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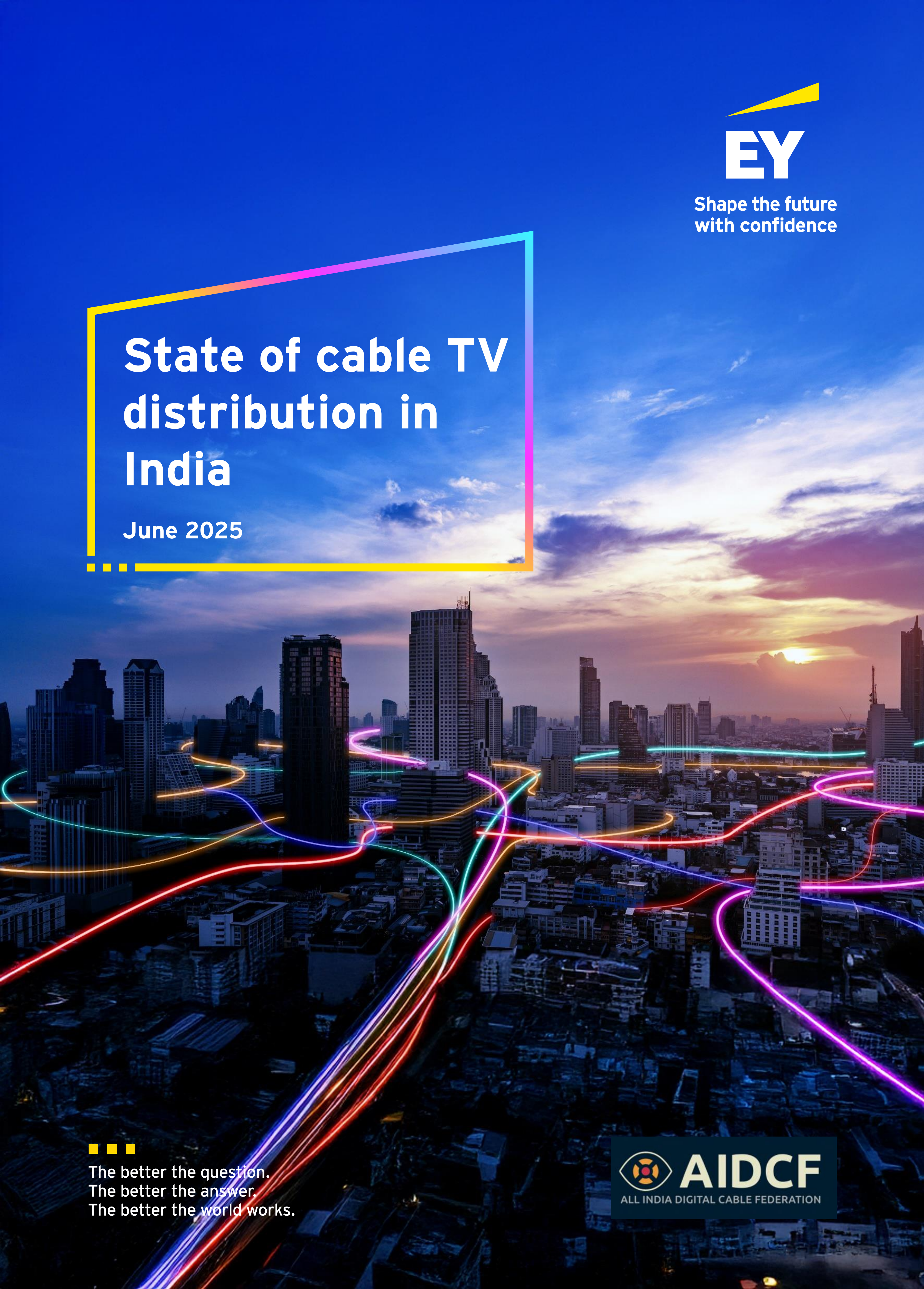
State of cable TV distribution in India

June 2025



The better the question.
The better the answer.
The better the world works.

AIDCF
ALL INDIA DIGITAL CABLE FEDERATION

Foreword

A fine balance is needed.

The broadcasting and cable television industry has been an integral part of India's media landscape, ensuring widespread access to diverse content and fostering economic growth. Over the years, it has contributed significantly to employment generation, technological progress, and consumer outreach. However, with the rapid rise of digital platforms, shifting consumer preferences, and advancements in content delivery mechanisms, the industry is undergoing a transformative phase that presents both opportunities and challenges.

This report, undertaken by AIDCF in collaboration with industry experts, offers valuable insights into the employment trends within the linear TV distribution sector. It highlights how the industry has adapted to market shifts, regulatory changes, and competition from digital-first platforms, while also drawing attention to the challenges faced by various stakeholders, including cable operators, service providers, and the workforce that has traditionally supported the industry's growth.

The Government is cognizant of the challenges posed to the cable TV industry due to evolving technology and digital disruption. **While innovation and growth cannot be curtailed, a fine balance must be struck between fostering technological advancement and ensuring the sustainability of traditional distribution platforms.** The Government of India remains committed to supporting a fair, competitive, and inclusive broadcasting environment. The objective remains to support a regulatory framework that enables industry players to compete effectively while protecting consumer interests and ensuring sectoral stability.

Reports such as this serve as important reference points for understanding sectoral challenges and opportunities, allowing for an informed and data-driven approach to policymaking. AIDCF's efforts in compiling this comprehensive study is appreciated and we look forward to continued engagement with all stakeholders to ensure that the broadcasting sector remains robust, competitive, and inclusive in the years ahead.

Sanjiv Shankar

Joint Secretary, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting
Government of India

A call to action.

Cable TV has been the major source of entertainment and education for more than three decades. Thriving on the Motto "kam daam, zayada saaman", it has been delivering diverse content to millions of households and fostering a competitive distribution ecosystem. However, in recent years, the sector has faced unprecedented challenges. A regulation which never met its objectives leading to more issues instead of creating a level playing field, shifting consumer preferences, and the rapid rise of alternative content delivery platforms have significantly impacted Pay TV distribution, leading to a sharp decline in subscriber base, revenue losses, and a substantial reduction in employment opportunities across the industry.

The All India Digital Cable Federation (AIDCF) has always been at the forefront of advocating for policies that promote fair competition, sustainable growth, and consumer choice. In line with this commitment, we have undertaken this study to assess the current employment landscape in the linear TV distribution sector, document the extent of job losses, and evaluate the broader implications for cable TV operators, Multiple System Operator (MSOs), and Local Cable Operators (LCOs).

This report is not just a statistical analysis; it is a call to action. It highlights the urgent need for policy interventions to safeguard the future of the industry, protect employment, and ensure that millions of Indian households continue to enjoy affordable and reliable television services. While the industry welcomes new technologies leading to better consumer experience, however the industry also needs to be nurtured to deliver same consumer experience that these new technologies are offering.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the industry stakeholders, experts, and professionals who contributed to this report. Their insights and experiences have been instrumental in shaping a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and potential solutions.

As we present this study, we urge policymakers, regulators, and industry leaders to engage in constructive dialogue and take decisive steps to restore balance and sustainability to the cable TV ecosystem. AIDCF remains committed to working collaboratively to ensure that the distribution sector continues to thrive in the evolving media landscape.

S.N. Sharma

President
All India Digital Cable Federation

It is about the industry's long-term viability

The Indian cable TV industry has been a cornerstone of the country's media landscape for decades. From its early days of localized distribution to becoming a nationwide force in content delivery, the industry has not only transformed entertainment but has also played a pivotal role in generating employment and sustaining millions of livelihoods. However, in recent years, the sector has faced mounting pressures from regulatory inconsistencies, disruptive technological shifts, and increasing competition from unregulated digital platforms.

The decline in pay TV households has had a cascading effect, leading to job losses across multiple levels, from Local Cable Operators (LCOs) to technical and customer support teams, network engineers, and backend service providers. This is not merely an industry concern; it is an economic and social issue that needs immediate attention.

This report is a timely and critical intervention that documents the real impact of the ongoing disruptions in the linear TV distribution industry. **Through a detailed employment study, it highlights the erosion of jobs, the changing workforce dynamics, and the urgent need for policy measures to ensure the industry's long-term viability.**

It is imperative for stakeholders—including regulators, broadcasters, policymakers, and service providers—to recognize that a thriving cable TV ecosystem is not just about competition but also about preserving employment, ensuring diversity in content distribution, and maintaining affordability for consumers.

I strongly believe that with the right regulatory support and policy corrections, cable TV can remain a vital and competitive force in the Indian broadcasting space. I commend the AIDCF for spearheading this study and hope it serves as a catalyst for much-needed industry reforms.

Ashish Pherwani

Partner and Leader, Media & Entertainment
EY India

Contents

Executive **summary**

The growth of digital means of content consumption has led to a decline in pay TV homes in India – **pay TV homes fell by 40 million** from 151 million in 2018 to 111 million in 2024.

The impact of this decline in pay TV homes has been significant, particularly on the local cable operator (LCO) ecosystem. Our **survey of 28,181 LCOs** in November and December 2024 indicated that:

93% of the LCOs surveyed claimed their monthly take home income had reduced

49% of survey respondents reported a decline in their subscriber base since 2018

35% of respondents claimed their subscriber base had fallen by over 40%

Based on current trends and market conditions, we estimate that **pay TV homes will continue to decline** and are expected to reach around 71 to 81 million by 2030. The employment situation will only worsen, and LCOs will face increased pressures on their income.

The key issues faced by LCOs as per our survey are:

01 Inability to increase collections/ rates from customers when channel rates are increased

02 Movement from pay TV to OTT platforms, Free Dish and Connected TVs

03 The quality of content on linear TV is not on par with the quality of content on OTT platforms

04 A decline in second TV set connections within households

The key impact of this decline is that **employment generated by the LCOs has fallen by 31% since 2018.** Survey respondents collectively reported reducing the number of people they employed by **37,835.** Extrapolating this to all-India level, the approximate reduction could be between **1.14 lakh and 1.95 lakh**, given that TRAI data suggests there are approximately 85,000 registered LCOs in India and AIDCF's twelve members claim 1.62 lakh[1] LCOs between them.

