



Háskólinn á Akureyri
Sólborg, Norðurlóð 2
600 Akureyri
Sími: 460 8000

Faculty of Social Sciences
Media studies
2011

Félagsvísindadeild
Fjölmiðlafræði
2011

Smoke, smoke, smoke that cigarette

-Final Thesis-

Authors: Gunnlaugur Blöndal & Tómas Hallgrímsson

**Final Project in School of Humanities and Social Sciences Lokaverkefni við Hug- og
félagsvísindasvið**



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Supervisor: Markus Meckl

Final Project for 180 ETCS credit B.A-degree in School of Humanities and

Social Sciences Lokaverkefni til 180 eininga B.A-prófs við Hug-og

félagsvísindasvið

We hereby declare that this final-project is all our own work, except as indicated in the text

_____ Gunnlaugur Blöndal

_____ Tómas Hallgrímsson

I hereby declare that this final-project satisfies, in my opinion, requirements for a B.A-degree

Markus Meckl

Signature _____

Útdráttur

Tilgangur þessa verkefnis var að kanna hvernig ímynd reykingarmannsins hefur breyst á Íslandi. Fyrst er farið stuttlega yfir sögu tóbaksins hérlandis og erlendis, hvaðan það er upprunið og hvernig og hvenær það barst hingað til Íslands. Til að skoða breytingar á ímynd reykingarmannsins er tilvalið að notast við fjölmiðlaumfjöllun sem og við gerðum. Samhliða þeirri nálgun er rýnt í þróun og hlutverk tóbaksvarnarlaga og þá gagnrýni sem að þau hafa hlotið, skoðuð eru viðtöl úr gagnasafni Þjóðskjalasafni Íslands um endurminningar og reynslu Íslendinga af tóbaki og hlutverki þess snemma á síðastliðinni öld. Ímynd reykingarmannsins á Íslandi hefur breyst mikið í gegnum tíðina og skiptist umfjöllunin niður í fjögur tímabil sem ráðast á áhrifamiklum og afgerandi breytingum í íslenskri menningu og samfélagi. Hernámið, áhrif Kanans (e. Americanization), aukinni vitund fólks og fræðimanna á skaðsemi tóbaksins og tímabil tóbaksvarna sem nær til dagsins í dag.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to evaluate how the image of smokers has changed in Iceland. First is a brief history of tobacco in Iceland and abroad, where it comes from, how and when it came to Iceland. To see the changes in the image of smokers it is ideal to use media coverage as we did. Alongside this approach, the development and role of the Tobacco Control Act and the criticism they have received is examined, interviews received through the database of the National Museum of Iceland which contains memories and experiences of Icelanders on tobacco and its role in the early last century is also studied. The image of smokers in Iceland has changed a lot over the years and this coverage is divided into four

periods, depending on influential and decisive changes in Icelandic culture and society. The military occupation, Americanization, increased awareness among the public and scholars regarding the harmfulness of tobacco and the period of tobacco prevention that extends to present day.

“Cigarettes just lie there in their packs waiting until you call on one of them to help you relax. They aren’t moody; they don’t go in for sexual harassment and threats, or worry about their performance as compared to other cigarettes, nor do they keep you awake all night telling you of their life, beginning with the mother and going on until morning about their first wife.” - Fleur Adcock “Smokers for celibacy”, in *Time-Zones* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 36-7

Our dear thanks to all of those who made this BA become reality. Special thanks to Hafdís Sveinsdóttir, Theodór Sigurðsson and our instructor Markus Meckl.

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Introduction

The main purpose of this BA-thesis is to look at the changing image of smoking in the Icelandic media and to discuss the reason for these changes. Smoking tobacco has been used for millennia in different parts of the world and it reached Iceland in the 16th century when Icelandic explorers brought it home from their voyages as well as foreign ships, stopping by in Icelandic ports, carried it aboard. The cigarette, however, was not to become popular until the beginning of the 20th century as foreign trade increased. One of the sources used are interviews conducted by the National Museum of Iceland. This source proved to be invaluable in this research but the National Museum of Iceland did not allow us to name the individuals that took part in it. With the military occupation following the second world war, cigarettes became a status symbol and was much appreciated by the Icelandic people. New cigarette brands were imported and brought along by foreign soldiers and seamen. The cigarette has been a part of the Icelandic culture ever since, and is not likely to go anywhere in the near future. The image of smoking has, on the other hand, changed through time. The first chapter of this essay will briefly discuss the history of tobacco, where it originates from and what it was used for. In the second chapter the topic is the circulation of tobacco in Europe, which discusses the entrance of tobacco on the European market as well as the history and import of tobacco in Iceland, how it began, where it came from and the image of smoking in those days. It will also discuss the pricing, how much did tobacco cost at its arrival and how has pricing changed through time. Chapter three tells the story of cultivation of tobacco in Iceland, the different experiments performed, the circumstances required and how the Icelandic weather conditions played a vital role in cultivating the plant. The

fourth chapter will be divided into four time periods. The topic is the perception of smoking tobacco in Iceland in the 20th century to the present day, the supposed medicinal purposes etc. It will also include stories of people growing up in Iceland when the cigarettes first became popular, their perception of society at the time and interesting tales of tobacco use. It entails the military invasion in Iceland and the changes the foreign soldiers brought with them. It will include how the Icelandic culture changed and the effects of the Americanization. Lastly, the peoples' awareness of the dangers of tobacco and the tobacco prevention methods will be discussed as well the development of the tobacco laws and the criticism it has received.

