

According to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) the concessional SMS tariffs offered by operators will be applicable only for 100 SMS a day, following which a minimum of Rs 0.50 per message will have to be paid by the subscriber.

TRAI's move to put a cap on the number of SMS is aimed at tackling unwanted telemarketing SMS received by subscribers. As per TRAI, subscribers engaged in telemarketing activities use discounted SMS packages, for sending bulk promotional SMSs. Some service providers offer bundled plans and packages where the SMS charges effectively become close to zero and these are often misused by the telemarketing firms.

TRAI has also mandated operators to put in place, within three months, a solution, which will ensure that no commercial SMSs are sent having same or similar characters or strings, or variants from any source or number. The solution will ensure that not more than 200 SMSs with such similar 'signature' are sent in an hour. Subscribers can also lodge their complaints against pesky messages by simply forwarding the unwanted SMS to 1909 after appending the telephone number and date of receipt of the SMS.

Operators are also required to establish a web-based complaint registering system and a dedicated e-mail address to receive such complaints.

In September 2011, TRAI had imposed a cap of 200 SMS per day per SIM on subscribers. Initially, the restriction did contribute to lowering complaints from subscribers against unwanted telemarketing messages. However, following the removal of the cap of 200 SMS per day per SIM by the High Court, the number of complaints relating to unwanted messages increased manifold.

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