

# How the tobacco industry uses e-mail and internet for marketing their products despite a tobacco advertising ban on the internet – a German case study

Susanne Schunk

German Cancer Research Center, Office Cancer Prevention and WHO Collaborating Centre for Tobacco Control

## Introduction

The European Tobacco Advertising Directive (2003/33/EC) bans advertising and sponsorship of tobacco products in “information society services” (Definition: activities of an interactive nature provided online which have an economic value). The directive was implemented in Germany in January 2007. Aim of the presented study was to find out whether tobacco advertising on the internet is taking place or not and which kind of marketing is used.

## Study Design

Observation study monitoring internet sites of the ten most popular cigarette brands in Germany as well as ten cigarette and tobacco brands with special features i.e. slim cigarettes, rolling tobacco and tobacco related products (rolling paper). The study also observed their presence on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube and was conducted between December 2013 and April 2014.

Observed brands	
most popular	special features
Marlboro	Natural American Spirit
L&M	Camel
JPS	Vogue „Superslim“ and „La Cigarette“
Pall Mall	Fred
West	Davidoff
Gauloises Blondes	Chesterfield
Lucky Strike	Schwarzer Krauser rolling tobacco
f6	Gletscher Prise snuff
HB	GIZEH rolling papers, filters etc.
R1	Muskote rolling papers

## Results

Despite an internet advertising ban the tobacco industry runs internet sites for six of the ten most popular cigarette brands.

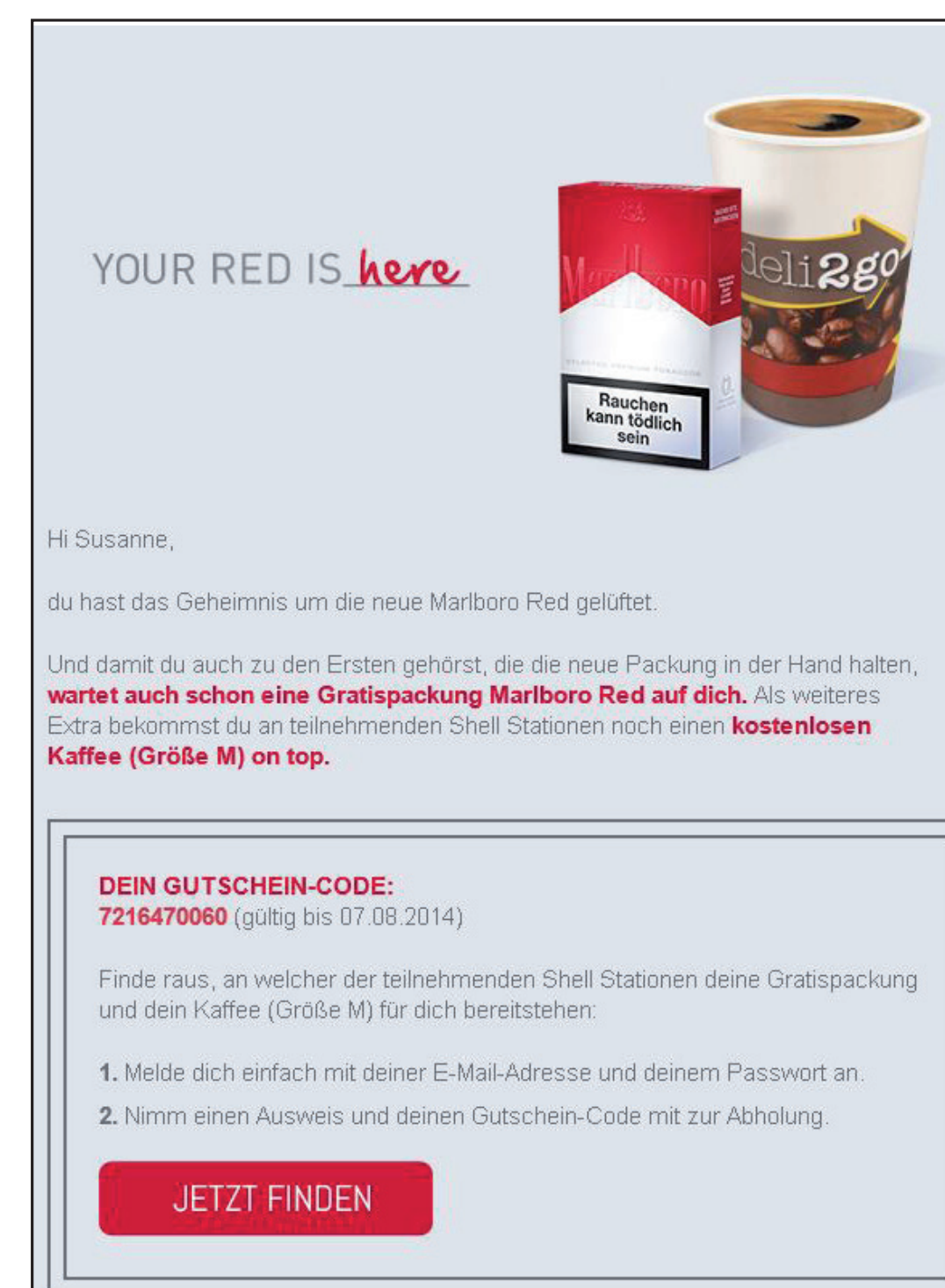
The tobacco companies “recruit” new consumers to sign up to their websites and then they contact them via e-mail and grant access to their websites. All websites attract a young audience and offer competitions and give away prizes. They all offer free packs of cigarettes from time to time and without exception they all have “tell-a-friend”-features to recruit new „members”. This way the tobacco industry collects thousands and thousands of contacts of smokers and potential smokers who want to be “members” as well. Potential consumers are also recruited at music festivals, at university campus parties, in bars, discotheques and at other events that cater to young people.

