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# **CHILDRENSWEAR MANUFACTURERS**

## **A DYING BREED..?**

**BY**

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## ***INTRODUCTION***



An analysis of the growth, development and subsequent decline on the Childrenswear manufacturing industry in Ireland is the focus for this thesis. A report in 1988 maintained that Irish parents 'spend up to £160 million in clothes for their children every year and a £130 million of that goes abroad' (Irish Times 31.10.88). That translates to a sizable part of £2.5 million leaving the country every week.

The situation referred to in the above has continued into the 1990s. The childrenswear clothing industry is a huge market in Ireland and yet this is not reflected in the industrial base in this country. The establishment of the childrenswear industry took effect in the 1960s, this followed a period of intense investment and development; following the establishment of the Free State.

Children as a commodity have grown into an enormous area for targeting by manufactures. This thesis will try and establish why Irish manufacturing area is <sup>not</sup> developing in this section. It will look at the initial government policies to establish an industrial base for the general clothing industry in this country. This is undertaken in chapter 1 where a brief overview of the industrial background to the area will be assessed.

Chapter 2 will focus on two manufacturers who established themselves in the childrenswear industry and who reflect through their differing manufacturing policies, the changing nature of the business. The first, J.A. Hickey established in 1968, who is now a major supplier to the Dunnes Store retail group and a large exporter to the U.K. He contributes much of his success to 'Modern Thinking' and large technology investment.





The second Laura Duffy, a smaller scale childrenswear manufacturer who supplies Roches Stores outlets and small boutique outlets nationwide.

The reasons for selecting these two manufacturers is to show the contrast between a multiples manufacturing based company and a more selective market scale of the industry. I will also endeavour to discuss the motivation for the establishment of these two industries within a wider cultural context.

The design of childrenwear developed into an area in it's own right. Chapter 3 will assess how these two companies developed their design systems by examining the changing construction and restrictions placed on the designing for children.

The research undertaken has involved extensive discussion *and* interviews with former and existing manufacturers, newspaper reportage on the industry and publications relating to government policies. This thesis hopes to assess difficulties experienced by the selected companies in maintaining their positions in the market place and will try to establish where the way forward maybe, given the current economic status of the country.





## ***CHAPTER 1***

### **The Evolution of Irish Childrenswear Manufacturers**



Ireland in the 1950s was in a developing state. The entire country was practically dependent on agriculture as their source of income and survival. Only a hundred years previously the great famine had engulfed the land driving thousands of people from their homes or to an early grave. The population of Ireland should have realised that a country of its size could not survive on agriculture alone. The Irish needed guidance to pursue other industries of substance. The government was determined to reduce the running expenses of the state as much as possible and above all to achieve economic self sufficiency for Ireland. Ireland at this time, like the rest of the world was recovering from World War II, and thus needed to enrich existing industries.

Sean Lemass the Minister for Industry and Commerce from 1932-1948 was intent on establishing industries while, at the same time, prove to the world that Ireland could have an industrial base. Lemass turned his attention from the agricultural industries and looked towards the urban areas. He realised modern manufacturing industries would require well developed transport networks, with good roads and railway services. So, he was attracted to the larger towns, especially the capital Dublin, because they offered all the service facilities needed to establish industries. They also had a greater population and perhaps a larger market base.

One of these growth areas was in clothing manufacturing, which Lemass had a special interest in. Up to the fifties, the clothing trade operated in a system of *cottage industries* on small scale production rooms for example dressmakers and seamstresses. These small home based industries had continued to operate mainly due to the Second World War. During the war years raw materials could not be imported into Ireland.





The Irish economy was heavily dependent on imports of food (such as tea and wheat) oil, machinery and in particular clothing and the raw materials needed for the clothing manufacturing industry. These were normally imported to Ireland by British ships, but, as Britain <sup>needed</sup> her ships in the war these products became in short supply. New clothing could not be made therefore old clothing had to be recycled. This resulted in dressmakers being one of the few areas which continued to boom. The term for this form of recycling was *turncoats*.

