



Telecom Regulatory Authority of India

Consumer Handbook on Broadcasting and Cable Services



Foreword

Safeguarding the interests of consumers and empowering them is one of the primary objectives of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). Towards this endeavor, TRAI has been issuing Regulations, Directions and orders on various consumer centric issues from time to time. To enable consumers and consumer organizations to take advantage of these measures, it is important that they are made aware of these initiatives.

TRAI has notified a new comprehensive regulatory framework for broadcasting & cable services in March, 2017, which had been effective since 29th December, 2018. The new framework has played an instrumental role in the growth of the broadcasting and distribution sector providing a level playing field for all players and choice in the hand of consumers. This handbook will help to create awareness amongst TV subscribers about their rights and freedom they are being granted by TRAI through the implementation of this framework across the country. The transparency in terms of choosing the channels/bouquets one wants to see and pay only what has been chosen, has been the basic premise of this framework, which has benefitted everyone in the value chain.

The electronic version of this handbook is made available on TRAI website www.trai.gov.in. Further, it is intended for free distribution to consumers and the registered consumer organizations at the consumer outreach programmes, workshops and seminars organized by TRAI.

I am confident that this handbook will help in creating awareness amongst consumers of TV services about various rights and privileges granted to them by TRAI.

Dated: April, 2021

(Dr. P. D. Vaghela)
Chairman

Content Disclaimer

This handbook has been published for the assistance, education and information of the consumers and information contained therein is general in nature, condensed from the original broadcasting and cable services tariff orders, directions and regulations. Full text of these broadcasting and cable services tariff orders, directions and regulations are available on TRAI's website www.trai.gov.in. The users may refer to the TRAI Act, 1997 (24 of 1997), as amended from time to time and to the text of broadcasting and cable services tariff orders, directions and regulations and their amendments, as published in the Gazette of India/TRAI's website before taking any legal recourse. Under no circumstances shall the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India be liable for any loss, damage, liability or expense incurred or suffered that is claimed to have resulted from the use of material contained in this handbook, including, without limitation, any error or omission, with respect thereto.

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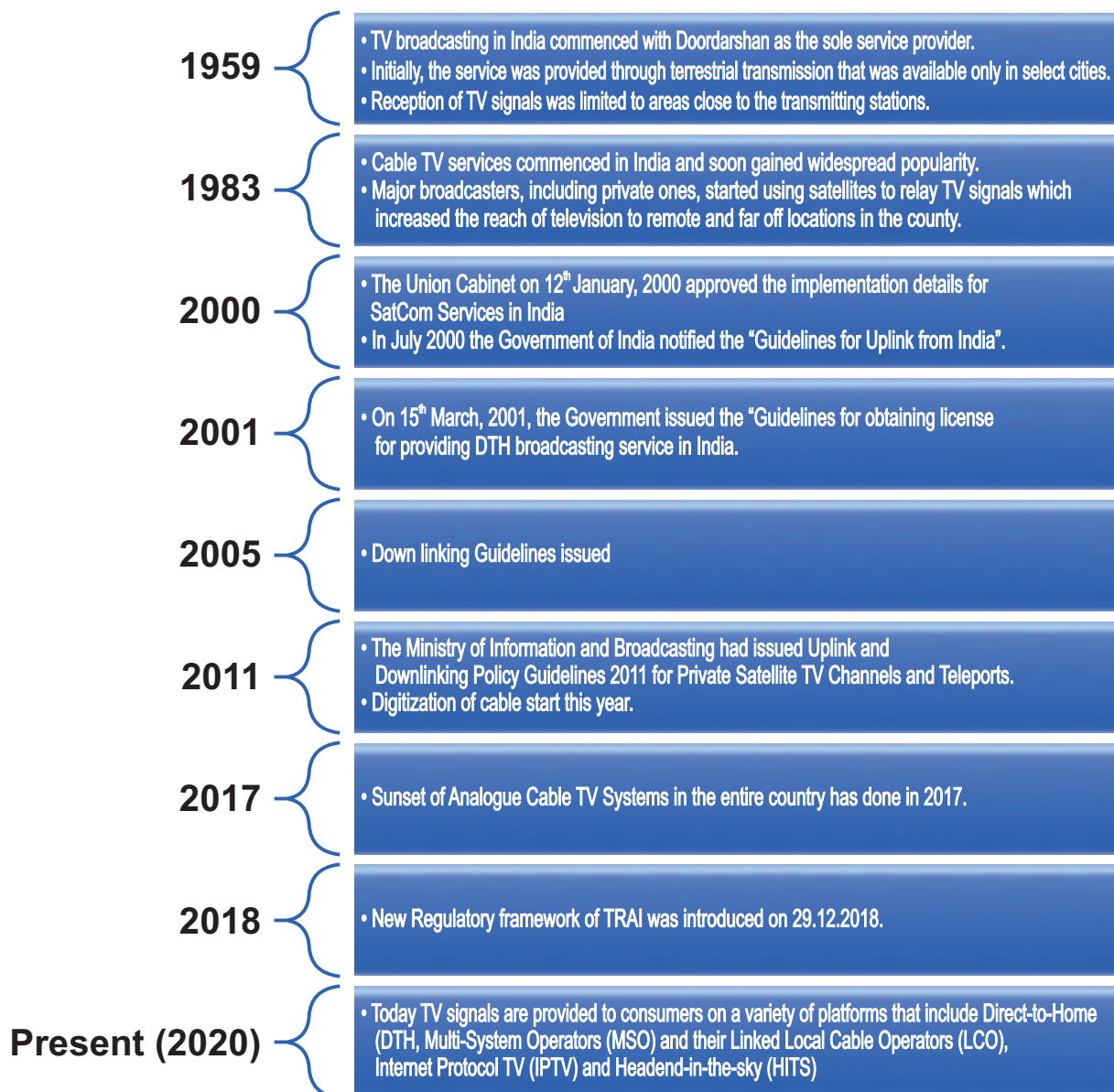
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A. Broadcasting Services in India

