

Reliance Communications Ltd. (RCOM) Response to Draft Telecom Consumers Protection (Eighth Amendment) Regulations, 2015

Preamble

The rise in internet services on mobile phones in India has reflected a paradigm shift in the usage pattern of mobile phones from traditional voice and SMS services to internet/data services. Citizens of all ages are becoming more tech savvy and are using smart phones equipped with 2G, 3G and 4G connections for video and audio chatting, online entertainment & music downloads, connecting to friends and families through social networking, playing online games, keep tab on stock markets, downloading various personalized applications etc. In fact, India has become the largest market for some of the mass communication OTT services like Facebook, LinkedIn, Google services, whatsApp etc. This proliferation of internet, **so very important for the 'Digital India' vision envisaged by the government**, has been a reality because of affordable internet/data services provided by TSPs to their subscribers.

Telecom operators have designed various tariff plans based on the usage pattern and requirements of their postpaid and prepaid subscribers. Customized, bundled data packs and special tariff vouchers have also complemented the increase in data services over the years. However, we feel that **the Draft Telecom Consumers Protection (Eighth Amendment) Regulations 2015, if implemented, may become counterproductive to the growth of data services in the Country.** In view of the above we would like to submit as below:

Executive summary

- **Enough safeguards are already available today to inform subscribers about their data usage and there is no need to intimate them after every 5 MB consumption.**
- **Existing Direction dt. 27th July 2012 for broadband subscribers may be made applicable for Mobile internet subscribers i.e. Subscribers may be intimated about their usage once they reaches 80% of the plan utilization followed by re-intimation once it reaches 100%.**
- **Charges post 100% utilization, if applicable will be intimated upon 100% consumption of data limit.**
- **Enable Deactivation and Reactivation of data services through toll free short code 1925 either by request through SMS or dial mode.**
- **Provide information to customers about short code 1925 through welcome message during activation of mobile connection.**
- **Publish on the website of service provider the details of short code 1925**

- Intimate to subscribers about such short code 1925 every 6 months.

Our point wise comments on the TRAI in its draft recommendations are submitted below:

1. **Information to consumer (through SMS or USSD) who have subscribed to data connections other than through data packs relating to usage of data and the tariff thereof after every 5000 kilobytes of data usage.**

RCOM Response:

As per the TRAI Regulation on Consumer Protection dated 6th January 2012 operators are already providing the usage information after every data session, to all of its pre-paid subscribers based on their usage. This gives choice to the customer to decide the usage of voice and data services at his discretion. We believe that the said Regulation provides enough safeguards and are adequate to address the usage & charging related concerns of the subscribers. We would also like to inform TRAI that there are technical challenges involved in providing the cumulative data that is being used by the prepaid subscriber during their validity period.

Our Recommendations:

Enough safeguards are already available today to inform subscribers about their data usage and there is no need to intimate them after every 5 MB data consumption.

2. **Information to consumers (through SMS or USSD) who have subscribed to data connections through data packs or through tariff plan with discounted tariff upto certain limit whenever the limit of data usage reaches 50%, 90% (along with applicable tariff beyond the data limit) and 100%.**

RCOM Response:

In order to cater to the variety of customer requirements, operators are offering various types of data packs and plans in the market. These packs are designed based on data consumptions and usage pattern of the subscribers. The consumers who are subscribing to such data packs are well informed and are aware of the applicable tariffs.

Further, TRAI's vide its direction dated 27th July 2012 has mandated all internet service providers including TSPs to intimate the broadband subscribers on utilization of 80% of their enrolled data limit along with the applicable tariff (in case of any changes) post consumption of 100% of the data limits, which is complied by all the service providers.

It is requested that instead of creating new set of regulation for mobile data users, TRAI may replicate the said Direction across all the mobile internet data subscribers. This shall allow the subscribers to make an appropriate usage of their mobile data plans based on their budgets.

Our Recommendations:

- **Existing Direction dt. 27th July 2012 for broadband subscribers may be made applicable for mobile internet subscribers i.e. Subscribers may be intimated about their usage once they reaches 80% of the plan utilization followed by re-intimation once it reaches 100%.**
 - **Charges post 100% utilization, if applicable, will be intimated upon 100% consumption of data limit.**
3. **Activation or Deactivation of data services through toll free short code 1925 and provide intimation to subscribers about such short codes every 6 months.**

RCOM Response:

Today, mobile internet data, in addition to voice and SMS service is one of the basic expectations/requirement of a customer who wishes to avail mobile connection. TSPs licence also defines data as bearer service, which is being offered along with Voice and SMS services.

With the proliferation of high speed 3G and 4G services and affordability of smart phones, internet on mobile phone has become a basic necessity, which a subscriber expects to avail as soon as his / her mobile number gets activated.

In fact, by enabling the data services to mobile customers, the TSPs are working together with the Government of India mission/vision in increasing internet and broadband penetration to all the users. This also supports the Govt. in achieving three core components of '**Digital India**' Initiative viz. Creation of Digital Infrastructure, Digital delivery of Services & providing Digital Literacy.

In view of the above, we believe that any restriction on activation of internet data over mobile phone shall hamper the growth of internet in the country.

Considering the subscribers' interest, RCOM has already implemented the services for Deactivation and Reactivation of data services for mobile subscribers through SMS on 1925 and is also in process of enabling the same through voice dialing.

Our Recommendations:

- **Enable Deactivation and Reactivation of data services through toll free short code 1925 either by request through SMS or IVR.**
- **Provide information to new customers about short code 1925 through welcome message during activation of mobile connection.**
- **Publish on the website of service provider the details of short code 1925.**
- **Intimate to subscribers about such short code 1925 every 6 months.**