

RJ Reynolds to stop print ads next year

By JOCELYN NOVECK, AP National Writer Tue Nov 27, 2007 10:23 PM ET

NEW YORK - The R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co., which has been under intense pressure from anti-smoking groups and members of Congress over print ads for its cigarettes, said Tuesday it would not advertise its brands in newspapers or consumer magazines next year.

The company had been criticized sharply for both its colorful and feminine Camel No. 9 ads, which appeared in fashion magazines and were seen as cynically aimed at young women, and also for a recent ad in Rolling Stone.

In that ad, four pages of Camel cigarette ads book ended Rolling Stone's own material on independent rock music, which was presented in a cartoon-like format. That angered anti-smoking advocates, who said it appeared the whole thing was a Camel ad - and that it recalled the old "Joe Camel" cartoons that were banned because they appeared aimed at children.

R.J. Reynolds spokeswoman Jan Smith said the decision, first reported Tuesday in the Winston-Salem Journal, had been made sometime before October and was unrelated to the Rolling Stone controversy.

In a telephone interview, Smith called the move "an effort by the company to enhance and sharpen the effectiveness and efficiency of its marketing programs." She did, however, say the company had taken into account, at least in part, the protests over the Camel No. 9 ads.

"Obviously tobacco industry issues are in mind with every decision we make," Smith said. "A result of this is there should be less controversy over cigarette advertising in magazines and newspapers, because we won't be doing it."

The Washington-based Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, which has long protested the Camel ads, called the company's decision "more a strategy to deflect criticism than a real change in marketing."

Matthew Myers, president of the group, said it was unfortunate that R.J. Reynolds had not committed to permanently stop print advertising. Smith said the company, based in Winston-Salem, N.C., would make decisions about future years at a later time.

Myers also said the company has far to go to curtail egregious marketing practices, which include promotions at bars and nightclubs.

"What they've done is just to limit the ads that have prompted the fiercest criticism, because they are the most visible," Myers said in a telephone interview.

He noted the company is still engaging in direct mail advertising, heavy promotion at retail outlets, and price promotion "for the brands kids like most."

The Camel No. 9 ads, launched early this year, appear on thick, shiny paper in fuchsia or teal and are adorned with images of roses and lace.

A group of Congress members, led by Rep. Lois Capps, D-Calif., have been urging women's magazines such as Cosmopolitan, Vogue and Glamour to stop accepting the ads, saying they threaten the health of the teenagers and young women who form a large part of their readership.

Capps on Tuesday called the Reynolds decision a "token concession" that was "a day late and a dollar short."

In fact, the print ads account for only a tiny portion of what the tobacco industry spends on marketing. But they've been notable because they often appear in magazines side by side with articles promoting women's health.

Print ads for tobacco are banned in a number of countries, including throughout Europe, but legal in the United States. Tobacco advertising was banned from radio and TV long ago, and more recently from billboards.

A major tobacco report issued earlier this year by the Institute of Medicine, a branch of the National Academy of Sciences, recommended that print ads be restricted to black and white text only - no images.

A number of magazines refuse to accept tobacco ads. A few are Self, Men's Health and Money, according to the Tobacco-Free Periodicals Project.