

In-school Commercialism and the Pressure it Places on Children, Parents, Teachers and Schools

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B.A in Journalism

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I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of BA in Journalism is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of in-school commercial promotions from an Irish perspective. It covers schemes from voucher collections (Tesco, SuperValu) to AIB's 'Build a Bank Challenge', all specifically targeted at children while they are in school.

It is important because in-school marketing is a relatively new practice in Ireland and has dramatically increased over the past 15 years. Why are companies spending so much targeting schools? Why are there so many current promotions aimed at schoolchildren? What are the benefits of their promotions to the school/children/company? Are companies genuinely fulfilling their 'social responsibility'? Why are some people firmly against in-school commercialism? What has allowed commercialism to come into Irish schools? What are the effects it has on children's education? What regulations are in place to protect children from marketing in schools?

Companies argue that taking part in their promotions is entire optional, others argue that there is significant pressure to partake. Where is this pressure coming from and who does it effect?

Over four chapters, this thesis will attempt to illustrate the issues associated with in-school commercialism, while trying to identify what has allowed commercialism into schools and what role the Irish government plays. It will also attempt to show the situation Ireland might find itself facing in a couple of years by looking at the example of American schools (chapter two).

The final chapter makes recommendations based on the information in the preceding chapters.

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Chapter One

Education is the foundation of modern society. In a modern democracy, the ideal is that education serves no agenda; its purpose is enlightenment. The curriculum is objective; there should be no political, religious or racial bias – the student should be taught to be critical and to gain an understanding of the world they live in.

While the idea of the school curriculum being completely objective is just an ideal, like the ideal of media objectivity, there will naturally be some subjectivity evident from the selection of subjects taught, and indeed in the opinions of those who teach. What is and what is not taught as ‘history’ is an obvious example. However, just as the media and journalists strive to adhere to the idea of objectivity for the benefit of society, so too must the school system.

Over the last twenty years, something has crept almost silently into Irish classrooms which is influencing how and, in some extreme examples, what children are learning.

Children have long been considered an important target market for companies because they are the consumers of tomorrow. Today’s children have more money in their pockets and are subjected to more advertising than any previous generation because of their exposure to a greater range of media. Ireland’s new found affluence has seen a rise in spending by children and a rise in spending on children.

Under funded (Ireland spends 0.5pc less of its Gross Domestic Product [GDP] on Education than the EU average) and often with poor or inadequate facilities, schools have begun to look to the commercial sector for resources. Companies are more than willing to give to the school system, provided they get access to the children.

Some groups are agreeing that the under funding of schools in Ireland also has wider social implications - it is a pre-requisite for economic growth.

‘The examples of countries like Germany, Japan and the Republic of South Korea, in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries respectively, suggest that an educated population is a springboard for jumping to high economic performance...if you want to make a country prosperous, invest in education! A recent study from UNESCO/OECD confirms education and economic

growth go hand in hand' (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO] 2003).

This message appears not to be heeded.

The Debate

Children of today are bombarded with advertising from the second they are born. Kunkel (2001, cited in Walsh 2004, page 3) suggests that children in the U.S may view more than 40,000 advertisements every year. The child market has great potential for companies - apart from the money they spend first hand, they also have an effect on family and parental spending through 'pester power'. In the U.S in 1997, children influenced family spending by \$188bn according to McNeal (1998 cited in Macklin, 1999, page 4). Targeting schools for advertising, however, is one area that some people feel is a step too far. The classroom is a place of learning and is not a sales opportunity, they argue.

There are no figures currently available for value of Ireland's child market, but the figures from the UK might give an indication of what it's worth. Last year the Guardian Newspaper reported that the consumer power of children is valued at £30 billion sterling (Curley 2005), which should parallel Ireland's experience, assuming that Irish society's higher degree of affluence.

The unique nature of a debate surrounding advertising in schools is based on the extreme psychological vulnerability of children - adults have a stronger ability to be critical and discriminatory about what they believe. Advertisements are designed to manipulate the recipient into wanting something he/she had no previous want of. A good marketer, as the saying goes, is one who creates a need and then allows the product to fill that gap.

Children, in general, do not have the cognitive ability to understand the purpose of advertising or its persuasive content. Young children are like a sponge that absorbs information around them in an uncritical manner. As Deborah Roedder John (Macklin, *ibid*) says, "At the heart of these debates (on children's understanding of advertising) are questions about children's knowledge and beliefs about advertising, as well as assessments of the age at which children attain an 'adultlike' understanding of advertising messages and their content".

Therein lies a huge gray area of debate, with advertisers saying the effects of advertising on children are minimal. Many companies argue that there is no conclusive proof children are influenced by adverts and that today's generation are considerably more media savvy than previous generations – despite the commercial sector spending billions and coming up with increasingly sophisticated means of getting their message across to children.

Parents and pressure groups occupy the opposite end of the spectrum, arguing that the psychological effects of advertising on children are very real and demonstrable. Their fear is that children do not understand the possible deception and persuasive intent of advertising (Macklin, *ibid*). This thesis will not focus on this debate because the existing literature on this argument focuses almost completely on television, film and the internet - not the relatively new and less overt territory of the classroom.

The literature on that argument also focuses on 'passive' advertising, i.e advertising that children watch or see. The advertisements in the classroom often require a much higher degree of interaction with the product or company, like 'colouring in' exercises or token collection schemes. In some cases, students actually 'work' for a company during school time, like Allied Irish Bank's (AIB) scheme whereby transition and fifth year students sets up a 'bank' in one of the school's classrooms (Fogarty 2006).

Similarly, while encroachment on the public spaces of universities and colleges by commercialism is nothing new, this thesis will concentrate exclusively on primary and secondary schools because of the above arguments centered on age and mental capacity. It can reasonably be assumed that third level students have significantly higher media literacy and more robust psychological defenses against advertisers claims. Also third level participation is entirely voluntary, unlike the mandatory attendance at primary and secondary level.

A lot of the information in this thesis will, because of a lack of literature from an Irish perspective, be from first-hand interviews with pressure groups and companies. Any Irish research into the effects of advertising/marketing to children comes from a television/radio perspective.

A major source of information will be the CCFE because it is the first campaign of its kind in Ireland, meaning a lot of the critical information will come from direct interviews with members and from their research. Also, because it is the first organisation of its kind, I met a lot of my contacts through their involvement in the campaign.

Similarly, a lot of the international statistics and reports will come from internet sources because of the difficulty in obtaining original documents from overseas. Many of the companies involved in the advertising campaigns were unwilling to talk about their marketing strategies, and so a lot of their information comes from formal sources like their website or end of year reports, but where possible I got original interviews. My understanding is that this thesis is the first piece of research into the area of in-school marketing in an Irish context and, hopefully, it can be of help to future researchers.

Why is This Issue Important Now?

Although educational marketing advocates are loath to admit it, “free” promotions turn teachers into salespeople, require that they take time away from teaching to keep program records, and force them to push products that may not be the best value or businesses that may not be the best choice for many families – Alex Molnar 1996 (CCFE 2006a).

Health Risks

There are three major arguments against commercialism in the classroom which have recently emerged in this country; the first argues the health risks associated with advertising and that school should be a ‘safe area’ for children. School, they say, should be a place for children to learn free from the psychological manipulation and inherent pressure of advertising.

Parents are concerned that in-school advertising is encouraging their children to live an unhealthy lifestyle, and because the parent is not there beside the child in school, they cannot counter the message of advertising firms. Some marketing executives have picked up on this concern and have given their marketing a more ‘ethical’ face by promoting healthier foods, some of these schemes are discussed in chapter three (‘Le Crunch’, ‘Kids in Action’ etc).

Today’s children’s diet is dominated by a variety of heavily advertised energy dense junk food, leading to a surge in children being diagnosed with type 2 Diabetes – a disease which up until a couple of years ago was almost exclusively found in 50 to 80 year olds (Irish Health

2006). The European Heart Network says that children are too heavily exposed to marketing of foods high in saturated fat, salt and/or sugar on a massive scale (Matthews et al, 2005).

All the major health organisations agree that the advertisement of unhealthy foods to children is a major aspect of the weight problem in Ireland. The European Heart Network's research (cited by Donnellan 2002) found that in Ireland, 54 per cent of all advertisements are for unhealthy foods aimed directly at children.

Shocking EU figures illustrate the problem with no ambiguity, today's children are the fattest in history. In the 25 member states in the EU, a whopping 14 million children are overweight with a further 3 million classed as clinically obese according to a report by the International Obesity Task Force (Condon, 2005).

The Guardian (2006) reported that a quarter of all children in secondary schools in England are now obese, almost double the proportion a decade ago, something the chairman of the National Obesity Forum has called "a public health timebomb".

Doctors are saying today's parents might be the first generation to bury their own children if the health threats associated with junk food are not taken seriously (Irish Health 2006, *ibid*).

Currently one Irish child in five is obese, higher than the European average. The associated health problems are costing the state €1bn a year according to the Irish Heart Foundation (cited in Matthews et al, *ibid*).

"There is a growing and worrying trend towards obesity in Ireland and elsewhere...there is a consistent growth in all countries towards innovative marketing approaches directed at children, *especially in schools and on the internet* - amid increasing concerns by parents and public health experts," says the Chief Executive of the IHF, Michael O'Shea (2005). (My emphasis).

The health risks associated with advertising to children prompted many countries to take action. Restrictions on in-school advertising are currently in place in Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Portugal and Vietnam.

