

Media & Society: 9

Newspapers: Japan

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Outline

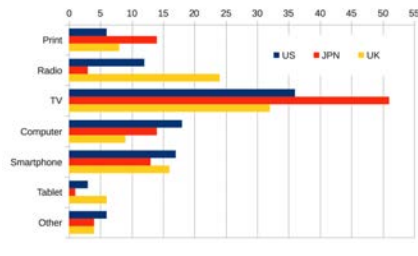
- Newspapers and online sources
- Freedom of the press in Japan
- Training and identity/professionalism
- "Press Clubs"

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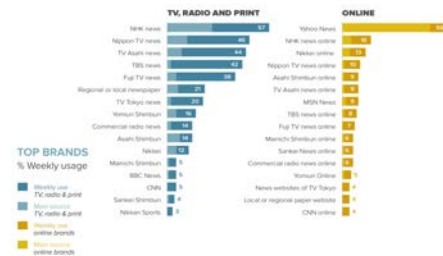
Where to find news



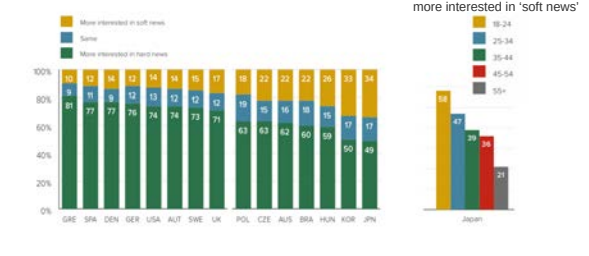
First news of the day



Online/Offline sources



Interest in 'soft news'



Constitutional guarantee

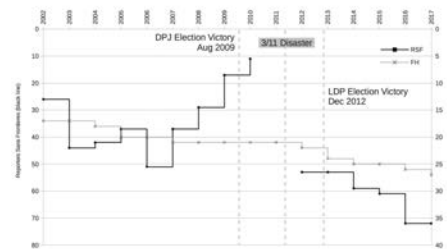
- The Constitution of Japan (1946) states:
 - **Article 21.** Freedom of assembly and association as well as speech, press and all other forms of expression are guaranteed.

No censorship shall be maintained, nor shall the secrecy of any means of communication be violated.

http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html

Recent changes

<https://rsf.org/en/japan>, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2017/japan>



UN Rapporteur's Visit

- Oct 2016: David Kaye, UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression visits Japan
- "Significant concern" over the independence of media in Japan



Journalistic Organisation

- "the problem is, the **system of journalism** and the **structure of media** itself in Japan doesn't seem to afford journalists the ability to push back against government encroachments"
 - E.g. Press clubs
- Kaye advocates some kind of "union" for journos
- "Professional Identity"

J-Orgs around the world

- **US:** Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ)
- Founded 1909, 7500 members
 - Journalism education
 - Public education about the 'free press'
 - Issuing and maintaining a 'Code of Ethics'
 - Legal Defense Fund (LDF) for members



J-Orgs around the world

- **UK:** National Union of Journalists (NUJ)
- Chartered Institute of Journalists (CIJ)
 - Working conditions
 - Pay / pensions
 - Ethics
 - Freedom of information

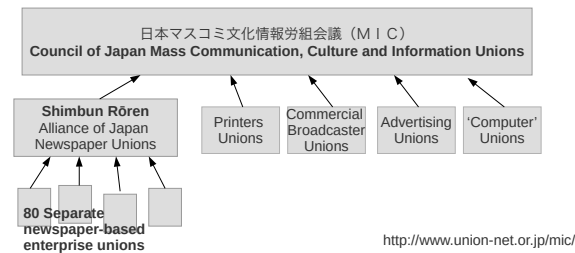


J-Orgs in Japan

- Journalists' trade unions?
 - Prevalence of 'enterprise unions'
- Professional bodies?
- Free Press Association of Japan (FPAJ)
- Japan Congress of Journalists (JCJ)



Union structure



Nihon Shimbun Kyōkai (NSK)

- The Japan Newspaper Publishers & Editors Association
- Members are 'companies' NOT individuals
- The emphasis of their activities seems to be on promoting the newspaper-as-business
- Issues a Code of Ethics for journalists

<http://www.pressnet.or.jp/english/>

Training Journalists

- UK: National Council for the Training of Journalists
- US: SPJ involved
- 1997:
 - **US:** 427 programs including journalism
 - **Japan:** 21 schools of journalism and mass communication (Cooper-Chen 1997)



Employing journalists

- Mass comm. curriculum tends to be very theoretical.
- Mass media employers do not favour applicants with relevant degrees
- Applicants take a standard entry exam and may apply from any major
- Companies prefer 'non-journalism' majors who can be trained in-house.