37,835

31% decline in employment generated since 2018 by the LCOs surveyed

1.14 lakh to 1.95 lakh

Approximate industry-wide loss in employment when survey results are extrapolated

[1] *AIDCF*

It is imperative that **steps are taken to increase the reach of pay TV** in India. The following are several views from the industry that could be evaluated:

01 Permitting **differential pay TV pricing for** different territories based on their ability to pay

02 Enabling **a level-playing field** across all content distribution mediums —Free TV, OTT platforms, FAST channels and pay TV, while accounting for their unique technological characteristics in pricing, content and advertising codes

03 Activating over **20 million inactive STBs** in India through incentives or other appropriate means

04 **Restrict or limit the provision of live** or slightly delayed transmission of pay TV content for free on other platforms, i.e., create adequate windows before moving pay TV content onto free digital platforms

05 Providing **hardware or other subsidies** and incentives to cable dark areas to adopt television *(there are 190 million TV households out of around 330 million households in India)*

06 Leveraging **public-private partnerships** to enable TV dark homes to buy televisions through incentives, such as:

a. Free distribution of sets under government programs in border/sensitive areas

b. Subsidized distribution of TV sets and STBs

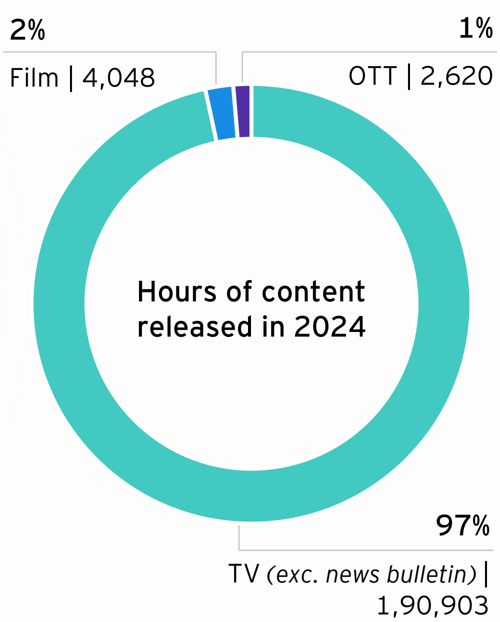
07 Take a unified stand against piracy, a menace which costs the M&E sector over INR200 billion a year, through awareness programs, use of technology and policy change and enforcement rigor.

1

Overview of India's content and distribution landscape

The distribution of content to consumers is undergoing rapid transformation, driven by digital adoption, evolving consumer preferences and technological advancements (e.g., D2M technology and 5G broadcast)

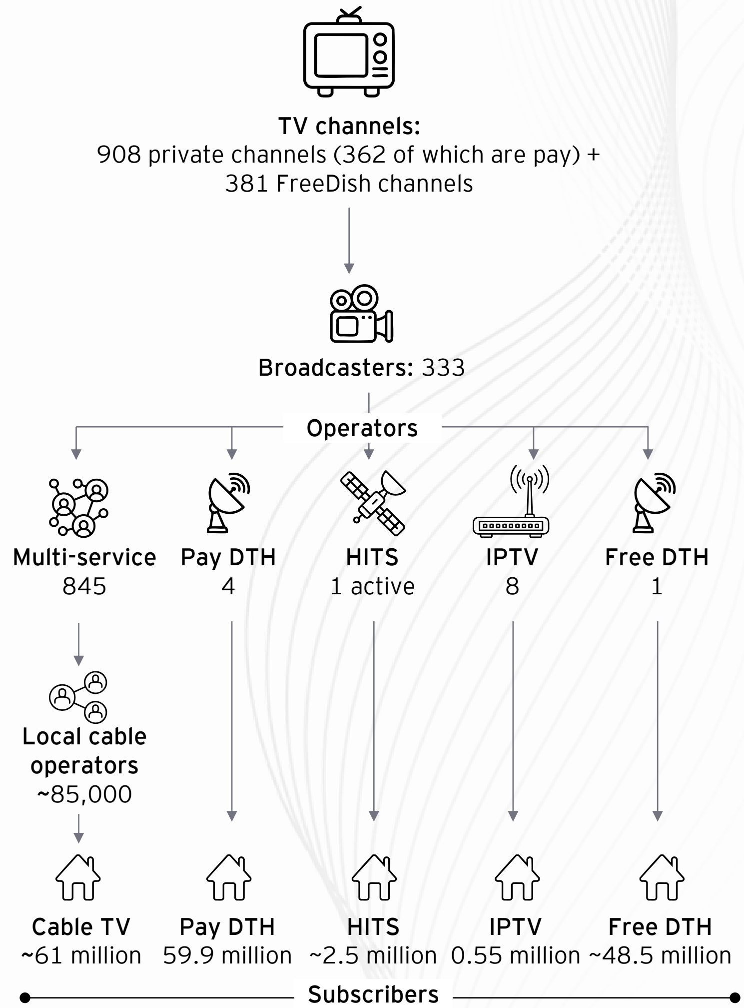
I. India created almost 200,000 hours of content in 2024



EY estimates | Includes content that was broadcast on TV, released in theaters or available on OTT platforms. It excludes unorganized creator economy, news bulletins, imported content, social and short form content

- India produces one of the highest volumes of content in the world to cater to its diverse languages and cultures
- With around 200,000 hours of content produced annually (excluding news bulletins and user-generated content) this equates to over 540 hours of original content daily (or more than 20 days of content produced each day)
- A significant 97% of the content created was for television (though most was also made available on OTT platforms), employing an estimated 38,000 people[2], representing a substantial investment for creators, platforms and distributors

II. The traditional broadcasting landscape in India



Performance Indicators Reports | Telecom Regulatory Authority of India | MIB - TV households as of 31st March 2024/ 31 March 2025; other information as of 30 September 2024; includes inactive households. Free DTH subscriber base is an EY estimate using BARC's establishment survey, adjusted.

- The traditional linear TV broadcast ecosystem comprises cable TV, Pay DTH, HITS, IPTV and Free DTH
- While DTH provides content directly to the end consumer, cable TV, MSOs and HITS services utilize the services of local cable operators
  - TRAI data indicates there are 845 MSOs as of 31 March 2025[3]
  - TRAI has estimated that there are around 85,000 LCOs in India as of 28 June 2024[4]
- As of 31 March 2025, there were 908 TV channels in India, of which approximately 40%[5] were news and current affairs, and 60% were free-to-air[6]

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[2] *EY estimates*
[3] *The Indian Telecom Services Performance Indicators July-September, 2024*
[4] *https://www.indianbroadcastingworld.com/mib-proposes-5-year-registration*
[5] *EY FICCI M&E report*
[6] *The Indian Telecom Services Performance Indicators July-September, 2024*

III. The video on demand content distribution landscape in India

- Digital infrastructure has been growing in India[7]:
  - There are now 562 million active smartphones in India, with over a billion telecom subscriptions
  - Of the total telecom subscriptions, 945 million are capable of broadband
  - Internet penetration in India grew by 4% in 2024
  - There are 46 million wired broadband subscriptions, while the remainder are wireless broadband
  - 50 million smart TVs connect to the internet each month

[7] *FICCI-EY M&E sector report: Shape the future*

- With the adoption of digital infrastructure, a plethora of content distribution platforms have emerged, including online content distribution platforms from linear broadcasters, and national and international OTT players. Examples of some platforms are provided below:
- There are 57 OTT platforms operating in India, according to the MIB portal[8]:
  - 52 (91%) of the OTT platforms offer both SVOD and AVOD options to subscribers
  - Three are exclusively AVOD
  - Two are exclusively SVOD
- The abundance of free and ad-supported content on digital platforms provides an attractive aggregation of content for Indian consumers

