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Dated: 07.02.2020

To,
Shri Kaushal Kishore,
Advisor (Finance & Economic Analysis-I),
Telecom Regulatory Authority of India,
Mahanagar Door Sanchar Bhawan,
Jawahar Lal Nehru Marg, Old Minto Road,
New Delhi - 110002.

Subject: Consultation Paper on 'Transparency in Publishing of Tariff Offers'

Dear Sir,

This is with reference to your above-mentioned consultation paper. In this regard, please find enclosed our response for your kind consideration.

Thanking You,
Yours' Sincerely
For **Bharti Airtel Limited**

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Amit Kushwaha'.

Amit Kushwaha
Vice President - Regulation & Compliance

Encl: a.a.

Bharti Airtel's Response to TRAI's Consultation Paper on "Transparency in Publishing of Tariff Offers"

We thank the Authority for providing us with an opportunity to submit our response to this Consultation Paper. We hope that Authority will consider the submissions favourably.

At the outset, we would like to submit that since inception the Authority's approach is to have a light touch regulatory system, which gives the TSPs, the freedom to design the tariffs according to the prevailing market conditions, customer expectations and publish the same in a simplistic and transparent manner in order to protect the interest of the consumers.

Further, it is worthwhile to mention that over the years TRAI has issued various regulations / directions for ensuring transparency in communication of tariff offers to customers. With the proliferation of internet, the accessibility of information to the customers has increased manifold and all the information related to Tariffs are transparently being published / made available to customers through various channels in order for the customer to make informed decisions.

TRAI has over the time issued and implemented various guidelines to ensure that the tariff offers are transparently communicated to the customers. Some such guidelines/ initiatives include:

- Reporting to the Authority, any new tariff or any changes in tariff, within seven working days from the date of implementation;
- Filing of all tariff offers/ changes online to TRAI w.e.f. 1st Aug 2018;
- Availability of TRAI's website (<https://tariff.trai.gov.in/consumerview/index.aspx>) where the customer can freely see the tariff offers by a TSP as well as compare tariff offerings from different TSPs.
- All tariff offers available for subscription to be made available on different platforms of TSPs such as website, Customer Care Centres, the points of sale, and retail outlets;
- Prohibited TSPs from offering or advertising any tariff offers in a manner which is likely to mislead the consumers;
- Not terminating any existing tariff plan without giving a notice of less than thirty days to the subscriber;
- Mandatory information is given to pre-paid consumers such as post recharge communication via SMS.

We believe that the extant guidelines framed by TRAI are sufficient and adequately protect interest of the customers. The TSPs adhere to the TRAI's guidelines to ensure that relevant and complete information is readily available through various channels mandated by TRAI viz website, SMSs, Newspaper ads, etc. for easy accessibility and for allowing the customers to exercise their right of choice in selecting suitable tariffs on offer as per requirement.

Further, there are additional channels as per the acceptability/ popularity among the customers such as service provider apps, Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter etc. which are also currently being used to create due awareness about the various tariff offers. However, the use

of the said alternate channels of communications have various limitations like screen size, character limitation, etc., which are taken into consideration while disseminating the information. The use of such channels is also not static but subject to rapid changes basis customer preferences/ popularity.

Any intrusive regulatory framework vis-à-vis publication of tariff offers is against Authority's own stated and practised policy of light touch regulation and would be counterproductive. Such intrusive regulation also creates unnecessary hindrances in this regard. Additional provisions relating to publication, excessively or unreasonably shall restrict the ability of TSPs to carry on its business. This has also been held by the Hon'ble TDSAT in the past.

In this backdrop, please find below our response to the questions raised in the consultation paper.

Q1. Whether TRAI should prescribe any format for publishing tariff? Please support your answer with rationale.





Bharti Airtel's Response:

We submit that the existing measures prescribed by the Authority for publication of tariffs are adequate to ensure transparency, enable customers to take informed decisions about telecom services and protect their interest. Further, as stated above TSPs have adopted several initiatives to enhance transparency while providing services to the customers. For example, Airtel has an application called "My Airtel", whereby its customers can easily access details regarding the tariff plans they have subscribed to, their usage pattern for voice, data etc., their billed /unbilled amounts and the tariff plans offered in their service area, as well as opt for any change in their tariff plan as per their requirements. For customers with feature phones, such facilities are available on the "self-care" menu designed for them. Further, there is no change in the circumstances which warrants any change in the existing norms including formats prescribed by Authority or being adopted by TSPs in various other modes as explained herein.