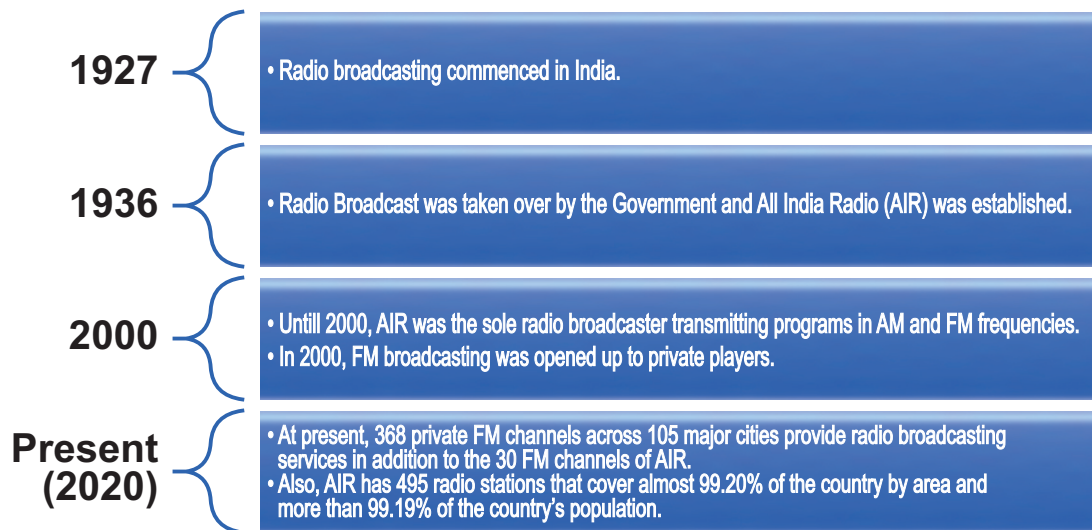
Broadcasting: An Introduction

Broadcasting means distribution of audio and video signals to a widely dispersed audience. Broadcasting as a mass communication media is a powerful tool to inform and educate the masses in a vast country like India. Broadcasting services are broadly classified into two categories: Radio broadcasting and Television broadcasting.

Evolution of Television services in India

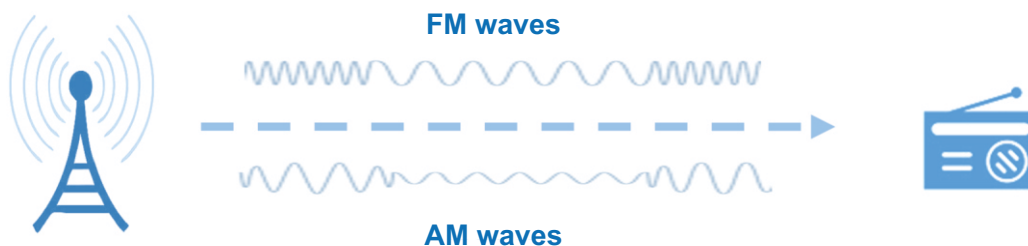


Evolution of Radio services in India



Different modes of radio waves transmission

Radio broadcasting at present takes place on either AM broadcast frequencies or FM broadcast frequencies. Digital radio broadcasting is at an experimental stage in India.



Different modes of Radio waves transmission

Business model of radio broadcasting services

Radio Broadcasting is free-to-air service. A consumer can simply procure radio receiver equipment and tune into the various radio channels available in a particular region. No application is required to be made to avail these services.