Encouraging your child to eat healthily in school is an uphill struggle argues the advocacy officer of the Children's Rights Alliance of Ireland (CRAI), Sarah Benson (cited in Kerr 2005, page 13). Multinational corporations have massive resources at their disposal and

employ sophisticated marketing techniques, child psychologists and pop stars to get their message through to children. Marketing companies spend millions each year to find out what children find interesting and desirable so they can market their products more effectively, something Naomi Klein (2001, page 87) refers to as 'cool hunting', and in the peer-pressure environment of the classroom, children are under immense pressure to conform to what is considered 'cool' by classmates.

"It's impossible to combat the messages of heavily-financed companies who throw billions into their sponsorships, whereas the government can only spend small amounts on promoting healthy food options. The simple fact is, you're not going to get Britney Spears to chomp into a banana sponsored by the Irish government," argues Sarah Benson (Irish Times, *ibid*).

Education or a Sales Opportunity?

The second argument says commercialism turns the classroom into something it should never be – a sales conference. The commercial sector's involvement in the classroom detracts from the education curriculum and distracts children from their lessons, but perhaps most controversially of all, it puts pressure on children to buy or support certain brands.

Marketers are all too aware of how good salespeople teachers make, says teacher and chairperson of the Campaign for a Commercial Free Education, Joseph Fogarty (2006). "We're educators, not providers of cannon fodder for multinationals".

Schoolchildren are transformed from students to 'an audience' or 'consumers'. In commercial 'education' promotions, students are expected to swallow the sponsor's message at the expense of the critical and questioning process that the school curriculum promotes. In the school curriculum, lessons are student centred but in the commercial agenda, lessons are product based.

"One of the major arguments against these in-school promotions (Tesco, SuperValu etc) is the extremely high levels, some would say unacceptable levels, of group pressure on the children," says Dr. Darach Turley, senior lecturer in Consumer Behavior in DCU (2006). "Even if parents decide they want to make a stand against these promotions, there is no safeguard that their child won't be singled out by the other children or even the teacher. It is like putting a gun to the parents' heads. It is an unacceptable form of pestering".

Taken at face value, it appears that the Department of Education and Science (1991) agree with this assessment. In a circular sent around several times by the department, they say that

‘The Minister requests that schools consider carefully the implications of allowing any situation to develop which would result in parents being put under undue pressure to purchase a particular product.... The Minister requests that school authorities following consultation with staff, to formulate agreed school policies in relation to commercial promotions.’

Which seems like political rhetoric when certain initiatives are clearly supported by Education Ministers – such as CIE and the Independent Newspaper’s ‘Building for the Future’ scheme which was personally endorsed by the former Minister for Education and Science, Noel Dempsey while he held office. Dempsey (2006) says he agrees with the scheme as it helps build up the concept of ‘community’.

‘It is this awareness that makes us enthusiastic supporters of the same concept being promoted, on a much wider scale, in the primary schools amongst the nation’s young citizens of tomorrow,’ he says.

His support attracted considerable criticism because a lot of people believe the Minister for Education should not be supporting any commercial scheme, especially one involving a newspaper which will have a political/cultural/social/commercial agenda.

Also, in order to enter the competition, which has a first prize of €40,000 for the winning school, each student in the school must collect 30 tokens from the Independent and the Sunday Independent newspapers. Thus, a typical single-stream primary school (a school with one class for each year e.g. one junior infants, one senior infants etc) must produce 6,720 tokens in order to take part. A larger two-stream school (a school with two classes for each year) requires a massive 14,400 tokens which can only be obtained by purchasing the Independent newspapers at €1.60 - €2 per copy. Assuming children collected single token editions of the newspaper, this would equate to over €20,000 expenditure (CCFE 2006b). The minister for Education and Science apparently does not see how this jars with the Department of Education’s circular stressing that parents should ‘not be put under undue pressure to purchase a particular product’.

Cash Strapped Schools

The third argument against in-school advertising is primarily economic. Why is it that the second richest country in the world, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD 2005), comes 21st in a list of 27 EU countries when it comes to funding primary and secondary education? And this in a country that had a €6.7bn surplus in last year's budget.

The report also states that between 1995 and 2002, Ireland's spending on primary and secondary education was way behind its growth in GDP. Based on their figures, the Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI 2005) say the government would have to increase spending on primary and secondary education by 25 per cent for each of the next three years in order to be in-line with countries with world class educational systems, like the Scandinavian countries. The increase in funding for the school system for 2006 is way below this recommendation at 10 per cent. The TUI report (2005 *ibid*) says the government is acting "immorally and irresponsibly" by not funding education properly.

'A wealthy family which refused to make a provision for the pressing needs of its children would be considered immoral and irresponsible. A government, awash with funds, which blights the life chances of children by refusing adequate resources to combat disadvantage, is equally immoral.'

"The growth in Ireland's GDP in recent years means we are now rated the second wealthiest nation in the world by the OECD," says the Secretary General of Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI 2005), John White. "We are a rich country which, when it comes to education, operates like a poor country".

At this year's Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) annual conference, one of the country's highest economists, Jim Power (the Chief economist of Friends First – Ireland's leading financial service group), spoke about his experience as treasurer on the board of his children's primary school in "a leafy middle-class suburb in Dublin".

"I was amazed when I discovered they were fundraising for proper toilets and to build a security railing around the school. On Monday mornings, teachers were arriving to find syringes, condoms, beer cans and rubbish lying around the place. We felt it was incumbent to

do something about it but we had to raise €300,000 to do so,” he says. “I hate to think what it’s like in poorer areas of the city or around the country,” (Irish Independent 2006, page 8).

The current Minister for Education and Science, Mary Hannifin, also conceded that her department’s commitment to cut class sizes to a maximum of 20 for pupils below the age of nine will not be met by next year’s elections (Irish Independent 2006, page 8).

This under funding has paved the road for companies to enter the classroom and ‘offer’ to provide facilities. Physical Education (P.E) is a particularly attractive area for marketing companies. The under funding of the P.E curriculum is a particularly sore spot for opponents of in-school commercialism because of the government’s rhetoric about combating the problem of childhood obesity. While simultaneously publicly speaking of the need for physical exercise and a balanced diet for children, the government dropped its PE grant for ‘underprivileged’ schools, allowing companies who sell products of poor nutritional quality to enter the P.E hall. Launched in 2001, the P.E grant allowed schools with poor facilities to take advantage of a grant of between €500 and €1,000. Two years later the initiative was dropped with no replacement.

The result was a flurry of multi-national companies offering ‘free’ sports equipment and sponsorship of school sports. McDonalds seized the opportunity and launched a sponsorship scheme with heavily branded footballs and bibs which saw the logo of one of the most criticised companies when it comes to nutrition and child centred advertising enter 92 per cent of Irish schools (Sunday Tribune 2006, April 9, page 12).

Advertising and sponsoring school sports is a great opportunity because, as a ‘fun’ subject, the company can build a good relationship with the children who enjoy using the equipment with the company logo on it. For companies who have been receiving negative publicity because of the poor nutritional value of their products, sponsoring PE offers them the chance to improve their image. Tesco, The Star/Nike and Supervalu are all currently involved in P.E sponsorship, advertising and promotions in Irish schools and there has also been McDonald’s ‘Go Active GAA’, Cadbury’s ‘Secondary Schools Basketball Champs’, and Coca-Cola’s ‘Rugby Tournament’.

“Schools are providing more and more opportunities for the marketing of goods to children and much of this support is coming from companies whose products are typically contributing to an unhealthy diet – high in fat, sugar and salt,” says the IHF (cited in O’ Regan, 2005).

Many in-school promotions also widen socio-economic gaps. Companies defend their ‘offer’ to give schools free equipment as the company living up to their ‘social responsibility’. However their altruism is questionable as a certain amount of purchases are necessary to be involved in most offers. For example, the Tesco promotion requires vouchers to be collected to redeem equipment – putting pressure on parents who perhaps cannot afford to shop there or have other preferences, like supporting local producers. Or the CIE and Independent Newspaper’s scheme mentioned earlier, it’s too bad if your parents like the Irish Times or the Sun, or cannot afford to shell out €1.50 to €2 everyday.

“Don’t get me wrong, we have nothing against companies offering to fulfil their ‘social responsibility’, but do so with no strings attached,” says the Vice-Chair of CCFE, Niall Smyth (2006b). “Drop the ‘purchase necessary’ rule, allow everybody to have an equal opportunity to enter competitions or get free computers, don’t base it on purchase power. That just widens the gap because those schools in more advantaged areas can afford to enter and get all the offers, whereas this may not be the case in other areas”.

Proceeding Chapters

Marketing in schools is still a relatively new phenomenon here in Ireland, but it is rapidly increasing. Seán Cottrell (2005), the National Director of the Irish Primary Principals’ Network, says when he started as a teacher in 1991, there were maybe a dozen commercial items entering the school through promotions and unsolicited mail. Last year a colleague of his counted the amount of commercial material aimed at children sent to his school and it numbered 350 – working out at almost two items per school day. The effects of such an increase merits looking at.

Chapter two of this thesis will look at the existing literature on the subject with particular emphasis on America because it has the highest level of in-school commercialism. Most of the existing literature on the subject comes from America because of this. Hopefully, it will give the reader an idea of how extensive in-school commercialism is in America, and show the situation Irish schools could find themselves facing if in-school commercialism continues unabated.

Chapter three will look at the Irish situation. It will examine individual examples of current in-school marketing from the marketers’ position as well as from pressure groups. This

chapter aims to deconstruct the offers being made by companies; both in terms of finances needed to participate as well as in terms of the methods they use to get children/parents/teachers/schools to participate.

