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# The Conflicts Between Competition Act And TRAI Act In Arriving At An Effective Control Over Infiltration Of Foreign Media And Broadcasting Content In India.

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The telecommunication Industry in India has become one of the distinguished accomplishments of monetary liberation at some stage in the past due 1990s. With the view of this phenomenal growth of the telecommunication industry, this sector is converting from being entirely ruled through the Department of Telecommunications ('DoT') to diverse non-public operators coming into the arena and imparting facilities that include global calling, net offerings, and increasing into different branches of telecommunications. However, even after this boost, there appears to be a sense of disgruntlement among the non-public operators.

Telecommunication Industry in India has experienced superb growth after liberalization. The service providers have a fair and sturdy competition among themselves that the providers have reached a point where they provide service touch anybody inside within seconds without paying excessive fees thus pushing forward the service for betterment.

Under section 18<sup>1</sup> of the competition act 2022 it is stated that it is non other than the legislation which delegates the overall responsibility of "promoting and sustaining competition" in the Indian economy to the CCI. Thus, this implies that it is the Competition Commission of India that has the primary jurisdiction relating to the regulation of competition in different sectors and markets of the economy.

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997 is the legislation that controls the telecommunication industry as stated in section 11<sup>2</sup> that the TRIAC Act delegates power and

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Competition Act 2002 section 18 Acts of Parliament 2002

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act 1997 section 11 Acts of Parliament 1997

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responsibility to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India to; "facilitate competition and promote the telecommunication service providing a ground for the full-fledged improvement and growth of this sector"<sup>3</sup>

For the welfare and development of the telecom sector in the Indian economy, both legislations are meant to be read together with the objective of creating such conditions which push the telecommunication department upward through healthy and sturdy competition.

The statues speak approximately the equal goal i.e. truthful opposition, the safety of the hobby of the members and the customers, and constructing surroundings that promote healthy opposition. However, the two laws imbricate and this has brought about conflicts within the jurisdiction. While TRAI tries to keep the tariff rate reasonable as a customer-centric approach CCI thinks this is a case of predatory pricing being a more business-centric approach as it cut downs the doors for potential healthy market competition.<sup>4</sup>

To subdue this conflict the court has tried this matter in many cases over a long period of time. This issue first came into light in the case of Star India v. Sea T.V. Network<sup>5</sup>; here the court laid the judgment that the Commission that's now referred to as the Competition Commission of India has no authority to cope with disputes associated with TRAI. Later in the case of Consumer Online Foundation v. Tata sky and ors. <sup>6</sup>; dish TV challenged the jurisdiction of CCI in the matter when it was a case under the jurisdiction of TRAI and already under the hands of Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal. Here the CCI stated that though it is TRAI that regulates the telecommunication sector when the subject matter is about the competition in any sector the CCI holds the power.

Ending this state of confusion and resolving the jurisdiction on the 5th of December a twojudge bench adjudicated this issue in the case of Competition Commission of India v. Bharti Airtel ltd. and others<sup>7</sup> The main issues in this case were-

Whether CCI has the power to regulate and exercise its power in matters of the 1. telecommunication sector when TRAI is the act that governs the whole sector.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Rajvansh Singh Supreme Court on Jurisdictional Conflicts between the CCI and TRAI January 28, 2019

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Hindu Business Line, October 07,2005, "Long distance operators dismiss cartel allegations".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> (2006) 2 CompLJ 487 TelecomDSAT

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Case No. 2 / 2009 24 March 2011

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> 2018 SCC OnLine SC 2678, decided on 05-12-2018.

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2. Whether or not the writ petition filed under sect 26(1) be admitted in the concerned high court or not.<sup>8</sup>

Here the Hon'ble Supreme court delivered the judgment that though TRAI is specialized legislation that has a frame in the telecommunication sector the CCI is special legislation with the vocation to inspire honest and fair competition. TRAI manages best a unique area and CCI is the preferred regulator within the marketplace. The main objective of both legislation differs and so do their functions. It is within the jurisdiction of CCI to examine a settlement that's antiaggressive in nature and the impact of that settlement within the marketplace. This feature is best protected via way of means of the CCI and the TRAI has no jurisdiction in such matters. The Supreme Court did now no longer agree that during such matters the jurisdiction of CCI may be taken away. <sup>9</sup>

It became additionally stated that if the TRAI had observed that a cartel became created via way of means of the IDOs in order to prevent Jio's access within the marketplace then it's far the CCI could have jurisdiction to decide whether or not the exercise followed by the IDOs is an anti-aggressive and its unfavorable effects. The TRAI Act limits the power of the TRAI and its jurisdiction while CCI had jurisdiction to inspire honest competition. <sup>10</sup>

If each of the CCI and TRAI has been given jurisdiction to adjudicate the dispute this could bring about contradictory views. Thus it became important to keep away from a concurrent jurisdiction. The Supreme Court stated that CCI ordered research and offer justice to the events. The order became, especially an administrative order. The Supreme Court stated that if an administrative order is given through a court or tribunal that order needs to receive with positive motives and the writ petition became maintainable. <sup>11</sup>

Lastly, Supreme Court stated that it's far the TRAI who shall be exercising its jurisdiction first in case of telecom disputes and CCI may have a observe jurisdiction i.e. if the TRAI feels that an anti-aggressive exercise is followed by the IDOs it shall refer the dispute for adjudication to the CCI. <sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Rajvansh Singh Supreme Court on Jurisdictional Conflicts between the CCI and TRAI January 28, 2019, https://indiacorplaw.in/2019/01/supreme-court-jurisdictional-conflicts-cci-trai.html <sup>9</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Vaish Associates Advocates, "Supreme Court ends jurisdictional conflict between CCI and TRAI," https://www.lexology.com/commentary/competition-antitrust/india/vaish-associates-advocates/supreme-court-ends-jurisdictional-conflict-between-cci-and-trai

Dhruv Dhawan CCI v. TRAI July 1, 2021 https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\_id=3898366
 Ibid.