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In-school marketing in South African primary schools: An exploratory study

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In-school marketing is a global phenomenon that has recently become the focus of much debate and criticism. Concerns about the potentially negative impact marketing practices may have on school going children have been raised across the globe. In response a variety of policies have been developed in different countries to regulate the practice of in school marketing. This paper explores commercial activities in South African primary schools through an empirical study of primary school principals. The study investigates the policies and procedures in place to guide the practice of marketing in schools and the views of principals on issues pertaining to in-school commercialism. The findings of this paper indicated an absence of formal policies to guide the practice of commercial activities in primary schools. Principals however supported the need for policies on in-school commercialism to protect children. They also expressed the view that commercial activities can only be tolerated when they offer added value to the school.

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Introduction

In-school marketing is a globally practised and growing phenomenon that has in recent years become the focus of attention. In-school marketing (sometimes referred to as in-school commercialism) can be defined as corporate marketing activities directed at children in school (Geuens *et al.*, 2002; Molnar & Garcia, 2005). These activities have been increasing in volume over the past few years as schools experience increasing pressures on their budgets and companies target the attractive youth market in their school environment (Public education: commercial activities in schools, 2000).

Supporters of in-school marketing highlight the potential benefits to their schools as increased funding and access to free educational materials through sponsorships. Companies benefit as schools provide a good location for them to meet their young consumers and undertake effective and efficient targeting. Companies can profit from creating brand preferences and strong brand impressions at an early stage of their consumer's life (e.g. Feuerstein 2001; Boyles, 1998; Gelberg, 1997; Kohn, 1999; Cort, Pairan & Ryans, 2004; Gunter & Furnham, 1998; Atherton & Wells, 1998; Molnar, 1996).

Critics on the other hand have raised concerns about the potentially negative impact these practices may have on learners. These are generally directed at those activities that force children to view advertising in the classroom; market unhealthy food and drinks to children; masquerade as educational materials; invade students' privacy as a

condition of participating in technology-related learning activities; use children as market research subjects and/or take place without the informed consent of parents (Larson, 2002). Marketing in schools raises particular concerns because of the vulnerabilities of children (Palmer *et al.*, 2004). Lobbyists have advocated for the regulation of commercial activities in schools and a variety of policies have been developed in different countries to regulate this practice (Hawkes, 2004).

Despite the practice growing on a global scale and the extensive research on advertising to children, research on the topic of in-school marketing is limited. In South Africa specifically, there is no known research on the topic. The purpose of this exploratory research paper is to gain insight into the commercial activities that exist in South African primary schools. The paper identifies marketing activities occurring in primary schools; the policies and procedures the schools have; and the views of principals on in-school commercialism.

Children as a market

Children and youth collectively represent a powerful economic and demographic segment. Based on 42 countries under review by Euromonitor International (2001), accounting for some 95% of world GDP (Gross Domestic Profit), sales of children's goods, i.e. goods for children aged 5-14 were worth some US \$396 billion in 2000. There are two segments of children's markets: the self purchase children's market financed by pocket money/allowance/gifts; and the products purchased for children by adults. The

first segment depends on purchasing decisions made by children as a result of child targeted marketing. The second market depends on purchasing decisions made by adults as a result of marketing targeted on adults and also as a result of influence exerted on adults by children known as 'pester power'. A third children's market has been identified as the future market, representing tomorrow's adult customers for branded products and services (McNeal, 1999; Magazine Publishers of America (MPA), 2004; Euromonitor, 2001). South African children are economically influential spending more than R4 billion a year and influencing a further R20 billion in spending (UCT, 2004).

While marketers realize that children are an attractive audience to target, critics believe that advertising directed at children could be harmful or that advertising to children is inherently unfair (Hoek and Laurence, 1993). A major concern at present is the impact of the media on childhood obesity. According to the Institute of Medicine's (IOM) comprehensive study (2006) the media is one of the socializing forces that potentially impacts children's eating behaviour. Childhood obesity is an increasing problem worldwide with 22 million children under the age of 5 years being classified as overweight (World Health Organisation, 1998). According to a recent study by Goedecke, Jennings and Lambert (2005) on the prevalence of obesity in South Africa, childhood obesity is becoming as increasingly evident in South Africa, as it is internationally. The National Household Food Consumption Survey reported 17.1% of South African children between the ages of one and nine living in urban areas are overweight (Steyn *et al.*, 2005).

