Reviewer's report

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

Version: 1 Date: 27 February 2012

Reviewer: Norman Giesbrecht

Reviewer's report:

This is a timely paper and is clearly written. My comments follow.

Major revisions:

I thought the methods section would benefit from elaboration. The authors are encouraged to indicate the following: script used to 'sell' the project to potential respondents; was a consent form used, if so please indicate the main message in it; or attach it: provide an overview of response pattern, how many were contacted, did not respond, refused, completed, and did those who did not respond or refused come mainly from some sectors; of the 35 interviews what is the breakdown by sector - producer, trade, retailer, members of parliament, civil servants, etc. What were the key questions that were asked of each respondent?

The focus of the paper is on the UK alcohol industry. Should not the interviews with non-industry respondents be analyzed separately as a sub-set of the 35?

Presentation of results. I would prefer to have the results presented first then discussion of them.

Also, the results might be organized along a few policy themes rather than by type of organization.

The authors should consider adding a descriptive table. Column one would list sectors of the industry: producers, on-trade retailers, off-trade retailers, trade organizations; a heading of the second column would be policy topic(s) such as minimum pricing, etc., a final column being which sectors tend to collaborate or not on which topics. The cells for the second column would have brief text about the main perspectives of each sector on the policy topic. The cells of the third column would provide a comment on collaboration or agreement on specific policies.

The paper would benefit from a discussion of several themes: How the various sectors of the industry differ on what type data they use or reject to strengthen their case? What are the implications of this research for public health and safety experts who wish to reduce alcohol-related harm and damage? In general, is the UK alcohol industry seriously interested in reducing alcohol-related harm in the UK?

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