



भारतीय दूरसंचार विनियामक प्राधिकरण
TELECOM REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF INDIA
भारत सरकार / Government of India



Dated 02nd June, 2023

DIRECTION

Subject: Direction under section 13, read with sub-clauses (i) and (v) of clause (b) of sub-section (1) of section 11, of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997 (24 of 1997) regarding implementation of Digital Consent Acquisition under Telecom Commercial Communications Customer Preference Regulations, 2018 (6 of 2018).

F. No. RG-25/(6)/2022-QoS - Whereas the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (hereinafter referred as the "Authority"), established under sub-section (1) of section 3 of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997 (24 of 1997) (hereinafter referred to as "TRAI Act"), has been entrusted with discharge of certain functions, inter alia, to regulate the telecommunication services; ensure technical compatibility and effective inter-connection between different service providers; lay-down the standards of quality of service to be provided by the service providers and ensure the quality of service and conduct the periodical survey of such services provided by the service providers so as to protect the interest of the consumers of telecommunication service;

2. And whereas the Authority, in exercise of the powers conferred upon it under section 36, read with sub-clause (v) of clause (b) and clause(c) of subsection (1) of section 11, of the TRAI Act, made the Telecom Commercial Communications Customer Preference Regulations, 2018 (6 of 2018) dated the 19th July, 2018 (hereinafter referred to as the "regulations"), to regulate Unsolicited Commercial Communications (UCC);

3. And whereas regulation 3 of the regulations provides that every Access Provider shall ensure that any commercial communication using its network only takes place using registered headers assigned to the sender for the purpose of commercial communication;

4. And whereas regulation 5 of the regulations, inter alia, provides that every Access Provider shall develop or cause to develop an ecosystem to regulate the delivery of the commercial communications as provided for in the regulations, which includes facility to record consents of the subscribers acquired by the senders for sending commercial communication and maintain complete and accurate records of the consents, facility for revocation of consent by its subscribers and accordingly update records of consent for the Subscribers, and to comply with any other directions, guidelines and instructions issued by the Authority in this regard;

5. And whereas sub-regulation (1) of regulation 6, inter alia, provides that every Access Provider shall establish Customer Preference Registration Facility and make necessary arrangements to facilitate its customers, on 24 hours and 7 days basis, throughout the year, to provide ways and means to record consent or record revocation of consent related to commercial communication;

6. And whereas regulation 9 of the regulations, inter alia, provides that every Access Provider shall ensure that no commercial communication is made to any recipient, except as per the preferences or digitally registered consents registered in accordance with the regulations;
7. And whereas regulation 11 of the regulations, inter alia, provides that every Access Provider shall give due publicity through appropriate means to make the customers aware regarding the procedures and facilities for registration of preferences, registration and revocation of consents, and the procedures and facilities for making complaints or reporting UCC;
8. And whereas regulation 12 of the regulations, inter alia, provides that Access Providers shall deploy, maintain and operate a system, by themselves or through delegation, to record preferences, consents, revocation of consents, complaints, etc., and to carry out pre-check and post-checks in respect of commercial communication being offered for delivery and also to keep records of actions performed;
9. And whereas, regulation 17 of the regulations provides that the Authority may direct Access Providers to make changes, at any time, in the Code of Practice and Access Provider shall incorporate such changes and submit revised Code of Practice within fifteen days from the date of directions issued in this regard;
10. And whereas sub-item (2) of item 4 of Schedule I to the regulations, inter alia, provides that every Access Provider shall carry out Consent Registration Functions as provided in the regulations, which reads as under:-

"4. Every Access Provider shall carry out following functions: -

....