The dressmakers took coats or more expensive fabrics based clothes and *turned* them inside out by ripping down all seams, turning the fabric and re-sewing them. In many cases it was parents clothes being turned for their children. This involved cutting them to size and adjusting them for a child's dimensions. Resulting in the dressmakers talent not only lying in the construction of garments but the re-styling of them also. This involved a very slow process for various reasons such as :

- 1) **It was time consuming:** As the seams had to be opened. It was normally parents clothing which had to be reshaped for their children. This meant each fabric piece had to be re-cut accordingly.
- 2) **Great demand:** The working class of Dublin were quite poor and this was an inexpensive way of clothing themselves and their children. Therefore demand for this service was very high, leading to a build up of garments needing turning.
- 3) **Conditions:** The seamstress's worked from their homes <sup>often</sup> after containing large families who lived in extreme poverty conditions. Lighting was poor which placed restrictions and limitations on hours they could work.



These three reasons meant that there was often a three monthly wait for the recycled clothes and is one of the factors which led to the establishment by Lemass of a clothing industry. Ultimately, leading to a growth in the childrenswear manufacturing industry.

(Brenda Fallon Interview 15.10.94).

After the war had ended, a new and wide range of fabrics could be brought into the country. This sparked excitement amongst the working class. Although these classes who in general, had little or not disposable income bought new clothes, considering them to be more as a novelty item than one of necessity. Lemass used this motivation to generate power for a related industry to entrap this excitement. So, with the help of government, they began to tackle the problems surrounding the setting up of the new industry. Lemass believed the government should play a greater role in the economy. But two semi-state bodies were not established until 1970 to play a direct role in the development of an industrial base. These semi-state bodies are as follows:

- 1) **I.D.A. (Industrial Development Authority) which was set up to help industrial growth.**
- 2) **Coras Trachtala (C.T.T. - The Irish Export Board) established to promote Irish Exports.**

Lemass in promoting the clothing industry essentially established a very protected and insulated industry. This meant that there was a taxation levy on all imported goods entering the country. According to one manufacturer:

'When I first started in the trade it was a totally protected one, there was a duty on stuff coming from England'. (Hickeys Interview 10.09.94)





This allowed Irish manufacturers to compete within the country and so developed a very strong and profitable base network. In other words it offered a way of making fast money. With the help and encouragement from Sean Lemass many ventured into business, expanding their home based furnished workrooms to larger premises, often situated in four floored tenement buildings. Although these buildings were a level higher than that of their workroom counterparts, they were not necessarily better and conditions were still deplorable. Twenty to thirty people held employment in a tenement, ascending and descending four flights of stairs several times a day to receive deliveries.

A worker could acquire employment from the age of fourteen. Many children coming from large inner city families usually commenced work from this age due to poverty, family circumstances. On commencement, they swept floors and made tea, learning their skills from more senior staff members on dinner breaks. So, by the end of their four year training they were qualified to use most of the assembling machinery. Taxation was extremely low, allowing employees to earn up to £6 before taxation.

Although the I.D.A. had introduced the first Industrial Estate in 1957 in Shannon, Co Limerick, City base clothing manufacturers were reluctant to leave the city centre to urbanised residence of business. Therefore, these tenement buildings continued to operate successfully until the late 1960s.



Indeed by the late 1950s Dublin alone had over 1,000 clothing manufacturers operating in the city:

'You literally had thousands of small manufacturers. I remember when I first started the city was dotted with small factories and all doing well employing 20-30 people'. (Hickey, Interview, 10.09.94).

It is difficult to assess how many specialised in the childrenswear manufacturing industry, this is due to the fact that childrenswear was effectively a miniaturised version of womenswear and was not seen as a separate industry. It was not until the late 1960s that a more specialised form of the industry evolved. This occurred because children were establishing themselves as a market area which had to be targeted separately. The more time consuming methods of creating miniaturised dimensions of womenswear and menswear for the childrenswear market was under analysis. Combining this with the growing ranges of specialised childrenswear being produced in the English market and imported into Ireland led to the motivation by a number of small manufacturers to move into the childrenswear area.

The market area was dominated primarily by wholesalers such as Arnotts, Guineys and Pollocks who had traditionally supplied nationwide boutiques. Mr Hickey explained -

'In those days the trade was dominated by retailers, single retailers, Clearys, Guineys, Arnotts and then a lot of wholesale companies, you had Arnotts wholesale, Crow Wilson, Pollocks, all of which have since closed'. (Hickey, Interview, 10.09.94).





They too, were instrumental in the change of specialisation. Wholesalers imported foreign childrenswear ranges which were in competition with the Irish based manufacturers. Thus prompting the change.

The clothes designed specifically for children are less cumbersome in their forms, they are more simplistic which is better suited to a child's smaller proportions, and ultimately are less brash. When the market became more established childrenswear was seen as an area which could develop into co-ordinated ranges, a mix and match, using related colour stories and fabrics. J.A.Hickey recognised this fact when assessing the market place and incorporated co-ordinated ranges in his production ranges.