### Example 1: Marlboro

#### Recruiting young people at music festivals for internet promotion



**Music festival promotion** Love Family Park Festival 2014: Recruiting young people at music festivals is the most popular advertising instrument of the tobacco industry. At Marlboro promotion areas you can swap almost anything for a full pack of cigarettes: chewing gum, a pen, an empty pack of cigarettes etc. In return you have to show your ID to prove that you are over 18 and you have to give the promotion agents your personal details and e-mail address. The next day you receive a welcome-e-mail from Marlboro and the offer to sign on to their website and to receive advertising mails for more free packs of cigarettes and other promotional gifts. Photo: © DKFZ



### Internet promotion: free cigarette packs

#### Mail from Marlboro:

„Hi .....,  
you have lifted the secret of the new Marlboro Red. And because we want you to be one of the first who hold the new pack in your hands, there is a free pack of Marlboro Red already waiting for you. As a further extra you will receive a free coffee (size M) on top at participating Shell stations.

Your coupon code:.....(valid until 07.08.2014)

Find out at which participating Shell gas stations your free pack and coffee (size M) are available for you:

1. Sign on with your e-mail address and password.
  2. Take your ID and your coupon code for pickup.
- Shall your friends also know about this? Invite them.”



### Internet promotion: recruiting friends

#### Message on the Marlboro internet site

www.for-deciders.de:

“Mission Marlboro

successfully completed.

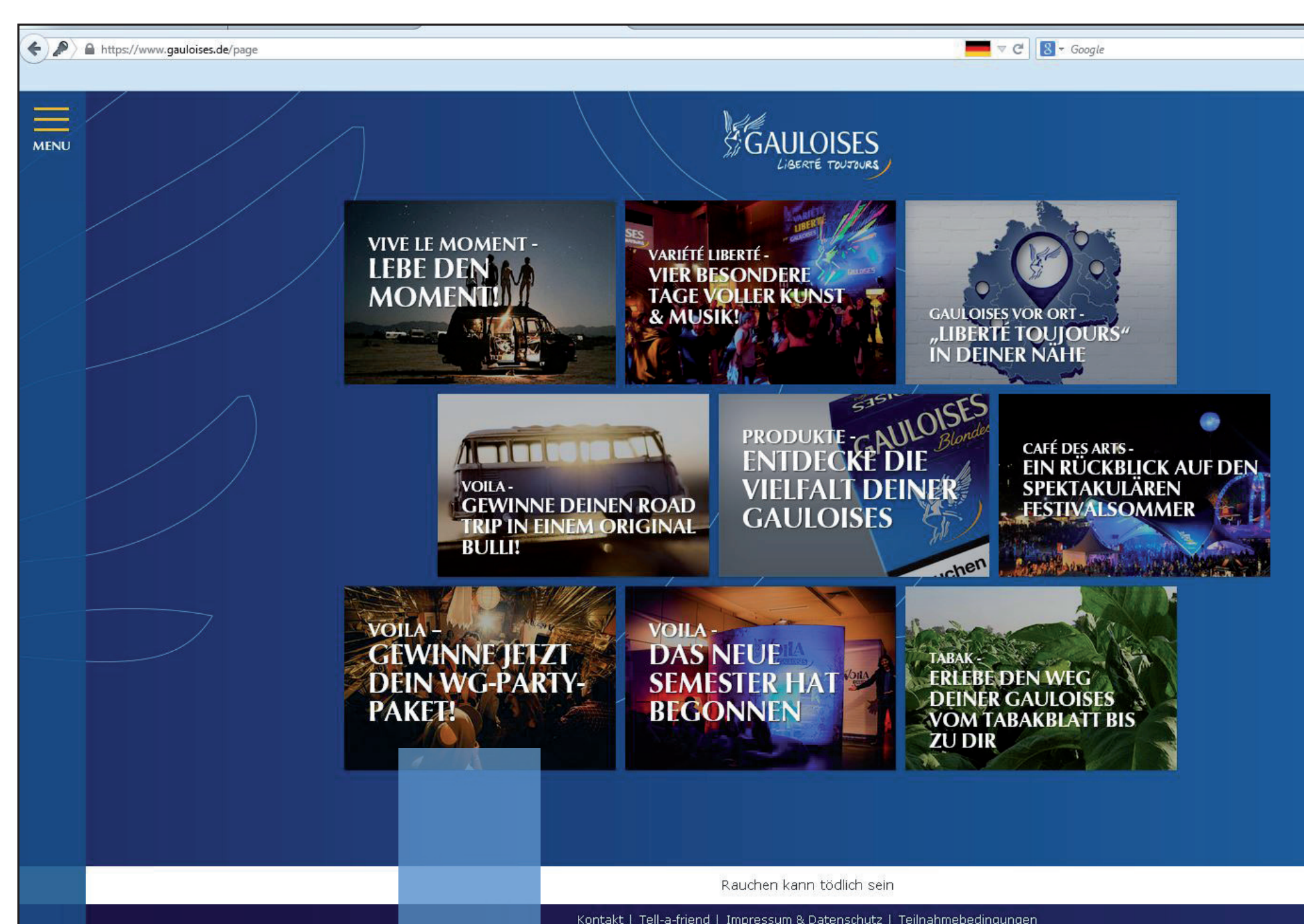
Look forward to an exciting new year with Mission Marlboro. Unique challenges and great winnings are waiting for you!

Spread the word.”

If you click on „Erzähl es weiter“ (spread the word) you activate the tell-a-friend-function. That means that you invite a friend to sign on to the website. Each member admitted receives free packs of cigarettes as well as the person that recruited the new member.

### Example 2: Gauloises Blondes www.gauloises.de

The Gauloises website is, like all cigarette brand websites in Germany, only accessible after registration (only adult smokers). It has various offers tailored to a young audience, for example:



- „Voila - Gewinne Deinen Road Trip in einem original Bulli“ (Voila - win your road trip in a original bulli vintage van). This offer is a prize draw where you can win a trip for four persons with this van for two weeks including pocket money.

- „Café des Arts - Ein Rückblick auf den spektakulären Festivalsommer“ (Café des Arts - A review of the spectacular summer music festivals). This site informs about the massive festival promotion activities of Gauloises at music festivals.



- „Voila - Gewinne jetzt Dein WG-Party-Paket!“ (Voila - win now your flat-share-party-package). Gauloises sponsors a party at a student flat share with beer, wine, cigarettes and decoration. Students can apply if they will invite a minimum of 100 friends and allow smoking at the party.

## Summary and conclusions

The tobacco ad ban on the internet does not work. The tobacco industry uses the internet as a new communication platform for marketing. The regulatory authorities must intervene on the basis of existing legislation. It is a case for strong implementation and control. A ban of all forms of marketing and sponsorship is the order of the day.