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“Consultation on Review
of IDA’s Regulatory Requirement for Directory Services

Question 1: IDA invites views and comments on the current situation in relation to Directory Services, in particular, whether you agree with the trends observed on the demand and usage, and whether Directory Services in their current form continue to be relevant in today’s environment

My Comment

I do not think that the number cited for usage of the Business Directories (Business Directory and Commercial/Industrial Directory) is accurate (i.e. it is on the low side). This is because there are the following 2 groups of subscribers who are not counted:

- (i) Fixed Line subscribers of HomeLine telephones (I am a Singtel subscriber) are only given the option to collect the Residential Directory. There is no option to select either the Residential Directory or the Business Directories. If we wish to have the Business Directories, we will have to pay for them. For this reason, many of us would not have asked for the Business Directories. Thus, the numbers cited for the Business Directories do not include this group of subscribers who would have collected the Business Directories if they were also given free of charge as in the case of the Residential Directories.
- (ii) The Business Directories serve a very useful function as they are used to search for doctors/repairmen/painters etc within our neighbourhood. For those of us who do not have our PCs on throughout the day, paper copies are infinitely more accessible than the Internet.

Going to the Internet takes time as we need to switch on the PC, wait for the PC to start. Then another wait for Internet access which is oftentimes quite slow. On the other hand, the Residential Directory is not as essential as we do not search for our acquaintances’ numbers that way. The numbers would have been stored in hard copies or on handphones. Thus, because of the option to collect only the Residential Directory, subscribers who do not consider the Residential Directory to be essential do not bother to go all the way to collect it.

- (ii) Question 2: Do you agree that IDA should adopt Option 2 to remove

the regulatory requirement for provision of integrated directories but retain the requirement for the provision of directory enquiry services? If not, please state your preferred Option and the supporting reasons

My Comment

I am not concerned about not having the Residential Directory. But I do feel that the Business Directories are essential as stated above (viz faster and more convenient accessibility for those who do not have their PCs on the whole day). When we use the Business directories to search for doctors, repairmen etc, we do not have the name of a particular business. So, the directory enquiry service is not useful per se.

However, once the name of the business is found, the enquiry service then becomes of use if the listed number has changed in-between publications.

I am of the post-war generation i.e. not computer or technologically savvy. Also, I find it very difficult to use the new telephones or other apps as I do not have the aptitude for this sort of thing. Neither do I want to spend money on them.

For this group of people, we are not at the PC most of the time. Therefore, the hard copy is easier to access as it can be done at any time of the day without going through the hassle of starting up the PC and Internet.

Question 5: IDA also invites views and comments on whether IDA should require the Fixed-Line Operators to obtain the subscriber's consent to be included in the directory services database on an opt-in (i.e., the subscriber must explicitly give consent to be included in the database) or opt-out basis (i.e., the subscriber will be included in the directory services database by default unless the subscriber takes action to opt-out from it).

My Comment

Prefer to have the opt-in basis. This will cut down on unsolicited calls from e.g. property agents enquiring if our property is for sale.

Option 3: Remove regulatory requirements for integrated directories and directory enquiry services for residential numbers but retain both requirements for business numbers

25. Under Option 3, Fixed-Line Operators will be required to maintain an integrated database of business numbers. IDA notes that Option 3 will address concerns from individuals about protection of personal data while allowing the public to continue to have access to integrated business directory information. As mentioned above, individuals are likely to have stronger concerns about personal data protection, as compared to business subscribers who may prefer their companies' information to be publicly available. On the other hand, it may not be meaningful to retain the regulatory

requirements for business numbers given that there are already different commercial directories available in the market and on the Internet.

My Comment

Agree that regulatory requirement be retained for business numbers. On the issue of the availability of commercial directories in the market and on the internet, many including myself do not know where to buy these commercial directories. Also, as stated above, paper copies are more accessible than internet searches. Also, if left entirely to commercial entities, prices will escalate year after year and more than if IDA is not in the picture.

If IDA wishes to terminate the availability of hard copies of Business Directories, perhaps it can consider deferring till my generation passes on.

Thank you.

Ms Ang Chiew Leng