

**Kaori, Hayashi**, University of Tokyo, Japan; **Tetsuo, Hatanaka**, University of Tokyo, Japan

### **A Future of the Local Press?: The Potential of Social Networking Websites run by Japanese Local Newspapers**

The purpose of this study is to analyze the function, organization and future potential of “Social Networking Service (SNS)” run by Japanese local newspapers. These initiatives, meant to build online communities to share interests and activities of participants, are one of the most recent innovations to invigorate the long stagnating Japanese newspaper market. In this study, we not only examine their business models, but also the relevance to the function of journalism in local areas by means of new digital technologies. Among the major media companies, launching a SNS website is regarded as a safer way among digital interactive services since participants must identify themselves at the time of its registration. Most of Japanese newspaper companies are hesitating so far to ride of the global tide of setting up blogging on their websites since they are wary of inaccurate information and defamatory/discriminatory comments.