Reviewer's report

Title: An Interpretive Study of Food, Beverage and Snack Advertisements in Rural and Urban El Salvador

Version: 2
Date: 23 February 2015
Reviewer: Teresa Davis

Reviewer's report:

This is a very interesting study of nutrition transition in a transitional economy. It uses good qualitative data to provide results that would inform policy direction.

Some key/major points that need to be revised:

The research question, is rather generally stated 'rural vs urban' 'how advertisements interact with nutrition transition' are both mentioned. However it is not clear what the question exactly is. While it is interesting in and of itself that the data captures 'in process' of nutrition transition, I think this part of the paper needs further clarification. If it is a 'exploration of the advertising of food in the moment of nutritional transition' this should be clearly stated.

The data is very rich and very interesting. It offers the potential for a deeper visual discourse analytical potential which I think is not fully realised. I would suggest the authors look at Gillian Rose's 'Visual Methodologies: an introduction to the interpretation of visual materials' 3rd edition (2011). The data is genuine and authentic, and very interesting, I just think it could be 'unpacked' a little more. The themes identified, while useful are sometimes confusing. For example while you identify the 'modern theme' as one that is 'urban' rather than rural, there are clearly modern themes within the rural images as well (photos 6 and 7). I think you could build upon this overall 'modernity' theme as well as the 'cheapness if these foods' as the key themes driving the nutrition transition. In the work by Pechy and Ulijaszek (2012) economic data shows a rise in population level obesity rates with changes in type of government and economic policy/ideology.. This is a strong explanation for your data. You refer to the effects of CAFTA as one of the reasons for the fact that coke is cheaper than water. This is an extraordinary fact, processed, unhealthy foods are cheaper than clean drinking water, because of unequal trade agreements between the US and Central American governments. It would make a much more 'macro' level explanation for your data. Also if possible look at the increase in visual advertising in public places since CAFTA came into place?

Overall a well written paper, with interesting data which has great potential. The abstract is well written and past work is appropriately cited.

Some minor points that need to be fixed up:

The statement about the 'triple burden' ...of food in high income economies
could be supported with a reference.

"Today, high income countries are as likely to experience the triple burden of malnutrition – underweight, overweight and micro-nutrient deficiencies – as low income countries"

Similarly, the statements about the working poor could be better supported with a reference.

"What is new about the hunger statistics in high income countries is the presence of large numbers of ‘working poor’: those who are formally engaged in the labour market but whose incomes do not resemble a living wage. The data from Food Banks in Australia, Canada and the UK provide the evidence here"

Section on labour market practices and effect on food, may be useful to bring in the examples of 'King Korn' the story of corn syrup in the industrialised US food chain.

Overall the paper needs revision in line with more I depth visual analysis and some macro level theoretical framing, but interesting work and great data.


Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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'