Types of in-school commercialism

Like any other marketing strategy, in-school marketing has both direct and indirect dimensions (General Accounting Office (GAO) Report, 2000). Direct advertising seeks to gain the student's purchasing dollar through a diverse range of in school venues (e.g. television, Internet, radio, cellular telephones, billboards, posters, book covers, school buses, and kiosks). Indirect advertising seeks to convey a positive, favourable corporate image to students which, in a later context, may translate into purchasing preference and loyalty for the brands of that corporation. Two other GAO categories - product sales and marketing research are also common school-based commercial activities (GAO Report, 2000). The Commercialism in Education Research Unit at Arizona State University (CERU) has released annual reports on commercializing trends in schools, tracing those trends back to 1990. They document eight categories of commercialism in schools (Molnar *et al.*, 2006).

Based on the typologies presented by Molnar and Garcia (2005), The GAO Report (2000), Timpane and McNeil (1991) supported by Bona (2003) and MacIndoe (1999) and on observation and discussion with the key informants of the study the following typology (in Table 1) represents a comprehensive list of the commercial activities undertaken in schools.

Table 1: Typology of in-school commercial activities

	Type of Activity	Description
1.	Company Fundraiser	Companies host events at school to raise funds for charities.
2.	Advertising	Placing advertisements for companies in a school magazine, pamphlets, etc.
3.	Soft drink vending machine	A soft drink vending machine situated on the school grounds for the pupils.
4.	Food vending machine	A vending machine situated on the school grounds to sell food such as chips and sweets to pupils.
5.	Company educational talks	An educational talk given by a company on topics such as food, body care, financial products, etc.
6.	Company educational materials	Materials supplied by companies that have an instructional content, such as flash cards and educational posters.
7.	Company event sponsorship	A company sponsors school events such as plays, sports meetings, etc
8.	Company incentive	A company provides the prize or incentive for a competition run within the school. For example a spelling contest.
9.	Tuck Shop	A tuck shop on the school grounds that sells food and cold drinks to the pupils.
10.	Sampling	The provision of samples of a company's products to pupils at school.
11.	Company excursions	A company sponsors excursions such as in-company visits.
12.	Promotional notice board	A marketing company has a notice board on the school grounds on which it places company promotions aimed at pupils.
13.	Company school sponsorship	A company sponsors scoreboards, school signs, bulletin boards or places its logo on a rooftop.
14.	Corporate sponsor	The school has one specific corporate sponsor who donates moneys to the school.

The ideological perspectives

The use of any of the activities of the typology is based on the perspectives held by the School on in school marketing. According to Feuerstein (2001) awareness of the diverse types of involvement of corporates in schools raises questions concerning the associated risks and/or benefits for children and schools. Answering such questions is difficult and rests, to a certain degree, on one's ideological point of view. According to Feuerstein (2001), the dominant rhetoric in our society suggests that corporate involvement in schools is positive (Ascher, 1988; Chion-Kenney, 1989; Hall, 1993; Warner & Curry, 1997). This rhetoric rests on the assumption that what benefits corporations benefits society.

The opposite view holds that corporate interests are malevolent, as their involvement is intended to create a new market for their goods and ideas. Critics argue that the goals of public schooling may be compromised when businesses take advantage of schools. In particular, these critics question the schools' abilities to create critical citizens capable of working together toward common goals if the

educational program reflects a corporate agenda (Feuerstein, 2001).

Many of the concerns about commercialism in schools are similar to those expressed about the commercialism of childhood in general (Palmer *et al.*, 2004). Ethical issues are at the heart of public concern over the effects of commercial activities on school children. Critics are especially concerned with in-school commercial activities that force children to view advertising in the classroom; market unhealthy food and drinks to children; masquerade as educational materials, activities or programs; invade students' privacy as a condition of participating in technology-related learning activities; use children as market research subjects; take place without the informed consent of parents (Larson, 2002). These ideological perspectives will inform the policies that exist in schools.

In-school marketing policies

According to Anderson (2000), the attitudes and intentions of the schools themselves are very important since schools exert power over commerce. First of all, schools decide on what does and does not reach their students, and second, schools exert influence on both children and their parents. The present study attempts to gauge the values espoused by primary schools through an assessment of the views of their school principals.

School principals are uniquely qualified to comment on school-corporate interactions because they have more knowledge related to school programs and events than any other official in the school (Feuerstein 2001). Several studies have explored these views internationally. Principals who hold a positive view believe that in school marketing is beneficial and necessary to advance the goals of the schools through their funding and their ability to educate children on commerce (Feuerstein, 2001; Geuens *et al.*, 2002; Bona *et al.* 2003). However, Cort *et al.* (2004) found that although the majority of the principals felt the funds were needed they believed that it is important to monitor and evaluate the use of in-school marketing activities as certain activities are inappropriate for education.