The business model of radio broadcasting service is based on advertisement revenue. Radio broadcasters are permitted to air commercials during their program. There are a large number of radio broadcasters in India and they are operating in an open competition environment.

All types of radio broadcasting services in India are free for the consumers.

Various AM and FM Radio Services available

All India Radio (AIR) is the sole public radio broadcaster in India. At present, AIR operates 18 FM channels, called AIR FM Rainbow, targeting the urban audience in a refreshing style of presentation. There are four more FM channels called AIR FM Gold, broadcast composite news and entertainment programmes from Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai and Mumbai. National and primary/regional channels are transmitted in AM mode (short and medium wave transmission). Also, radio channels are available on DD+ (Free dish) DTH platform.

Radio services was opened to private players in year 2000 when the Government auctioned 108 frequencies in the FM spectrum (VHF 87 –108 MHz) in 40 cities. This was called as Phase-I of FM Radio. At present, 368 FM Channels are operational in 105 cities (21 private FM channels were set up during Phase-I and an additional 222 channels were set up during Phase-II). To expand the reach of FM Radio broadcasting in the country, the Government has embarked upon Phase III to enable setting up of private FM Radio channels in all cities with a population of more than 1 lakh. Some of the prominent private FM stations are Big FM, Fever, Hit FM, Radio City, Radio Mirchi, Radio One and Red FM.

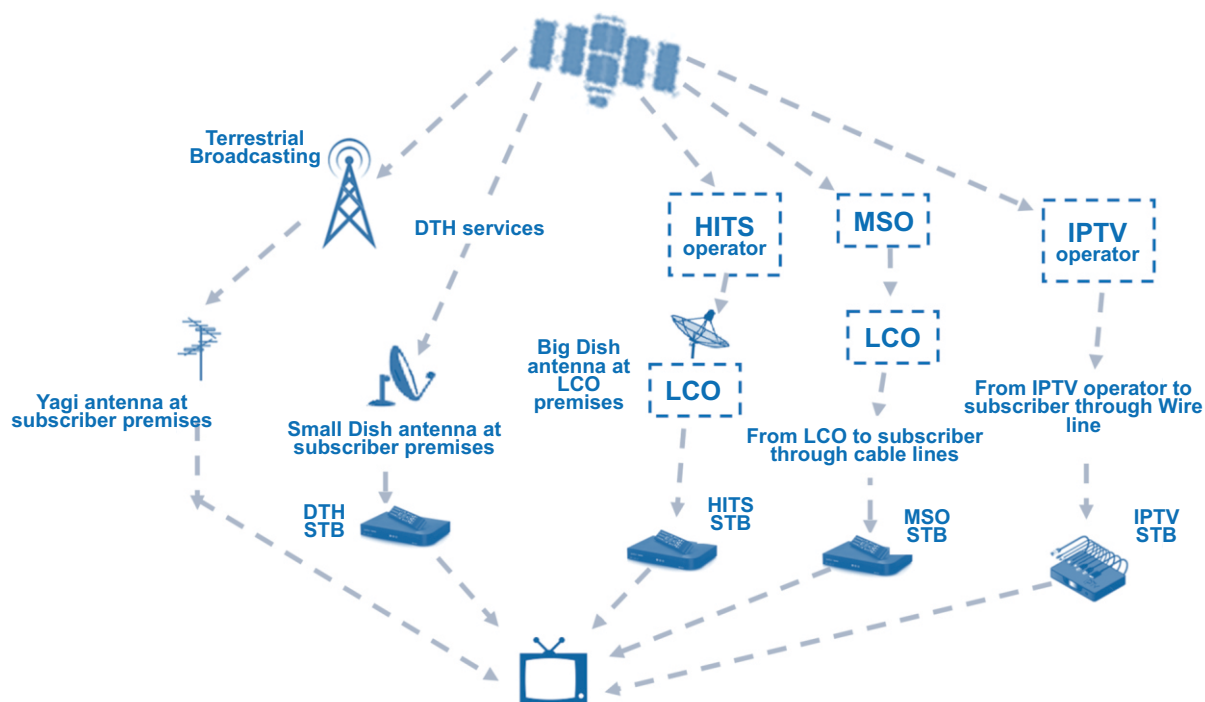
Community Radio Stations (CRS)

To encourage radio broadcasting for the specific sections of society the Government has allowed setting up of Community Radio Stations (CRS).

CRS typically broadcast on low power transmitters to the local community in its vicinity. They address the specific information needs of far flung and difficult areas like tribal population, hilly & remote areas and population having similar interests like university campuses. Today, there are more than 290 operational CRS.

