

THE DOMINANCE AND  
MONOPOLIES  
REVIEW

ELEVENTH EDITION

**Editors**

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VINGE

# JAPAN

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## I INTRODUCTION

### i Characteristics of the regulations on private monopolisation and unfair business practices

The Japanese regulations on dominance and monopolies come in two forms: prohibition on private monopolisation and prohibition on unfair business practices.<sup>2</sup> Although there are two forms, the targets of each regulation are overlapping to a significant degree.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Private monopolisation*

The concept of private monopolization is derived from Article 2 of the US Sherman Act, and was enacted at the time of the establishment of the Antimonopoly Act (AMA) in 1947, which is based on US judicial precedents on monopolisation. Two types of conduct are prescribed: exclusionary conduct and controlling conduct, with controlling conduct being unique to Japanese competition law. There are also regulations on such conduct being committed by multiple enterprises simultaneously, although there are few actual examples of this. Private monopolisation is defined in the provisions of the AMA as follows:

*The term private monopolisation as used in this Act means such business activities by which any enterprise, individually or by combination, in conspiracy with other enterprises, or by any other manner, excludes or controls the business activities of other enterprises, thereby causing, contrary to the public interest, a substantial restraint of competition in any particular field of trade.*<sup>4</sup>

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2 While the Japan Fair Trade Commission (JFTC) translates the Japanese term *fukōsei na torihiki hōhō* as ‘unfair trade practices’, the term business suits the reality of what is being referred to, and accordingly this translation is used in the chapter.

3 Except for ‘abuse of superior bargaining position’ in ‘unfair business practices’.

4 AMA, Article 2, Paragraph 5. While ‘any particular field of trade’ is the JFTC’s English translation, this has the same meaning as the term relevant market, which is generally used globally. Cartels and bid rigging are defined in Article 2, Paragraph 6 of the AMA as follows: ‘The term “unreasonable restraint of trade” as used in this Act means such business activities, by which any enterprise, by contract, agreement or any other means irrespective of its name, in concert with other enterprises, mutually restrict or conduct their business activities in such a manner as to fix, maintain or increase prices, or to limit production, technology, products, facilities or counterparties, thereby causing, contrary to the public interest, a substantial restraint of competition in any particular field of trade.’ Although Paragraph 6 requires fact-finding regarding a substantial restraint of competition in any particular field of trade, in actual cartel and bid-rigging cases, relevant market is often defined very narrowly according to the effect of the conduct. Therefore, cartel and bid-rigging regulation in Japan is very similar to that of the rest of the world.

In actual practice, the provisions against controlling-type conduct are rarely applied, and eight of the nine private monopolisation cases that have taken place since 2000 have been exclusionary-type cases. While the title private monopolisation is used, there is also no requirement for the subject of the conduct to be monopolising the market in the economic sense of the term (that is, having only one seller or one buyer).

### ***Unfair business practices***

While unfair business practice means conduct that has a likelihood of impeding fair competition, and is derived from Article 5 of the US Federal Trade Commission Act, a notable feature of the provisions on such practices is that they prescribe various types of conduct.<sup>5</sup> Essentially, while an unfair business practice is the same as private monopolisation in that the AMA regulates against anticompetitive conduct impeding the function of competition in the relevant market, it differs from private monopolisation in that the AMA also prohibits unfair business practices that have a likelihood of having such an effect. There are debates over what constitutes such a likelihood, as described below.<sup>6</sup>

Unfair business practices are defined in the provisions of the AMA as follows:

*The term 'unfair trade practices' as used in this Act means an act falling under any of the following items:*

- (i) *engaging, without justifiable grounds, in any of the following acts, in concert with a competitor:*
  - (a) *refusing to supply to a certain enterprise or restricting the quantity or substance of goods or services supplied to a certain enterprise*
  - (b) *causing another enterprise to refuse to supply a certain enterprise, or to restrict the quantity or substance of goods or services supplied to a certain enterprise*
- (iii) *unjustly and continually supplying goods or services at a price applied differentially between regions or between parties, thereby tending to cause difficulties to the business activities of other enterprise*

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5 Conduct is designated as unfair business practices by the AMA or the JFTC (AMA, Article 2, Paragraph 9, Items 1–6; JFTC General Designations (GD), Paragraphs 1–16). The JFTC is authorised to designate additional prohibited practices by the AMA and there are two types of JFTC designations; one is a general designation, which is applicable across sectors; the other is a specific designation, which is applied to a specific sector. Three specific designations, applicable to newspapers, freight transportation and retail businesses, are enacted currently.

6 A likelihood of impeding fair competition was theoretically categorised as three forms in the 1982 AMA study group report: (1) lessening free competition; (2) use of unfair methods of competition; or (3) infringing the foundation of free competition. Form 1 is a core impediment, as it has essentially the same meaning as impeding the function of competition in the relevant market; form 2 relates to a substantially supplemental act of the AMA (the Act Against Unjustifiable Premiums and Misleading Representations, which is enforced by the Consumer Affairs Agency. The Consumer Affairs Agency and the JFTC sometimes cooperate in handling misleading cases); and form 3 mainly relates to abuse of superior bargaining position (exploitative abuse). Additionally, the JFTC considers that the use of unfair methods of competition (form 2) must be prevalent to find a likelihood of impeding fair competition. In relation to unfair business practices cases, the JFTC sometimes rejects defining the relevant market, alleging that a likelihood of impeding fair competition would fall within form 2. There are many criticisms of this attitude, which does not match the international trend.

7 In this excerpt, the term unfair business practices is used.

- (iii) *without justifiable grounds, continuously supplying goods or services at a price far below the cost incurred to supply them, thereby tending to cause difficulties to the business activities of other enterprises*
- (iv) *supplying goods to another party who purchases the relevant goods from oneself while imposing, without justifiable grounds, one of the restrictive terms listed below:*
  - (a) *causing the party to maintain the selling price of the goods that one has determined, or otherwise restricting the party's free decision on selling price of the goods*
  - (b) *having the party cause an enterprise that purchases the goods from the party maintain the selling price of the goods that one has determined, or otherwise causing the party to restrict the relevant enterprise's free decision on the selling price of the goods.*
- (v) *engaging in any act specified in one of the following by making use of one's superior bargaining position over the counterparty unjustly, in light of normal business practices:*
  - (a) *causing the counterparty in continuous transactions (including a party with whom one newly intends to engage in continuous transactions; the same applies in (b) below) to purchase goods or services other than those to which the relevant transactions pertain*
  - (b) *causing the counterparty in continuous transactions to provide money, services or other economic benefits*
  - (c) *refusing to receive goods in transactions with the counterparty, causing the counterparty to take back such goods after receiving them from the counterparty, delaying payment to the counterparty or reducing the amount of payment, or otherwise establishing or changing trade terms or executing transactions in a way disadvantageous to the counterparty*
- (vi) *any act falling under any of the following items, which tends to impede fair competition<sup>8</sup> and which is designated by the Fair Trade Commission, other than the acts listed in the preceding items:*
  - (a) *unjustly treating other enterprise in a discriminatory manner*
  - (b) *engaging in transactions at an unjust price*
  - (c) *unjustly inducing or coercing the customers of a competitor to deal with one*
  - (d) *dealing with another party on such conditions that will unjustly restrict the business activities of the counterparty*
  - (e) *dealing with the counterparty by making use of one's superior bargaining position unjustly*
  - (f) *unjustly interfering with a transaction between an enterprise in competition with one in Japan or a corporation of which one is a shareholder or an officer and another transaction counterparty; or, if such enterprise is a corporation, unjustly inducing, instigating or coercing a shareholder or officer of such corporation to act against the corporation's interests.<sup>9</sup>*

Based on Article 2, Paragraph 9(vi), the regulation named the Japan Fair Trade Commission (JFTC) General Designations (GD), Paragraphs 1–16 also exists.<sup>10</sup> The regulations regarding unfair business practices are quite complicated. However, they are roughly divided into three types.

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8 A likelihood of impeding fair competition has the same meaning as 'which tends to impede fair competition'.

9 AMA, Article 2, Paragraph 9.

10 [www.jftc.go.jp/en/legislation\\_gls/unfairtradepractices.html](http://www.jftc.go.jp/en/legislation_gls/unfairtradepractices.html).

First, most types of conduct can be categorised as exclusionary, which destroy fair inter-brand competition, as with private monopolisation (exclusionary type). Second, some conduct can be categorised as vertical types that restrain intra-brand competition. Third, some conduct can be categorised as exploitative abuse, that is abuse of superior bargaining position.

### **Market share**

While with private monopolisation there are no provisions imposing requirements on a company's market share, under the Guidelines for Exclusionary Private Monopolisation under the Antimonopoly Act<sup>11</sup> enacted by the JFTC (Private Monopolisation Guidelines), companies with a share of approximately over 50 per cent are subject to the regulations, and in actual cases to which private monopolisation has applied, the share of companies in the relevant market has been much higher than 50 per cent.

For instance, from a general overview of cases since 2000, we see examples including a share of approximately 85 per cent in *NIPRO*,<sup>12</sup> 70 per cent and above in *NTT East*<sup>13</sup> (NTT's share of fibre-optic lines in the east Japan region), 72 per cent in *USEN Corporation*<sup>14</sup> (up from 68 per cent owing to an implementation of exclusionary conduct), 89 per cent in *Intel*<sup>15</sup> (up from 76 per cent, again owing to the implementation of exclusionary conduct), approximately 99 per cent in *JASRAC*<sup>16</sup> (managing operator for music copyright) and 80 per cent in *Mainami Aviation Services*<sup>17</sup> (unusually down from 100 per cent, even though again owing to the implementation of exclusionary conduct). These cases are described in more detail in Sections II and IV.

This illustrates that all cases of private monopolisation since 2000 have identified exclusionary conduct by companies with a market share of over 50 per cent as a violation of the prohibitions thereon. However, even companies that do not have a market share of 50 per cent or more are regulated by the rules against unfair business practices.

It is for sure that in the case of unfair business practices, there is no need for the company committing the conduct to have market power, and it is enough for it to have a strong position within that market. This double regulation is the most unique point in the AMA. The Guidelines Concerning Distribution Systems and Business Practices under the Antimonopoly Act<sup>18</sup> contain safe harbour provisions whereby an enterprise is not considered to have a strong position where it has a share of 20 per cent or less in respect of some types of conduct. However, from a practical point of view, it seems that each target company in actual cases had a market share of over 30 per cent at least and often had a market share of around 50 per cent.

Having said that, whether the safe harbour provisions apply varies depending on the type of conduct that is alleged to be an unfair business practice, and the aforementioned Guidelines should be consulted accordingly.

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11 [www.jftc.go.jp/en/legislation\\_gls/imonopoly\\_guidelines\\_files/guidelines\\_exclusionary.pdf](http://www.jftc.go.jp/en/legislation_gls/imonopoly_guidelines_files/guidelines_exclusionary.pdf).

12 JFTC hearing decision, 5 June 2006.

13 Supreme Court judgment, 17 December 2010.

14 JFTC recommendation decision, 13 October 2004.

15 JFTC recommendation decision, 13 April 2005.

16 JFTC cease-and-desist order, 27 February 2009.

17 JFTC issued a cease-and-desist order, 7 June 2020.

18 [www.jftc.go.jp/en/legislation\\_gls/imonopoly\\_guidelines\\_files/DistributionSystemsAndBusinessPractices.pdf](http://www.jftc.go.jp/en/legislation_gls/imonopoly_guidelines_files/DistributionSystemsAndBusinessPractices.pdf).

For instance, safe harbour provisions are not available in the case of restrictions on resale prices or abuse of a superior bargaining position, and so may be violated even where the JFTC considers the company in question to have a market share of only 10 per cent. Further, the market share is dependent on the market definition, so it is important to be mindful of the fact that a company's relative market share will increase where the market is narrowly defined.

***Exclusionary conduct and controlling conduct (private monopolisation)***

In recent years, there has been a series of important Supreme Court judgments concerning exclusionary conduct, in which the concept of excluding the business activities of other enterprises was defined as 'an artificial nature which deviates from normal competitive methods, as seen in terms of them creating, maintaining or strengthening their own market power, and it can be said that this had the effect of significantly making it difficult for those competitors to enter the market'.<sup>19</sup> While this definition has become generally accepted, views are divided when it comes to the actual finding of exclusionary conduct. However, there is no disputing the fact that there is no need for a company to completely expel a competitor from the market, or to bar it completely from entering it, for such conduct to be considered exclusionary. In addition, in the same judgment, a substantial restraint of competition is defined as 'creating, maintaining or strengthening market power', and so is consistent with actual practice to date.

On the other hand, controlling conduct is generally defined (albeit not in a Supreme Court judgment) as 'conduct which imposes restrictions on another enterprise's decision-making concerning their business activities, and so causes them to comply with one's own wishes'.

***Other matters***

While a company that creates market power is essentially free to raise prices, if these price rises prevent competitors from entering the market, the company may be violating the regulations on private monopolisation.

