Reviewer's report

Title: Do consumers ‘Get the facts’? A survey of alcohol warning label recognition in Australia

Version: 2 Date: 26 June 2015

Reviewer: Niamh Fitzgerald

Reviewer's report:

Many thanks for the opportunity to review this interesting paper. I believe the article needs some clarification and explanation in some places and a rigorous overall edit for conciseness, readability and improved English.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Please clarify if and how the survey was tested for face and content validity (e.g. using piloting or cognitive interviews). If not done so, please note as a limitation and/or defend.

2. The order of questions relies on participants spontaneously recalling the labels prior to being shown them. Please clarify if there was anything stopping them clicking forward to see the labels before answering the first question. Please also clarify if the same individual could have completed the survey more than once.

3. Please clarify who the ‘online research panel’ were, by whom, how and why they were originally recruited and comment on any bias this may have introduced. To what extent are they representative of other consumers (who are not online, or not likely to sign up to an online panel) and/or different in respect of aspects that may not have been weighted?

4. In line 194, it is stated the ‘overall awareness could not be calculated’ but since that measure has been defined as the combination of those freely recalling with those who recognised the label, then there is no reason why this cannot be calculated – it is simply the same as the figure for those who recognised the label.

5. Line 331 implies that the DrinkWise website could be a useful vehicle for provision of evidence-based ‘advice’. This is in conflict with the direct interests of the funders of the DrinkWise website and many scientists have argued that it illustrates a fundamental and irreconcilable conflict of interest. The authors should acknowledge this and reconsider their statements. E.g. http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/add.12356/abstract and references cited therein.

6. The authors should present and critique the use of ‘warning labels’ and public awareness websites (even if not industry sponsored) in the context of effective alcohol policy more widely, in the introduction and in the discussion.

Minor Essential Revisions
7. The article needs a rigorous overall edit for conciseness, readability and improved English. The results section does not appear to be structured efficiently and is long; it would be benefit from the use of bulleted lists. The discussion section repeats many of the results, instead of broadly summarising them. The current paper gives the impression of being unnecessarily long.

8. Other specific revisions noticed (this is not exhaustive, others will likely be picked up by a rigorous edit):

8.1. Line 63 – restructure, I am assuming that the consumption is at least once a month, not the accident/injury.

8.2. Line 64 – remove the word ‘do’

8.3. Line 66 – sentence starting ‘Recommendation’ restructure as the second clause is unclear

8.4. Line 69 – see point 6 above – this sentence should be caveated with a statement of the limitations of warning labels in the context of alcohol policy more broadly.

8.5. Line 74 ‘aide’ should be ‘aid’

8.6. Line 83 – clarify what recommendations are meant here (not just in reference)

8.7. Line 87 – ‘in conjunction with’ not ‘to’

8.8. Line 101 – should be ‘free recall of the warnings’

8.9. Line 102 – remove the word ‘approximately’

8.10. Line 118 – remove ‘the’ at the beginning of the line

8.11. Line 194 – should be Due to

8.12. Line 228 – remove the word ‘only’ – to save judgement for the discussion.

8.13. Line 262 – The summary sentence starting with ‘Gender…’ does not tell us anything about the direction of the associations and so is not helpful.

8.14. Line 271 – did the studies cited here use the same methods, if not, please caveat this.

8.15. Line 278 to end of paragraph – this could be better written – especially the last sentence.

8.16. Line 289 – it is unclear how drink responsibly messages enable young people to make these selections – do they only appear on the cheapest or strongest alcohol? Please clarify if you mean that standard drink information enables these selections.

8.17. Line 308 – ‘beforehand’ – clarify - before what – before going out?

8.18. Line 320 – this is vague – how exactly would this be in line? Clarify what you are proposing in licensed venues? It is ‘labels’ or signs or posters of some sort?

8.19. Line 328 – what is meant by ‘promotional strategies of the web address’. Please be careful to clarify if you are suggesting that the industry-sponsored
DrinkWise website should be promoted more? Or an independent awareness website?
The author can be trusted to make these. For example, missing labels on figures, the wrong use of a term, spelling mistakes.

Discretionary Revisions

9. The distinction between ‘recall’ and ‘recognition’ takes a while for the reader to understand – it might be helped if you used the term ‘spontaneous recall’, or perhaps ‘spontaneous recall’ and ‘prompted recall’.
10. Additional imagery showing the labels in question would make the article easier to read and interpret.
11. In the ‘Measures’ section - would it make more sense to list the ‘measures’ in a table e.g. with questions and response options?
12. Line 220 – it feels here like you are reporting on all significant associations rather than on planned analyses. It would be worth thinking about the number of analyses and whether some of the associations that are significant arise by chance just because of the large number of analyses conducted.
13. Line 334 – what evidence-based strategies should appear on a website? If they appeared on DrinkWise would that mean it was okay to direct people to an industry-sponsored website?
14. Line 358 – I would suggest not repeating the results in the conclusion.

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

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.