Negative social cues on tobacco packaging may help smokers quit

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New research published in the *Journal of Consumer Affairs* suggests that tobacco packaging that reminds smokers that broad societal 'others' disapprove of the activity can trigger feelings of self-consciousness,

which in turn reduces smoking intentions. This approach was particularly effective in 'isolated' smokers who did not see smoking as identity-relevant or congruent with their social self.

The study involved an online experiment with a panel of 156 American adult smokers, who were randomly assigned to view one of two tobacco packages, which included the same tagline ("this is how people look at smokers") but portrayed different images. Specifically, packages featured black and white photographs of the same individuals either displaying neutral or disgusted expressions.

"Tobacco denormalization strategies such as workplace and social setting bans have used social pressure as a means of discouraging smoking. Our early research suggests that tobacco packaging itself may be another tool by which to exert similar pressure, especially in those smokers already sensitive to smoking stigma," said co-author Dr. Jennifer Jeffrey of King's University College at Western University, in Canada.