

Media Choice and Media Effect: Evidence from a field experiment with Japan Broadcasting Corporation*

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Abstract

What are the roles of public broadcasting in the economy? Public broadcasters, which are typically funded by citizens, are distinguished from commercial broadcasters, in the sense that they have more incentive to provide less “biased” information (e.g. Right vs. Left) than commercial broadcasters as they tend to serve the broader audience. If consumers are provided with such an option, in addition to commercial broadcasting, they may be able to access to more “neutral” information, or less biased information, than what is provided by commercial broadcasters that they tend to watch. The study focuses on such a role of public broadcasting and conduct a randomized experiment in Japan in collaboration with Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK). In the experiment, we randomly give free subscriptions for watching NHK programs online to 5,000 consumers in the greater Tokyo area. In addition, we also send the advertisements of certain TV programs to “nudge” those people to watch them. By using the unique dataset including the minute-by-minute viewing records and the script data of each TV program that we scrape using a digital recorder, we investigate how consumers choose media and TV programs and whether their being exposed to certain words in the program affects their political beliefs.

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