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Abstract

Die Rolle des Internets für die Stärkung der japanischen Zivilgesellschaft

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The concept of civil society in Japan today is generally associated with non-profit organisations (NPOs). Japanese NPOs are characterised by having little political influence, few financial and personal resources and by suffering from lack of members. The paper argues that increasing their membership is essential for the reinforcement of Japanese NPOs. The main assumption is that the Internet is an effective tool for recruiting new members because its use is not restricted and is relatively cheap, thus making it an ideal channel of communication for NPOs. The paper investigates this argument by analysing the websites of NPOs from the Japanese city of Niigata to find out whether NPOs actually make efforts to recruit members via the Web. A coding frame was created for the content analysis which lists the criteria a website should possess in order to make joining the respective NPO attractive and easy. The results of the content analysis show that the Internet is not used by NPOs from Niigata as a tool for recruiting new members or it is only employed in a limited way. While more than half of the NPOs do not have a website at all, those that do fail to profit from all the possibilities the Web offers. Some NPOs make an effort to present their own group in an attractive way, but miss the opportunity to inform people about how to become a member. Others offer information about joining, but the content on their websites is out of date. The results suggest that the NPOs from Niigata have not yet recognised the Internet as an effective tool for their own reinforcement.

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