

Lori decides (which is actually a pretty good present, although I'd prefer the lightness of being). It's exactly the sort of off-key platitude in which the film abounds. *Dear Talula* might have emerged from a wellspring of educated self-awareness, but that's not the same thing as insight. There's a sentimentality at work here that seems to wash everything out. Even the editing displays a grandfatherly indulgence—halfway through we are broadsided by the phrase "every moment you spend in confidence is a

moment you heal your body". If *Dear Talula* has a therapeutic function for its director then so much the better, but as an artistic endeavour, unleavened by humour, it's leaden and dull of edge. But of course, the clue's right there in the title: *Dear Talula*. The lesson here? Don't go peeking at other people's post.

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Web

Tobacco promotion invades new media

We all get them incessantly—forwarded emails that the senders promise will make us laugh or will astonish, amaze, or disgust us. Often these messages are simply ignored, but now and then one of these emails is compelling enough that we forward it on to friends, family, and colleagues. Welcome to the power of word-of-mouth viral marketing. A few clicks of your mouse and everyone you know can be alerted to an online video, an event, or perhaps a new consumer product.

Hugely popular video-content websites, such as YouTube, not only rely on users to forward content onto other potential users, but also for creating the actual content of the website. Known as Web 2.0, the internet is no longer simply a way for people to retrieve information or purchase goods, but a fully interactive medium increasingly driven by consumer-generated content. Social-networking and chat-room sites, such as Facebook and MySpace, allow millions of people to share opinions, stories, information, and entertainment in a minimally restricted environment. In August, 2007, YouTube had 56.5 million US visitors alone, with the recently launched Facebook attracting 19.2 million 12–17-year-olds for an average of 331 minutes a month. Although much of the content on these sites remains true to the Web 2.0 principles of participation and interaction between users, the business sector has been quick to notice the potential to reach millions of customers by advertising on such sites.

Driven by the increasing global restrictions on their ability to openly market their products, the tobacco industry is an innovator in covert means of product promotion. A search of these high-traffic websites shows a huge pro-tobacco content. Entering the search term "smoking" on YouTube returns more than 117 000 relevant video clips. These range from instructional clips on how and why to smoke—eg, *Smoking cigs for beginners, Q&A*—to scantily clad young women suggestively blowing their smoke towards the camera—eg, *Sexy smoking bad girl*—to clips of celebrities smoking—eg, *Smoking fetish celebs*. Many of the videos show popular cigarette brands.

Are these often lavishly produced videos created with the support of the tobacco industry, or are they genuine, independent expressions of real people's love of smoking? Unsurprisingly, the tobacco industry has denied any involvement in the promotion of their products on the internet. But then, with anonymous posting now as easy as a walk in the park, their declaration of innocence is hardly surprising. Furthermore, this is an industry that, for decades, denied that nicotine is addictive and that smoking causes lung cancer. So should we really take their word for it?

Internet chat rooms can be fruitful sites for tobacco marketing. In February, 2007, R J Reynolds launched a new Camel No 9 cigarette aimed at women. Contributors to female-centered chat rooms talked about the allure of the stylish packaging: "with me being female and all, I have to say that the box and the pink foil inside are appealing, as is the actual look of the cigarette itself...the pink foil and the pink decor on the cigarette is adorable". In view of the fact that only an email address—which could be anonymously

Smoking cigs for beginners, Q&A

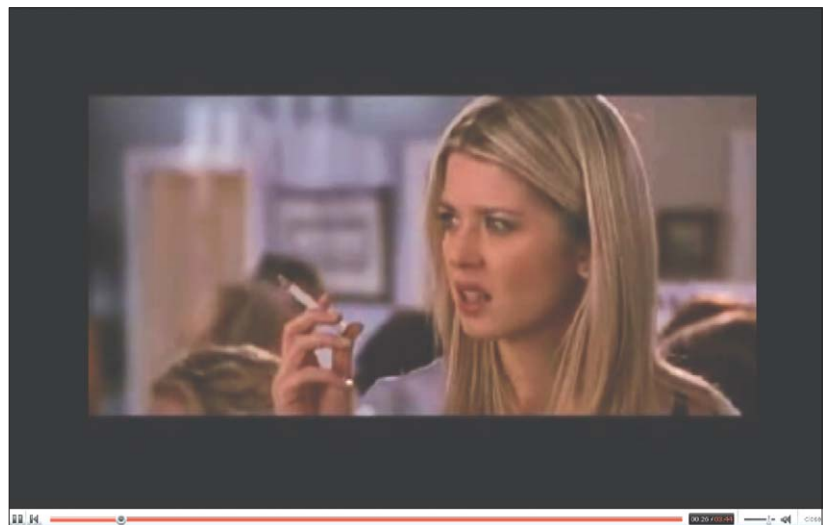
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBlAdOFYVnc>

Sexy smoking bad girl

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yWoO69bnRg8>

Smoking fetish celebs

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-bxVaddCXg>



A clip of the celebrity, Tara Reid, smoking, which is being shown on YouTube



In an antitobacco video broadcast on YouTube, which targets smokers, the presenter openly smokes a cigarette

For the video that gives a demonstration of how tobacco smoke particles are retained in the lungs see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQ4n7g31RIE>

obtained from any number of free providers—is needed for contributing to a discussion in these chat-rooms, comments such as these could have been posted by genuine women, public-relations people, or, very easily, by employees or marketing agents of R J Reynolds.

Although the tobacco industry might be using these sites to promote their products, some of the most popular smoking content on YouTube is, in fact, powerfully antismoking. However, some of this material does not always fit the notion of a politically correct health promotion. A video that gives an unforgettable

demonstration of how tobacco smoke particles are retained in the lungs—and that has been viewed by more than 1.158 million people in the past two months—caused a small furore within the tobacco-control community when it was released, thanks to the young man featured in the clip, who openly shows his enjoyment for smoking by stating “that’s good smoke” when taking a draw and then tosses his cigarette butt on the ground at the end. Fervent calls to ban all smoking imagery from websites like YouTube ensued. This myopic critique ignores the power of the antismoking message of this film and fails to recognise that tobacco control can and should be engaging to its target audience, especially when the success of any video relies on users to spread the word about its recommended content.

Tobacco-control organisations routinely spend large amounts of money on revamping their websites with youth-oriented content in the hope of preventing young people from taking up smoking or helping smokers to quit. However, popular websites like YouTube, MySpace, and FaceBook remain largely ignored by the tobacco-control community. By establishing a presence on websites that have a target audience of young people and smokers, these organisations will not only be able to help combat prosmoking content by active and witty participation in the feedback mechanisms, but will also be able to reach audiences that would never visit typically earnest and formal tobacco-control websites.

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