

Jaipur. 17 January 2023

New Indian Consumer Initiative – NICI’s Comments on TRAI’s Consultation Paper on the Introduction of Calling Name Presentation (CNAP) in Telecommunication Networks

The New Indian Consumer Initiative (NICI; www.newindianconsumer.com) is a community-owned platform to foster interaction on the many challenges and opportunities of consumers in the New Economy. It is also a platform for community led capacity building, for consumers to understand and lead the public interest.

The introduction of CNAP has been explored by NICI and some of the topics raised in the TRAI's consultation paper require careful consideration from a consumer's perspective. The consultation paper is a step towards the introduction of CNAP in India, and is likely to generate a lot of interest and discussion among industry stakeholders. Even though it is a good move by TRAI, as it will bring transparency and increase the accountability of the caller, but we implore the regulator to consider the following observations.

1. One important issue that should be considered is the protection of the identity of certain groups of consumers, such as those in distress, victims of abuse, whistle-blowers, and journalists. These individuals may need to make anonymous or confidential calls to seek help or report abuse, and the introduction of CNAP could put them at risk if their name is displayed.
2. Reliability of the name provided in the Customer Acquisition Form (CAF), which is proposed to be mandatorily displayed as part of the CNAP service is another issue of concern. The accuracy of the name provided in the CAF will depend on the honesty and accuracy of the customer when providing their information. If a customer provides false or inaccurate information, this could lead to the display of incorrect names when they make calls.
3. Differences between the number's subscriber and user could cause the display of the erroneous name. This could lead to confusion or inconvenience, specifically in cases of phone theft detection, use of fake ids for multiple sim procurement, etc.
4. Another key issue is centring around the consent, privacy and protection of data of consumers. This includes concerns related to display of name without effective and informed consent of consumers; risks to privacy and data protection with regard to the database from which names would be sourced for display, making it difficult to assign blame and hold violators accountable in case of data breach and leakages and associated risks of identity spoofing and misuse of data. With access to the personal information of customers, an unauthorized person could potentially impersonate someone else and make calls on their behalf. This could lead to confusion, harassment, or even fraud. Additionally, there is a risk that the data in the database could be misused for marketing or other purposes without the customer's consent, leading to privacy violations.

5. In addition to above, reflections can be made on the potential concerns with regards to the potential for call dropouts, a delay in call setup time, and a decline in the quality of services provided to customers along with the cost of implementing and maintaining the service may be passed on to consumers in the form of higher prices for telecom services.

6. NICI also participated in a consultation organised by CUTS International where most of the issues discussed in this representation were discussed in detail and deliberated upon.