

ABSTRACT

Enabling the Barbados Telecommunications Regulatory Framework for Competition and Convergence

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Barbados started its telecommunications liberalisation process with the establishment of the Fair Trading Commission in 2001. This process was initially formulated in the Green Paper on Telecommunications Policy and in the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Government of Barbados and Cable & Wireless (Barbados) Limited. The Telecommunications Act was revised to cater to the transition from a monopoly to competition environment. The telecommunications industry has changed; not only are there several licensed competitors, but it has transformed from a utility service to an information and communication technology industry, critical to the development of the country.

It is believed that the current regulatory framework is ambiguous and may hinder the government in achieving its goals of promoting competition, attracting new investment and providing its citizens with new services. To test this hypothesis a qualitative, applied research approach was used to evaluate the effectiveness of regulatory framework. The main objective of the research is to evaluate the existing framework and to identify areas where changes are required in policy and regulation to ensure that the government's goals are met. This research involved data analysis of secondary material including the Telecommunications Act CAP. 282B, Utility Regulation Act, CAP. 282 associated regulation and writings of noted authors on regulation policy. Additionally, a survey of

stakeholders was used to obtain information on the adequacy of the existing regulation environment for future development.

The study focused on areas that may potentially affect competition and it was found that there is the need for a strategic review of the regulatory framework. There was fragmentation between the various pieces of legislation and consideration had not been given the evolving nature of the industry. Areas that require attention are those associated with the treatment of universal service, dominance, services regulated, VoIP and other broadband issues as well the responsibilities of the Fair Trading Commission.

With the broadening of telecommunications into information, communication and technological industry this study is useful as it provides information on matters that should be addressed in order to provide an environment that will encourage competition and promote the economic development of the country.

Keywords: Sandra Sealy; Regulation; Policy; Competition; convergence; telecommunications; Barbados