After seeing articles in print & electronic media on views presented by different organized stake holders on your consultation paper CP 10/2019, I have gone through many newer perspectives presented by stakeholders (especially under Companies/Organizations /Firms & Individual category of stakeholders), some of which have refreshing newer perspectives and sincerely made suggestions seeking to squarely address the core malaises in the system without attracting legal consequences, which originated basically due to some clauses and slackness in the current NTO provisions., as businesses will always tend to game the system to their benefit.

I wish to present my counter comments as a retail subscriber / consumer as certain ills of the present system will continue to remain in some form to extract a good min Rs. 250-300 from each STB connection inspite of choosing bare minimum no. of popular channels., for which both the Broadcaster and DPO groups will make all efforts to protect their current advantage turf. All their “Hullabaloo” that Industry will collapse if radical changes are made in NTO etc are not only misleading but totally deceptive. Needless to mention that all broadcasters in all languages will invariably price their top 2-3 driver channels in GEC and Movies at maximum permissible rates and tune their other channel rates for an attractively priced bundle push, so that standalone channel selections will be expensive/ pointless after taking top 3-4 broadcasters channels pricing into account. It will become further more expensive to cover interests of all type of members within a typical household with different genre preference. **To my sheer disappointment no credible association is representing consumer’s interests with logical reasoning other than the stakeholders mentioned earlier., so TRAI is expected to take lead here.**

1. NCF structure is the first hurdle in reducing cable bills in line with past trends. Two media stakeholders on cable/satellite tv suggested NCF slabs at Rs. 100 & 150, may be aimed to protect their cable operator friends. **TRAI should not pay heed to such a practice because the core problem of affordability by low income users will not be addressed.**

TRAI should instead go for any of the two other type of suggestions made by stakeholders esp. Individuals, because most of the stakeholder comments seem to be aligning their views purely as per interests of either Broadcasters or DPOs & unfortunately not subscribers., who are lacking proper agencies to fight and represent with insightful and powerful presentations., so "TRAI is our only true savior".

a.) First one is to remove the distinct charges as NCF which is the main culprit though it sounds good in theory as 'piping cost' or delivery charges, <u>and instead blend it with 'content cost'</u> subject to minimum monthly charges, like it used to be offered earlier in two broad options of

(i) Rs. 99 DPO packs (with a minimum no. of locally popular pay channels & with option to pay & add extra packs OR

(ii) Rs. 155-160 Ala-carte pack (with own bouquet selection of pay channels as per stand alone rates & but without scope for adding DPO packs).

TRAI has to preferably adopt this second option but allowing both DPO/ Broadcaster packs and standalone channels or any combinations, as per subscriber choice.

Here TRAI has to work out some methods suggested by stakeholders to split the bill / revenue between DPO and Broadcaster. The problem will come only with low revenue subscribers for which half of the pay channel amount can be set aside for DPO and allow full realization of pay channel rates by broadcasters after crossing the minimum monthly revenue limit of 155-160.

b.) **Second way and better alternative is to make minimum NCF of Rs. 50 + tax for which consumer can choose & select only 20-25 channels., and pay per channel variable NCF thereafter. You may also supplement this with an additional requirement of minimum monthly payment of Rs. 150+tax, (but debited on a daily rate basis to facilitate change in channel / pack selections by subscriber on any day.)** I agree with a stakeholder who validly questioned as to why TRAI fixed Rs. 130 for 100 channels when their officials publicly say people watch max. 50 channels, which is indeed a reality as I have seen often. This is clearly favoring DPOs interests over subscriber interests (& even Broadcasters in a way)

2. As made out by one stakeholder Firm, I fully agree that even with enforcement of 15% cap on discounts (if & when Courts allow it), going by the relative pricing trends of genres/ channels based on their popularity, costing picture may not change much in terms of subscriber affordability going by the channel prices already declared, as relative genre pricing matrix will again be distorted and mispriced merely with an eye for bouquet formation to their advantage. Even new semi cloned channels will be created with close pricing for bundling & revenue purposes.

Further fixing of Rs. 19 as maximum DRP for channel inclusion in a bouquet is based on past wholesale MRP, whose real net price and discount is opaque and not in public domain as Inter connect agreements were blatantly disregarded and deals cut outside of it between broadcasters and DPOs in past. Hence there is a compelling case for new ceiling in place of Rs. 19 based on declared DRP / retail prices of channels after NTO., and this is a complex and legal dispute prone exercise.

So new & innovative methods like prohibiting bundling totally which is the best way forward or allowing NO DISCOUNT on bundling, but allowing a small benefit of treating Bouquet as one channel for NCF purpose etc. need to be explored.

Also disallowing Broadcasters to bundle but allow DPOs to bundle with or without discount will also lead to scope for perverse pricing due to leeway for back door deals between them outside the Interconnect rates/ register.

3. If Bouquets are indeed allowed, without placing restricting on total no. of bouquets to avoid litigation, allow one channel to appear in not more than one bouquet (or two bouquets if there is a workable logical basis to support) and only same language channels to appear in a bouquet as suggested by some Individual stake holders. This will solve the problem of innumerable bouquets and help easy selection by consumer. Broadcasters will always argue that more bouquets means more choice and more bouquet discount means more benefit to consumer, hiding the immense damage caused by this practice to the to price discovery mechanism.

4. I suggets HD and SD should have same channel count for NCF because broadcasters are already pricing HD channels much higher than SD. Also NIL NCF to be counted for all DD channels or some 4-5 dedicated NCF free slots for DD which cannot be filled in by other channels.

Thanks for listening to our voice

Pandurang M. Rao
Mylapore., Chennai
piscean.mindspace@gmail.com