

**The C.I. Campaign for ‘Holding  
Broadband Service Providers to Account’  
Report of the Consumer Interviews**

The report summarises the findings of broadband consumers’ interviews questionnaire conducted under the campaign by CUTS.

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## Report of the interviews under the C.I. Campaign for 'Holding Broadband Service Providers to Account'

Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS) is partnering with Consumers International (CI) for the campaign for "Holding broadband service providers to account" in India, as country campaign partner.

For more information please visit, project webpage: [www.cuts-international.org/CART/Campaign\\_for\\_Holding\\_Broadband\\_Service\\_Providers\\_to\\_Account.htm](http://www.cuts-international.org/CART/Campaign_for_Holding_Broadband_Service_Providers_to_Account.htm)

The campaign of CI is to empower consumer organisations around the world to demand more equitable and accessible broadband service offerings, respecting consumers' rights and broader human rights, as a necessary condition of achieving a socially-inclusive information society.

As per the CI instructions for the campaign partners to complete the task, CUTS conducted an interview as per questionnaire shared by CI. The questionnaire data was analysed and the report was prepared in the format provided by CI. The report briefly summarises the findings of interview questionnaire:

### Research Method

#### 1. How many interviews were held?

CUTS conducted 30 personal interviews of internet consumers as per the questionnaire provided by CI.

#### 2. Were these participants selected for any specific reason?

These participants were selected randomly, but one reason was that they were users of internet/broadband services.

#### 3. What were the demographic backgrounds of the subjects or participants?

Out of 30 respondents 27 were from the State of Rajasthan and remaining three were from Gujarat, Maharashtra and Bihar each.

Out of 30 respondents 11 were female and 19 were male. We have also taken into account the other criterion, mandated by CI, such as age, income groups, ethnicity and physical disability or impairment etc. as far as possible, while conducting the interviews.

4. **Were all of the issues from the interview form covered, or only a subset?**

Yes, most of the respondents answered all issues, except few issues which were non-applicable to them.

5. **Were any additional issues, not included in the interview form, also covered?**

No. Interviews were conducted as per CI's structured questionnaire. Respondents raised certain other issues related to increase competition in sector, make services affordable and easily accessible, create awareness among broadband users about their rights, and improve quality of services etc.

### Connectivity Issues

6. **Did all of the respondents have some form of Internet access?**

Yes, all were having some sort of internet access.

7. **For those who did, what and where was their primary means of access?**

The primary mean of access was internet connection at home, followed by use in office, cyber cafe and educational institute. Few were using it through mobile phone.

8. **What proportion of those with Internet access had broadband connections?**

50 percent. Out of total 30 respondents 15 were using internet through broadband.

9. **About what was the average price paid, and what was the range of prices?**

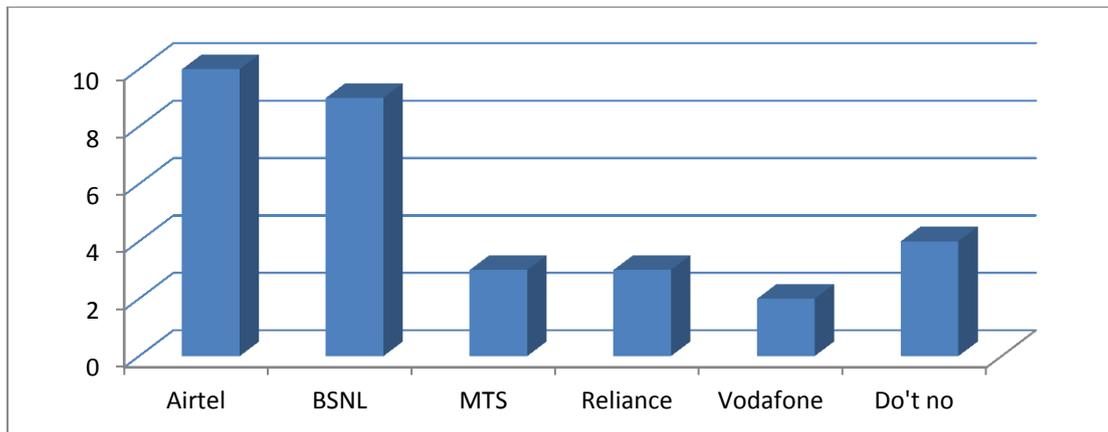
The average price paid was Rs 626 and the range of price paid was Rs 120-Rs 1100 per month.

10. **Did the connections tend to be shared with others? With about how many on average?**

About 50 percent of respondents were having shared connections at home and office. On an average it is shared by 4-5 users, but few respondents were not able to state the exact number of persons sharing the connection, at office or public place.

**11. What were the most popular Internet providers used by the respondents?**

Airtel was the most popular internet service provider among the selected respondents as 1/3 respondents were using its services. But it is not indicator of national or overall trend. In big urban areas these private service providers are capturing the market not in remote areas, rural areas and small towns. In such areas government owned BSNL is providing services as national action plan.



**12. What barriers prevented respondents changing provider, and how prevalent were these?**

- Non availability of other service providers in area
- Tariff plans
- Not much difference in services of service providers in their area.

**Consumer Protection Issues**

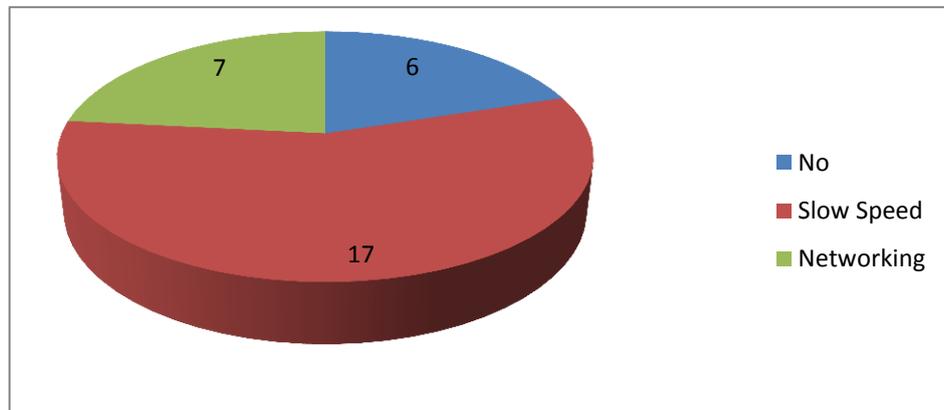
**13. What information did respondents receive from their provider about their connections?**

Most of the respondents received information about tariffs, speed, customer care contacts.

**14. How much of this information was accurate? Were some providers better than others?**

All the respondents said that the information was almost accurate technically, but many of them were not able to understand properly about the speed, data used etc.

15. **What sort of technical problems did respondents experience with their connections?**



16. **How many of them sought technical support, and how good was this support?**

11 respondents sought technical support and only four were satisfied with the support provided.

17. **How many made complaints, and about what issues?**

Out of 30 respondents only 9 respondents made complaint about speed (8) and billing (1)

18. **How well were their complaints handled? Were some providers better than others?**

Most of the respondents were not much satisfied with complaint handling, irrespective of the service providers. But in few cases service provider Airtel was more responsive to consumer complaints than BSNL.

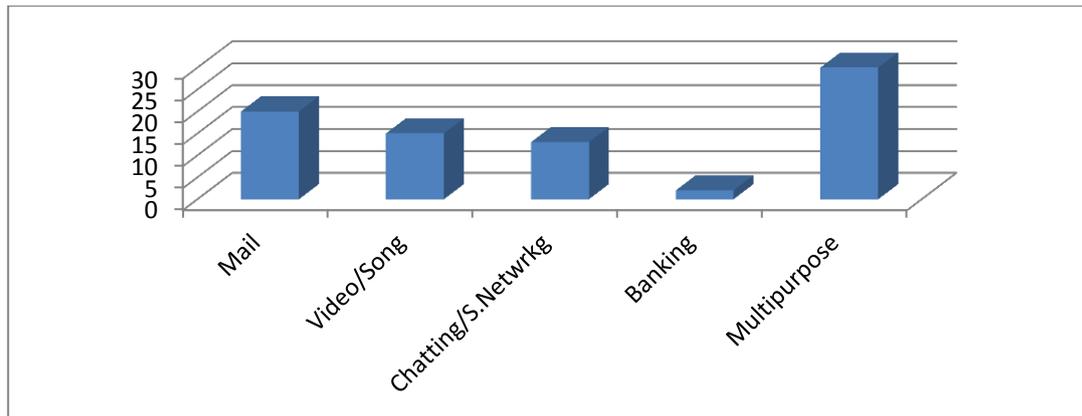
19. **How satisfied were the respondents with their connections' cost, speed and reliability?**