OTT (Global)
- Netflix
- Prime Video
- Lionsgate Play
- Discovery+

OTT (Regional)
- Hoichoi
- A-Ha
- Eros Now

Broadcaster OTTs
- JioHotstar
- Sony LIV
- ZEE5
- Sun Nxt

OTT aggregators
- Tata Play Binge
- YuppTV
- Jio TV
- OTTplay

FAST TV
- Samsung TVPlus
- WebOS (LG TV)
- Apple TV

Global platforms
- YouTube
- Daily Motion
- Vimeo

Short format video
- Instagram
- YT shortz
- Reelies

News aggregators
- Inshorts
- DailyHunt
- Waves

News OTTs
- Dainik Bhaskar
- Times Internet
- TV Today
- ManoramaMAX

Sports
- FanCode
- SportVot
- CricInfo
- Sportstar

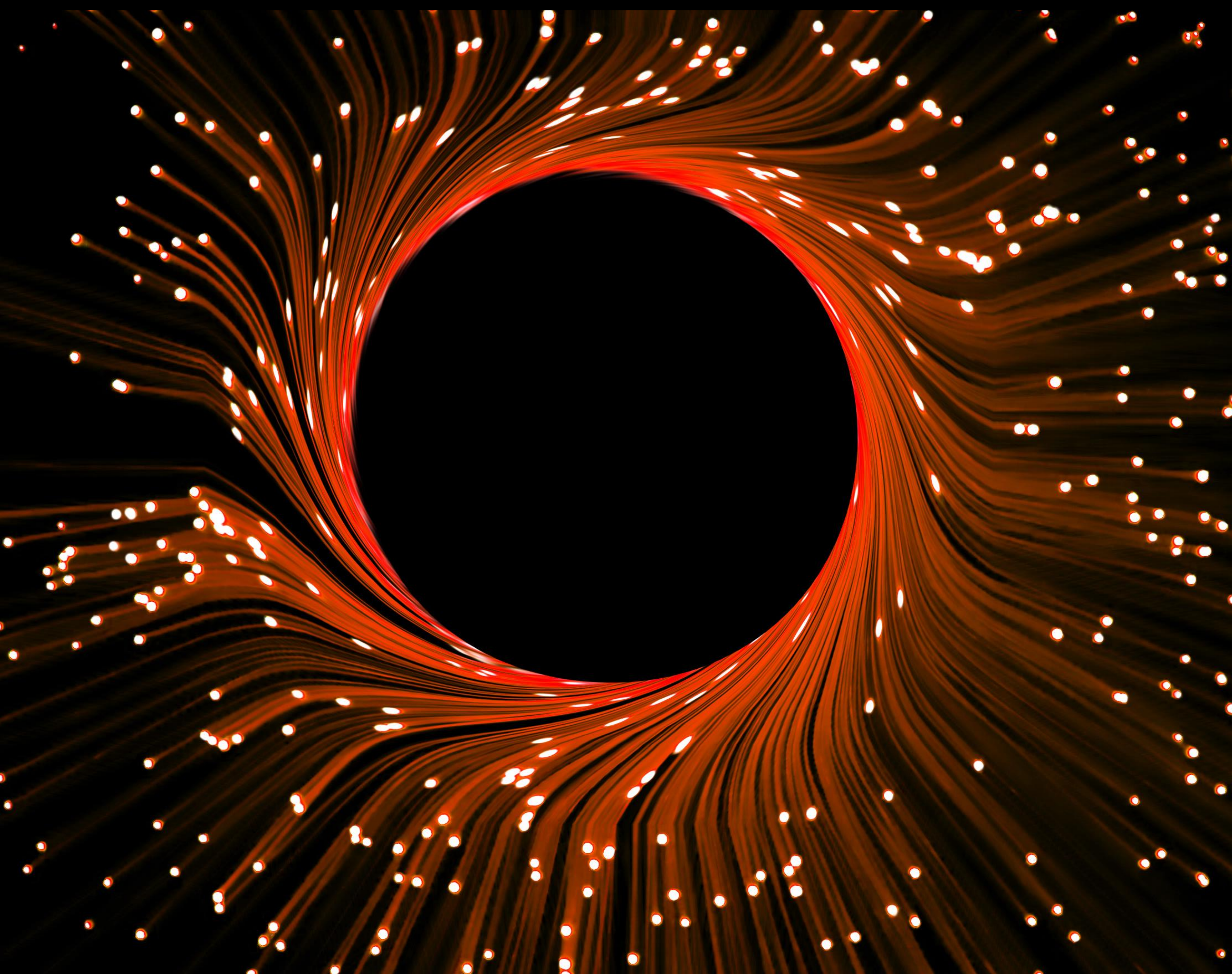
Note: Select operators only. This is not a comprehensive listing.

[8]*List of OTTs published by TRAI as on Mar-23 - excluding the banned list of OTTs as of Mar-24*

2

An industry in transition: Regulatory developments in India's broadcasting and cable sector

Section contributed by Mr. Jayant K. Mehta, Senior Advocate and Mr. Swapnil Gupta, Advocate, Capital Law Chambers and Mr. Nasir Hussain, Advocate & Senior Consultant (Legal), Hathway Digital Ltd.



I. There have been major changes in the regulatory landscape governing broadcasting and cable TV services

The Indian broadcasting and cable television sector has witnessed significant regulatory evolution over the past two decades, shaped by technological advances, consumer behavior shifts, and market dynamics.

This section outlines key milestones in the regulatory framework, underscoring the legal interventions that have defined the distribution and consumption of large-screen video content in India.

2004

Regulatory oversight transferred to TRAI

Pursuant to the powers conferred under the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997 ("TRAI Act")[9], the regulation of broadcasting and cable TV services was formally brought under the purview of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)[10].

TRAI has since actively exercised its recommendatory and regulatory powers, including the issuance of tariff orders, interconnection regulations, and quality of service standards aimed at ensuring transparency, non-discrimination, and consumer protection across the value chain – encompassing broadcasters, Distribution Platform Operators (DPOs), and subscribers[11].

2012

Introduction of digital addressable systems (DAS)

The Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Amendment Act, 2011[12] mandated a phased implementation of Digital Addressable Systems (DAS) from January 2012, transitioning the industry from analog to digital mode. This shift enabled encrypted transmission, improved quality of service, subscriber-level addressability, and enhanced regulatory oversight, setting the foundation for subsequent tariff and interconnection reforms.

2017

Comprehensive regulatory framework introduced (NTO 1.0)

On 3rd March 2017, TRAI notified a consolidated regulatory framework applicable to addressable systems, comprising three key instruments:

- **Tariff Order, 2017:** governing retail and wholesale pricing structures[13]
- **Interconnection Regulations, 2017:** defining rules for fair and non-discriminatory[14] agreements between broadcasters and DPOs
- **QoS and Consumer Protection Regulations, 2017:** establishing service benchmarks and consumer grievance redressal mechanisms[15]

These instruments collectively sought to promote consumer choice, transparency in pricing, and balanced revenue allocation.

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[9]Proviso to Section 2 (1) (k), TRAI Act, 1997
[10]Notification S.O. 44(E) and Order S.O. 45(E), dated January 9, 2004 [Department of Telecommunications, Ministry of Communication and Information Technology
[11]Chapter III, TRAI Act, 1997
[12]Act No. 21 of 2011 (30-Dec-2011)
[13]The Telecommunication (Broadcasting and Cable) Services (Eighth) (Addressable Systems) Tariff Order, 2017
[14]The Telecommunication (Broadcasting and Cable) Services Interconnection (Addressable Systems) Regulations, 2017
[15]The Telecommunication (Broadcasting and Cable) Services Standards of Quality of Service and Consumer Protection (Addressable Systems) Regulations, 2017

2018–2019

Judicial endorsement and emerging regulatory concerns

The comprehensive regulatory framework notified by TRAI was initially met with legal resistance from broadcasters, who challenged its validity and the extent of TRAI's jurisdiction under the TRAI Act, 1997[16]. The primary contention before the Hon'ble Madras High Court revolved around whether TRAI could regulate pricing structures and interconnection arrangements in a manner that allegedly impinged upon the broadcasters' rights under the Copyright Act, 1957.

The Hon'ble Madras High Court[17] upheld TRAI's regulatory competence, noting that the TRAI framework did not interfere with copyright per se, but regulated the manner of offering television channels to consumers via Distribution Platform Operators (DPOs), which was within the realm of telecommunication services. This position was further affirmed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court[18], which dismissed appeals against the High Court's judgment, thereby clearing the path for implementation.

Following this judicial validation, the 2017 framework—encompassing the Tariff Order, Interconnection Regulations, and QoS Regulations—came into effect on 29 December 2018.

While the new regime enhanced consumer choice and ensured revenue security for stakeholders, TRAI, noted certain pricing strategies—particularly bundling and deep discounting of bouquets by broadcasters which[19], though permissible within the framework, had the effect of undermining consumer autonomy by making standalone channel selections economically unattractive.

The regulator, based on the above, began a consultation process[20] which led to amendments under NTO 2.0.

[16]*Star India Private Limited & Ors. v. Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion & Ors., W.P. Nos.44126 and 44127 of 2016 and W.M.P.Nos.37951 to 37956 of 2016, 5641, 6050 to 6052, 6054 to 6056 and 11131 of 2017*

[17]*A division bench of the Madras High Court delivered a split verdict (judgement dated 02-Mar-18), with one judge striking down a majority of the clauses in the Regulations and the Tariff Order under challenge, while the other judge upheld them as being in line with the TRAI Act. The case was referred to a third judge of the Madras High Court (judgement dated 23-May-18), who arrived at the same conclusion as the latter judge and held the Regulations and the Tariff Order to be valid. Aggrieved by the judgement of the Madras High Court, Star India preferred an appeal before the Supreme Court.*

[18]*Star India Private Limited v. Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion & Ors., Civil Appeal Nos. 7326-7327 of 2018 and 7328-7329 of 2019*

[19]*Para 1.10, TRAI Consultation Paper on 'Tariff Related Issues for Broadcasting and Cable Services' dated 16th August 2019*

[20]*TRAI Consultation Paper on 'Tariff Related Issues for Broadcasting and Cable Services' dated 16th August 2019*

2020–2021

Second phase of regulatory intervention (NTO 2.0) and judicial scrutiny

To curb the unintended consequences of the first framework, TRAI introduced the New Tariff Order 2.0 (NTO 2) via amendments notified on 1 January 2020[21]. The revised framework sought to:

- Impose a cap on the number of channels that can be included in a bouquet
- Introduce price caps on channels included in bouquets to ensure their standalone availability remains attractive
- Promote genuine consumer choice and reduce bundling-induced revenue distortion
- However, NTO 2.0 was challenged by multiple broadcasters and industry associations on grounds that it amounted to excessive regulatory intervention in the commercial domain. Legal challenges were filed before the Hon'ble Kerala High Court and Hon'ble Bombay High Court, resulting in divergent interim orders that delayed and fragmented its implementation.
- In the Kerala High Court provisions related to Network Capacity Fee (NCF), NCF for Multi TV homes and long-term subscriptions were challenged. However, these were duly implemented in April 2020 after the interim orders of the Court. In its final judgement dated 12 July 2021, the Hon'ble High Court upheld the amendments introduced by the Tariff Amendment Order, 2020[22].
- In the Bombay High Court several provisions of all three regulations were challenged. However, vide its judgement dated 30 June 2021, the Hon'ble High Court upheld the validity of the amended regulations except for the condition of the average test provided in the third proviso to Clause 3 (3) of the Tariff Amendment Order 2020[23].

The petitioners in Bombay High Court filed Special Leave Petitions in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, challenging the Bombay High Court's judgement. The matter was heard by the Court but no interim relief was granted. The broadcasters' association eventually withdrew their petition on 15 February 2022[24].