Chapter four will attempt to outline the possible direction Ireland could be heading, and will recommend what actions should be done to improve the situation. It will also attempt to show where the responsibility of protecting children from advertising lies.

Chapter Two

Most existing literature on commercialism in the classroom comes from America for two reasons; the first is it has by far the highest level of in-school commercialism when compared internationally. The second, because American society is so advanced in terms of capitalism, there are simply more resources and people to conduct the research. So this chapter will focus mainly on the American experience.

Studying America is important because they are the global trendsetters. As the saying goes, when America sneezes Ireland gets the cold. When compared to Ireland, it may appear that the American experience of commercialism in schools is completely alien, but the current Irish experience parallels the American situation twenty or so years ago.

Another interesting element of in-school marketing in America is that, because the companies involved are Public Limited Companies (PLCs) - a person in the eyes of the law - they defend their right to market to children under the provision for freedom of speech in First Amendment of the American constitution, as senior lecturer of consumer behaviour in DCU, Darach Turley (2006), points out. PLCs argue that, under the constitution, they have as much right to tell someone under 18 years of age about their product as another company telling the over 80s market about a product. Non-commercial bodies are not impressed by this argument, and point to the arguments on mental capacity.

Commercialism crept into American schools silently over a period of years with relatively low levels of protest. The same is happening in Ireland right now.

At the heart of allowing commercialism into schools is the dominant economic philosophy of neo-liberalism, which has been at the centre of American politics for decades. Spending, as they say, is good for the economy, it's good for business, it's good for growth, it's good for the country - good Americans express their nationalism through spending. The result has been the involvement of the commercial sector in almost every aspect of American public life. Education being no exception.

Why advertise in schools?

As mentioned in chapter one, there is a wealth of reasons why advertisers target children while they are in school, from the fact that children are the consumers of tomorrow to the absence of parents to give the children guidance. The ‘pester power’ of children is also a huge incentive for companies because they know if they can get their advertising message across to children then the child will pester the parents into buying a particular product/brand.

The value of the in-school market was assessed by McNeal (1999, *Redefining Progress*) who estimated that in America in 1998, the under 14s market spent \$24bn in direct purchases, and the year before they directly influenced household expenditure by another \$188bn and indirectly by a further \$300bn.

But one of the most cited reasons why in-school marketing is an ideal opportunity for companies is that schoolchildren are a captive audience – they cannot leave, they must legally attend until they are sixteen (or, in Ireland, until they have completed the Junior Cert - McCabe 2006) and they can rarely object to what a teacher says (which could be misinterpreted as being disruptive). In this regard, school children represent an unparalleled opportunity for marketers not found anywhere in adult life (with the exception of the prison population, but they are of a reasonable age). This has been a sore point for many groups who disagree with commercialism in schools because

‘School children cannot turn down the sound or walk out of the classroom when the ads come on or the logos appear. Offering these students advertising in the guise of education is unethical and exploitative’ (CCFE 2006c).

The teacher’s role within the classroom is the key to companies using in-school promotions. Teachers are trusted by parents and their students, getting teachers to advocate a product plays on the trust given to them by society. Children, being at an age of extreme psychological vulnerability and willingness to accept what adults say as ‘truth’ will follow whatever tasks the teacher sets them. In the classroom, teachers are the only adult authority. The wish of marketers is to get teachers to become a spokesperson for their product in the classroom.

“At that age the desire to please the teacher is immense, generally children will do whatever the teacher tells them,” says the co-ordinator of advertising and marketing in Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), Rosie Hand (2006).

Peer relations are an immensely important aspect of classroom psychology. The classroom is the first place that a child learns about social interaction, and the experience they have will stay with them for the rest of their lives – “at that age children are making their mind up about the world and they will solidify habits they will have for the rest of their lives,” says the Marketing Director of Renault Ireland, Brian Purcell (2006). And, as marketers are aware, this includes purchasing habits.

From that perspective, making something ‘cool’ to the children with heavy marketing will have a two-fold effect. Firstly, those brand names that have been deemed ‘cool’ by classmates will influence a child’s/parent’s buying decision. For Example, if a child is shopping with his/her parent for clothes, the child will use ‘pester power’ to influence the parent into buying a brand that is ‘cool’ in the eyes of the child’s peers. The buying habits formed at that age stay with the child for most of their lives. For companies, the classroom offers an early opportunity to solidify a child’s relationship with a brand.

“...the idea is to get to children using your brand as early on as possible because research shows that someone who has a preferred brand between 7-18 years of age will still be buying that brand 20 later,” says Rosie Hand (ibid).

The second effect is that there will be an adherence to the ‘cool’ brand - the peer-pressure of interclass relations will mean that children will stick to the preferred brand of his/her classmates. The will of children to conform and fit in during the primary and secondary school years is perhaps stronger than anytime in their adult life. This area of child psychology is well known by teachers and principals in schools with a required uniform. The justification of having a uniform is often said to be that uniforms are ‘anti-bullying’ because it prevents children whose parents can afford ‘cool’ brands from bullying those students who may not be able to afford those brands. This is especially true in areas of socio-economic disadvantage. The ‘anti-bullying’ initiative of school uniforms appears to be undermined by commercial enterprise in schools, especially because most of the ‘offers’ are based on purchase power.

The division of schools by the government based on gender, age and socio-economic background (the area a school is based in often determines the background of the student) is an added bonus to marketers because all the demographics pre-exist. Companies can target their audience with brilliant precision, courtesy of the school system. In Ireland, Renault’s ‘Seatbelt Sheriff’ is a perfect example of this. The initiative is targeted at seven to eight year

olds and all Renault has to do is send out (unsolicited) post to first and second classes around the country (CCFE 2006d).

Another big prize for companies is the Public Relations (PR) value of in-school sponsorship and advertising. Companies with unethical histories can make sure the next generation grows up with very different images of the company than those held by previous generations (McDonalds is a great example).

The psychological advantage of advertising in the school environment lies in “the deeply ingrained cultural perception of schools as places of learning. The potential of teachers to be effective salespeople, coupled with the powerful influence of peer relations makes school, in the words of one in-school marketing firm: ‘the ideal time to influence attitudes, build long-term loyalties, introduce new products, test market, promote sampling and trial usage and, above all, to generate immediate sales.’” (Consumers’ Union Education Services 1990, cited by the Socialist Worker 2006).

Tapping into the school market – innovative ways of getting commercial messages to children in the U.S

Channel One

Perhaps one of the most innovative means of advertising to schoolchildren came with the advent of Channel One. Owned by K-111 Communications and the Youth News Network, Channel One is a television station specifically for the classroom which reaches an audience of seven million teenagers in 11,000 schools across America daily (Channel One 2006). Fitting in with the 50 per cent increase in advertising aimed at children from 1993-96 (Macklin 1999, page 8), Channel One shows twelve minutes of current affairs news, specifically angled for teenagers, with two minutes of advertising (also specifically aimed at teenagers) in between.

Schools do not receive any direct funding for allowing the station into classrooms, but instead they are allowed access to the audiovisual equipment for other lessons after the show is broadcast, in a practice described as “educational prostitution” by the National Director of the Irish Primary Principals’ Network, Séan Cottrell (2006).

As Naomi Klein (2001) points out, the success of Channel One comes from its unique boast of being able to offer companies access to the classroom. It

‘...charges advertisers top dollar for accessing its pipeline to the classroom – twice as much as regular TV stations because, with mandatory attendance and no-channel changing or volume control, it can boast something no other station can: “No audience erosion”.’

Volume cannot be adjusted during broadcast or commercials, nor can the TV be switched off to ensure the students’ full attention and to maximise the chances of students absorbing the message. For a 30 second advert slot, Channel One charges \$200,000 (Hoynes 1997).

The station introduces students to a hegemonic pro-business, nationalistic and neo-liberal curriculum evident in its news without debate (a reflection of the national newspapers’ ‘news values’).

And, as this pro-advertising and pro-corporate stance suggests, the news values of Channel One are quite right wing, capitalistic and conservative in nature.

‘The most frequent type of source to appear on these programs is government officials and politicians, who account for more than one-quarter of all sources and more than one-third of source time’ (Hoynes, *ibid*).

The Channel one website is also framed with government sponsored ‘anti-drugs’ images and interactive messages, clearly a part of the news station’s political and social agenda (which will also favour the ‘clean-cut’ image that advertisers will want associated with their product). The reason why it is so important to scrutinise the message of Channel One lies in the fact that it ‘...is neither accountable to educators and parents, nor connected to the communities where it beams its news program’ so ‘there is good reason to scrutinize the moral lessons that Channel One teaches’ (Hoynes, *ibid*).

ZapMe!

A similar initiative to bring advertisers into the classroom via the internet was launched by Californian company, ZapMe! Offered free to schools in 1998, ZapMe! is an in-school internet browser.

In order to use the 'free' browser on the school's computers, children must first fill out an online registration form to receive a personal login number. The registration form requires children to provide details of their gender, age and address which is then sold to marketing companies to help target children more specifically, according to the Associated Press (cited in Ruskin, 1998). The child's online activity is also logged, so marketers can get an idea of individual children's interests and preferences. The next time the child logs on they are hit with advertisements that are micro-targeted to them (Klein, *ibid*, page 94) in a practice that has been described as borderline child abuse by Ralph Nader (Ruskin, *ibid*).

