

PEER REVIEW HISTORY

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ARTICLE DETAILS

TITLE (PROVISIONAL)	STANDARDISED TOBACCO PACKAGING: A HEALTH POLICY CASE STUDY OF CORPORATE CONFLICT EXPANSION AND ADAPTATION
AUTHORS	Hatchard, Jenny; Fooks, Gary; Gilmore, Anna

VERSION 1 - REVIEW

REVIEWER	Mike Daube Curtin University, Perth, Western Australia Author Fooks is a Visiting Fellow at my institution. We have not collaborated (and do not collaborate) on any projects or papers.
REVIEW RETURNED	08-Jun-2016

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>This is a valuable contribution to the literature about both tobacco control and the roles of corporate entities in seeking to influence health policy outcomes directly and indirectly.</p> <p>The authors have focused on the activities of transnational tobacco corporations, in the context of both the plain/standardised packaging issue and Article 5.3 of the FTCT (Framework Convention on Tobacco Control), but there are important lessons to be drawn for other areas in health policy where major vested interests are involved.</p> <p>The authors have drawn on their experience in this area to ensure the most appropriate means of identifying both those actors involved in the campaign and the nature of their involvement. Their analyses demonstrate clearly not only the extent of their activities, but also the relationships with TTCs and coordination, along with lack of transparency, and indeed efforts to avoid the public appearance of linkages.</p> <p>The conclusions are appropriate and relevant to areas beyond tobacco.</p> <p>The following are minor comments/suggestions which are not intended to delay publication, and should all be amenable to attention in the final editing process.</p> <p>Abstract</p> <p>Objectives: suggest ".....opposition to standardised tobacco packaging in the UK.....".</p> <p>Conclusions: suggest "low levels of transparency or information....".</p>
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	<p>Introduction</p> <p>Line one: "over 6 years..." - only reference 1 seems to be from this period; maybe some further wording to account for refs 2 - 4.</p> <p>Para 3, line 3 might acknowledge that the UK was not the first country to implement this measure, so might read, "a policy which, following the Australian precedent, is being taken up by other jurisdictions....".</p> <p>Methods</p> <p>"....the largest ever response to a public consultation....": this may be true (I have not checked - but given the number of public consultations around the world and on different topics would be surprised.....), or it may need some qualifying?</p> <p>Results</p> <p>"Ten of the organisations.....were in receipt...." - is this slightly more accurately "known" or "found" to be....?</p> <p>Timing of Political activity</p> <p>Perhaps very briefly outline what the Chantler Review was.</p> <p>Final para - not only government ministers?</p> <p>A couple of minor edits are needed:</p> <p>Analysis - "We, first, examined....".</p> <p>Production of research - sentence starting "Namely" looks odd.</p> <p>In conclusion, this is an important and well constructed paper which was a pleasure to read. Publication is strongly recommended.</p>
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REVIEWER	Allison Ford Institute for Social Marketing University of Stirling UK
REVIEW RETURNED	08-Jun-2016

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>An interesting article describing the organisations involved in opposing standardised packaging in the UK, their links with tobacco companies and their activities. It will be particularly insightful and relevant for countries currently considering standardised packaging as industry strategies to oppose the measure will likely follow those used in Australia and the UK.</p> <p>On a general note, the style of writing makes it difficult to follow at times and it feels a little jargon heavy. Shorter sentences in places, limiting the use of colons/semi-colons and ensuring more unfamiliar terms are explained early on, should provide greater clarity and improved flow. Similarly, signposting to supplementary files disrupts the flow somewhat. The policy timeline as supplementary file 1 is appropriate, but I wonder if the information contained within files 2 and 3 would be better incorporated into the manuscript.</p> <p>Some additional points to consider:</p>
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	<p>Introduction Packaging is not the sole form of brand marketing and identity, there is also an increasing focus on product design as a way of promoting the brand. “‘Insider’ political strategies, such as direct lobbying...” Are there other ‘insider’ strategies used by tobacco companies? It would be useful to expand.</p> <p>Methods It would be helpful to state the four consultation months in 2012. A case study approach is described, which included interviews with public health advocates. More detail on the interviews would be useful, e.g. sample, approach, length, ethical approval. How was this data used? Were interviewees’ accounts simply used to help source further data and activities or were their accounts used as evidence of activities? Rephrase ‘prolonged engagement’ and ‘persistent observation’. Political activities were ‘qualitatively analysed’. This should be followed by a fuller description of the analysis approach.</p> <p>Results: Related to the above point, the results section is very descriptive. Given the uniqueness of the dataset, the paper could go further to expand on the emerging themes to come out of the activities analysis, supplemented with examples for each activity type.</p>
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REVIEWER	Benjamin Hawkins LSHTM, UK
REVIEW RETURNED	09-Jun-2016