Television broadcasting services

Several kinds of TV broadcasting service providers are operating in India. These include terrestrial broadcasting services by Doordarshan; subscription-based cable TV services; satellite based DTH service; IPTV; and cable/satellite based HITS service. While DTH has pan India footprint, all other TV services largely have localized presence.



Various Platforms of Television Broadcasting

Terrestrial TV broadcasting service

Terrestrial television is the traditional method of television broadcast where the broadcaster sends the TV signal from ground-based transmission towers. TV signals are received by using a Yagi antenna usually installed on the rooftop. Terrestrial TV service is a free-to-view service provided by the public broadcaster 'Doordarshan'. At present two channels are available nationally on this platform.

New Regulatory Framework on Broadcasting & Cable Services of TRAI



The new regulatory framework for Broadcasting and cable TV Sector was notified on 3rd March, 2017. On 3rd July, 2018, TRAI released a press note on the regulatory framework for broadcasting and cable services. This press note kickstarted the process of implementation of the new regulatory framework provided through addressable systems, which include the Direct to Home (DTH) Systems, Cable TV Systems provided through Digital Addressable Systems (DAS), Head-end In The Sky (HITS) and Internet Protocol TV (IPTV). The aforesaid new regulatory framework has been effective since 29th December, 2018.

Digital Addressable Systems (DAS)

After complete digitization by March 2017, signals are provided through Digital Addressable Systems (DAS) which requires an STB for the reception of TV programs for both pay channels and free-to-air channels. All the channels are broadcast in an encrypted form which is decrypted by the STB before it can be watched on a TV set. Generally, the STB is provided by the distributor while providing a TV connection. The various advantages of DAS include:

- Large number of channels for the consumer to choose from and subscribe to.
- High quality signal available with better picture quality & sound.
- Option to consumer to subscribe only those channels that one wishes to watch.
- Value added services like home shopping, movies-on-demand and educational programmes of high quality available.
- Broadband connection can also be provided by the cable operator on the same cable.
- DAS is not susceptible to service disruption during rainfall.

Cable TV services

Cable TV is a popular platform for receiving TV broadcast. The signal is provided by a local cable operator (LCO) to the consumer through a cable laid up to the TV set. The cable operator is providing services through a digital addressable system (DAS), wherein a set-top-box (STB) is required in addition to the cable. By March 2017, cable TV broadcasting in India got completely digitized switching-off analog TV signals. Local cable TV operator gets signal from Multi-System Operator (MSO). MSO receives programming service from broadcaster and re-transmits the same either directly in the form of primary subscribers or through one or more local cable operators as secondary subscribers. As on 1st December 2020 there are around 1625¹ Multi System Operators (MSOs) registered with Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB), an estimated 60,000² cable operators operational in the country.

Direct-to-home (DTH) TV Services

DTH is a digital satellite service that provides TV signals directly to subscribers anywhere in the country. DTH TV signals are received by the subscribers directly from the satellite by using a small outdoor dish antenna that is mounted to point towards the satellite.

A subscriber has to purchase Customer Premises Equipment (CPE) to receive the DTH service. CPE consists of a set top box and outdoor equipment like small dish antenna, low noise block convertor and connecting cables.

‘DD Free Dish’ is a free-to-view DTH service provided by the public Broadcaster Doordarshan. In addition to this free DTH service, 4 private operators are offering paid DTH services today.

Advantages of DTH service

The main advantage of DTH services is the ease with which a connection can be obtained in practically any location howsoever remote. Since the signal from the satellite is directly received at the consumer’s premises with a good quality programming without a cable being drawn from the cable operator’s location, all it requires to receive TV broadcast is setting up of the CPE. However, the DTH service signals may break during rains or even cloudy atmosphere.

1 MIB website <https://digitalindiamib.com/>

2 FICCI-EY Report 2019

Headend-in-the Sky (HITS) Cable TV service

HITS service is a mix of satellite and cable TV. The HITS operator uplinks the TV broadcast to a satellite, which is downlinked by LCO and distributed to individual consumer's premises through a cable network. The HITS operators thus, supply the signal through a cable TV network to customers. There is only one HITS operator today in the country.

Advantages of HITS service

The HITS digital broadcasting is relatively cost-effective and does not require heavy investment from the cable operator nor does it require all the consumers to have dish antennae placed at their premises. HITS, unlike DTH, is not vulnerable to rain and there is no deterioration of signal during rainy season. HITS technology offers a fast and convenient system of distribution of broadcasting signals using the existing LCOs' networks thereby increasing the reach of digital TV broadcasting.

Internet Protocol TV (IPTV) service

IPTV signals are delivered to the consumers through the wire line that may also provide them with broadband internet access. It is a digital broadcast and it is in an addressable mode using Internet Protocol (IP). The existing Regulatory framework for addressable systems applies to IPTV services as well.

