Author's response to reviews

Title: The availability of snack food displays that may trigger impulse purchases in Melbourne supermarkets

Authors:

Lukar E Thornton (lukar.thornton@deakin.edu.au)
Adrian J Cameron (adrian.cameron@deakin.edu.au)
Sarah A McNaughton (sarah.mcnaughton@deakin.edu.au)
Anthony Worsley (anthony.worsley@deakin.edu.au)
David A Crawford (david.crawford@deakin.edu.au)

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

RE: Minor revisions - The availability of snack food displays that may trigger impulse purchases in Melbourne supermarkets

Please find attached a revised copy of our manuscript for publication in the BMC Public Health. Changes made as a result of the reviews received on the 7th of February, 2012 are outlined on the following pages and highlighted in the revised version of the manuscript.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Lukar Thornton

Centre for Physical Activity and Nutrition Research
School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences,
Deakin University
221 Burwood Highway, Burwood, Victoria, 3125
Australia
Reviewer 1.

Minor essential revisions

1. On a couple of occasions the term 'soft drink' is used, when it should be 'soft drinks', e.g. P5 in the last paragraph of the background section, and P9 in the paragraph headed 'End-of-aisle displays'.

   Changes made.

2. In the paragraph entitled 'Island displays' in the methods section, please add 'and' into the first sentence so that it reads 'Island bin displays are temporary displays within the store that often change AND are often used...'

   Changes made.

3. In the section sentence of the discussion, I suggest swapping the two points around so that the sentence reads 'Such displays increase the frequency in a shopping trip that supermarket customers are exposed to snack foods within Melbourne supermarkets and are designed to increase impulse-driven purchases'. I think this would improve the flow.

   Change made.

4. In the first sentence of the last paragraph of the discussion, it should be '...AN audit tool'.

   Change made.

5. Further down in the same paragraph, there is an extra 'an' that needs removing from the sentence that starts 'Further, a previous study from the US...'.

   Change made.

6. In the same sentence as the previous point, there should be an apostrophe after stores i.e. 'stores' usual stocking practices'.

   Change made.

7. In the last sentence of the discussion, 'beverages' should be amended to 'beverage' to read '...food and beverage types'.

   Change made.
Discretionary Revisions

1. With regard to the statement in the background section that snack food displays at checkouts are where retailers attempt to sell items likely to be purchased on impulse, it might be useful here to offer some data on the impulse purchasing rates at such locations if any exist? E.g. a study has shown that X% of consumers purchase a snack item from this location on impulse, just to give some indication of the scale of the issue.

   We are unaware of any recent publications that report this.

2. Perhaps a further minor limitation of the study could be noted; namely that the extent of snack food displays in the actual aisles were not included in the analyses? Perhaps this differed between the various locations, even if the displays in the more impulse purchase-based locations that were the focus of the study didn't?

   To some extent the 1st paragraph on page 13 notes this with reference to a second paper under review exploring this very issue in more detail.

   “By including supermarkets from least and most socioeconomically disadvantaged neighbourhoods, we were able to account for whether the displays were socioeconomically patterned however we found no evidence of this. One plausible explanation is that the nature of the displays presented in this study are more likely to be dictated by other market forces such as promotions by snack food companies and that any variation by area-level disadvantage is more likely to be observed in the regular aisle displays (Cameron et al. Submitted for publication).”

Reviewer 2

1. Overall, this is an interesting, original and well written paper. Within the abstract the background could be reduced and the auditing methods expanded and perhaps the results could rely less on descriptive statistics. The background / introduction is concise. The methods and result are straight forward. It would have been useful to explore some of the SES differences more in the results if any had been found – pity the sample did not allow that. This could be commented on more.

   As per the previous reviewer comment above, a deeper discussion on SES differences that relates to aisle displays is reported in a second paper currently under review.