Author's response to reviews

Title: The Virtual Supermarket: An Innovative Research Tool to Study Consumer Behaviour

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Author's response to reviews: see over
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Dear Miss Pafitis, dear Editor,

Hereby we would like to resubmit our manuscript entitled ‘The Virtual Supermarket: An Innovative Research Tool to Study Consumer Behaviour’ to BMC Public Health.

We thank you very much for considering our manuscript for publication. We have tried to process all the requested changes as good as possible. Below, we will provide a point-by-point description of the changes made. Also, the changes are highlighted in the manuscript.

- Availability software: We confirm that the software is freely available for academic use. We have added a wide range of log on codes into the ‘availability and requirements’ section of the manuscript. The revised text is as follows: “The application can be obtained for free for academic purposes. If people wish to view the front-end of Virtual Supermarket, they require a personal code. For this purpose a number within the range A670 – A1000 can be used (for example A801).” This text has also been changed in the abstract. The URL which gives access to the software was already provided in the manuscript.

- Pilot study: It is a good point that we should elaborate on the pilot study. We have added a table describing participant characteristics and a table describing the results. Also, we included a separate Methods and Results section within the pilot study paragraph, elaborating on participant recruitment and data collection, for example: “Participants were recruited through local and national newspapers, the Amsterdam public library, and community centers in Amsterdam. Inclusion criteria were that people had to be eighteen years of age or older, being familiar with the Dutch language, and running their own household.”

- Conflict of interest: You are right that one of the authors is affiliated with a private company. Still, this company works on a non-profit base. We added a comment on this in the Implementation section (where the company is first named) and in the Conflict of Interest section, stating: “One of the authors (MS) is affiliated to SARA Computing and Networking Services Amsterdam, the company that collaborated in developing the Virtual Supermarket. SARA is the Dutch National High Performance Computing and e-Science Support Centre, and the Dutch supernode in the international Science Grid. SARA is a private company, but collaborates with the VU University Amsterdam on a non-profit base.”
We hope that you approve the changes made and that our manuscript is now acceptable for publication. We are open to any other requests or remarks.

We are looking forward to your response.

With best wishes,

Wilma Waterlander
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Ingrid Steenhuis