By the early 1970s in Ireland large scale growth in the manufacturing of childrens clothing had established itself with a number of small scale industries setting up. However, a number of factors contributed against this growth. These included Ireland becoming a member of the European Community (E.E.C.) in 1972. Ireland as part of the community had to lower its protective tariffs on home industries and comply with the importations laws of the community states.

Another factor was the oil crisis of the mid 1970s. Reduction of the levys saw the introduction of cheap imports from the Far East despite efforts by the Community to establish the Multi Fibre Agreement. This in turn would aid in the control of import number of allowances into the community. These factors all contributed to the decline of the industry.



The 1980s have not seen a re-establishment of the level of industrial growth which had prevailed in the 1960s and late 1970s. In fact, meaning the industry had to cope with even more competition from cheap imports. Inflation in the 1980s continued to grow despite the perception of a market growth in the decade. This was due to the levels of taxation, the breaking of the parity with sterling which in turn effected exports and imports into the country. High overheads such as wages and taxation meant many manufacturers could not retail their merchandise at cost effective prices. Attempts by the government in 1982 to tax the *necessities of life* such as clothing and footwear, were met with national unrest. The manufacturers, the marketplace and consumers could not sustain such levels of taxation. The government of the day to amend its plan only leaving taxation on clothing exceeding 10 years.

'The most controversial item in the Budget which brought down the government was the decision to subject clothing and footwear to the newly increased VAT rate of 18%. up to now the '*necessitates of life*' in Mr John Brutons words has a zero VAT rating but he made it clear that this exception could no longer be justified'.  
(The Irish Times - Thursday Jan 28 1982)

The government left themselves one option, to tackle the growing problem facing the industry. The IDA which had been established to aid Irish industry in fact set about enticing foreign companies to set up a base in Ireland offering grants and low taxation packages. However, the notion of bringing capital into the country was a false one as many of these companies just used this base from which to export their products.





This meant that the money invested by the Irish government was not returned into the Irish economy and investment was lost to indigenous Irish firms as a consequence.

However, the situation for childrenswear manufacturers continued to decline. The following chapter focuses on two manufacturers who have continued to successfully operate in the childrenswear manufacturing industry from the 1970s. These firms will be used to discuss the various factors which initially saw the growth and development of the business and charts the move of both firms into the differing methods of production to find there niche and markets.



## ***CHAPTER 2***

The History of J.A. Hickey  
&  
Laura Duffy



Two manufacturers of childrenswear who were established in the late 1960s and early 1970s are the focus for discussion in this chapter. Both firms adapted their ranges and manufacturing bases to develop in different ways. Each company reflects the changing nature of the business.

The first is J.A Hickey, who is now a major supplier to the Dunnes Stores retail group and a large exporter to the UK. The second is Laura Duffy, who manufactures and supplies Roches Stores and nationwide small boutiques sized outlets. The reasons for selecting these two manufacturers is to show the contrast between a multiple design and manufacturing company with a more selected small scale firm in the industry. This chapter will look at the motivation for the establishment of the two industries within a wider cultural context.

Hickey was born the eldest of three children into a dominant childrens clothing trade family. Upon finishing his education with the Christian Brothers he began his working life as a retailer in Dublin. At the age of eighteen he had little interest in his parents trade but due to family circumstances ultimately made it his livelihood. The family firm was established as a consequence of Lemass's policies and the low taxation rates.

The early 1960s brought with it his fathers ill health and the news of his 40 year old mothers late pregnancy. J.A. Hickey was left to hold the part of their childrenswear manufacturing business. His father was a successful man and held many partnerships, one of which was J.A. Hickey's cousin, who also ran a small childrenswear manufacturers in Dublin.





His fathers health picked up and when he returned to work J.A Hickeys duties were cut from Managing Director to Manager of the cutting room and extended duties of managing the factory floor. This was a come down for the young J.A. who had become quite accustomed to holding the responsibility of his fathers business. J.A was soon to learn of his cousins ill health and his opportunity of leadership arose again. He offered to look after his cousins business while she took time off to recover, thus leading his father and cousin to form an agreement. The settlement being he should work for his father during the day and check on his cousins business at night. But, J.A soon realised this was not practical nor feasible and so trained his brother-in-law into his former position at his father factory. This left J.A more time to practise his management skills on his cousins business.

