

RESPONSE TO:-

**TRAI Consultation Paper on “Transparency in
Publishing of Tariff Offers”**

Dated – 27 November 2019

BY :-

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**Question 1: Whether TRAI should prescribe any format for publishing tariff?
Please support your answer with rationale.**

Answer - The essence of free market lies in not only the choices available to the consumer but also the information symmetry vis-à-vis the dynamism of the market which enables an informed exercise of choice. Publishing Tariff on the public forums and channels goes a long way in underlining the empowerment of consumers. However the lack of seamless and consistent disclosure hinders this very facet. To address this access issue, **TRAI must come up with a format for publishing tariff**. However the format here must here shall act as a standard which must not constrain the TSPs ability to advertise or the consumer's ability to readily make a choice with least hassle.

Question 2: If the answer to the Question 1 is yes, then please give your views regarding desirability of publishing tariffs on various modes of communication viz., TSP website/Portal, App, SMS, USSD message, Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Customer care centers, Sales outlets etc. If the answer to the question is that tariffs should be published on multiple channels as above, please state whether TRAI should prescribe a separate format for each channel. Please also suggest the essentials of the format for each channel.

Answer – We are of the opinion that there needs to be a **separation between format for Online and Offline modes of communication** (based on internet access) considering that various Modes of communication have their own modus operandi in terms of target audience/advertisement and marketing strategy. Hence the separate formats (guideline) must cater to the distinctiveness of the mode and the consumers' ability to access a particular mode of communication. For instance, a farmer using a feature phone who desires to access Tariff plans must receive sufficient information through SMS/USSD mode.

Question 3: Whether the extant format prescribed for publishing tariff at TSP's website conveys the relevant information to consumers in a simple yet effective

manner? If no, please provide the possible ways in which the same can be made more effective?

Answer- The already existing directions (Format C of Direction under Section 13 read with Section 11(1)(b) of TRAI Act 1997 regarding Publication/Advertisement of tariffs for consumer information. with respect to publishing of Tariff) is not precise and explicit, particularly for prepaid consumers. We propose that instead of using phrase like “Details of the Plan including recharge coupons available”, specific parameters may be prescribed for revealing information by TSPs on their website. An Indicative table of such parameters is given below (the list is not exhaustive)

1 st Click	Plan Category (Data, Voice or SMS) , Price , Validity , Benefits
2 nd Click	Data Available per day, Call rates(domestic/inter TSPs) , SMS(per day)
3 rd Click	Call rates(international/landlines) , Speed after data limit exhaustion , Hidden Charges

All the information must be furnished within these 3 clicks.

Question 4: Whether the service providers be required to publish all the tariff offerings and vouchers in addition to the publishing of tariff plans, in the prescribed format? Please provide rationale for your response.

Answer- Yes, this enables an informed choice making and will aid consumer empowerment. The table indicated above can be used for the same.

Question 5: Whether there is a need to mandate TSPs to introduce a tariff calculator tool to convey the effective cost of enrolment and continued subscription? If yes, what can be the essential features of such a tool? If the answer is in negative, then please give reasons for not mandating such a tool.

Answer – Yes, this would go a long way in enhancing consumer experience by providing customized tariff plans, which may provide greater value for money. The tool may take customer daily consumption requirements in terms of Data, Voice, SMS, Validity requirements etc as input and may suggest most suitable tariff plan.

However, publishing of the tariff plan and Tariff plan calculator must be simultaneously placed on the TSP website so as to provide a free choice to consumer. In addition, introduction of tariff calculator must not impact the structure of the current tariff plan.

Question 6: Whether the service providers be asked to disclose clearly the implications of discontinuation of tariff plan after expiry of mandatory tariff protection period of six months on the provision of non-telecom services offered as a part of the bundle at the time of subscription to a particular plan? If yes, what should be the exact details that service providers may be required to provide in case of bundled offerings? If the answer is in negative, then please give reasons for not mandating such a disclosure.

Answer- Yes, a disclosure must be transparently and explicitly Conditions are subject to change after mandatory period of 6 months. However, the TSPs must provide with remedial action in case of discontinuation of an existing tariff plan and any compensation (in terms of services or monetary) if any.

Question 7: Whether the service providers be required to provide a declaration while reporting tariffs to TRAI and displaying tariffs through its various channels that there are no terms and conditions applicable to a tariff offering other than those disclosed here? Do we require additional measures to ensure that all the terms and conditions are clearly communicated to the subscribers and the Authority? If the answer to the above is yes, then please provide your suggestions in detail. If you do not agree with the above requirement, please provide detailed reasons for the same.

Answer – Yes TSPs should provide a declaration regarding the same. Any information contained in terms and condition must be a part of format (guidelines) of disclosure of tariff plan as given in earlier comments.

Question 8: Whether the service providers be required to publish details of all plans in the prescribed format including the plans not on offer for subscription but active otherwise? Please support your answer with rationale.

Answer- Yes, it must be published although it must be distinguishably marked that the plan is active but not available for subscription. Different markers like different color/Font must be used for such plans display.

Question 9: Whether the service providers be required to update the information on point of sale and retail outlets simultaneously with the launch/change of a tariff offer?

Answer- Yes the updation of changes in Tariff at PoS (assuming all PoS are registered with TSPs) and retail outlets must be done within a time frame which must be decided mutually through a consultative process between all TSPs and TRAI. This is much needed to bridge the gap between the online and offline customers who are dependent upon the PoS for Tariff information.

Question 10: Whether the tariffs published in prescribed formats are displayed on websites of the service providers in an effective manner? If no, should the manner of display on website may also be prescribed by the Authority? If it is felt that the manner of display on website may be prescribed by the Authority, please give your views on the proposed display framework.

Answer – As mentioned early, the prescribed format for website publishing are too minimalistic which leaves too much scope for ambiguity. While over prescription of format must be avoided, to provide greater space for advertisement and freedom to sell tariff plans in a highly competitive ecosystem.

Question 11: What are your views on introduction of concept of unique id and requiring the service providers to link the tariff advertisements etc. with corresponding tariffs published in TRAI prescribed formats including requirements to publish dates of implementation of tariff and that of reporting of tariff. Do you think that any other safeguards need to be introduced? If yes, please elaborate. Please support your answer with rationale.

Answer – It is a good initiative. It removes issue of duplication of tariff plans, ease of regulation of tariffs.

The unique ID once assigned by TRAI to a tariff plan ensures that the change/introduction of tariff plan has gone through the regulatory process of free market competition parameters. However the period over which the Unique ID must be assigned must be decided through a consultative process so as to ensure that the freedom of TSPs to change tariffs is not curtailed in the current dynamic scenario in the telecom sector.

Question 12: Whether the proposed monitoring and compliance mechanism is enough to deter any violation of compliance with applicable regulations/directions? If no, please suggest further safeguards that may be introduced to ensure a robust monitoring and compliance mechanism.

Answer – Yes, mechanisms in place are sufficient to check violation. But timely implementation of safeguards must be looked into. Further in future, any monitoring mechanism must be evolved only via a consultative process with TSPs. This will not only ensure voluntary compliance but also check any fear of over regulation.

Question 13: Any other issue relevant to the subject discussed in the consultation paper may be highlighted.

Answer – Harmonization of tariff publishing on DTH connection and other mode of communication is an issue which needs addressing to ensure a uniform and seamless