1. History of smoking tobacco

The tobacco plant *Nicotiana tabacum*, descends from the Solanaceae species, a species related to potatoes and tomatoes. (Tóbak, 1998) (Níels Dungal, 1965) It is impossible to know how long ago people began to inhale the smoke of burning leafs of wild plants, later known as the tobacco plant. It comes from the tropical countries of America, especially from Central and South America. Its first use is reported to be by the Indians of Americas who burned the tobacco leaves, along with smelly resin, in order to deter mosquitoes. (Tóbak, 1998) The consumption of tobacco was probably the highest among the Aztec community in Mexico as well as the Inka community in Peru. It was also common in North America when smoking a so called peace-pipe.(Tóbak, 1998)

1.1. Tobacco circulation in Europe

The ocean voyagers were the first Europeans to come into contact with tobacco, found the tobacco smoke undesirable. It did not take long before some of the voyagers began enjoying the habit and brought with them tobacco leaves to their native countries. (Tóbak, 1998) (PLP, 1987) It was Sir Walter Raleigh that transported both the tobacco and the potatoes to England at the end of the 16th century. The Indians smoked tobacco through pipes and by rolling it like cigars, Europeans copied their methods as well as inventing new ways of using it, such as cutting it finely to use as snuff, adding spices and sauce to it in order to chew it and finally to wrap it in paper like a modern day cigarette. Smoking tobacco was a commodity for wealthy Europeans. The modern cigarette, as we know it today, was invented by beggars in Sevilla in the 16th century. It was not, however, until the 19th century that cigarettes became socially accepted. (Ólafur Daviðsson, 1898) (PLP, 1987) (Tóbak, 1998)

Tobacco usually contains about 2% nicotine although it varies somewhat between species. Nicotine is a very strong poison and in the book *Tóbaksnautn*, by Níels Dungal, from 1965 it is compared to blue acid. A famous tale, told by the Duke of Saint-Simon, tells the story of what happened at a party held by King Ludvig XV of France. The prince told one of the guests to pour the content of his snuff can into a wineglass and then drink it. The guest was too afraid to say no and consequently fell to the ground and died. Many experiments have shown the poisonous potential of nicotine but when used in low doses, for example when smoking, people get used to the substance and addicted to it. (Níels Dungal, 1965)

1.2. History of smoking tobacco in Iceland

The first reliable sources of people smoking tobacco in Iceland are from the year 1639 when some schoolboys in Skálholt were enjoying smoking. (Frjáls Verslun, 1939) Before that time there are rather uncertain stories about tobacco use of tobacco in general. Although these are the first documented stories about the use of smoking tobacco in Iceland, there are sources from Jón Indíánafara from 1615 about the use of smoking tobacco aboard a ship. It was a ship that sailed from the east coast of Iceland to England. This makes Jón the first Icelander recorded to have used smoking tobacco.(Ólafur Davíðsson, 1898) (PLP, 1987) According to an article written by Ólafur Davíðsson, it did not take long for Icelanders to pick up the habit of smoking, and in fact, the habit of smoking, spread rapidly all over the country. It is likely that Icelanders picked it up from foreign sailors that were often in Iceland, at that time. This is long before tobacco became a commodity. From the day that smoking tobacco became a commodity in Iceland it was quite rare and therefore a luxury product. People would send their friends and family tobacco as gifts .(Ólafur Davíðsson, 1898)

Smoking has always been debated throughout its history in Iceland. A few priests openly criticized the use of smoking tobacco, saying it was unhealthy and not along the lines of Christian values. Rev. Páll Björnsson was one of the first outspoken critics of tobacco use. In 1668 he sent a letter to Brynjólfur the Bishop in which he openly questioned the moral issues regarding tobacco use. (Frjáls Verslun, 1939) The hoi polloi, generally, did not take these warnings seriously and so the demand grew for tobacco, and therefore it became rather expensive to enjoy. People speculated with tobacco and sold it for a high price when the supply

was not enough due to the intermittence of import. (Frjáls Verslun, 1939) The tobacco was imported from different nations to begin with but starting around the middle of the 18th century the trade was solely confined to the Danish traders. (Tóbak, 1998)

1.3. Import

There are documented records about the import of tobacco in Iceland. The oldest is from 1743 and it records an import of 31 tons of tobacco in that year. One should keep in mind that at that time Iceland's inhabitants were only about 50.000. In those days the import would vary substantially between years. In 1759 the import was only 5 tons but in 1788 the records show an import of 62 tons. This huge fluctuation is hard to explain as there are no records explaining it. It could have to do with the weather, business situations at that time or any other unforeseen events. (Natascha Mehler, 2004) These sources are not reliable and there was probably a huge black market that was not recorded in any documents. At this time only one form of tobacco was imported and used for smoking, snuffing and as mouth tobacco. Later the import of tobacco was divided into separate groups consisting of the three aforementioned uses, making it more difficult to compare the different numbers imported.

The Icelandic Alcohol and Tobacco Institute (Áfengis- og tóbaksverslun ríkisins, ÁTVR) have a monopoly on Iceland in regards to distribution and production of tobacco. Their records show that in the year 1974 they reached the highest sales in history, selling 3.135 grams per adult Icelander. In 1997 the records show a sale of 2.007 grams. (Tóbak, 1998)

1.4. High cost

Tobacco has never been cheap in Iceland although the price for smoking tobacco was variable at the beginning. A document from the year of 1668 shows the price for one pound of tobacco being up to 30 fishes, probably cods. (Frjáls Verzlun, 1939)

In 1679 the Alþingi laid down regulations on tobacco pricing. This interference of the Alþingi was because the pricing of tobacco varied greatly in Iceland at that time. (Ólafur Daviðsson, 1898)

In the regulations laid down by the Alþingi in 1679 it is recorded that the price for one alin¹ of good tobacco was 6, 8, 10, 16 and even 20 fishes. After the regulations were laid down the highest price for alin (10 alin equal about 1 pound) was not supposed to be higher than the price of one fish. (Frjáls Verzlun, 1939)

2. Cultivation of tobacco in Iceland

In the 18th century agriculture improved in Iceland as farmers from Denmark and Norway came to the country to teach the Icelandic people how to grow different plants. In many places attempts were made to grow varieties of corn, trees, vegetables and different herbs. Three sources from this period suggest that people were trying to grow tobacco in Iceland in the 18th century. In 1757, the book *Tractacus Historico-Physicus de Agricultura Islandorum* by Jón Snorrason was

¹ Ancient measure at the time called Hamborgaraalin. It was 22 inches, 57,8 cm, in the beginning of the 16th century.

published. In that book it is said that the soil in Iceland is as fertile as in other European nations. Snorrasson mentions the cultivation experiments on the island Brokey in Breiðafjörður, conducted by Jóhannes Erichstrup. Jóhannes managed to grow, not only corn and herbs but also *Linum*, *Canabis* and *Nicotia*. Jón then compares the Icelandic soil to Swedish, Norwegian and Scottish soil and concludes that they are very similar in fertility. There are more examples of people trying to grow tobacco in Iceland and in 1770 the Land Committee was given the task to see if tobacco cultivation could be of financial importance to Iceland. District Magistrate Magnús Ketilsson tried to cultivate tobacco as he writes: „I’ve handled tobacco like cabbage and planted it early in hotbeds to then plant it in my cabbage garden. It was given good soil, plenty of nurturing and it has grown quite a bit although I have not been able to get seeds from it. I’ve followed the instructions that Mr. O. Deckberg published in Stockholm, 1752, and I believe that it can grow and mature here.” (Natascha Mehler, 2004, bls. 135)

These sources bear witness to the fact that tobacco was grown successfully in Iceland, at least for some period of time. Weather conditions were not ideal for cultivation in Iceland at the time. The 18th century was especially cold in Iceland and Northern Europe. There were some warmer periods in between but the century was generally cold partly because of sea ice situated near Iceland during the middle of the century which had a big impact on weather conditions and agriculture. (Natascha Mehler, 2004)

3. Perception of smoking tobacco in the 20th century

Smoking tobacco became popular in Iceland as elsewhere and people enjoyed smoking. It was believed to have a good effect on stomach aches as well as improving eyesight according to the majority of the people that were interviewed by the National Museum of Iceland. These people grew up in the early 20th century in Iceland. It was often compared to medicine and that it was particularly good for colds and coughs but only in small doses. This belief persisted for quite some time and it was even believed to sharpen peoples minds. (Óprentuð gögn á Þjóðháttasafni Þjóðminjasafns, 1997) There is even a tale of a teacher who recommended to his students that they smoke a cigar before exams as it would prove to give them better results. (Óprentuð gögn á Þjóðháttasafni Þjóðminjasafns, 1997) This was long believed to be the truth until science proved otherwise.

3.1. Perception of tobacco until World War I

Before the first world war smoking was not a class issue but something that every man could enjoy. However, there was a gender issue. It was not socially acceptable for women to smoke as smoking was considered very masculine. (Óprentuð gögn á Þjóðháttasafni Þjóðminjasafns, 1997) One man remembers the first time he saw a woman smoking in 1937 and it was considered quite scandalous. There are stories of grown men handing cigarettes to teenagers in order to see their reaction to it. If the teenagers felt nauseated or reacted in some unfitting way they were laughed at and not considered to be real men. The quality

of the tobacco being used varied substantially. The good quality tobacco was more expensive and not everyone could afford it. Consequently, smoking evolved into a larger class issue with time. The interviews conducted by the National Museum of Iceland verifies that the tobacco became divided by class. In one of the tales the utilization of tobacco was made clear. It told the story of men chewing tobacco, then drying it for smoking and in the end snuffing the ashes. (Óprentuð gögn á Þjóðháttafasni Þjóðminjasafns, 1997) This was done in order to utilize the tobacco as much as possible.. It is quite clear that the public did not have the same access to good quality tobacco as the wealthier men of the time. To get a sense of how the perception of cigarettes and tobacco smoking has changed in Iceland it is necessary to take a look at the development of the advertisement and the different strategies used by both prevention agencies and tobacco resellers throughout different timeperiods. Starting with an advertisement from 1926 in *Eimreiðin* for Elephant cigarettes. These cigarettes came to Iceland after the First



World War and soon became very popular.