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>This is article makes an important contribution to our understanding of tobacco companies’ modus operandi in a shifting political context. It should be of great interest to the BMJ’s readership and to both policy makers and scholars of corporate political influence in the area of tobacco control and beyond. The study on which the article is based is methodologically sound and I recommend publication in its present form. The only substantive revision I would like to see is some additional details in the methods section, especially data collection which may be useful for scholars seeking to use similar approaches in other sectors. How for example was web monitoring undertaken? In addition, more details on the FOI requests which succeed and failed would be useful. Perhaps a box could be inserted detailing some of these? Finally, I think you actually undersell the value and contribution of the article in the discussion. You make the point well on p14 that the perceived anonymity of third party actors is a key aspect of their power in shaping debates and their usefulness to TTCs. In revealing their connections and impartiality your paper goes some way to removing their credibility and this from the arsenal of TTCs political toolbox. I suggest you add something to this effect on page 15 immediately after reference 151. Finally, could the title be revised to better reflect the content of the paper?</p> <p>The remaining comments below are micro level and designed to improve style/ clarity, especially for a non-specialist audience.</p> <p>P4, line 43-44- rephrase to avoid repetition of ‘impact assessment’; P5, line 12- replace ‘they’ with ‘these opponents’; P5, line 51-52- explain the tem ‘unsolicited political activity’ or perhaps rephrase;</p>
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	<p>P13, line 55-56- Add a sentence to explain what is meant by insider/ outsider political strategies;</p> <p>P14, line25- de facto referendum may overstate the point; the TTCs' aim is they want to make it seem like a referendum but in reality (de facto) it is not. Key point is industry seek to use/ manipulate these vents in this way. Rephrase this to make the point clearer and bring out the strategic nature of this move;</p> <p>P14, line 56- add 'around plain packaging' after 'conflict';</p> <p>P15, line 44; rephrase to 'engage in conflicts around tobacco control policy';</p> <p>P15, line 46; add 'evidence of' after 'Second, '</p> <p>P16, first line- point about registration of third parties and precisely what this means is unclear. Rephrase to bring this out.</p>
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REVIEWER	<p>Dr Olivia Maynard Senior Research Associate University of Bristol UK</p>
REVIEW RETURNED	20-Jun-2016

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>This is an important paper systematically examining opposition to standardised packaging legislation in the UK. The findings will be of particular interest in those countries currently considering implementing this legislation. The paper is well written, the results are presented clearly and the discussion is appropriate. I have only minor comments which I hope will improve the manuscript further.</p> <p>The Article Summary states that this paper is the first to systematically explore tobacco industry opposite to standardised packaging in Europe. As the research specifically focussed on opposition in the UK this is misleading and should be reworded.</p> <p>Page 6, line 18: it might be clearer to number each of the four steps</p> <p>Page 7, line 25L: remove comma after 'We'</p> <p>Page 8, line 4: Possibly move final sentence of this paragraph (about the organisations with no relationship to TTC) to here (i.e. before 'Ten of the organisations...')</p> <p>Page 10, line 4: the total number of political activities is noted as 400. Is this the total number of activities, distinct from the 418 documents? If so, this should be clarified.</p> <p>Page 10, line 12: Put the percentage and total numbers in the same order as below (i.e. 114/400, 28.5%)</p> <p>Page 10, line 32: Writing 'nearly nine out of every ten research reports...' would be clearer (or alternatively 'almost 90%'). Also, this is repeated line 51 page 10.</p> <p>Page 11, line 35: ITG should be defined in the text.</p> <p>Page 12, line 12: How many MPs were in this ad hoc group? This would be useful to put the 8 who received gifts into context.</p>
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VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer 1: Mike Daube, Curtin University, Perth, Western Australia

This is a valuable contribution to the literature about both tobacco control and the roles of corporate entities in seeking to influence health policy outcomes directly and indirectly.

The authors have focused on the activities of transnational tobacco corporations, in the context of

both the plain/standardised packaging issue and Article 5.3 of the FCTC (Framework Convention on Tobacco Control), but there are important lessons to be drawn for other areas in health policy where major vested interests are involved.

The authors have drawn on their experience in this area to ensure the most appropriate means of identifying both those actors involved in the campaign and the nature of their involvement. Their analyses demonstrate clearly not only the extent of their activities, but also the relationships with TTCs and coordination, along with lack of transparency, and indeed efforts to avoid the public appearance of linkages.

The conclusions are appropriate and relevant to areas beyond tobacco.

The following are minor comments/suggestions which are not intended to delay publication, and should all be amenable to attention in the final editing process.

Abstract

Objectives: suggest ".....opposition to standardised tobacco packaging in the UK.....".
The words 'in the UK' have not been added to objectives as the 'setting' section makes it clear that this is a UK case study.

