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Advertising Council Japan: The Limits of ‘Public’

As “the nongovernmental advertising network aiming for a better society,” AC Japan and its 1,200 voluntary corporate members have been creating and broadcasting public service campaigns in Japan since 1971. Through textual analysis of representative campaigns from the past three decades, this presentation examines the limits of maintaining the element of “public” for a private entity that claims to represent the entire society in regards to the determination of social problems requiring attention. Often the case, the advertisements highlight issues of moral panic featured in the Japanese media at the time of their production. Do decisions made by the select few justify as an act of service to the public? For example, in the instance of advertisements advocating for changes in family education in terms of children’s imagination, and addressing problems such as drug addiction, bullying, and suicides, do they reflect or define the situations and concerns of contemporary Japan?