
Subject Suggestions on Inter-Operability of DTH set top boxes

Sirs,

I saw the TRAI ad calling for suggestions/comments on inter-operability of DTH set top boxes. I want to pass on a few pertinent comments, sir.

I kindly request you to go through the ideas patiently..

First of all, I wish that the Government (including the TRAI and the MIB) should look at the DTH scenario with much preponderance and research oriented thinking. DTH technology is a new entrant as far as India is concerned. In the West, DTH has existed ten years before it embarked in India.

We can, in fact, send one team of experts to study the global DTH majors in foreign countries.

Just the day when MPEG-2 technology was offered through DishTV, almost every intelligent folk in India guessed that there will be a problem when MPEG-4 comes into foray. In any one's view, MPEG-4 is a superior technology compared to MPEG-2.

For example, the picture quality, compression, and sound quality is better in MPEG-4 compared to MPEG-2.

Coming to inter-operability of DTH set top boxes, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) has triggered the problem. My remedy is very simple and straightforward:

The DTH operators should NOT insist the new subscribers to buy all the Customer Premise Equipment (CPE) but they should come forward to sell the set top boxes separately. I am damn sure that this will reduce the shift over between various DTH operators, and this certainly will avoid unnecessary purchasing of dish antennae and LNBF/wiring. This measure will also eliminate the necessity to sell the CA Modules in the market separately. (It is worth mentioning here that the price of separate CA Module and set top boxes is almost the same).

One more thing:

The DTH operators can arrange STB exchange melas so that those subscribers willing to switch over to the other DTH operator can surrender their old STB and get new STB (such as HD or HD-DVR) with some discount. The surrendered STBs which are in good condition can be re-sold to economically poor subscribers at lower rates (The address database of the surrendered STBs can be edited to add the new subscriber's data). Such measures will come a long way in re-cycling of e-waste.

On non-discriminatory clause and prohibition of exclusive content in DTH segment:-

As far as I am concerned, with the onset of more and more High Definition channels in India, and due to the launch of HD-DVRs, LCD, LED and Plasma TVs, the television entertainment has changed totally during the past five years or so.

In this context, DTH, being a superior technology which offers seamless supply of digital/HD television channels, should be given some exclusive content. That is, DTH platform should have its own exclusive TV channels that are normally not available through the local cablewallah.

On the Broadcasting Bill and self-regulation:-

The MIB has been toying around with the idea of Broadcasting Bill and Self-regulation for more than five years. The logic is simple:-

Keep the programmes with violence, offensive content, and sex during late night hours(with advanced parental filtering in DTH STBs) and offer clean, harmonious programmes during daytime.

This is the type of programming code being followed globally and I recall the MIB Minister Hon'ble Ambika Soni's statement on improvisation of parental lock during last year.

Thank you very much,sir.

Mr Ronald Rodriguez, Goa.