[21] *The Telecommunication (Broadcasting and Cable) Services (Eighth) (Addressable Systems) Tariff (Second Amendment) Order, 2020; The Telecommunication (Broadcasting and Cable) Services Interconnection (Addressable Systems) (Second Amendment) Regulations, 2020; The Telecommunication (Broadcasting and Cable) Services Standards of Quality of Service and Consumer Protection (Addressable Systems) (Third Amendment) Regulations, 2020*

[22] *All India Digital Cable Federation & Ors. v. Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, WP(C) No. 2879 of 2020*

[23] *The Film and Television Producers Guild of India Ltd. & Another v. UOI & Another, WP No. 680 of 2020 & WP(L) No. 116 OF 2020; Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd. & another v. TRAI, WP(L) No. 117 OF 2020; Sony Pictures Networks India Pvt. Ltd. v. TRAI, WP(L) No. 118 OF 2020; Indian Broadcasting Foundation & Others v. TRAI & Another, WP(L) No. 120 OF 2020; Shri S. Venkata Subramanian shareholder of Disney Board (India) Limited & Others v. TRAI & Another, WP(L) No. 124 OF 2020; Asianet Star Communications Pvt. Ltd. & Others v. TRAI & Another, WP(L) No. 125 OF 2020; Shruti Takulia, Shareholder & Head of Production of NGC Network India Private Limited & Another v. TRAI & Another, WP(L) No. 126 OF 2020; Shri Sankunni Krishnan Kutty, Shareholder of Star India Private Limited & Others v. TRAI & Another, WP(L) No. 127 OF 2020; TV 18 Broadcast Limited & Others v. TRAI, WP(L) No. 147 OF 2020*

[24] *Indian Broadcasting and Digital Foundation v. Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, SLP(C) No. 010801 of 2021*

2022

Stakeholder consultations (NTO 3.0)

Amid these developments, industry stakeholders appealed to TRAI to enable a smoother transition and address market disruption. In response, TRAI constituted an internal committee to deliberate on operational difficulties and stakeholder concerns, eventually laying the groundwork for NTO 3.0.

TRAI initiated another consultative process[25] which led to the promulgation of NTO 3.0 on 22nd November 2022[26], representing a moderated version of NTO 2, informed by industry feedback.

2023-2024

Continuing policy uncertainty and legal challenge to reforms (NTO 4.0)

NTO 3.0 was seen as a partial recalibration, leaving several legacy issues and emergent challenges unresolved. Recognizing the need for a broader review, TRAI issued a new consultation paper[27]. This consultation aimed to revisit:

- Tariff flexibility for broadcasters
- Rules around bouquet discounts
- Rules regarding migration and lock-in periods
- Consumer grievance redressal mechanisms

However, several critical concerns raised earlier - including bundling practices, pricing asymmetries between FTA and pay channels, and the lack of effective consumer-level unbundling mechanisms - remained unaddressed in the 2023 consultation paper. This omission prompted a challenge to the non-inclusion of certain issues in the consultation paper before the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi regarding the scope and process of the consultation[28]. The matter remains pending for consideration of the Hon'ble Court[29].

TRAI proceeded to notify NTO 4.0 on 7th July 2024[30], reflecting incremental adjustments but stopping short of a full review addressing structural issues faced by the DPOs.

2025 and beyond

Need for holistic regulatory review

As convergence blurs the lines between traditional broadcasting and digital streaming, new categories such as OTT platforms, Connected TVs, FAST channels, and aggregator-based services are redefining the media landscape. These emerging players operate outside the purview of existing broadcast regulations, creating regulatory asymmetries.

TRAI has indicated its intent to conduct a holistic consultation to reassess the sector's regulatory architecture in light of these developments. Such a review is essential to ensure level-playing conditions, uphold consumer interests, and sustain industry viability.

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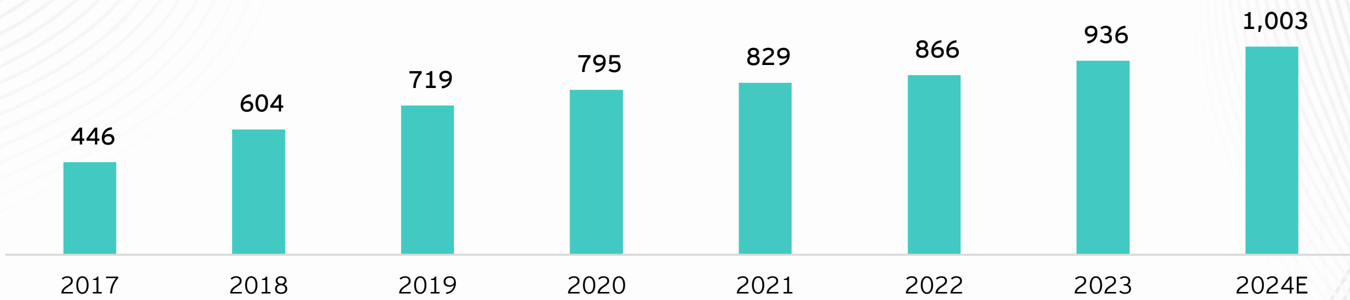
[25] *TRAI Consultation Paper on 'Issues related to New Regulatory Framework for Broadcasting and Cable Services' dated 7th May 2022*
[26] *The Telecommunication (Broadcasting and Cable) Services (Eighth) (Addressable Systems) Tariff (Third Amendment) Order, 2022; The Telecommunication (Broadcasting and Cable) Services Interconnection (Addressable Systems) (Fourth Amendment) Regulations, 2022*
[27] *TRAI Consultation Paper on 'Review of Regulatory Framework for Broadcasting and Cable Services' dated 8th August 2023*
[28] *All India Digital Cable Federation v. Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, W.P.(C) 12906/2023 & CM APPL. 50853/2023*
[29] *The next hearing in the matter is scheduled for 18th August 2025.*
[30] *The Telecommunication (Broadcasting and Cable) Services (Eighth) (Addressable Systems) Tariff (Fourth Amendment) Order, 2024; The Telecommunication (Broadcasting and Cable) Services Interconnection (Addressable Systems) (Sixth Amendment) Regulations, 2024; The Telecommunication (Broadcasting and Cable) Services Standards of Quality of Service and Consumer Protection (Addressable Systems) (Fourth Amendment) Regulations, 2024*

II. During the same period, internet subscriptions crossed a billion

Internet subscribers in India

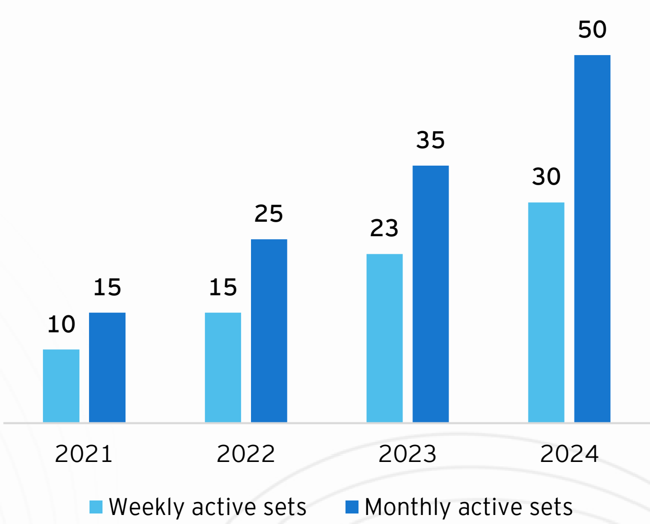


TRAI 2017 to 2023, EY estimates for 2024 | subscriptions in million

- Internet access has now surpassed one billion subscriptions in India, of which 945 million are broadband
- The growth of wired broadband has been driven by the rise of 5G networks, as well as investments by telcos, ISPs, and local cable operators. Wired broadband connections are now 46 million, while wireless broadband subscriptions are 899 million
- FTTC technology reduces the requirement for last-mile wires, and such products are gaining traction in relatively less populated Tier-2 and Tier-3 markets
- This provides people with the ability to consume content on the move and across multiple devices, reducing the overall relevance of traditional television

III. Connected TVs crossed 50 million households

Connected TVs (in millions)



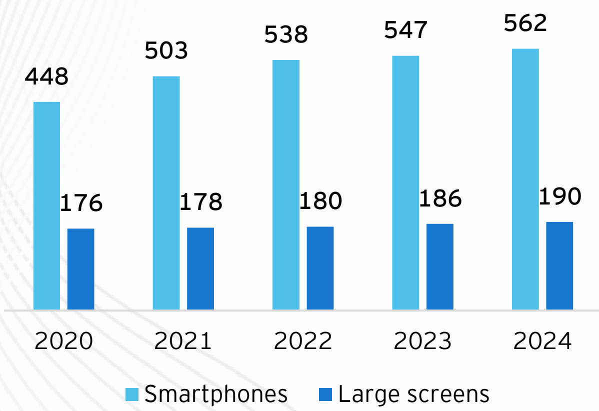
EY estimates, based on inputs from samsungads.com and extrapolations

- With the growth of wired broadband to around 46 million homes in 2024[31], a new means of content distribution is available to consumers, particularly affluent audiences
- Around 50 million smart televisions connect to the internet each month, with an average of 30 million connecting each week
- In effect, there are now four relatively large methods of content distribution in India:
  - 60 million cable TV subscriptions
  - 51 million DTH and HITS subscriptions
  - 49 million Free TV subscriptions
  - 46 million wired broadband homes
- Each method caters to a large audience segment

[31] EY estimates based on analysis of TRAI data, trend analysis and industry discussions

IV. Smartphone users reached 562 million in 2024

Smartphones vs. large screens in India

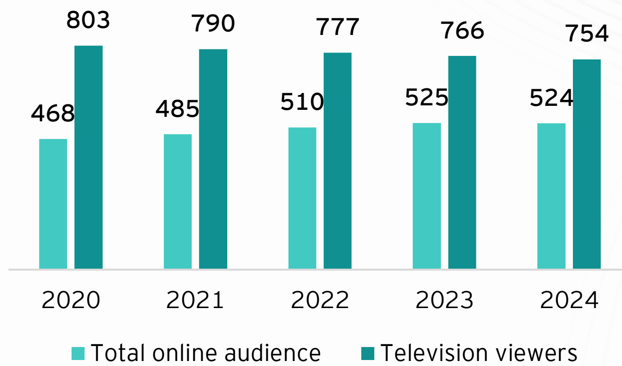


EY estimates based on Comscore, Ericsson and TRAI data | Screens in millions

- While the pay TV (large screen) segment continued to decline, there was significant growth in the small screen, i.e., the smart mobile phone, which reached 562 million active devices in 2024
- The growth of small screens and low-cost data has created an alternate medium of content distribution, particularly due to the ubiquitous availability of YouTube, a free, ad-supported content platform, as well as broadcaster OTT platforms that show television content for free within a few hours of its broadcast
- Our discussions with DPOs indicate that the availability of high-quality content on YouTube, including broadcast content, impacts the revenue potential of the pay TV business, at the very least delaying recharges of monthly pay TV packs by price-conscious consumers

