

# GLOBALITY: THE POTENTIAL FOR WEIGHT-LOSS COMPANIES IN EMERGING MARKETS

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## ABSTRACT

Once a problem unique to developed countries, obesity has become endemic in emerging markets posing a health and economics threat worldwide. This research aims to draw attention to increasing obesity rates around the world and addresses the opportunities for private firms with a focus on the consumer fitness and health industry. To tackle the problem, governments in developed countries are taking serious measures, implementing programs and building partnership with both non-profit organizations as well as private companies.

The increasing prevalence of obesity among men and women provides firms with a unique opportunity as demand for weight loss products increases worldwide. These companies include but are not limited to food and beverage, medical supplies and fitness companies. Opportunity for many firms to expand their operations even into developing countries looms on the horizon. However, these companies should consider many issues before entering the developing world such as cultural differences, economic conditions, legal and public policy issues, differences in eating habits and the entire concept of "overweight perception." Another issue with developing markets is the fact that obesity has yet to be realized as a serious illness and governments have not yet mobilized adequate resources to address the problem.

In this study, data on obesity and its costs were collected to present the case for governmental action from a social perspective and to build the *business case* for global private corporations' attention to the profit potentials stemming from "globesity." The study uses US and UK from the advanced economies' perspective and Mexico, as a representative of the emerging markets. It is argued that companies that are planning to market their products in developing countries should work with governments and non-profit organizations to first, increase awareness of obesity in these countries and then, market their products in emerging markets for profit. This way, the society, the government and private firms, will all benefit from reducing costs of obesity.