When a school agrees to use the 'free' service offered by ZapMe!, the contract stipulates that the children must bring the company's marketing materials home to their parents at least three times a year (Sullivan 2001). Another contract stipulation that comes with the 'free' internet browsers scheme says children are required to use the computers for a minimum of four hours a day, with advertisements and banners constantly being displayed at the bottom of the screen.

The company has since publicly denied the practice, saying it just uses students' details for 'statistics'. "We absolutely do not compile data for marketing purposes and we don't provide any personal data about any children in school," said ZapMe! CEO, Rick Inatome, in a television interview (Salon 2000).

While Nader's denunciation of ZapMe! is characteristic of the anti-corporate politician, the support lent by then President, Bill Clinton, came as a shock to many. While Clinton was using political rhetoric around the issue of e-privacy saying, "first and foremost, we have to safeguard our citizens' privacy" in his State of The Union Address on January 27th 2000, he was involved in appointing the ZapMe! CEO, Rick Inatome, to the National Campaign Against Youth Violence board of directors (Ruskin and Metrock 2000). In-school marketing had just gotten thumbs up from the White House.

Advertising Laws and Self-Censorship

Why can't parents just refuse the schools permission to allow their child to be subjected to advertisements on the internet? Perhaps it is because parents do not know that if a school makes an agreement with an internet company, then the school's willingness constitutes parental consent.

‘The Rule notes that COPPA (Children Online Privacy Protection Act) does not preclude schools from acting as intermediaries in the notice and consent process, or from serving as agents of parents. Where a school has an agency relationship with an operator that explicitly authorizes information collection, the Rule allows the operator to presume parental consent.’ (Federal Trade Commission 1998).

Once a school accepts, so too does the parent and child. Even if parents are opposed to this legal point on ethical grounds, many are so afraid of handicapping their children’s education by denying them access to facilities used by other children that they cannot boycott the promotions. Should a parent have an objection, they will censor themselves.

COPPA also recommends that schools help educate students and parents about online privacy issues and safe surfing practices, but does not offer any resources to help nor does it have a plan in place to do so.

Schools Selling ‘Exclusive Rights’ and the ‘Coke Day’ Incident

Not all in-school promotions are as overt as Channel One and ZapMe! Some companies have deals with administration in cash-strapped schools to hold an effective monopoly on products sold and advertised on premises.

‘...many school boards have given exclusive vending rights to the Pepsi-Cola Company in exchange for generally undisclosed lump sums. What Pepsi negotiates in return varies from district to district. In Toronto, it gets to fill the 560 public schools with its vending machines, to block the sale of Coke and other competitors, and to distribute ‘Pepsi Achievement Awards’ and other goodies emblazoned with the company’s logo...at South Fork High School in Florida, there is a blunt, hard sell arrangement: the school has a clause in its Pepsi contract committing the school to “make its best effort to maximise the sales opportunities for Pepsi-Cola products,”’ (Klein, *ibid*, page 91).

This clearly infringes on the school as an agenda-free place of learning. In-school contracts and marketing are not limited to the Pepsi Company; others involved include Coca-Cola, Taco Bell (who are winning the battle of the ‘school cafeteria market’, having 20,000 American schools stocking its frozen burrito product line to compete with the generic cafeteria), Pizza Hut (a good bit behind in the cafeteria battle ‘capturing’ a mere 4,000 schools) and Subway (bottom of the pile with just 767 schools) (Klein, *ibid*, page 90). Again,

this makes a mockery of attempts by parents to get their child to eat healthily, or on in-school government initiatives to combat childhood obesity.

Some companies are getting students from cash-strapped schools to do their marketing work for them, rewarding the school with 'donations'. Channel One is a major player in delivering children to companies by

'...frequently enlisting 'partner' teachers to develop class lessons in which students are asked to create a new ad campaign for Snapple or to redesign Pepsi's vending machines. In New York and Los Angeles, high-school students have created thirty-second animated spots for Starburst fruit candies, and students in Colorado Springs designed Burger King ads to hang in their school buses. Finished assignments are passed on to the companies and the best entries win prizes and may even be adopted by the companies – all subsidized by the taxpayer-funded school system' (Klein, *ibid*, page 94).

One of the most controversial and well publicised incidents illustrating how commercialism effects education came in 1998 when the Coca-Cola company ran a competition asking schools to come up with a strategy to maximise the distribution of Coke Coupons to students, with the winning school receiving a \$500 'prize'. Naturally, those schools contracted to Pepsi were excluded from the competition.

Greenbriar High School wanted to win the competition badly and set up a 'Coke Day', where students had to wear Coke T-shirts, pose for a photograph in an arrangement spelling out the company's logo and attend lectures to learn about the product. A nineteen-year-old student, unhappy with the school's sycophantic approach to commercialism, decided to wear a Pepsi-Cola T-shirt in an act of defiance and found himself suspended for his actions, according to *The Washington Post* (1998, cited at Centre for a Commercial Free Public Education, 1998).

While the student defended his actions as being motivated by a wish not to follow trends that everyone else does because he sees himself as an individual, the principal defended her actions saying that the student should have acted more appropriately because "we had the regional president of Coke fly in from Atlanta to do us the honour of being resource speakers. These students knew we had guests" (*San Francisco Examiner*, 1998). Coke, although not an official part of the school curriculum, clearly has preference in this case.

It was an important incident because it showed the commercial sector's influence on the education curriculum and it also showed how schools are dependent on the commercial

sector's money - so much so that the school in question took the company's side over the right one of its students to refuse to conform to the whims of the commercial sector.

The principal's response is typical of quotes responding to those critical of in-school commercialism. When teachers, parents or indeed the principal of the schools are quoted in the existing literature, they come across as having either singularly failed to grasp the real issues at the heart of the debate, or they simply wish to glaze over them in favour of the sponsor's view.

Perhaps most startling of all is that in the existing literature on in-school marketing, it is extremely rare to hear those involved in the running of schools or in-school advertising criticise governmental under funding of schools, or the pressure subsequently put on schools to allow the commercial sector into the classroom, perhaps because they fear that a vocally critical school would not be looked on favourably by future 'investors'. This trend was reflected in my own interviews with companies involved in in-school advertising in Ireland, whose PR people would rather not mention the issue of under funding, or when they do they pass it off as a factor of 'living in the real world'.

"What can the government do? They have the rising health bill, they have to raise taxes for public transport...so there are a lot of the things that the government have to look after and we're just happy to be able to help...there are a lot of things in schools that would not happen if it wasn't for the commercial sector, like Tesco's computers for schools scheme," argues Brian Purcell, the marketing director of Renault (2006), when questioned on whether he believes under funding is allowing the commercial sector access to schools.

In the next chapter we shall examine some of the commercial schemes entering the Irish school system this year with help from CCFE and the marketing companies who were involved in the promotions. Hopefully it will go some way to showing the wealth of commercial pressure that is put on schoolchildren, which the Irish government simultaneously condemns and condones.

Chapter Three

The Social, Personal and Health section of the primary curriculum was revised to make children more media savvy by the Irish government in 1991. One of the main provisions of the revision was to make children critically aware of advertising and its purposes. It came at a time when the targeting of schoolchildren by companies had increased significantly, and the move was welcomed.

“There is a need for children to be educated in media matters. Not being media literate today is like not being able to read at the time the printing press was invented,” says the chief executive of the National Parents Council (NPC), Fionnuala Kilfeather (2001).

Under the revised curriculum, children in first and second class are supposed to examine advertising aimed specifically at children and discuss the purpose of advertising. In third and fourth class, the children are supposed to learn about advertising’s persuasive content and the methods they use (‘free’ gifts, offers etc). In fifth and sixth class, children are to discuss the different forms of advertising and the messages it promotes e.g. hidden links between body image and products – if you drink X brand you will look good and be attractive to the opposite sex (CCFE 2006e).

Some teachers, however, argue that the government is undermining its own curriculum by allowing commercialism in schools with no specific guidelines, and by supporting certain forms of advertising both implicitly and explicitly. As CCFE (2006e, *ibid*) puts it, ‘school should make students more critically aware of advertising, not pressure them to witness and participate in marketing driven schemes.’

While simultaneously trying to give children the message that advertisements are trying to get them to buy something or make them perceive their desires as needs (Consuming Kids 1999), teachers are also engaged in trying to get children to be involved in commercial ventures for the benefit of the school, which Dr Darach Turley (2006) calls a “double-standard”.

Because of a lack of resistance to in-class marketing, it is becoming an industry unto itself as schools become a valid targeting ground says Joe Fogarty (Sunday Tribune 2006, page 12). Real Events Solutions in Cork is one of the first and most prominent companies to identify this new and emerging market in Ireland, and aims to create brand awareness in schools by

organising commercial events for schoolchildren. It is an organisation set up and run by former educators. The trend in the company's growth mirrors the overall growing trend of in-class marketing; in 1998 they had promotions in one school with 24 students, in 2004 they were involved with 354 schools and 12,000 students. Amongst their services they boast an ability to 'create links between schools and relevant funders' (Real Events Solutions 2006a).

The Department of Education's policy towards in-school commercial promotions is that private companies are free to promote their business in whatever way they see fit provided they are in accordance with accepted marketing practices and comply with advertising regulations (which does not have any specific provisions for schools).

They also say that while 'the Department recognises the sensitivities attached to the issue of promotion initiatives linking schools, pupils and parents to commercial activity,' they do not see a problem with in-school marketing/advertising provided 'that such schemes do not place undue pressure on parents in terms of requiring additional expenditure, that children are protected from inappropriate promotional activity and that the schemes are linked to desirable projects serving educational initiatives' (Department of Education and Science 2006).

They continue on to say that it is up to individual schools to 'formulate agreed policy' on in-school commercialism – basically absolving the department of any responsibility. However, as we examine the current in-school promotions, we will see that there is indeed undue pressure on parents and children for additional expenditure and that most of the promotions are not linked to projects serving educational initiatives.

The Current Promotions

Tesco's Three In-Class Promotions

Tesco are the busiest of all companies involved in in-school advertising/promotion this year, with no fewer than three offers running. The most prominent is their 'Computers for Schools', an import from their successful scheme in the UK which has been running for 14 years (Tesco Corporate Responsibility Review 2005).

The way the scheme works is for every €10 spent in Tesco, the person is given a voucher which can be exchanged by schools for 'prizes'. It is currently in its 9th year here in Ireland

and claims that it ‘has one clear objective – to help the schools of Ireland to get more computer equipment, accessories and software into their classrooms!’ (Tesco Corporate Responsibility Review, *ibid*).

In its corporate responsibility review (*ibid*), there is a quote from Graham Long, a design and technology teacher in Oxfordshire, explaining why he believes it to be “the best company collection scheme we’re involved in.”

“The promotion dates are **put on the school calendar and every classroom has its own collection point**. Computers have been put into rooms that would not have otherwise been equipped,” he goes on to explain (my emphasis). After 14 years of promoting itself to schools in Britain, Tesco has managed to get a slot on the school calendar and have a collection point put in every classroom. It is now an official part of the school curriculum, and the same is happening in Ireland.

In Ireland, schools are sent unsolicited post from Tesco informing them of the offer and telling them that over the last eight years Tesco has given Irish Schools over €9.5 million worth of computers. To take full advantage of the offer, all the school has to do is collect vouchers from the children by asking them to get their parents to shop in Tesco.

To further ‘help’ the school encourage children’s parents to participate, Tesco enclose a letter for each parent which not only asks that the parents shop in Tesco, but also suggests asking ‘your friends and relatives – in fact anyone you know – to collect vouchers for us! What about setting up a collection point at your place of work?’ (Help Your Local School 2006). Parents have 10 weeks between March 6th and May 14th to collect as many tokens as possible.

Further appeals from schools for Tesco vouchers typically appear in parish newsletters, local papers and school websites as teachers and pupils set about promoting the brand and appealing for purchases in Tesco (CCFE 2006f).

On the surface it appears to be a genuinely decent offer to help schools out. However, despite Tesco’s insistence that their ‘one clear objective’ is to help Irish schools get computer equipment, some say that this is just another example of cynical marketing designed to put pressure on children and parents to shop in Tesco.

This became even more apparent when I called up and asked if it would be possible for children from local schools to collect vouchers from customers leaving Tesco stores on

Saturday evening, but was told that we cannot do this as it is against company policy (Tesco, 2006a). In other words, you can't collect those tokens because those people are already shopping in Tesco - what we want you to do is to encourage other people who perhaps shop elsewhere to come to our stores. The schoolchildren are effectively turned into Tesco promoters.

In terms of value, to get one 'free' standard PC, which retails for under €700 online (and is cheaper when bought in bulk), a school has to generate about €215,000 worth of shopping in Tesco. Similarly, to get a 'free' iMac computer, retailing for about €1,400, schools must generate over a quarter of a million euro (€261,600) worth of shopping at Tesco. It works out that for every €10 voucher; just 0.04 cent goes back to schools (CCFE 2006f, *ibid*)

For the school to just receive a 'free' box of floppy discs (retailing at €12.50), they must generate €4,000 worth of shopping (CCFE 2006f, *ibid*). The basic message from this token collection scheme is that the quality of your child's school's facilities depends on where you shop and how much purchase power you have. It is easy to conclude how more those living in 'privileged areas' will benefit substantially more than those living in 'underprivileged areas', thus widening the gap in educational facilities based on socio-economics.

And, as Tesco's unsolicited post says, token collections can be relevant to the curriculum also – 'Why not use the vouchers for counting practice in maths class?' Another good way of putting the company's slogan in front of the children (Very Little Helps 2006).

Another one of Tesco's in-class schemes is their 'Young Cooks 2006' initiative. Children (between the ages of 10 and 16, again easily targeted) are encouraged to send in a recipe for a main course and desert that will feed four persons using under €25 worth of products, all of which must be available from Tesco (Do you have a Flair for Food 2006).

Tesco have enlisted the help of celebrity chef, Caroline Morohan, to help its promotion. Again, schools are made aware of the promotion by unsolicited post containing posters (with Tesco's 'every little helps' slogan emblazoned on them) and 20 leaflets to distribute. While the scheme should be commended for promoting healthy eating, it is condemned for its heavy slogan use and, as CCFE (2006g) points out, it 'excludes students who may wish to produce ethnic or regional dishes.'

At the beginning of the last school year, Tesco launched its second token collection scheme – 'Sport for Schools and Clubs'. Again there is a time limit for token collection, between

September 12th and November 6th, and the principal is the same - for every €10 spent you get a voucher (Tesco 2005). The arguments against Tesco's other token collection scheme apply here too. As does the high levels of expenditure needed to obtain sports equipment - €900 for a football captain's armband worth €3.50 is just one example. To help the promotion along, Tesco have celebrity endorsements, bright shiny posters, collection boxes and the pressure inducing wall chart which gauges each individual child's (and their family's) effort to raise funds for the school.

The use of wallcharts is particularly controversial for this reason, and blatantly goes against the guidelines set out by the Department of Education and Science which say that the commercial sector's in-class promotions should 'not place undue pressure on parents'. Hanging the wall chart up in the class encourages children to compete against one another, it gets the company's logo into the classroom and may lead to bullying because no child wants to be seen to be the one to contribute the least to the school effort, or to be seen to be poorer than the other children, and no parent wants their child singled out by the other children or the teacher.

To further maximise expenditure in their stores, Tesco also recommend having 'inter-class competitions with a prize for the class that collects the most vouchers', thus putting more pressure on the children. If classes in the same school are competing to collect the most amount of vouchers, pressure is put on each child to contribute as much as possible to the class effort. Aside from the pressure it puts on a child, it also has the potential to inspire bullying. How can a parent abstain from the promotion knowing they are effectively singling out their own child?

Tesco's 'Computers for Schools' won the Business in the Community (BITC) award in 1998. This is an award for innovative marketing that improves a company's image by being attached to a cause.

"The Business in the Community, Awards for Excellence highlight not only great examples of businesses 'doing good in society', but also how this kind of activity can produce direct business benefits," says Sir Christopher Bland, Chairman, British Telecom (BITC 2006).

Or as Niall Smyth (2006a) puts it, the award is "for businesses who have improved their image by what is referred to as 'cause related marketing'. So you attach yourself to a cause and it heightens your reputation in the community".

SuperValu's 'Kids in Action'

SuperValu are involved in a 'vouchers for sports equipment' promotion like Tesco, but on closer examination there are subtle differences. Basically, the premise works the same way, parents have a set time in which to collect as many vouchers as possible, and vouchers are handed out for every €10 spent.

The scheme runs from January 16th to March 26th, the period before Tesco begin their promotion. During the period, children are conditioned by a strong media campaign, which includes celebrity endorsements from Sonia O'Sullivan and Ray D'Arcy, and by the school to get their parents to shop in SuperValu. As soon as the promotion is over, the Tesco promotion begins, meaning the children have to be reprogrammed to get their parents to shop in Tesco. Supermarkets are being accused of being involved 'in a bidding war for commercial control of schools' (CCFE, 2006h).

The 'Kids in Action' appears to be one part of a larger community based campaign to get children more active and fight childhood obesity. It comes under attack because it is the most overtly profit orientated part of SuperValu's campaign.

Since 2004, SuperValu have been supporting Buntús, a non-commercial scheme developed by the Irish Sports Council, which provided schools throughout Ireland with P.E equipment, instructional cards and P.E training sessions for teachers. The Sports Council explained SuperValu's interest in the initiative when it said that, 'SuperValu will in-turn promote its "community positioning" as well as its nutritious own-brand range with Buntús,' (CCFE 2006h, *ibid*).

They have also been involved in research with the Irish Universities Nutrition Alliance (IUNA) with the aim of 'increasing physical activity levels amongst the 5 - 12yrs age group and encouraging them and their parents to take a fresh look at nutrition and their daily diets' (Irish Sports Council 2006).

While parents and children are still put under the same pressure to shop in SuperValu to enhance their school's facilities, SuperValu's internal structure makes its 'Kids in Action' promotion very different Tesco's scheme says its PR officer, Sue Lemon-Diver (2006).

"SuperValu is individually owned so there is 'localised' empowerment and decisions are made at this level. Because we are not really Dublin based – we have most of our success outside

Dublin – we have managers in shops who have lived in these areas all their lives and know a lot of the people. In this company we don't hand out directives to each branch and say 'you have to do this' like they do in most supermarket chains, we give the individual managers advice and it is up to them if they wish to implement it. Some of our stores are not even participating in the 'Kids in Action' promotion.

“So what happened in a lot of the stores with the token collection scheme is some of the managers set up a collection point for unwanted tokens and, at the end of the week, those tokens are shared out to local schools. I'm not saying this happens in every one of our stores, but it's happening in places like Middleton in Co. Cork,” she argues.

However, just like the Tesco scheme, massive amounts of spending must be generated in SuperValu shops in order to obtain the most basic of equipment. A basketball skills coaching bag can be acquired when parents spend €70,000 in SuperValu, even an €18 Gaelic Football cannot be obtained until €3,950 is spent in their shops (CCFE press release, 2006).

Dublin City Classmates Magazine vs. Primary Times Magazine

The single significant difference between these two magazines is that Dublin City Classmates Magazine (DCCM) is fully paid for by Dublin City Council and is non-commercial, whereas the Primary Times (PT) is completely paid for by the advertisers (and is free to schools). The difference between the two is an apt metaphor for the differences between an education system paid for by the state and is commercial free, and a commercial sector subsidised education system.

First published in 1967, DCCM reaches 45,000 children in the Dublin area. The topics it covers are awareness about waste management, recycling, the rising multi-culturalism in Ireland, events in Dublin City Libraries and galleries and has many sections in Gaelic. There are competitions, with no entry fee or catches attached, giving children the chance to win book tokens.

It does not seek to influence spending in any way and is non-profit (CCFE 2006i).

On the other hand, the PT works almost as a franchise, with each regional editor having some content control but with certain common articles/advertisements handed down from above.

There are five franchisees in Ireland. Because the magazine is free, it relies completely on revenue from advertising. As such, it is subject to the terms of the advertisers.

Companies involved in advertising in PT have commended the magazine for giving them access to the four to eleven year old market. It costs between €175 and €1,500 to advertise in the magazine and recent advertisements include McDonalds, Tesco, Disney, Cheesestrings, shopping centres (aimed at the parents) and summer camps (CCFE 2006 and Kearney 2006).

The Irish PT (2006) outlines what it has to offer the commercial sector on the front page of its website which says it is 'Allocated to individual classes, it is then taken home by the children themselves, where, our research tells us, it remains for up to 12 weeks.'

Or as the Marketing Manager of Tesco Ireland, Aidan Cahill also testifies on the home page of the magazine's website, "We have found the magazine very effective as a vehicle to target school going children and their parents".

The editor of the Kildare/Meath/Wicklow franchise, Orla Kearney (2006), says that they don't have to seek advertisers, the advertisers come to them.

"Many advertisers specify what they want and we are happy enough to facilitate them. The magazine is free and so is paid for by the advertising. But generally we don't allow adverts on the front page. The Gaiety was doing a pantomime of Aladdin and wanted to have an advert on the front page, we couldn't fully do that so we put a recognisable image on the front, in this case the genie. The full advert is then somewhere in the magazine," she says.

The AIB 'Build a Bank Challenge'

This promotion is 'an exciting challenge to 5th and transition year students to run their own school bank with the support of AIB' (Level2, 2006). This is a promotion set up by the Real Events Company. Once a school agrees to take part in the promotion, a classroom is converted into an AIB bank (to the anger of those against in-class commercialism, who criticise AIB for taking away more resources from already under-resourced schools), and children are interviewed for the six available positions from manager to teller. Children are then 'working' for the AIB group, and have duties including 'sourcing new customers to open AIB accounts through the School Bank'. Other duties include

‘Encouraging regular savings, and new ways to bank such as Phone & Internet Banking. The Student Bank Team will also have responsibility for providing ongoing customer service for their customers and keeping accurate financial records - in fact, everything it takes to run a bank!’ (Level2, *ibid*).

AIB benefits by getting the children to find new customers for them and the children do all the groundwork – courtesy of the taxpayers’ money. As Niall Smyth (2006b) points out, people tend to stick to whatever bank they sign up to first, he still uses the bank account that he opened as a transition year student.

Unbelievably, AIB defend their scheme saying that it is very relevant to the school curriculum under business studies, marketing, English, media studies (using the media for advertising and marketing, not critically analysing content), maths, art, computers/technology and what AIB calls the ‘hidden curriculum’ i.e. interpersonal and social skills.

The chairperson of CCFE, Joe Fogarty (2006), says he has contacted AIB and told them of his intention to “set up a school in one of their offices in town just as they have set up banks in our classrooms. So far we have not received a reply.”

Independent Newspapers/CIE: Building for the Future

The ‘Building for the Future’ scheme is in the unique situation in the in-school marketing world because it is personally endorsed by the former Minister for Education and Science, Noel Dempsey. This has angered the groups against commercialism in schools because it is a blatant contradiction of the circular Minister Dempsey’s own department sent around to schools (see chapter one).

Started in 2000, it claims to be ‘the largest and best-supported initiative ever run among primary schools in Ireland’ with 1,500 primary schools taking part last year. The requirements to enter the competition are outlined in chapter one. There is a top prize of €60,000 for the winning school, and a host of other prizes to be won. The school receives a ‘prize’ of a Mitsubishi TV/DVD combi unit worth €379 just for entering the competition (Building for the Future 2006) – at a cost of €20,000 worth of spending on the Independent and Sunday Independent for a typical two-stream school (CCFE 2006b). A school with 250 pupils will have to spend €10,312.50 on the Independent just to enter the competition.

The promotional material the school receives is similar those used by the supermarket - a brochure, posters, collector's cards, a wall chart and a letter explaining the promotion 'which you might like to photocopy and give to pupils to take home' (CCFE 2006b, *ibid*). All the materials given to children are heavily branded with the company's logo.

National Safety Council / Renault: Seatbelt Sheriff

This scheme is micro-targeted at seven to eight year olds, an "age children are making their mind up about the world and they will solidify habits they will have for the rest of their lives," says the Marketing Director of Renault, Brian Purcell (2006). While, unlike the other above scheme, no purchase is necessary, the brand presence is heavily present.

Renault say they are fulfilling their 'social responsibility', and are using 'pester power' to get children to wear their seatbelts and pester adults to wear theirs. Working in conjunction with the National Safety Council, Renault encourages children to 'buckle up', and all you have to do to become a 'Seatbelt Sheriff' is to take a pledge to always wear a seatbelt.

Again, schools are informed of the initiative by unsolicited post containing a booklet, posters, and certificates featuring the Seatbelt Pledge, stickers and badges all featuring the Renault logo. Alternatively, a certificate and badge can both be downloaded after the pledge is taken, both with large Renault symbols and their logo - 'Renault. The safest car you can drive.' It is interesting to note that the 'Seatbelt Sheriff', just like all the in-school marketing initiatives, is a cartoon logo because children "feel child actors are too cheesy and don't find them credible," says the co-ordinator of advertising and marketing in DIT, Rosie Hand (2006).

Despite the omnipresent logo and slogan, and saying that the reason they specifically target seven to eight year olds because it is at this point they "solidify habits they will have for the rest of their lives", Renault say this is not an attempt to solidify brand/consumer relations at an early age.

"We try to keep out branding to a minimum but I really don't think the kids give a damn about our brand so it's not an attempt to build brand awareness...we saw this as an opportunity to reduce fatalities on the roads, especially for children," says Mr Purcell.

While agreeing that the 'Seatbelt Sheriff' has more curricular relevance than most promotions, CCFE (2006d) argue that

‘Giving children badges, stickers, posters or certificates carrying the blatant assertion that Renault are “The safest cars you can drive” is to bias and commercialise this subject in an inappropriate manner. The placing of a corporate logo on such materials (including the Seatbelt Sheriff’s uniform itself) creates, we feel, an unfair and unproven association in the minds of children. Young children should not be wearing badges with company logos on them in schools – they are not to be “branded” by any cowboy advertiser.’

Le Crunch/Dunnes Stores: Health Heroes

Again the school are informed of this by unsolicited post from Real Events Solutions containing an information pack for teachers on healthy eating and the importance of apples, all of which are heavily branded with the Dunnes Stores, Air France and Le Crunch logos.

To enter the competition, children must make a poster which features the logos of the above companies and must mention Le Crunch in the title or slogan. The winning entry will have their work displayed in Dunnes Stores shops nationwide. To encourage teachers to promote the competition to their students, they are told that once they enter their students into the competition they will be put into a draw to win flights to Paris courtesy of Air France. It appears to have worked too, last year just fewer than 3,000 students participated (Real Events Solutions, 2006b).

While, in terms of nutrition, this campaign has more merit than most of the promotions, the heavy branding of materials and bribe aimed at teachers is heavily condemned by CCFE (2006j).

The Coca-Cola Factory Tour

These are just some of the current commercial promotions running in schools at the moment. Others include ‘EdAlive: Community Software Plan’ (educational software), ‘Spar Kids’, ‘Scholastic Book Fair’, ‘GAA and McDonalds: Catch and Kick’, ‘Domestos: Germcatchers’ and ‘Irish Daily Star and Nike: Biggest Sports Giveaway’.

One promotion which has been going for years, runs throughout the school year and has practically no educational value is the Coca-Cola tour for schools (primary and secondary).

School children are taken out of their usual lessons and brought to the Coca-Cola factory where they are brought around the premises

‘Allowing pupils to learn the history behind the world’s number one soft drink in a way that is both fun and educational...(the tour) draws over 30,000 visitors every year from schools around the country.’ (Coca-Cola Bottlers Ireland, 2006).

They then

‘Learn about the magical world of Coca-Cola, its origins and, of course, its beginnings here in Ireland.’ (Coca-Cola Bottlers Ireland, 2006 *ibid*).

The story children are told is designed to build up the mythology around the company and “get to the imagination of the students”, says the organiser of the School Tour Program and former teacher, Tom Garret (2006). The tour takes in all stages of primary and secondary school children from first class to sixth year.

