

Excerpts of confidential and anonymous interviews¹ of influencers paid by tobacco companies or their agents in Brazil, Italy, and Uruguay

Philip Morris International cigarette brands

- *“They told us they were doing the same in Japan or China. Although we all know it is prohibited to do advertising of cigarettes in any media (tv, radio, press), they found a way...First because they target a super young profile, Night Hunters [PMI campaign in Uruguay] goes from 18 to 29 years old, but the people they selected are always the youngest.*
- *“The role of the social networks was key to advertise over the Internet what they wanted... it was about getting together young people that will move other young people because, as I already said, they were looking for people that were already in the social networks.”*
- *“The benefits are countless, it’s awesome!..they will give you all the benefits, but you have to do your part too. Your part means to upload a sort of advertisement [for PMI’s Ice Ball cigarettes] to Instagram or Facebook, but not something that looks set-up, but something that looks natural...the creative and natural pictures that you uploaded were very important...”*
- *“It was all about the pictures in the social networks: shares and likes... We had a training session with the person in charge of marketing in Marlboro, she talked to us about how difficult it was for them to advertise due to all the laws in place. She also talked to us about the brand in general, what the target population was, even she talked about the box and design. And after that, how they make you link the brand to certain colors or situations.”*
- *“It was forbidden to exhibit in the pictures other brands other than the ones they were advertising. It happened that someone uploaded a picture where you can see a cigarette box from another brand and they make her/him delete it.”*
- *“[T]heir idea was “marketing among peers...The cigarette brand was the strongest brand, you had to take pictures with their products. But the*

pictures should not be too obvious or overreacted, you needed to use your creativity to have them to be subtler... We couldn't be too explicit about the pictures we were uploading... The idea was to take pictures but not directly, but indirectly – for example, you would put the cigarettes in your pocket and take a selfie, so you can see in the picture the Ice Ball brand... The idea was to take “natural” pictures to advertise Ice Ball.”

British American Tobacco cigarette brands

- *I'm working for Lucky Strike, for their cigarettes. I started 2 years ago when I moved to Milan. ...So, we have to publish a number of photos a week. We have a normal contract, that includes the ban to cooperate with the competition. We have to publish 2 photos a week with the product, made in a subliminal way, as if right now I put the pack of cigarettes here on the table and I take a photo. Because it's obviously illegal. So they have this group of people in every city... They try to create this thing where they give packets of cigarettes to people with a certain number of followers, so that they post a picture with the packet. The final image they want to give is that smoking Lucky Strike is cool. Then there are the hashtags that we use for the pack – for the product – and the hashtag for the events, situations, places... #Lus for the pack of cigarettes, #Like_Us Party for the events... We are called Ambassadors.*
- *“Lucky Strike chooses a number of persons that sponsor their cigarettes. [My friend REDACTED] has to post 3 pictures a week and the pack of cigarettes has to appear in them, followed by the tags #Lus and #Like_Us Party. There are lots of people that do it and they are given 200 € a month and 2 cartons of cigarettes [each carton has 10 packs in it]. . . they only choose persons with an important number of followers.”*
- *“Interviewer: When you post, do you think your followers know what you're talking about?*

Interviewee: No... Only that I think that is precisely what Souza Cruz [BAT subsidiary in Brazil] wants. They want to show people who are normal, decent, cool, and even so they smoke.”

¹ Interviews were conducted by the netnography market research firm Netnografica, LLC with financial support by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. Netnografica, LLC is a research firm based in Los Angeles, CA and founded by Dr. Robert Kozinets, the inventor of the research methodology referred to as netnography. According to Netnografica’s website, netnography is a “qualitative and empathic research methodology that adapts ethnographic research techniques from anthropology to deeply immerse managers in online consumer interactions and experiences” and “combines the vast scope of big data analysis with the embedded emotional insights of focus groups. It starts out with a big data, search-fuelled type of examination of a broad range of social conversations, interactions, connections, and experiences. But then, it examines them closely using the approach of netnography.” Available at: <http://www.netnografica.com>.