V. Consequently, consumption of content on (and reach of) online platforms has increased significantly

Comparison of TV and online reach



Millions | Comscore, EY estimates

- As compared to the total reach of TV, which was 754 million in 2024, the total online audience was 524 million in December 2024, meaning online reach is now 70% of the reach of television
- The reach of digital platforms is evenly distributed:
  - Online entertainment has a reach of 440 million
  - Online news has a reach of 461 million
  - Online music has a reach of 190 million
- The number of people consuming content using the internet has been growing significantly, with a growth of 72% in video consumption, 93% in news consumption and 39% in music consumption from 2018 to 2023

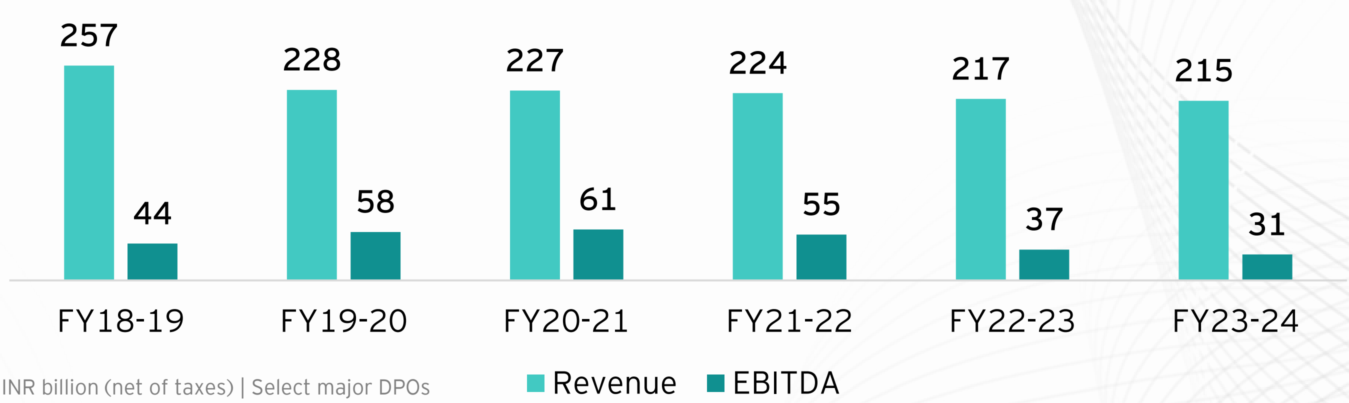
VI. While TV households have grown, pay TV has fallen

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Pay TV	152	151	133	131	125	120	118	111
Free TV	31	36	39	40	43	45	45	49
Total linear TV	**183**	**187**	**172**	**171**	**168**	**165**	**163**	**160**
Connected TV	1	1	4	5	10	15	23	30
Total TV households	**184**	**188**	**176**	**176**	**178**	**180**	**186**	**190**
Total Indian households	297	300	304	307	312	319	323	330
TV dark homes	**113**	**112**	**128**	**131**	**134**	**139**	**137**	**140**

Millions of subscriptions | Estimates from the FICCI-EY M&E sector reports | Free TV largely pertains to Free Dish

- While Indian TV homes have reached 190 million, the mix of methods used to deliver content has changed significantly
- Connected TV homes have grown to around 30 million weekly active sets, while Free TV connections (largely Free Dish) are estimated at 49 million
- Consequently, from 2018, the reach of pay TV homes has reduced by 40 million to 111 million, which includes pirated and under-declared connections
- This reduction has decreased the share of pay TV viewers to 58% of total TV viewers, down from 81% in 2018
- Unfortunately, during the same period, India's TV dark homes have increased from 102 million (in 2018) to 140 million (in 2024) due to population growth

VII. Not surprisingly, DPO revenues and margins have declined[32]



INR billion (net of taxes) | Select major DPOs

- The fall in pay TV homes has naturally led to a decline in revenues of DPOs
- Our analysis of four DTH and 10 major MSOs indicates that their revenues have fallen more than 16% since 2018, and margins have decreased by 29% during the same period
- However, the bigger impact has been on the LCO ecosystem, which is detailed in the forthcoming section

[32] *MCA portal for private companies; S&P Capital IQ for public companies*

MSO *speaks*

Cable industry has been an affordable source of news and entertainment to common man for 30 years. Despite implementing digital addressable system with huge investment, the consumer choice is elusive and forced bundling of many unwanted channels at steeply inflated prices (by 500-1000% in 6 years in some cases) by broadcasters along with discrimination is adversely affecting the industry which provides employment to 10 lakh people. There is an urgent need to address the issues to revitalise the cable industry.

Mr. Sankaranarayana Gopalan
Vice Chairman
Asianet Satellite Communications Limited

India's cable TV industry is at a pivotal inflection point. In an increasingly multi-platform environment, cable must evolve beyond being a mere content delivery pipeline—it must become a robust enabler of digital services. This transformation calls for smarter infrastructure, integrated digital offerings, and real-time consumer engagement. To make this shift successful, timely and supportive regulatory intervention is crucial—including fair and forward-looking policies, incentives for digital modernization, and a level playing field across all platforms. With the right vision and backing, cable can play a central role in India's digital future.

Mr. Jagdish Paliya
Managing Director & CEO
UCN Cable Networks Private Limited

The Digital Cable TV industry is constantly evolving to compete effectively with new content delivery platforms. The past decade has transformed the way that consumers watch television content. Complete digitalisation has offered the consumer a wide choice of channels along-with a boom in high-definition channels. While the industry faces headwinds in the form of OTT, Free Dish as well as other forms of content delivery, TV viewing remains as relevant for the consumer with a 110 million+ homes and more than 500 million individuals being delivered services 24x7x365 through nearly 2,00,000 LCOs.

Mr. Anirudh Sinh Jadeja
Managing Director
GTPL Hathway Limited

LCO *speaks*

We hope that this report will be considered by the policymakers. The current regulatory framework is outdated and favors broadcasters. It's time for a level playing field where LCOs are heard, and the distribution chain is protected, not punished.

Mr. Narender Bagri
President
All Local Cable Operators Association of India

Even though we are the ones who physically connect millions of homes, LCOs are rarely considered in policy discussions or support schemes. This report rightly highlights how ignoring the ground-level challenges of LCOs will weaken the entire broadcasting value chain.

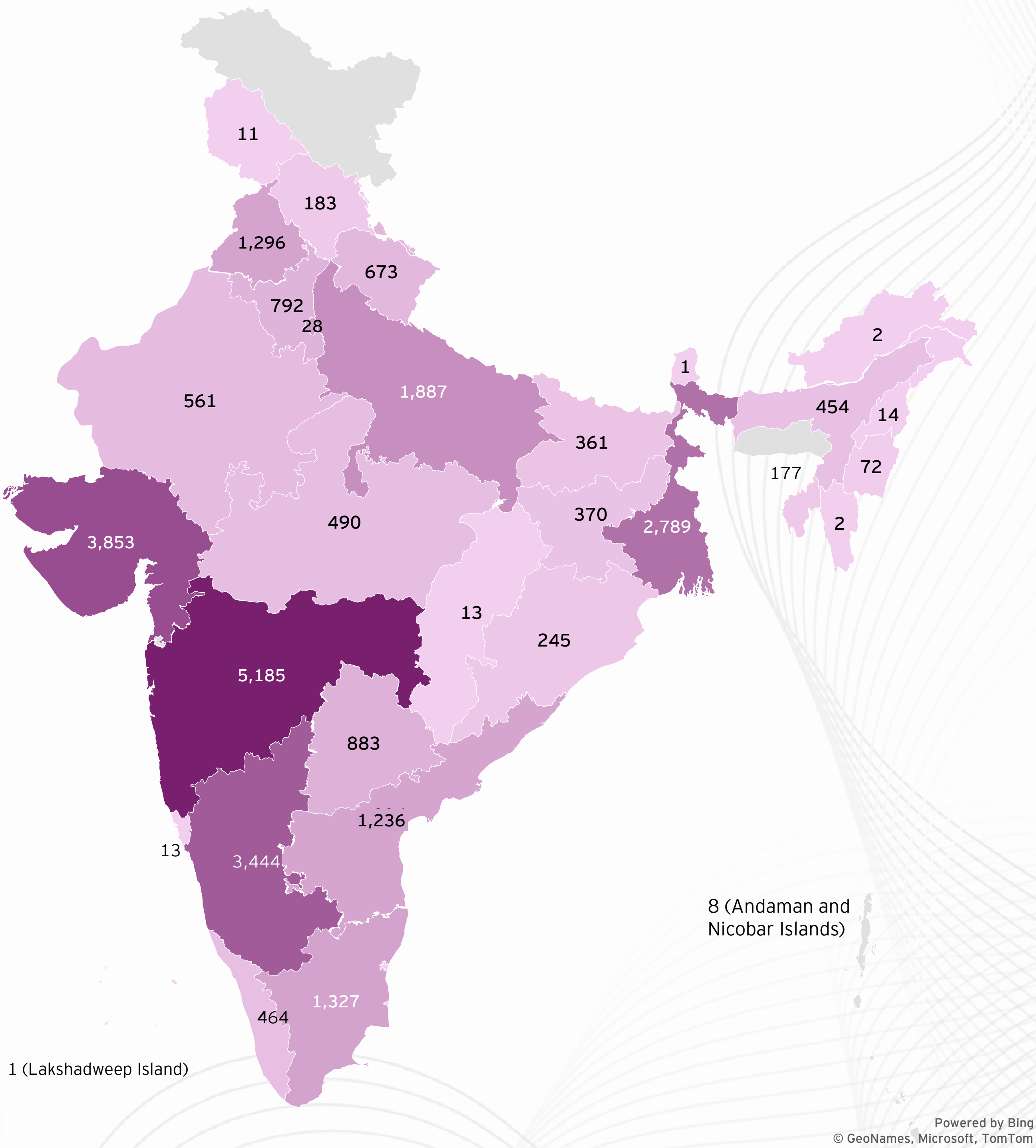
Mr. Omi Pal
District President – Dehradun, Uttarakhand
All Local Cable Operators Association of India

3

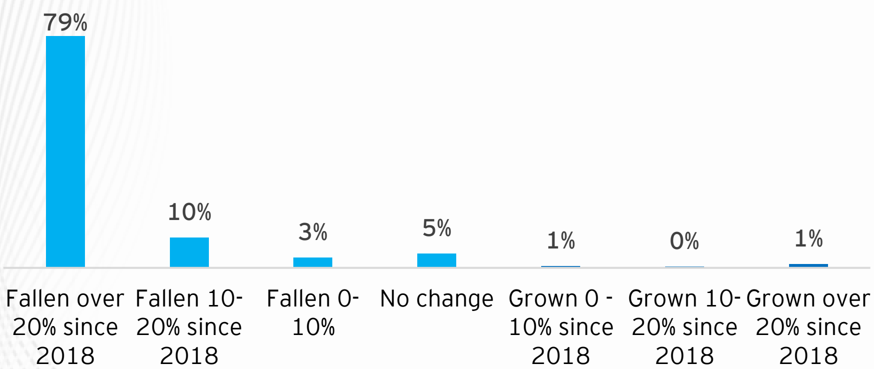
Impact on the cable TV distribution ecosystem

Over 28,000 LCOs were surveyed across India

EY, in collaboration with AIDCF, conducted a focused survey to assess the effects of the dwindling number of cable TV households on LCOs. A total of 28,181 LCOs participated in the survey, which was administered in November and December 2024, across 34 states and union territories of India, as depicted in the map below. The survey was conducted unaided, using online tools and was administered in eight languages.