In 1967 he commenced management of his cousins childrenswear manufacturing firm. The design of the childrens clothes was undertaken by Hickey himself, this included the cutting of blocks and establishment of a production base. These clothes were essentially miniaturised versions of adult clothing, but needed adaptation for childrens sizes. By the end of his first year he had made £3,000 profit. He soon got together the collateral to buy out his fathers share in his cousins business. His cousin soon returned to work. By this time J.A was running the company successfully thus, leading to the decision of a partnership. This partnership worked well until his cousin remarried. Her husband became inquisitive and began asking about profit and general maintenance of the factory. J.A. saw this as a way of undermining his authority. As a result he left the company and set up on his own. (Hickey, Interview 10.09.94).





He moved into a building in Wolftone Street. It was a four floor tenement building so he offered two floors to his father, which he accepted. Once again both father and son were working alongside one another. Very rapidly J.A had outgrown his two floors and as a result in 1969 he moved to a larger premises on Green Street. Suddenly, in 1970 his father died leaving his mother to manage the running of the business. It was a difficult task for his mother, so he moved her business near to his premises so he could keep an eye on the running of the firm. Although it was a brand new building within a couple of weeks a fire broke out, destroying the premises and prompting the retirement of his mother.

J.A Hickey re-established the firm and built his factory staff to eighty. As the factory grew he expanded, taking over the rear of the building which was situated at 100 Capel Street. A factory then became available in Golden Bridge Industrial estate, Inchicore, on the outskirts of Dublin. He moved location where the factory is currently situated employing 180-200 staff members. Hickey at this point sold his merchandise through the wholesale distribution network. Based in Dublin, this cut out the need to invest in marketing his products, and in turn meant that he could saturation of the market nationwide without large expenditure and selling costs. <sup>This is</sup> In contrast to many of the smaller manufacturing industries, as they operated on a basis of selling direct to small boutiques and necessitated being on the road on a constant basis selling their merchandise.



From his Inchicore base, analysis of his business practices was undertaken. Hickey's philosophy of design was that:

Childrenswear in those days was a form of engineering, and I considered myself to be an engineer. (Hickey, Interview, 10.09.94)

His realisation of his company being successful meant branching away from the small nationwide boutiques and engaging in a market research study. From his study he discovered that chainstores were the future. In order to increase profit margins he would have to widen his focus to entrap them. His first customer was Mr Ben Dunne of Dunnes Stores. This new endeavour posed many problems for J.A.Hickey in the beginning *as he felt* feeling he was unable to viably compete with European and Far Eastern competition. He began to travel to Cologne and Paris as a source of inspiration, taking ideas from the trade fare exhibitors and from this knowledge negotiated with his high volume customers to determine a suitable price for their consumer. (Hickey, Interview, 10.09.94).

Gradually J.A became aware of the amount of co-ordinated ranges being acquired from his Far Eastern counterparts which *were* saturating his customers market. His main concern was their attention to design details, something J.A. Hickey's garments did not possess. Worried that this fact would undermine the good working relationship he had with his customers he decided to employ two designers. This positive step enhanced J.A. Hickey's trade and resulted in increasing profit sales. (In chapter 3, I Discuss in depth the importance of design to J.A. Hickey).





His next focus of study was the methods of cutting production time and costs, in order to fulfil his growing orders. This led to his introduction of 'cellular production'. A system whereby a machinist could operate four machines consecutively without dramatically shifting her position. Thus performing several tasks on each garment, resulting in the cutting down of garment positing time and passing time from machinist to machinist. The analytical report also revealed time wasting on garment handling of each bundle and so each garment was pegged individually allowing machinists to work on the garment without physically removing it from its peg. This led to bundles moving more rapidly up and down the production line.

J.A. Hickey believed in 'Modern Thinking', in turn investing large amounts of profit in introducing computer technology to aid design development and pattern construction. The system developed was known as 'Computer Aided Design' (C.A.D.) and has subsequently been utilised in many clothing wear manufacturing firms. This technology assisted both designer and pattern cutter. For example the latter by feeding his existing pattern blocks into his system it became relatively easy to re-design and re-create new style lines without indulging in labour intensive pattern drafting by hand. This suited his customer Dunnes Stores as design for childrenswear was first a re-adaptation for the previous years styles such as detail changing shape of colours, pockets, studding etc, by doing this excellorated the design process and sample making techniques.

*Thus* Supplying his customer with new ranges in a third of the original time, as a result his company outdid his foreign competitors by better serving his major customers.





