



# Empowering the Customer

An Association for Communications Users in  
Bahrain

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13<sup>th</sup> October 2008

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- The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), established by Decree No. 48 of 2002 as an independent body with duties and powers including:
  - protecting the interests of subscribers and users, and
  - promoting effective and fair competition among established and new licensed operators.
- To provide consumers with:
  - Choice of supplier
  - Choice of services
  - Fair terms
  - Value for money
  - What has TRA done to achieve this?....

## *Provide Choice through issuing Licences*

	Operator Name	National Fixed	International Calls	Mobile	Internet	Leased line	Other data services
1	2Connect	√	√		√	√	√
2	ANIS		√				
3	Batelco	√	√	√	√	√	√
4	BT Solutions LTD						√
5	Business Communication Networks		√				
6	Etisalcom	√	√		√	√	√
7	Fakhro IT Services		√				
8	Fastelco ( TeleGulf)		√				
9	Kalaam Telecom	√	√		√	√	√
10	Light Speed	√	√		√	√	√
11	Mena Telecom		√		√		
12	Northstar		√		√		
13	Nuetel Communications	√	√		√	√	
14	Orbit		√		√		
15	Viacloud		√				
16	Zain (Bahrain)	√	√	√	√		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>

## ***Ensured connectivity***

- Customers of one operator must be able to contact customers of all other operators – nationally or internationally
- To achieve this TRA has set condition for interconnection of network – Terms, conditions & Costs
- Customers must be able to access services of any other operator via:
  - Carrier selection, pre selection, free phone, premium charge services
  - TRA has set conditions for access to Batelco's infrastructure:
    - » Local loop
    - » Leased lines
    - » International access
- But what about prices...

## ***Agreed the wholesale prices***

- TRA has the powers to set retail prices of dominant operator but has chosen to let competition determine prices
- However TRA does review proposed tariffs of Batelco to ensure that they are not anti competitive which might result in a short term gain but a long term loss for consumers
- TRA does however ensure that the prices that Batelco charges other operators to use their network are cost based so as to allow operators to compete at a service level
- New operators can and do build their own competing infrastructure but access to Batelco's core network enables them to have a choice of building or buying infrastructure
- The aim is to be efficient in resources and hence offer efficient prices
- The aim is to enable operators to compete and in doing so offer better value for money to encourage consumers to select their services

## ***Provided the facilities to change suppliers***

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- Customers must be able to change suppliers easily:
  - Number Portability
  - No lock in contracts
  - Inform customers of the quality of service performance
- TRA uses its legal powers .....

1. Issue regulations, orders and determinations
2. Monitor and investigate compliance with, regulations, orders and determinations
3. Give final decisions as to applications for Licences
4. Monitor and enforce compliance with Licence terms by Licensees
5. Set and collect fees and, fines for services provided by the Authority
6. Co-ordinate Telecommunications Frequency Assignments
7. Examine complaints and resolve disputes arising between Licensees, Subscribers and any other Person involved in the Telecommunications industry

But TRA can only do so much it is down to the customer to take advantage of what has been created....