The advertisement says: “Elephant cigarettes. Delicious and cold.” (Eimreiðin, 1926)

This sort of

advertisement was very common at the time, before photographs became common in newspaper advertisements. Another cigarette brand that came to Iceland at roughly the same time was Teofani, a turkish cigarette brand, that was not considered as fancy as other brands, but cheaper, making them



more accessible to the public. This advertisement says: “Teofani is the word of choice. Available everywhere.” (Fálkinn, 1929) It encourages people to start smoking Teofani cigarettes today. It also states that it is readily available all over the country.

Note the cigarette brand named Swastika in the left corner of the advertisement. One



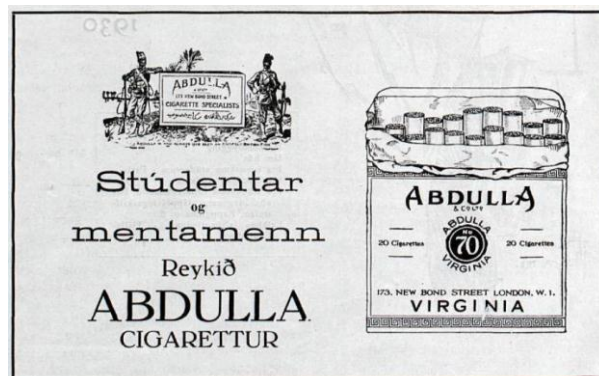
of the successful advertisement campaigns that Teofani held in Iceland was a beauty contest, the first one held in Iceland. (Kþ, 1982) With each pack of cigarettes, a photograph of a female contestant was attached. They encouraged their buyers to send in the photograph of the girl they liked the most and that would count as a vote.

Each consumer could send as many photographs as

he/she liked. (Kristín Anna Sólveigar Hermannsdóttir, 2010)

Another advertisement, from 1930, appeals to students and scholars with the text: „Students and scholars: Smoke ABDULLA cigarettes.”

(Stúdentablaðið, 1930) The



advertisement divides and promotes smoking in different classes of society, indicating that Abdulla cigarettes are more suited for the higher classes. Smoking cigars, or cigarettes, was done in a way of displaying a social status. It was a common belief that men who smoked cigars were socially above the public. Educated men, such as doctors and businessmen, smoked cigars or cigarettes and encouraged others to join them. Local businesses gave cigars to their employees for Christmas.

(Óprentuð gögn á Þjóðháttasafni Þjóðminjasafns, 1997) There were some that spread information regarding the negative effects of smoking but as many of the people of

that time bear witness to it was “just nice to smoke”. In fact, it was commonplace to offer guests a cigar and it was even offered to customers in shops. (Óprentuð gögn á Þjóðháttasafni Þjóðminjasafns, 1997)

3.2 The effects of the military occupation

With the military occupation the perception of cigarettes changed. To begin with, cigarettes were common in urban areas but soon spread to the countryside where pipe smoking was already common. (Óprentuð gögn á Þjóðháttasafni Þjóðminjasafns, 1997) Cigarettes came with the military occupants in Iceland and grew in popularity around the Second World War. Undoubtedly few Icelanders could have foreseen the effect that the military occupation of the British and later of the Americans would have on their way of living. When the military occupation began, in 1940, a new era in the history of Iceland began: a period of internationalization. This was of course not the sole event that brought Icelanders out of their turf huts because, as generally known, the globalization began with the original industrial revolution a few decades earlier. (Björn Teitsson, 2003) Effects of the military occupation, however, have been great and has changed much of the Icelandic culture and their consumption habits. Purchasing abilities of the public increased significantly. Suddenly everyone could get a job in construction work in connection with the military which lead to the disappearance of unemployment. Everyone who could work were employed by the British, and later the Americans, who paid much better wages than Icelandic workers were accustomed to from fellow Icelandic employers. This increased prosperity led to various innovations in consumer culture which the country had never seen. Before

the occupation there was a persistent shortage of supplies in the country but with the occupation came a number of innovations to the market and one can even call it a particular

“Americanization”(Björn Teitsson, 2003) The new settlers, although they only stayed for a short while, came with all kinds of products, practices and customs from their home that many Icelanders

considered exotic and very fancy. (Björn Teitsson, 2003) With the

Americanization Hollywood stars became more prominent in Icelandic media.

How people dressed and what they did in their spare time was often because of idolization of models or actors/actresses. The Americanization shaped the media

with its content in movies, fashion advertising and above all, contemporary

zeitgeist. Many of the male respondents in the interviews held by the National

Museum of Iceland agreed that female smoking in Iceland increased due to the

influence of Hollywood actresses, many of which were often seen with a cigarette between their fingers. (Óprentuð gögn á Þjóðháttasafni Þjóðminjasafns, 1997)

Tobacco companies at the time sponsored Hollywood movies and the biggest

stars were paid a considerable amount of money to display their cigarettes on the

silver screen. The Hollywood celebrities that were paid the most by the tobacco



Gary Cooper

financial capabilities, fancier products, better clothes and elegant ways, it was

hard not to admire them in a bigger way than the British before them and the



Joan Crawford

companies were Gary Cooper and Joan Crawford to name a few. (BBC, 2008) In

light of this, it is not surprising that

when the Americans came, with more

Icelandic society as a whole. Jón Hjaltason, an historian from Akureyri, wrote the following: ...”a big change in society in May and September 1942. The public’s smoking habits continued to grow enormously, cigarettes changed in flavour, and hot dogs were seen for the first time ... gum ... chocolate It did not occur to anyone, neither children nor adults, that the American soldiers were so much more sophisticated than the British ...” (Björn Teitsson, 2003)

