

The Triumph of Commercial Imperatives: Discursive Formation of TV Commercialism in the 1950s in Japan

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This research examines how the discourse of TV commercialism was formed in the 1950s when commercial TV appeared in Japan. According to McQuail (1986), the essence of media commercialism is the production and supply of media contents within a market structure for profit. As long as commercial TV stations are also private enterprises, it is natural for them to follow the market principles. However, it is necessary to consider the implications of TV commercialism because TV is basically public in nature whether it is 'public' or 'private.'

Recently the boundary between commerce and content is increasingly blurred in commercial TV in Japan. In spite of this, there is lack of discussion of TV in terms of media commercialism. It is supposed that the reason is that TV commercialism was successfully defended in the process of the formation of TV. To shed light on this issue, the literature on the advent and development of commercial TV, particularly Kanazawa (1951), Nitta (1956) and Uryū (1965), was analyzed using discourse analysis. This revealed that commercial TV was a useful ideological tool for reconstructing the state and developing democracy in post-war Japan. TV commercialism was defended by two rationale, the first that commercials enable democratic broadcasting to exist and the second that commercials serve the public interest *per se*. This study concluded that these defenses were more effectively practiced in the conflicting relationship with NHK. Further research will investigate how the meaning of TV commercialism has shifted since the 1950s.