

Developments of Broadcasting Regulations in the Post-War Japan

- Changes in Methods of Regulations and Impacts on Broadcasting Media -

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(Summary)

Among the various mass media, one of the characteristics of broadcasting is that there are a wide range of regulations imposed by the governments. Regulations related to broadcasting can be categorized into “content regulations” with which the government aim to directly ensure appropriate broadcast programs, and structural regulations (e.g. entry regulation and capital regulation) to indirectly secure the diversity of broadcasting services. Japan’s broadcasting regulations, especially content regulations, have been characterized by relatively “lax” methods compared to those taken by other major nations. However, there have been only a few studies that empirically verified the effects or influence of broadcasting regulations. This report, therefore, examines how regulations actually affected broadcasters and broadcast programs, focusing on terrestrial TV broadcasts, by tracing the post-war history of broadcasting regulations.

First, the basic content of structural regulations did not change much during the period from the 1960s to the early 1990s. On the other hand, the levels of “multiplicity, diversity, and locality” of capitals and operation, which the government planned to achieve, were lowered as more and more commercial broadcasters were integrated into major networks. This trend was further accelerated after the late 1990s, along with the relaxation of regulations. Regarding the “multiplicity, diversity, and locality” of TV programs, local stations’ in-house production rates, or the degree of independence from key stations regarding broadcast programs, indicate that there were limited effects of regulations, which the government approached through capital and operational structures.

It is also revealed that the content regulations mainly depended on broadcasters’ self-imposed regulations and no administrative measures were taken against program content. The government started imposing administrative guidance after the latter half of 1980, but there were no clear standards, and the frequency varied from moment to moment. In the post-war period, administrative penalties were not used in a consistent manner as a method of content regulation, and the effects were limited.

Nevertheless, a different picture emerges when considering the impacts of regulations through an unofficial pathway. In issuing broadcasting licenses, against the backdrop of the existing structural regulations, ruling parties played a key role in unofficial coordination of new entries, which formed a new order of the industry. During the process of the coordination, a close

relationship between the ruling parties and broadcasters were generated, along which unofficially exercise of influence on TV content took place from time to time from the 1960s to the early 1970s. These impacts were different from the effects that the regulations had originally aimed for and included some adverse effects. Given these wider consequences, it is difficult to assert that regulations' practical impacts were small.

These analyses show that when discussing broadcasting regulations it is crucial to take their practical functions into consideration. As to structural regulations, since their effects are limited and some affect through a route different from the original intention, it is necessary to examine the broadcasting institution with the understanding of how they are actually implemented. Meanwhile, in examining content regulations, it is presumably necessary to consider the development of frameworks that help produce appropriate broadcasting content, with problems pertaining to administrative guidance as well as various options such as the use of independent third-party organizations in mind.