Reviewer's report

Title: Measuring Perceived Effects of Drinking an Extract of Basidiomycetes Agaricus blazei Murill: A Survey of Japanese Consumers with Cancer

Version: 1 Date: 15 May 2007
Reviewer: Wim Verbeke

Reviewer's report:

General

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Methods: the major weakness relates to the fact that perceived effects have been measured on a three point scale with anchor points “better”, “worse” and “about the same”. Strictly this is a categorical scale, not an interval scale. Hence, the scale properties do neither allow performing factor analysis techniques, nor the computation and comparison of mean scores (t-tests and ANOVA) from this categorical scale. The scale properties do allow testing for association, e.g. using chi-square test statistics or using non-parametric tests. This has important implications for the analyses and presentation of findings, which should be given due consideration.

Discussion: second paragraph: appropriate references are needed with the statements that include reference to “previous studies …” and “Like others ..”.

Table titles should be made more informative and include also the sample size to which the findings apply, and when relevant, the measurement units; e.g. The title “Table 3. Help from Sen-Sei-Ro” is not informative the way it stands.

Table 5: results (e.g. mean values and statistical tests; see comments on Methods)

Typos: page 10 “Europe”; page 12 twice “on”.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Abstract: conclusions section: change “favorable effects” into “perceived favorable effects”; write CAM in full, this abbreviation may not be common knowledge for all future readers of the abstract.

Introduction: change sentence about how long the product has been manufactured and marketed in Japan; change “for the last 12 years” into concrete information such as “since 19xx”.

Results: second paragraph; replace “of these consumers” by “of the respondents”, or “of the participants”; The section about positive and negative effects should be revised (in line with the comments made before related to the measurement scale properties).

Conclusions: same remark as for abstract: change “favorable effects” into “perceived favorable effects”.

Table 4 and perceived effect items: explain the difference in meaning between “maintained or gained weight” and “lost weight”; it is logical that these items load with opposite signs on the same dimension; please clarify.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.