

Abbott-Ross

Promotion to the public

There should be no advertising or other form of promotion of products. There should be no point-of-sale advertising, giving of samples or any other promotional device to induce sales directly to the consumer at the retail level, such as special displays, discount coupons, premiums, special sales, lossleaders and tie-in sales. Marketing personnel should not seek direct or indirect contact with pregnant women or with mothers of infants and young children. (Article 5).



In Vietnam, a large Abbott signboard outside a grocer shows idealising images of a mother and baby and an extended family with an "1 Abbott" logo referring to "No. 1 milk" and superiority, and the slogans "Let Abbott be your First Choice" and "A Promise for Life".

The Vietnamese Decree #21/2006 prohibits advertising of breastmilk substitutes for babies 0-6 months.



This leaflet found at a health care establishment in China bears the catchphrase "Nutrition guaranteed" for the **Isomil** soy infant formula. The brochure contains claims that the product reduces allergy in infants and improves nutrition during diarrhoea. A chart shows allergy resistance is better with Isomil compared to breastmilk. One of the references cited is an Abbott study which claims that soy formulas are "safe and effective alternatives for infants" running contrary to findings in independent research which shows that soy milk can be harmful to infants.

Article 8 of the Chinese Regulation requires information materials to advocate for breastfeeding and shall not be distributed without permission of health administration departments.



In the wake of the Sanlu melamine-in-milk scandal which caused more than 54,000 infants to fall ill, Abbott seeks to reassure parents in Hong Kong that its products are safe with this promotional ad found in a MTR station. The bear mascot holds an award for the **Gain I/ Eye Q** range of formula, which the ad claims are of "superior quality and safety" and have "gained" the trust of all parents.



Abbott pulls out all the stops and goes on an advertising blitz to pacify parents on the safety of their products, in the wake of the melamine-in-milk scandal.

First, an ad entitled "Quality at the Core of Abbott Nutrition" features a list of brand names with an idealising picture of worry-free moms, happy babies and toddlers to support the slogan.

The ad was then followed by a cellphone text message from Abbott assuring recipients individually that Abbott formulas do not contain milk from China. There is also a number to call for free samples, a practice which is prohibited by the Code of Ethics on the Sale of Infant Foods in Singapore.

Article 7.1 of the Code of Ethics on the Sale of Infant Foods in Singapore prohibits company personnel from distributing samples of breastmilk substitutes to pregnant women, mothers or members of their families or healthcare professionals.

Misleading text and pictures which violate the Code

- Article 4.2 requires all information material to advocate for breastfeeding and not contain pictures or text which idealises the use of breastmilk substitutes.
- For health professionals, Article 7.2 of the Code only allows product information which is factual and scientific.



In China, a leaflet shows UNICEF ambassador and celebrated pianist Lang Lang promoting the TPAN (Total Potentially Available Nucleotides) content in **Gain Advance Eye/IQ** formulas. Abbott claims TPAN helps strengthen a baby's developing immune system. To get parents to buy the product, Abbott harps on the premise that nurture is more important than nature by having Lang Lang say *"my success is not born, thanks to my folk's parenting"*.

At the back of the leaflet is the statement that Abbott is the world leader in nutrition.

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In Malaysia, this advertisement from the Journal of Pediatrics, Obstetrics & Gynecology uses an image of a dancing couple and the catchy slogan *"it takes two to tango"* to describe how the Dual Carbohydrate System works in **Similac LF's** which purportedly results in faster energy absorption which helps prevent prolonged episodes of diarrhoea.

The statement 'Breastmilk is Best for infants' is overshadowed by the promotional image and text.

Article 4.5 of the 1995 Malaysian Code of Ethics forbids the advertising of infant formula products in the media. Only vetted scientific and educational materials, not advertisements may be distributed to health professionals.



In Vietnam, a whiteboard provided by Abbott to a health facility bears the Abbott logo and the slogan *"A Promise for Life"*. The Abbott logo is found on the label of all products.

Article 10 of the Vietnamese decree #21/2006 prohibits the donation of materials with names and symbols of products.

Stretching the rules

The aggressive promotional tactics for growing-up milks and other products which are not within the scope of the Code indirectly promote infant and follow-on formulas bearing the same (or similar) names and logos. These practices undermine breastfeeding and are highlighted in this section along with practices, such as sponsorship, which give rise to conflicts of interest.

- WHA resolutions 49.15 (1996) and 58.32 (2005) warn against conflicts of interest where financial support or other incentives are given for programmes and health professionals working in the area of infant & young child health.



A huge Abbott wall poster outside a ward of a maternal and child hospital in China shows a Caucasian woman promoting the Lamaze method and a slogan which describes the tender love of parents for their children. No product name is shown on the wall poster but goodwill is being generated for the company products which will bear the company logo.

Competition between brands of cow's milk-based formulas has resulted in companies coming out with soy milk as the 'new breakthrough'. This advertisement from The Star, a Malaysian daily shows a cow and a boy as equal winners in a race denoting that Isomil Plus IQ/Eye Q Advance soy milk, purportedly Malaysia's top selling soy milk formula, is equivalent to cow's milk "to meet a growing child's special dietary demands". This ad indirectly advertises soy infant formula in the same range.



In the Philippines, an Abbott sales representative distributed 30.5gm sachet samples of Gain Plus Advance growing-up milk for children 1-3 years to hospital workers, despite being warned not to do so by the City Health Department.