It is pertinent to mention here that we are transparently publishing all on-offer customer tariffs on various platforms such as, Company website, Company Mobile App, Point of sale (retail outlets) in a very simple and customer friendly manner with complete details pertaining to the offerings. It is submitted that our website and Mobile App are specially designed to present similar view to the customers of the tariffs across the platforms.

As per TCPDR regulations every tariff voucher has a specification which has already been mandated by TRAI, and which is transparently displayed over our website. For instance:





- **Plan Voucher:** As per TCPDR, 2012, under the plan voucher, the details of tariff applicable to all the telecommunication services offered by the service provider should be given to customers. The complete details of 'Plan Voucher', in accordance with TRAI prescribed format is clearly displayed over our website. A sample view of same as viewed on our website is given below:

PLAN VALUE			
₹ 2398			
1.5GB/Day Data	Truly Unlimited Calls	365 Days Validity	100/Day SMS
Additional Benefit(s)			
	Wynk Music Enjoy unlimited music downloads for free		Airtel Xstream App Premium Zee5, HOOQ, 370+ Live TV Channels, 10k+ Movies & more
	Free 4 week course on Shaw Academy Validity: 28 DAY Learn anything from photography to music		Get Rs. 150 cashback on FASTag FASTag Mandatory from 15th Dec

- **Top-up Voucher:** The said voucher offers only monetary value expressed in rupees and does not have any restriction on its validity or usage. A sample view of same as viewed on our website is indicated below:

₹10	₹7.47 talktime	NA validity	₹10
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- **Special Tariff Voucher:** The Special Tariff Voucher clearly indicates the tariff for different items and validity period of voucher as required under the regulations. A sample view of same as viewed on our website is indicated below:

₹ 249			
1.5GB/Day Data	Truly Unlimited Calls	28 Days Validity	100/Day SMS
Additional Benefit(s)			
	Wynk Music Enjoy unlimited music downloads for free		Airtel Xstream App Premium Zee5, HOOQ, 370+ Live TV Channels, 10k+ Movies & more
	Free 4 week course on Shaw Academy Validity: 28 DAY Learn anything from photography to music		Get Rs. 150 cashback on FASTag FASTag Mandatory from 15th Dec

- **Combo Voucher:** The Combo Voucher clearly indicates the tariff for different items, validity period of voucher and the monetary value applicable. A sample view of same as viewed on our website is indicated below:

₹ 49		
38.52 Talktime	100 MB Data	28 Days Validity

As evident from above, currently the Authority has defined the contours of information to be made available to the customers while displaying any tariff offers, be it a plan voucher, top-up voucher, special tariff voucher or a combo voucher. All the required information is being displayed/ provided to the customer in a clear and transparent manner.

In addition to above, TRAI's directions dated 24.05.2004, 02.05.2005 and Tariff Orders issued from time to time requires compliance with the Reporting Requirements which, inter alia, includes;

- Reporting to the Authority, any new tariff plans or any changes in tariff plans, within seven working days from the date of implementation;
- Not terminating any existing tariff plan without giving a notice of less than thirty days to the subscriber; and
- Ensuring that at any time, not more than twenty five tariff plans (including both post-paid and pre-paid) are on offer.

All the above provisions by TRAI sufficiently ensure that due information is available to the customers while, opting for any tariff offer.

It is evident from all the above that the entire important tariff related information/ disclosure is clearly provided to customer, which helps in taking informed purchase decisions. Also, it is a fact that transparency in communicating tariff offers has been followed by TSPs for several years. The TSPs have always supported the TRAI in ensuring the benefit of customer such as actively participated in all Customer Education Workshops (CEWs) conducted by TRAI across all LSAs.

In view of above, we submit that the current method of publication directed by the Authority and as adopted by the Company and the prevailing regulations/ directions are robust enough to ensure the transparency in publishing tariff information in the public domain. Therefore, there is no further need for the Authority to prescribe any new/additional formats for publishing tariff offers.

Q2. If the answer to the Question 1 is yes, then please give your views regarding desirability of publishing tariffs on various modes of communication viz., TSP website/Portal, App, SMS, USSD message, Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Customer care centers, Sales outlets etc. If the answer to the question is that tariffs should be published on multiple channels as above, please state whether TRAI should prescribe a separate format for each channel. Please also suggest the essentials of the format for each channel.

Bharti Airtel's Response:

We submit that the method of publication adopted by the Company and the prevailing regulations/directions are robust enough to ensure the transparency in publishing tariff information in the public domain. Also, as mentioned in our response to Q1 above, we submit that the method of publication adopted by the Company across specified platforms and the

prevailing regulations/directions issued by TRAI are adequate and transparently communicate complete information of the tariffs to the consumers. We also believe that the other TSPs also follow the current regulations and ensure that transparency in publishing tariff information in the public domain is adequate.