South African school policies are developed within the ambit of the South African Schools Act of 1996 (SASA). According to the Act public schools must take "all reasonable measures within its means to supplement the resources supplied by the State in order to improve the quality of education provided by the school to all learners at the school". Independent schools need to raise their own funds to supplement revenue generated from school fees and the government subsidy where applicable (South African Schools Act 84 of 1996). According to the SASA, a school's governing body is responsible for developing a set of rules and regulations regarding funding whilst abiding by the general rules set out by the governing Ministry. School principals may be encouraged by this clause to engage in commercial activities to supplement their funding.

Regulation

In view of the very strong negative public opinion and the ethical concerns on in-school commercialism, lobbyists have moved for the regulation of marketing and commercial activities in schools. Hawkes' (2004) examination of the regulation of advertising to children in 73 countries covered in-school marketing. While 85% or 62 countries were reported to have regulations on television advertising that specifically referred to children, the majority of countries surveyed had no specific regulations on in-school marketing. In those countries where regulations on in-school marketing were found to exist (in only 24 of the 73 countries reviewed), the main areas of the regulation were: advertising, sponsorship and product sales. Only 15 of the 24 countries identified had some form of regulation on in-school marketing. Within this group, 10 countries had statutory restrictions contained in laws on education, advertising or commerce; a further three had government-issued non-statutory guidelines; and two had articles on marketing in schools contained within self-regulatory codes (Hawkes, 2004: 33).

The British Medical Association (BMA, 2005) highlighted the need for schools to consider their role in childhood obesity and commit to healthy food education. They believe that policies that are sweeping, clear, enforced and supported by government are required. In 1997, the European Advertising Standards Alliance (EASA) in the spirit of self regulation recommended that in-school marketing should be regulated by schools themselves. This places greater responsibility of supervision on the schools, their principals and their governing bodies.

South Africa has no specific regulations on in-school marketing. The SASA (1996) loosely states that schools themselves need to obtain funding to supplement government contribution to education and governing bodies take the liberty of formulating policies on these issues. Indeed, no empirical research on in-school commercial activities could be identified and there is little, if any information on the incidence of business involvement in South African schools. There is also little evidence of the policies and procedures in place that guide commercial activities targeted at children in schools. The current research attempts to fill this gap in exploring in-school commercial activities in South African primary schools.

Research objectives

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into in-school marketing activities in South African primary schools. The objectives of the research were:

- To identify contemporary practices of in-school marketing activities in South African primary schools.
- To determine the existence of guidelines or policies and procedures governing in-school commercial activities in South African primary schools.
- To gauge the views of primary school principals on in-school commercial activities.

Research methodology

The research study may be described as exploratory in nature and employed a single-cross sectional research design. A quantitative methodology was deployed through the use of a mail survey to primary school principals. The development of the survey instrument was informed by a review of the extant literature and based on a qualitative component which comprised key informant interviews. These key informants were principals of primary schools in the Durban region.

A convenience sample of two principals (one public and one independent school) was drawn and face-to-face interviews were conducted to gain insight into the current practices, prevailing norms and standards and principals' views on commercial activities in schools. These interviews lasted 2 hours each and served as the pilot for the formulation of the questionnaires. The design of the interview questions was guided by the study conducted by Geuens *et al.* (2002).

The survey (quantitative component) comprised a questionnaire that was administered by mail to primary school principals. The questionnaire solicited the use of in-school commercial activities in South African primary schools, the use of policies and procedures, and principals' views of in-school commercialism.

The questionnaire comprised focus on the types of commercial activities undertaken at the school; the school policies and procedures on in-school marketing; and the principals' views on in-school commercial activities. Demographic variables included the size of the school; the type of school (public or independent, primary or combined, single or mixed gender); the geographic location (urban or rural); province (the nine provinces); the age and gender of the responding principal; and the school structures (the school governing body (SGB) and a marketing department). The questionnaire took on average 30 minutes to complete.

A random sample of 1300 schools was derived from a population of 20 323 eligible schools contained in the Department of Education website. To obtain a representative sample of all primary schools in South Africa, a stratified quota sample was developed. This ensured the appropriate proportions of respondent schools from categories of primary schools in South Africa. The three variables defined for the stratification of the study population were: province (nine provinces of South Africa); urban/rural; and independent/public. Random sampling was applied within the quotas in the categories to select respondent schools that mirror the population parameters. 1300 schools were selected for the sample and questionnaires were mailed to primary school principals in February 2007.

