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Author(s)	林,健太		
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氏 名 **林 健 太**

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学 位 論 文 名 Theory of Network Pricing Policies

(ネットワーク価格政策の理論)

論 文 審 査 委 員 (主査)

教 授 辻 正次

(副査)

教 授 Colin Ross McKENZIE 助教授 今川 拓郎

助教授 下村 研一

論文内容の要旨

The purpose of this dissertation is to derive policy recommendations as to the choice of an optimal pricing scheme for information networks based on rigorous theoretical analyses. Although the information network which constitutes the social infrastructure of an advanced information society is increasingly prone to competition at various layers, it is our contention that there is room for public policy intervention in its management as a public good in some broad sense.

Throughout the subsequent four chapters, we will be concerned with three basic pricing questions concerning the network resources as summarized in the following table.

Resources	Questions	Optimum Sought	Policy Response
Essential Facility	Bottleneck Monopoly	Ramsey Optimum	Access Charge Regulation
Network Capacity	Efficient Utilization	Comparative Analysis	Choice of Pricing Scheme
Subscribers	Quickest Penetration	Time-optimal Path	Dynamic Pricing Policy

Table. Three Basic Questions of Network

The first question is concerned with the essential facility for the telephone network which is composed of subscriber lines and various switch board devices. The service is an indispensable intermediate input for such downstream carriers as long distance and international carriers as well as internet service providers. However, the essential facility is the private property of local access providers (NTT-locals) and hence constitutes the basis for bottleneck monopoly. Relevant policy questions are : 1) is any form of government intervention legitimatised ?; 2) if so how should access charges be regulated? We will devote Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 to this question and come up with a conclusion that access charges should be regulated by the "global price cap" method even when competition is vigorous in the local access market.

The second question we will be concerned with is how to make the best use of network capacity to which we will devote to Chapter 3. Although the Internet makes use of network resources for more efficiently than the telephone service, there is a physical limitation for information traffic, at least in the short run, beyond which congestion becomes a serious problem. It is therefore necessary to allocate the capacity utilization to maximize social welfare.

The focus here is on the comparison of pricing schemes for the optimum use of network resources. It is often contended in the policy debate that the flat rate offers a better opportunity for the proliferation of the Internet as compared with usage sensitive pricing. Another widely held conviction is that the self-selective dual tariff scheme, in which users have a choice between the flat rate and the usage sensitive rate will add to social welfare.

By developing a system of models which incorporate the diversity of network service demand, we examine the question in a simple but most rigorous framework that has yet to be presented. The main conclusion at which we arrive, is that the best pricing scheme is the usage sensitive pricing, which runs counter to the popular conviction.

In Chapter 4, we will ask what will be the optimal pricing policy from the point of view of minimizing the time needed for full penetration of the network. The resources we will be concerned with are the number of subscribers and the network is characterized by the "network effect" — an increase in the number of subscribers adds value to the network. It is our contention that the question is quite relevant for a government who wishes to achieve the proliferation of Internet connection in a minimum amount of time. We will formulate the problem in a time-optimal dynamic programming model and will seek to establish the optimal path.

The conclusion that will emerge from our analysis is that the network service provider (NSP) must set the price at the minimum level (zero in our model) to exploit the dynamic network effect for expansion and later to raise the price to the level which recovers the cost of network. If the government is interested in such a policy objective and if the NSP is a private enterprise, then subsidy would have to be introduced so that the subsidized price follows the optimal path.

Thus, we will be concerned with three network resources and three policy questions in this dissertation, and try to make policy recommendations based on a rigorous theoretical analysis. However, a little achievement we make in this dissertation is but a small step into the inquiry of optimum pricing policy for the network. Technology is rapidly changing and markets are expanding. Each day sees a new service and product in the information industry. Researches along this line we showed in this dissertation will have to be updated continuously.

論文審査の結果の要旨

本博士論文は、インターネット等の情報通信ネットワークの料金のあり方を論じたもので緻密な理論的分析と政策提言からなる。第1章のイントロダクションは、これまでのこの分野での研究成果がサーベイされている。第2章では、市内回線網等の essential facility を持つ独占事業者が存在する場合、それへの長距離通信業者の最適アクセス料金を Ramsey Rule を用いて求めている。このモデルでは、長距離通信業者が、NTT が保有する市内回線への接続形態と、その競争・規制状況により、3つのケースを取り上げ、厳密なモデルを構築している。ここで得られたのは、市内回線市場で競争が進展しても、essential facility が存在するり、プライスキャップなどの規制が必要との結論である。第3章では、消費者がインターネットへの接続する場合、設備能力といった制約が存在する場合、接続時間に依存する従量料金制と、依存しない定額料金制、この両者では社会厚生上いずれが望ましいかを論じている。モデルの特徴は、消費者のインターネットに関する需要関数に嗜好を表すパラメータを導入したことにある。設備に一定の制限がある場合には、従量料金制の方が資源利用の方法として社会的に見て望ましいことが厳密に証明されている。

通常は、定額料金制の方が望ましいとの通説が多い中、ある条件の下ではこれが必ずしも成り立たないことを示した 意義は大きい。第4章では、異時点間のプライシングの問題を取り上げている。問題意識としては、現在如何にイン ターネット等の普及率を高めることが議論されているが、それに回答を与えるものである。具体的には、ネットワー クの外部性を有するネットワークの普及率を最短時間で達成するための、最適な価格政策が、最大原理を活用して求 められている。得られた解はある時点まで、料金を低く抑え、普及率がクリティカルマスを越えた時点から、高める というものである。

以上のような内容を持つ本論文は、博士(国際公共政策)の水準に達していると判断される。