I. 93% of respondents reported that their monthly take-home income had reduced since 2018



EY-AIDCF survey of LCOs

- 93% of respondents reported that their monthly take-home income had reduced over the period
- 79% of respondents reported that their monthly take-home income had reduced by over 20% since 2018
- Subsequent survey questions indicated one of the reasons was the inability to pass through channel rate increases. AIDCF data shows that in several markets, channel retail prices increased upwards of 50% since 2018

II. The top issues LCOs face pertain to collections

#1 Inability to increase collections/ rates from customers when channel rates increase

#2 Movement from pay TV to Free Dish, OTT platforms and Connected TV

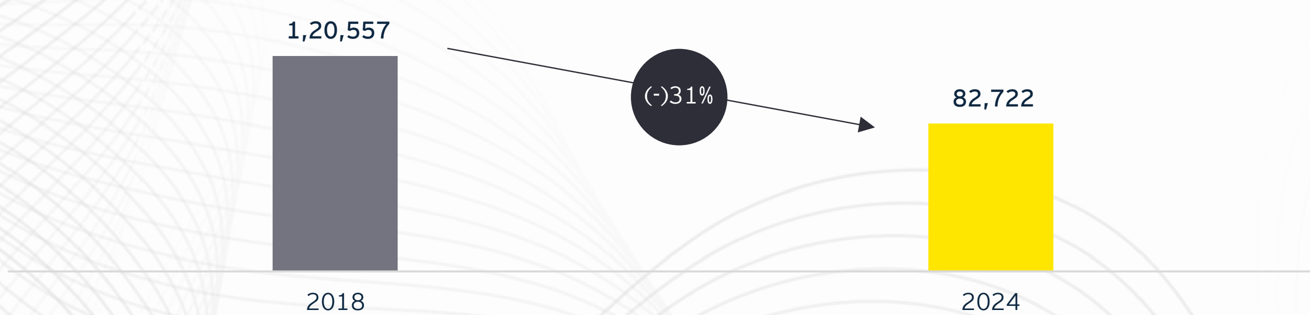
#3 Quality of content on linear TV is not at par with quality of content on OTT platforms

#4 Fall in second TV set connections within a household

EY-AIDCF survey of LCOs

- Among the various options provided to respondents, the top four responses highlighted a shift away from paid content to free content consumption, as well as a transition from linear to on-demand viewing
- Respondents noted that one of the main reasons for this shift is the perceived quality of content on TV, which they felt was not on par with the quality of content on OTT platforms:
  - Television and OTT platforms operate under different programming and advertisement content codes, with television being subject to more controls than online content
  - The cost of content per episode on OTT platforms is several times higher than that on TV, which could impact the quality of content available on these platforms[33]

III. There was a 31% drop in employment generated by LCOs between 2018 and 2024



EY-AIDCF survey of LCOs

[33] *FICCI-EY M&E sector report: Shape the future; based on survey of production houses*

- 49% of LCOs we surveyed reported a drop in the employment they created
- Total employment across the participating LCOs dropped by 31%, resulting in a loss of 37,835 jobs
- Based on the latest available data from the TRAI, which states that there were 85,000 LCOs in June 2024[34], or data from the ten AIDCF member MSOs, which claim 1.6 lakh LCOs between them[35], if we extrapolate this sample finding to the entire sector, the approximate total job loss could be between 1.14 lakh and 1.95 lakh

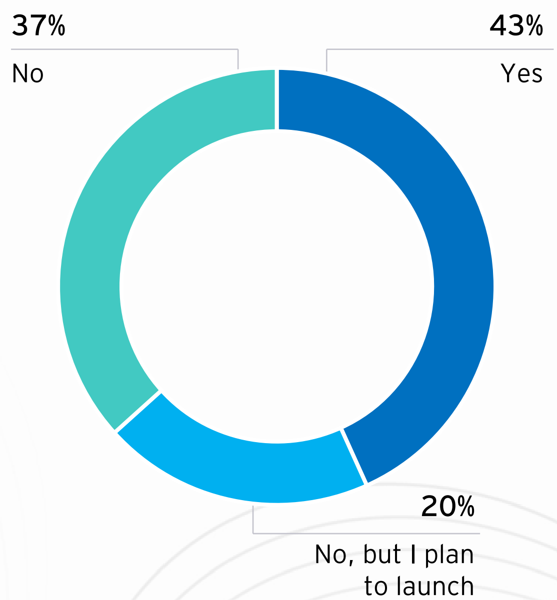
IV. Change in subscriber base since 2018

Change in subscriber base	No. of respondents
Fallen over 40%	9,993
Fallen 20-40%	2,514
Fallen 10-20%	691
Fallen 0-10%	512
No change	215
Grown 0-10%	275
Grown over 10%	13,976

- 49% of survey respondents reported a fall in their subscriber base since 2018
- Among the respondents, 35% claimed that their subscriber base had decreased by over 40%
- While 50% of respondents claimed growth, this number included growth due to mergers and consolidation of LCOs

EY-AIDCF survey of LCOs

V. A significant majority of LCOs expect to launch broadband services



- 43% of the LCOs surveyed had already launched broadband services to augment their incomes, although their success varied due to the large marketing budgets and capabilities of larger players like ISPs and telcos
- Another 20% respondents proposed launching broadband services
- By offering broadband options, LCOs aim to protect their household base and revenues, as a shift to organized broadband could significantly impact their income

EY-AIDCF survey of LCOs

[34] *https://www.indianbroadcastingworld.com/mib-proposes-5-year-registration*
[35] *AIDCF estimates; could include duplicates between members*

4

Future outlook

I. Pay TV households will continue to fall

	2024	2027E	2030E
Pay TV	111	95	71- 81
Free TV	49	53	57
Total linear TV	160	148	128-138
Connected TV	30	48	76
Total TV	**190**	**196**	**204-214**

Millions of subscriptions | EY estimates as per FICCI-EY M&E sector reports | Free TV largely pertains to Free Dish

- The total number of televisions in the country is projected to increase to 214 million by 2030, representing over 60% of total Indian households
- However, the composition of these households will change significantly. Pay TV could decline by a further 30 to 40 million, reducing the total to just 71 to 81 million (including under-declared and pirated connections), as both Connected TVs and Free TV continue to grow on the back of changing demographics and consumption habits, such as:
  - 93% of television sets sold in India in 2024 are expected to be internet-capable[36]
  - The rise of work-from-home and study-from-home arrangement is fueling the adoption of broadband connections in households
  - The price of consumer premise equipment for free televisions has come to below INR1,000[37] making it the most affordable television option for consumers
  - Higher quality content is being produced for OTT platforms, along with more features that allow viewers to customize their experience, boosting Connected TV subscriptions
  - The availability of free content on YouTube and other platforms like Samsung TV+ and JioTV+, which can be viewed on Connected TV sets
  - TV content is made available on OTT platforms as well, in some cases for free when delayed

II. Potential impact: Further loss in employment

- The loss of 40 million pay TV households between 2018 and 2024 resulted in a loss of 37,835 jobs in the LCO ecosystem, based on the **28,181** respondent LCOs. When extrapolated to all 85,000[38] LCOs, as per the latest LCO data from TRAI, which states that there were 85,000 LCOs in June 2024[39], or data from the ten AIDCF member MSOs, which claim 1.62 lakh LCOs between them[40], the approximate total loss of employment could be between 1.14 lakh and 1.95 lakh
- A further loss of 30 million pay TV homes by 2030, as indicated above, could exacerbate unemployment. Even if broadband connections replace pay TV connections, the growth in employment generated by large ISPs and telcos may not match the levels previously generated by smaller LCOs due to economies of scale

[36] *www.expertmarketresearch.com/reports/india-television-market*
[37] *Industry discussions; survey of Free TV equipment retailers and wholesellers*
[38] *https://www.indianbroadcastingworld.com/mib-proposes-5-year-registration*
[39] *https://www.indianbroadcastingworld.com/mib-proposes-5-year-registration*
[40] *AIDCF estimates; could include duplicates*

MSO *speaks*

The cable TV industry faces sharp decline in subscriptions, leading to revenue losses and job cuts. Rising prices and complex bundling burden consumers and slow market growth. A growing gap between linear TV and OTT content, along with inconsistent programming standards, further disrupts the ecosystem. To remain viable, the industry must embrace innovation, digital integration, and fair pricing. Equally important is the implementation of consumer-centric regulations that ensure a level playing field, which will be essential for the sustained growth and competitiveness of the cable TV sector.

Mr. Tavinderjit Panesar
CEO
Hathway Cable & Datacom Limited

The future of cable TV in India is to embrace digital convergence, hyper-local content, and value-driven bundling. To remain relevant and competitive, the business must look beyond traditional delivery methods, incorporating on-demand services, individualized viewing experiences, and economical pricing plans. The next phase of inclusive and sustainable growth will require a coordinated strategy among broadcasters, MSOs, and regulators.

