

1.1.5.3. The PSUs (BSNL & MTNL) have also played a pre-eminent role in provision of telecom services in the country, particularly in rural, remote, backward and hilly areas. Contribution of BSNL and MTNL to broadband penetration in the country is significant. The importance of PSUs in meeting the strategic and security needs of the nation can also not be understated.

## **1.2. Statement of Problem**

1.2.1. With the increase in the size of telecom sector and plethora of services, there is need to have an efficient system to deliver the services and an effective mechanism to handle the consumer complaints.

1.2.2. After the introduction of private operators for providing the telecom services, there was pressure on the government telecom operators to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their provisioning mechanism to deliver telecom services and complaint handling mechanism.

1.2.3. Today various modes (through IVRS, call center, mail, fax etc) and various routes (through service providers, licensor, DPG, DARPG, PMO, President Secretariat etc) are at the disposal of the consumers to register their complaints. Even though a structured system of complaint handling exists yet the consumers feel that the grievance redressal mechanism is not effective to deal with their complaints.

## **1.3. Objectives**

1.3.1. To evaluate the existing public grievances redressal mechanism in telecom sector in India.

1.3.2. To suggest reforms to make the redressal mechanism more consumer friendly in handling complaints.

#### **1.4. Rationale**

- 1.4.1. There is need to review and strengthen the public grievances mechanism in order to make the government bodies more responsive, accountable and transparent.
- 1.4.2. There is also need to assess the effectiveness of measures taken by government for the benefit of telecom consumers.
- 1.4.3. There is need to change the attitude and mindset of those who are handling consumer grievances.

#### **1.5. Research Questions**

- 1.5.1. Is the existing Public Grievance Redressal Mechanism able to handle the consumer complaints effectively?
- 1.5.2. Whether the telecom consumer has the right to approach various Forums/ Commissions under Consumer Protection Act in view of the Arbitration clause under Indian Telegraph Act?

#### **1.6. Scope**

- 1.6.1. The scope of this study will be limited to review and analysis of Public Grievance Redressal Mechanism followed by the Licensor (Department of Telecommunication) and Government Service Providers (BSNL/MTNL).

#### **1.7. Review of Literature**

- 1.7.1. Singh (1990)<sup>1</sup> stated that consumer complaints are a useful source of knowing dissatisfaction, and therefore should be encouraged. Sometimes the dissatisfied customers rather than complaining direct to the company, display indirect behavior such as negative word-of-mouth. Consumer dissatisfaction often arises from poor business practices and is something

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<sup>1</sup> Singh J (1990) A multifacet typology of patient satisfaction with a hospitals, *Journal of Health Care Marketing* 10: 8-21.

customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction and telecom industry. These studies have been done in many service industries. But no study has been done in the telecom sector to analyze its Grievance Redressal Mechanism's effectiveness. Therefore, the above study has been undertaken to research the factors relating to effectiveness of consumer redressal mechanism in Indian telecom sector.

## **1.8. Methodology**

1.8.1. The methodology adopted for this dissertation involves:

- a. To study the working of the consumer grievance redressal mechanism in resolving consumer complaints by Govt. Service Providers.
- b. To examine select cases handled under Consumer Protection Act and under Indian Telegraph Act through arbitration.
- c. To survey the randomly selected telecom consumers (Eighty in this case) to know about their level of satisfaction, this will form the basis for the measurement of effectiveness of consumer grievance redressal mechanism.

1.8.2. The study has been conducted on the basis of information, data and figures from Department of Telecommunication, TRAI, TDSAT and government service providers.

1.8.3. Primary sources

- a. Discussion with government official in Department of Telecommunication (DOT)
- b. Discussion with official of public sector undertaking BSNL/MTNL.
- c. Discussion with consumers

#### 1.8.4. Secondary sources

- a. Policy circulars issued by DOT.
- b. Guide lines issued by BSNL/MTNL/TRAI.
- c. Books, Journals, News Papers and Magazines.
- d. Judgments on consumer related court cases by Consumer Forums under Consumer Protection Act, High court and Supreme Court.

#### 1.9. Chapterisation Scheme

##### i. Chapter 1: Introduction

It presents introductory part and it includes research problem, objectives, research methodology and other related contents.

##### ii. Chapter 2: Current status of Public Grievances Mechanism, procedures and types of complaints

##### iii. Chapter 3: Effectiveness of Grievance Redressal Mechanism

It presents the survey details and findings.

##### iv. Chapter 4: Consumer Protection under Indian Telegraph Act and Consumer Protection Act, Analysis of cases and judgments

##### v. Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations