



India in Focus

By Rahul Nehra, Honorary National Secretary, SCTE® India



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Rahul Nehra is the Founder/MD of Jadoo Media Solutions. He founded and successfully exited Moving Talkies.

In his financial career, he has taken various leadership roles in blue chip companies in India such as Irdeto, Latens, Intelsat and Exset. He is also a director of Celebridge and the co-chair of TIE Global: Media and Entertainment SG.

The second quarter of the current financial year brought some welcome cheer to the market with the second wave abating and the third wave now seen as something that can be controlled.

The broadband infrastructure machinery is being cranked up, plans are now being revisited to put things in action, rural projects concerning broadband and associated services are

being laid out, the smart cities planning is now moving up a gear in anticipation of a firm third quarter of growth and services.

In a game-changing proposition the two pillars of the digital distribution industry - NXTDIGITAL and Siti Networks have agreed on infrastructure-sharing; this could be a defining moment for the cable industry which is now rapidly embracing the broadband era.

Meanwhile in telecoms, recent retrospective tax legislation may boost the prospects of Vodafone and will improve infrastructure confidence. Furthermore the ongoing 5G trials will undoubtedly herald a nationwide upgrade in the consumption of content wirelessly.

The satellite space continues to draw innovation and investment. Agnikool is undergoing an investment round at the moment and Methara is likely to announce plans to build low cost launch vehicles and satellites.

The broadband service space is beginning to emerge now as two distinct categories: education, governance and health as a public sector offering, while entertainment and education are being offered by the private sector. Education crosses over into both in India. However, as schools reopen we will probably see the take-up of remote online education plateau across many states.

The entertainment sector saw a profusion of releases on the top five streaming platforms and the response varied between “excellent” for online box sets series and “average” for films, demonstrating that these are two very different experiences, and possibly audience habits and appetites are changing. As cinemas finally reopen across the country we expect the resurgence of this embattled industry and this will redress that balance.

In terms of sheer numbers, handset purchases rose to 32.4m across all brands in Q2, a saturation of 87% to date. Broadband subscribers grew to 22.8m with a monthly growth of 2 percent. The digital cable figures stood firm with more than 110m cable connection with DEN, NXTDIGITAL, Hathway, DEN, Siti, GTPL and other regional players holding onto their subscribers. DTH subscribers remain in excess of 70m with Tata Sky, Freedish and Dish TV driving most of the numbers.

The Chairman of SCTE® India Vynsley Fernandes summarises the last quarter as “a wake-up call for the media and entertainment industry; it is time to focus on innovation and defining an agile business model required to combat the

changing dynamics of content consumption. As opportunities open up across the wide media spectrum – ranging from telecoms, television broadcasting and distribution to OTT and advertising, companies need to look to emerging technologies and “smart” models, to not just sustain their business, but continue to grow. An important lever will be to encourage continuous upskilling of staff as well as embracing the digital environment that has been accelerated due to the changes effected by the pandemic.”

“Our colleagues in India have had a particularly hard time in recent months with the pandemic, but we are very pleased to see things turning a corner. I have every confidence that Rahul and his team, with support from the UK office, will go on to achieve fantastic things in 2022.”



Editor’s Note

SCTE® India (based in New Delhi), with its own dedicated committee, focuses on the requirements of SCTE®’s members in India. The group has been granted registration as a non-profit organisation and is run by an Indian Executive. It regularly organises networking meetings and roadshows (sometimes hosted by local cable operators and manufacturers) as well as training activities in India. It also holds the SCTE® India awards (for individual achievement and technology innovation).

SCTE® India regularly disseminates news that is relevant to all SCTE® India members and widely promotes further SCTE® activities such as training and standards news. For further details, see www.scteindia.org