(2) Consent Registration Function (CRF)

- (a) record consent via Customer Consent Acquisition Functionality on Consent Register, on its own or through its agents, to facilitate consent acquirers to record the consent taken from the customers in a robust manner which is immutable and non-repudiable and as specified by relevant regulations;*
- (b) Presenting content of consent acquisition template to the customer before taking consent;*
- (c) Taking agreement to the purpose of consent and details of sender;*
- (d) Authenticate customer giving the consent through OTP;*
- (e) record revocation of consent by the customer via revoke request in a robust manner which is immutable and nonrepudiable and as specified by relevant regulations;*
- (f) record sufficient contact information, valid for at least 30 days, required to revoke consent and present it to recipient to enable them to submit request for revoking consent;"*

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02/06/2023

11. And whereas sub-item (4) of item 4 of Schedule I to the regulations, inter alia, provides that every Access Provider shall carry out Scrubbing Functions (SF) to process Scrubbing as defined in the regulations, in a secure and safe manner, using preferences and consent of customers and category of content;

12. And whereas sub-item (1) of item 6 of Schedule I to the regulations, inter alia, provides that every Access Provider shall ensure that content of any Commercial Communication sent by the senders shall be categorized and compared with the list of preferences of the recipient and/or purpose of consent given by the recipient to the sender for the purpose of Scrubbing as provided in the regulations and the relevant provisions of the said item reads as under;

"6. Every Access Provider shall ensure that

(1) content of any commercial communication sent by the sender(s) shall be categorized and compared with the list of preference(s) of the recipient and/or purpose of consent given by the recipient to the sender for the purpose of scrubbing and for this purpose access provider shall ensure that-

(a) any commercial communication through its network takes place only using registered content template(s) for transaction and/ or content template(s) for promotion;

(b) ...

(c) ...

(d) Every Access Provider shall suffix relevant information required to revoke the consent to the text of promotional message;

(e) ..."

13. And whereas item 7 of Schedule II to the regulations, inter alia, provides that every Access Provider shall establish facility for revoking the consent by its customers and the relevant provisions of the said item reads as under:-

"7. Every Access Provider shall establish facility for revoking the consent by its customers and shall make necessary arrangements: -

(1) to receive request, from the customer, for revoking the consent, if any, given by the recipient to the sender or to the consent acquirer for the purpose of receiving a commercial communication message or voice call;

(2) to provide modes, free of cost, to the customer, as per his choice, to revoke consent either by: -

(i) sending SMS to short code 1909 with Label <Revoke> and <Sender ID> or to telephone number mentioned in the message or during the voice call received from the sender(s); or

(ii) calling on 1909 or number mentioned for revoking the consent during the voice call received from the sender(s); or

(iii) calling on customer care number; or

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- (iv) Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS); or
- (v) Mobile app developed in this regard either by the Authority or by any other person or entity and approved by the Authority; or
- (vi) Web portal with authentication through OTP; or
- (vii) Any other means as may be notified by the Authority from time to time."

14. And whereas, the Authority has observed that:-

- (a) promotional messages are being sent without scrubbing (verification) of the consents of the customers registered, and further, these messages are being sent under the Service Message category;
- (b) Access Providers have not developed uniform process for registering the consent of the subscribers, as envisaged in the regulations;
- (c) the consents acquired by the Principal Entities are being used by the Access Providers without re-verification and updation as provided for in the regulations;
- (d) Digital Consent Acquisition and Revocation facilities are yet to be developed and to be deployed by the Access Providers;

15. Now, therefore, the Authority, in exercise of the powers conferred upon it under section 13, read with sub-clause (v) of clause (b) of sub-section (1) of section 11, of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997 (24 of 1997), hereby directs all Access Providers to-

- (a) ensure that no promotional messages are sent without scrubbing of the consent and preference of the customers;
- (b) ensure that no promotional messages are sent under the Service Message category;
- (c) develop and deploy, within two months, from the date of issue of this Direction, Digital Consent Acquisition(DCA) facility to-
 - (i) enable subscribers to record their consents and revoke the same as given in the regulations,
 - (ii) ensure that short code 127xxx(or any other code as prescribed by the Authority) shall be used by all the Access Providers for sending consent seeking message.
 - (iii) develop a SMS/IVR/Online facility to register unwillingness of the customers to receive any consent seeking message initiated by any Principal Entity and whitelist the telephone numbers of such customers and that no consent seeking message shall be delivered to such customers;
 - (iv) ensure that the scope and Principal Entity/Brand name is mentioned clearly in the consent seeking message sent through the short code;

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- (v) ensure that Principal Entities whitelist existing URLs/APKs/OTT links/Call Back number within one month after development of Digital Consent Acquisition facility and after that only whitelisted URLs/APKs/OTT links/Call Back number and others as may be specified by the Authority from time to time shall be used in the consent seeking messages;
 - (vi) ensure that the consent acquisition confirmation message to the customers shall also have information related to revocation of the consent;
 - (vii) ensure that if a customer has rejected or not responded to the consent seeking requests, no such messages to the customer shall be initiated by the same Principal Entity for next ninety (90) days for the same consent. However, customers shall have the right to initiate the consent registration request at their own;
 - (viii) ensure that Principal Entity initiated consent acquisition process should begin only one month after the Digital Consent Acquisition Facility is fully functional and advertised or 30 days after successful implementation of DCA, whichever is earlier, and until then, only customer-initiated consent acquisition process shall be followed;
 - (ix) ensure that in the first month after the commencement of the Principal Entity initiated Consent Acquisition process, Principal Entities belonging to the Banking, Insurance, Finance and Trading related sectors are on-boarded to initiate Consent Acquisition process and the remaining sector shall be on-boarded in next two months;
 - (x) educate the Principal Entities about the process of taking consent and its verification through Access Providers and facilitate the on-boarding of Principal Entities;
 - (xi) give wide publicity through various media including print media to the Digital Consent Acquisition/Revocation/whitelisting process so that end users are aware of it;
 - (xii) no other mode of consent acquisition process shall be adopted after successful implementation of the DCA platform, as per schedule below and
- (d) update the Code of Practice within fifteen days from date of issue of this direction, ensure compliance of the above direction as per the timelines given below and submit monthly progress report in the format as may be prescribed by the Authority.

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02/06/2023

Timelines for implementation for the Direction

(i)	Development and Deployment of the Digital Consent acquisition facility	By 31 st July 2023
(ii)	User initiated consent acquisition	To start from 1 st August 2023
(iii)	Whitelisting of existing URLs/APKs/OTT/Links/call-back numbers	By 31 st August 2023
(iv)	PE initiated consent acquisition	To start from 1 st September 2023
(v)	On-boarding of Principal Entities belonging to the Banking, Insurance, Finance and Trading sectors	By 30 th September 2023
(vi)	On-boarding of Principal Entities belonging to remaining sectors	By 30 th November 2023

Jaipal Singh 02/06/2023
(Jaipal Sing Tomar)
Advisor (QoS-II)

To,

All Access Providers (including M/s Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited and M/s Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited)



भारतीय दूरसंचार विनियामक प्राधिकरण
TELECOM REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF INDIA
भारत सरकार / Government of India



12th May, 2023

DIRECTION

Subject : Direction under section 13, read with sub clauses (i) and (v) of clause (b) of sub-section(1) of section 11, of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997(24 of 1997) regarding measures to curb misuse of Headers and Content Templates under Telecom Commercial Communication Customer Preference Regulation, 2018 (6 of 2018)

F. No. RG-25/(6)/2022-QoS - Whereas the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (hereinafter referred as the "Authority"), established under sub-section (1) of section 3 of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997 (24 of 1997) (hereinafter referred to as "TRAI Act"), has been entrusted with discharge of certain functions, inter-alia, to regulate the telecommunication services; ensure technical compatibility and effective inter-connection between different service providers; lay-down the standards of quality of service to be provided by the service providers and ensure the quality of service and conduct the periodical survey of such services provided by the service providers so as to protect the interest of the consumers of telecommunication service;

2. And whereas the Authority, in exercise of the powers conferred upon it under section 36, read with sub-clause (v) of clause (b) and clause(c) of sub-section (1) of section 11, of the TRAI Act, made the Telecom Commercial Communications Customer Preference Regulations, 2018 (6 of 2018) dated the 19th July, 2018 (hereinafter referred to as the "regulations"), to regulate unsolicited commercial communications;

3. And whereas regulation 17 of the regulations provide that the Authority may direct Access Providers to make changes, at any time, in CoPs and Access Providers shall incorporate such changes and submit revised CoPs within fifteen days from the date of direction issued in this regard;

4. And whereas, the Authority, in exercise of the powers conferred upon it under section 13, read with sub-clauses (i) and (v) of clause (b) of sub-section (1) of section 11 of the TRAI Act and the provisions of the regulations, issued a Direction No.RG-25/(6)/2022-QoS dated 16th Feb, 2023 to all Access Providers pertaining to headers and content template, and a copy of the said direction is enclosed as Annexure to this Direction;

5. And whereas after the issue of the said Direction dated 16th February, 2023, the Authority received representations, not brought to the notice of the Authority in earlier discussions including discussion in JCOR, from various Principal Entities and Access Providers, stating, inter alia, that -

(a) there are quite good number of genuine templates, like templates for IRCTC Ticketing information, Stock Trading information, information with respect of sugarcane procurement and settlement, etc., which require more than three variables and hence limit of upto three variables in content template is not sufficient to convey the intended message to the recipients; and

(b) certain variables, such as names, addresses, etc., require more than thirty characters, as such not allowing two consecutive variables restricts the completeness of information in respect of name, address, etc.;

6. And whereas after examination of the aforesaid representations, the Authority has observed that -

(a) there is a need to review the maximum number of variables and their placements allowed in a content template; and

(b) at the same time, there is also a requirement to keep a check on usage of variables so as to ensure that the intent/information of the original message, for which the content template was approved, is not changed by the intermediaries;

7. Now, therefore, in continuation of its earlier direction dated 16th February 2023, the Authority, in exercise of the powers conferred upon it under section 13, read with sub-clauses(i) and (v) of clause (b) of sub-section (1) of section 11, of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997(24 of 1997) and the provisions of the Telecom Commercial Communications Customer Preference Regulations, 2018 (6 of 2018) hereby directs all the Access Providers to-

(a) allow, in special circumstances and on requisition with reasons and proper justification from Principal Entity, more than three variables in the content templates, with the condition that-

(i) after examining the sample message, reasons and proper justification for more variables shall be recorded by the competent authority designated by the Access Provider for this purpose and such authority shall be different from the authority designated for the approval of content templates;

(ii) each variable in the message template should be pre-tagged for the purpose it is proposed to be used and no information other than those defined in pre-tagging shall be included in the variables;

(iii) minimum thirty percent characters in the content template shall be fixed content;

- (b) allow, where it is not possible to put the contents of a variable within the limit of thirty characters, more than one contiguous variable of the same type, after proper examination and justifications supported by sample message;
- (c) ensure the use of only whitelisted URLs/Apks/OTT links/call back numbers in the content template;
- (d) ensure that, in case of an URL containing both fixed and variable parts, the fixed part of URL is whitelisted;
- (e) monitor the use of content templates and further, stop any misuse of special templates; and
- (f) update the Code of Practice accordingly within fifteen days and furnish compliance report of the above direction within forty five days from date of issue of this direction.

Jaipal Singh
(Jaipal Singh Tomar)
Advisor (QoS-II)
12/05/2023

To

All Access Providers (including BSNL and MTNL)

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भारतीय दूरसंचार विनियामक प्राधिकरण
TELECOM REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF INDIA
भारत सरकार / Government of India



Dated : 16th February, 2023

DIRECTION

Subject: Direction under section 13, read with sub-clauses (i) and (v) of clause (b) of sub-section (1) of section 11, of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997 (24 of 1997) regarding measures to curb misuse of Headers and Content Templates under Telecom Commercial Communication Customer Preference Regulation, 2018 (6 of 2018).

F. No. RG-25/(6)/2022-QoS - Whereas the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (hereinafter referred as the "Authority"), established under sub-section (1) of section 3 of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997 (24 of 1997) (hereinafter referred to as "TRAI Act"), has been entrusted with discharge of certain functions, inter alia, to regulate the telecommunication services; ensure technical compatibility and effective inter-connection between different service providers; lay-down the standards of quality of service to be provided by the service providers and ensure the quality of service and conduct the periodical survey of such services provided by the service providers so as to protect the interest of the consumers of telecommunication service;

2. And whereas the Authority, in exercise of the powers conferred upon it under section 36, read with sub-clause (v) of clause (b) and clause(c) of sub-section (1) of section 11, of the TRAI Act, made the Telecom Commercial Communications Customer Preference Regulations, 2018 (6 of 2018) dated the 19th July, 2018 (hereinafter referred to as the "regulations"), to regulate unsolicited commercial communications;

3. And whereas regulation 3 of the regulations provides that every Access Provider shall ensure that any commercial communication using its network only takes place using registered headers assigned to the sender for the purpose of commercial communication;

4. And whereas regulation 5 of the regulations, inter alia, provides that every Access Provider shall develop or cause to develop an ecosystem to regulate the delivery of the commercial communications as provided for in the regulations and to comply with any other directions, guidelines and instructions issued by the Authority in this regard;

5. And whereas regulation 8 of the regulations, inter alia, provides that every Access Provider shall, before allowing any commercial communication through its network, develop Codes of Practice (hereinafter referred to as "CoPs") for

Entities of ecosystem (CoP- Entities) as per Schedule-I and develop CoP for Unsolicited Commercial Communications Detection (CoP-UCC_Detect) as per Schedule-IV, register entities as provided for in the CoP for Entities and register Senders and assign the headers/ header roots;

6. And whereas sub-regulation (3) of regulation 12 of the regulations provides that Access Providers shall deploy, maintain and operate a system, by themselves or through delegation, to register persons, business entities or legal entities in making Commercial Communication through its network involved from origination, transmission or delivery and have adequate documentary evidence in support to provide their identities;

7. And whereas item 4 (1) of Schedule I to the regulations provides that every Access Provider shall carry out Header Registration functions as provided in the regulations and the relevant provisions of the said item reads as under-

"4. Every Access Provider shall carry out following functions: -

1. Header Registration Function (HRF)

....

(b) carry out pre-verifications of documents and credentials submitted by an individual, business entity or legal entity requesting for assigning of the header;

(c) bind with a mobile device and mobile number(s), in a secure and safe manner, which shall be used subsequently on regular intervals for logins to the sessions by the header assignee;

....

(f) carry out additional checks for look-alike headers which may mislead to a common recipient of commercial communication, it may also include proximity checks, similarity after substring swaps specifically in case of government entities, corporate(s), well-known brands while assigning headers irrespective of current assignments of such headers, and to follow specific directions, orders or instructions, if any, issued from time to time by the Authority;"

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8. And whereas item 4 (3) of Schedule I to the regulations provides that every Access Provider shall carry out Content Template Registration functions as provided in the regulations and the relevant provisions of the said item reads as under-

"4. Every Access Provider shall carry out following functions: -

....

(3) Content Template Registration Function (CTRF)

(a) to check content of the template being offered for registration as a transactional template and service message template;

(b) to identify fixed and variable portion(s) of the content in the offered transactional template and service message template with identification of type of content for each portion of variable part of the content, e.g. date format, numeric format, name of recipient, amount with currency; reference number, transaction identity;

(c) to estimate the total length of variable portion, viz. total length of fixed portion for a typical transactional message, service message for offered template;

(d) to de-register template or temporarily suspend use of template;

....