Mr. Gurdeep Singh
Managing Director
Fastway Transmissions Private Limited

There is a tectonic shift happening in the pay TV television industry. Since 2018, pay TV homes in India have dropped from 161 million to 111 million, and could fall to 81 million by 2030. Cable TV subscriptions have halved to just 60 million in 2024. Viewership is shifting rapidly online; connected TV homes at 30 million today are projected to reach 48 million by 2027. What is clear is this: subscribers want content on their own terms. Cable TV can and will stay relevant, but it needs to undergo a radical change. The future lies in combining traditional broadcast with digital services - whether it be deployment of IPTV or using AI tools to enhance content discovery and customer experiences. These efforts should underscore the pay TV industry's proactive approach to maintaining relevance and enhancing accessibility in the digital age.

Mr. Vynsley Fernandes
Whole-Time Director, Hinduja Global Solutions
CEO, NXTDIGITAL Media Group

Future of cable TV in India hinges on a strategic convergence of media, network and technology evolving beyond traditional content delivery and to retain and effectively monetize different segment of customers, industry must transform into an integrated entertainment platform. This involves seamless integration of multiple services, ensuring ease of access to multiple devices, enhancing TV viewing experience with interactive and engaging features and cable TV can leverage its existing infrastructure to offer a compelling and unified entertainment hub.

Mr. Padmakumar N
Chief Operating Officer
Kerala Communicators Cable Limited

The future of Cable TV lies in seamless convergence by uniting existing services with technologies, and a better customer experience. By transforming into a smart network platform that integrates broadband, OTT, and home automation, Cable TV can redefine itself as an unified, interactive, intelligent digital experience focal point. To remain competitive and drive sustainable growth, the industry must embrace bold innovation and invest in digital infrastructure, and thereby revolutionize customer engagement.

Mr. Yogesh Sharma
CEO
SITI Networks Limited

5

International landscape

I. Traditional broadcasting landscape across select countries

Particulars	US	UK	Australia	UAE	Singapore	India
Total no. of broadcasters	250+[41]	200+[42]	5[43]	8+[44]	4[45]	333[46]
Major broadcasters	ABC, CBS, NBCUniversal, Fox, Univision, The CW, Telemundo, Estrella, Disney, WBD	BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Channel 5, S4C, Sky[47]	ABC, SBS, Seven Network, Nine Network, and Network 10[48]	Dubai Media Incorporated, Abu Dhabi TV, Ajman TV, Sharjah TV, MBC, OSN, Al - Arabiya, Sky news Arabiya[49]	Mediacorp[50]	Prasar Bharti, JioStar, Zee, Sony, Sun, TV18, Enterr10, ABP, Eenadu, Times TV, Shemaroo, IN10 Media, TV Today, Asianet, NDTV
No. of Pay TV channels*	~376[51]	~60[52]	79[53]	500+[54]	150+[55]	362 *(258 are SD satellite pay TV channels and 104 are HD satellite pay TV channels)*[56]
No. of FTA channels	~411[57]	~294[58]	~94[59]	~39[60]	6[61]	550[62]
Public service broadcaster	Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), American Public Television (APT), American Public Media (APM)	BBC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS)	Abu Dhabi Media Network and Dubai Media Incorporated	Mediacorp	Doordarshan *(operated by Prasar Bharati)*
No. of distributors[63]	55+	5+	4+	3+	2	845[64]
Major distributors[65]	Charter, Comcast, Dish, DirectTV, Verizon FiOS, Cox, Altice	BT Group plc, Sky Ltd, TalkTalk Telecom Group, Virgin Media	Foxtel Cable Television, Fetch TV, Singtel Optus, Telstra Group	Etisalat, Du, OSN	Singtel TV, StarHub TV	Free Dish, Tata Play, Airtel DTH, Dish TV, Hathway, GTPL, Sun Direct, Siti, Nxt Digital, Atria, Asianet, Den
Approximate subscriber base[65] *(in million)*	47.5	13.4	1.4	1.7	0.5	111

*The numbers are approximate based on the channels offered by the largest player in the country

[41]*https://usinfo.org/enus/media/overview/press11.html, SNL Kagan's TV station owners list*
[41]*Approximated from Ofcom's list of cable, satellite and IP-delivered licensed services*
[43]*https://www.acma.gov.au*
[44]*https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14704229*
[45]*https://aeroleads.com/list/top-broadcasting-companies-in-singapore*
[46]*trai.gov.in/sites/default/files/2024-10/CP_18102024_0.pdf*
[47]*Media Nations: UK 2023*
[48]*https://www.acma.gov.au*
[49]*United Arab Emirates media guide - BBC News*
[50]*List of Broadcasting Companies in Singapore In 2025*
[51]*https://www.spectrum.com/cable-tv/channel-lineup*
[52]*https://www.bt.com/tv/packages*
[53]*Sport + Movies Bundle - Shop - Foxtel*
[54]*du - My Account - Tv Package*
[55,62,64]*https://www.singtel.com/personal/products-services/tv/packs*
[56]*The Indian Telecom Services Performance Indicators July-September, 2024*
[57,58,59,60]*LyngSat*
[61]*https://www.imda.gov.sg*
[63,65]*SNL Kagan*

- Due to the multi-lingual and multi-cultural nature of India, the broadcasting market in India is far more fragmented, and quite different, than many other countries
    - Compared to leading content hubs like the US and the UK, India has more channels and many more distributors (the number of distributors in India is almost 2.5 times the number of broadcasters, while in the US it is less than a fourth) which leads to a highly competitive DPO ecosystem in India
    - Compared to multi-cultural countries like Singapore and the UAE, India also has channels in many languages, however, distribution is much wider and larger in scope due to the population differential
    - Compared to primary single-language markets with a prominent public broadcasting ecosystem, like the UK and Australia, the difference in distribution scale and the role of the public broadcaster vary considerably
- The common themes that emerge are:
    - The Pay TV ecosystem is present, and scaled across all types of markets
    - Both Pay TV and Free TV co-exist in all markets; with larger countries having more free-to-air options to cater to larger number of people in the weaker sections of society
    - The more populated countries have a significantly higher number of broadcasters to cater to varied tastes and cultures
    - Public broadcasting is present across all countries
    - Pay TV subscriber base is falling almost universally:
- In our research on the Pay TV market in five countries, the cable and satellite subscriber base was noted to be declining across countries, with the UAE being the exception
- The "cord-cutting" trend is expected to continue globally as consumers are increasingly moving away from traditional cable and satellite TV, with the majority opting for streaming services
- This shift is fueled by changing consumer viewing habits, the growing popularity of streaming platforms, increased availability of on-demand content, growing adoption of CTV for live sports and news, and rising interest in user-generated content
- However, one of the main factors to be considered is that in markets like the US, the cost of cable is several times higher than the cost of OTT subscriptions and broadband, while the same is not the case in India[66]

Year	US	UK	Australia	UAE	Singapore	India
2020	54.0	15.0	2.6	1.5	0.7	131
2021	69.2	13.8	2.2	1.6	0.6	125
2022	61.8	13.6	1.9	1.7	0.6	120
2023	54.1	13.5	1.6	1.7	0.6	118
2024	47.5	13.4	1.4	1.7	0.6	111

Subscriber base in millions | EY-FICCI report for India, S&P Capital IQ for other countries

[66] *EY estimates based on publicly available data, MPA reports, Statista*

II. Initiatives by regulators to protect the declining pay TV industry

Regulators across the key countries are taking direct and indirect initiatives to support pay TV against competition from streaming platforms, paving the way for affordable and flexible viewing options. Some examples are noted below:

The UK[67]

- The UK Media Act 2024 is expected to bring changes in the media broadcasting sector by modernizing the legislative framework for public service broadcasting (PSB), including the digital platforms operated by the public service broadcasters (PSBs). It also aims to promote UK PSBs and national radio stations
- The media bill will address the disparity between global streaming platforms and UK-based services, and level the playing field between traditional television services and VoD services

Australia

- "Prominence" reform – The government has legislated a television prominence framework to ensure that local TV services are easy for Australian audiences to find on connected TV devices[68]
- The government has now included streaming companies in the anti-siphoning scheme, which will help prevent iconic sporting events from slipping behind online paywalls[69]
- The government has suspended the commercial broadcasting tax (CBT) for one year, saving commercial broadcasters an estimated AU$50.3 million[70]
- The government has shifted Australia's national public broadcasters from a three-yearly to a five-yearly funding cycle, allocating AU$7.7 billion over five years from 2023–24[71]

III. Licensing requirement for OTT platforms

There is an even mix in terms of licensing requirements for OTT platforms:

- **The US:** No license required
- **The UK:** Ofcom charges regulatory fees using a tiered fee structure based on annual turnover[72]
- **Australia:** No license required
- **The UAE:** Requires license as per Art. 5 r/w Art. 8 of Law No. 55 of 2023[73]
- **Singapore:** IMDA provides license for OTT players (license period of five years)[74]
- **India:** No license required

IV. Regulation of content

The US

OTT – Not regulated

- In the US, there are no specific regulation for OTT platforms. Neither the FCC nor state or local jurisdictions have registration or licensing requirements for online video distribution service providers[75]

Linear - Regulated

- TV broadcasting is governed by rules and regulations set by FCC, which grants broadcast licenses for eight years, prioritizing applicants who demonstrate citizenship, good character, financial stability, and technical compliance. Licenses are awarded based on serving public interest, convenience, and necessity[76]

[67] *https://www.osborneclarke.com/insights/uk-media-act-2024-takes-first-steps-ofcoms-roadmap-implementation*
[68] *https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/media-communications-arts/television/prominence-connected-tv-devices*
[69] *https://www.publicmediaalliance.org/australia-passes-prominence-and-anti-siphoning-laws/*
[70] *https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/department/media/news/commercial-broadcasting-tax-suspension-support-tv-and-radio-broadcasters*
[71] *https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_departments/Parliamentary_Library/Budget/reviews/2023-24/MediaPrograms*
[72] *https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/audience-protection-standards-on-video-on-demand-services/audience-protection-standards-on-video-on-demand-services*
[73] *https://uaelegislation.gov.ae/en/legislations/2145*
[74] *https://www.imda.gov.sg/regulations-and-licensing-listing/niche-television-service-licence*
[75] *https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/migrated/opbp_report-_regulation_of_digital_media_and_intermediaries.pdf*
[76] *https://www.justia.com/communications-internet/broadcast-licensing-procedures/*