Having tasted these “luxury” products the Icelandic people didn’t want to let them go. The Americans and their occupation as a whole has had a major impact and, as Björn Teitsson points out, it is worth to reflect on the role they played in regard to the spreading of smoking in Iceland. At least it is quite clear that products such as popcorn, Coca Cola, cornflakes, Cocoa Puffs and candy as well as going to the cinema are still a big part of the Icelandic culture. (Björn Teitsson, 2003)

3.3 Loss of innocence

As the century progressed scientists began to realize that cigarettes were a wolf in a sheep’s clothing. For example, as early as 1944, the American Cancer Society warned the Association of Tobacco about cancer related to smoking (Edrú, 2011). This article did not receive much media attention in the U.S. or worldwide. Up to this point, the main arguments had not been focused on the potential dangers of cigarettes but rather the quality and sales pitch of the companies behind them as you could see in the advertisements shown in the previous subchapter. In 1950, a British article was published that connected smoking with lung cancer. This is the year that smoking lost its innocence in Iceland. It proved to be a milestone in the Icelandic tobacco discussion as Níels Dungal became the first Icelander to point out the hazards of smoking. He did that by using the aforementioned British article. (Árni Einarsson &

Guðni R. Björnsson, 2001) Despite this, the media coverage changed very slowly in Iceland, possibly due to the advertisement money that the media received from the tobacco companies. Ben Bagdikian, a respected journalist, made this conclusion when it came to the Western markets. In other words, the media always reflects the interests of their advertisers as they finance it. (Alda Áskelsdóttir, 2009) The following advertisements from the sixties were seen in Icelandic news papers. They deal with the perception of cigarettes as they portray successful, beautiful people smoking cigarettes and living the high life. The text in one of the advertisements says: “Have a Camel, Camel makes every moment better”, suggesting that by smoking Camel cigarettes you can have that lifestyle as well. (Vísir, 1967)



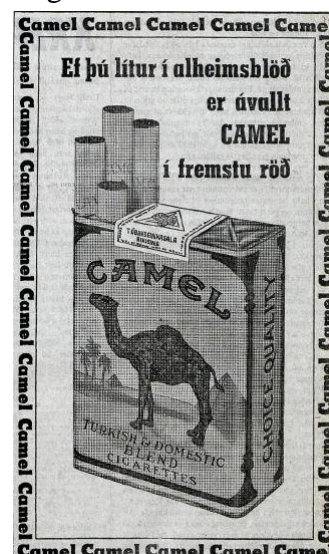
The man to the left looks like a successful actor and seems to be promoting the use of



Camel cigarettes as a way of reaching your dreams. The text in the advertisement says: “Camel filter, Camel regular, of course. Camel, Camel, Camel, Camel.”

(Frjáls Verzlun, 1968) On the right is another Camel advertisement saying: “If you read the world press, Camel is always the best.”

(Tíminn, 1970) Camel are distinctly claiming to have the best cigarettes. Their slogans are very catchy and their advertisements dominated the cigarette advertisements in the newspapers in the sixties.



Another popular cigarette brand in Iceland was Winston cigarettes. Once again it



portrays the happy, beautiful people smoking and enjoying life. Their advertisement says that their filter cigarettes are the highest selling in America; they are always available fresh from the U.S.A. “Try them today. Winston tastes good like a cigarette should!” (Tíminn, 1966)

“The Filter Pall Mall cigarettes came quietly onto the market from the U.S.A. They are already known throughout the world for their special and good flavour. Join the ride with Filter Pall Mall. The finest taste from the U.S.A.” (Morgunblaðið, 1970)



This next advertisement shows a well dressed man at, what seems to be, a bar, enjoying a Marlboro cigarette, looking confident. Behind him is a beautiful woman looking at him with admiration and desire. She, of course, is also smoking.



The text in the advertisement says: “Of course I smoke Marlboro.” (Frjáls Verslun, 1968) As seen in these advertisements, media coverage did not change until the Icelandic government intervened and in 1969 the first laws were passed to decrease smoking in Iceland. The law required a warning label to be visible on tobacco products, explaining

its hazards. Not long after these latest advertisements were published the ban on tobacco advertisements came into effect.

