

Telecommunication Market *Consumer prospective*

Wafa Al-Mansoori
Bahrain Consumer protection Society

The main reason behind the liberation of the communication market is to insure that the consumers receive the best service quality at low price

TRA Duties

- ◆ To protect the interest of the subscribers and users in respect of:
 - The tariffs charged for service.
 - Availability and provision of service.
 - Quality of services.
 - Protection of personal particulars and privacy of services

United Nation Guidelines for consumer Protection

1. Physical Safety.
2. Promotion and protection of economic interest of consumers.
3. Standards for the safety and quality of consumer goods and services.
4. Distribution facilities for consumer goods and services.

United Nation Guidelines for consumer Protection (cont.)

5. Measures enabling consumers to obtain redress.
6. Education and information programs.
7. Promotion of sustainable consumption.
8. Measures relating to specific areas.

Education and Information Programs

- ◆ An informed consumer is an empowered consumer.
- ◆ It is essential to educate the consumer about his/her rights of choice when it has been under monopoly for a long time.
- ◆ Specific educational mass media awareness campaigns are needed.

Consumer Information

- ◆ Help customer to make informed choice when selecting a service.
- ◆ Help customer to understand their service and rate plans such as Peak, off peak units and hours; Minutes or seconds; Roving; Etc.....
- ◆ Use TRA Web site (FAQ & Guides) to supply information to consumers

Consumer Safety

- ◆ **Telecommunications Equipment Type Approval:**
 - Manual (English)
 - International Standards ???
 - No specific safety marking is required but internationally agreed safety marks must be presented.
- ◆ **Communication Law; section 3-C**

The authority shall have the power to:

 - Adopt and publish technical specifications and standards for the import and use of telecommunications equipments

Consumer Safety (cont.)

- ◆ Communication Law; section 3-C (Cont.)

The authority shall have the power to:

- issue approvals or entrust that to others, for the use of telecom. equip. for which no specifications or standards have been issued by the Authority

Complaints and Disputes

- ◆ TRA consumer information site:
 - Complaints: There is no information about any complaint that has been received yet processed by the TRA
 - TRA Investigations: Coming Soon

Complaints and Disputes (Cont.)

- ◆ There is a need to inform the consumer about the role of the TRA as a body to solve disputes
- ◆ List of formal complaints and their outcomes should be available to the consumer
- ◆ Information about major carriers such as web pages and toll-free numbers should be available.

Consumer Privacy

- ◆ Initiating Do-Not Call List
- ◆ Blocking access to unwanted services.
- ◆ Disclosing consumer information only with his/her authorization.

Consumer Privacy (Cont.)

- ◆ Regulating operators “win-back” calls and messages
- ◆ Regulating Operators SMS messaging times.

Consumer Economic Interest

- ◆ Any regulation should be based on a market study.
- ◆ The telecommunication law allows the TRA to “contract with a third party and co-operate with specialized agencies, academic or technical institutes and advisory committee”.

Bahrain Internet Exchange (BIX)

- ◆ Was established on the 13 of Aug. 2003
- ◆ TRA started licensing ISPs since 2002
- ◆ Objectives of BIX:
 - Reduce costs on operators as well as end-users
 - Increase the speed of the service
 - Increase local traffic and contents

Final Remarks

- ◆ A major mass-media campaign is needed to educate consumers about new changes in the market, their rights, responsibilities and choices
- ◆ There is a need to study the telecommunication consumer issues and produce data that can help decision makers to regulate the industry.