It is apparent that J.A. Hickeys success is based, not only on ambition, but on his evidently futuristic ideals on how the childrenswear industry should be structured in order to survive. The establishment of Laura Duffy's childrenswear clothing manufacturing business is in contrast to that of J.A.Hickey. Laura Duffy began trading two years after J.A.Hickey in 1970 from a small converted room in her home in Cappaghmore estate in Clondalkin, Dublin. With no family tradition in the industry she established her firm in order to 'make money'. Her business was one of those set up to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by protective levys and taxation. Childrens clothing soon became her focus as she explained:

*she* was more familiar with childrenswear, and liked working with childrens sizing' (Laura Duffy Interview 15.10.94)

The workroom was run on a outworker basis. This meant that the workroom's solo function was for cutting and designing which Ms Duffy undertook herself. The work was then passed to home machinists for construction and on completion returned to the workroom for checking and dispatch. Her sizing was focused on the 0-2 years age bracket and within a year of trading demand for her designs grew warranting a change of venue to a larger premises; a double garage on the Monastery road, Clondalkin. With a staff of 5-6 people and the equivalent in outworkers, the double garage became too small to house the demand within a year. This resulted in yet again a larger premises being sought after. With the help of the I.D.A., grants provided assistance for the furnishing of the factory and <sup>the</sup> build up <sup>up</sup> her staffing level to 30 employees. She traded under the name of 'My Child' and this was soon to become a household name.



Her styles were stocked in Roches Stores and nationwide boutique size outlets. Although the I.D.A.'s funding and encouragement enticed new clientele to the company, it was only by the sheer determination of Ms Duffy herself that related into profit sales. As her business was not confined to just one client, but a range of small boutique's nationwide, it entailed travelling and marketing of each new range. It also meant establishing new market trends by conducting market research and in particular participation at the trade fairs. The factories structuring consisted of an office area/reception area, dispatch room, design room/sample room, cutting area, production line and pressing area.

The assembling of garments operated on a 'bundle' system. A bundle being made up of 7-8 garments of the same style and size tied together. Each machine operator performed various tasks of construction to aid the completion of the garment bundles. Like J.A.Hickeys system of cellular production, this method encouraged team work and motivated all staff members to help each other in the construction. But unlike J.A.Hickeys system it had major defects.

1. The loss of garments: If the bundle distribution was uneven ie.( not the full bundle being passed to the next operator) it allowed garments to go missing.
- 2.Sizing: If a bundle was opened and not re-tied after tasks of each construction, sizing could be mixed up causing wrong construction of bodice size to skirt size.





Timing of each task was extremely precise. Machinists worked on a bonus unit basis which meant production of excess units assisted basic wage earnings. Each line of assemblers were assigned a time keeper/supervisor to analyse production methods. By applying this strategy to the factory floor it encouraged machinists to work faster in order to earn more money, thus, enhancing company profits.

Owing to personal reasons ten years later in 1984, Ms Duffy was forced to liquidate the company following the advice of her financial advisor and accountant.

It was so complicated with the I.D.A. funding, machinery on lease, etc. that the easiest way out was liquidation. (Laura Duffy, Interview, 15.10.94)

However Ms Duffy felt that with reduced staffing levels she could still successfully complete her orders and only slightly reduce her customer list, to which she attributed much of her success. With this plan in mind a premises in Smith Haywood House on the Longmile Rd, Drimnagh, in Dublin, was acquired under the new name of 'Laura Duffy'. There she negotiated a three year lease. With a staff of five machinists, one office staff, one timekeeper/supervisor and a sales representative she still maintained her good working relationship with the customer without the restrictions of the I.D.A. repayments. Duffy continued at the same production level for the duration of the lease and so by its termination had enough money to buy her own premises in the same block.



Business at this stage had began to decrease mainly due to that fact that importation of cheaper produced clothing was taking effect. Throughout the years she explained that:

I used to work with the 0-2 years sizing in which I did big business, gradually the smaller sizes were discontinued because of the Far Eastern factor and were replaced by ages 4-10 years. (Laura Duffy, Interview, 15.10.94)

This was true as the Far Eastern merchandise at first only competed in the younger sizing market. The Irish population which in turn began to buy this cheaper but not necessarily inferior merchandise from the developing chainstores and not the childrenswear boutiques. This left the boutiques not other option than to follow suit and stock the cheaper produced garments from the Far East. The boutiques by doing this, reacted against the Irish manufacturer who found it difficult to compete with their Eastern counterparts on price. The only way they could survive was by dealing with mass market volume such as J.A.Hickey, but many did not possess the collateral needed to back such an operation, resulting in the termination of many small companies. The general economic recession of the mid 1970s was a factor also in the demise of a number of those companies where overheads and production costs could not be sustained.