There are provisions that enable measures to be taken where a market is in a situation whereby it is monopolised by a large company<sup>20</sup> to remove such a situation; however, these have not actually been used in practice, and it is extremely unlikely that they will be in the future, either.

**ii Relationship between private monopolisation and unfair business practices**

It might be difficult for readers in countries that do not have a system of dual regulations to understand the relationship between private monopolisation and unfair business practices. As a matter of fact, the targets of each regulation are overlapping to significant degree except for 'abuse of superior bargaining position'.

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19 Judgment of the Supreme Court in *NTT East*, Supreme Court decision, 17 December 2010, Minshu Vol. 64, No. 8, p. 2,067.

20 AMA, Article 8-4.

While the enactment of regulations on unfair business practices was influenced by the US Federal Trade Commission Act,<sup>21</sup> the AMA is distinct from this Act in that it has provisions on a diverse range of different types of conduct, such as:

- a concerted refusal to supply;<sup>22</sup>
- b discriminatory prices;<sup>23</sup>
- c unjust low prices;<sup>24</sup>
- d resale price maintenance (RPM);<sup>25</sup> and
- e abuse of superior bargaining position.<sup>26</sup>

See also the provisions described in ‘Unfair business practices’ in Section I.

Except for RPM, the above types of conduct are dually regulated in the AMA and the JFTC GD, with slight differences between the regulations.<sup>27</sup> The main types of conduct, dealt with only in the GD and often applied by the JFTC, are as follows:

*refusal to deal* ([u]njustly refusing to trade, or restricting the quantity or substance of goods or services pertaining to trade with a certain entrepreneur, or causing another entrepreneur to undertake any act that falls under one of these categories’);<sup>28</sup>

*tie-in sales* ([u]njustly causing another party to purchase goods or services from oneself or from an entrepreneur designated by oneself by tying it to the supply of other goods or services, or otherwise

21 Although in Japan, the only enforcing body is the JFTC.

22 AMA, Article 2(9)(i); GD, Paragraph 1. Because concerted refusal to deal is not treated as unilateral conduct in general competition law, it is referred to only briefly in this chapter. The JFTC treats concerted refusal to deal as illegal in principle. The nature of it is exclusionary conduct by collusion of horizontal competitors.

23 AMA, Article 2(9)(ii); GD, Paragraph 3.

24 AMA, Article 2(9)(iii); GD, Paragraph 6.

25 AMA, Article 2(9)(iv). Because RPM is not treated as unilateral conduct in general competition law, it is referred to only briefly in this chapter. The JFTC treats RPM as illegal in principle. However, the JFTC recently evaluated the illegality by comparing and balancing the anticompetitive effect on intra-brand competition and the pro-competitive effect on inter-brand competition. Having said that, the JFTC tends to dislike to admit the pro-competitive effect on inter-brand competition in the actual case. Formal RPM cases arise approximately once every two years. So it is somewhat difficult to say that the enforcement is aggressive. Recent products subject to RPM were childcare products (a stroller, child seat and cradle manufactured by Aprica and Combcamping equipment (manufactured by Coleman Japan)), sports shoes (manufactured by Adidas Japan) and a herbicide (manufactured by Nissan Chemical). In January 2022, the JFTC started its voluntary investigation against expensive cup ramen (noodles) named Ichiran. On 19 May 2022, the JFTC approved the commitment plan submitted by Ichiran.

26 AMA, Article 2(9)(v); GD, Paragraph 13.

27 For example, unjust low price is defined in Article 2(9)(iii) of the AMA as follows: ‘without justifiable grounds, continuously supplying goods or services at a price far below the cost incurred to supply them, thereby tending to cause difficulties to the business activities of other enterprises’. However, it is defined in Paragraph 6 of the GD as follows: ‘in addition to any act falling under the provisions of Article 2, Paragraph (9), Item (iii) of the Act, unjustly supplying goods or services for a low consideration, thereby tending to cause difficulties to the business activities of other entrepreneurs’.

28 GD, Paragraph 2.

*coercing the said party to trade with oneself or with an entrepreneur designated by oneself’);<sup>29</sup> trading on exclusive terms ([u]njustly trading with another party on condition that the said party shall not trade with a competitor, thereby tending to reduce trading opportunities for the said competitor’);<sup>30</sup> trading on restrictive terms ([i]n addition to any act falling under the provisions of Article 2, Paragraph (9), item (iv) of the Act and the preceding paragraph, trading with another party on conditions which unjustly restrict any trade between the said party and its other transacting party or other business activities of the said party’);<sup>31</sup> and interferences with a competitor’s transaction ([u]njustly interfering with a transaction between another entrepreneur who is in a domestic competitive relationship with oneself or with the corporation of which one is a stockholder or an officer, and its transacting party, by preventing the effecting of a contract, or by inducing the breach of a contract, or by any other means whatsoever’).<sup>32</sup>*

The major difference from private monopolisation is in the extent to which there is an anticompetitive effect on the market, and for private monopolisation to be realised, there must be a substantial restraint of competition in the relevant market.

On the other hand, it is enough for there to be a likelihood of impeding fair competition for unfair business practices. The question of to what extent a likelihood there should be to satisfy this requirement is, in some cases, the most contested issue. While it also depends on the case in question, the JFTC often sets a low bar in cases to ensure that it wins, while on the other hand companies tend to set a high bar in a way that is substantially the same as a substantial restraint of competition.

On this point, while the JFTC ruled in the administrative hearing decision for the *Microsoft* case<sup>33</sup> that ‘the quantitative or substantive effect on competition of the relevant conduct should be determined on a case-by-case basis’, this became the largest point of argument in the actual case.

In many cases, if private monopolisation applies, it will also constitute one of the types of unfair business practice. On the other hand, the relationship between them is such that conduct does not necessarily constitute private monopolisation just because it is an unfair business practice.

### iii Intellectual property rights

Intellectual property rights are defined in the provisions of the AMA as follows: ‘The provisions of this Act do not apply to acts found to constitute an exercise of rights under the Copyright Act, Patent Act, Utility Model Act, Design Act or Trademark Act’.<sup>34</sup>

Regardless of the above, abusive exercise of intellectual property rights may be restricted. On 22 July 2020, the Tokyo District Court ruled as follows:

*in light of purpose of Article 21 of AMA, even in patent infringement proceedings based on patent rights, in that case the exercise of patent right by patentee, coupled with other conducts of the patentee, tends to impede fair competition, by such as unjustly interfering with a competitor’s transaction, it*

29 id., Paragraph 10.

30 id., Paragraph 11.

31 id., Paragraph 12.

32 id., Paragraph 14.

33 16 September 2008.

34 AMA, Article 21.

*can be abuse of rights as deviating purpose of the patent system and can be prohibited. Whether it is abusive or not must be judged comprehensively considering these factors such as purpose of the exercise of patent right by patentee, necessity, rationality, mode and degree of restriction on competition by that.*

This judgment is in line with actual practice. On 29 March, Intellectual Property High Courts came to the opposite conclusion based on fact findings; however, they did not deny the rule above.

#### **iv Extra-territorial application of the AMA**

On 12 December 2017, the Supreme Court, albeit in an international cartel case, indicated that even where cartel agreements are reached outside Japan, the AMA will apply where these infringe Japan's free competitive economic order. Although this is self-evident in actual practice, it makes sense that this was made explicitly clear, and it is surmised that this is also applicable to private monopolisation and unfair business practices.

## **II YEAR IN REVIEW**

On 13 June 2018, according to press reports, the JFTC conducted an on-site inspection of Nihon Medi-Physics Co, a dominant company providing cancer examination test drugs for positron emission tomography, which is effective in the early detection of cancer, on suspicion of private monopolisation (of the exclusionary type). Nihon Medi-Physics Co was suspected of disrupting the entry of new entrants into the market by putting pressure on the administration developer and manufacturer not to use competitors' test drugs. On 12 March 2020, the JFTC approved the commitment plan submitted by Nihon Medi-Physics Co (see Section VI).

On 11 July 2018, the JFTC announced the closure of its investigation against Apple into a suspected violation of the AMA regarding its agreement with mobile operators (see Section IV).

On 30 December 2018, in accordance with the enactment of the Act on the Development of Related Legislation Following the Conclusion of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, a scheme to resolve suspected violations against the AMA voluntarily by consent between the JFTC and the enterprise (commitment procedures) was introduced into the AMA (see Section V).

On 15 March 2019, after hearing procedures that took almost 10 years, the JFTC revoked its own cease-and-desist order against Qualcomm, which was issued in 2009 (see Section V).

On 10 April 2019, according to press reports, the JFTC conducted on-site inspections of Rakuten Travel Co, Booking.com Japan and Expedia Japan, companies providing online hotel booking websites, on suspicion of unfair business practices (forcing most-favoured nation (MFN) clauses on hotels). On 25 October 2019, the JFTC approved a commitment plan submitted by Rakuten Travel. On 16 March 2022, the JFTC approved the commitment plan submitted by Booking.com BV (see Section V).

On 10 April 2019, according to press reports, Amazon Japan made public that it would withdraw its measure of service point reduction system returning to consumers over 1 per

cent of the purchase amount of all items at the seller's expense. After Amazon Japan initially made this measure public in February 2019, the JFTC started investigations on suspicion of abuse of superior bargaining position.

On 17 December 2019, the JFTC released the Guidelines Concerning Abuse of a Superior Bargaining Position in Transactions between Digital Platform Operators and Consumers that Provide Personal Information, etc (see Section IV.iv 'Exploitative abuse (abuse of superior bargaining position)').

On 28 February 2020, the JFTC filed a petition for an urgent injunction to the Tokyo District Court in accordance with the provision of Article 70-4, Paragraph 1 of the AMA seeking an urgent injunction against shipping inclusive programme measures proposed by Rakuten, Inc (Rakuten), under which all the merchants of the 'Rakuten Ichiba (market)' would be prevented from receiving delivery fees from purchasers.

The JFTC alleges that Rakuten's conduct violates Article 2(9)(v) (abuse of superior bargaining position) of the AMA. Recognising that Rakuten stated that, in consideration of the influences of covid-19 on merchant staff resources, etc., it allowed merchants to decide whether to participate in the measures, the JFTC withdrew its petition for an urgent injunction on 10 March 2020. However, the JFTC continued its investigation into Rakuten's measures. On 6 December 2021, the JFTC closed its investigation because Rakuten proposed, *inter alia*, full dissemination, to specific Rakuten employees, of a policy that:

- a* Rakuten would respect the will of the merchants concerning their application for the threshold (common free shipping threshold) and leaving the threshold, and would not engage in any activity that violates the AMA;
- b* Rakuten would not take actions disadvantaging the merchants outside the threshold, and would not suggest such actions to the merchants; and
- c* Rakuten would not take the actions constraining the exemption application of the merchants forced to apply for the threshold and would not suggest such actions to the merchants. At the same time, Rakuten proposed letting the merchants know of the policy.

Note that the JFTC did not take formal commitment procedures and simply terminated the investigation procedure based on the plan submitted by Rakuten.

On 7 June 2020, the JFTC issued a cease-and-desist order to Mainami Aviation Services Co Ltd (following an on-site inspection carried out by the JFTC on 22 May 2018) (see Section IV). On 7 August 2020, the JFTC approved the commitment plan submitted by drugstore Genky Stores, which was being investigated for violation of Article 19 (abuse of superior bargaining position).

On 10 September 2020, the JFTC approved the commitment plan submitted by Amazon Japan, which was being investigated for suspected abuse of superior bargaining position.

On 14 September 2020, Kazuyuki Furuya was inaugurated as chair of the JFTC, as the successor to Kazuyuki Sugimoto, who had served as chair for seven and a half years. Mr Furuya's previous position was assistant chief cabinet secretary. Prior to that, he had worked for the Ministry of Finance for a long time and also served as commissioner in the National Tax Agency. At a press conference, he said that strict action would be taken to deal with anticompetitive conduct, including abuse of power of digital platforms, as a matter of priority. He had a good reputation for his practice standards and political coordination.

On 16 September 2020, Yoshihide Suga was inaugurated as prime minister, as successor to Shinzo Abe, who had served in the position for seven years and nine months. Although Mr

Abe was very interested in the industrial policy implemented by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) and less interested in competition policy, it seems Mr Suga was more interested in competition policy. Soon after taking office, Mr Suga actually called for a reduction in call rates from NTT Docomo, KDDI and SoftBank; these were accepted and a new low-priced plan was announced, even though the legal basis for his request was weak. On 4 October 2021, Mr Suga resigned and Fumio Kishida was appointed as prime minister.

On 15 November 2020, the JFTC closed its investigation into a suspected violation of the AMA by Nippon Professional Baseball (NPB). The NPB is the top Japanese professional baseball organisation, which consists of two leagues, the Central League and the Pacific League, with six teams in each league. The JFTC investigated allegations that the NPB forced the 12 teams to refuse to sign contracts with certain baseball players. Specifically, the NPB decided that if an amateur baseball player who was eligible for selection in the NPB draft refuses to sign up at the draft or refuses to join a team that gains negotiating rights to the player through the draft of contracts with a foreign baseball team, the 12 NPB teams may not select the player at future NPB drafts for a specific period of time after the foreign baseball team terminates the contract with the player. During the JFTC's investigation, the NPB reported to the JFTC that the NPB took voluntary measures such as repealing the agreement, publicising the repeal and informing related organisations of its action. Because the JFTC recognised that these measures would eliminate the suspected violation, it decided to close the investigation.