The children are told a story about how Coca-Cola has a secret ingredient and only two people in the world know about it and that’s why it is so special. In the mind of a child, this is very impressive. Children are then asked a series of questions about the company and for every right answer they are given a free can of Coca-Cola. The lecturer also has a catchphrase that he repeats over and over and the children repeat it in the classroom for weeks afterwards, ‘Give that man/woman a can of Coke!!’

Throughout the story the lecturer maintains eye contact with the children and when he sees a child’s eyes wandering he stops, clicks his fingers and says he will not continue until everybody’s eyes are on him and he has their full attention. This is a form of hypnosis (Fogarty 2006).

“I’m a retired primary teacher, and you need this kind of background to do this job. We take in a maximum of 60 children in one tour and it can be hard to keep them under control. We attract schools from all over the country even from Donegal and Cork - they come down to Dublin for the day and take in the factory as part of the outing,” says Tom Gary. “We had one teacher from a convent school call up because she had been correcting leaving certificate papers during the summer and loads of students had written about the Coca-Cola Company for their business case study. She was amazed that so many students knew so much about the

company and we explained to her about the tour. When the school year re-started, she had arranged for her class to come visit the factory.”

While the company maintains that it ‘respects all classrooms as commercial free zone(s)’ (Coca-Cola bottlers 2006, *ibid*), the tour is available to primary schools as well as secondary schools.

Chapter Four

The Pressure Chain

Having looked at the issues at the heart of the in-school commercialism and having heard the arguments from both the commercial sector and those opposed to the practice, it can definitely be concluded that children/parents/teachers and schools are all under pressure from the commercial sector.

While the degree of pressure put on children/parents/school by in-school commercialism varies from promotion to promotion, it is nonetheless apparent that the pressure does exist.

The pressure seems to filter down from above. Governmental under funding makes in-roads for commercialism in schools, forcing cash-strapped schools accept whatever offers they can to improve facilities. Schools are struggling to get as much out of commercial promotions as they can, not just to improve their resources, but also because they are in competition with other schools for resources. Parents will send their children to the school with the best educational facilities, so schools are vying for potential students and funds (the Irish school system allocates funds to schools based on the number of children in each school – Department of Education and Science 2006). Once the promotions begin, a sort of self-regulating pressure system amongst schools is created.

The principals of these schools are under enormous pressure to provide good facilities for existing students while trying to attract future students. Consequently, he/she has to accept and promote whatever commercial scheme is going, sometimes going so far as to mention commercial schemes in Parish letters, local papers and on their school website (Tesco's 'Computers for Schools' scheme – CCFE 2006f). They then pass the promotions onto the school's teachers to give to the children, who will pass it onto their parents.

The teachers, under pressure from the principal to improve the school's resources, accept the promotions. Teachers are not exempt from inter-peer pressure either; for the school to perform better all the teachers must work together. If one teacher decides that a promotion is unethical and decides to boycott without the support of the others, they will come under

pressure from other teachers, the principal and possibly the children in their class ('How come class X are allowed to enter but we're not?'). Parents may similarly exert pressure on teachers to participate because they want their children's school to have the best of facilities.

Children are perhaps under the most pressure because they are the bargaining chips in all this. The burden of commercial promotions filter down to them. The success a school has in a particular promotion depends on how well the children respond, and so there is an incentive for the school to apply pressure. They are expected to participate themselves and, in many cases, to 'encourage' their parents to participate. The inter-peer relations also have a regulation effect, as children do not want to be marginalized by other children/teachers by not participation or by performing poorly. Wall charts play on this, as do recommendations of 'inter-class competitions with prizes' for the class to perform better.

Finally, the parents are in the unenviable position of wanting their child's school to have the best (or simply adequate) educational facilities but not being in a position to object out of a fear of handicapping their child or the child's school. They cannot single handily change government policy, but what they can do is shop in X, or buy X because they have a promotion that helps the school. They also don't want their child to be marginalized by the other children/teacher/principal for not participating. To abstain has consequences for the child. When it comes to supermarket promotion, they must also keep up to date on which supermarket is giving out vouchers for money and when.

The question is, who is responsible for the situation and what can be done to rectify it?

Responsibility

The easiest way to lash out would be to blame the companies, but this would be misdirected because the companies are only doing what companies do best; making profit for their shareholders. Their promotions are the symptom of the problem, not the cause. It would be desirable to see companies act more ethically in their marketing practices, but the profit-orientated nature of PLCs mean that just wanting them to be more conscientious is not enough – legislation is needed. It can easily be argued that at decision level, for marketers and managing directors, there is as much pressure on them to perform and make profit for the benefit of their shareholders as there is on children/parents/teachers/schools to participate in the commercial promotions.

Almost everybody, outside the commercial sector and a few inside, agree that the blame lies with the government. The government are simply not doing enough for schools and the lack of funding (discussed in chapter one) is what has created this pressure system whereby schools almost certainly must accept the demands of the commercial sector for paltry rewards. Schools are, in a sense, being held at ransom.

Aside from the lack of funding, the government has adopted a contradictory stance on in-school commercialism. While the government says the commercial sector is free to market as it pleases 'provided that such schemes do not place undue pressure on parents in terms of requiring additional expenditure, that children are protected from engagement in inappropriate promotional activity and that the schemes are linked to desirable projects serving national educational initiatives,' it sees nothing wrong with the promotions analysed in chapter three.

It appears that the government has adopted a very well calculated position on in-school commercialism, simultaneously allowing the commercial sector to provide resources for the school system, which the government would otherwise be responsible for, while taking the rhetorical high ground refusing to curtail 'the free market', saying it 'recognises the sensitivities attached to the issue of promotion initiatives linking schools, pupils and parents to commercial activity,' implying that there is nothing wrong with the current promotions.

Their assertion that it is up to each individual school to implement its own policy sounds like the government washing its hands on this issue, and it ignores fundamental issues such as the socio-economic situation of individual schools. Schools in 'underprivileged' areas are more vulnerable to commercial promotions as they struggle to get their facilities up to a respectable standard for a Tiger Economy. So much for the government's rhetoric on 'combating inequalities'.

Perhaps most shockingly of all, there are absolutely no specific laws or guidelines for in-school advertising to children. The only laws the companies have to adhere to are the ones regulating advertising/marketing to wider society. The psychological vulnerability of children coupled with school, as a place of learning, should be enough to prompt some protective laws.

The CCFE's recommendation to rectify the situation is one that should please everybody – provided the companies' claim that they want to fulfill their 'social responsibilities' and the promotions are evidence of this. They suggest that we raise the 12.5 per cent corporation tax by a further 0.5-1 per cent to pay for teacher training and education equipment. If companies

genuinely believe in 'social responsibility' then here is the ideal way to put their money where their mouth is, albeit without the public relations value that the current promotions allow. There will also be no extra cost to the taxpayer and it will not take away from other under funded resources like the health system.

Who Should Act?

To make the situation better, or simply stop it from getting worse, action needs to be taken at government policy level. The rhetoric of allowing schools to formulate their own policy shows that either the government is comfortable with in-school commercialism or that it does not understand 'the sensitivities attached to the issue of promotion initiatives linking schools, pupils and parents to commercial activity' as it claims.

The department is burying its head in the sand by saying they are allowing schools to formulate their own policy on in-school commercialism because it ignores the idea that schools need better resources and that under funding coupled with commercial promotions, based on purchase power, force schools to scramble for resources to the benefit of the commercial sector and the detriment of education.

Sue Lemon-Diver (2006) of SuperValu spoke of her astonishment when she was drawing up plans for an in-school promotion and went to the Department of Education and Science to see if it was within legal guidelines, only to be told that there are none.

“We went to the departments to see if we could get the stamp of approval for our schemes and we were shocked to find out there are no guidelines in place for in-school advertising and sponsorship...I mean there are absolutely no rules or guidelines whatsoever. The industry we work in would prefer to see some guidelines in place, or some framework that we could stick to.”

Action must be taken at several levels to fully combat the situation.

Firstly, if the government is unwilling to ban in-school commercialism (as all current signs suggest), then they should introduce specific guidelines dealing with in-school commercialism. As it stands, the commercial sector is free to market and advertise to children in school in whatever way they see fit. The government should also regulate its assertion that they only oppose those promotions that put parents under pressure for excess

expenditure, which almost all of the current promotions do. It is not enough to just say these words as a token, they must act to show that they are sincere about protecting children from inappropriate commercial schemes while they are in school.

Secondly, teachers need to be educated to be critical of the commercial schemes that are entering the classroom. They need to be aware of the issues posed by in-school commercialism, and not just the public relations rhetoric the companies send out to the schools. Teacher's unions are perhaps the best motor for pushing this motion forward, they should be made aware of the need to train teachers to be critical of the 'offers' targeted at them and their children.

Thirdly, and most importantly, the government needs to start treating education as an essential part of a modern society and fund it accordingly. The under funding of the school system is a disgrace in a country as rich as Ireland, and the TUI's assertion that the government is acting 'immorally' seems consequently accurate. CCFE and the TUI say that the government, with a surplus of €6.7bn, should fund all schools properly and is washing their hands because they are comfortable with the idea of the commercial sector picking up the bill for under funding.

More funding should be made available for schools, especially in the area of information technology and P.E. Coupled with this, better training on both subjects is needed for teachers. Teachers regularly complain that they have not been trained on how to use computers or on how to teach the use of computers to children.

The future implications posed to Irish society by under funding education was laid out by a INTO (2006) in a submission to the National Economic and Social Forum this year.