Advantages of IPTV service

IPTV is fully interactive because of availability of two-way communication capability between the consumer and service provider. Therefore, it can provide a wide variety of services to the consumers. Some of the features of IPTV are:

- (i) Video on Demand (VOD) - The subscribers can browse a catalogue of videos, not related to TV programming.
- (ii) Time shifted television - The subscribers can view TV programs at their convenience using time shifted TV feature.
- (iii) High picture quality - Picture quality of IPTV is also very good due to use of digital transmission.
- (iv) Live television - With or without interactivity related to the current TV show.
- (v) "Triple play service": i.e. voice, video and data on the same bundled connection. A subscriber will get television signals, broadband internet and telephone connectivity through the same connection.

B. Obtaining TV Services

Selecting a TV broadcast service

For selecting a TV broadcast service, compare the different TV broadcast platforms available; identify the different service providers operating in a particular area; the channels available on their platform, in addition to TV services, identify if any value added services are needed and available; finally check the tariff packages offered by different operators.



Information about the area covered by a service provider is usually available on the websites of the individual service providers. The toll-free numbers of the major TV service providers are available at Annex-1.

Obtaining connection after selecting the TV platform

After selecting the TV platform:

- (i) Contact the service provider or his local representative to obtain the subscription;
- (ii) Fill up the Consumer Application Form (CAF) or electronic CAF (e-CAF). This will inter alia include the options for procuring the STB and the channels or bouquet of channels that he wants to subscribe to. A copy of the CAF must be retained for the subscriber's own records.
- (iii) Obtain a copy of 'Manual of Practice' (MOP) from your service provider. MOP includes details of the different schemes offered, toll free number of call-centre and the complaint redressal mechanism. The service providers have to provide a copy of his MOP to each subscriber.

TRAI's regulations for obtaining TV Services

TRAI has laid down detailed regulations regarding obtaining a new connection:

- Fill in the CAF/e-CAF. Choose initial channels/bouquets/services to subscribe to. The chosen channels/bouquets/ services must be mentioned in the CAF/e-CAF.

- A copy of the CAF must be retained by the consumer for his own records.
- The distributor must provide the connection within 7 days from receipt of request, subject to the technical and operational feasibility.
- There are several options for a subscriber to obtain a CPE. He may opt for outright purchase scheme or under rental scheme from the Distributor. The Distributor may also offer any other scheme including bundled scheme for supply of the CPE
- Customer Premise Equipment (CPE) means the components and accessories installed at the premises of the subscriber. It includes cable wire, STB, remote, dish antenna, LNBC etc.
- Any STB supplied to a subscriber under outright purchase scheme will be covered by a guarantee/warranty for a minimum period of one year.
- The distributor shall not levy any repair or maintenance charge towards a CPE acquired under outright purchase scheme during its guarantee/warranty period unless the STB has been tampered with or physically damaged by the subscriber.
- The distributor shall be responsible for maintenance of the CPE, availed under rental scheme or any other scheme for a minimum period of 3 years.
- DTH operator shall not charge an amount more than ₹ 250 as visiting charges to carry out repair and maintenance work.

Installation and activation charges

A maximum of ₹ 250 may be charged as a one-time installation charge for installation of a new connection. A maximum of ₹ 100 may be charged as a one-time activation charge for activating the broadcasting services related to television by the distributors.

Ownership of Customer Premises Equipment provided by your Operator

The DTH operator must offer STB, dish antenna and related accessories, commonly referred to as Customer Premises Equipment (CPE), on outright purchase or on rent. In addition, your operator may offer other schemes for providing CPE. The consumer thus has several options to choose from the schemes offered by the DTH operator.

Ownership depends on the option chosen by the subscriber.

If purchased under outright scheme, ownership rests with the subscriber. It may be noted that a minimum warranty of 1 year must be provided on CPE, if purchased outright.

If purchased under rental scheme and other bundled schemes, the ownership rests with the distributor or its linked local cable operator.

Your operator shall not charge any repair or maintenance charge for CPE acquired under a rental or any other bundled scheme for 3 years, if CPE has not been damaged or tampered by the subscriber.

Although, your DTH operator may charge a maximum of ₹ 250 as visiting charges if the complaints require repair and maintenance, but which is not related to STB.

Procedures regarding disconnection of broadcasting services related to Television

- The TV connection will be disconnected, upon receiving the request from the subscriber and the deposits due will be refunded to the subscriber on the fulfilment of the terms and conditions as agreed by the distributor and the subscriber.
- Your distributor cannot disconnect your TV without giving a notice of at least 15 days and indicating the reasons of disconnection to the subscriber.

