

## Web games probed over possible child pressure

April 12 2013

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Children use the Internet at the 20th Sao Paulo Fashion Week, in Sao Paulo, Brazil on January 20, 2006. A watchdog has launched an investigation into whether children face "unfair pressure" to spend money on apparently free web and app-based games, it said Friday.

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The Office of Fair Trading (OFT) is asking parents to get in touch with any examples of possible "commercially aggressive" practices which encourage children to buy [virtual currency](#) like [coins](#), gems or fruit, or upgraded membership.

It is unlawful to make a "direct exhortation" to children to make a purchase or persuade their parents to do so under consumer protection regulations.

"We are concerned that children and their parents could be subject to unfair pressure to purchase when they are [playing games](#) they thought were free, but which can actually run up substantial costs," said Cavendish Elthorne, the OFT's senior director for goods and consumer.

"The OFT is not seeking to ban in-game purchases, but the games industry must ensure it is complying with the relevant regulations so that children are protected.

"We are speaking to the industry and will take enforcement action if necessary."

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