On 30 November 2020, three major convenience stores, 7-Eleven, Lawson and Family-mart, announced improvements to their franchisee agreements. The JFTC strongly recommended that they immediately improve the content of their agreements, including in terms of a lack of explanation of profitability at the point of recruiting member stores, a restriction on discount sales, compulsory 24-hour operations and dominant strategies in specific areas. These types of conduct were suspected of abuse of superior bargaining position. On 11 December 2020, the Tokyo High Court completely revoked a JFTC hearing decision that, other than reducing the surcharge payment amount, approved its own cease-and-desist order and surcharge payment order against Sanyo-Marunaka supermarket, based on a violation of abuse of superior bargaining position in relation to conduct including requiring its suppliers to dispatch their employees on secondment to them for free, demanding cooperation fees from them for new store opening celebrations and returning products according to its own sales deadline. The reason for the revocation was that the JFTC's description of disadvantaged suppliers was incomplete. The JFTC accepted this judgment. The JFTC has since improved this description, and it seemed, at first glance, that the issue was settled. However, it is expected to create a big problem for the JFTC when it issues formal orders against digital platform operators such as Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon, because the list of disadvantaged users could be extensive.

Contrary to *Sanyo-Marunaka Supermarket*, on 3 March 2021, the Tokyo High Court completely accepted the JFTC hearing decision on *RALSE*. See Section IV.iv 'Exploitative abuse (abuse of superior bargaining position)'.

On 17 February 2021, the JFTC published the Final Report Regarding Digital Advertising, which requires the transparency of publication criteria for internet advertising by large IT companies. The report specifies actual conduct that may violate the AMA, such as the discontinuation of advertising for unjust reasons. Despite the Report not being formal JFTC guidance, it includes strong recommendations for companies.

On 12 March 2021, the JFTC recognised that a commitment plan submitted by BMW Japan would conform to the approval requirements and approved it. BMW Japan was investigated by the JFTC on suspicion of abuse of superior bargaining position for forcing sales targets that seemed unachievable considering dealers' past sales results.

Albeit a cartel case (market allocation), on 13 April 2021, according to press reports, the JFTC conducted on-site inspections of Chubu Electric Power Co, Kansai Electric Power Co and Chugoku Electric Power Co on suspicion of, inter alia, cartels in the super-high voltage field. On 30 March 2023, the JFTC issued a surcharge payment order to these companies. The amount of the surcharge is ¥101 billion, which is the highest ever. Because Kansai Electric Power Co was the first leniency applicant before dawn raids, the surcharge was zero. While Japanese electric power companies once tended to dominate certain areas for long periods of time, the regulations were gradually eased to accommodate new market entrants. In particular, in recent years a liberalisation of retail electricity has begun, starting with the super-high voltage field (such as for large-scale power plants), then office buildings and finally low-voltage domestic electricity (from April 2016), resulting in the Japanese electricity retail market becoming completely liberalised. The cartel above went against the tide of reform. The JFTC has made it clear to the energy industry (including electricity and gas) that it will proactively investigate the situation going forward.

On 16 July 2021, Ms Eriko Watanabe, who had been a famous and powerful anti-trust lawyer for a long period of time, was appointed as Supreme Court Justice.

On 21 September 2021, the JFTC closed its investigation against Apple (see Section IV.iv).

On 4 October 2021, Fumio Kishida was appointed as Japan's new prime minister. Although Mr Kishida's stance on competition law is not clear, broadly speaking, it seems that he is more interested in social welfare policy, especially protecting people hit by covid-19, based on new capitalism aiming to mainly increase national income by increasing wage income. Accordingly it seems that his interest in competition policy is not as high. As a matter of course the JFTC is politically neutral (more or less), so we have to look carefully at the effects of Japan's macroeconomic policy.

On 16 March 2022, the JFTC approved the commitment plan submitted by Booking.com BV (see Section V).

On 25 March 2022, the JFTC approved the commitment plan submitted by Amer Sports Japan, Inc and Wilson Sporting Goods (see Section V).

On 16 June 2022, there was a very important civil judgment re algorithms. Introducing the outline of the case, the plaintiff who owned several 'Yakiniku (Korean barbecue)' restaurants filed civil lawsuits against 'kakaku.com' who run the restaurant port pull site 'Tabelog' as the defendant to Tokyo District Court. 'Tabelog' was the number one restaurant port pull site in Japan, and its score evaluations based on reviews from users, in particular, had a big impact on sales in many restaurants. The reasons for the lawsuits were that 'kakaku.com' lowered the grading algorithm unilaterally, especially in relation to chain restaurants. Tokyo District Court almost accepted the plaintiff's claim, judged that the conducts of 'kakaku.com' fell into 'abuse of superior bargaining position', and ordered them to pay ¥38.4 million. 'Kakaku.com' appealed for revocation of this judgment to the Tokyo High Court. Regardless of the high court judgment, two important points could be pointed out. First, Tokyo District Court issued a judgment in favour of the plaintiff in such a difficult case. Second, the JFTC has not issued any order to 'kakaku.com' so far, although the JFTC had a lively discussion regarding this matter in several of its reports.

In October 2022, the unified Business Court was opened. Lawsuits regarding competition law shall now be subject to the jurisdiction of this Business Court.

On 27 December 2022, the JFTC published the results of the survey with regard to 'abuse of superior bargaining position'. To implement key policies of the Kishida Administration, the JFTC conducted an extensive survey to what extent large companies reflected cost increases (energy cost, raw material cost, labour cost etc) in transactions with small companies. The JFTC conducted written surveys on 80,000 small companies and many officials of the JFTC were driven to work in this survey. As the results of the survey, the JFTC published 13 company names who had insufficient meetings with business partners (small companies) based on Article 43 of the AMA.<sup>35</sup> The JFTC explained the reason that the publication of 13 company names would enhance smooth promotion of price pass-through.

However, the publication was problematic in multiple respects. First, the publication criteria were not clear at all. Second, although 13 companies gained a bad reputation in the market through the publication as if they had committed violations of the AMA (the JFTC denied the formal violations), they had no means of appeal. Third, it was also not clear what sufficient meetings mean.

Albeit in a bid-rigging case, on 28 February 2023, the JFTC, having investigated a bid-rigging case concerning the 'outsourcing contracts of planning test events, etc.' regarding the Olympic and Paralympic Games, Tokyo 2020, ordered by the Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (hereinafter referred to as the Organising Committee), believed a criminal violation of the AMA and filed, in accordance with Article 74 (1) of the AMA, a criminal accusation with the Prosecutor General against six companies including Dentsu Group Inc., six individuals of the six companies who were engaged in work related to winning the outsourcing contracts of planning test events, etc, and one individual in charge of work related to ordering the outsourcing contracts of planning test events, etc as an operations executive at the Organising Committee. The term 'outsourcing contracts of planning test events, etc.' means the outsourcing contracts of planning the test events being ordered sequentially by the Organising Committee in each athletics field and stadium regarding the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020, and of managing the test events and main events that were planned to be signed with the companies that won the contracts of planning the test events.

The accused companies are Dentsu Group Inc, Hakuhold Incorporated, Tokyu Agency Inc, Fuji Creative Corporation, Cerespo Co, Ltd and Same Two Inc.

In relation to the accused individuals, these are as follows:

- a* a six individuals of the accused companies who were engaged in work related to winning the outsourcing contracts of planning test events, etc; and
- b* b one individual engaged in work related to ordering the outsourcing contracts of planning test events, etc. as an operations executive at the Organising Committee.

By having meetings, etc. at the Organising Committee's office, etc. located in Tokyo from around February to July 2018, the seven accused individuals, in conspiracy with the employees who were engaged in work related to winning the outsourcing contracts of planning test events, etc in the other advertising agency and other employees who belonged to the seven companies, predetermined winners of the outsourcing contracts of planning test events,

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35 Article 43. The Fair Trade Commission may, to ensure the proper operation of this Act, make any necessary matters public except for the secrets of enterprises.

etc. with considering each company's request and agreed that basically only predetermined winners would place a bid. And in accordance with the above-mentioned agreement, they determined the winners of the biddings.

On 23 March 2023, according to press reports, the JFTC conducted an on-site inspection of IBJ, a major company providing matchmaking services on suspicion of 'interfering with a competitor's transaction' (unfair business practices).

On 23 May 2023, according to press reports, the JFTC conducted an on-site inspection of Logic, a major company providing services regarding nursing care management systems, on suspicion of 'trading on restrictive terms' (unfair business practices).

On 5 July 2023, there was a personnel change in the JFTC when Tetsuya Fujimoto was appointed as a new secretary general.

### **i Green Society Guidelines**

On 31 March 2023, the JFTC released the 'Guidelines Concerning the Activities of Enterprises, etc. Toward the Realisation of a Green Society Under the AMA'.<sup>36</sup>

In the 'Plan for Global Warming Countermeasures' (Cabinet decision, 22 October 2021), Japan declared goals of reducing greenhouse gas emission as of 2030 and 2050. To achieve those goals, it is necessary to build a society which combines reduction of environmental impact and economic growth, that is, 'Green Society'. In this regard, the JFTC has now compiled the 'Guidelines Concerning the Activities of Enterprises, etc. Toward the Realisation of a Green Society under the AMA' in order to prevent anticompetitive conduct which deters realisation of a Green Society, and to raise transparency and predictability of the application and enforcement of the Act for businesses working towards a Green Society.

From now on, the JFTC will keep reviewing the Guidelines continuously while taking into account the changes in markets and business activities as well as law enforcements and consultation cases. Also, the JFTC will respond to consultations by businesses actively in light of the descriptions in the Guidelines for the purpose of supporting business activities towards a Green Society. The following examples in the Guidelines are helpful.

#### ***Acts that do not pose problems under the AMA***

Among joint activities of enterprises, etc, those acts that are not expected to have any anticompetitive effects do not pose problems under the AMA. Most of the joint activities of enterprises, etc that satisfy the following factors are considered to fall under the category of acts without anticompetitive effects: not affecting matters that constitute important means of competition including prices, not restraining entry of enterprises, and not excluding incumbents from markets.

#### ***Supposed case 1: Industry-wide awareness-raising campaign***

Trade Association X has decided to organise an awareness-raising campaign to promote the activities of individual enterprises in the industry toward the realisation of a green society. In the implementation of the campaign, X has ensured the following matters: it is to be implemented to an extent that it will not affect any matters constituting important means of competition; entry of new enterprises will not be restrained; incumbents will not be excluded from the market; and it will not restrict the business activities of individual enterprises.

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36 <https://www.jftc.go.jp/en/pressreleases/yearly-2023/March/230331.html>.

*Supposed case 2: Compliance with statutory obligations*

Trade Association X, which consists of manufacturers of Product A, has set the target recycling ratio for its member enterprises to comply with; the target ratio is same as the obligatory recycling ratio with which each individual enterprise is statutorily required to comply. Then, in an attempt to ensure the achievement of that recycling ratio, X has decided to encourage its members to publish on their websites that they are making efforts to achieve the goals and has decided to publish the accomplishment rate of each member enterprise on X's website, with the consent of the member enterprise.

*Supposed case 6: Information exchange irrelevant to important means of competition*

Enterprises X, Y, and Z, which are manufacturers of Product A, exchanged among them information on their respective activities for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, such as how to calculate the emissions, measures for energy saving, experiences of greenhouse gas emissions reduction leading to new transaction opportunities, and used that information as a reference for their respective activities. The matters constituting their important means of competition, such as their respective prices of Product A, were not subject to the information exchange.

***Acts that pose problems under the AMA***

If a joint activity of an enterprise, etc. causes only anticompetitive effects, in principle, it poses problems under the AMA. Specifically, if a joint activity falls under (1) act that restrains any matter constituting important means of competition such as prices, (2) act that restrains entry of enterprises, or (3) act that excludes any incumbents from markets then even if the purpose of this joint activity is to realise a green society, it will, in principle, pose problems under the AMA without being justified by its purpose alone.

*Supposed case 10: Joint disposal of production facilities*

In order to reduce the amount of greenhouse gas emissions generated in the manufacturing processes of Product A, Enterprises X, Y and Z, which are manufacturers of Product A, individually considered switching their existing production equipment to new equipment featuring a new technology for less greenhouse gas emissions. Under such circumstances, X, Y and Z communicated with each other, without each of own decisions, to set their pace in the industry and decided the time of disposal of their existing production equipment and which pieces of their existing production equipment to dispose of.

*Supposed case 11: Restraints on technological development*

Enterprises X, Y and Z, which are manufacturers of Product A, were strongly required by Product A users to develop technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. However, X, Y and Z exchanged information on their respective R&D statuses among them so as to avoid the escalation of competition in the development of new technologies, and also restrained the new technologies adopted for the product to be offered to users in the future.

