Reviewer’s report

Title: Who calls the shots in tobacco control policy? Policy monopolies of pro and anti-tobacco interest groups across six European countries.

Version: 2 Date: 15 Apr 2019

Reviewer: Rachel Brown

Reviewer's report:

Reviewer comments

Page 24 - Ethics approval: the clarification of the ethics framework in each participating nation is a good addition to the paper and the effort the authors have made here is appreciated. It is my view that this does enough to address any potential reader concerns.

Page 4, lines 44-46 Policy dominance. This is a good explanation of policy dominance and effectively addresses the point raised.

Background -

(Author response to comment on discussion of supra-national policy) - As we focus only on national level policymaking, we wanted to highlight the role of supranational institutions such as the EU to emphasize the fact that tobacco control policy is developed at multiple levels. We believe that a more elaborate discussion about the interaction of layers of governance would disrupt the flow of the background section. Therefore we decided not to further elaborate on this topic there.

Reviewer - I appreciate the point made but still feel that a brief amendment at the start of 'Background' is needed to illustrate the layering of legislation in effect. This doesn't need much amendment but should clarify that national government decision-making happens in a wider context. In paragraph 1, you state 'Despite efforts by the World Health Organisation and European Union…", and I would suggest that 'despite' may be more effectively framed as 'along side' to show that they are not in opposition, but are often directly associated with national action e.g. on warnings, cross-border advertising bans etc. This would better set up your next statement that display bans are based on Article 13 of the FCTC and that the paper is looking at how, despite these being international guidelines, they are enacted differently at national level. This would also set up the rationale you go on to make on choice of cross-national comparisons, which reads really well with the additional material on page 4.
Methods

The elaborations on stakeholder selection, data management and interview topics work well and I have no additional changes here.

Results

I really appreciate the work that has been done to refine the Results section and it has been effective. The themes are still well-chosen and the additional narrative at the start of each section works well in positioning it in the overall story. It creates better linkage as you move through the paper.

Page 14 - line 39 should be 'frameworks’

Discussion - The additional content on the positioning of display bans within broader national policy works really well and follow on cohesively from Results. I accept the point that elaborating any more on historical development of power structures would add too much to the word count and the additional comments in ‘Limitations’ covers the points raised.

I would be happy to see this paper published with the minor amendments stated. The findings are timely and are a good addition to current, and ongoing, policy discussions.

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.

Yes

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.

Not relevant to this manuscript
Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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