Apart from website/ portal, customer care centres, sales outlet etc. all other modes of communication have limitation of screen space/ size and characters. The method of publishing information on other channels including social media channels is dependent upon the limitations posed by these channels. Further, the use of these channels is also dependent upon the popularity of use of these channels by the customers. For instance, currently, some app/ social media platform popular with the customer may not be the preferred mode in upcoming future. Further, not all customers subscribe to these channels. For the aforesaid reasons.

Further, it is evident that the current regulatory framework adequately protects the interest of the consumers and any unreasonable or excessive restriction on TSPs for publication of tariff would be contrary to the extant norms and settled practice.

Hence, we believe that other than the presently prescribed format, there is no need to prescribe formats for other modes for the reasons mentioned above.

Q3. Whether the extant format prescribed for publishing tariff at TSP's website conveys the relevant information to consumers in a simple yet effective manner? If no, please provide the possible ways in which the same can be made more effective?

Bharti Airtel's Response:

We submit that the extant format prescribed for publishing tariff at TSP's website are very effective and adequately conveys the relevant information of tariff offers to consumers in a simplistic and effective manner to enable them to make informed decision. The Company website and Mobile App are very important tools for communicating tariff offers to the customers. Utmost care is taken to ensure that all tariffs are published in the simplest and customer friendly manner with complete information of the tariff offers on the website and Mobile App. Further, all the details as mandated under the format prescribed by TRAI are being adhered to by the operators.

Any tariff offer comprises of following major components Voice, Data, SMS and validity of benefits offered. The present format prescribed by TRAI mandates indicating all the above components along with its bifurcation of on-net/ off-net, local/ STD/ ISD, roaming charges etc. The format also has a row to also indicate any other additional benefits/ terms & conditions associated with the same. In view of the above, we believe that since all disclosures are being made transparently, there is no further need to change the current format.

Further, for various vouchers being offered by the operators, TRAI has as per TCPDR regulation already mandated the information required to be provided. The same is being diligently followed by all the operators.

In view of above and as cited in our response to question 1 above, the extant format prescribed for publishing tariff at our website conveys the relevant information to consumers in a simple yet effective manner.

Q4. Whether the service providers be required to publish all the tariff offerings and vouchers in addition to the publishing of tariff plans, in the prescribed format? Please provide rationale for your response.

Bharti Airtel's Response:

As stated in our response to Q1 above, all tariff offerings in the market including tariff plans, STVs, Combos and Top-up are already published in a simple and transparent manner on various platforms mentioned hereinabove including TSP's website and App.

The tariff offerings and the vouchers are allowed by the Authority for the purpose of giving benefits to the customers. The Industry has for over 10 years continued the same practise and also been offering the vouchers and the tariffs to customers across the board. The vouchers help to provide favourable and customised offerings to the customers or a class of customers. The TRAI has been completely aware and has never indicated, rather acknowledged and be satisfied with the current process and the practise being followed and maintained a light touch regulatory intervention while reporting of the tariff offers and the vouchers being offered to the customers.

Further, as mentioned in response to Q1 above, the service providers are transparently displaying all details of vouchers as mandated by TRAI. Therefore, when all the elements as already specified in the TCPR regulations and the requirements of the TTOs are being followed the by the TSPs, there is no requirement or need for prescribing formats. In the interest of the consumers and the business, the TSPs should continue to be given due flexibility w.r.t representation of the said elements in a manner as the operators deem fit on different media.

We believe that any fixation of formats even though all the broad contours have already been mandated under different directions/ regulations, will take away the flexibility available to the TSPs for innovative marketing of tariff offers.

In view of the submissions above, no further formats are required to be prescribed/ fixed by TRAI for publishing of tariff offerings.

Q5. Whether there is a need to mandate TSPs to introduce a tariff calculator tool to convey the effective cost of enrolment and continued subscription? If yes, what can be the essential features of such a tool? If the answer is in negative, then please give reasons for not mandating such a tool.

Bharti Airtel's Response:

In today's scenario, various operators have different tariff offerings. Some such tariff offerings prevalent in the market include:

- Alacarte rates for Voice, SMS and Data requiring the customer to do a minimum recharge on a regular basis
- Alacarte rates for Voice, SMS and Data along with talktime and certain associated quota of Voice/ SMS/ Data
- Fixed quota of data for a defined duration along with limited/ unlimited quantity of Voice/ SMS
- Daily quota of data for a fixed duration along with limited/ unlimited quantity of Voice/ Data

As is evident from above, the tariff offerings in the market range from alacarte rates to limited/ unlimited bundled offerings. In such a scenario, it is almost impossible for a TSP to assign values to individual components i.e. Voice/ SMS/ Data for customer to make any meaningful comparison basis his needs. Further, if at all any attempt is made to ascribe any values, it will be highly subjective, prone to challenges and may not depict the real picture to the customer, creating unwarranted confusion.