**ii Enactment of the Act to amend the AMA**

The amendments to the AMA mainly relate to cartels and bid rigging, not to unilateral conduct, but still remain very important.

On 19 June 2019, the bill to amend the AMA, which was submitted to the National Diet on 12 March 2019, was approved by the House of Councillors and enacted. The purposes of the amended Act are:

- a* to deter unreasonable restraint of trade effectively;
- b* to invigorate the economy and enhance consumer interests through fair and free competition, and through increasing incentives for enterprises to cooperate in JFTC investigations; and
- c* the imposition of an appropriate amount of surcharges according to the nature and extent of a violation.

The outlines of the enacted Act are as follows:

- a* amendment of the leniency programme;
- b* the introduction of a system that allows the JFTC to reduce the amount of surcharges when enterprises submit information and documents that contribute to the fact-finding of a case, in addition to a reduction according to the order of application;
- c* abolishing the current limit on the number of applicants in the leniency programme;
- d* revision of the calculation methods: the addition of, inter alia, the basis of calculation of surcharges and extension of the calculation term;
- e* revision of the penal provisions: raising the limit of the amount of criminal fine for a juridical person charged with the offence of obstructing an investigation; and other necessary revisions.

All amendments had entered into force by the end of 2020.

As an approach to attorney–client privilege, rules pursuant to the provisions of Article 76 of the AMA and guidelines were to be established by the effective date of the bill from the perspective of making the new leniency programme more effective by, inter alia, protecting confidential communications regarding legal advice between an enterprise and independent attorneys substantially and ensuring the appropriateness of administrative investigation procedures (the rules entered into force from 2020).<sup>37</sup>

### **iii Enactment of the Act on Improvement of Transparency and Fairness in Trading on Specified Digital Platforms**

On 27 May 2020, the bill for the Act on Improvement of Transparency and Fairness in Trading on Specified Digital Platforms, which was submitted to the National Diet on 18 February 2020, was approved by the House of Councillors and enacted. On 1 April 2021, Amazon Japan, Rakuten, Yahoo, Apple Inc, iTunes and Google LLC were designated as specified digital platform providers by METI.

#### ***Purpose of the Act***

In recent years, digital platforms have dramatically improved users' access to markets and have become ever more important. Meanwhile, concerns are emerging, such as low transparency in trading as seen in changes in terms and conditions and no provision of reasons for refusal to deal; and insufficient procedures and systems for addressing rational requests of platform users providing goods and services.

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37 [www.jftc.go.jp/en/pressreleases/yearly-2019/June/19061907.html](http://www.jftc.go.jp/en/pressreleases/yearly-2019/June/19061907.html).

In light of this situation, METI will take necessary measures to improve transparency and fairness in trading on digital platforms, such as those for requiring digital platform providers to disclose terms and conditions of trading and other information, secure fairness in operating digital platforms, submit a report on the current situation of business operation and conduct self-assessment of the report, as well as those for requiring the government to publicise the results of its assessment of a report and to take other actions.

In addition, the Act is to require the government, when implementing these measures, to encourage digital platform providers and platform users providing goods and services to establish a mutual understanding in terms of trading relationships on the basis of digital platform providers making voluntary and proactive efforts with minimal involvement by the government.

### ***Outline of the Act***

The major measures to be taken under the Act are as follows.

#### *Measures targeting specified digital platform providers*

The Act is to designate digital platform businesses whose transparency and fairness in trading should be improved as specified digital platform providers under cabinet order and, thereby, such specified providers, whether they are domestic or overseas businesses, are to be subject to the following rules:

- a* a requirement that specified digital platform providers disclose their information (e.g., terms and conditions of trading). The Act will require specified digital platform providers to disclose terms and conditions and give prior notices of any change thereof to platform users;
- b* a request that these providers develop procedures and systems in a voluntary manner: the Act will request such providers to develop procedures and systems in accordance with the guidelines specified by METI; and
- c* a requirement that these providers submit a report on the results of self-assessments and requiring the METI Minister to assess the report.

The Act will require such providers to submit a report, every fiscal year, on their current situations under items (a) and (b) above with the results of self-assessment on such situations to the METI Minister, and then the Minister will assess the situations of business operations based on the report and publicise the assessment results.

#### *Collaborating with the JFTC*

The Act will require METI to establish a system under which METI should request that the JFTC exercise certain measures under the AMA if METI finds any cases that are suspected of violating the AMA.

## **III MARKET DEFINITION AND MARKET POWER**

### **i Market definition**

A market is defined in terms of its product scope and geographical scope. However, markets are sometimes defined very narrowly when compared to merger control, such as in terms of specific areas, services or customers.

The most noteworthy case regarding market definition is *NTT East*. The JFTC defined the market somewhat narrowly as ‘[fibre to the home] services for detached residential properties in the East Japan region’. While the company naturally countered that the market should be defined as the broadband services market (including asymmetric digital subscriber line services), the Supreme Court affirmed the JFTC’s decision.<sup>38</sup>

Markets have been defined as:

- a* ‘the field of supply for glass tubes in the West Japan region for which the consumers are ampoule processing companies with headquarters in the same region and the suppliers are NIPRO and processing companies’, in the later *NIPRO* case;
- b* the ‘transmission of music to retail shops in Japan’ in the *USEN Corporation* case;
- c* ‘the market for the sale of CPUs to computer manufacturers in Japan’ in the *Intel* case; and
- d* ‘the Molybdenum-99 market in Japan’ in the *Nordion* case.

There is also debate as to whether market definition is required for unfair business practices, and the JFTC’s position is to define markets as necessary on a case-by-case basis. That is to say, its basic position is that this is not necessary. However, in *Microsoft*, the JFTC did not shy away from defining the market, but instead defined it as the computer audiovisual technology trading market. Even for unfair business practices, it is not possible to consider the anticompetitive effect if the market is not defined, and so there are many situations where companies and the JFTC contest the point.

## ii Market power

As mentioned previously, under the Private Monopolisation Guidelines a company is required to have a share of approximately over 50 per cent in the relevant market for private monopolisation to apply.

Private monopolisation is established where companies create, maintain or strengthen their market power through either exclusionary conduct or controlling conduct. There are many cases where private monopolisation is committed by companies that already have market power, and in doing so maintain or strengthen that power. While in this sense it is rare for such companies to create market power, there are cases where, for instance, an enterprise that already has market power in another market uses that position to create new market power in another separate market; that is to say, it makes use of its leverage.

In relation to market power and market share about unfair business practice, see Section I.i ‘Market share’.

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38 The Court stated: ‘Given it is clear that there actually existed consumers who prefer [fibre to the home (FTTH)] services in terms of the communications side, etc., regardless of the price difference with other broadband services such as [asymmetric digital subscriber line services], and so it can be understood that for such persons there was almost no demand substitutability as regards other broadband services, so the FTTH services market can be assessed independently as being the ‘relevant market’ for the purposes of Article 2, Paragraph 5 of the AMA’.

## IV ABUSE

### i Overview

While conduct constituting private monopolisation may be either exclusionary conduct or controlling conduct, the former is at the heart of such conduct, and one should also be mindful of the following: it is highly likely that the JFTC makes its decisions regarding private monopolisation not only by paying attention to the anticompetitive nature of each such conduct, but also by considering overall the strength and weakness of factors such as: (1) the company's power in the market; (2) the anticompetitive nature of the conduct that is viewed with suspicion; and (3) the effect on the relevant market, as well as the causal relationship between the three, and further, taking into account the existence or absence of any pro-competitive effects, the extent thereof.

For point (1), the JFTC takes into account not only the company's market share itself, but also the characteristics of the market, the difference in share between the company and the player ranking second in the market, and where necessary, the extent of excess profits, the existence of potential new entrants, brand strength and so on.

Concerning point (2), while the Supreme Court has proposed 'an artificial nature which deviates from normal competitive methods' this can simply be taken to mean anticompetitiveness. The extent of the anticompetitive nature of a conduct can be taken instead to mean the extent of the deviation from normal competition based on price and quality, that is to say from competition on the merits of the relevant products or services. The effect on the relevant market (point (3)) refers to effects such as competitors failing to enter or being delayed in entering a market, withdrawing therefrom, experiencing fluctuations in their share or increases or decreases in customer trading.

Because points (1) to (3) act on each other, if an anticompetitive effect is quantitatively assessed and given a numerical value, the anticompetitive effect is likely determined not through a summing up of such values, but by multiplying them and subtracting any pro-competitive effects instead. Once this is understood, the following examples become easier to comprehend.

In the Private Monopolisation Guidelines, four typical examples of exclusionary conduct constituting private monopolisation are given:

- a* predatory pricing;
- b* exclusive dealing;
- c* tie-in arrangements; and
- d* refusal to deal or discriminatory conduct.

While this is a simple way to classify such conduct, a much more broad and diverse range of types of conduct can be given. Additionally, the following classification of conduct is based on the JFTC's law applied to actual cases; however, this is fluid, and dependent on the details of each case. In many cases, if private monopolisation applies, this also constitutes a type of unfair business practice. However, the converse is not true.

As the JFTC has tended to enforce the regulations on private monopolisation in waves, it is worth looking back at previous events to understand the current situation in Japan. There were no such cases between 1972 and 1996, and prior to 1972 there were only a few. During this period, conduct that met the requirements for private monopolisation was regulated as an unfair business practice, as it was generally understood to be at the time, for which the evidential burden was low.

From 1996 to 2009, private monopolisation was actively enforced, with one case a year on average. However, the JFTC lost the *JASRAC* case. JASRAC, which was the monopolistic managing operator for music copyright in Japan, was initially determined by the JFTC in 2009<sup>39</sup> to have committed a violation of private monopolisation by adopting a blanket collection method for broadcaster licensing fees, whereby it charged a fee by applying its prescribed rate to broadcasters' broadcasting business revenue as a comprehensive licence for all music managed by JASRAC, regardless of the number of times that music was actually used. JASRAC contested the cease-and-desist order in the hearing procedure<sup>40</sup> held by the JFTC, which resulted in the JFTC taking the highly unusual step of revoking its own cease-and-desist order of violation.<sup>41</sup>

While it seemed the matter would then be concluded, an action for revocation of administrative disposition was subsequently brought against the JFTC by JASRAC's competitor, e-License, which claimed that it was excluded by JASRAC. The Tokyo High Court and the Supreme Court both determined that exclusionary conduct had taken place, and the case was referred back to the JFTC.<sup>42</sup>

In 2016, the case finally came to a close, with the withdrawal of JASRAC's petition for redress, and during the period from 2009 to 2016, shackled as it was by its ongoing conflict with JASRAC, the JFTC did not expose any cases of private monopolisation, with the exception of one small and local case of a controlling-type private monopolisation. However, in recent years, the JFTC has become more active again. It has exposed a string of cases that are fascinating from a competition law standpoint (see Section II).

## ii Exclusionary abuses (private monopolisation)

### *Predatory pricing*

According to the Private Monopolisation Guidelines, a price is highly likely to constitute exclusionary conduct where it is lower than the 'costs required to supply the product', which is a similar concept to average variable costs. On the other hand, where the price is lower than the total costs required to supply a product, but greater than the 'costs which do not arise if the product is not supplied', and there are no special circumstances such as that the product is being supplied over a long period of time and in high volume, there is a low possibility of such pricing constituting exclusionary conduct.

The *USEN Corporation* case<sup>43</sup> is a typical example of this. USEN Corporation, which had a market-leading share in cable music broadcasting to retail offices (68 per cent, rising to 72 per cent as a result of exclusionary conduct), lowered the monthly listening fee that it

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39 JFTC cease-and-desist order, 27 February 2009.

40 The practice of which has since been abolished.

41 JFTC hearing decision, 12 June 2012.

42 Supreme Court decision, 28 April 2015, *Minshu*, Vol. 69, No. 3, p. 518. The ruling was as follows: A collection method which does not take into account the amount of broadcast usage when calculating broadcasting licence fees will cause the overall amount of music usage fees borne by broadcasters to increase where they are paying music usage fees to other managing operators. Accordingly, coupled with the fact that the broadcasting usage of music is essentially interchangeable in nature, this has the effect of suppressing the usage by broadcasters of music which is managed by other managing operators, and when one takes into account that the scope of such suppression extends to almost all broadcasters, and that the continuation period thereof extends over a considerably long period of time, one should say that this method clearly has the effect of making it difficult for other managing operators to enter this market.

43 See footnote 14.

charged to customers of its largest rival, Cansystem (26 per cent, decreasing to 20 per cent as a result of USEN's exclusionary conduct) as a condition of the customers switching to use its own service, and also extended its promotional campaign to those customers (whereby those monthly fees were made free) from the standard three months to six, and so was determined to have engaged in exclusionary conduct.

### ***Margin squeeze***

Margin squeeze means conduct whereby a company that does business in both an upstream market and a downstream market tries to bring the price of an upstream product close to that of a downstream product. In some cases, it is regulated as a refusal to deal.