If Laura Duffys company was to survive this crisis she would have to look to other cost cutting solutions, thus focusing her business on communion wear. Her motivation was mainly due to the fact that communion wear being a skilled operation, was also time consuming, something her Eastern counterparts avoided if possible.





She diminished her two season ranges and in turn replaced them with a larger communion range which she saturated the market with. Her achievements in the communion wear area were prospering and the product was well received. However owing to the nature of this aspect of the business being a guaranteed market at all levels at a particular time of the year and having a good sale value, it is open to theft. The company saw it's stock stolen three times in as many months. Prompting Duffy no other option than moving her premises yet again. Thus in 1990, she decided to extend her existing home foundations to accommodate her business. By taking this positive step she found it easier to keep an eye on her merchandise and machinery especially during her communion season. This current premises employs 4-6 staff and Duffy who controls all design and production management.

The growth of Duffys small scale business to one which employed 30 employees at one point in the 1970s and the early 1980s shows the growing market and development of childrenswear as a product. Her initial production for the 0-2 age range was a carefully selected one, owing to its ease of production. With Irelands entry into the E.E.C. this forced Ireland into dropping many of its benefits of its home industries including protection from imports. These imports flooded into the country particularly in the clothing industry and as discussed already many of the Far Eastern production firms were concentrating on the 0-2 sizing market. Although Duffy was flexible and by closing her firm and re-opening with a reduced debt and staff was able to re-establish herself in the market with a larger range of childrenswear sizes. However the market place reacted to the imported cheaper ranges and forced change again.





This cost structure of many Irish clothing firms is fundamentally higher than in Third World countries or in Eastern Europe which means that Irish firms cannot succeed by competing on price alone. (Irish Times 22.10.91)

Hickey also has had to adapt and change in the twenty five or so year of his business, moving, from a small scale manufacturing unit similar to Duffys, to a multiple design and manufacturing format. While this has proven very successful for him, he is at the mercy of the client and needed to constantly be aware of the changes in design and the effects that this will have on production and the ultimate cost to his client. These two industries have managed to survive in different ways by adapting and being flexible.



## ***CHAPTER 3***

The relationship between  
Manufacturing & Design





Laura Duffy's system of design is somewhat traditionally minded. She has not invested large amounts of collateral in technology to over-ride her Eastern counterparts. Instead, she engaged in other avenues analysing and researching <sup>what</sup> that her high profit making competitors were reluctant to venture into. For this reason Ms Duffy remained with the system of designing she used in the beginning to great success. 'Talent and a good judgemental eye'. (Laura Duffy, Interview, 15th October '94).

This is in contrast to Hickeys method of design through use of logo placement on the basic shape of garments. This aspect will be discussed further in the chapter. Duffys design development works more with printed fabrics and manipulation of such fabrics to the best of their abilities using them alone to determine the styling sample ranges. Unlike the adult fashion industry childrenswear clothing does not have any particular colour reference stories. In fact the only reference to colour might be the strict usage of bright pastel colours in the summer months and dark and more vibrant colouring for the autumn to winter months.

She begins by sourcing her fabrics at trade fairs such as Premiere Vision, held twice yearly in Paris. At this show international cloth mills show a selection of fabrics for usage in the industry. There Duffy orders sample lengths of 4-6 meters of fabric for her seasons collection. Her selection is made in keeping with the clientele requirements for the season and not necessarily the theme of personal inspiration. The fabric once ordered is shipped to her firm in Dublin where she sets about creating her collection. Using fabrics inspiration as her source, shapes the pattern pieces to best capture the clothes essence.



Then on completion, sews up the sample styling each sample with small details such as pockets fancy colours and frills. Ms Duffy prefers to use a mixture of this fabric inspiration with strong design ideas from current *Bambini* and *Collectioni* magazines of the season. When all the samples have been completed a selection is made from the more accented pieces of the range, keeping in mind her clienteles customer profile.

