Reviewer’s report

Title: Seattle is Sweet on the Sugary Beverage Tax

Version: 0 Date: 30 Oct 2018

Reviewer: Laura Cornelsen

Reviewer's report:

The paper looks at the attitudes and opinions of a sample of adults in Seattle about the sugary beverage tax right before its implementation in January 2018. The paper is clear and well written. I do have some concerns and comments, listed below.

Major comments

- The argument of the paper seems to be that if taxes have unintended consequences (for example on businesses), perceptions on these consequences may affect attitudes towards this policy. I understand that, but what it less clear from the paper is why we should be worried about it? Why do the attitudes matter? Is it about possibly leading to a repeal of the tax if the attitudes are largely negative? Is it about how it affects the effectiveness of the tax in changing consumption behaviour? The article needs a clear explanation on why this study matters - why do we need to know about this.

- The questionnaire explains about the tax and says what is the tax rate (as per ounce) but I wonder if the respondents were truly aware of how much the tax is going to increase the price of the drinks they like to buy given that it requires some maths to figure out how much it is going to increase the price. As the tax was not in place at the time of the survey the respondents would not have seen the actual increases. This may explain why you find that nearly 80% of the sample don't think it will affect their finances or that they would not cross border to shop for beverages as they might under-estimate or have very different understanding of how prices will change. Alternatively, the explanation is that they don't consume these beverages (or don't plan to after the tax) which is why they say it won't affect their finances. In that regard it would have been useful to show directly examples of how much certain bottle sizes might increase in price and also collect some information on their consumption behaviour.

- The questionnaire includes whether respondents knew about the tax before. This has not been described in methods or the answers to that questions have not been summarised in the paper. Why not? The opinions of those who have not heard of the tax before might be
different to those who have, not least because they have had to make an opinion in brief time during the interview/survey.

- There is no comment in the text regarding the political affiliation other than in the descriptive stats table. Another study https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0306919217301707?via%3Dihub has found that each of the jurisdictions that have passed a tax on sugary drinks are predominantly Democrat. That could also be at individual level an important characteristic determining support

- I am not familiar with the raking weighting method and that should be explained in more detail (as a supplementary text) to give confidence that the results indeed can be taken as representative of the Seattle population

Minor comments

- FPL should be spelled out in abstract

- Were respondents compensated and was the compensation different for online/telephone survey?

- Spell out ACS and AAPOR for those readers unfamiliar with what these stand for

- Page 13, first beta coefficient doesn't include p-value. Second includes (p=0.032) but is stated as not-significant?

- How big of an issue is soda consumption in Seattle?

- I would suggest keeping reporting consistent and show coefficient and CI's also for overall tax impact score rather than just p-values

- Page 15 start - Rather than saying nearly 60% should say the actual value.

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.

No

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

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I recommend additional statistical review

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