Conclusions: suggest "low levels of transparency or information....".
Low levels of transparency captures the point made and is explained in the text of the paper, so the addition of 'or information' has not been made.

Methods

"...the largest ever response to a public consultation....": this may be true (I have not checked - but given the number of public consultations around the world and on different topics would be surprised.....), or it may need some qualifying?
Words added: 'in the UK'

Final para - not only government ministers?
More explanation has been added regarding the context of this point.

The remainder of Reviewer 1's suggested changes have all been made in the text (as below):

Introduction

Line one: "over 6 years..." - only reference 1 seems to be from this period; maybe some further wording to account for refs 2 - 4.

Para 3, line 3 might acknowledge that the UK was not the first country to implement this measure, so might read, "a policy which, following the Australian precedent, is being taken up by other jurisdictions....".

Results

"Ten of the organisations.....were in receipt...." - is this slightly more accurately "known" or "found" to be....?

Timing of Political activity

Perhaps very briefly outline what the Chantler Review was.

A couple of minor edits are needed:

Analysis - "We, first, examined....".

Production of research - sentence starting "Namely" looks odd.

In conclusion, this is an important and well constructed paper which was a pleasure to read.
Publication is strongly recommended.

Reviewer 2: Allison Ford, Institute for Social Marketing, University of Stirling, UK

An interesting article describing the organisations involved in opposing standardised packaging in the UK, their links with tobacco companies and their activities. It will be particularly insightful and relevant for countries currently considering standardised packaging as industry strategies to oppose the measure will likely follow those used in Australia and the UK.

On a general note, the style of writing makes it difficult to follow at times and it feels a little jargon heavy. Shorter sentences in places, limiting the use of colons/semi-colons and ensuring more unfamiliar terms are explained early on, should provide greater clarity and improved flow. The flow of writing has been reviewed throughout, and over-long sentences edited.

Similarly, signposting to supplementary files disrupts the flow somewhat. The policy timeline as supplementary file 1 is appropriate, but I wonder if the information contained within files 2 and 3 would be better incorporated into the manuscript.

Supplementary files 2 and 3 have been incorporated into the text.

Some additional points to consider:

Introduction

Packaging is not the sole form of brand marketing and identity, there is also an increasing focus on product design as a way of promoting the brand.

Product design is now referred to.

“‘Insider’ political strategies, such as direct lobbying...” Are there other ‘insider’ strategies used by tobacco companies? It would be useful to expand.

The wording has been changed to make this point clearer – insider strategies are characterised by direct contact between companies/representatives and government officials/ministers (p.4).

Methods

It would be helpful to state the four consultation months in 2012.

The months are now included.

A case study approach is described, which included interviews with public health advocates. More detail on the interviews would be useful, e.g. sample, approach, length, ethical approval. How was this data used? Were interviewees’ accounts simply used to help source further data and activities or were their accounts used as evidence of activities?

More information on ethics, number and purpose of interviews has been added to the methods (p.5).

Rephrase ‘prolonged engagement’ and ‘persistent observation’.

The terms prolonged engagement and persistent observation have been used purposely and are explained in the methodological source cited in the paper (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Prolonged engagement facilitates understanding of the context of the data; persistent observation enables the researcher to identify salient and non-salient features in the data. Each of these help the reader reduce uncertainty about findings. We have briefly expanded on this in the text.

Political activities were ‘qualitatively analysed’. This should be followed by a fuller description of the analysis approach.

This has been briefly expanded in the text.

Results:

Related to the above point, the results section is very descriptive. Given the uniqueness of the dataset, the paper could go further to expand on the emerging themes to come out of the activities analysis, supplemented with examples for each activity type.

In response to this suggestion, and bearing in mind Reviewer 2's comments about insider/outside strategies, a new table has been added to the results (Table 3, pp.11-12) providing examples of activities undertaken subdivided by insider and outsider political strategies, with quotes from organisations whose activities we examined. This is explained briefly in the text (p.11). However, we have chosen not to add further detail across the results section as comments from other reviewers were that the paper is strong in its current form and we do not wish to interrupt the existing narrative flow.

Reviewer 3: Benjamin Hawkins, LSHTM, UK

This article makes an important contribution to our understanding of tobacco companies' modus operandi in a shifting political context. It should be of great interest to the BMJ's readership and to both policy makers and scholars of corporate political influence in the area of tobacco control and beyond. The study on which the article is based is methodologically sound and I recommend publication in its present form.

The only substantive revision I would like to see is some additional details in the methods section, especially data collection which may be useful for scholars seeking to use similar approaches in other sectors. How for example was web monitoring undertaken?

In addition, more details on the FOI requests which succeed and failed would be useful. Perhaps a box could be inserted detailing some of these?

More detail has been added to the data collection section of the methods (p.6). In lieu of a box relating to foi requests, an example foi request has been added to the text.

Finally, I think you actually undersell the value and contribution of the article in the discussion. You make the point well on p14 that the perceived anonymity of third party actors is a key aspect of their power in shaping debates and their usefulness to TTCs. In revealing their connections and impartiality your paper goes some way to removing their credibility and this from the arsenal of TTCs political toolbox. I suggest you add something to this effect on page 15 immediately after reference 151.

We have added the following sentence on page 18: 'By making explicit the links between ostensibly independent organisations opposing tobacco policy and TTCs, the research aims to reduce the utility of their third party strategy for opposing public health policies. It also, potentially, has implications for understanding how corporations in other sectors responsible for producing commodities harmful to health (e.g. alcohol, sugar-sweetened beverages) may oppose population level policy instruments.'

Finally, could the title be revised to better reflect the content of the paper?

We feel the title does reflect the content of the paper and has been retained.

The remaining comments below are micro level and designed to improve style/ clarity, especially for a non-specialist audience.

P4, line 43-44- rephrase to avoid repetition of 'impact assessment'; P5, line 12- replace 'they' with 'these opponents'; P5, line 51-52- explain the tem 'unsolicited political activity' or perhaps rephrase; P13, line 55-56- Add a sentence to explain what is meant by insider/ outsider political strategies; P14, line25- de facto referendum may overstate the point; the TTCs' aim is they want to make it seem like

a referendum but in reality (de facto) it is not. Key point is industry seek to use/ manipulate these vents in this way. Rephrase this to make the point clearer and bring out the strategic nature of this move; P14, line 56- add 'around plain packaging' after 'conflict'; P15, line 44; rephrase to 'engage in conflicts around tobacco control policy'; P15, line 46; add 'evidence of' after 'Second, ' P16, first line- point about registration of third parties and precisely what this means is unclear. Rephrase to bring this out.

All of these points have been addressed in the text.

Reviewer 4: Dr Olivia Maynard, University of Bristol, UK

This is an important paper systematically examining opposition to standardised packaging legislation in the UK. The findings will be of particular interest in those countries currently considering implementing this legislation. The paper is well written, the results are presented clearly and the discussion is appropriate. I have only minor comments which I hope will improve the manuscript further.

The Article Summary states that this paper is the first to systematically explore tobacco industry opposite to standardised packaging in Europe. As the research specifically focussed on opposition in the UK this is misleading and should be reworded.

This statement has been reworded as follows: 'This paper is the first study to systematically examine the scale and nature of opposition to standardised tobacco packaging outside Australia'.

Page 6, line 18: it might be clearer to number each of the four steps Page 7, line 25L: remove comma after 'We'

Page 8, line 4: Possibly move final sentence of this paragraph (about the organisations with no relationship to TTC) to here (i.e. before 'Ten of the organisations...') Page 10, line 4: the total number of political activities is noted as 400. Is this the total number of activities, distinct from the 418 documents? If so, this should be clarified.

Page 10, line 12: Put the percentage and total numbers in the same order as below (i.e. 114/400, 28.5%) Page 10, line 32: Writing 'nearly nine out of every ten research reports...' would be clearer (or alternatively 'almost 90%'). Also, this is repeated line 51 page 10.

Page 11, line 35: ITG should be defined in the text.

Page 12, line 12: How many MPs were in this ad hoc group? This would be useful to put the 8 who received gifts into context.

All of these points have been addressed in the text.

VERSION 2 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Allison Ford Institute for Social Marketing University of Stirling UK
REVIEW RETURNED	24-Aug-2016

GENERAL COMMENTS	The authors have addressed all the points raised by the reviewers. The paper will make a positive contribution to the literature.
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REVIEWER	Benjamin Hawkins LSHTM, UK
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REVIEW RETURNED	23-Aug-2016
GENERAL COMMENTS	The previous version of the paper was close to publishable in my view and only minor edits were suggested. These (mainly to do with the methodology) have been adequately addressed. Overall the paper has been strengthened by the responses to other reviewers' comments.

Correction: Standardised tobacco packaging: a health policy case study of corporate conflict expansion and adaptation

Hatchard JL, Fooks GJ, Gilmore AB. Standardised tobacco packaging: a health policy case study of corporate conflict expansion and adaptation. *BMJ Open* 2016;6:e012634. On page 8, a sentence reads: 'For example, in public communications former police officers did not declare membership of the Common Sense Alliance (a FOREST offshoot).' The Common Sense Alliance is not an offshoot of FOREST. It was supported by British American Tobacco among other organisations. The phrase in brackets '(a FOREST offshoot)' should be omitted.

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BMJ Open 2016;6:e012634corr1. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2016-012634corr1



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