(f) to check content of the template being offered for registration as a promotional from perspective of content category;"

9. And whereas item 5 (1)(c) of Schedule I to the regulations provides that every Access Provider shall set up functional entities like Header Registrar for keeping record of headers throughout its lifecycle, i.e. free for assignment, assigned to an entity, withdrawn, surrendered, re-assigned etc.;

10. And whereas item 2 of Schedule VI to the regulations, inter alia, provides that in preparation of migration plan, the Access Provider shall stop assigning headers without verification of identity and scope of senders and they shall register the existing assignee of headers after verification of identity and scope documents of Unsolicited Commercial Communications senders;

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11. And whereas, the Authority has noticed that-
 - (a) Headers and Content templates of Principal Entities (hereinafter referred to as "PEs") are being misused by some telemarketers due to failure of authentication of data of PEs and there is an urgent need to re-verify the authenticity of all headers and templates approved on Distributed Ledger Technologies (hereinafter referred to as "DLT") platform and cleanse the data within a definite time frame, and that the process of cleansing DLT data requires periodical actions by the Access Providers;
 - (b) look-alike headers are being registered by Access Providers on names of different Principal Entities and many times, such headers create confusion among recipients of message or even misused by some entities for their benefit; and
 - (c) the number of variables in a template is not defined in CoPs which leads to misuse of the same and moreover, the promotional content is being passed in the variable portions of content templates and therefore, in order to minimize the said misuse, number of variables allowed in content template needs to be limited in a way that not only gives PEs enough flexibility to phrase their content but at the same time, there are reasonable restrictions on number and placement of variables;
12. And whereas regulation 17 of the regulations provides that Authority may direct Access Providers to make changes, at any time, in the CoPs and Access Providers shall incorporate such changes and submit revised CoPs within fifteen days from the date of direction issued in this regard;
13. And whereas regulation 18 of the regulations provides that every Access Provider shall comply with submitted CoPs provided that any provision in CoP shall not have effect to the extent of being inconsistent with these regulations;
14. And whereas regulation 19 of the regulations provides that the Authority reserves the right to formulate a standard CoP in case the formulated CoP is deficient to serve the purposes of these regulations;
15. And whereas regulation 20 of the regulations provides that every access provider shall comply with the provisions of Standard CoPs;
16. And whereas the Authority is of the view that the above mentioned provisions of the regulations pertaining to Headers and Content Templates are

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not strictly being followed, and that there is a need to make changes in the CoPs so as to curb the misuse of Headers and Content Templates;

17. Now, therefore, the Authority, in exercise of the powers conferred upon it under section 13, read with sub-clauses (i) and (v) of clause (b) of sub-section (1) of section 11, of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997 (24 of 1997), and the provisions of the Telecom Commercial Communications Customer Preference Regulations, 2018 hereby directs all the Access Providers to:

- (a) Ensure re-verification of all Headers registered on DLT platform within thirty days from the date of issue of this direction and blocking of unverified headers;
- (b) ensure to develop, within sixty days from issue of the direction, a system to -
 - (i) temporarily deactivate all headers which remain unused in last thirty days;
 - (ii) reactivate headers by PEs through an online process; and
 - (iii) ensure that PE shall classify every header at the time of registration as 'temporary' or 'permanent' header, as the case may be, and that the 'temporary' header shall be deactivated after the time duration for which such 'temporary' header has been registered;
- (c) ensure that each Header is distinct and shall reject, during registration, such Headers which are similar by virtue of combination of small case or large case letters;
- (d) ensure re-verification of all content templates within sixty days of issue of this direction and blocking of unverified templates ;
- (e) incorporate procedure for quarterly re-verification of Headers and content templates in their respective CoPs;
- (f) limit the number of variable portions in content template of messages to two variables only provided that, for the reasons to be recorded, a third variable may be allowed in case of exigency; and
- (g) ensure that variables in the content templates are non-contiguous and not separated with space, comma and/or any other special characters.

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18. All the Telecom Service Providers are directed to comply with the above directions and forward updated status on actions taken, including updating of CoPs, within thirty days from date of issue of this direction.

Jaipal Singh 16/02/2022
(Jaipal Singh Tomar)
Advisor (QoS)

To
All Access Providers (including BSNL and MTNL)