The Supreme Court's judgment in *NTT East* is a typical example of this. When providing new communication services using fibre optics to detached residential properties, NTT East, which owns more than 70 per cent of the fibre optic lines in the east Japan region, provided users with such communication services under a system whereby one person used a single fibre optic line (central wire direct connection system). However, the fact that the usage fee for this was less than the connection fee for other communications providers when using the same central wire direct connection system, was treated as them being excluded. While the monthly usage fee was ¥5,800, the monthly connection fee was ¥6,328.<sup>44</sup>

### ***Exclusive dealing***

In *Nordion*, the Canadian company Nordion, which held the majority of global production volume and a large part of the sales for Molybdenum 99 (a substance used in radiation therapy) and 100 per cent of the market share in Japan, required its Japanese business partners to purchase all of the products they required from it over the course of 10 years, and accordingly was found to have excluded its competitors.<sup>45</sup> This is an exclusive purchasing obligation, which is one type of exclusive dealing.

Note that almost all of the cases except for abuse of superior bargaining position have the characteristic of being substantially exclusive dealing.

### ***Rebates***

The Private Monopolisation Guidelines attempt to draw a line under whether conduct is illegal by listing a diverse range of factors, including loyalty rebates, but are unsuccessful in doing so. As such, analysis of exclusionary conduct is at a developing stage, whereby factors such as the discount aspect of rebates and pro-competitive effects are also taken into account.

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44 The Supreme Court ruled as follows: 'in the case of the conduct concerned, NTT East directly provided subscriber fibre optic equipment installed by it to its subscribers, and at the same time, when providing this equipment to other telecommunications providers with which it competed for connection purposes, made use of its position as effectively the sole supplier in the equipment connectivity market for subscriber fibre optics to set and present them with connectivity terms and conditions which those providers could not accept as reasonable in economic terms. This unilateral and one-sided act of refusal to deal and predatory pricing has an artificial nature which deviates from normal competitive methods, as seen in terms of them creating, maintaining or strengthening their own market power, and as it can be said that this had the effect of significantly making it difficult for those competitors to enter the market, this should be considered as constituting exclusionary conduct in that same market.'

45 *Nordion*, JFTC recommendation decision, 3 September 1998.

A representative example of this is *Intel*.<sup>46</sup> Intel, which has a larger share of the market for central processing units (CPUs) installed in computers (rising from 76 to 89 per cent as a result of exclusionary conduct), provided its business partner computer manufacturers with rebates, etc., on the condition that they would use Intel CPUs for 90 to 100 per cent of their computers, and would not use CPUs from Intel's competitor, AMD (with a share of 22 per cent falling to 10 per cent as a result of Intel's exclusionary conduct), for computers with a high production volume. Intel's conduct in causing them not to adopt the CPUs of its competitor was deemed to be exclusionary.

### *Mixed conduct*

There are some situations in which various different types of exclusionary conduct are mixed together or combine to form a consecutive series.

*NIPRO*<sup>47</sup> is a typical example of mixed conduct. In this case, NAIGAI Group, a business partner of NIPRO that produces and sells glass tubes for use in ampoules (and has a share of 85 per cent), began dealing in non-Japanese-made glass tubes, which were competitor products to NIPRO's. To restrain the expansion of NAIGAI's dealing in such glass tubes, and with the intention of imposing sanctions on it, NIPRO raised the sale price for glass tubes to NAIGAI Group only (price discrimination); refused to accept orders placed by NAIGAI Group (refusal to deal); and required NAIGAI Group alone to provide security or to settle invoices with cash payments (abuse of superior bargaining position).

The JFTC decided that exclusionary conduct had taken place after taking into account a series of conducts by NIPRO over four years. While NIPRO was the first case of private monopolisation in which the JFTC's findings were contested, it also alleged in the course of the hearing as a preliminary claim that NIPRO's same series of conducts also constituted unfair business practices.<sup>48</sup>

As NAIGAI Group had not decreased its dealings in imported glass tubes despite such course of conduct, NIPRO was able to exclude the imported tubes, but only slightly, and accordingly, the JFTC added an allegation of unfair business practices, which have a low evidential burden and for which it is sufficient to show that there was a likelihood of impeding fair competition. Finally, the JFTC returned to its claim of private monopolisation and won its case.

*Mainami Aviation Services* is also an interesting example of a mixed conduct case. On 7 June 2020, the JFTC issued a cease-and-desist order to Mainami Aviation Services Co Ltd (following an on-site inspection carried out by the JFTC on 22 May 2018). In this case, the JFTC alleged that Mainami Aviation Services had been committing a violation of Article 3 of the AMA (exclusionary private monopolisation) in its sale of 'into-plane fuelling' aviation fuel at Yao Airport, by:

- a allegedly stating that it would not bear responsibility for aircraft-related accidents caused by mixing its aviation fuel with that of SGC Saga Aviation, and notifying its customers that it would discontinue fuelling their aircraft if these are refuelled by SGC Saga Aviation; and

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46 See footnote 15.

47 See footnote 12.

48 Trading subject to restrictive conditions, GD, Paragraph 12.

- b making it a condition of sale that customers sign a document confirming that they would not seek Mainami Aviation Services' liability for aircraft-related accidents caused by mixing its aviation fuel with that of SGC Saga Aviation.

Mainami Aviation Services' conduct excluded SGC Saga Aviation's business activities and caused, contrary to public interest, a substantial restraint of competition in the field of into-plane fuelling of aviation fuel at Yao Airport. Although international standard specifications exist, the Civil Aeronautics Act<sup>49</sup> and other related ordinances do not prohibit or restrict the mixture of the same type and grade of aviation fuel. Although the same type and grade of aviation fuel provided by different fuelling companies are normally mixed within aircraft fuel tanks, no accidents caused by this have been reported in the aircraft accident investigation reports (from 1974 to 31 January 2020) published by the Japan Transport Safety Board. In relation to this order, on 19 February 2021, the JFTC issued a surcharge payment order against Mainami Aviation Services. The amount of the surcharge payment is ¥6.12 million. This is the first case in which the JFTC has issued a surcharge payment order for conduct of exclusionary private monopolisation since the JFTC introduced the system of surcharge payment orders against conduct in violation of exclusionary private monopolisation in 2009 (which entered into force in 2010). Mainami Aviation Services ceased the conduct on 21 August 2020.

Although the surcharge is very small because of the narrowness of the relevant market, it is assumed that the JFTC will not hesitate to issue higher surcharges in subsequent cases. Mainami Aviation Services has appealed for revocation of both administrative orders to the Tokyo District Court. On 10 February 2022, the Tokyo District Court dismissed the claims.

*Hokkaido Shimbun*<sup>50</sup> is additionally an interesting example of a mixed conduct case. The *Hokkaido Shimbun* newspaper covered the entire Hokkaido area and had a dominant position even within newspaper sales in the Hakodate region (which is located within the Hokkaido area). Given that *Hakodate Shimbun* was established in the same region with the aim of publishing an evening paper, *Hokkaido Shimbun* both filed a trademark on title lettering that the new market entrant, *Hakodate Shimbun* newspaper, was likely to use, and also greatly reduced its newspaper advertising fees in the same region and put pressure on the press agency not to broadcast news to *Hakodate Shimbun*. It further demanded that TV stations would not broadcast its commercials. This conduct was treated as *Hakodate Shimbun* being excluded.

Other examples of mixed conduct are outlined below. While these types of conduct are difficult to typify under the Private Monopolisation Guidelines, they are clear examples of exclusionary conduct.

In *Japan Medical Foods Association*, the Association, which exclusively carried out inspection work on medical food products (that is, it had a share of 100 per cent) through the public inspections system, colluded with Nisshin Healthcare Food Service Co, Ltd, a primary seller of food products for medical use, to construct a production and sale system that made it clearly difficult for new players to enter the market, such as requiring registration for medical food products and certification for production plants, and so was deemed to have excluded new market participants from producing and selling medical food products.<sup>51</sup>

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49 Act No. 231 of 15 July 1952.

50 JFTC recommendation decision, 28 February 2000.

51 *Japan Medical Foods Association*, JFTC recommendation decision, 8 May 1996.

In *Pachinko Machine Production Patent Pool*, 10 pachinko machine producers that held key patents on the manufacturing of these machines (and together held approximately 90 per cent of the pachinko machine market), and that had gathered their patents together and were managing them as a patent ‘pool’, were deemed to have committed exclusionary conduct for not granting new participants licence rights to those patents.<sup>52</sup>

In *Paramount Bed*, Paramount Bed placed pressure on the person in the Tokyo metropolitan government in charge of placing orders for medical-use beds (Paramount had an almost 100 per cent share of this market) to enable delivery only of beds for which Paramount Bed had utility model rights, so that competing providers could not supply other beds, and accordingly was found to have committed exclusionary conduct.<sup>53</sup>

### iii Controlling conduct (private monopolisation)

There are few cases concerning controlling-type conduct; nor are there any guidelines thereon from the JFTC. An example that constitutes controlling is a company using a given investment in another company to restrict its sales areas against its wishes, and to prohibit the establishment of new factories.<sup>54</sup> Also, while there are very few examples of this (just five cases to date), cases such as the *Japan Medical Foods* case and the *Paramount Bed* case involved both exclusionary conduct and controlling conduct. Since the *Toyo Seikan* case, there has been only one case of controlling conduct alone – the 2015 *Fukui Agricultural Cooperative* case.

While *Fukui Agricultural Cooperative*<sup>55</sup> is a controlling-type case, the scale thereof was small, and it was extremely local in nature. Furthermore, this case could be treated as bid rigging.

### iv Unfair business practices

#### *Price discrimination*

In *Hokkaido Electric Power*, the company set different fees for returning consumers that were higher than those for new consumers, and accordingly the JFTC issued a warning on suspicion of price discrimination.<sup>56</sup>

The JFTC has made it clear to the energy industry (including electricity and gas) that it will proactively investigate the situation going forward.

#### *Tying*

Microsoft Japan licensed its word processing software, Word, to computer manufacturers together with Excel (the spreadsheet software for which it has the leading market share) at the same time as licensing the latter, and accordingly was deemed to have engaged in tying.<sup>57</sup> Following this, Ichitaro, competing word processing software, suffered a notable reduction in its market share.

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52 *Pachinko Machine Production Patent Pool*, JFTC recommendation decision, 6 August 1997.

53 *Paramount Bed*, JFTC recommendation decision, 3 September 1998.

54 *Toyo Seikan*, JFTC recommendation decision, 18 September 1972.

55 16 January 2015.

56 JFTC warning, 30 June 2017.

57 GD, Paragraph 10; JFTC recommendation decision, 14 December 1998.

***Non-assertion provisions clause***

The *Microsoft* case is a typical example of this. Microsoft US was found to have created an anticompetitive effect in the computer audiovisual technology market by including in its contracts for licensing Windows (its core software for PCs) original equipment manufacturer (OEM) sales provisions whereby the OEM providers entering into those contracts promised not to sue Microsoft or other OEM providers for breaches of patent infringement by Windows (non-assertion provisions), and so this conduct was found to constitute trading subject to restrictive conditions.<sup>58</sup>

In the decision, it was determined that the non-assertion provisions were extremely unreasonable given that it enabled the OEM providers' worldwide patents to be incorporated into the Windows series for free, and accordingly that there was a high probability of OEM providers losing the desire to research and develop new computer audiovisual technology.

In addition, given that the OEM providers and Microsoft are competitors in the computer audiovisual technology market, the OEM providers would, as a result of the non-assertion provisions, lose the desire to research and develop computer audiovisual technology if they had such powerful technology in their possession, and accordingly, their position would be weakened, while on the other hand, Microsoft could rapidly and widely distribute its computer audiovisual technology on a global scale by installing it within the Windows series.

Accordingly, it was determined that the non-assertion provisions had a likelihood of excluding competition in the computer audiovisual market, or causing it to stagnate, and so there was a high probability of an anticompetitive effect being extended to that market.

The opposite conclusion was come in the *Qualcomm* case. On 15 March 2019, after hearing procedures that took almost 10 years, the JFTC revoked its own cease-and-desist order against Qualcomm, which was issued in 2009. This was a highly unusual step, as in the *JASRAC* case discussed in Section IV. On 28 September 2009, Qualcomm was determined by the JFTC to have committed violation of unfair business practices (trading on restrictive terms) by forcing a royalty-free clause and non-assertion provisions clause to mobile terminal manufacturers in the licence agreements of code-division multiple access (CDMA) intellectual property rights it owned. The JFTC evaluated in its cease-and-desist order in 2009 that the manufacturers would, as a result of these clauses, lose the desire to research and develop technologies related to CDMA, etc., and, accordingly, their positions would be weakened, while on the other hand, Qualcomm would strengthen its position. However, the JFTC hearing examiner ruled that the clauses had a property similar to cross-licence agreements, and finally found that the claimants had failed to show evidence to support the existence of violation. The JFTC commissioners approved the hearing decision.

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58 GD, Paragraph 12; JFTC hearing decision, 16 September 2008.