In contrast to these design practices is J.A Hickey's, whose designs have evolved more related to that of his garment production methods. Unlike Laura Duffy, Hickey is dealing with mass market production and he must satisfy his client ten times out of ten and a level of direction<sup>s</sup> dictation is apparent in his interaction with them. In turn as the focus of his company shifted from small boutiques<sup>sofab</sup> as has his design sources and methodology. Evidently he geared his company towards his clienteles marketplace. His clientele being Dunnes Stores whose market place covers a generally working lower to middle class customers. Hickey by analysing his clienteles market place focused his motivation towards leisurewear for children. Childrens attitudes are constantly changing and Hickey took this into account.

Children today probably spend more time wearing casual sportswear than they did a decade ago. (Hide Jaffe Rosa Rosa 1990).

Leisurewear in general is very dependent on logo development and especially so in childrenswear. It is however, a time consuming process, including both usage and typography in most cases. To address both aspects of the logo image requires both a graphic designer and fashion designer skills. The latter leaving a greater importance as the placement of such logo's is critical in determining the style.





J.A Hickey for this reason made many investment<sup>s</sup> in order to aid his designers design development ultimately with raising profit margins in mind. He needed his designers to broaden their constructive design development as this was a barrier owing to the lack of technology. The answer was Computer aided Design. <sup>the</sup> C.A.D. system itself is a similar version to that of an artist sketch book. The system houses a sketching facility amongst others which allow the designer to work freely on design development. Design development is a term used whereby different contributions to a style makeup can be added or subtracted to create slight variations on the same style, thus enabling the correct attribute selections to be made to create the most interesting and eye pleasing sample.

The beauty of this is we used to make a range of samples and I went into the chainstore with that range of samples maybe having 30-40 samples that took weeks to make in the sample room and have 75% rejected in couple of minutes meaning more re-sampling. (Hickey, Interview, September 26th 1994)

The method begins by all the seasons logos that is designed images being keyed into the system by placing each image onto a scanner which in turn sends them into the computers memory banks for storage. Once all the images have been filed, it becomes easier to re-arrange image proportions to fit garment sketches. This method also facilitates the designer to play with both fabric background colour and logo colour jointly. This meant that:

Now they put their boards together, put their ideas together, put their fabric with them, at a fraction of the time and we do not mix any samples. (Hickey, Interview, 26.10.94)





By doing this J.A Hickey can sell from computerised sketches rather than 40-50 clothing samples which is time consuming and puts him in a better position to negotiate with his client about colour and logo size. It also facilitates the changing of logos from design to design.

Although both companies engage in different methods of design they have both arrived at the same conclusions. It is currently the child's opinion of the clothes emerging in the rise and fall of childrenswear sales. Children are beginning now to understand more than they did when my two selected manufacturers began trading and have become consumers to target in their own right. In as late as the early 70s children's lives were not influenced by television as they are today. The 'look good' syndrome is even touching the younger age groups as fashion is becoming more important in everyone's lives. As Mr J.A Hickey explained:

Yes certainly the children and the peer pressure from their friends at school play a huge influence on what a child wears.  
(Hickey, Interview, 26.10.94)

In turn this has changed parents' influence on what their children wear. It is no longer the case that parents clothe their children independently, fitting clothing on their children at home and returning clothing to the place of purchase if dissatisfied. Children from an early age are beginning to insist on choosing their own clothes.



With the integration of advertising both on tv, music and sport children are being all the time bombarded with labels. Sterotypical childrenswear clothing of frilled dresses and net underskirts are no longer the norm:

It has to do with fashion really, dresses are now worn only on special occasions or on Sundays rather than on everyday basis, which they would have been wearing 20 years ago. (Laura Duffy 15th October '94).

J.A Hickey has perhaps developed a good production system with which to deal with this now constantly changing market. His ideas are reflected in his attitude to design on engineering as these garments are seen as a product similarly as an industrial designer or engineers view on multiples of standardised parts, the changing element being colour and surface logo. This is very much a consumer market high volume led area of the business and is perhaps one future of design for childrenswear. Duffy on the other hand had moved more towards the 'haute couture' design end of her business. Unable to compete in a high volume and mass market area and so <sup>he</sup> has diversified her design to the area of the communion dress where more one-off creative design ideas may be utilised. Unlike Hickey's market which is based on childrens want to look the same in the same products, the communion dress <sup>is an</sup> in area for one upmanship in both shape and fabric and most importantly, detailing.





*This is a repeat.*

Two manufacturers of childrenswear who were established in the late 1960s and early 1970s are the focus for discussion in this chapter. Both firms adapted their ranges and manufacturing bases to develop in different ways. Each company reflects the changing nature of the business.

The first is J.A Hickey, who is now a major supplier to the Dunnes Stores retail group and a large exporter to the UK. The second is Laura Duffy, who manufactures and supplies Roches Stores and nationwide small boutiques sized outlets. The reasons for selecting these two manufacturers is to show the contrast between a multiple design and manufacturing company with a more selected small scale firm in the industry. This chapter will look at the motivation for the establishment of the two industries within a wider cultural context.

Hickey was born the eldest of three children into a dominant childrens clothing trade family. Upon finishing his education with the Christian Brothers he began his working life as a retailer in Dublin. At the age of eighteen he had little interest in his parents trade but due to family circumstances ultimately made it his livelihood. The family firm was established as a consequence of Lemasses policies and the low taxation rates.

The early 1960s brought with it his fathers ill health and the news of his 40 year old mothers late pregnancy. J.A. Hickey was left to hold the part of their childrenswear manufacturing business. His father was a successful man and held many partnerships, one of which was J.A. Hickeys cousin, who also ran a small childrenswear manufacturers in Dublin.



## ***CONCLUSION***

The future for the  
industry



This thesis looked at the nature of two well established clothing industry<sup>ies</sup> in regards for these manufacturers. The future for these manufacturers is difficult to assess, while a specialised form of production has been manipulated to large extent by the Far East and affects the industry in general. The manufacture of childrenswear<sup>?</sup> in the industrial clothing industry in Ireland and so can be taken in conjunction with the overall industry.

A number of factors still mitigate against this aspect of the business, taxation, general level of employment, the Industrial Development Authorities investment in foreign companies. Taxation of not only the commodities is a factor but the taxation levies of the employees within the sector discourage many from working in the area.

Although a number of state agencies such as FAS (Foras Aiseanna Saothair, Training & Development Authority)<sup>which was ment</sup> established on Jan 1988. This agencies established<sup>ment</sup> was based on training of potential employees for the industry. The situation is such that the nature of the industry is not a profitable option to them staying in it. At the present time an organisation called the Irish Clothing Manufacturers Federation based in Dublin also feels very strongly about this matter. They revealed in an interview with the Sunday Business Post that

The basic industry wage is £131 which means a take home pay of £96.50 (Sunday Business Post 14.11.93).

The taxation allowance in the workers pay checks by the government is simply not acceptable to the working conditions to which they must endeavour to continue to earn an honest living.





In conclusion if the taxation rates were lowered for the employees at the factories it would help to obtain better and more skilled staff thus helping with the competitions who enter the country each year. The future looks bleak but not for all.

Both J.A Hickey and Laura Duffys futures contain different paths. J.A Hickeys path appears to be a fruitful one of prosperity, with large investment in computer technology and <sup>with the</sup> high rating in <sup>the</sup> exportation of multiple production the importation of Far eastern bodies cannot rock his now solid foundations. he continues to keep his base of production her in Ireland but is again looking towards future expansions. Next year Hickeys hopes to begin importing clothing himself and moving these garments with his own rage. By doing this it will cut down on production and ease profit margins yet again.

In contrast Laura Duffys future is somewhat different without the aid of technology traditional ways of design and production make it hard to survive the competition. As i explained in previous chapters the boutiques which Ms Duffy relys on for her business turnover have looked towards the East for stock but without sizable investment it is too difficult to construct garments at similar Eastern prices . And so

Irish manufacturers in the clothing trade are just getting a living out of it and having to do this with great effort. (Laura Duffy Interview 10.09.94).





EXCLUSIVE FABRICS

Hickey & Co. Ltd., Parkgate House, Parkgate Street, Dublin 8, Ireland.  
Telephone: 6778361. Telex: 93548 SILK EI. Fax: 6718023.

Ms Laura Fallon  
Laura Duffy Ltd  
45 Kimmage Road West  
Kimmage  
Dublin 12

15th February 1995

Dear Laura,

It is with regret that we have to advise you of our requirement to rationalise our wholesale business by closing down the manufacturing aspect of that business.

Over the past number of years our wholesale business to manufacturers has declined dramatically, the customer base has eroded to such an extent that it is no longer tenable to stock goods for this market. While concentrating on our own retail business we will however, be continuing to wholesale dress fabric, curtain fabrics, trimmings, accessories and special occasion wear to other retail shops.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your business and support over the years and to wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely,  
Hickey & Co. Ltd.,



Ian Donnelly,  
Managing Director.







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