The UK

OTT – Partly regulated

- Non-linear services in the UK do not require license but on-demand program services (ODPS) providers must notify Ofcom before their service begins and advise if the service closes or undergoes significant changes. Ofcom maintains a list of the ODPS it regulates. Ofcom plans to regulate OTT platforms under country's new framework Media Act 2024's VoD Code[77]

Linear – Regulated

- To broadcast commercial television services in the UK, a broadcaster needs a licence from Ofcom. Program content, advertising and transmission technical standards are all regulated as part of the licence agreement[78]

Australia

OTT – Regulated through amendments

OTT platforms are primarily regulated by the Broadcasting Services Act 1992, which also governs digital content. There is no separate dedicated law for OTT services, but existing regulations are applied to them through amendments addressing digital media. The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) is the governing body responsible for enforcing these regulations on OTT platforms[79]

Linear – Regulated[80]

- ACMA helps develop codes of practice, develops and administers program standards, manages local content rules for regional commercial tv broadcasters, and investigates the broadcasting industry
- There are codes of practice for commercial FTA television broadcasters (developed by Free TV Australia in consultation with the ACMA) and pay TV (developed by Australian Subscription Television and Radio Association (ASTRA) in consultation with the ACMA)

[77] *https://www.streamingmediaglobal.com/Articles/News/Featured-News/UK-proposes-%E2%80%98Video-on-demand-Code-157910.aspx*
[78] *https://www.gov.uk/find-licences/tv-broadcast-licence*
[79] *https://avia.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/PUB-OTT-TV-Policies-in-Asia-2018.pdf*
[80] *https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/media-technology-communications/television/commercial-pay-tv*

UAE

OTT – Regulated

- In the UAE, international OTT platforms are required to work with licensed telecom companies, meaning they must partner with local providers like Etisalat and du to operate within the country[81], amid regulations enforced by the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TDRA)[82]
- Content on OTT platforms must abide by the media content standards stipulated in the 'Federal Decree by Law No. (55) of 2023 Concerning Media Regulation'[83]

Linear – Regulated

- TV Broadcasting activities must abide by the media content standards stipulated in the 'Federal Decree by Law No. (55) of 2023 Concerning Media Regulation'[84]

Singapore

OTT – Regulated

- IMDA regulates the OTT platforms with applicable codes of practices "Content Code for Over-the-Top, Video-on-Demand and Niche Services"[85]

Linear – Regulated

- Regulated by the IMDA's "Content Code for Nationwide Managed Transmission Linear Television Services " under the Broadcasting Act (Cap. 28)[86]

India

OTT – Self-regulated[87]

- OTTs are currently regulated by MeiTY via IT Rules, 2021 established for OTT oversight
- The 2021 IT Rules regulate OTT audiovisual services by setting up a self-regulatory three-level grievance redressal mechanism and classification mechanism of content under the notified categories

Linear – Regulated and self-regulated

- The Cable Television Network (regulations) Act and Rule 6 of the Cable Television Network Rules (the Program Code) sets out guidelines for the content on TV[88]
- The Code of Ethics and Broadcasting Standards (NBA Code) formulated by the News Broadcasters Association (NBA), a self-regulatory association, states principles and guidelines to be adhered to by NBA members in their news channel broadcasts[89]

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[81] *https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/media/entertainment/what-different-countries-are-doing-to-regulate-content-on-ott-platforms/articleshow/80437858.cms?from=mdr*
[82] *https://legalservicesdubai.com/uaes-new-media-regulation-law/*
[83] *https://uaelegislation.gov.ae/en/legislations/2145/download*
[84] *https://uaelegislation.gov.ae/en/legislations/2145/download*
[85] *https://www.imda.gov.sg/-/media/imda/files/regulations-and-licensing/regulations/codes-of-practice/codes-of-practice-media/ott-vod-niche-services-content-code-updated-29-april-2019.pdf*
[86] *https://www.imda.gov.sg/-/media/imda/files/regulation-licensing-and-consultations/codes-of-practice-and-guidelines/acts-codes/managed-linear-tv-services-content-code-updated-29-april-2019.pdf*
[87] *https://www.internetgovernance.org/2024/09/26/ott-regulation-in-india-turf-wars-definitional-ambiguities/*
[88] *https://mib.gov.in/sites/default/files/2025-01/programme-and-advertising-code-as-on-02.01.2025.pdf*
[89] *https://www.nbdanewdelhi.com/code-of-ethics-and-broadcasting-standards*

6

Views for the growth of pay TV

To protect the pay TV industry, and create a fair and level playing field for content creators, platforms and distributors, the following are several views from the industry that could be evaluated:

1. Broadcasters should continue to focus on and **invest in growing the pay TV universe**
2. Permit **differential pay TV pricing and/ or packaging** for certain territories to create affordability for less affluent regions, like how pricing changes by region for other products and services in India
3. Consider enabling a **level playing field between all the mediums of content distribution**, i.e., Free TV, OTT platforms, FAST channels and pay TV, while paying heed to their unique technological aspects, across pricing, content and advertising codes
4. Industry effort needs to be taken to **activate over 20 million inactive STBs**[90] in India. This could include incentives, subsidies, free repairs/ STB replacement, trial packs, etc.
5. **Evaluate restricting or limiting the provision of live** or slightly delayed transmission of pay TV content for free on other platforms. Industry consensus should be achieved to create a fair window between paid and free broadcasting as is done for filmed entertainment
6. Provide **hardware or other subsidies** and incentives to the over 100 million cable dark areas to adopt television. **Public-private partnership** can enable TV dark homes to buy televisions through incentives such as:
    - Free distribution of sets under government programs in border/ sensitive areas
    - Subsidized distribution of television sets and STBs to below-poverty-line households
7. Take a unified stand against piracy, a menace which costs the M&E sector over INR200 billion a year[91], through awareness programs, use of technology and policy change and enforcement rigor.

In the long-run, technological changes will continue, but content's basic premise of "inform and entertain" will stay the same. Creating a climate where all components on the content value chain thrive and prosper will go a long way in ensuring that a country as varied and diverse as India will continue to benefit from decades of investment made in the M&E sector.

[90]*As per several industry discussions*
[91]*IAMAI-EY report on piracy in India "The rob report"*

7

About this report

Glossary

5G	Fifth generation (of cellular network technology)
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
AIDCF	All India Digital Cable Federation
APM	American Public Media
APT	American Public Television
ARPU	Average Revenue Per User
ASSOCHAM	Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India
AVOD	Ad-Supported Video on Demand
BARC	Broadcast Audience Research Council
CAGR	Compound annual growth rate
CII	Confederation of Indian Industry
CTV	Connected television
DD	Doordarshan
D2M	Direct-to-Mobile
DPO	Distribution Platform Operator
DTH	Direct-to-Home
EY	Ernst & Young LLP (India)
FAST	Free Ad-Supported Streaming TV
FCC	Federal Communications Commission
FICCI	Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry
FTTC	Fiber to the curb
HH	Households
HITS	Headend-in-the-Sky
IBF	Indian Broadcasting Foundation
IMDA	Infocomm Media Development Authority
INR	Indian Rupee (US$1 = INR85 approx.)
IPTV	Internet Protocol Television
ISPs	Internet service providers
LCO	Local cable operator
M&E	Media and entertainment
MeitY	Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology
Mn	Million
MSOs	Multiple system operators
NTO	New Tariff Order
ODPS	On-Demand Program Services
OTT	Over-the-top
PBS	Public Broadcasting Service
PSB	Public Service Broadcaster
RIO	Reference Interconnect Offers
SBS	Special Broadcasting Services
STBs	Set-top boxes
SVOD	Subscription Video on Demand
TDRA	Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority
TRAI	Telecom Regulatory Authority of India
TV	Television
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America

Assumptions and disclaimers

This report has been developed by conducting primary and secondary research, discussions with several companies and industry stakeholders, and by cross-referencing available data points. To the extent possible, the data has been verified and validated.

The survey results are naturally dependent on the number and quality of responses received. Given the large survey sample, we have not independently reverified the data. However, the survey was administered by EY and responses directly collected and collated by EY.

Recommendations are provided to facilitate discussions at an industry level and may need additional analysis and research before being finalized.

The section on regulatory landscape has been provided by legal experts. The contents of that section have not been independently verified by EY for completeness and accuracy.

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Despite our best efforts, errors do creep into this report, which we correct when brought to our notice. Please do use the latest updated version from our website.

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AIDCF Member Companies

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- Den Networks Ltd
- Fastway Transmissions Pvt Ltd
- GTPL Hathway Pvt Ltd
- Hathway Cable & Datacom Ltd
- Kerala Communicators Cable Ltd
- NXT DIGITAL
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EY

Project team

- Anu Goyal
- Ashish Pherwani
- Bhavesh Laddha
- Kamlesh Dey
- Mahboob Alam
- Pranjal Sohani
- Sandeep Gupta
- Shrikant Gosavi

Coordination

- Kabiir Khattar | Kabiir.khattar@in.ey.com

Design

- Rachita Gupta

Editorial

- Kaveri Nandan
- Shweta Sharma

Quality

- Arunima Mitra

Marketing

- Nishtha Sharma

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AIDCF

All India Digital Cable Federation (AIDCF) is India's apex body for Digital Multi System Operators (MSOs).

AIDCF works towards the overall growth of the sector and creates an environment for not only complete digitization of cable TV under regulatory guidelines but also delivers the benefits of digital services including broadband and other value-added services to the people of India thus fulfilling the dream of 'True Digital India.'

The federation is the official voice for the Indian digital cable TV industry and interacts with ministries, policy makers, regulators, financial institutions and technical bodies. It also provides a platform for discussion and exchange of ideas between these bodies and the service providers, who share a common interest in the development of digital cable TV in the country.

It also collaborates with other industry associations such as IBF, CII, FICCI, ASSOCHAM association etc., with the objective of presenting an industry consensus view to the government on crucial issues relating to the growth and development of the industry.

The members of the federation have a combined market share of > 80%.

Contact:

Manoj P. Chhangani

Secretary General
contact@aidcf.com