

December 29, 2015

To,

Shri. RS Sharma,
Chairman,
Telecom Regulatory Authority of India.

Sir,

Sub: Consultation Paper on Differential Pricing for Data Services

We appreciate the efforts taken by TRAI to engage with stakeholders by inviting feedback on issues related to the practice of Telecom Service Providers in offering Differential Tariff to access certain content or applications on the Internet.

The open nature of the Internet has spurred innovation and enabled startups to flourish. The success of Google, Facebook or of several Indian startups, including those founded by the below signatories to the letter, is a result of the open nature of the Internet that permitted innovation without any entry barriers.

The practice of differential pricing of data services results in skewing the dynamics of the Internet with Telecom Service Providers and a few players like Facebook with its Free Basics platform acting as gate-keepers. Differential pricing of data services including practices like zero rating of selected content and applications leads to a tiered Internet instead of a single open Internet. This affects the ability of new players to compete in the market with the established corporations.

The Government of India is taking commendable steps to improve access of citizens to Government services through digital means. Efforts at improving access to the Internet is being undertaken by Governments at all levels including local self Government Institutions. At this stage, there is no reason to create a digital divide by offering a walled garden of limited services in the name of providing access to the poor.

We request TRAI to issue clear Regulations preventing telecom providers or content providers from acting as gate-keepers offering restricted Internet services instead of the Open Internet.

Sincerely,

1. Alok Agarwal, Cofounder and Business Head at Teesort.com
2. Bharat Gulia, Cofounder, Metis Learning
3. Deepinder Goyal, Founder and CEO, Zomato
4. Faisal Farooqui, Founder and CEO, Mouthshut.com
5. Manish Vij, Founder and CEO, SVG Media
6. Sachin Bhatia, Cofounder and CEO, TrulyMadly
7. Vijay Shekhar Sharma, Founder and CEO, Paytm
8. Vineet Dwivedi, Founder and CEO, FlipClass.com
9. Vishal Gondal, Founder and CEO at GOQii