

BMJ - Decision on  
Manuscript ID  
BMJ.2018.044594

**Body:**

04-Jul-2018

Dear Dr. Schmidt

# BMJ.2018.044594 entitled "Tobacco Industry Involvement in the Children's Sugary Beverage Market"

Thank you for sending us this paper and giving us the chance to consider your work.

We sent it out for external peer review and discussed it at the Analysis manuscript committee meeting (present: Cat Chatfield, Navjoyt Ladher, Paul Simpson, Robert Redelmeier [RR observing only]).

Unfortunately we do not consider it suitable for publication in its present form. However if you are able to amend it in the light of our and/or reviewers' comments, we would be happy to consider it again.

The reviewers' comments are at the end of this letter.

The editors' comments are listed below:

1. Editors enjoyed reading your interesting paper, but wondered about its suitability for our general medical readership. Given its historical nature we felt that the relevance to current practice and policy could be made more clear. The comments here are intended to shape the article for the analysis section of the journal and ensure it is better pitched for our readership.
2. In order to work for the analysis section of the journal, we felt that the paper should refocus on the current significance and the relevance of these findings and spell out the policy implications. Typically we think of analysis articles as scholarly debate pieces, with more focus on the big picture arguments rather than the detailed descriptions.
3. In accordance with the usual style for analysis, the manuscript needs to be shorter (around 2000 words) and with more of the material contained in the main body of the paper rather than the associated documents.
4. Our suggested option would be to reduce the length of the section detailing the industry practices (one example for each company perhaps or simply less detail) and expand on why this is significant and how it should inform regulatory approaches to SSB marketing (as one of the reviewers has commented).
5. We appreciate that we are asking for a substantial revision, with no guarantees that we will publish the resulting manuscript. We hope that you will be willing to revise your paper, but will understand if you prefer to take the paper 'as is' to another journal.

We hope that you will be willing to revise your manuscript and submit it within 4-6 weeks. When submitting your revised manuscript please provide a point by point response to our comments and those of any reviewers. We also ask that you keep the revised manuscript within the word count of 1800-2000 words.

Please note that resubmitting your manuscript does not guarantee eventual acceptance, and that your resubmission may be sent again for review.

Once you have revised your manuscript, go to <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/bmj> and login to your Author Center. Click on "Manuscripts with Decisions," and then click on "Create a Resubmission" located next to the manuscript number. Then, follow the steps for resubmitting your manuscript.

You may also click the below link to start the resubmission process (or continue the process if you have already started your revision) for your manuscript. If you use the below link you will not be required to login to ScholarOne Manuscripts.

\*\*\* PLEASE NOTE: This is a two-step process. After clicking on the link, you will be directed to a webpage to confirm. \*\*\*

[https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/bmj?URL\\_MASK=55b6819827ca48bf9f5080f8e4a2efc1](https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/bmj?URL_MASK=55b6819827ca48bf9f5080f8e4a2efc1)

IMPORTANT: Your original files are available to you when you upload your revised manuscript. Please delete any redundant files before completing the submission.

If accepted, your article will be published online at [bmj.com](http://bmj.com), the canonical form of the journal. Please note that only a proportion of accepted analysis articles will also be published in print.

I hope you will find the comments useful. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely

Navjoyt Ladher  
[nladher@bmj.com](mailto:nladher@bmj.com)

**\*\*IMPORTANT INFORMATION TO INCLUDE IN A RESUBMISSION\*\***

Instead of returning a signed licence or competing interest form, we require all authors to insert the following statements into the text version of their manuscript:

**Licence for Publication**

The Corresponding Author has the right to grant on behalf of all authors and does grant on behalf of all authors, an exclusive licence (or non exclusive for government employees) on a worldwide basis to the BMJ Publishing Group Ltd to permit this article (if accepted) to be published in BMJ and any other BMJPGJL products and sublicences such use and exploit all subsidiary rights, as set out in our licence (<http://group.bmj.com/products/journals/instructions-for-authors/licence-forms>).

**Competing Interest**

Please see our policy and the unified Competing Interests form <http://resources.bmj.com/bmj/authors/editorial-policies/competing-interests>. Please state any competing interests if they exist, or make a no competing interests declaration.

Reviewer(s)' Comments to Author:

Reviewer: 1

Recommendation:

Comments:

This is an excellent paper: very clear, organized, and well-written. Although the companies' marketing actions presented in the paper may not be especially surprising or egregious (although I am probably more familiar with their marketing tactics than most readers), it does provide a significant contribution to the literature by documenting – in the companies' own words – their intent and the process and techniques used to design sugary drinks that directly appeal to young children.

I have a few minor comments.

- This first sentence does not accurately describe the findings. Coca-Cola, Pepsico and DPSG were responsible for 70% of all advertising spending for SSBs in the US. This advertising was not only marketing to children. The same report also documented the number of TV ads for sugary drinks seen by children. Those numbers show that Pepsico and Kraft Foods had the most advertising to children.
- The sentence on p. 11, line 33 isn't clear. Suggest "Until 2007, both RJR and its tobacco competitor, Philip Morris, owned SSB brands that they had developed into product lines specifically for children."

