

Telecom Sector in Pakistan

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At present, telecommunication sector is in its ideal stage in Pakistan. Since its deregulation in 1996, this sector has seen phenomenal progress. In fact, this has become one of the healthiest industries in Pakistan and during last ten years, the sector has performed an extraordinary role not only for its own growth but for the

played on all kinds of mobile sets. And even no place is exempt from displaying its advertisements. Just open up any page of the newspaper or magazine or turn on your TV and radio sets, you will see nothing but telecommunication ads.

At the moment, telecommunication sector in Pakistan has come out from its fancy stage to maturity as newly-introduced technologies with attractive packages offered to local con-

tor.

To date, a lot more discussion on telecommunication in Pakistan pertains to economics and economic indicators of this sector but a few analysts have really highlighted the sociological aspects of this boom within the country in recent years. Honestly speaking, many critical and serious issues have emerged due to this tech revolution and they have yet to be addressed both by telecommunication firms and governmental bodies. If putting a mobile phone in everybody's pocket is an achievement then taking much from the same pocket is another milestone achieved by such manufacturers and telecom service providers. In other words, this phenomenal growth in recent years has also brought numerous consumer rights dilemmas as well. Totally choked network errors occurring frequently on major political events and national holidays, misleading pricing schemes, erroneous billing, distorted voice reception, severe connectivity issues e.g. network busy status and service delays, and sale of already used prepaid calling cards not excluding deceptive advertisements particularly targeting to young consumers are only a few.

Internationally, many small and large organizations in all business fields have taken numerous measures to assure

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entire national economy by and large.

Generally speaking, everywhere one can see the prevailing cell phone culture in the country.

Whether you are standing on a bus stop or eating out snakes at seaside you have to hear different catchy tunes being

sumers are further moving this sector in fact.

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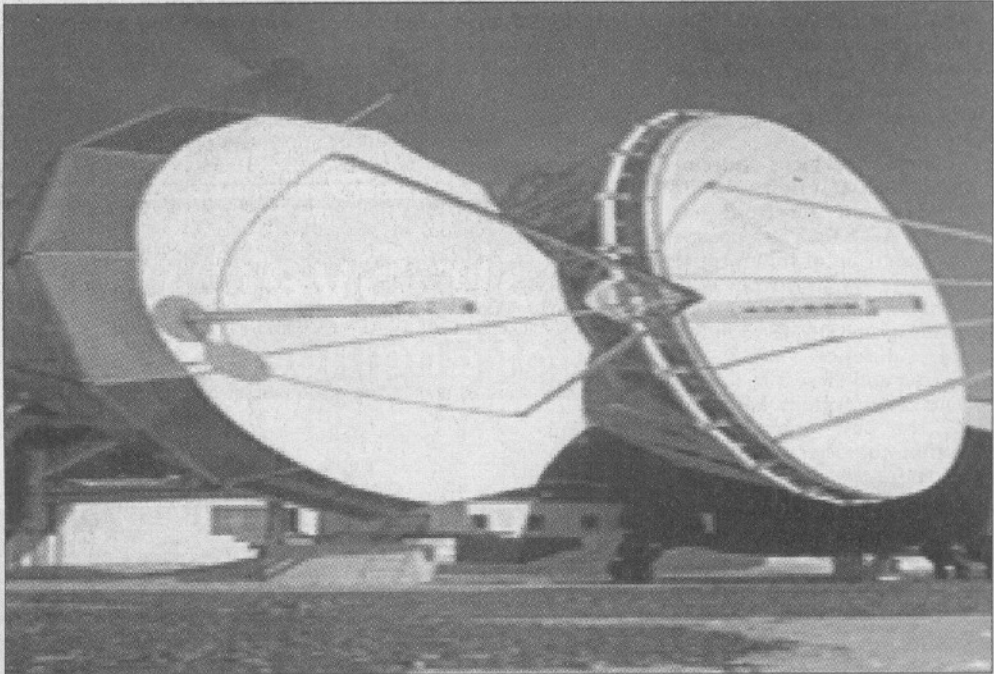
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corporate social responsibility. Besides running up pure business operations, a lot more factors are being considered by companies in order to perform their societal rules or at least these firms are doing their best not to affect societal interests for meeting up their annual revenue targets. But in Pakistan unfortunately this is not the case in most cases. For example, the alleged environmental hazards posed by mobile towers atop residential and commercial buildings in all places.

Many people have highlighted the environmental and health related effects of the cellular based station antennas but no satisfying clarification has been given from responsible side. Now it is commonly believed that mobile-phone towers or cellular based station antennas are huge health hazards. The electromagnetic radiation emitting from such towers and antennas is supposed to bring about many biological harms such as many neurological changes including the change in the blood-brain barrier, slower reaction time and quite decreased attention, increased blood pressure with possible risk of leukemia. Studies show that residents living around such towers and the workers responsible for its maintenance suffer from headaches, blurring of vision, earaches, short-term memory loss, tingling and burning sensations, numbing, bad sleep and additional fatigue and anxiety. In addition, other health hazards could include even cancer, respiratory, cardiac and ophthalmologic disorders. But again, the same mobile phone companies spending millions in advertising and promotions are nowhere to promote the safety measures for the protection of the people living around these gigantic installations and to mitigate their horrendous health hazards. Furthermore, the amount of electric energy being wasted through battery charging of all modern telecommunication devices is another issue especially when the whole nation is badly suffering from prolonged load-shedding and power breakdowns. There is a dire need to introduce energy-saving telecommunication



devices in our country.

In our Eastern culture, freely usage of mobile phones by young people has started creating many issues. Now our children have their own mobile sets. They talk very long especially when everyone is asleep. Almost all late-night packages available on cheapest rates are all utilized by these young consumers. Almost all of them have more than one SIM and some even carry more than one mobile phone. Now what they usually talk and whom they are talking to remains a puzzle that can never be duly resolved by their parents and guardians. Most importantly, pornographic clips and pictures, obscene messages and dirty jokes are widely shared by innocent minds but there is no control whatsoever. Definitely, this is parents' responsibility to keep track of this but even parents cannot control cell phone usage all the time as young people are clever enough to use it very intelligently. Thus, a cultural modification is also required in mobile devices and services making them socially compliant to our cultural norms and values.

In order to keep track of mobile phone usage especially by underage and young people, all cell numbers of family members should be shared with each other where each other's hand-

set would be serving like a fixed telephone line. In case of no response from a desired number, anybody shared in family network can pick up the phone and get the message and could even read the SMS. If this idea is taken seriously by our telecom sector, it will be a great help of society.

In other things, the evergreen incidents of mobile phone snatching can be definitely controlled if concerned authorities are ready to deal with this crucial matter rather creatively. The current system to block stolen/snatched mobile phone handsets has not produced expected results as changing the IMEI numbers of such stolen mobile phones is an easiest task for such crooks. Now it's the time to totally ban the sell and purchase of used secondhand mobile phones. It will definitely discourage the criminals for stealing or snatching something which can not be even sold in the market. Furthermore, new SIM (Subscriber Identity Module) should be always issued only at the time of purchase of new mobile phones. The recent trend to sell SIM cards blindly is just nonsense as it involves numerous law and order concerns as well. SIM cards being sold at every nook and corner of the land is causing severe damages to general consumers. For

example, when a consumer goes to reopen the SIM he finds his SIM being assigned to another ID card. Thus, he can never get his SIM back by any means. General shopkeepers have no concern with putting the SIM on wrong ID cards at all; they just know how to sell maximum number of SIM cards not considering this totally wrong selling practice.

When it comes to fixed land-line services, the situation is even worst. In many areas of metropolitan, several telephone lines are totally dead since months and despite numberless complaints from the users nothing has been done so far. This thing, as a result, paves the way for wireless telephone which looks to be essential part of selling strategy of the same company. Even their wireless telephones are not problem-less but who cares for the rest. When less offers much for the companies thus it should be even lesser to consumer side so that the mounting profits can beat the unbeatable heights of Mount Everest.

To conclude, despite its phenomenal growth in Pakistan a lot more is required to make it exemplary and flawless for all consumers. Telecom sector has to play its due role in fulfilling its corporate social responsibilities for a better and healthy society.