In view of above, we are of the firm opinion that there should not be any mandate on TSPs to introduce a tariff calculator tool.

TRAI has already mandated all the operators to file its tariff online. Hence, all the updated information is already available on the TRAI website. Even today, TRAI provides a portal to the customers to not only see the tariff offerings of a particular operators but also to compare the offerings between the operators. In such a scenario, we feel that no further requirement for a tariff calculator should be imposed on the TSPs.

Q6. Whether the service providers be asked to disclose clearly the implications of discontinuation of tariff plan after expiry of mandatory tariff protection period of six months on the provision of non-telecom services offered as a part of the bundle at the time of subscription to a particular plan? If yes, what should be the exact details that service providers may be required to provide in case of bundled offerings? If the answer is in negative, then please give reasons for not mandating such a disclosure.

Bharti Airtel's Response:

It is submitted that the details of all tariff plans which are available to the customers for subscription, including non-telecom benefits bundled therewith, if any, are displayed clearly with complete details to the customers through the various channels described above. Also, the applicable conditions, including the validity, for usage of non-telecom benefits offered to the customer along with tariff plan are clearly communicated to the customer at the time of subscription / enrollment in the tariff plan.

The customers are adequately informed and educated on the procedure of availing / activating claiming the non-telecom benefits bundled with the tariff plan along with validity of such non-telecom benefits. The continuation of these non-telecom benefits is dependent upon the customer continuing with the plan on a recurring basis. In any case; a plan once launched is always available to the customer for a period of 6 months as per the mandate of

the Authority itself. In case of discontinuation of a plan by the TSPs post 6 months, due notice of 30 days is given to the customers wherein he has the option of subscribing to another plan. In no case, the customer is deprived of non – telecom services before the period for which it has been subscribed to as per the terms and conditions of the tariff offer.

Therefore, we submit that the details, including the validity of non-telecom benefits are fully disclosed upfront to all customers during the enrolment on the plan. In view of the sufficient measures already being in place there is no need for any further regulation in this regard.

Q7. Whether the service providers be required to provide a declaration while reporting tariffs to TRAI and displaying tariffs through its various channels that there are no terms and conditions applicable to a tariff offering other than those disclosed here? Do we require additional measures to ensure that all the terms and conditions are clearly communicated to the subscribers and the Authority? If the answer to the above is yes, then please provide your suggestions in detail. If you do not agree with the above requirement, please provide detailed reasons for the same.

Bharti Airtel's Response:

Presently, we are transparently mentioning all applicable terms and conditions in tariff filing with TRAI and also clearly displaying them on our website.

All the terms and conditions applicable to a tariff are placed on our website - www.airtel.in/tnc. Further, the link to the applicable terms and conditions is also provided on the webpage wherein the particular voucher is being displayed.

It is pertinent to mention that the display of all terms and conditions of a tariff offering is not feasible on all channels such as SMS/ App/ WhatsApp/ twitter etc. due to limitation in character/ display area, rather the same would be very inconvenient for TSPs as well as customers. The customer, while being informed about the tariff offer on these alternate channels, is also intimated to refer to our website for detailed terms and conditions of the offer. Further, the complete details of the tariff plans are explained to the customer at TSP's stores, point of sale and call centre etc.

It is, therefore, apparent that it is practically not possible to display all the terms and conditions associated with a tariff offer on all channels of communication except the company's website.

Any intrusive mandate to display all terms and conditions on all channels will create unnecessary hinderance and shall restrict the ability of TSPs to utilize various channels for promotion and carry on its business freely. Such onerous compliances if mandated will be against Authority's own stated and practised policy of light touch regulation and would be counterproductive. This has also been held by the Hon'ble TDSAT in the past.

Since, all the terms and conditions are being adequately displayed on the TSP's website and also report during TRAI filing, there is no need to provide an additional declaration while reporting tariffs to TRAI and displaying tariffs through various channels that there are no terms and conditions applicable to a tariff offering other than those disclosed here. Further,

the website enables the customer to access and read the terms and conditions at any time without any restrictions whatsoever.