***Breach of fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory terms***

One-Blue, LLC manages and operates the patent pool for the standard essential patents for Blu-ray disc standards. Despite declaring that it would license these under fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory (FRAND) conditions, it did not reach an agreement with Imation Corporation, which wished to receive a licence under the FRAND conditions, and furthermore told its business partners that the Blu-ray discs produced and sold by Imation would infringe One-Blue's patent rights. Accordingly, this conduct was determined to constitute unfair interference with a competitor's transactions.<sup>59</sup>

***Most-favoured nation clause***

Amazon Japan was found to have included in its seller display contracts for Amazon Marketplace (its electronic shopping mall) an MFN clause that required sellers to set prices and terms and conditions for products sold by them on Amazon Marketplace at whichever were the most favourable prices and terms and conditions of the same product as sold by other sales routes, and accordingly was investigated by the JFTC on suspicion of trading subject to restrictive conditions.<sup>60</sup> However, as Amazon Japan made a petition to the effect that it would take voluntary measures itself, and those measures, including deleting MFN clauses from the contracts and not introducing the clauses in new contracts, dispelled the suspicion, the JFTC broke off its investigation.<sup>61</sup> It could be said that Amazon took commitment procedures in advance.

***Unfair interference with a competitor's transactions***

DeNA, an online game platform that uses mobile phone and social network services (SNS), was ranked top in sales of SNS game software and was also in hot pursuit of its rival, Gree. DeNA planned to disrupt SNS game developers from providing software to Gree by eliminating their links to the DeNA platform when they provided software to Gree. DeNA was determined to have engaged in unfair interference with a competitor's transactions.<sup>62</sup>

***Exploitative abuse (abuse of superior bargaining position)***

The provisions on unfair business practices contain prohibitions on abuse of superior bargaining position that are unique to Japan, even though somewhat similar regulations had been introduced in various competition laws of other countries. One aspect of these provisions is the traditional Japanese industrial policy of protecting small and medium-sized companies, and, while they are somewhat hard to understand in terms of pure competition law theory, the JFTC makes frequent use of these provisions, therefore making them a key part of the regulations against unfair business practices.<sup>63</sup> It is enough for a company to have

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59 GD, Paragraph 14; JFTC press release, 18 November 2016.

60 GD, Paragraph 12.

61 JFTC press release, 1 June 2017.

62 JFTC cease-and-desist order, 9 June 2011.

63 The regulation on abuse of superior bargaining position is also implemented by the Subcontract Act, the supplemental act of the AMA. The Act applies to subcontract transactions related to the commission of manufacturing, repairing or making information-based products or providing services and only where the capital falls under the criteria in the Act. When the JFTC finds a violation of the Subcontract Act, it first issues a recommendation. If the company does not comply, the JFTC issues a cease-and-desist order after evaluating the conduct in light of abuse of superior bargaining position.

a superior bargaining position relative to its suppliers, and there is neither any need for the relevant company to have market power nor to have a strong position in the relevant market. Of course, if such elements exist, the possibility of the company being targeted by the JFTC will increase.

As such, the company is an important trading partner for suppliers; if they have a relationship with such company whereby they must accept any demand made by the company, no matter how unreasonable, the company in question will be deemed to have a superior bargaining position. Theoretically, the key factor in finding a superior bargaining position is the degree of dependence by the supplier on the transaction with the company, and the degree of dependence is generally evaluated by dividing the supplier's volume of sales to the company by the supplier's total amount of sales. However, in practice, the JFTC often finds dependency, even if the ratio is less than 5 per cent.

The rules primarily regulate against large companies, such as mass electronics retailers, supermarkets, department stores and home and convenience stores, demanding cooperation fees or support money from their suppliers, requiring them to dispatch their employees on secondment to them for free, returning products that are not faulty or reducing payments without due cause.

In *7-Eleven*, involving the largest franchisor in the convenience store sector, 7-Eleven prevented franchisees from discounting unsold foods such as lunch boxes, and its conduct was deemed to be abuse of superior bargaining position.<sup>64</sup>

In *Toys 'R' Us*, which involved the largest Japanese retailer specialising in goods for children and infants at that time, Toys 'R' Us reduced prices and returned products to suppliers. Toys 'R' Us's conduct was deemed to be abuse of superior bargaining position.<sup>65</sup>

Note that there are no restrictions on the types of industry that may be targeted, and in the past, there have also been cases of banks being investigated. In *Mitsui Sumitomo Bank*, the JFTC found that Mitsui Sumitomo Bank forcing borrowers to purchase financial products was unlawful.<sup>66</sup> Note that the JFTC tends to apply this regulation readily. The most recent order was issued in 2014 in *Direx*, and since then there have been no formal orders, even though the JFTC had been very active in cases against abuse of superior bargaining position. As a matter of fact, the JFTC and the investigated company have actively used commitment procedures since the introduction of such procedures (see Section VI).

There have been only five cases in which cease-and-desist orders and surcharge payment orders have been issued since 2010, when surcharges were incorporated for certain types of unfair business practices, including abuse of superior bargaining position. All of these cases involved abuse of superior bargaining position.

<sup>a</sup> In *Sanyo-Marunaka Supermarket*, although the surcharge payment order first issued in 2011 was for ¥222.16 million, it was reduced to ¥178.39 million by a JFTC hearing decision in 2019.<sup>67</sup> However, on 11 December 2020, the Tokyo High Court completely revoked the 2019 hearing decision because the JFTC did not provide a complete description of the suppliers disadvantaged by Sanyo-Marunaka (see Section II).

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64 JFTC cease-and-desist order, 22 June 2009.

65 JFTC hearing decision, 4 June 2015.

66 JFTC recommendation decision, 26 December 2005.

67 This administrative system was abolished.

- b* In *Toys 'R' Us*, although the surcharge payment order first issued in 2011 was for ¥369.08 million, it was reduced to ¥222.18 million by a JFTC hearing decision in 2017. This case was settled.
- c* In *EDION*, although the surcharge payment order first issued in 2012 was for approximately ¥4 billion, it was reduced to approximately ¥3 billion by a JFTC hearing decision in 2019. This case has been appealed to the Tokyo High Court.
- d* In *RALSE*, the surcharge payment order first issued in 2013 was for approximately ¥1.2 billion and was confirmed at this level by a JFTC hearing decision in 2019. Contrary to *Sanyo-Marunaka Supermarket*, on 3 March 2021 the Tokyo High Court accepted the JFTC's hearing decision.
- e* In *Direx*, although the surcharge payment order first issued in 2014 was for approximately ¥1.2 billion, it was reduced to approximately ¥1.1 billion by a JFTC hearing decision in 2020. This case was also appealed to the Tokyo High Court. On 26 May 2023 the Tokyo High Court accepted the JFTC's hearing decision.

These cases illustrate that the JFTC is having difficulty arriving at surcharge figures for cases involving abuse of superior bargaining position.

Regardless of JFTC improvements in describing disadvantaged suppliers following *Sanyo-Marunaka Supermarket*, one judgment of the Tokyo High Court is still uncertain. Under these circumstances, although the JFTC is very active in investigating abuse of superior bargaining position, commitment procedures are the main method used for settling cases.

***JFTC Guidelines Concerning Abuse of a Superior Bargaining Position in Transactions between Digital Platform Operators and Consumers that Provide Personal Information, etc.***<sup>68</sup>

*Background*

The services provided by digital platform operators constitute multi-sided markets with multiple user segments, and these services readily expand and promote monopolisation and oligopolisation through their characteristics such as network effects, low marginal cost and economies of scale. Furthermore, data concentration through network effects and economies of scale increases users' benefits, and also the data-based business model, as accumulating and utilising data by digital platform operators create cycles that maintain and enhance competitive advantages by further accelerating the accumulation and use of data by digital platform operators. Because some digital platform operators adopt a business model where they provide free goods and services in exchange for the acquisition or use of personal information, for purposes of accumulating data, there are some concerns over the acquisition and use of consumers' personal information by digital platform operators that provide services to consumers. If the digital platform operator's acquisition or use of personal information in unfair ways causes consumers disadvantages and adverse effects on fair and free competition, then issues under the AMA will arise. Therefore, the Guidelines describe what kind of acts related to the acquisition of personal information, or use of acquired personal information, at a digital platform of a digital platform operator will be issues concerning abuse of a superior bargaining position in view of transparency of AMA enforcement and improvement of

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68 [www.jftc.go.jp/en/pressreleases/yearly-2019/December/191217\\_DP.html](http://www.jftc.go.jp/en/pressreleases/yearly-2019/December/191217_DP.html).

predictability for digital platform operators. Note that if conduct described below violates other laws and regulations, interventions under these other laws and regulations will not be prevented.

*Types of abuses of superior bargaining position*

Types of abuses of a superior bargaining position include:

- a* unjustifiable acquisition of personal information, including:
  - acquiring personal information without stating the purpose of its use to consumers;
  - acquiring personal information beyond the scope necessary to achieve the purpose of use;
  - acquiring personal data without taking the precautions necessary and appropriate for safe management of personal information; and
  - causing consumers in continuous use of services to provide other economic interests like personal information in addition to the consideration provided in exchange for the use of services; and
- b* unjustifiable use of personal information, such as:
  - using personal information beyond the scope necessary to achieve the purpose of use; and
  - using personal data without taking the precautions necessary and appropriate for the safe management of personal information.

***Apple case I (unfair business practices: mixed conduct)***

The JFTC had been investigating Apple Inc (Apple), the ultimate parent company of Apple Japan GK, in accordance with the provisions of the AMA,<sup>69</sup> since October 2016. Apple Japan had, based on its agreements with NTT Docomo KK, KDDI KK and SoftBank KK (collectively, three mobile network operators (three MNOs)), been suspected of restricting the business activities of the three MNOs regarding the following:

- a* quantities of iPhones that the three MNOs order from Apple Japan;
- b* telecommunication service plans that the three MNOs offer iPhone users;
- c* iPhones that users traded in to the three MNOs; and
- d* subsidies that the three MNOs and others offer users purchasing iPhones.

During the investigation, Apple reported to the JFTC that it would amend a part of the agreements. The JFTC reviewed these amendments. Consequently, on 11 July 2018, the JFTC decided to close the investigation, concluding that the amendments would eliminate the suspicion of the violation mentioned above. The JFTC's evaluations are outlined below.<sup>70</sup>

Apple Japan concluded iPhone agreements with, and sold iPhones to, the three MNOs. The iPhone agreements include provisions regarding the three MNOs' purchase and sale of iPhone products, iPhone services and support provided to users purchasing iPhones, and telecommunication services provided to users purchasing iPhones. The JFTC investigated the following provisions in the iPhone agreements.

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69 Suspected violation of trading on restrictive terms, GD, Paragraph 12.

70 [www.jftc.go.jp/en/pressreleases/yearly-2018/July/180711.html](http://www.jftc.go.jp/en/pressreleases/yearly-2018/July/180711.html).

*Provisions regarding iPhone order quantities*

It was seen that Apple Japan obligating an MNO to order a specific order quantity of iPhones could be a problem under the AMA if, for example, it reduces the sales opportunities of other smartphone makers. However, considering the fact that a specific order quantity was not set out in the iPhone agreements except for during a limited time period, and a stipulated order quantity did not appear to oblige an MNO to order the quantity, as well as other facts, it was not recognised that Apple Japan restricted an MNO's business activities.

Apple reported to the JFTC that, when concluding a new iPhone agreement with the MNO, it would stipulate that an order quantity would be a target for the MNO and that a failure to meet an order quantity would not be a breach of contract.

*Provisions regarding iPhone plans*

It was seen that Apple Japan obligating an MNO to offer an iPhone plan could only be a problem under the AMA if, for example, it lessens competition on service plans among MNOs. However, considering the fact that it was possible for other service plans to be offered under the iPhone agreements and a stipulated iPhone plan had not been offered, as well as other facts, it was not recognised that Apple Japan restricted an MNO's business activities.

Apple reported to the JFTC that it would amend the iPhone agreements and abolish the provisions regarding iPhone plans.

*Provisions on subsidy*

Subsidies provided to users purchasing smartphones are considered to lessen the substantial costs to users in purchasing smartphones and to have promoted the wide use of smartphones. However, Apple Japan obligating an MNO to provide a certain amount of subsidy could be a problem under the AMA if, for example, it lessens competition among mobile telecommunication businesses through the smooth offering of low-price and diverse service plans, by constraining the price reduction of telecommunication services and the price combination of smartphones and telecommunication services under the current situation where MNOs bundle smartphones and telecommunication services to many users.

Apple Japan proposed to the JFTC to amend the iPhone agreements with the three MNOs so that they may offer (even if users purchasing iPhones subscribed to a term contract) service plans without subsidies (alternate plans) on the condition that the three MNOs provide clear, fair and informed choices to users in their selection of either service plans with subsidies (standard plans) or alternate plans and other conditions. Apple Japan agreed on such amendments with the three MNOs and then reported them to the JFTC.

