
Historians looking back at North America in the twentieth century will be hardpressed to reconstruct its cultural dimensions without making reference to liquor, cigarettes, and advertising. In promoting alcohol to women, the purveyors of mass culture eliminated much of the stigma of female alcohol consumption. Tobacco consumption by women did not suffer the disgrace of alcohol, yet it infringed on masculine rituals and spaces. The freedom of women to smoke and drink was an inevitable development of the culture of consumerism. Cigarettes were inexpensive and instantly recognizable as emblems of maturity, rebellion, and liberty; advertisers used images of glamour, wealth, and sophistication to promote public drinking and those of domesticity and companionate marriage to encourage household consumption. For both habits, freedom came to be equated with the use of public space, or more precisely female incursions into male public space.

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