

have no problem on moral or other grounds with companies that use this type of promotion. However, I do wonder whether it exploits the vulnerable (children and adolescents) in some way. The question I have been asking myself is whether (despite the legal disclaimer) young children and adolescents are engaging in a form of gambling by buying these products.

Precursors of gambling?

I have been studying gambling behaviour for over ten years, and I would argue that Camelot's introduction of the National Lottery and 'Instant's' has brought about a 'something-for-nothing' culture where people want to win big prizes on lots of different things. Children themselves are growing up in an environment where gambling is endemic — a situation that certainly didn't exist before the introduction of the National Lottery. Nick Rhines, of the Institute of Sales Promotions, also agrees that *as a result of the National Lottery the nation has gone gambling mad. People aren't interested any more in collecting things to win prizes — the market has been driven by instant-wins.* (The Sunday Mirror, 29 October 1997.)

Having examined a variety of instant-win promotions, I clearly see them as gambling precursors in that they resemble gambling without being a form of gambling with which we would all identify. It is unlikely that a lot of children will develop a problem as a result of this activity, but there is a danger that some will. It is also worth adding the consistent research finding that the earlier children start to gamble the more likely they are to develop a gambling problem.

Evidence that instant-win products cause problems is mostly anecdotal, although I recently appeared on the Channel 5 programme *Espresso* with a mother and her two children (aged nine and ten) who literally spent all their disposable income on instant-win promotions. These two children had spent hundreds of pounds of their pocket-money in the hope of winning the elusive prizes offered, but never won anything more than another bag of crisps.

The mother said that they had the 'gambling bug' and was terrified that they will have problems when they grow up. She claimed that she had

done her utmost to stop them using their pocket money in this way, but as soon as her back was turned they were off to the local corner shop to buy instant-win products. This wasn't restricted to products they enjoyed, either. For instance, when they went to the supermarket the children just filled the trolley with anything that had an instant-win promotion, including tins of cat food — and they haven't even got a cat!

Recommendations

Harsh critics of instant-win promotions might advocate a complete banning of these types of marketing endeavours. However, this is impractical, if not somewhat over the top, for there is no empirical evidence of any problems apart from the occasional bizarre situation just described. However, instant-win marketing does appear to be on the increase, and it may be that young children are particularly vulnerable to this type of promotion if case-study accounts are anything to go by. (Recommendation 1.)

Another area of potential concern is the giving-away of free scratchcards with newspapers and magazines. The rise of this type of promotion may have had an influence on Camelot's declining scratchcard sales, but the idea has been taken up by some youth magazines, which require their young readers (often in their early teens) to scratch off the panels of their free scratchcards and then ring a premium-rate telephone number to see if they have won a prize. There is a likelihood that some of these children will develop a thirst for the 'real thing' when they get older. Children easily get caught up in crazes, and these latest promotions are probably a good example. This issue has at least been taken up by the BBC's youth consumer programme *Short Change*. (Recommendation 2.)

There may also be a case for giving as much information as possible on the product itself, to enable people to make some kind of informed choice about whether it is worth buying the product for the chance of winning something. Although instant-win promotions state in the small print the number of possible prizes to win, there is no mention of the types of odds of winning. Admittedly many people might not take much notice of such information, and young people might not understand about odds and probabilities anyway. Nevertheless, Camelot are required to produce the National Lottery prize structure, so shouldn't they too? (Recommendation 3.)

Children are growing up in an environment where gambling is endemic.

Dr Mark Griffiths may be contacted at the Department of Social Sciences, Nottingham Trent University, Burton Street, Nottingham NG1 4BU (0115 941 8418).

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Companies should not directly or indirectly target the young with instant-win promotions, particularly on products like crisps and chocolates, which are universally popular amongst children and which appear to be well within their own small disposable income.
2. Scratchcards should not be given away with magazines whose readership is mainly an adolescent one.
3. Instant-win promoters should be required to declare the prize structure, so that (as with the National Lottery) people know their chances of winning a particular prize.

<p> Mansfield Primary, Mansfield Mansfield Primary, Mansfield Manor Way Primary, Halesowen Mansfield Primary, Dudley Mount Pleasant Primary, Hill Northbrook Primary, Netherton Netherton CE Primary, Halesowen Northfield Road Primary, Dudley Oldswinford CE Primary, Stourbridge Our Lady & St Kieran RC Primary, Halesowen Our Lady & St Kieran RC Primary, Halesowen Peter's Hill Primary, Ambicote Peter's Hill Primary, Brerley Hill Quarry Bank Primary, Brerley Hill Queen Victoria Primary, Sedgeley Red Hill Primary, Dudley Red Hill Primary, Dudley Roberts Primary, Dudley Rufford Primary, Stourbridge Rufford Primary, Stourbridge St Edmund & St John CE Primary, Dudley St. Joseph's CE Primary, Westleton St. Joseph's RC Primary, Dudley St. Joseph's RC Primary, Norton St. Mary's CE Primary, Kingswinford St. Mary's RC Primary, Brerley Hill St. Mary's RC Primary, Kingswinford Sycamore Green Primary, Dudley Tenterfield Primary, Halesowen Tenterfield Primary, Halesowen Walbrook Primary, Cosely Withymoor Primary, Brerley Hill Woodstock Primary, Stourbridge Woodstock Primary, Dudley Women's Nest Primary, Dudley </p>	<p> Durham (SW) Aycliffe Village CP, Newton Aycliffe Chilton CE, Frimthorpe Chilton CE, Frimthorpe Grove Way Primary, Bishop Auckland Cockton Hill Junior, Spennymoor Coundon Primary, Bishop Auckland Eidon Lane Primary, Bishop Auckland Ferryhill Station, Newton Aycliffe Hegnigan CE, Newton Aycliffe Hill Top Primary, Hill Top Auckland Kirk Meslington Primary, Spennymoor Middlestone Moor Jnr., Spennymoor Rola St. Primary, Spennymoor St. Annas CE, Bishop Auckland St. Helen's Auckland CE St. Helen's Auckland CE St. Joseph's RC, Newton Aycliffe Sheldon St John's CE, Sheldon T. Anthony Hackworth, Sheldon Vane Road Prim., Newton Aycliffe Woodhouse Close Jnr., Bishop Auckland </p>	<p> Hereford & Worcester Bredebury, Ross-on-Wye CE Credenbury CE Gardsley CE Garway Kington Ledbury CP, J. Leagrave CE, Ross-on-Wye Lugwardine Much Marcle CE Precombe CE, Hereford St Pauls CE, Tisbury Tisbury CP, Hereford Weobley Wigmore Withington </p>	<p> Humberside Pillington Beine CE, Goole Kent Barrow Grove Junior, Sittingbourne Bayning Wood CP, E Ayrham Dunnington CP, Faversham Ovingdean CP, Faversham Reculver CE, Faversham St. Andrew's CE, Faversham Union County Junior, Broadstairs Kingston upon Thames Burlington Junior, New Malden Chestchurch Junior Colman Hill Junior, Surbiton Corcus Christi Primary, New Malden Gillingham St. Mary's, Chesington King Athelstan Primary Knowlmead Primary, Tolworth Malden Manor Primary, New Malden Our Lady Immaculate Primary, Reigate Reigate Primary, London SW15 St. Agatha's Primary St. Andrew's & St. Mark's Junior, Reigate St. Joseph's Primary St. John's Primary St. Mary's Primary, Chessington St. Paul's Junior, Chessington St. Philip's, Chessington St. Matthew's Primary, Surbiton Theodor Junior, Surbiton </p>	<p> Knowsley Eastcote Primary, Kirkby </p>
---	---	--	--	---