

## 論文の内容の要旨

原子力報道におけるマスメディアと原子力事業者との相互認識に関する研究

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### 1. Background

The mass media distributes a broad range of information about nuclear energy to the general public. The media coverage on nuclear energy has variable aspects in Japan. For example, positive news coverage consists of topics like achievements of R&D, partnerships with foreign organizations, cooperation activities with other research fields and promotion of industry-academia-government collaborations. On the other hand, negative coverage includes several subjects such as accidents and troubles in nuclear facilities, radiation leakage, legal action of siting problems and so forth.

Nuclear accidents and troubles occurring at nuclear sites account for most of the negative media attention. At this time, journalists always request prompt release of sufficient information from the nuclear energy industry (hereinafter called “the industry”) in order to confirm safe conditions of the facilities as well as report related information to the public as soon as possible.

Generally, the negative and critical news coverage tends to heighten the interest of the public. If the industry intentionally conceals information from the mass media, this inappropriate attitude will generate a sense of distrust in their public relations (PR) activity. The media coverage is meant to play an important role in shaping public opinion. This means the mass media has no small effect on nuclear energy policy and related projects. Thus, the mass media will have the potential to effect the utilization of nuclear power in Japan.

### 2. Purpose and approach

In the context of the influence of the mass media, this study aims at elucidating the perceptions between the mass media and the industry. Usually, the PR section becomes a target for the mass media that is a sender of information to the society. After considering the perceptions of journalists and the PR staff, a comparative review of the perceptions between the two sides will be made. In order to do this, the author queried both the mass media and the industry about the following subjects;

- (1) the Necessity of Nuclear Energy, (2) the Roles and Significance of PR Activities, and (3) the Characteristics of the Media Coverage on Nuclear Energy

A sample of questions derived from the above categories are ;

“Do you think nuclear energy is needed?”

“Do you think the industry recognizes roles and significance of the PR activities for nuclear energy utilization?”

“What kind of characteristics do you think the media coverage on nuclear energy contains?”

This study is also intended to analyze the interrelation between the two parties so as to find out how distantly or closely the bilateral relations should be sustained in the course

of maintaining an appropriate level of communication. With the methodology of a survey, a qualitative analysis such as an interview method is one of the most practical and effective ways so that the mind of both journalists and PR staff members can be grasped. In this way, interviews with journalists and PR staff members were conducted in order that their perceptions will be investigated individually.

In fact, there have been very few research studies or continuous surveys undertaken in Japan, which report relations between news sources and journalists. Furthermore, awareness of the journalists involved in the reports on nuclear energy issues has not been surveyed and investigative studies about PR staff members' awareness have not often been conducted.

### **3. Information flow between the mass media and the industry in Japan**

All companies organize PR sections. PR members usually contact the journalists concerned or the press clubs which are situated in every local public entity such as prefectures and cities. In case of an emergency, the PR section immediately informs the mass media when and where a press conference will take place. On the other hand, journalists gather information routinely in contact with PR staff in time for editing information and carrying the latest news broadcast. In this context, a typical information flow is shown as follows;

Industry (source)→ Mass media (communicator)→ General Public (receiver)

The above communication process indicates that the industry is always expected to provide the mass media with timely and accurate information.

### **4. Interviews with journalists and PR members**

With the aim of understanding the perceptions between the mass media and the industry, the author conducted interviews with 26 journalists and 23 PR staff members in 2007-2008. It took approximately 80 minutes for every interview.

#### **4.1 Summary of the interviews with the mass media**

The interviewees of the mass media consisted of journalists, deskmen, editorial writers and a senior staff writer. They were selected from a broad range of the media companies located in Tokyo and regional cities. They were working for national papers, block newspapers, local papers, NHK, key stations, local stations, news service agencies and specialized papers focusing on industry-related issues. When the interviews were held, 11 interviewees were actively working for news reports on nuclear energy issues.

#### **4.2 Summary of the interviews with the industry**

The author contacted 10 electricity companies and 2 related organizations. The interviewees consisted of persons in charge of contacting journalists and their managers. They are usually called "PR staff" and engaged in press conferences. Among them five technical staff previously worked as engineers or scientists.

### **5. Answers from the mass media**

Most of the interviewees answered that they perceive nuclear power as necessary for electricity supply. It is revealed that journalists acknowledge the necessity of nuclear energy as long as nuclear power facilities are safely operated. Their acceptance is always based on the maintenance of safety.

The journalists answered that the industry has begun to understand how significant PR activities are for the use of nuclear energy. But, they also said that some electricity companies still have an absence of awareness about the important roles played by PR personnel. The interviewees thought that the PR activities will potentially be crucial for

advancement of related projects. They suggested that the influence of the media coverage on nuclear energy should not be underestimated.