Cooper-Chen, A. and Takeichi, H. (1997) Different drummers: Education for journalists in Japan and the U.S.A. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 52(3):16-25

Tendencies in employment

- **Japan**
 - Workers for larger companies expect to be employed for life at graduation
 - Applications are for a *company* not a specific *role* or *job*
 - Promotions comes with seniority
- **US**
 - In 1997 a typical US career involved 10 different companies and jobs that lasted 3.6 years

Cooper-Chen, A. and Takeichi, H. (1997) Different drummers: Education for journalists in Japan and the U.S.A. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 52(3):16-25

Workers attitude

The *Nippon Herald* exercises **lifetime employment** and seniority systems. Once employees are hired, they are not fired unless they engage in illegitimate behavior or act against corporate interests. Employees' **salaries rise according to their age** and length of career. [...] *Nippon Herald* employees see the newspaper as their **lifelong workplace**.

Yusaku said, "As long as this company exists, I will stay. I will work for this company until my retirement."

Taro does not see a future after the Nippon Herald: "Well, I will need to think about what to do if the company goes bankrupt. I don't know what I will do."

Minami, H. (2011). *Newspaper Work in a Time of Digital Change: A Comparative Study of US and Japanese Journalists*. PhD thesis, University of Oregon, p234

Professional Identity?

- Minami: "*Nippon Herald* journalists are not sure exactly where such a watchdog image of the newspaper came from. **None of my interviewees had journalism education in college**, and therefore, they were not formally taught about newspaper roles."
- Journalists in Japan lack any alternative 'power base' / source of professional identity

Minami, H. (2011). *Newspaper Work in a Time of Digital Change: A Comparative Study of US and Japanese Journalists*. PhD thesis, University of Oregon, p234

Journalistic identity?

- Japanese journalists tend to identify primarily as *company employees* rather than *professionals*
- 'Enterprise Unions' are the norm
- Unlikely to share any theoretical background from education or training
- Other representative organisations are fractured and weak, or heavily politicised

Minami, H. (2011). *Newspaper Work in a Time of Digital Change: A Comparative Study of US and Japanese Journalists*. PhD thesis, University of Oregon, p234

A Warning!



Press Accreditation

- Police / Union schemes...
- White House Press Corps
- Westminster 'Lobby correspondent'



"Kisha Kurabu" (KK)

- Sizeable room in a government building or company where assigned reporters work.
- Desk area, faxes and phones, TVs etc...



Hyogo Prefecture Political Reporters Press Club

Basic data

- How many are there?
 - Estimates 400-1000? (probably 6-700)
- Where are they?
 - Local and national govt. buildings
 - Police stations
 - Large organisations, companies, hospitals, airports, sports venues etc etc etc ...

Regulated membership

- Diet Press Club Regulation
 - "To join this association, at least two secretaries must recommend membership and the secretaries group must recognize and approve membership"
 - 'Secretaries': "Big 13" + 3 block papers + 1
 - \$1700 registration fee

NSK* + 'press clubs'

- To join a press club reporters (may) have to work for a NSK member company...

Newspapers	Broadcasters	Agencies
Yomiuri	NTV	<i>Kyodo Tsūshin</i>
Asahi	TV Asahi	<i>Jiji Tsūshin</i>
Mainichi	TBS	
Nikkei	TV Tokyo	
Sankei	Fuji TV	
	NHK	

* Nihon Shimbun Kyōkai

Objections to the cartel...

- Reputable and capable foreign journalists and companies excluded
- 'Reuters Financial TV' vs Min. of Finance Club
- 2002 EU objects...
 - "de facto competitive hindrance to foreign journalists" [...] "diminish the quality of information available to the public".

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/nov/29/worlddispatch.pressandpublishing>

Effects on journalism

- Reliance on information handouts (*happyō*)
 - Information overload (as a control strategy?)
- Lack of critical distance from subjects of reporting.
 - *Ban* reporters aim to cultivate sources
 - (Possible) Failure as effective watchdog



Why Newspapers are Boring

- Iwase Tatsuya, 1998
- Articles from *Asahi*, *Yomiuri*, *Mainichi* :
 - Only *happyō*: 50%
 - *Happyō* + additional reporting: 6%
 - Press conf. + *ban* reporters: 11%
- **2/3 of material via press club!**



Kisha Kurabu features/issues

- *Kokuban kyōtei* – informal embargoes
 - Anti-scoop mechanism
- Public subsidy of private business?
- Collective responsibility
- Lack of critical distance from new sources

Self(?)Censorship?

"It is in source's manipulation of the club's willingness to agree to such embargoes that the distinction between overt press control and self-censorship begins to blur. **In some instances, as soon as a source discovers that a journalist is investigating a certain topic, they request [...] an embargo.** Fearful of being scooped, club members find it in their best interest to agree to the embargo"

Relations with sources



- *Ban* reporters build long-term amicable relationships with sources
 - "There is only one precondition for obtaining scoops from Diet members. [...] the ability of a reporter to gather information is **a reflection of their ability to establish solid contact** with Diet members."
- Press clubs can discipline reporters who upset sources

Feldman, O. (1993). *Politics and the News Media in Japan*. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor MI.

Summary

- Newspapers still widely read in Japan
- Journalism has some 'unique' characteristics
 - Very little professional training
 - No effective labour unions
 - Identity as 'worker' not 'journalist'
- Restrictions of 'press clubs' system worrying...

Ends