Even after the implementation of the above amendments, the three MNOs' obligation to provide subsidies to users purchasing iPhones would still partly remain. However, it would become possible for the three MNOs to offer alternate plans to users, which would not breach the iPhone agreements with Apple Japan. However, as long as the three MNOs' sales promotion activities of alternate plans were not hindered, it was considered that such marketing would provide users with the optimal service plan choice, promoting competition among telecommunication businesses. Considering these points, it was recognised that the amendments would eliminate the suspicion of the violation of the AMA.

***Apple case II (unfair business practices; mixed conduct)***

The JFTC had investigated Apple Inc (Apple) in accordance with the provisions of the AMA since October 2016. Apple had been suspected of restricting business activities, such as selling digital content (music, e-books, videos, etc.), of enterprises (developers) that distribute applications (apps) based on App Store Review Guidelines (Guidelines) as Apple operates App Store, where the developers distribute apps for iPhone.

During the JFTC's investigation, Apple proposed to take measures such as revising the Guidelines related to the alleged conduct above. As a result of the JFTC's review on this proposal, on 2 September 2021, the JFTC recognised it would eliminate the above-mentioned suspicion, and decided to close the investigation on this case after the JFTC confirms the measure has been taken.<sup>71</sup>

*Market of sales of smartphones*

The volume of smartphone shipments in Japan exceeds 30 million per year and iPhones supplied by Apple Japan G K have a 46.5 per cent market share.

*Overview of App Store*

App Store is the only place where iPhone users are able to download native apps. Apple has published the Guidelines with which apps in the App Store are to comply and reviews these apps based on the Guidelines. In the process of review, when Apple finds that an app does not comply with the Guidelines, the app may not be allowed to be distributed via App Store (hereinafter, Apple's judgement that an app does not comply with the Guidelines is referred to as a 'rejection').

Apple, based on the Guidelines, requires developers to use the means of payment that Apple specifies (hereinafter, IAP) for sales of digital content, etc., within the apps, and charges developers with fees that amount to 15 or 30 per cent of sales made through IAP.

*Music streaming, e-books and video streaming services for smartphones*

In the sectors of music streaming, e-books, video streaming services for smartphones (hereinafter referred to as music streaming services, etc.), developers have difficulty cutting costs further in general because of heavy burdens, such as copyright fees for content holders.

Some developers of music streaming services, etc., distribute apps that are used not to sell their digital content but mainly to listen to, read and watch the digital content (hereinafter referred to as reader apps) that users have bought through, inter alia, websites. Some of these developers sell their digital content, etc., only through websites.

Apple distributes its own apps for music streaming services, etc., and sells, inter alia, digital content as well.

The Guidelines stipulate that developers are required to use IAP for sales of, inter alia, digital content, and prohibits the inclusion of external links or buttons within the app to induce consumers into purchases other than using IAP.

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71 <https://www.jftc.go.jp/en/pressreleases/yearly-2021/September/210902.html>.

*Evaluation under the AMA*

Digital content, etc., is also distributed outside of apps, such as on websites. Therefore, consumers may visit developers' websites where businesses distribute such content and pay for it. As such, providing sales channels using means of payment other than IAP may create a price-reduction effect, and consequently benefit consumers.

In the situation described above, prohibiting developers from including an in-app link could be a problem under the Antimonopoly Act because it raises concerns about developers' sales channels using means of payment other than IAP, such as insufficient functions and the abandonment of their introduction.

*Report from Apple*

After the JFTC pointed out the concerns described above in the process of this investigation, Apple reported to the JFTC that it would take measures to allow developers to include an in-app link within reader apps of music streaming services, etc., and to revise the Guidelines. Apple also reported that it would take the same measures for developers of reader apps of digital magazines and newspapers in addition to music streaming services, etc.

*JFTC position on the report*

According to Apple's report, developers will be able to display the links for their own websites on their reader apps, and thus the concerns that it prevents developers from providing sales channels using means of payment other than IAP will be eliminated.

Therefore, the JFTC recognised that the measure proposed by Apple outlined above would eliminate the suspicion of a violation of the AMA in music streaming services, etc.

*Closing of this case*

The JFTC recognised that the measure proposed by Apple mentioned above would eliminate the suspected violation of the AMA, and decided to close the investigation on this case after confirming that the measure has been actually taken.

## **V REMEDIES AND SANCTIONS**

### **i Sanctions**

The revision of the AMA in 2005 led to administrative surcharges also being levied for controlling a private monopolisation. The JFTC does not have discretion over the amount thereof, but rather surcharges are charged at 10 per cent of the consolidated annual sales affected by the conduct for the past 10 years (maximum). Further, with the 2009 revision of the AMA, administrative surcharges came to be imposed on exclusionary private monopolisation as well. These are charged at 6 per cent of the consolidated annual sales affected by the conduct for the previous 10 years (maximum). However, to date there has been just one case of an administrative surcharge being levied for private monopolisation, *Mainami Aviation Services*. In addition, while criminal charges are also prescribed in respect of private monopolisation, there is no example of these having actually been imposed.

With the 2009 revision of the AMA, administrative surcharges also came to be imposed for certain types of unfair business practices (certain types enacted only in the AMA, not in the GD). The basic rate for these is 3 per cent (but 1 per cent in the case of abuse of superior bargaining position). Actually, administrative surcharges have only been imposed for unfair

business practices in five cases of abuses of a superior bargaining position so far. While these surcharges are imposed in respect of the first instance of the conduct in violation of the prohibition on abuse of superior bargaining position, for other unfair business practices they are imposed in respect of the second instance of the offending conduct where it is repeated, within 10 years of its first violation.

With the 2019 revision of the AMA, the period for calculating surcharges for private monopolisation and unfair business practices was extended from three years to a maximum of 10 years.<sup>72</sup>

## **ii Behavioural remedies**

Cease-and-desist orders are formal behavioural remedies. The JFTC has broad discretion to order different measures, which include an enterprise resolving not to repeat the same violation, informing its customers of the violation and implementing a compliance programme. Even where the violation has already been extinguished, the JFTC may, where it deems particularly necessary, order the enterprise, for a period of seven years<sup>73</sup> after the extinguishment thereof, to take such measures as are required to ensure that the relevant conduct is removed, such as disseminating notices to the effect that the offending conduct is no longer taking place.

## **iii Structural remedies**

While there is debate over whether the JFTC can order enterprises to take structural measures such as splitting a company, such an order has not been given to date.

# **VI PROCEDURE**

## **i Overview**

Investigations conducted by the JFTC consist of either an on-site investigation (dawn raid) or an order to report. While an on-site investigation is the method normally employed where there is strong suspicion of a violation, in recent years some investigations have been commenced through an order to report instead. Although at the time of commencing an investigation the JFTC gives a written notice of the suspected facts, it is common for the JFTC to describe both grounds for private monopolisation and unfair business practices, thereby investigating with the aim of finding both and proving at least one of the two, and for the applicable law to be determined mid-way through an investigation or indeed at the end thereof.

When the JFTC reaches a firm position,<sup>74</sup> it will send the enterprise in question a draft of the measures to be taken and provide the enterprise with an opportunity to refuse the allegations and view or copy evidence held by the JFTC. Formal measures, cease-and-desist orders, are then issued once this process is completed.

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72 Article 2-2, Paragraph 13, Article 7-9, Paragraphs 1 and 2, and Articles 18-2, 20-2, 20-3, 20-4, 20-5 and 20-6, of the AMA.

73 The period was extended from five years to seven years by the amendment of the AMA in 2019. Article 7 Paragraph 2, Article 7-8 Paragraph 6 of the AMA.

74 The JFTC may plead to the Tokyo High Court for an emergency interim order when immediate action is necessary. The most recent plea was made in 2020.

Where the enterprise in question objects to measures, it may dispute them through an action for revocation of administrative order made to the Tokyo District Court, the judgment of which may be further appealed to the Tokyo High Court and subsequently to the Supreme Court.

When the JFTC cannot prove a violation, it may issue informal administrative measures in the form of a warning or alert. The JFTC also can conduct sector or industry inquiries, most of which are done with the company's voluntary cooperation. However, the JFTC have the power to order any person to appear before the JFTC, or require them to submit necessary reports, information, materials or documents for their inquiries. This power was used in 2017 in an inquiry on liquid natural gas.

In addition to this formal enforcement, the JFTC may advise on business plans when consulted by the parties. This consultation system plays a very important role in practice.<sup>75</sup>

Note that the company must consult with the JFTC before starting the activities.

In spite of the existence of the JFTC consultation system, which requires a written answer from the JFTC, the JFTC dislikes using this formal procedure. In practice, the JFTC gives oral answers in almost every case.

## **ii Commitment procedures**

The purpose of commitment procedures is to ensure the transparency of the application, as well as predictability for businesses, of the law related to commitment procedures by clarifying the policies concerning commitment procedures as much as possible.

### ***Subjects of commitment procedures***

The JFTC applies commitment procedures to the suspected violation when the JFTC recognises that it is necessary for promotion of free and fair competition. On the other hand, the following cases are not subject to commitment procedures: suspected violations, such as bid-rigging or price-fixing cartels (hardcore cartels); cases in which an enterprise has violated the same provisions within a 10-year period; and cases recognised as constituting vicious and serious suspected violations that are considered to deserve a criminal sanction.

### ***Commitment measures***

To ensure the restoration of competition or that the act will not be repeated in the future, commitment measures must satisfy the following requirements: they are sufficient for excluding the suspected violation or to confirm that the suspected violation has been excluded; and they are expected to be reliably conducted.

Typical examples of commitment measures are cessation of the suspected violation, confirmation that it has ceased, notification to trading partners and others or publicising information to users and others, development of a compliance programme, amendments of contracts, transfer of business, etc., recovery of monetary value provided by trading partners and others and reporting on the state of implementation.

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75 Prior consultation system for activities of businesses, etc., [www.jftc.go.jp/en/legislation\\_gls/imonopoly\\_guidelines\\_files/priorconsultationsystem.pdf](http://www.jftc.go.jp/en/legislation_gls/imonopoly_guidelines_files/priorconsultationsystem.pdf).

### ***Other key points***

#### *Public comments*

If the JFTC finds that it needs to invite opinions of third parties for commitment plans, it requests public comments regarding an overview of such.

#### *Public announcements*

After the approval of a commitment plan, the JFTC shall publicly announce a summary of the approved commitment plan, a summary of the suspected violation and other matters as necessary.

#### *Exercise of investigatory authority after migration to commitment procedures*

After the issuance of a notification of commitment procedures, the JFTC shall not, in principle, conduct any investigation, such as an on-site inspection, report order or seeking testimony of the notified enterprise.

### **iii Commitment cases**

#### ***Approval of the commitment plan submitted by Rakuten, Inc<sup>76</sup>***

In response to the notice of commitment procedures that the JFTC issued to Rakuten, Inc on 23 July 2019 because the JFTC suspected that activities by Rakuten violated Article 19, Paragraph 12 (trading on restrictive terms) of the AMA, Rakuten made an application for commitment approval. The JFTC recognised that the plan would conform to the approval requirements and approved the commitment plan on 25 October 2019. This is the first commitment case approved by the JFTC.

Note that this approval of the commitment plan does not represent a determination that the activities of Rakuten constituted a violation of the AMA.

#### *Overview of the suspected violation*

In the contracts between Rakuten and accommodation operators that place information about accommodation on the website named 'Rakuten Travel' operated by Rakuten, Rakuten had set the conditions to require the operators to make the prices and the numbers of rooms placed on the website equal to or better than those through other distribution channels with the minimum number of rooms requirement.

#### *Overview of the commitment plan*

The commitment plan consisted of the following.

- a Rakuten will cease the activities in the contracts between Rakuten and accommodation operators that place information about accommodation on the Rakuten Travel website operated by Rakuten. (Rakuten had set the conditions to require the operators to make the prices and the numbers of rooms that they placed on the website equal to or better than those through other distribution channels with the minimum number of rooms requirement.)

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76 25 October 2019, [www.jftc.go.jp/en/pressreleases/yearly-2019/October/191025.html](http://www.jftc.go.jp/en/pressreleases/yearly-2019/October/191025.html).

- b* The board of directors of Rakuten will resolve to cease the activities mentioned in (a) above, and not to perform the activities similar to those mentioned in (a) above for the next three years.
- c* Rakuten will notify the operators mentioned in (a) above of the measures taken based on (a) and (b) above, and thoroughly make the measures known to the employees involved in the Rakuten Travel business.
- d* Rakuten will publicise (a) above and (e) below to general consumers.
- e* Rakuten will not perform the activities similar to those mentioned in (a) above for the next three years.
- f* Rakuten will take measures necessary to do the following: (1) preparation of guidelines for compliance with the AMA concerning transactions with the operators mentioned in (a) above, and thoroughly disseminating them to the employees involved in the Rakuten Travel business; and (2) regular training of the employees involved in the Rakuten Travel business regarding compliance with the AMA concerning transactions with the operators mentioned in (a) above, and regular audit by auditors.
- g* Rakuten will report on the state of implementation of the measures mentioned in (a) to (d) and (f) above to the JFTC.