Procedures regarding choosing channels/bouquets of your choice

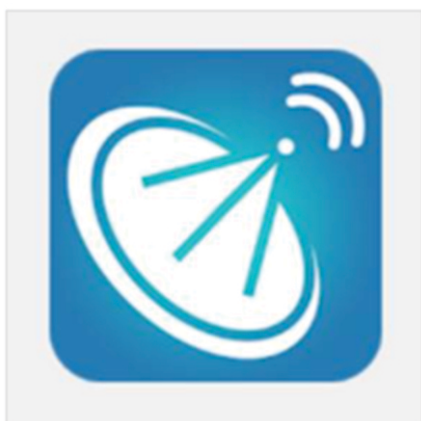
The new framework provides full freedom and flexibility to the consumers to choose channels and bouquets of their choice and pay for only what they chose. All the distributors take choice from their subscribers through various means (website/mobile app/call center/through LCO etc.). Now the consumer can add or delete any channel or bouquet anytime as per his choice.

Transparency in the channel prices

Consumers can see the price of any channel on the Electronic Programme Guide (EPG) on the TV screen itself and can decide which channel they want to add and what to drop. This gives the power to control the prices of TV subscription in the hands of the consumer.

TRAI Channel Selector App

TRAI has launched Channel Selector App on 25th June, 2020. It is available for download on both Android and iOS platforms for free. The App offers the functionality via which consumers can view their service provider/operator's offerings, fetch the existing subscription details, choose & optimize channel and Bouquet selection, modify existing selection and set selection/submit request with respective service provider/operator.



The App will suggest an optimum configuration i.e. combination of Channels/Bouquet based on consumer's selection so as to reduce total monthly bill. In addition, it will suggest combination of Channels/Bouquet based on consumer's interest keeping in view geographical, regional, language, genres, etc. preferences.

C. Tariff and Billing

Pay channels

Pay channels are channels which are declared as such by the broadcaster and for which broadcaster's share of maximum retail price is to be paid to the broadcaster by the distributor of television channels and for which due authorization needs to be obtained from the broadcaster for distribution of such channel to subscribers.

FTA (free-to-air) channels

FTA channels are channels which are declared as such by the broadcaster and for which no fee is to be paid by a distributor of television channels to the broadcaster for signals of such channels.

Network Capacity Fee (NCF)

The framework introduces the concept of network capacity fee (NCF). NCF means the amount, excluding taxes, payable by a subscriber to the distributor for distribution network capacity subscribed by that subscriber to receive the signals of subscribed television channels and it does not include subscription fee for pay channel for an upper ceiling of ₹ 130 for up to 200 SD channels. Capacity of 1 HD channel is treated as 2 SD channels. Any subscriber who opts for more than 200 channels a maximum price of ₹ 160 will be charged as NCF.

TRAI's regulations on tariff for TV Services

TRAI's regulation regarding tariff include:

- The broadcaster shall offer all the channels on a-la-carte basis.
- The broadcaster shall declare nature of each of its channel either as "free-to-air" or pay.
- The broadcaster shall declare maximum Retail Price (MRP) of each pay channel offered by him.
- The distributors shall declare Distributors Retail Price (DRP) of each channel which can be equal to or less than declared MRP.
- FTA channels shall have 'zero' price.

- Pay channels bouquet will not have FTA channels in it.
- Bouquet shall not contain both HD and SD variants of the same channel.
- The distributor shall declare network capacity fee (NCF), per month for availing a distribution network capacity so as to receive the signals of television channels.
- NCF upto initial 200 SD channels, cannot exceed ₹ 130 plus tax.
- NCF beyond any number of 200 SD channels, shall not exceed ₹ 160 plus tax.
- 1 HD channel shall be treated equal to 2 SD channels.
- Subscriber can choose all the channels available on the platform of the distributor on a-la-carte basis.
- Subscriber can also choose any of the bouquets formed by broadcasters and formed by distributors.
- Subscribers can make their own pack using any combination also.
- All the channels mandated by Central Government will be provided to all the subscribers and they will not be counted in the NCF.
- A subscriber can also have more than one TV connection or set top box in his name in a household. That would be called as “Multi TV home”.
- NCF, per month, for each additional TV connection, beyond the first TV connection in a multi TV home shall not exceed 40% of the declared NCF.
- Distinct choice of channels and bouquets of channels can be chosen on each TV connection or set top box in a multi TV home.
- Distributors can offer long term subscriptions and declare respective network capacity fee, distributor retail price and duration of all such subscriptions.
- Distributors can offer promotional schemes on DRP per month of a-la-carte pay channels available on its platform.