3.4 The impact on tobacco law development

Before 1950 cigarettes were not the main coverage of the articles published in Iceland but rather a part of stories being told in newspapers and other medias. The newspaper *Vísir* published, in 1945, an article that reflects this quite well. It tells the tale of how Icelanders prospered economically compared to other European nations. The prosperity was so great that Icelanders threw away their “precious” cigarettes without smoking them all which shocked the visiting travelers in Iceland. (*Vísir*, 1945) Another example of the media coverage at that time is an article published in *Morgunblaðið* in 1945. Again, the cigarette does not play the lead role of the story being told. It describes how Norwegian travelers were invited to a dinner party aboard the ship of Captain Bjarni. They were served Rock Ptarmigan and other delicious courses. After the dinner they were offered English cigarettes and Cuban cigars. The Norwegians had not had this luxury for many years. (*Morgunblaðið*, 1945) After the article published by Níels Dungal in 1950 where the hazards of smoking were pointed out, by a scholar for the first time in Iceland, the media coverage began to change. The articles began to focus on the hazards of smoking contrary to the coverage in the years before. The media coverage began to focus on the scientific approach to cigarettes and with time it was not a question of whether the cigarettes were hazardous or not but rather how hazardous they were. Media coverage went from being of an innocent and naive nature before Dungal's article, to questioning the hazards of smoking and finally headlines such as “Does your life disappear in a cloud of smoke?” (timarit.is,

“Líður ævi yðar burt í reyk?”,1964) and “Cigarettes kill at least one in every four middle aged men (timarit.is, “Sígarettur drepa a.m.k. fjórða hvern miðaldra mann”, 1971) became common in a matter of years which testifies to the changing media environment surrounding smoking. The message was that smoking was an expensive and hazardous joke. Cigarettes cause heart failures, cancer and are even described as being filthy. In the article *Reykingar eru dýrt spaug*, published in *Samvinnan* in 1957, one can see the initial prevention methods used against tobacco. The article calls for a different view on tobacco and its hazards.

(Samvinnan, 1957) More and more articles began to appear with the same message alongside the tobacco advertisements in newspapers. This changed media coverage had an impact on the society and the new tobacco prevention laws.

Iceland has been the leading nation when it comes to tobacco prevention. It was the first country to introduce laws on tobacco advertising that ban the advertising and promotion of tobacco in media and in public in 1971. These laws require ÁTVR (State Alcohol and Tobacco Company of Iceland) to use 0.2% of its brutto income to advertise the hazards of tobacco smoke on tv, on the radio, in newspapers, in cinemas and elsewhere. (Kristín Anna Ólafsdóttir, 2010) In 1972 a Committee of Tobacco Prevention was established by ÁTVR and operated for 5 years but the degree of activity depended on the amount of financial support. In 1977 the committee was abolished but a new one soon took its place but this time it was established by the Minister of Health. With these changes the government financially supported it in a direct way. The objectives of the new committee was to decide what kind of tobacco advertisements were to be banned in Iceland. Tobacco producers had up that point taken advantage of a loophole in the law that allowed them to advertise tobacco inside. So instead of putting the advertisement

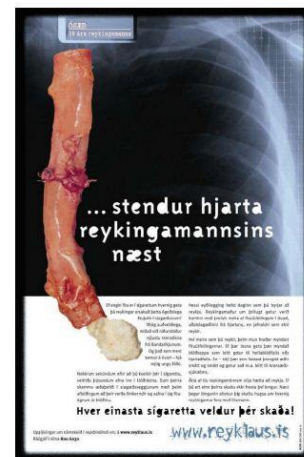
outside they placed advertisements in store windows facing outward. New laws were adopted with the purpose of preventing these kinds of actions. (Kristín Anna Ólafsdóttir, 2010) In 1984 the Act on the Prevention of the Use of Tobacco was passed with the objective of decreasing smoking and the health hazards it caused. It was to protect people from tobacco smoke (Alþingi, 1984). This had a major impact on the perception of smoking, effectively making smokers dangerous in the eyes of the law. The same law also banned smoking in commercial airlines, limited tobacco use in customer service based facilities, healthcare facilities, public schools, work places and in public transportation. It was made illegal to sell tobacco to people younger than 16 years of age. Regular information about the harmfulness of tobacco was implemented and 2% of tobacco sales were to be used for tobacco prevention information. (Þorgrímur Þráinsson, 2003) (Tóbak, 1998) In 1996 it was made illegal to sell tobacco to people under the age of 18. Information surrounding the quantities of tar and nicotine was made visible on cigarette packs. Fine cut snuff tobacco and all mouth tobacco was made illegal except for the Icelandic “ruddi” (Icelandic tobacco). Complete ban against smoking in schools and healthcare facilities was implemented and at least 0.7% of tobacco sales were to be used for tobacco prevention information. (Þorgrímur Þráinsson, 2003) (Tóbak, 1998) (Alþingi, 1996) The most important law since 1971, regarding the media and the impact it had on the perception of tobacco smoking, was passed in 2001. (Alþingi, 2001) The law banned positive media coverage surrounding tobacco and tobacco advertisement in shops. People under the age of 18 were not allowed to sell tobacco and stricter laws were implemented surrounding smoking in restaurants and coffee shops. 0.9% of tobacco sales were used for tobacco prevention information. (Þorgrímur Þráinsson, 2003) (Tóbak, 1998). The impact

of these laws, particularly the laws from 2001, can be seen in modern advertisements. Instead of promoting smoking the advertisements now became prevention campaigns. This ad to the left shows this in a very distinct way. It



portrays a brain that has suffered from a stroke caused by smoking and a child being used as an ashtray. The texts states: “A smoker who gets a stroke is no coincidence!” and “Smoking kills – little by little.” (Þorgrímur Þráinsson, 2003)

Another similar advertisement is the one surrounding a myocardial. The picture obviously displays a clog in the coronary artery, warning of the potential dangers of smoking. The text says: “Situating closest to the heart of a smoker”, suggesting that smoking will affect the hearts of smokers in a negative way and may lead to their death. (Þorgrímur Þráinsson, 2003)



