

Reliance Digital TV's response to the Consultation Paper on "Distribution of TV Channels from Broadcasters to Platform operators"

1. Reliance Big TV is pleased to respond to the TRAI's consultation on Distribution of TV Channels from Broadcasters to Platform Operators. Aggregators operating as authorized agent for more than one broadcaster are vital for Platform Operators and overall growth of Broadcasting Industry.
2. The TV marketplace is characterized by a complete dominance of few broadcasters who have become even stronger as they have started collaborating by aggregating their channels and marketing under few entities called aggregators. The large disparity in the bargaining power of aggregators and various platform operators has further widened with aggregators representing more than one broadcaster.
3. The Aggregators create bouquets of TV channels from different broadcasters and offer them to the DTH operators. As these bouquet contains main popular content of all major broadcasters, DTH operators are left with no choice but to take them at terms decided by the aggregators. The concentration of market power is evident from the fact that 73% of the total pay TV market available today is controlled by the top four aggregators. Almost complete popular content is part of offerings from these 4 aggregators. The prevailing market structure has led to serious market distortions of market power.
4. The proposed Regulation to impose restriction on Aggregators that they cannot bundle TV channels of more than one broadcaster is absolute necessity. This stipulation would ensure that aggregators do not make bouquet of channels without even considering feasibility of its carriage on platforms. Due to irrational offerings at wholesale level, DTH operators are also burdened to prepare bouquets with mix of channels which consumers are wanting to watch with the undesirable channels. Consumers are also burdened due to irrational bundling by aggregators.

5. The unfair use of the negotiating power by these aggregators often results in dispute amongst these aggregator and DTH operators and outcome of such dispute is usually the discontinuation of major channels on temporarily or permanent basis. The discontinuation of channels forces the DTH operator to change the composition of its different bouquets and also deprive the DTH subscribers, who have opted these channels, from watching it.
6. The proposed regulations, would address the problem of disparity in the bargaining power of aggregators and various platform operators to some extent.
7. In view of the above, it is requested that TRAI should come with a regulations which restricts the consolidation of the major channels in hands of few large aggregators. This will increase the competition amongst the broadcasters and would also provide fair opportunity to consumers to take channels which only they desire to watch.
8. **In view of the above, we request the Authority (TRAI) to urgently notify draft Regulation so that the aggregators would not be able to bundle TV channels from more than one broadcaster.**