

Independent expert report regarding Kaul/Wolf working papers: no basis for Oxyromandie's defamatory campaign

OxyRomandie claimed that there is a "strong suspicion of scientific fraud" in two of our working papers on the potential effects of plain packaging of tobacco products in Australia. The University of Zurich had asked the independent expert Prof. Ben Jann (University of Bern, Switzerland) to assess the allegations leveled against us. The independent expert report by Prof. Jann is now available. As is clear from the conclusions of the independent expert report, there was *no basis for Oxyromandie's defamatory campaign*:

- There are no fundamental "errors" or "issues" justifying the retraction of the papers.
- Freedom of scientific research was ensured at all times.
- Any disagreements, as the independent expert has said, "can be resolved through usual scientific discourse."

On the contrary, some of OxyRomandie's claims and methods seem "entirely unclear" to the expert Prof. Jann. Accordingly, we hope that from now on Oxyromandie will refrain from its excessively aggressive rhetoric and personal attacks.

Main conclusion of the independent expert report by Prof. Jann:

"I do not think that the papers are fundamentally flawed from a methodological point of view. I do not suggest their retraction." (Methodological Report of Prof. Ben Jann, p. 45)

Prof. Jann on 'Error #1': Erroneous and misleading reporting of study results

"I am very skeptical of whether researchers can be held responsible for monitoring the use and interpretation of their results by others. This would be an obligation that is impossible to fulfill and it would strongly discourage researchers from publishing anything." (Methodological Report of Prof. Ben Jann, p. 39)

Prof. Jann on 'Error #2': Power is obtained by sacrificing significance

"...the statistical procedure used by Kaul and Wolf does have the power they claim it has (given their assumptions about the nature and size of the effect)." (Methodological Report of Prof. Ben Jann, p. 40)

Prof. Jann on 'Error #3': Inadequate model for calculating power which introduces a bias towards exceedingly large power values

"Kaul and Wolf (2014a,b) are very clear about what their assumptions are and anyone is free to provide alternative analyses based on other assumptions." (Methodological Report of Prof. Ben Jann, p. 40)

Prof. Jann on 'Error #4': Ignorance of the fact that disjunctive grouping of two tests results in a significance level higher than the significance level of the individual tests

"...this only means that there is an increased risk of finding an effect if there is none. It does not render the power values reported by Kaul and Wolf (2014a,b) invalid." (Methodological Report of Prof. Ben Jann, p. 40f.)

Prof. Jann on 'Error #5': Failure to take into account the difference between pointwise and uniform confidence intervals

"Essentially, this is the same argument as in "Error #2" and "Error #4". The argument is undoubtedly true, but, again, it does not render the power values reported by Kaul and Wolf (2014a,b) invalid." (Methodological Report of Prof. Ben Jann, p. 41)

Prof. Jann on 'Error #6': Invalid significance level due to confusion about one-tail vs. two- tail test

"Whether to use a one-sided test or a two-sided test is an a-priori decision made by the researchers." (Methodological Report of Prof. Ben Jann, p. 41)

Prof. Jann on 'Error #7': Invalid assumption of long term linearity

"From my own analysis I cannot support the claim that a linear fit is inappropriate." (Methodological Report of Prof. Ben Jann, p. 42)

Prof. Jann on 'Issue #1': Avoiding evidence by post-hoc change to the method

"I guess what Kaul and Wolf try to say is: yes, we do find some evidence for an effect in December 2012, but if there was a lasting effect it should also show up in the remaining 12 months." (Methodological Report of Prof. Ben Jann, p. 42f.)

Prof. Jann on 'Issue #2': Unnecessary technicality of the method, hiding the methodological flaws of the papers

"I do not consider the approach proposed by Kaul and Wolf (2014a) particularly complicated. It is quite straightforward, as is the approach proposed by OxyRomandie." (Methodological Report of Prof. Ben Jann, p. 43)

Prof. Jann on 'Issue #3': Very ineffective and crude analytic method

"It is entirely unclear to me what kind of t-test the authors employ here, nor can I link the presented power values for Kaul and Wolf's approach back to the results published in the working papers by Kaul and Wolf."¹ (Methodological Report of Prof. Ben Jann, p. 43)*

Prof. Jann on 'Issue #4': Non standard, ad-hoc method

"I do not see the problem. All steps taken by Kaul and Wolf are simple and transparent and their analyses are easy to replicate. No fancy tools are needed. Power analyses

¹ Asterisk added. `The authors´ refers to OxyRomandie.

will always require a bit of programming except for very basic problems for which canned solutions exist.” (Methodological Report of Prof. Ben Jann, p. 43f.)

Prof. Jann on ‘Issue #5’: Contradiction and lack of transparency about the way data was obtained

“It is not really clear to me what exactly OxyRomandie’s critique is.” (Methodological Report of Prof. Ben Jann, p. 44)

Prof. Jann on ‘Issue #6’: Conflict of interest not fully declared

“Kaul and Wolf did declare that PMI provided funding. In my opinion, this clearly identifies the papers as industry sponsored research.” (Methodological Report of Prof. Ben Jann, p. 44)

Prof. Jann on ‘Issue #7’: Lack of peer review

“All I can say is that it is standard practice in economics to make results available as a working paper before submission to a peer reviewed journal.” (Methodological Report of Prof. Ben Jann, p. 45)

The full export report of Prof. Jann is available [here](#).

For further information please contact:

Prof. Dr. Ashok Kaul
IPE Institut für Politikevaluation GmbH
Saarbrücken, Germany
Email: info@ipe-saarland.de