'Thus far, the Irish state and Irish people in general have been well served by the primary education system despite under investment but in a modern context, taking account of growing global imperatives, inertia is not an option. The mere maintenance of existing policies, practices and investment levels in education will see Ireland surpassed in economic and social terms by other countries. The continuous improvement of education is a political and social imperative in terms of sustaining economic growth and building a cohesive, equitable society.'

Fourthly, if the government is serious when its pledges to combat childhood obesity, providing schools with adequate P.E equipment and teacher training is essential. P.E is the one time that today's children, who are obsessed with non-active ways of spending time from

computer games to mobile phones, are obliged to engage in physical activity. Teachers are complaining that they are fighting a contradictory battle by trying to get children to be fit and active, but when they go to play football they have to tell the children to put on their 'McDonald's bibs' and play with a 'Coca-Cola football'.

Parents are the key in creating change because, after all, it is their children. Firstly, the complacent attitude that 'sure what can we do' and that the companies 'are doing schools a favour' must be questioned. Parents must be made aware of the issues raised by in-school commercialism perhaps by the school or from the research on the internet. They must be made aware of the lack of funding schools receive, and that there are other ways to fund them without raising personal taxes or allowing the commercial sector to pick up the tab.

They must raise concerns about commercialism with their schools and create a dialogue between the school and the community. In-school commercialism in Ireland has not been protested or combated because, before the advent of CCFE, those who showed dissent were either isolated individuals or parents/teacher who didn't know how to go about making change. Both parents often work in modern families, leaving them with little time to get involved in the community. CCFE, through holding meetings across the country and being on the internet, is unifying these people into a nationwide network with a focus and a voice. It is their job in this to unify these sporadic voices into a collective that will carry some political weight and inform people of the subversive nature of seemingly benevolent 'offers'. The conclusion drawn from the online discussions and discussions with the school should be made school policy. The parents and school can then pressure the government using their own school as an example.

Recommendations for Future Research

To my knowledge, this is the first Irish piece of research on the subject of in-school commercialism. I am hoping that this thesis will act as an inspiration for further research into the field as it is a relatively new subject. Consequently, I faced a variety of difficulties trying to get relevant research from an Irish perspective. I would recommend that future researchers look into the area of the mental capacity of children in an Irish context because it is unclear just how receptive/critical children are to marketing, and at what age they obtain an 'adult-like' understanding of advertising.

Another area that would be well worth-while looking at is the peer relations/psychology of the classroom and just how influenced children are by the opinions/pressure from those around them. It would be interesting because this is the exact area that in-school promotions play on; so marketing companies are already aware of its value.

A comparative analysis of international laws on in-school marketing will be needed to make any recommendations to government at policy level. Seeing how other countries (like Portugal and Vietnam) have dealt with in-class commercialism can point the direction for suggested policy here in Ireland, and will have the added benefit of seeing what measures have failed in these countries.

There is also very limited research into the value of the child market in Ireland. It would have been useful to know how much spending power the children of today have and how much they influence family spending through 'pester power'.

Report

While working on an article about rising child obesity in Ireland, I naturally came in contact with many teachers, one of whom, the National Director of the Irish Primary Principals' Network, Séan Cottrell, was very concerned by the diet of today's children and the deliberate targeting of children while they are in school by marketing companies. He was angry that schools had now become a target for companies who were trying to build brand loyalty at a young age.

While not overtly relevant to the issue of childhood obesity, he recommended that I talk to a primary teacher called Joseph Fogarty who, along with Niall Smyth (another teacher) and friends, had just set up a group to combat in-school commercialism called the Campaign for a Commercial Free Education. I called Joseph to talk about childhood obesity and became fascinated with what he had to say about in-class commercialism. It was clear that he had done his research, and there was still a wealth of research to be done.

There was simply too much information to fit in one article about childhood obesity – which was just one element of the group's argument and research. He informed me that while the Campaign for a Commercial Free Education had been formed in August of 2005, it was only as I was talking with him that they had started to make serious strides and their website was almost ready to be launched. He invited me along to the official unveiling of the site in the Teachers' Club in January 2006.

When I got there I watched the presentation and listened to arguments from teachers, politicians and even a former child advertiser and lecturer in marketing (who said she joined the group because her conscience got to her when she found out she was to be a mum herself). I knew then that this would make an excellent thesis topic, and should be done in academic format because a series of articles risked fragmenting the argument. I had also made a few useful contacts.

The more I studied and read on the subject the more certain facts would jump out at me, like the lack of laws or regulations on advertising to children in school, or the fact that it is done at the expense of the taxpayer or the incredible amounts of money that schools were expected to generate to take advantage of the voucher schemes.

When I spoke to friends of mine, some of whom are parents, they were not aware of the issues involved. There was a real lack of knowledge by most people on the subject of in-school commercialism, or what its effects are.

Similarly, the debate on the CCFE's forum saw plenty of parents and even teachers attacking the group, often asking questions like 'what's the problem?' '(the companies) are only giving back to the community' and accusing the group of 'nit-picking'. However, as the discussion continued, many people who held those opinions mellowed and often began to agree with the campaign when they were shown the relevant facts. I thought writing an in-depth piece of research would be of some use to make teachers and parents aware of the central issues, and hopefully will inspire further research in the field and maybe be of some use to the campaign, without whom I could not have done this thesis.

Luckily, I had been keeping clippings from newspapers since early September 2005 on the subject of childhood obesity because I knew I would be working on an article. Most of those clippings had quotes that were relevant to in-school commercialism, and they also gave me names that I could look up and contact for interviews. Some of the interviews were not used for quoting but for background information because they were reiterating information that was already apparent. This was essential because some people/organisations were very difficult to contact and did not want to talk.

Because CCFE is the first group to do anything on the subject of in-school commercialism, I was able to gain a lot of knowledge and information from them. This was absolutely essential because there is virtually no other significant research on the topic from an Irish perspective. I realised early on that interviews and the CCFE would be my main resources because of this. The members are all very articulate and vocal on the subject so interviews were not a problem; it was just a matter of finding a time that suited both of us.

However, using information from just one side of the argument was not my wish. I wanted to see what light the companies saw their own promotions in, and to ask them what the benefits are for the company. I had wanted to have one chapter solely from the marketers' perspective, showing the opportunities posed by the classroom and talking about solidifying brands with children. I wanted to see the psychology of in-school commercialism from the marketing perspective and from the perspective of the classroom. This proved more difficult than I thought as many of the companies refused to talk to me about their promotions and either never passed my calls on to the relevant people or ignored my emails (I had to call and email each company several times in case I was 'forgotten about'). When I called and said I

was a student of journalism I got negative reactions, and subsequently dropped the 'journalism' part of my self-introduction.

Some of the public relations people I talked to are very convincing in their arguments, but they simply didn't stand up to the anti-commercial arguments. When the public relations people said that 'we're just fulfilling our social responsibility' and were asked why, then, do they need to use logos, they could not answer or gave a diluted answer like 'that's just our slogan...it's what we do'. Nobody wanted to admit that schools and schoolchildren presented opportunities for the commercial sector.

Renault's Brian Purcell's reaction to my inquiries was typical of the difficulty I was facing – he wouldn't talk to me about anything unless I emailed him the questions first and met up with him just to be sure that "you are who you say you are". Some were more helpful than others but this was typical of the general reaction.

Luckily, because the promotions are trying to attract as much attention as possible (not from scrutinising journalists) they all have official websites and often advertise their offer in newspapers, so it was easy to get the official PR material. Where possible I tried to use both interviews and official materials, but where that was not an option, I could only represent the companies involved through their official marketing.

Tesco refused me an interview after emailing and calling for a couple of weeks. They did, however, send me out copies of their annual reports and their corporate responsibility review and that was quite useful.

The Department of Education and Science would not grant me an interview with anybody, and after a couple of weeks of emailing and calling and waiting on replies, they sent out reiterations of the circulars they sent to the schools in 1991 with very little new information.

The most readily available international research centred on America, and Naomi Klein's 'No Logo' had an excellent chapter on advertising in schools which was hugely beneficial. Ideally, I would have liked to review more literature on American and indeed the rest of the world's experience, but it simply wasn't available. Most of the existing information was on the internet, and it is a source that I avoided as much as possible unless I can verify the information. The DCU library has some helpful periodicals, especially UNESCO's 'Education today', but again it had very little from an Irish perspective.

Macklin's (1999) book, 'Advertising to Children: Concepts and Controversies', was very helpful for facts and figures, again from the American perspective. I took it out on three-week loan from DCU's library and when I went back to the library the next day to take it out again it had been sent for mending and nobody could tell me when it would be returning, and I did not get to use it again. I think it could have been more use to my thesis. I would recommend that the library sends its books for mending in the summer in future, not at a time when students are writing theses and doing exams.

Orla Kearney, one of the franchisees of the Irish Primary Times, was very helpful and answered questions readily. She was able to point me in some new directions. Similarly, Sue Lemon-Diver of SuperValu's 'Kids in Action' was helpful and forthcoming with opinions and information.

I spent weeks trying to contact Real Events Solutions (who work with companies to organise sponsored events for schools) but they never replied to any of my emails. Whenever I called them they would tell me they would call me back but never did, or they would say there is no one there to talk to me at the moment.

Overall I am happy with the way the thesis worked out and the topic itself deserves more examination than the word count here permits. I feel it's a good piece of research on an untouched subject, but there needs to be more research done in the areas outlined in the concluding chapter. My one regret is not being able to get more original interviews with the companies involved in the promotions.

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