Billing and payment options

TRAI has laid down that

- Distributors shall provide services either on pre-paid basis or post-paid basis or both.
- The Distributors must issue bills and payment receipts for every payment made by a subscriber.
- Subscribers must be given itemised bills clearly showing the split of NCF, Rental Charges for CPE, if any, a-la-carte channels and bouquet charges and the applicable taxes, separately.



Temporary Suspension: Seeking a break in service from a distributor

Yes, a subscriber can request for temporary suspension of his cable TV services for a period of 1 month and in the multiple thereof without any charge, i.e., other than the rental charge towards STB, if any. Such a request shall be made by the subscriber at least 15 days prior. Restoration fees will be charged as ₹ 25 if the services remain suspended for 1,2 or 3 months. Re-activation fees will be charged ₹ 100, if the services remain suspended for more than 3 months.

Change in the channels in a package

The Distributors cannot discontinue or modify the composition of a package subscribed by the subscriber during its lock-in period or during the period for which subscription amount has been paid in advance by the subscriber, if all the channels forming part of the bouquet continue to be available on its platform. In case, if the channel is discontinuing, a subscription charges of that bouquet should be reduced by an amount equivalent to discounted Distributor retail price of that channel. The Distributor should not substitute any channel in lieu of discontinued channels on its own.

D. Whom to Contact for Information and Complaint Redressal

TRAI's regulations on Complaints Redressal

TRAI has laid down regulations that every distributor to implement various methods for providing subscribers the information they need about their subscriptions and for resolution of their complaints.

Information available for Consumers

- Every distributor must have a website having a Consumer Corner and a Subscriber Corner.
- The Consumer Corner gives details of the list of channels and bouquets being offered, Pay/FTA channels available on its platform, details of Network Capacity Fee, details of Multi TV discounts. CPE offerings along with terms and conditions, CAF, MOP, toll free number, details of Nodal officers etc.
- The Subscriber Corner provides the login access to the subscriber, detailed subscriber information and his current subscription. Options to modify his subscription, options to add/delete channels/bouquets, billing details, bill payment guidelines and other relevant information.
- Distributors have also developed mobile apps for consumer's convenience.
- Every Distributor has a dedicated Consumer Information Channel No. 999 displaying all the relevant information.



Registering your complaint

- The subscriber can register his complaint or service request on toll free number of call centre of the distributor.
- Your distributor will provide a complaint/docket number for each registered complaint.

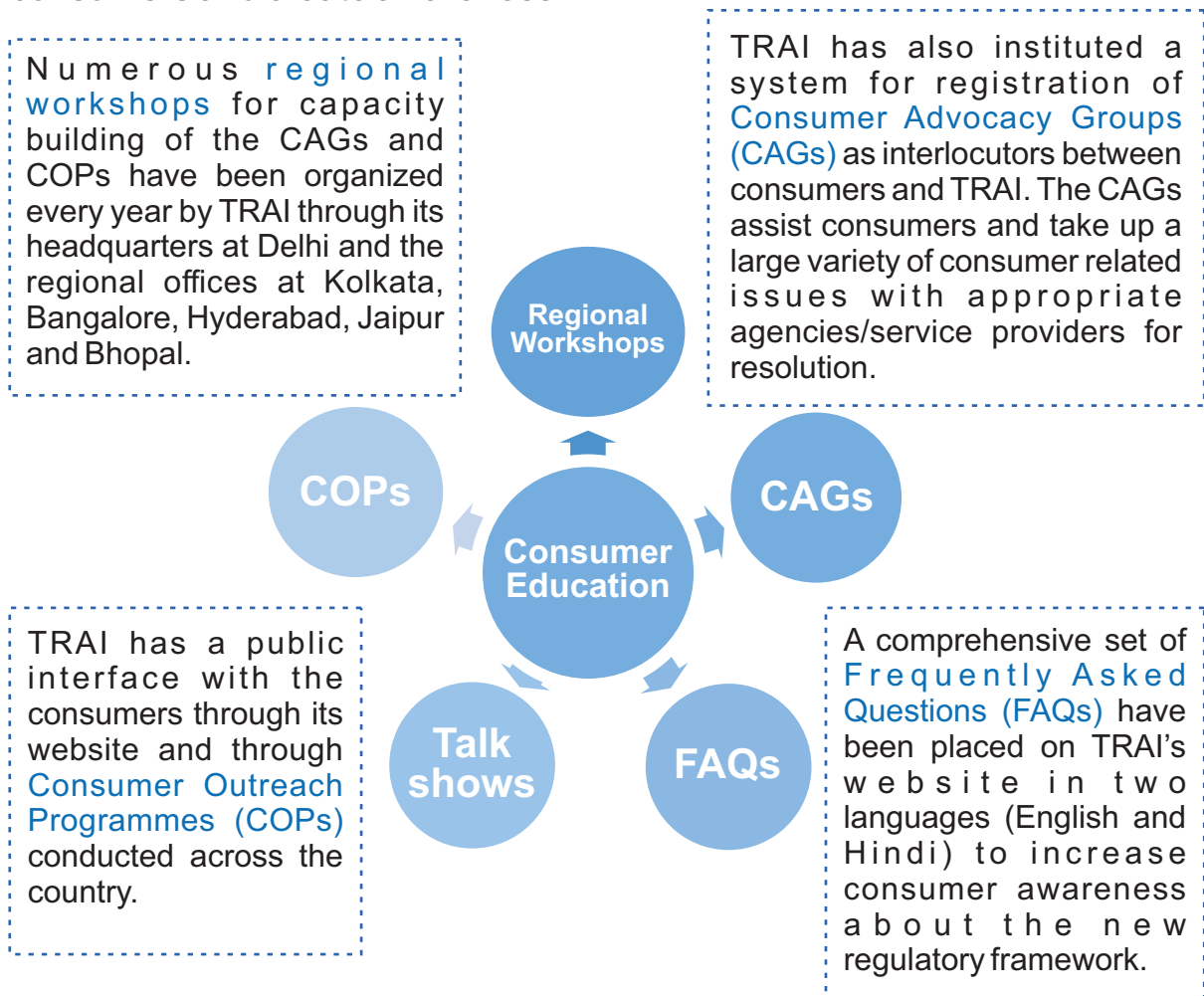
- The distributors have established a web-based complaint monitoring system for monitoring of subscriber complaints.
- Consumer complaints must be responded to within 8 hours of making a complaint.
- The distributor shall designate one or more nodal officers for each State for complaints if the subscriber is not satisfied with the redressal of complaint by the call centre.
- Nodal Officer must acknowledge the complaint within 2 days and redress the complaint within 10 days.