Q8. Whether the service providers be required to publish details of all plans in the prescribed format including the plans not on offer for subscription but active otherwise? Please support your answer with rationale.

Bharti Airtel's Response:

We submit that it is not required to publish details of all plans in the prescribed format including the plans not on offer for subscription but active otherwise. This is not in the best interest of customers and would be counterproductive.

It is submitted that all plans which are not on offer for subscription but are active in TSP's system would have been duly filed with TRAI at the time of the launch of such tariff plans. However, publishing details of such plans, more so when the same are not active anymore, will confuse the customers and make it difficult to make an informed choice. This also affects the ability of the customers to identify the ideal tariff plan to suit his/her requirements. Further, confusion due to display of all plans i.e. on offer & not on offer will result in customer being unhappy. Further, this will end up with the customer calling our call-centres enquiring about such plans which in turn, would deteriorate our call-centre related QoS for other customers. Therefore, it would not be prudent to publish all plans including the plans not on offer for subscription but active otherwise.

It is pertinent to note that the details of the plans not on offer for subscription but active otherwise for particular customers is adequately communicated to the respective customer through monthly bills or TSP's App. The customer can also avail of the information of his/her plan from TSP's store or call centre.

In view of above, we recommend that there should be no requirement for publishing details of all those plans which are not in offer for subscription but active otherwise publicly for all the customers.

Q9. Whether the service providers be required to update the information on point of sale and retail outlets simultaneously with the launch/change of a tariff offer?

Bharti Airtel's Response:

The changes in tariff are updated on the TSPs website and App simultaneously with the launch of the tariff. The information on revised tariff offers are made available to all the point of sale and retail outlets via SMS, apps and emails. However, the updation of same in the form of printed material/ hard copy takes time.

Our point of sale and retail outlets are spread across the length and breadth of the country. Majority of such point of sale/ retailers are small shopkeepers who recharge the customers number using mobile numbers or by selling vouchers. While such information is updated to

them via alternate channels, updation in the form of hardcopy/ printout of the offer may not be possible instantaneously.

Therefore, due to logistic reasons, it would be highly impractical to update the information in print/ hardcopy simultaneously with the launch/change of a tariff offer in all point of sale and retail outlets.

In view of same, there should be no mandatory provision to update the information in print/ hardcopy on point of sale and retail outlets.

Q10. Whether the tariffs published in prescribed formats are displayed on websites of the service providers in an effective manner? If no, should the manner of display on website may also be prescribed by the Authority? If it is felt that the manner of display on website may be prescribed by the Authority, please give your views on the proposed display framework.

Bharti Airtel's Response:

As cited in our response to Q1, the extant format prescribed for publishing tariff on our website already conveys the relevant information to consumers in a simple yet effective manner. It is submitted that we communicate all relevant information about our tariff offers to our customers in a transparent manner.

Our website is primarily designed to hand hold customers through a simple journey to know about our tariff offers to help them in making informed purchase decision. In our view, mandating formats for publishing tariff offers over website would take away that simplicity and would make it unattractive for the customers.

In view of above, it is strongly recommended that there should not be any mandate which would result into control on presentation of our website. TSP's website is their property which is designed keeping customer convenience and aesthetics in displaying the information.

Q11. What are your views on introduction of concept of unique id and requiring the service providers to link the tariff advertisements etc. with corresponding tariffs published in TRAI prescribed formats including requirements to publish dates of implementation of tariff and that of reporting of tariff. Do you think that any other safeguards need to be introduced? If yes, please elaborate. Please support your answer with rationale. and

Q12. Whether the proposed monitoring and compliance mechanism is enough to deter any violation of compliance with applicable regulations/directions. If no, please suggest further safeguards that may be introduced to ensure a robust monitoring and compliance mechanism.

Bharti Airtel's Response:

In our view, linking of unique id with particular tariff offer for any communication and publishing of additional information such as date of implementation and reporting would not be beneficial and rather be redundant for customers. The important information such as benefits, validity and terms and condition are already present in all market facing communications.

Further, at present, tariffs are filed through API based online mechanism wherein tariffs are filed with unique id for the purpose for revising/ deleting the particular tariff offer in future. We believe that the present regulatory measures are good enough for ensuring the reporting of tariffs in transparent manner. The said information is already available on TRAI's tariff website that is available to the customer for checking and comparing the tariff offers.

In view of submissions above, linking unique id with all tariff advertisements would not serve any purpose for the customers. Therefore, no additional mandate or mechanism on publishing tariff offers be imposed on the operators.

Q13. Any other issue relevant to the subject discussed in the consultation paper may be highlighted.

Bharti Airtel's Response: NA.