Rakuten will report annually on the state of implementation of the measures mentioned in (e) and the state of implementation of the measures taken based on (f)(2) above to the JFTC for the next three years.

#### *Approval of the commitment plan*

The JFTC recognised that the commitment plan would conform to the approval requirements, and approved it.

#### ***Approval of the commitment plan submitted by Booking.com BV***

The JFTC had been investigating Booking.com BV. On 16 March 2022, the JFTC approved a commitment plan submitted by Booking.com BV.<sup>77</sup>

#### *Overview of the suspected violation*

Booking.com BV requires, in contracts with operators of accommodation facilities who place information about accommodation facilities located in Japan on the online travel agency website named 'Booking.com' operated by Booking.com BV (the Booking.com website), that the room rates and availability of the accommodation operators' accommodation facilities located in Japan listed on the Booking.com website shall be equivalent to or more favourable than those offered through other sales channels (except for the requirements provided in these contracts that such room rates shall be equivalent to or more favourable than those offered through sales channels, such as websites operated by the accommodation operators, etc.).

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<sup>77</sup> 16 March 2022, [www.jftc.go.jp/en/pressreleases/yearly-2022/March/220316.html](http://www.jftc.go.jp/en/pressreleases/yearly-2022/March/220316.html).

*Effects caused by the conducts*

Due to the conducts mentioned above, the accommodation operators are required to place equivalent to or more favourable room rates on the Booking.com website than those on other online travel agent (OTA) websites (for example, if the accommodation operators want to discount their room rates on other OTA websites).

According to such conduct, for example, the following effects on their business activities of some OTAs competing with Booking.com BV were found:

- a* when an OTA, 'X', placed discount room rates of accommodation facilities on X's website at X's own expense, the accommodation operators required X to cancel the placement of the discount rates because the accommodation operators are required to place equivalent to or more favourable room rates on the Booking.com website at the accommodation operator's own expense; and
- b* when an OTA, 'Y', planned and proposed a limited-time bargain offer of accommodation facilities on Y's website, the accommodation operators rejected the plan because the accommodation operators are required to place equivalent-to or more favourable room rates on the Booking.com website even though the plan might attract a wider user base of Y's website.

An overview of the commitment plan is as follows:

- a* Booking.com BV will cease the conducts mentioned above.
- b* Booking.com BV will not perform conducts similar to those mentioned in (b) above. Booking.com BV will also continuously refrain from requiring that accommodation operators follow the conditions mentioned in (b) above with ranking-algorithm and other systems for deciding what ranking order to place accommodation on the Booking.com website for the next three years.
- c* The board of directors of Booking.com BV will resolve to cease the conducts mentioned above and not to perform similar conducts for the next three years.
- d* Booking.com BV will notify the accommodation operators of the measure taken based on (c) and the measure to be taken under (a) above, and thoroughly disseminate the measures to the employees involved in the relevant business in Booking.com BV and the executives and employees involved in the relevant business in Booking.com Japan KK.
- e* Booking.com BV will take the measures necessary to do the following:
  - preparing guidelines for compliance with the Act concerning transactions with accommodation operators, and thoroughly disseminating them to the employees involved in the relevant business in Booking.com BV, Booking.com Japan KK or companies that support the business of Booking.com BV in Japan; and
  - regular training of employees involved in the relevant business in Booking.com BV and Booking.com Japan KK, or companies that support the business of Booking.com BV in Japan regarding compliance with the Act concerning transactions with accommodation operators and regular audit by persons in charge of risk management.
- f* Booking.com BV will report the state of implementation of the measures mentioned in (a), (c), (d) and (e) above to the JFTC.
- g* Booking.com BV will annually report the state of implementation of the measures mentioned in (b) and the state of implementation of the measures taken based on point (e) (b) above to the JFTC for the next three years.

*Approval of the commitment plan*

The JFTC recognised that the commitment plan mentioned above would conform to all its approval requirements and approved the commitment plan.

*Future response to Booking.com BV's narrow parity clauses for room rates*

The JFTC did not cover narrow parity clauses for room rates contracted between Booking.com BV and accommodation operators in this commitment procedure, based on the current situation that the accommodation operators do not necessarily abide by the clauses. However, the JFTC will pay close attention to any effect on competition among OTAs caused by the future management of narrow parity clauses for room rates by Booking.com BV from the viewpoint of promoting and maintaining fair and free competition, and then will respond strictly to any anticompetitive problem under the Act attributed to the clauses.

***Approval of the commitment plan submitted by Amer Sports Japan, Inc and Wilson Sporting Goods<sup>78</sup>***

On 16 March 2022, the JFTC approved the commitment plan submitted by Amer Sports Japan, Inc (ASJ) and Wilson Sporting Goods.

*Overview of the suspected violation*

From around September 2016 to September 2020, ASJ, a Wilson subsidiary, obtained legitimate, non-counterfeit Wilson performance tennis racquets. These are a type of hard-ball tennis racquet for advanced players manufactured by Wilson and sold either by itself or through affiliated companies in its company group, including ASJ (affiliates), and had been imported from overseas authorised retailers by importers in Japan who deal in parallel imported goods (parallel importers). The parallel importers informed Wilson of information on hologram seals attached to the parallel imported goods, and asked Wilson to identify from such information the overseas authorised retailers who sold these goods to the parallel importers, and then to make such overseas authorised retailers not sell the tennis racquets to parallel importers. In response, Wilson warned certain identified overseas authorised retailers not to sell tennis racquets to parallel importers in Japan including because of documents that prohibit the sale of tennis racquets outside appointed sales areas.

*Parallel imported goods and the effects caused by the conduct*

The price of the parallel imported goods that the parallel importers sold was lower than that of tennis racquets ASJ sold through retailers.

Some parallel importers' transactions were impacted because of the conduct mentioned above.

*Overview of the commitment plan*

The board of directors of ASJ will resolve, inter alia, the following matters:

- a it will confirm that ASJ has already ceased the conduct mentioned above, and it will not perform the same conduct mentioned above for the next three years;

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78 25 March 2022, approval of the commitment plans submitted by Amer Sports Japan, Inc and Wilson Sporting Goods Co: Japan Fair Trade Commission (jftc.go.jp).

- b* ASJ will give notice in the joint names of ASJ and Wilson on the measures in accordance with (a) above to the parallel importers;
- c* ASJ will disseminate the measures in accordance with (a) above to all of its employees (excluding part-time workers); and
- d* ASJ will not perform the same conduct mentioned above with respect to tennis racquets sold to Japan for the next three years.

The board of directors of Wilson will resolve, inter alia, the following matters:

- a* it will confirm that Wilson has already ceased the conduct mentioned above; and
- b* Wilson will not perform the same conduct mentioned above with respect to tennis racquets sold to Japan; and, even without a request from ASJ, will not enforce any policy with respect to sales in Japan, either directly or through its affiliates (excluding ASJ), restricting the sale of tennis racquets by authorised retailers located in other countries to parallel importers in response to requests from such parallel importers for the resale of such tennis racquets to consumers in Japan for the next three years.

### ***Other approvals of commitment plans***

There have been around 15 cases in which the JFTC and an investigated company have actively used commitment procedures since the introduction of such procedures. However, recently the JFTC has often not imposed formal commitment procedures and has simply terminated an investigation procedure based on the plan submitted by a suspected company. It is unclear which procedure will be the main scheme at this moment.

## **VII PRIVATE ENFORCEMENT**

### **i Claims for damages**

A person who suffers damage as a result of private monopolisation or unfair business practices may make a claim for compensation against the offending person pursuant to Article 25 of the AMA or Article 709 of the Civil Code. In Japan, there is no system of punitive compensation for damages or triple damages, so it will only ever be possible to claim the actual amount of loss suffered.

Claims for compensation made pursuant to Article 25 of the AMA cannot be made unless the JFTC's order has been finalised,<sup>79</sup> and in the first instance the Tokyo District Court has exclusive jurisdiction.<sup>80</sup> Negligence is not required to establish liability, so the party engaging in the relevant conduct cannot avoid liability on the basis that it did not act intentionally or negligently.<sup>81</sup>

On the other hand, claims for compensation made pursuant to Article 709 of the Civil Code are made based on unlawful conduct in general, and so a claim can be made regardless of whether the JFTC has made an order.

These two rights of claim are separate from each other, and while it is in practice unusual, it is lawful to both bring a lawsuit pursuant to Article 25 of the AMA and at the same time another pursuant to Article 709 of the Civil Code, and provided the statute of

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79 Article 26, Paragraph 1 of the AMA.

80 Article 85-2 of the AMA.

81 Article 25, Paragraph 2 of the AMA.

limitations has not taken effect, it is also lawful for a claimant to bring a lawsuit pursuant to Article 25 of the AMA after losing a lawsuit brought under Article 709 of the Civil Code. While the limitation period is three years in either case, the starting point for calculating that period for lawsuits brought under Article 25 of the AMA is from the time at which the JFTC's order is finalised,<sup>82</sup> whereas for lawsuits brought under Article 709 of the Civil Code, it is 'the point in time at which the loss and the party causing that loss are known'.<sup>83</sup>

While at first sight lawsuits brought pursuant to Article 25 of the AMA, which do not require negligence to establish liability, may seem more advantageous to the affected party, these claims are restricted to violating conduct that is identified by the JFTC, and accordingly it may not necessarily be advantageous to the affected party, *inter alia*, where the actual violating conduct lasts longer than as identified by the JFTC. For this reason, when one excludes cases that have been statute-barred, affected parties, as often as not, choose to make a claim for compensation pursuant to Article 709 of the Civil Code.

In the *USEN Corporation* case (see Section IV.ii), Cansystem brought a law suit for compensation, pursuant to Article 709 of the Civil Code. A claim for approximately ¥2 billion was approved.<sup>84</sup>

As referred in Section II, on 16 June 2022, there was a very important civil judgment regarding the algorithm Tabelog.

## ii Claims for injunction

Injunction lawsuits by private persons were first introduced in 2001. In Article 24 of the AMA, it is prescribed that a person whose interests are harmed owing to unfair business practices, or that are at risk of being harmed thereby, and who clearly suffers loss as a result thereof or is likely to do so, may make a claim against the enterprise or trade association that is harming or at risk of harming its interests to have that infringement stopped or prevented. This system means that the party claiming does not have to wait for the JFTC to take enforcement measures but can make an injunction claim in its own capacity as the harmed party. In the case of private monopolisation, the harmed party is not specified, and while this is a flaw of the legal system, as mentioned previously, in many cases private monopolisation also constitutes one of the forms of unfair business practices, so if one adjusts the legal configuration, it is in practice possible for a party harmed by private monopolisation to make an injunction claim.

While many lawsuits have been brought since the introduction of the system, there were, for a long time, no successful cases brought by claimants, with the first such case occurring 10 years after the system was introduced. This was a case in which an enterprise that had an extremely powerful position in the dry ice market (the leading player with a share of 49 per cent) slandered its competitors to the effect that they were breaching their non-compete obligations, or repeatedly made allegations to stir up its exaggerated claim that they were not reliable suppliers, and in doing so weakened their position in the dry ice market, or tried to prevent them from entering the market altogether. In this case, it was deemed that there was a likelihood of impeding fair competition.

Following this was a case of a successful claim in the taxi industry.

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82 Article 26, Paragraph 2 of the AMA.

83 Article 724 of the Civil Code.

84 Tokyo District Court judgment, 10 December 2008.

Situations where a person's interests are clearly harmed include 'situations where damage arises due to conduct in violation of the Antimonopoly Act that is difficult to recover from, or where financial compensation is insufficient to remedy the situation, such as where the relevant enterprise is at risk of being expelled from the market or is being prevented from entering it as a new participant'.

Going forward, it is expected that private court actions will become more common.

## VIII FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Looking back on the year under review, the activities of the JFTC were affected by covid-19 until the autumn of 2022. The number of on-site inspection (dawn raids) cases was extremely low. Regarding the situation after that, there were two impactful cases regarding cartel and bid rigging, such as *Tokyo Organisation Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic and Electric Power Corporation* (see Section II). However, when it comes to unilateral conducts (single firm conducts), there were few interesting formal cases which the JFTC handled. On the other hand, there were many interesting civil litigation cases.

As referred to in Section II, although prime minister Kishida's stance on competition law is still not clear, broadly speaking, it seems that he is more interested in economic recovery and escaping from deflation, especially protecting people hit by covid-19 and recession, based on new capitalism aiming to mainly increase national income by increasing wage income. Accordingly, it seems that his interest in competition policy is not as high.

Around the autumn of 2022, to implement key policies of the Kishida Administration, the JFTC conducted an extensive survey as to what extent large companies reflected cost increases (energy cost, raw material cost, labor cost, etc.) in transactions with small companies. The JFTC conducted written surveys on 80,000 small companies. Many JFTC officials were driven to work in this survey resulting in other works of the JFTC being squeezed. As a matter of course, the JFTC is politically neutral (more or less) and we therefore have to look carefully at the effects of Japan's macroeconomic policy.