Face validity was established by experts looking through the survey questions prior to going to print. The Department of Education was contacted on several occasions to provide a motivation for school principals to complete the survey (to ensure a reasonable response rate) with no success.

Results

Only 112 school principals responded to the survey after three reminder contacts. This represents a response rate of 8,6%. The delivery method of the survey (that of a mail survey) may partly be responsible for this poor response rate of 8,6%. Three attempts to increase the responses were undertaken by personal contacts to schools. Wimmer and Dominick (2003) do however document an expected response rate of between 5 percent and 40 percent (depending on the area and type of survey) in the growing arena of declining response rates.

The respondent population is compared with the population parameters in Table 2.

Table 2: A comparison of population parameters, sample Statistics and respondents

	Population N (%)	Sample N (%)	Respondents n (%)
Provinces			
Eastern Cape	5252 (26)	338 (26)	20 (17.9)
Freestate	1720 (8)	104 (8)	4 (3.6)
Gauteng	1610 (8)	104 (8)	15 (13.4)
KwaZulu Natal	4276 (21)	273 (21)	42 (37.5)
Limpopo	2813 (14)	182 (14)	12 (10.7)
Mapumalanga	1736 (8)	104 (8)	5 (4.5)
Nothern Cape	328 (2)	26 (2)	0 (0)
North West	1424 (7)	91 (7)	7 (6.2)
Western Cape	1164 (6)	78 (6)	7 (6.2)
Location			
Rural	12344 (60.7)	787 (60.5)	50 (44.6)
Urban	7979 (39.3)	513 (39.5)	62 (55.4)
Type of School			
Independent	714 (3.5)	49 (3.8)	20 (17.9)
Public	19609 (96.5)	1251 (96.2)	92 (82.1)
TOTAL	20323 (100)	1300 (100)	112 (100)

It is clear from the table above that the response rates were much higher from urban schools (55%); from independent schools (18% compared with 4% of the population) and from the more developed provinces (Gauteng 13%). The responding 112 schools comprised 92 public schools and 20 independent schools. Responses came from both rural and urban areas in South Africa. 44,6 percent of the responding schools are situated in rural areas (compared with 60% of the population) and 55,4 of the respondents came from urban areas compared with 39.3% of the population. Most of the responding schools are from the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu Natal Provinces (37,5% and 17,9% respectively). The only province from which no feedback was received was the Northern Cape where only two percent of South African primary schools are situated. It is clear from Table 2 that the responding schools do not mirror the population parameters, making generalizations difficult. The natural selection does however represent the picture of schools in which there is a more likely prevalence of commercial

activities (urban schools, independent schools and those from the more developed provinces).

It should be noted that 21 of the responding schools (while labelled primary in the descriptions), may be described as common schools as they included high school grades. These respondents were not excluded from the responses as they did reflect the primary school situation as the questionnaire clearly stipulated responses from primary school principals.

Contemporary in-school marketing practices

South African primary school principals reported a 67,3% incidence of involvement in some type of marketing activities. These ranged from product sales to direct advertising and indirect advertising.

All the responding school principals were involved in at least one of the fourteen commercial activities in the typology presented to them. The most commonly mentioned activity in primary schools was the school tuck shop. This is not unexpected as the "school tuck" is a common feature of most schools around the country and indeed as reported in the Geuens *et al.* (2002) study and in the GAO Report (2000) of the United States. Interestingly, the existence of tuck shops is more common in urban areas than it is in rural ones and more commonly found in public schools. The next most commonly mentioned activity was advertising receiving 51 mentions. This occurs when companies place their ads in school-based materials such as school magazines. This too is not unexpected as the vast majority of schools are known to fundraise for the publication of their school materials. These activities are followed by co-educational talks and co-educational materials presented to the schools.

These responses to the question of incidence are classified by high penetration (used by more than 50% of the schools), medium penetration (a quarter to half of the schools are engaged in it), and low penetration (less than a quarter of the schools are involved in it) activities in Table 3.

Table 3: The presence of commercial activities in South African primary schools

Heavy Penetration (>50%)	Medium Penetration (25-50%)	Low Penetration (<25%)
Tuck-Shop (56,3%)	Ad in school magazine/pamphlet (45,5%)	Promotion notice boards (21,4%)
	Education talks by company (42%)	Charity Events (15,2%)
	Educational material sponsoring (35,7%)	Corporate sponsored excursions (13,4%)
	Non-commercial billboards with commercial logos (33,9%)	Soft drink vending machine (8,9%)
	Product sampling (30,4%)	One Corporate Sponsor (5,4%)
	Corporate prizes or incentives (30,4%)	Food vending machine (4,5%)
	Sponsorship of school events (29,5%)	

Interestingly soft drink vending machines (9%) and food vending machines (5%) fall into the low penetration category. These are generally the commercial activities that raise concerns in relation to childhood obesity. It may be speculated that the existence of a tuck shop could be seen as sufficient for the provision of food and beverage in the school. The low penetration of vending machines at responding schools may also be attributed to the low socio economic status of most responding schools who may not be able to afford the products generally sold in vending machines. Promotional notice-boards (example scoreboards) which are popularly found in school grounds of other studies also fall into the low penetration category of South African primary schools (21%).

Policies and procedures

These are the (documented or unwritten) guidelines, policies and procedures relating to the execution of in-school commercial activities. Interestingly, the majority (67%) of the responding schools in this study did not have any specific policy regarding in-school commercial activities compared with a number of restrictions on in-school marketing in the more developed countries of the world. Hawkes in 2004 noted the absence of specific regulations on in-school marketing in South Africa.

Of those that had policies (33%), these were neither formalised nor documented. There are several possible reasons for this: the stakeholders within the South African primary school system do not regard in-school marketing as an issue of priority; or that they do not have sufficient knowledge of in-school commercial activities; or they may not be aware of the potential negative impact it may have on children. Further analysis of the data in the form of cross-tabulations to determine whether independent schools were more likely to have policies rather than public schools revealed no significant findings. The absence of statutory regulations or self-regulatory codes in schools could thus leave children vulnerable to the potential negative effects of in-school commercial activities. In response to the question on where the decision-making is located, the majority of respondents selected the principal and the school governing bodies. This is to be expected as the SASA (1996) states that governing bodies are responsible for the development of policies to regulate the use of funds and the type of fundraising carried out by the school. The new Bill proposed by the Department of Health in South Africa attempts to control this activity in schools. It may be speculated that as the issue gains 'currency', South Africa will see the development of policies on the issue.

Principals' views on in-school marketing

Responding principals commented on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed (1 Strongly Disagree to 5 Strongly Agree) with 25 statements on in-school marketing. The statements dealt with four in-school marketing issues namely: policies; in-school commercial activities; the effects of in-school marketing on children; and in-school commercialism and health issues. The majority of South African primary school principals are the primary decision-makers as they were the ones most frequently contacted by

companies as indicated by principals in response to a previous question.

The schools that had policies (33%) were further analysed. Principals were required to select amongst the possible reasons for the development of policies at their schools. The most commonly selected reasons were: to protect the children and to develop a standard set of criteria for the evaluation of proposed activities. This concurs with the findings of Cort *et al.* (2004) in the beliefs expressed by US superintendents of schools. In view of small sample size, further analysis of the data revealed no significant differences.

Importance of policies on in-school commercial activity

School principals are invariably the champions of their school policies. Principals of primary schools in South Africa by and large (85.5%) agreed (or strongly agreed) that a school policy regarding in-school marketing is necessary to protect the school from being exploited. Although the vast majority (71.1%) of schools without specific policies had not considered developing a policy when presented with the issues surrounding in-school marketing, they agreed on the necessity of policy. In South Africa, proposed regulations on in-school commercial activities are currently being reviewed by the Department of Health (Sikiti da Silva, 2007). The findings of this study suggest there will be little resistance to government intervention in the matter. Indeed respondents in the majority (80%) also supported the involvement of parents in the development of the school policy.

Views on in-school marketing

Some 62.4% of principals agreed (or strongly agreed) that in-school marketing allows children to 'have a bit of fun'. While principals supported the fun aspects of commercial activities, they were quite firm on the issue of exploitation. 60.3% agreed (or strongly agreed) that companies should not use schools as a vehicle to drive commercial activities. Principals on the whole (86.5%) held the view that commercial activities should only be tolerated when they offer added value to the school. Thus, like the principals in the Bona *et al.* (2003) study South African principals in the present study were supportive of those in-school commercial activities that offer added value and enhance the goals of the school. Half (50%) of the respondents however, felt that commercial activities disrupt school, and 44.1% felt commercial activities within schools should be tolerated and only 25.2% felt that commercial/ marketing activities should not be tolerated. Primary school principals (47.7%) were however of the view that the decision to participate in commercial/ marketing activities should be independent of its commercial motive. South African primary school principals in general were supportive of in-school commercial activities like their counterparts in other parts of the world.

The effects of in-school commercial activities on children

The beliefs of the effects of in-school marketing have largely shaped the concern and criticisms around in-school commercial activities. The vast majority (85.6%) of the principals agreed (or strongly agreed) that in-school marketing definitely has an impact on children. However, what is quite interesting is the responses on the nature of the impact. Responses to the statement: Commercial activities in school have a positive impact on a child's well-being were evenly distributed (36% agree/strongly agree; 33.3% neutral; and 30.6% disagree/strongly disagree). This may explain why the majority of the schools had no policy on in-school commercialism as the principals, who were identified as the main decision makers in most of the schools, had no strong ideological position on the impact of in-school commercial activities on children. This finding is in agreement with Feuerstein (2001) who suggests answering such questions regarding the risks or benefits of in-school marketing is difficult and rests, to a certain degree, on one's ideological point of view. Although most responding principals (69.4%) believed children should be exposed to realities such as commercialism, the majority (69.1%) of respondents agreed (or strongly agreed) that pupils are vulnerable to in-school commercialism and two-thirds (66.6%) of respondents agreed (or strongly agreed) pupils should not be used as a vehicle to drive advertising. Lastly, the majority (60.9%) disagreed (or strongly disagreed) that in-school marketing does not influence children's buying behaviour implying that principals do appreciate the effects that marketing might have on children.

Views on in-school marketing and health issues

The link between in-school marketing and obesity has been identified (Palmer *et al.*, 2004; BMA, 2005; Sikiti da Silva, 2007). This section explores principals' views on health issues. The vast majority (90.9%) of respondents agreed (or strongly agreed) with a need for more healthy products to be made available in schools. On the issue of soft drinks, nearly half of the principals (46.8%) disagreed (or strongly disagreed) with the statement: the marketing of soft drinks should not be banned in schools. Some 27% of principals were neutral on the issue. In addition, these positive views were supported by the view that substituting healthy snacks will not have a financial impact on the school. These findings bode well for the implementation of healthy diets in the school environment of South Africa. The research evidence of Molnar and Garcia (2005) on the financial impact of the substitution of junk foods for healthful snacks in the US is varied. A number of responding schools in their survey reported financial losses due to the ban on soft drinks and junk foods in schools.

Cronbach Alpha coefficients for the scales used in this section were calculated and found to be lower than .70 for two of the four issues: principals' views on in-school commercial activities and views on policy. The scales on the health issue had only three questions that could be analysed and thus not calculated. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the scales of the effects on children was the only scale to be found reliable (0.767).

Implications and suggestions for future research

This exploratory investigation demonstrates a definite presence of in-school commercial activities in South African primary schools. While the sample size presents serious limitations on the ability to generalize the findings, the evidence reflects serious need for a more comprehensive study on the issue. A full and comprehensive inventory of all commercial activities operating within the school environment in South Africa is needed. Such a study should be undertaken under the auspices of the national Department of Education. In this exploratory investigation, of the fourteen commercial activities listed in the questionnaire, thirteen had medium (25-50%) to low (<25%) penetration in the schools. Future research needs to explore the reasons for the incidence of these specific types of commercial activities. It is important for example to examine the financial contribution of these specific commercial activities on school income and project the possible loss of income through restrictions. Further, research needs to examine the impact of the commercial activities on the health of children. It is important to research these issues even in light of the proposed Bill of the Department of Health. The financial impact of the proposed legislation should be explored. The proposed legislation of the Department of Health thus presents some interesting opportunities for research. One may for example also want to examine the nature of corporate support in view of the ban on the advertising of unhealthy brands within the school environment.

School principals appear positive on the health issues but seem not to fully appreciate the potentially negative impact of marketing activities on school children. The Department of Education should design an intervention programme exploring the effects of marketing within the school environment. It would also be beneficial to solicit the views of the other stakeholders in the South African school system, namely: teachers; parents; members of the Department of Education; School Governing Bodies (SGB); and companies involved in in-school commercial activities.

Future research should identify the practices and policies in other African and other developing countries. Of concern is the ability of multinational food and beverage marketers to target children in less developed countries as the restrictions in their home environments present challenges to them. The need for carefully defined policy and intervention from government is clear from the responses of this study.

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