As for the organizational scheme for the PR activities, the mass media acknowledges that the process for information release from the industry to the media is improving year by year. They pointed out that preparedness for the PR activities relatively differ among the electricity companies in Japan. It is revealed that a comprehensible explanation is essential as the journalists should draft and edit articles for a limited time.

The collected answers showed that journalists perceive that the industry has been learning how to disclose information immediately and understandably based on their past experience. They were aware that the industry improved in the system of information release in-house. However, the journalists understood that there is still a certain gap among the electricity companies in the degree of readiness to respond to journalists. It is considered that this depends on a company's experience in association with communication with the mass media.

As for the characteristics of the media coverage, most of the interviewees answered that it would be difficult to avoid sensational news coverage once an accident receives significant attention from the public. As for the media coverage on nuclear power, the press club is recognized as one of the strongholds, where journalists are able to collect relevant information efficiently on a regular basis. In addition, they explained journalists try to collect unique media material individually.

Regarding a significant role for the mass media, the interviewees recognized that the media coverage ought to reflect opinion and emotion of the general public. Most of the journalists realize that influence of the media coverage should not be negligible with respect to nuclear energy installation in Japan. Some of the journalists also think that the mass media can play the role of an opposing force against nuclear politics as "a watch dog."

## **6. Answers from the industry**

As expected, all PR staff answered that they were always in the position of promoting nuclear power projects. In addition, on the subject of the nuclear energy usage in Japan, PR members responded that they particularly hold higher interests on their own projects advanced in the regional areas where they live than interests on the national policy that the government initiates and implements.

It is revealed that PR staff members place importance on announcement at press conferences and communication with journalists. They acknowledge that it is necessary to keep a smooth flow of information from the industry to the mass media especially in case of an emergency. They mentioned that they always try to identify journalists' needs and make an effort to communicate with journalists individually. They acknowledged that it is unavoidable that a certain gap among the electricity companies exists concerning the preparedness and efforts of the PR activities. They understand that it is challenging to handle the difference in the power companies on a realistic level.

As for the characteristics of the news report, they have come to realize that nuclear energy events are sometimes sensationalized through newspapers and TV's and that intense media coverage resulting in exaggerated articles is unavoidable.

Although PR members perceive significance of PR activities, they answered that they recognize the limits of deploying personnel for the PR activities, preparing for prompt press release and providing journalist with large amounts of information rapidly. In addition, the PR staff answered that they hope for journalists to acknowledge the effort of their daily PR activities. Moreover, they stated that the other staff in the other divisions as well as PR personnel need to understand the importance of smooth communication between the mass media and the industry.

## **7. Perceptions between the mass media and the industry**

As compared to the perceptions of journalists to those of the PR staff, it is considered that the journalists more or less share similar perceptions to those of the PR staff. In particular, the mass media is found to emphasize dialogues with the industry for the purpose of collecting timely and accurate information on nuclear energy matters and writing well-timed articles. The reason why both sides get to share common perceptions is because the PR staff have been facilitating communication with journalists spontaneously and learning how to maintain effective communications with journalists through experience.

Although some differences concerning the perceptions are seen between both sides, it could be said that cooperative relations have so far been fostered by and large. In contrast, if the role of the mass media is that of a “watchdog”, the reciprocal relations ought to be neither too close nor distant. It would be necessary for the mass media to keep a sharp eye on the activities of the industry for balancing against the industry. According to the mass communication research, the mass media has the function of surveillance of a social environment. We can see from the above that the industry will be subject to both cooperation and supervision in relation with the mass media in parallel. As a summary of the interviews, as of now it is supposed that the bilateral relations have been improved, open communication is being established and mutual cooperation is more distinguished than surveillance given by the mass media.

## **8. Conclusions**

It is considered that a close and constant relationship on both sides has so far been sustained. The bottom line is that neither hostile nor friendly relationship between the two parties should be maintained. Furthermore, needlessly-tight mutual relations would prevent proper information from reaching the public. Seen in this light, the mass media needs not only understand the significance of the social functioning as an information source, but the industry is also required to recognize the key roles of PR activities to the mass media as an essential information source.

A proper relationship between the mass media and the industry needs to be maintained in order to improve information flow from the industry to the mass media. These circumstances are expected to enhance public welfare because people in a society take advantage of gaining sufficient and concise information on nuclear energy events.

In this sense, it is significant from the perspective of the public good to focus on the perceptions, analyze the interaction, and establish bilateral relations based on confidence and cooperation.