Reviewer's report

Title: Anti-tobacco control industry strategies in Turkey

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Reviewer: Jappe Eckhardt

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting and relevant paper. I just have a few relatively minor comments that will help the authors to further improve the manuscript.

1. In the background section (p. 4 onward) and elsewhere it is suggested that trade liberalization took place "under the auspices of international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank." Yet The WTO and bilateral trade/investment agreements have been just as (or arguably even more) relevant in this regard. This should somehow be acknowledged.

2. On p. 5 it is suggested that "tobacco control policies will remain inadequate as long as they do not target the industry as the supplier of tobacco products." This is an important point and the authors come back to this in the conclusion but not in the rest of the paper. This point should be emphasized more throughout the paper and early on in the paper the authors should clearly define what is meant by "demand" and "supply" measures.

3. At the moment, the authors only very briefly discuss why the paper focuses on Turkey (p. 6). I think the paper needs a more elaborate discussion on why Turkey is such an interesting case study. Also, a further justification is warranted as to why the paper focuses its empirical analysis on "product innovation, advertisement-promotion, cost management and pricing" rather than other market strategies TTCs pursue to undermine tobacco control policies.

4. On p. 6 the authors state that "manufacturing and trade of tobacco products continue to be a profitable business" and that therefore "there is a need to address corporate strategies utilized by TTCs to maintain profitability." However, they do not explain how exactly their analysis of such corporate strategies may help to make tobacco firms less profitable. The implicit argument seems to be that there analysis shows that current tobacco control
measures don't work and that such measures should focus more on the supply side. They should be more explicit about this from the outset.

5. The literature review (p. 6 onward) currently consists of an overview of different market strategies of TTCs in light of increasingly restrictive TC policies. What is lacking however, is a more in depth discussion on what this article adds to the existing literature. After all, the authors suggest that there are already studies on market strategies of TTCs in Turkey and obviously similar kind of studies have been conducted for other countries with a similar profile as Turkey. This begs the question: how does this paper relates to these studies and what do the authors see as their main contributions to existing scholarship. What is more, TTCs also try to fight/undermine tobacco control policies through non-market strategies (e.g. lobbying, litigation), as well as illicit trade practices, and this should somehow be acknowledged. At the moment it's only discussed very briefly at the end of the paper (in the section on limitations) but more should be said. I would suggest to add a few sentences and key references (see e.g. the work by Kelley Lee and colleagues) to the literature review and justify why this paper looks at market strategies and disregards non-market strategies and illicit trade.

6. Perhaps the authors can explain what the precise function is of the section on "Transformation of the Turkish Tobacco Sector in the Post-1980 Period" (from p. 8 on)? I understand intuitively why the authors want to discuss the (historical) context in which TTCs operate but they should explain to the reader why they do so. I also think that not all information provided here is necessary, so if they need to cut words this could be the place to do so.

7. More should be said about tobacco control laws in Turkey. At the moment the authors only briefly discuss this on p. 12 but in order to understand why current policies are not effective it is useful to have a more extensive discussion on what the Turkish government has done in this regard.

8. It's worth considering moving the methods section up. It now comes (p. 14) after "Transformation of the Turkish Tobacco Sector in the Post-1980 Period" but that seems part of the analysis as well? So perhaps it makes sense to discuss methods before that.

9. At several points in the text the authors use bullet-points (e.g p. 21 and in the concluding section) and I thinks it's a bit of a distraction. Why not just integrate it in the text?
10. On the discussion section: I would urge the authors to say more about whether the findings presented here are typical for Turkey or are generalizable? In other words, are TTCs more/less able to circumvent stricter tobacco control rules through market strategies elsewhere?

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

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