

A Study of Enhancement of Competition Policy Communication and Promotion in the Internet Era

1. Background of study

In recent years, government agencies have placed more emphasis on policy communication and promotion when planning and pushing new policies to assure administrative innovations can bring expected effects and such policies can be successfully promoted. Through various communication and promotion channels, the right of the public to be informed can be protected and private citizens can have access to information with regard to government policies at any time. Government agencies have even made active efforts to increase the number of channels for the public to participate in policy making in order to win their identification and support and policy planning and promotion can become smoother and meet the needs of the public. Thus, the quality of public governance can be upgraded.

As a result of rapid progress in information and communication technology (ICT), private citizens are able to use the Internet, online platforms and new media to communicate with government agencies and take part in policy making before policies are made. In particular, young people are good at using networks to participate in politics, understand policies and engage in policy communication with the government. In consequence, government agencies respond to the needs of the public and approach target social groups through online networks to conduct policy communication and promotion. This has become a new mode of policy communication. The Public Policy Participation Platform set up by the National Development Council (hereinafter referred to as NDC) is an example.

The Fair Trade Commission (hereinafter referred to as FTC) is the domestic competition authority. In the network era, the FTC cannot overlook the challenges and opportunities brought by ICT progress for policy communication and promotion. It is necessary to think about how to make good use of online media to engage in policy communication and promotion with the public in order to perfect policies and win the confidence of private citizens in the FTC. Therefore, this study is intended to apply examples of proper and effective use of networks by domestic and foreign government agencies to enhance policy communication and promotion to discuss how the FTC should use networks to reinforce competition policy communication and promotion and offer suggestions for the FTC in its future administration.

2. Methods and process of study

The literature analysis and case comparison methods are adopted in this study. Initially, definitions and connotations associated with policy communication and promotion in related literature are sorted out and analyzed. Information from Web 2.0 and associated with online participation as part of democratic governance, papers on participation theories published in journals, and descriptions on related web pages are collected and studied to understand the challenges and opportunities brought by ICT advances. At the same time, the progress in online public policy communication conducted by domestic and foreign government agencies is examined and cases are analyzed to find out how digital technology is applied in different parts of the world to promote civil society and the current domestic status. In so doing, it is hoped that

this study can come up with concrete suggestions for effective policy communication and promotion by referring to practices adopted by domestic and foreign government agencies.

This study is divided into five chapters. The introduction in Chapter 1 gives a brief description of the motive behind the study. Chapter 2 talks about the connotations of policy communication and promotion, related concepts on Web 2.0, online democratic participation as part of democratic governance, participation theories accessible online and recent literature associated with results of related studies. Chapter 3 presents an overview of the efforts of domestic and foreign government agencies in promotion of online public policy participation. In Chapter 4, the practices adopted by the FTC to push policy communication and promotion are introduced. In Chapter 5, the conclusions are presented while suggestions are also offered to be references for the FTC in its future administration.

3. Main suggestions

The following suggestions are offered to the FTC for its future administration:

- A. To strengthen the use of the Internet for policy communication and promotion, the FTC needs to be innovative with its official website. In addition to announcement of information, it should also set up a Web 2.0 page as well as designated page about specific types of conduct. The messages released by the FTC can be shared through Facebook, Google+ and Twitter. However, as 71% of citizens use Line, the FTC ought to add new functions to allow reposting on Line and Plurk, so that Line and Plurk users can share FTC messages with their group members.
- B. At present, the FTC App page offers apps for users to file complaints, to access new policies and regulations, to learn about laws and regulations under the jurisdiction of the FTC, and to get the latest news about the FTC. Yet, to expand services for the public, the FTC can also make its dispositions and decisions available to private citizens by adding an “administrative decision page” to make it easier for private citizens to make inquiries about dispositions, merger application decisions or concerted action application decisions. In addition, since the FTC is required to solicit opinions from different sectors when handling merger notifications or establishing law amendment drafts or regulation revisions, it is suggested that the FTC also sets up an “opinion solicitation” page and releases related information through apps to increase the number of channels through which private citizens can leave messages. In the future, if news releases, latest messages and information associated with merger notifications or preliminary announcements of amendments to laws and regulations can be posted on the FTC App page, app users will be informed of the latest information and also present their opinions or suggestions. In consequence, the interaction between app users and the FTC will be enhanced and the FTC will no longer be an agency out of reach.
- C. Due to the thoughtful design, the Public Policy Participation Platform of the NDC has become the most important channel for the public to participate in public affairs. The FTC will continue to pay attention to propositions from the

public. It will carefully consider whether there is the need to convene coordination meetings to review and discuss cases seconded by numbers of people reaching the statutory threshold. It will respond to the demand of the public with care. With law and regulation amendment being drafted, the FTC has started to make pre-announcements on “Let’s Talk” to solicit public opinions to help perfect such amendments. In the future, when there are issues related to important competition policies or social concerns, the FTC should also consider making public announcements on “Let’s Talk” to gather opinions from different sectors in order to reduce resistance to policy promotion.

- D. Take Facebook, the social media site most often used by Taiwanese, for example. Government agency fan pages that attract the public the most are set up by tourism and cultural agencies. Postings that people would click “like” and share are largely from the Department of Information Services of the Executive Yuan. However, websites associated with transportation policies draw the most discussions and responses. As for law enforcement agencies, because their operations are not closely related to the everyday life of private citizens, it is difficult for them to increase their fans or attract people; therefore, none of them has set up a fan page. The FTC, however, besides law enforcement, engages in operations involving economic issues that are associated with the public. Hence, the FTC can consider establishing inter-agency communication and link mechanisms to bring social groups together.