Respondents are not much satisfied with the cost, speed and reliability of their internet connection. They feel there is much scope of improvement in all aspects.

## Content Issues

**20. What were the most common purposes for which respondents used their connections?**

Respondents are using internet for Email, browsing, social networking, online banking, entertainment and multipurpose use as shown below:



**21. Were respondents troubled by unwanted content, and if so of what kinds?**

Yes, most of the respondents stated that they were troubled by advertisements, pop ups, vires, spyware, malware, and phishing emails etc.

**22. Did they make use of any tools or services to filter such unwanted content?**

Yes. Some respondents are using antivirus and browsers setting to filter unwanted content.

**23. Did any of their providers impose any blocks or filters on content or services accessed?**

Respondents are not aware whether service providers are imposing any filters on content and services.

**24. Did providers deliver preferential access to certain third party Web sites, and if so which?**

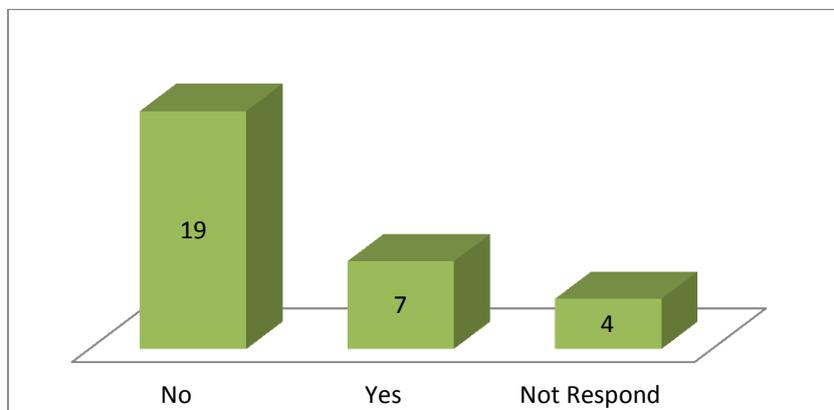
It has been noticed that the internet service providers as well as search engines promote their own products/services and to the paid advertisements. Please visited the given below weblink for a related study conducted by CUTS. (*Online search in India: Consumer trust eroded by ads blending in online search results – Survey*)

<http://circ.in/media-Nov11.htm#Online Search in india>

**25. Were respondents conscious of any monitoring or interception of their Internet usage?**

5 out of 30 responded said that they feel monitoring and interception of their internet usage.

26. **Had any respondents received warning notices about content accessed or uploaded?**



27. **Was lack of content in their native languages a problem for any of the respondents?**

Yes to some extent. Though most of the respondents were educated but still many of them felt that the lack of content in native language resulted in not properly understanding of some issues.

Apart from the language problem, respondent found the jargons/terminology used, not easy to understand.

### Other Issues

28. **Were any respondents living with a disability that affected their Internet access?**  
Yes. One blind respondent stated that it is not easy for him to use the internet.

29. **Did respondents lack training in the use of hardware or software for Internet access?**

Yes. More than 50 percent respondents admitted that they faced problems in using internet initially due to lack of training. Persons with disability face problem the most.

30. **What other problems or concerns were raised amongst the respondents?**

The other concerns raised were accessibility, affordability, high tariffs, bad quality of service, concern of privacy, high cost of instruments, language problem, hidden charges, lack of proper information etc.