From: support@platform.civis.vote
To: "Akhilesh Kumar Trivedi" <advmn@trai.gov.in>
Sent: Friday, August 4, 2023 11:59:06 PM
Subject: Citizen's Feedback Report: TRAI's Consultation Paper on OTT Services

Dear Ma'am/Sir,

On behalf of Civic Innovation Foundation, we would like to share with you citizen's responses to the TRAI's Consultation Paper on OTT Services, gathered on our online platform www.civis.vote.

0 responses were gathered on the document. To view citizen's feedback, please click on the link provided below:

[View Responses]

Should this report be relevant to any other officer in the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, please do forward this report to them.

We appreciate and laud your commitment to public consultations.

If you are unable to access the report or if we can provide any further assistance, donot hesitate to reach out to us at: info@civis.vote.

Best regards,
Team Civis

Summary

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India has released a consultation paper on the Regulatory Mechanism for Over-The-Top (OTT) Communication Services, and Selective Banning of OTT Services for public comments.

They have sought comments on 14 questions, apart from general comments based on the consultation paper.

Background:

Earlier in 2018, TRAI had released a Consultation Paper on Regulatory Framework for OTT Communication Services and based on its comments, sent its recommendations to the Department of Telecommunications (DoT). TRAI had then stated that no regulations were necessary at the time for OTT services.

However, in 2022, The DoT requested TRAI to reconsider these recommendations.

In light of this, the TRAI has released this consultation to consider the issues afresh.

The current Consultation paper is extensive and covers an analysis of documents, studies and reports available in the public domain, and published by government agencies/ departments, international bodies, telecom regulators in other countries, research agencies/ institutions, academic institutions.

The present consultation is focused on the following:

(a) Identification of a suitable regulatory mechanism for OTT communication services,
(b) Examination of the issues related to selective banning of OTT communication services.

Features of an OTT Communication Service:

OTT communication service may be characterized by the following twin features:

(i) It is accessed and delivered through an application over the Internet, using the network infrastructure of telecom service providers (TSPs); and

(ii) It is a direct technical/functional substitute for traditional telecommunication services (like direct calls and messages) provided by TSPs.

Regulation of OTT Services:

Currently, data is overtaking voice calls and direct messaging as the primary services of telecommunication. This has enabled the creation of an ecosystem of online applications including OTT services that introduce completely new use cases including the Internet of Things (IoT), connected cars, smart education, smart health, smart agriculture, etc.

A National Digital Communications Policy was announced in 2018 that highlighted the goal of creating a policy framework for OTT Services to push investments and innovation to optimise new technology deployments for maximum benefits.

The biggest reason listed for a proposed OTT Policy is to have uniformity with regulatory mechanism for other telecom services.

The mechanisms currently for telecom service provider that do not apply to OTT Services are:

1. Monitoring and interception of networks

2. Providing emergency services for free

3. Customer verification and KYC

4. Maintaining Detailed Call Records

5. Universal service obligation- to have access even in remote areas

6. Quality of service benchmarks need to be met.

7. Rules for billing and metering of their rates.

8. Portability of numbers

Currently, telecom operators also have to pay a one-time non refundable fee before getting their license, and an annual fee thereafter.

Other than these however, certain regulations do apply to OTT Services, primarily those under the Information Technology Act, 2000 and its rules. These include privacy and security of sensitive personal data of users, taking down of websites or posts in cases of certain violations.

Selective Banning of OTT Services:

The consultation paper also recommends selectively banning individual OTT sites instead of the current process of full-fledged internet shutdowns, to check the impact on jobs, healthcare, etc.

Selective banning of OTT services means that certain messaging apps or media platforms are blocked or restricted in certain areas or during certain situations, rather than stopping the entire internet. Importantly, it involves limiting access to certain apps or websites while still allowing others to be used. This is done to try and stop illegal or harmful activities while still allowing people to use important communication platforms.

Lastly, the consultation paper also delves into the practice of OTT Regulation across other countries and providing a bird's eye view of them.

[You may read the entire consultation paper here.](#)

Consultation satisfaction

😟 0   😐 0   🙁 0   😑 0