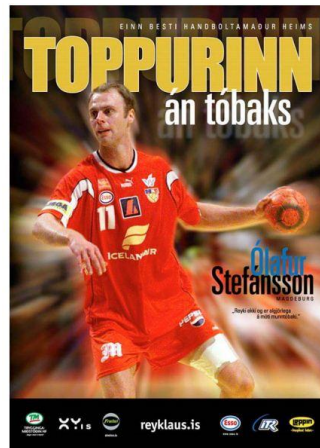
The advertisement shown on the right features the slogan “All you need is love”, made famous by John Lennon from the Beatles. In fact, the advertisement portrays a bullet with John Lennon’s date of death below and a cigarette with George Harrison’s date of death, another member of the Beatles. The text describes the untimely death of John Lennon which was hard to predict and therefore impossible to prevent. The death of George Harrison on the other hand was caused by



smoking and in his own words he says: “The cigarettes are killing me.”(Þorgrímur Þráinsson, 2003

Probably, the two most influential Icelandic athletes are Eiður Smári Guðjónsen and Ólafur Stefánsson. These advertisements show them at their best claiming that you can reach the top without tobacco. (Þorgrímur Þráinsson, 2003)

Despite these domestic anti-smoking advertisements the perception has continued to change with the entry of foreign movies, which increased, in Iceland with the Americanization. Hollywood and



the heroes they portray always had, and continue to have, a major impact on the Icelandic society. Therefore the image of smokers shown in the American movies is copied by some of the Icelandic people and subsequently it has an impact on the public's perception of smoking. An indication of how cigarettes are prominent in movies is shown in a study conducted by the University of California, San Francisco.

It showed that in every other movie that premiered between 1990 and 1995 prominent characters smoked cigarettes. (Morgunblaðið, 1997) What is astonishing in this study is that contrary to what one would expect, if compared to developments in other areas, this ratio has not decreased, but is becoming more prominent (Morgunblaðið, 1997)



Christopher Moltisanti from the Sopranos
ratio has not decreased, but is becoming more prominent (Morgunblaðið, 1997)

Hollywood movies had, and still have, a great influence on a worldwide basis and especially in Iceland where cinema attendance is higher than in many other countries.

A vast majority of movies shown on television and in cinemas in Iceland are from Hollywood. As Trevor Haché explains in his paper *Smoking in the Movies* “film directors and script writers portray movie stars lighting up to imply a variety of desirable traits, such as being rebellious and cool. Cigarette placement in movies creates a desired association between the sex appeal and charisma of the star who is smoking and the cigarette being smoked.” (Haché, 2010) In an interview with *Morgunblaðið*, Þorgrímur Þráinsson, former Director of the Tobacco Control Committee, said that “The [movie] stars are purchased to smoke, as well as the production companies, to make smoking visible. Young people worship these stars and famous people become their role models.” (Morgunblaðið, 1997) This can, of course, be found in Icelandic movies as well. Movies such as *Rokland*, *Mýrin*, *Djöflaeyjan*, *101 Reykjavík*, *Reykjavík Rotterdam* etc. are examples of this.

Hollywood movies do dominate the Icelandic market and therefore have a much bigger impact. Perhaps the Hollywood community is protesting against the anti-smoking campaign in their own way. This campaign may thus have the opposite effect in Hollywood and therefore also on the Icelandic people. The risk is that the protests become stronger and more intense, cigarettes become more attractive; smoking becomes a symbol of rebellion against authority and hostility towards prohibitions. It is fashionable to smoke in movies but it is also a sign of that you will not be told what to do, you do what you want. "It may well be that smoking in movies is a sign of a certain rebellion. Young people want to grow up quickly."

(Morgunblaðið, 1997) To further portray the changing image of smoking, *Chest*, the official publication of American College of Chest Physicians, created a study in

which they concluded, after analyzing five main protagonists in 447 popular movies between 1990 and 2005, that smoking in movies had gone from being part of an impressive lifestyle to becoming yet another bad trait of the antagonist. In fact, one out of three antagonists in the movies smoked. (Omidvari, Lessnau, Kim, Mercante, Weinacker & Mason, 2005) (Haché, 2010)

3.5 Voices of criticism

If taken a look at the laws described earlier in this essay there are clues that indicate a certain influence that these laws have had on the perception of smoking. The voices of criticism, however, call for a different perspective that does not necessarily mirror the general image of the public but is nonetheless important to reflect upon. The general criticism has to do with the third paragraph of Article 7 in the tobacco laws. It states that media is not allowed to write or talk about tobacco unless it clearly informs about its dangerous effects. (Alþingi, 2003) If the media does not follow this law it can be fined or the journalist in question may face imprisonment. (Alþingi, 2001) Accordingly, the media can not cover the subject in an objective way and therefore it does not mirror the smoker or the perception of the smoker. Furthermore, it is important to examine what the constitution says about freedom of speech, as well as what the many voices of criticism have to say and compare that to the laws just mentioned. Björg Thorarensen, professor of law at the University of Iceland, says the tobacco laws go too far when it comes to the Freedom of Speech Act in the constitution. She compares the third paragraph of Article 7 to the laws of racism but says that the arguments for those laws are more compelling. (Árni Helgason, 2006) A legal

committee on behalf of the Icelandic Bar Association was given the task to oversee Act no. 101/1996 on tobacco prevention. The committee concludes that the facts given in the Act in regards to the harmfulness of tobacco, the public's position on it, experience from other nations and the development of this matter elsewhere, could be true and built on reliable sources. In the committee's opinion the problem is that in the Act there is mention of some researches and polls but no account given as to how they were conducted or from whom. There is no mentioning in the Act or in its attachments of how the research was conducted or what the questionnaire looked like. It can only be concluded that the authorities are supposed to trust the sources of the Tobacco Control Committee as proof of the conducted research and polls, even though the authorities were not given any information on who conducted the researches or how they were conducted.