I also suggest that the authors expand on their policy implications to include a discussion about how this information can be used to inform the current dialogue between the food industry and child health advocates about marketing to children. This discussion would be very helpful for the advocates. The policy implications should also include a discussion of CARU, the other self-regulatory program for advertising to children. Specifically:

- Healthy Eating Research established an expert committee to develop a set of recommendations for the CFBAI to develop a more comprehensive definition of food marketing to children. Many of the techniques described in the tobacco documents are not currently included in the CFBAI definition of marketing to children and the food industry has argued that these techniques are not marketing to children (e.g., brand character toys and food brand licensing on toys [e.g., Barbie, Hot Wheels], characters on packaging, in-store displays, sponsorships, sweepstakes, types of packaging). The documents described in this paper show that the food industry does consider these techniques to be aimed directly at children.  
<http://healthyeatingresearch.org/research/recommendations-for-responsible-food-marketing-to-children/>

- The same document recommended that food companies expand protections to children up to at least age 14, and that messages aimed at "tweens" also appeal to children under 12. The definition of "tweens" on p. 10 directly supports this recommendation.

- Other practices reported directly go against CARU guidelines for marketing to children, established in 1974. In particular, the documents cite several examples of blurring of advertising and entertainment content which CARU prohibits, including Adventures of Kool-Aid Man Marvel comics Tang media collaborations with MAD Magazine and Sports Illustrated Jr. aimed at "pre-teens"

<http://www.asrcreviews.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Self-Regulatory-Program-for-Childrens-Advertising-Revised-2014-.pdf>

Additional Questions:

Please enter your name: Jennifer L Harris

Job Title: Associate Professor

Institution: University of Connecticut

Reimbursement for attending a symposium?: No

A fee for speaking?: No

A fee for organising education?: No

Funds for research?: No

Funds for a member of staff?: No

Fees for consulting?: No

Have you in the past five years been employed by an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this paper?: No

Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this paper?: No

If you have any competing interests <A  
HREF='http://www.bmj.com/about-bmj/resources-authors/forms-policies-and-check  
lists/declaration-competing-interests'target='\_new'> (please see BMJ policy)  
</a>please declare them here:

Reviewer: 2

Recommendation:

Comments:

This article demonstrates that the two largest US-based tobacco companies were important players in developing the market for children's sugar-sweetened beverages. As such, this analysis represents a significant contribution to the field with relevance to a number of important policy debates. The authors show that RJ Reynolds and Philip Morris were instrumental in expanding SSB product lines that were specifically aimed at children, and increased expenditures to focus the marketing efforts related to these product lines on children specifically. Much of the text is devoted to quotations which demonstrate the industry's approach in lurid detail, and these aspects of the paper will be very interesting for scholars and are likely to be highly cited.

My main critical comments relate to the 'Policy Implications' section, which could be strengthened. I have two comments specifically:

(1) The logic of the argument in this section is not sufficiently clear. It is shown that tobacco companies were implicated in a shift to extensive marketing of SSBs to children. It does not follow, however, that the SSB market should be regulated in the same manner as the tobacco industry. To support this point further, it would be worth revisiting the arguments about why the tobacco industry is currently treated as a distinct entity within the business community, one that requires particular restrictions and approaches to governance - and thus, why the tobacco industry's role in children's SSB promotion strengthens the arguments calling for a non-voluntary regulatory response.

(2) Although the companies at the core of this analysis piece are US-based, I would like to see the policy implications for the global level explored in more detail (and,

ideally to make this the key focus). Once point (1) is addressed, the implications of this for global health governance can be explored in more specific terms, and it would be valuable to do this with a broader perspective than the CFBAI alone.

A final point. The article shows that without doubt the tobacco industry believed that directing beverage marketing efforts towards children was an optimal strategy for them. There is also a sense that better access to industry evidence on this point would be a valuable contribution to knowledge. However, it is less clear to me that the analysis piece makes a distinctive contribution here, and I would recommend that this point is given less emphasis in the presentation of the paper (in particular, I would not devote one of the Key Messages to it - at least, not as it is currently formulated).

Additional Questions:

Please enter your name: Dr. Mark Hellowell

Job Title: Senior Lecturer

Institution: University of Edinburgh

Reimbursement for attending a symposium?: No

A fee for speaking?: No

A fee for organising education?: No

Funds for research?: No

Funds for a member of staff?: No

Fees for consulting?: No

Have you in the past five years been employed by an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this paper?: No

Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this paper?: No

If you have any competing interests <A  
HREF='http://www.bmj.com/about-bmj/resources-authors/forms-policies-and-check  
lists/declaration-competing-interests'target='\_new'> (please see BMJ policy)  
</a>please declare them here: