

## A Case Study of Business Sponsored Consumer Education Programs in Japan

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This study examines how fast food marketers use “nutrition education programs (one of the activities for Corporate Social Responsibility)” to promote their food products and build the relationships with school aged children as “important customers” in Japan.

In Japan, children are heavily exposed to variety of food marketing (advertising) through TV and online setting all day long. In addition to this situation, many companies have tried to design the consumer education programs and implement them to school aged children as activities related to corporate social responsibility (CSR). As a result, schools are one of the important marketing (sales promotion) channels to reach child consumers. However, there are not enough researches and arguments on this topic.

In this study, content analysis of major food and beverage companies' consumer education programs (education materials) was used. These contents of education materials are analyzed based on the guideline of SOCAP (Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals in Business): *Guideline for Business Sponsored Consumer Education Materials*.

Many U.S. food and beverage companies have pledged to market healthier foods to children to help combat the childhood obesity epidemic. However, the findings of this study reveal that many food marketers heavily used consumer education program as a marketing tool to contact children in Japan. (ex.) Mc. Donald's in Japan has more than 3 consumer education programs for preschool and school children and has chances to educate their brands and nutrition programs in school as an activity related to corporate social responsibility on a large scale.

This paper provides an overview of the business sponsored consumer (nutrition) education programs to reach school age children in Japan. These sponsored programs have an aspect of sales promotion programs and marketing not appropriate consumer education for children. Teachers and advocates should pay attention to this situation and raise the public policy toward new marketing techniques to reach children through education.

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