(Tobacco Control Committee, 2001)

Steindór J. Erlingsson, doctor in history of science, compares the tobacco laws to the idea of freedom of speech according to the book *On Liberty* by John Stuart Mill. Mill came to the conclusion that if „men only had two choices, it was much more important to protect the atheism against disgraceful attacks than religion itself and in these matters the government should not interfere”. Erlingsson goes on to say that „today we are not allowed to doubt the existence of God in open discussions, the words of Mill still apply today if God is replaced in the third paragraph of Act 7 in the tobacco laws that forbid any kind of discussion in the media about tobacco if not to warn about the dangers of the substance.” (Steindór J. Erlingsson, 2002) Erlingsson goes on and says that if we don't remove the third paragraph as soon as possible then one might wonder what comes next. „Maybe the discussion of alcohol, tanning booths or anything else that shortens our lives

and increases the cost of the healthcare system.” (Steindór J. Erlingsson, 2002)

One should keep in mind that Dr. Erlingsson wrote these contemplations in 2002 and since then tanning salons have an 18 year old age limit and the ban of alcohol commercial is being discussed in the Althingi and is likely to become reality.

„One thing is for sure, every single member of parliament was guilty of incredible disrespect when it comes to freedom of speech when they passed these laws and it would be good for them to read *On Liberty* to see how hard our ancestors had to fight for freedom of speech, a thing we take for granted today”. (Steindór J. Erlingsson, 2002)

Another Icelandic scholar, Guðmundur Heiðar Frímansson, also comments on these laws using the theories of Immanuel Kant, professor of philosophy, who wrote the essay *Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?* in 1784 in which he deals with the question of enlightenment and its importance. Enlightenment, or information, in his definition, involves breaking out of the shackles of dependence, which is the inability to use their own understanding without the guidance of others. (Guðmundur Heiðar Frímansson, 2004) In the essay it is clear that Kant is not denying that laws can limit the official use of rational thinking. That does not mean, on the other hand, that governments have the authority to influence opinionmaking, limit information or forever bind arrangements. No government has the right to do that. (Guðmundur Heiðar Frímansson, 2004)

An entertaining and satiric conflict shown in the media a few months before the laws entered into force in 2001 when Jón Steinar Gunnlaugsson, supreme court judge, and Haraldur Blöndal, attorney, wrote in Morgunblaðið, the biggest newspaper in Iceland at that time, articles about their view on smoking. Jón Steinar wrote about the pleasures of smoking and how he could not advice

against it. Haraldur Blöndal replied a few days later in the same newspaper in a similar way: the difference being that he loved Camel but Jón Steinar loved Winston light. (Jón Steinar Gunnlaugsson, 2001) (Haraldur Blöndal, 2001)

If read between the lines one can sense the satire, irony and how they were taking the opportunity to write positively about smoking before it would be made illegal. In the end, Haraldur Blöndal states that smoking will only increase and grow in popularity with the new law. (Haraldur Blöndal, 2001)

It is vastly important to look at these matters from multiple points of view in order to remain objective. Despite the governments actions and how it has changed the media coverage on smoking dramatically it has not had the same impact on all media. Smoking is still very much a part of society and the media today despite the current laws. Look around and you'll see it everywhere.

Conclusions

Tobacco arrived rather late in Iceland, but since its arrival Icelanders have taken tobacco well and it has been popular ever since. Despite this, it has always been met with a certain degree of criticism. Cigarettes were not well known in Iceland until the early 20th century and with the arrival of the military occupation its consumption grew substantially. The Icelandic society went through many changes following the occupation and the Icelandic culture changed greatly. Since then, the attitude and image of cigarettes has changed quite a bit. It was considered a sign of elegance and a certain status symbol for a long time, the soldiers were looked up to and that of course helped change the image of smoking as well as movies from America that were very popular, as they are today. These changes are well visible in newspaper advertising and are the most

apparent changes when it comes to the attitude towards smoking over the past three decades. Laws prohibiting the advertisement of tobacco, Tobacco Control, powerful tobacco prevention campaigns and increased discussion and awareness of the hazards of smoking has had an impact in that it is not considered as cool as before and, subsequently, it is not as common. Despite the governments struggle to contribute in changing the image of the cigarette as well as changing the society with laws and prohibitions, and draw a negative image of smoking, it has not yielded perfect results. Despite not being able to discuss tobacco, without warning about its dangers, the media has failed to get rid of it entirely from all mediums. Some still promote a different image of smoking. They are still a sign of an antagonist image and many viewers still want to be like their idols on the silver screen. It is, after all, not the role of movies to be preventive against smoking.

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