## ***Purchasers' Power***

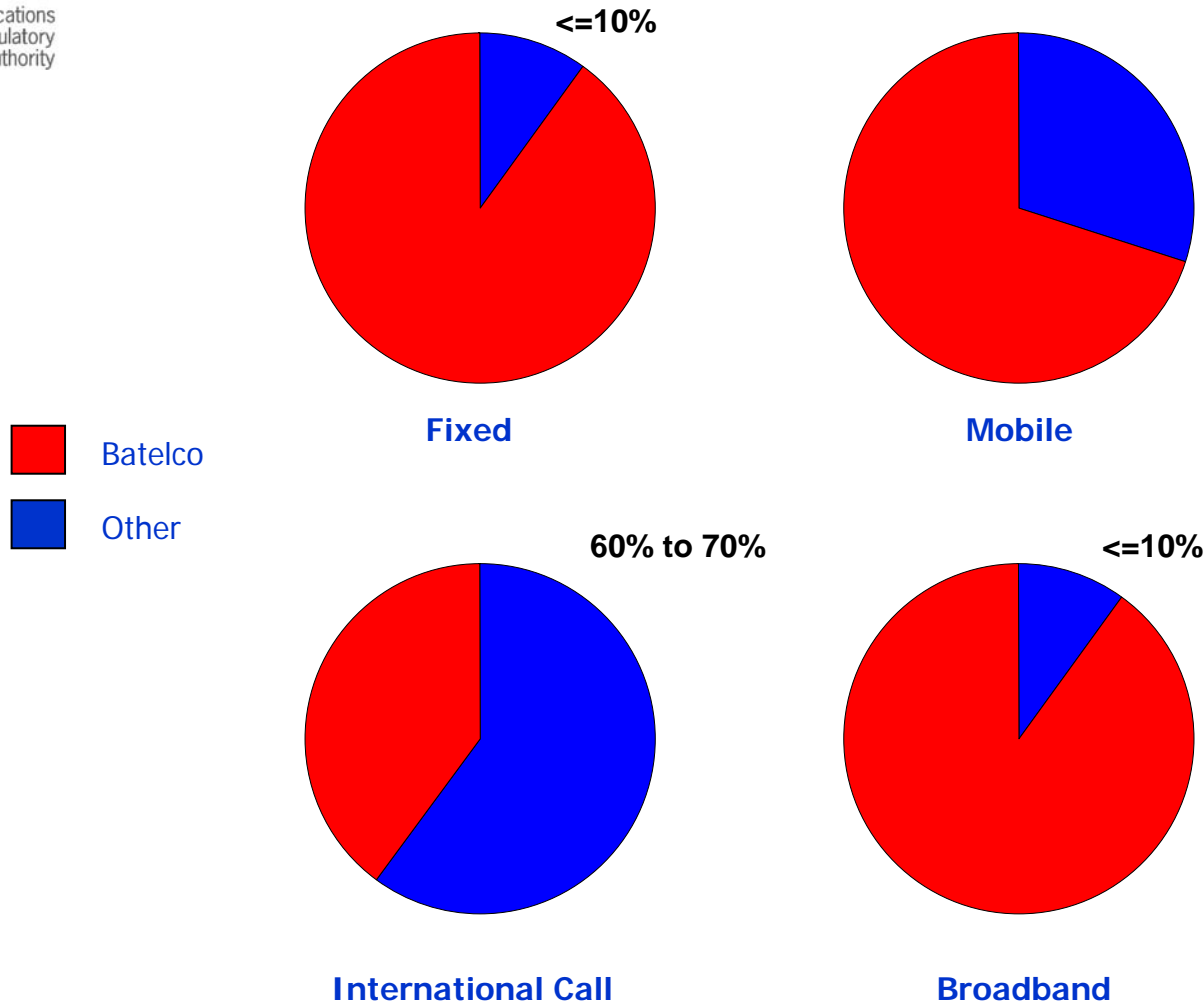
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- Purchasers' power is potentially by far greater than TRA are the collective power of the purchasers
  - Residential “Consumer”
  - Business Customer
- The Citizen – Taking a position supporting the Nation
- To assist in this process TRA established the Advisory Groups...

- The primary function of the Advisory Groups is to provide independent advice to TRA on the users' interest related to:
  - Telecommunications services
  - Telecommunications products
- Two Groups have been established to represent two main constituents::
  - Advise on matters relating to the interests of different consumers including the older people, people with disabilities, low-income households, etc.
  - Advise on matters relating to the interests of different business users including the companies, medium–small business, and individual establishments
- From these groups TRA is receiving:
  - Feedback and opinion on TRA proposed Regulations and Decisions
  - Opinion as to the issues being faced by the constituents being represented
  - Support in the ongoing awareness programs in the area of consumer protection

## *But we need to do more*

The following pie charts present approximated market share ranges for selected high level markets



**30%**  
Zain public statement

Our collective challenge is to achieve a growing telecommunications market in order to achieve a win-win position with sustainable competition and a strong national player - Batelco

- Make sure they inform themselves of their:
  - bills,
  - rights and obligations in your contract or terms and conditions of sale,
  - Options
- Use competitive tendering for services
- Have diversity of supply
- Keep a record of all correspondence
- Bring concerns to the provider
- If not satisfied contact TRA by:
  - phone
  - Email
  - Fax
- Participate in Consumer Advisory Groups and surveys



## ***Proposed wider industry group***

- We need to harness the energies of all Customers
- Everyone must understand that they have a choice
- That they need not take what is given to them
- All Businesses should work together to encourage operators to provide better quality of service, higher speeds of access and match the growing needs of their businesses
- Today we will hear the experience of one of the most experienced Association of communications customers, the CMA of the UK
- An association which has harnessed consumers power by bringing together individuals representing large and small business to lobby Suppliers, Regulator and Government
- Resulting in a better deal for customers

- TRA's roles and responsibilities – to support fair competition and protect customer rights – International best practice tuned to Bahrain market
- Current state of the telecommunications market in Bahrain – come a long way but much more can be done – choice & growth in services and usage
- Actions are being taken by TRA to improve services – Greater choice and lower barrier to change
- Residential and business customers being made aware – use the power to choose to stimulate competition
- An active association of communications users can greatly assist in the process of market development

- Liberalisation has greatly assisted in directly growing the telecommunications market in terms of revenues and employment as well as supported economic development in all other sectors
- The Bahrain market is far from saturated when it comes to communications usage
- We have a growing choice in electronic highways
- Now we have to grow our use of them for social and economic benefit
- We have to increase the use of ICT in all walks of life
- We have to educate customers to use the electronic highways to support economic growth in an environmentally friendly way
- An Business Association focused on Communication matters will assist in empowering the customer and overall improving choice, quality and value for money



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