Reviewer's report

Title: Cleavages and co-operation in the UK alcohol industry: a qualitative study

Version: 1 Date: 24 February 2012

Reviewer: David Jernigan

Reviewer's report:

This study is an important contribution to an as yet small field. It is not without flaws but the flaws pale in comparison to the significance of the enterprise, which is doing research to deepen the understanding in public health and public policy circles of how the alcoholic beverage industry operates as a political entity.

Major compulsory revisions: none

Minor essential revisions:

1. The discussion of minimum pricing debates in Scotland and Westminster is now seriously out of date. The mention of it here needs to be more specifically historically grounded, so that it does not present itself as the latest on this issue, but rather as the specific historical background against which the interviews were done.

2. p. 21 - Drinkaware needs to be described in more detail, particularly since it is an alliance between two of the key opposing constituencies described in the paper: supermarket chains and alcohol producers.

Discretionary revisions:

3. The methods section promises analysis of the interviews on a thematic basic, yet themes are not presented in any way in the rest of the paper. Perhaps add a sentence or two about what key themes were, and then clarify that this paper will focus on the themes of intra-industry collaboration and conflict?

4. The conclusion trails off a bit without offering the promised implications for public health. Were there any comments from the interviews with civil society about taking advantage of the cleavages in the industry that could be useful to share? Alternately, do the authors have suggestions about how the cleavages could work to public health advantage, or what other implications there might be for public health audiences, beyond just understanding that this industry is diverse and struggles to speak in a single voice in policy debates?

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 have no competing interests to report.