QoS Benchmarks for complaint redressal

S. No.	Complaint Type	QoS Benchmark
1.	% of complaints relating to “No Signal” redressed within 24 hrs	90%
2.	% of complaints relating to billing redressed within 7 days	100%
3.	% of complaints redressed within 48 hrs except no signal and billing	90%

E. Consumer Education Initiatives of TRAI

With the growth of TV and Radio broadcasting, the reach of TV and Radio signals can be seen in semi-urban and rural areas as well. The knowledge about various platforms and stakeholders in providing the services is limited. Hence, realizing the importance of reaching out to the consumers all over the country, TRAI has made several measures to educate the consumers and create awareness.



List of Acronyms

Abbreviation	Description
AIR	All India Radio
AM	Amplitude Modulation
CAF	Consumer Application Form
CAG	Consumer Advocacy Group
COP	Consumer Outreach Programme
CPE	Customer Premises Equipment
CRS	Community Radio Stations
DAS	Digital Addressable System
DD	Doordarshan
DTH	Direct to Home
EPG	Electronic Programme Guide
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
FM	Frequency Modulation
FTA	Free to Air
HITS	Headend in the Sky
IPTV	Internet Protocol Television
LCO	Local Cable Operator
MOP	Manual of Practice
MRP	Maximum Retail Price
MSO	Multi System Operator
QoS	Quality of Service
STB	Set Top Box
TRAI	Telecom Regulatory Authority of India
VHF	Very High Frequency
VOD	Video on Demand

Annex 1: Contact Details of TV Service Providers



DTH operators

S.No.	Name of DTH Operator	Toll Free Number
1	Airtel	18001036065
2	Dish TV	18001803474
3	Sun Direct	18002007575
4	Tata Sky	18002086633
5	Dish TV (for brand d2h)	18002583474

HITS Operators



S.No.	Name of HITS Operator	Toll Free Number
1	NXTDigital	18002100400

Toll Free numbers of some Multi-System Operators



The contact details of the MSOs are available on their websites. The following are some of the major MSOs that have a larger service area:

S.No.	Name of MSO	Toll Free Number
1	Siti Networks	180012340001
2	GTPL Hathway	18004190419
3	Hathway Digital	18004197900
4	Den Networks	18004192020
5	Fastway	18001026602
6	TACTV	18004252911
7	KCCL	18004195755
8	Asianet	18004254725
9	IN Digital	18002666456
10	VK Digital	18004199908
11	E-Digital	180042505678
12	UCN	18003131099
13	ACT Digital	18001022836
14	KAL Cables	18001020728
15	TCCL	18001029845



भादूविप्रा
TRAIR

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India

(IS/ISO 9001-2015 Certified Organisation)

**Mahanagar Doorsanchar Bhavan
Jawaharlal Nehru Marg, New Delhi-110002
Website : www.trai.gov.in**