

THE TOBACCONIST BOUTIQUE, AN INVITING (AND MISLEADING) MARRIAGE BETWEEN SMOKING AND CULTURE

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Tobacco smoking is considered a preventable epidemic due to the burden of mortality and morbidity of tobacco-related diseases. Tobacco addiction should be considered a real chronic disease *per se*, similar to hypertension or diabetes, to be recognized and treated as soon as possible^{1,2}. In addition, passive smoke has been declared a carcinogenic substance for humans by an authoritative institution, ie, IARC (International Agency for Research on Cancer)³. Accordingly, passive smoking is recognized as a health risk in Italy, as in many other countries, with a law that prescribes new anti-smoking regulations in public places and workplaces⁴.

Despite current attempts to change the cultural attitude towards smoking, however, what we can learn from the picture reported in Figure 1 is that: 1) smoking is strictly and overly associated to books (a reader must be a smoker), 2) smoking ranks equal to reading as a cultural and social value, and 3) such a strong message is not considered a disturbing invitation to smoking, since it has been capturing the curiosity of people for many years in one of the most renowned towns of the Ligurian Riviera (Italy). Far from suggesting crusade-like interventions, we would simply like to propose that the sign-board should be accompanied by a clear double caption: 1) when you are reading (usually indoors) pas-

sive smoking is responsible for a high level of particulate-matter pollution^{5,6} and 2) passive smoking (the smoke you inhale involuntarily) is harmful, whereas passive reading (the communication that can be shared less or more voluntarily by the reader and her/his partners) can open the mind.



References

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