

Reviewer's report

Title:Food store owners' and managers' perspectives on the food environment: An exploratory mixed-methods study

Version:2**Date:**17 March 2014

Reviewer:Ellen van Kleef

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory revisions

This is an interesting and well-written paper. Based on open-ended interviews, the authors examine how owners and managers of food stores in low-income neighbourhoods think about the healthiness of the assortment they offer and challenges they face in creating access to healthy foods.

I believe the topic of this study is of interest and use to academic researchers and policy makers in public health. It is clear that the authors carefully conducted the interviews and thoroughly examined the responses of the participants. Besides these valuable and interesting contributions, I have a few concerns and remarks.

1. Abstract: In the results section of the abstract, the results are described in an abstract way. It would be good to report key findings instead of describing the results in a too general way. To me, a key finding of the study seems to be that it is not necessarily access to healthy foods that is the problem, rather it is the lack of consumer demand. It would be helpful to select a few key findings and report them in the abstract.
2. Abstract: the conclusions section of the abstract is vague. In the paper, results are discussed in light of some elements of ecological models of the food environment. I do not see how results are linked to multi-level, ecological models beyond that while reading the abstract. The second half of the final sentence of the abstract '...imply that reducing social inequalities in access to healthful foods will require interventions across the spectrum of interventions'. Which spectrum? It would be helpful if the authors could come up with some concrete implications or suggestions for interventions. For example, a very relevant implication of the findings relates to the critique that public health researchers have not adequately addressed the priority of making sales.
3. The second paragraph of the background ('Research in this area is at a relatively early stage....') is too brief. As a reader, I am curious to know what exactly has been found in previous research and what hypothesized mechanisms are linking the store or food environment to health-related behaviours.
4. In section 3.1, the implications of the second findings related to participants' free listing of health foods are discussed. I would prefer to separate discussion of results from the results itself.
5. It would be good if the authors could reduce the length of the results section of

3.2 and use smaller or less quotes of participants.

Discretionary Revisions

1. The abbreviation 'FL' was not immediately clear to me. It would also be useful to include the country where the study took place.

Level of interest:An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English:Acceptable

Statistical review:No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.