Reviewer's report

Title: Why California retailers stop selling tobacco products, and what their customers and employees think about it when they do: case studies

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Reviewer: Becky Freeman

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This is important research as supply side policy issues in tobacco control are not as well explored in academic literature as demand side policies. This paper helps tobacco control stakeholders better understand how both voluntary and mandated retail sales restrictions can contribute to decreasing tobacco use.

Given the case study approach and exploratory nature of the research, the recruitment process for obtaining participants was appropriate. Both the focus group and interview methods are sound.

Results: Presented in a straightforward and easy to read summary. What is meant by a “high velocity” product? Unfamiliar with this term?

Limitations acknowledged and addressed.

The discussion seem a little bit thin to me – can you explore the issue raised in the results of it being easier on employees to just not sell tobacco? This seems an important argument particularly when retail associations often balk at additional tobacco control regulations in store as making it “too hard” on employees to sell tobacco smoothly and efficiently – how can tobacco advocates reframe this argument to induce grocery stores to no longer sell products?

The reoccurring frame of health and positive marketing should be explored in more depth too – marketing opportunities for grocery stores in particular through earned media – much cheaper than purchasing ad space - possibility of attracting the majority of people and who don’t smoke – even in poor neighbourhoods this is true.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests