



TACKLING OBESITY

HOW COMPANIES USE EDUCATION TO BUILD 'TRUST'

As pressure builds to stop junk food advertising to children, many companies are focussing attention on nutrition and health education in an attempt to establish themselves as producers of healthy food. By building public trust in this image they can divert attention from their continued aggressive marketing of unhealthy foods. The education materials and facilities that are produced as a result present an even more complex problem than straightforward advertising because they blur the boundaries between advertising, marketing and education. Although individual employees often have philanthropic motives, corporations themselves have a fiduciary duty to their shareholders to maximise profits, so the deal will be done with multiple motives: For example, companies will hope to:

- discourage open debate about sponsors undermine the independence of monitoring schemes;
- use education facilities as a channel for commercial propaganda which undermines public health messages;
- involve potential critics in partnerships and so discourage them from speaking out;

- project a healthy, responsible corporate image and so gain the trust of children, parents and teachers;
- distort the curriculum in favour of business interests - promoting a self regulation and partnership approach to marketing rather than regulation;
- use the 'halo' effect as evidence of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)
- divert attention from/'engineer consent' for actions which are anti-social and which harm sustainable development, the environment and human survival.

The United Nations has established a UN Global Compact (UNGC) which invites corporations to voluntarily incorporate and respect its ten principles of human rights, labour, the environment and anti-corruption. However, because there are no accountability or compliance procedures, corporations who sign up to the UNGC can use the process as PR, to divert criticism of human rights abuses and evidence of CSR. (See Nestlé's Global Compact cover-up.)

Breastfeeding provides an ideal window of opportunity for obesity prevention and may help in the development of taste receptors and appetite control.

The US Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has identified two cost-effective interventions to deal with the childhood obesity epidemic: decreased television viewing and breastfeeding

Formula-fed infants consume more milk and gain weight more rapidly than breastfed infants and may receive an oversupply of energy of 72-151 daily Kcal,² equivalent to **70-145 chocolate bars** by EIGHT months.



USING EDUCATION TO MISLEAD CHILDREN

Nestlé, the world's leading manufacturer of breastmilk substitutes, *systematically violates the WHO/UNICEF International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes* and subsequent relevant WHA Resolutions, and as a consequence has been the focus of consumer criticism and boycotts for over 30 years and continues to be one of the most boycotted companies on the planet.

While continuing its promotion of unhealthy foods, Nestlé is now keen to create an image of itself as the “World's Leading Nutrition, Health and Wellness Company. In 2011 it will create a new *Institute of Health Science* to develop foods that claim to ‘*treat and prevent illness.*’ Infant foods making all manner of claims will no doubt continue to be crucial in this strategy. Indeed by the end of 2007, Nestlé nutrition's sales had soared to \$ 9.4 billion with almost three quarters of revenue coming from infant nutrition. “...Nestlé has high expectation of the performance of its entire infant nutrition division in 2008 with sales rising to CHF 8 billion compared to under CHF 5 billion two years ago. – with strong growth expected across its infant formula and its infant meals and drinks more than trebling compared to 2006.” (Flex News 08)

Education is also a key part of its strategy and in July 2010 Nestle was boasting that its education partnerships now reach “*about five million children...and we're going to be expanding this to about eighty countries.*” Below are some examples of Nestlé's notion of ‘education.’

Pushing chocolate in Russia

Above right: Nestlé's ‘*Programme about Correct Nutrition - working notebook for school children*’ has been used in thousands of schools in Russia. Page 55 shows a mother telling her child that eating chocolate rather than a sandwich before an exam will help her manage the difficult exercises. So the more chocolate you eat the cleverer you will be?

Linking sports to sugary foods

Nestlé sponsors sports events all over the world, often pushing Milo which is 46% sugar and other unhealthy brands. In the UK its “*Get set, go free*” promotion (right) breached a key message of the Government's Change4Life campaign: to swap sugary foods and drinks for lower sugar or sugar-free products. A Children's Food Campaign survey found that 24 out of the 27 Nestlé products in the promotion are officially categorised as “*high in sugar.*” The Department of Health admitted that an error had been made when it approved Nestlé's use of the C4L logo on the website - so the logo was removed in October 2010.



Rewriting History 1996

The Controversy Over the Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes is a multimedia teaching resource for the ‘over 16s’ produced by the Council for Ethics in Economics (CEE). CEE is an ‘NGO’ based in Columbus, Ohio, set up in 1982 to help resolve the baby milk controversy and end the first phase of the Nestlé Boycott. Presented as ‘independent’ the case study was initiated and funded by Nestlé. The CD fails to make the Nestlé sponsorship explicit and contains a highly selective and distorted account of the history of the infant feeding issue.

www.businessethics.org/about.htm

Reformulations, novel foods: how healthy or safe are they?

Companies are busy reformulating products, replacing the salt, sugar and fat with artificial ingredients and additives which maintain the intense sweet taste. But the safety and nutritional value of these ingredients and novel processes are controversial. Surely children have a right to a truly objective view?

Aspartame

There is disagreement in the scientific community about the safety of the artificial sweetener, Aspartame. The European Ramazzini Foundation (ERF) (an independent institution in Italy) says that it is a “multipotential carcinogenic agent” in rats. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) says that ERF’s study does “not provide a scientific basis for reconsidering its use in foods. If any new information would become available in the future, EFSA will review these as a matter of priority.” Coca Cola says Aspartame “is one of the most thoroughly studied ingredients used in food and drink and has consistently been found to be safe.”

Medialiteracy

Media Smart is a media literacy programme funded by the food and toy industry that claims provide 6-11 year-olds with the “tools to help them interpret, understand and use information provided in adverts to their benefit.” Media Smart subtly undermines the health messages teachers are trying to convey. For example, many of its exercises and games reward

“All too often the education process is entrusted to people who appear to have no understanding of industry and the path of progress...The provision of education is a market opportunity and should be treated as such.”

European Round Table of Industrialists, 1988

great!” and a tawdry comic with “a great” read!”

www.mediasmart.org.uk



children directly in proportion to the amount of television they watch. The Smart quiz asks: “Which super model is the “face’ of the Rimmel UK TV advertising campaign - Jordan, Kate Moss or Naomi Campbell?” The child cannot move on to the next page until they give the right answer. In another game, called *Product Match*, children are asked to match reasons why they might buy certain products. A chocolate bar must be matched with “Tastes

great!” and a tawdry comic with “a great” read!”
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DANONE

Nestlé battles for market share with French **DANONE**, which on acquiring **Numico** in 2007, become the leader in the infant nutrition sector in Western Europe and number 2 worldwide. DANONE is another systematic Code violator and active in the ‘nutrition education’ business, sponsoring obesity education programmes for young parents. In June 2009 a national government Senior High school examination for 18-year-olds in the Netherlands included a question (forming 25% of the exam) which was based on a Nutricia infant formula, *Nenatal*, complete with registered trademark signs, promotional language incidental and irrelevant to the scientific content of the question.



Baby Milk Action’s education pack, *Seeing through the Spin, Public relations in the Global Economy* was created to help develop students’ critical faculties and to provide them with the tools they need to deconstruct the many subtle PR messages they receive. See:

Education - Pfizer/ Wyeth style

A notice in a supermarket in the Philippines, beside S26 Progress toddler milks (1-3 yrs) and S26 Promil Gold (6 -12 ms) says: “A toddler can learn anywhere - even in this aisle. Teach him what these items are and help him write them on this paper. Help him make better progress.” November 2010



MARKETING, CHILD RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS

Governments that have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) are legally bound by its provisions and can be held legally accountable for action which hinder the enjoyment of its rights and freedoms.

The CRC:

- Stresses children's rights to protection from economic exploitation.
- Recognises the fundamental role that breastfeeding plays in fulfilling the right of every child to the highest attainable standard of health.

The CRC Committee views the *International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes* as a tool to help governments fulfil their obligations to Article 24 of the Convention, The World Health Assembly Resolution (WHA34.22) stressed that adherence to the International Code "*is a minimum requirement and only one of several important actions required in order to protect healthy practices in respect of infant and young child feeding*". While the International Code is not a legally binding instrument as such, it nevertheless represents an expression of the collective will of the membership of WHO as a '*minimum requirement*' to be adopted by '*all member states...in its entirety*.' The International Code was adopted as a recommendation for the entire

Article 32: "*States Parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.*"

Article 36 says: "*States Parties shall protect the child against all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare.*" Convention on the Rights of the Child

membership of WHO, **not just for developing countries.** The UK has since endorsed the adoption of the more than 12 subsequent relevant WHA Resolutions that have strengthened and clarified the Code.

The WHA

Resolutions 1996 (WHA 49.15) and 2005 (WHA 58.32) state that: "*health institutions and ministries may be subject to subtle pressure to accept,*

inappropriately, financial or other support for professional training in infant and child health" and urge Member States to ensure that "*the financial support for professionals working in infant and young child health does not create conflicts of interest*"

The EU Nutrition Strategy identifies the need to know more about the "drivers for preventing obesity in target groups such as infants, children and adolescents" identifies schools as important settings which should be protected environments and calls for any partnerships to be undertaken in a transparent and non-commercial way.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food recalled government obligations contained in human rights measures: The Universal Declaration on Human Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as General Comment 12 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

SET OF RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE MARKETING OF FOODS AND NON-ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES TO CHILDREN

Adopted by World Health Assembly Resolution WHA 63.14

Para 20: "*Schools, child-care and other educational establishments are privileged institutions acting in loco parentis, and nothing that occurs in them should prejudice a child's well-being. Therefore the nutritional well-being of children within schools should be paramount and the foundation stone for children's well being at this formative age. This is also consistent with the recommendation made in the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health that urges governments to adopt policies to support healthy diets in schools.*"

REC5: *Settings where children gather should be free from all forms of marketing of foods high in saturated fats, trans-fatty acids, free sugars, or salt. Such settings include, but are not limited to, nurseries, schools, school grounds and pre-school centres, playgrounds, family and child clinics and paediatric services and during any sporting and cultural activities that are held on these premises.*

Para 24. *Independently of any other measures taken for implementation of a national policy, private sector stakeholders should be encouraged to follow marketing practices that are consistent with the policy aim and objective set out in these recommendations and to practice them globally in order to ensure equal consideration to children everywhere and avoid undermining efforts to restrict marketing in countries that receive food marketing from beyond their borders.*

