

Name and title under which you would like this response to appear:

Anonymous 191

Representing:

Self

What do you want Ofcom to keep confidential?:

Keep name/contact details/job title confidential

If you want part of your response kept confidential, which parts?:

Ofcom may publish a response summary:

Yes

I confirm that I have read the declaration:

Yes

Ofcom should only publish this response after the consultation has ended:

You may publish my response on receipt

Question 1: To what extent do you consider that DTT, DSat, cable and IPTV are in competition with one another for subscribers of pay TV services ? either at present or in the future?:

Although there is much less capacity for pay channels on DTT there is no reason why it should not compete for pay-tv viewers. This might become more important in the future if/when advertising funded tv becomes less viable. Therefore, it is important that any standards established now do not give any particular pay-tv operator a stranglehold over the system in future.

Question 2: To what extent do you consider the Proposal is likely to deliver benefits to the consumer?:

I see little benefit in the current proposals but that should not preclude working out a pay-tv policy now in case the advertising funded model should decline in the future (likely because of the growth in other advertising outlets and the ease with which the viewer can use hard-disk recorders to bypass advertising).

Question 3: To what extent do you consider that there is scope for sustainable competition in pay TV on the DTT platform and, more broadly, across all pay TV platforms?:

Only if an appropriate framework is put in place now.

Question 4:What are likely to be the key aspects of competition between providers of retail pay TV services on the DTT platform? E.g. what is the role of premium sports and movies content?:

Question 5:Do you consider that if Sky were to become the only provider of pay TV on the DTT platform it would be likely to have a significant detrimental effect on competition in the long term? How might this affect the development of other platforms for the delivery of pay TV services?:

Sky control over the satellite platform currently has a significant impact on customer choice ? both in terms of how the choice of channels is packaged and access to receiving equipment. If Sky is to be permitted to offer pay-tv on DTT then safeguards will be needed (see 10)

Question 6:To what extent, if at all, do you consider that the Proposal would be likely to lead to any of the public policy concerns outlined at Section 4?:

Question 7:Specifically, to what extent do you consider that the Proposal would be likely to lead to consumer confusion?:

Question 8:To what extent do you consider that it is beneficial for consumers to be able to obtain Sky and existing DTT pay TV content without having to purchase separate STBs?:

The issue concerning equipment is crucial and the current contrast between satellite and DTT highlights the dangers here.

For DTT I can walk into any Argos, TESCO etc. and purchase a set top box for as little as £20. Alternative I can purchase a Freeview recorder for under £100. There are many boxes to choose from with different features and different reputations.

On the other hand if I want satellite I am almost forced to go to Sky (non Sky boxes are theoretically available but in reality cannot decode most channels and cannot access the remaining channels easily)

I cannot go to Argos or TESCO and simply buy a Sky box. Even if I have a current subscription and viewing card and simply want a replacement I cannot go out and buy one for £20. Instead I will need to approach Sky and probably pay £140 (if I agree to subscribe to additional services then there is a chance they will let me have it for a knock down price). Of course Sky would recommend that I pay them £6 per month to insure my system.

Several manufacturers build Sky boxes but they are all built to the same spec and while some are reputedly more reliable than others the customer is given no choice. It

is very like when the telephone system was provided by the Post Office. Actually there is less choice ? the P.O. did offer phones in a range of colours and a few styles.

Sky also offer a hard disk recorder. Once again there is no choice of boxes. It costs £149 + installation. If I should cancel my Sky sub then the recorder will cease to work on even the free channels! ? unless I pay a special £10 per month sub just to activate the recorder. Again this is reminiscent of the UK telephone system in the 1970s

Moving into the area of tv packages, I cannot purchase just the channels that interest me as Sky does not sell individual channels ? instead I am forced to pay for packages containing many channels I will never watch. I am currently an occasional viewer of about 6 pay channels for which I pay £252 per year. I consider this very poor value and am constantly considering cancelling but then I will have issues with Sky+ and so would need to pay £120 per year simply to retain that.

I consider it essential that on the DTT platform, pay tv equipment should not be specified, supplied or controlled by a commercial operator. See 10 for a possible solution.

Question 9:Do you consider that the Proposal might lead to any additional public policy concerns:

Question 10:If Sky becoming the only provider of pay TV services on the DTT platform were likely to have a significant detrimental effect on competition, do you consider that it is possible to address this through a set of additional conditions and/or directions? If so, what form should those conditions/directions take?:

Pay tv technology, the equipment, specification of boxes, admin of viewing cards etc. should be the responsibility of a non profit making, impartial company.

Pay-tv Set Top Boxes should comply with Freeview standards and a new generic pay-tv standard. Therefore, equipment should be readily available in Argos & TESCO at competitive prices. Pay-tv broadcasters could come and go but the equipment would remain the same.

Ideally, pay-tv broadcasters would pay for access on a per channel basis and viewers would be able to subscribe on a per channel basis. There should be no subscription overheads for customers apart perhaps from a small one off fee every time they change their channel choice (reflecting the admin costs of implementing such a change ? maybe there would be no charge if done over the Internet). Subscriptions for some channels might be priced at as little as £1 or £2 per month. Obviously for premium sports or movies the pricing is likely to be higher.

Additional comments: