Author’s response to reviews

Title: Alcohol consumers' attention to warning labels and brand information on alcohol packaging: Findings from cross-sectional and experimental studies

Authors:

Inge Kersbergen (iker@liv.ac.uk)

Matt Field (mfield@liv.ac.uk)

Version: 1 Date: 14 Dec 2016

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December 2016

RE: PUBH-D-16-01890 Alcohol consumers' attention to warning labels and brand information on alcohol packaging: Findings from cross-sectional and experimental studies

Dear Dr Pafitis,

Thank you for providing detailed feedback on our manuscript. We are grateful for the constructive comments from you and the reviewers. We believe that we have been able to significantly improve the paper by taking their comments into consideration.

We hope you will agree that we have been responsive to the points raised during the first round of reviews, and that you will give our manuscript further consideration for publication in BMC Public Health.

Sincerely,

Inge Kersbergen

Reviewer 1

Methods Section

- Provide additional information on the AUDIT score, e.g., what is range of score so reader has an understanding of what 10.67 means - is this good or bad?

This information has now been provided (p7-8, row152-158).
- Provide information on how subjects were recruited

This has now been included (p5, row100-101, and p13, row283-284)

- Provide information on how the instruments were tested

All questionnaires were administered on a computer. This has now been indicated on p9, row193.

- Was a power analysis conducted?

We did not conduct a power analysis. The sample size in study 1 was based on previous research by Fulton et al 2007 (N = 63), who analysed attention to warning labels in alcohol print advertising. This has now been included on p5, row101-102.

- Page 7, describe the scales for readers unfamiliar with these scales. What are psychometric properties of the scales - has their validity and/or reliability been tested?

We have provided a description of the scales and their psychometric properties on p7-9, row152-189.

- page 13 - what do you mean by a bogus memory task

A bogus memory task is a task that is only included to make participants believe that we measured memory, without it being an actual memory test. We have clarified this now on p15, row335-336.

- page 13 - what color was the brightly colored border?

Yellow. This has now been included (p14, row320)

- page 14 - the 9% inaccurate tracking - is that good or bad, what is usually expected?

This percentage is to be expected. For example, previous research on visual attention to tobacco warning labels has excluded 8% of eye tracking data (Maynard et al 2013) and 14% of eye tracking data (Sussenbach et al 2013). This information has been included on p10, row215-217.

- Discussion - page 16, lacks comparison to existing research, suggesting expanding discussion to address this omission

We have now expanded the discussion

- page 17, row 389, in order to increase their effectiveness - explain in what way -page 17, row 393- describe in what way might be more effective

This has now been discussed (p19)
- page 18, conclusion - you say that changes in warning label design and content are advised - what types of changes, is this realistic, how would this be operationalized?

We cannot make specific recommendations about design and content, as we did not study how design changes might affect attention allocation. Additionally, we feel that recommendations regarding the operationalization of such changes would be outside the scope of this manuscript.

Reviewer 2

General Comments:

1. The labels your participants were exposed to appeared to be mostly wine and soda. Did you assess whether or not the participants already knew the brands and these labels? This may have affected the outcome of this experiment.

   We included photos of a wide range of alcoholic drinks and the manuscript now reflects this (p6, row113-116). We did not measure whether participants were familiar with the specific brands that we included, this has now been discussed as a limitation (p19-20, row448-455).

2. Brand preference may also affect their motivation to pay (or not pay) attention to labels. Did you consider this?

   It is possible that participants would be more motivated to attend to the branding on labels of brands they preferred. However, in this study, we showed each product by itself, so there was no competition for attention between brands. Additionally, everyone had to view each product for exactly 15 seconds, so participants could not decide to view the product for a shorter amount of time if they did not prefer the brand. We have included this in the discussion (p19-20, row448-455).

3. If you measured only wine, then 'alcohol' may not be appropriate in your title.

   We measured a range of drinks, which has now been stated on p6, row113-116

Major Revision:

1. Your background is narrow because it lacked relevant citations. You need to broaden your literature on alcohol warning labels, responsible drinking message/labels and the politics behind these concepts.

   We have broadened the introduction (p4)

2. In as much as it depends on what the editor decides, I think that your discussion of study 1 (without doing the same with study 2) before a general discussion is repetitive. You need to merge the two, especially because you repeated what has been said earlier in study 1.
We have merged the discussions.

Minor revision:

Page 4- You omitted heading: 'Background'

Fixed

Page 4, lines 62-63- warning labels have limited…. (see Stockwell, 2006, for an overview). This reference is neither numbered nor cited according to the BMC Public Health's guideline.

Fixed

Page 4, reference number 2 is missing.

Fixed

Page 6, line 109 reads: Most warning labels… Why "most" and not all? What is the reason for selecting the labels with(out) features that are in compliance with UK's specification? This requires more details.

We used a sample of alcohol products whose labels varied in size and visual characteristics. We included labels that did not comply with the responsibility deal as this is representative of current practise (see Petticrew et al 2016). This has now been included in the manuscript, p6 row127-129.

Discussion: (study 1)

Page 10, lines 219-222- Some recent research suggests that...[15]. You cited only one source. Cite more recent studies with international outlook. For example:

Simone Pettigrew et.at (2016). Reverse engineering a 'responsible drinking' campaign to assess strategic intent.


We now include more sources to support this statement (p18, row420)


Stautz et al.'s paper, which is conspicuously missing in your manuscript, should not, especially because of its methodology.
This has now been included in the discussion (p19, row434-439).

Study 2:

Page 12, line 259… "We used the same stimuli and questionnaire…" Then why separating the discussion?

We now combine the discussions.

Page 12, line 268- Elliott & Ainsworth, 2012 is not cited properly.

This has now been fixed

General Discussion

Page 16, line 377-8- A possible explanation is….due to current design. Although this may be true, you need to support your assertion by citing relevant sources.

This has now been included (p18, row412)

Page 17, lines 383-385- this is a repetition of your previous discussion. I would suggest that you merge the discussion sections.

We merged the discussion sections