Reviewer's report

Title: Lessons for public health from analysing commercial food marketing success factors: a case study

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Reviewer: Carolyn Dimitri

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Major Revisions

I generally have a positive attitude to this type of work, because I believe that big food companies are largely responsible for declines in public health. So I was surprised by this paper - and my concerns (I think) arise because I can't follow the main thread of the paper. It seems to me that the authors are discussing how to effectively market food products. But public health is mentioned repeatedly, so I am wondering what I missed. Perhaps more information about the eatwell project would have been helpful to me. What exactly is social marketing? How does it relate to the private marketing you discuss in the paper? In a way, the paper reads like a pro-big business article: their successful strategies are highlighted, and the companies suggest some of the case studies.

What is the link to public health? Can you measure impact of the health claim-based marketing on consumer health? (Ok I know that is really hard to do, but I think it deserves some mention).

Are the products really better for human health? What about future human health, through environmental quality? One could argue that drinkable yogurt is a high sugar, costly product with a lot of excess packaging. Should we eat 2 bowls of special k a day??

For me to be supportive of publishing this paper in a public health journal, I would need to see some evidence that its focus is not successful marketing (and enhanced corporate profits), but is about public health (and improved consumer health). I think you can revise this paper, but I am not sure that the cluster analysis you present is sufficient to support this line of research. Another possible outlet would be a food marketing journal.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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.