Unpacking cigarette packaging:

A review of corporate documents made public by litigation

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Abstract

This study examines the strategic role of packaging as a marketing communications tool among the Canadian tobacco industry. A case study is provided wherein internal marketing planning documents from the tobacco industry – normally proprietary but made public from litigation – are reviewed to provide unique insight into the role of packaging in upholding brand-building processes while navigating within stringent regulatory environments. Marketing planning documents from the tobacco industry reveal the package's role in communicating brand imagery. Moreover, brand extensions or variants have facilitated tobacco companies to ably position and create the perception that some cigarettes are healthier than others. The findings help inform plain packaging regulations for tobacco products that took effect in Canada during 2019, and which faced a constitutional challenge from Canada's three major tobacco manufacturers.

Keywords

Tobacco; packaging; public policy; case study; document reviews