

CHENNAI

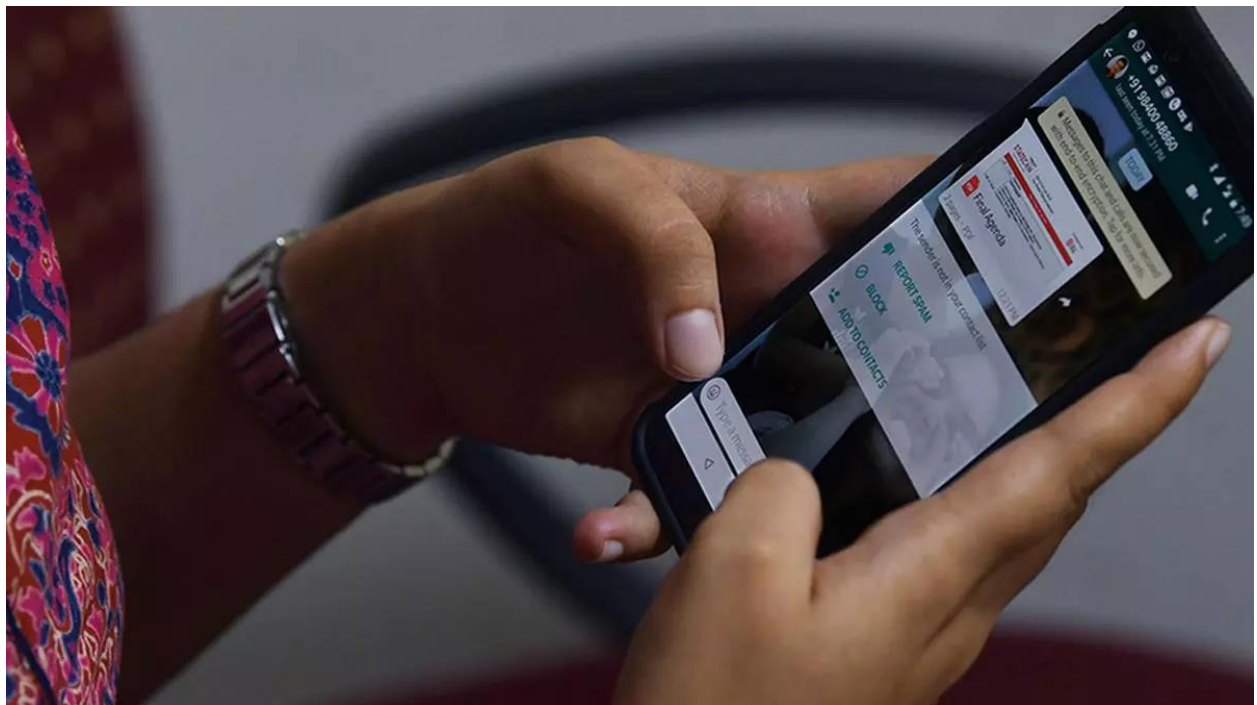
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Seamless communication

Interoperability across devices and platforms is vital

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Any telecom network that is not fully interoperable and interconnected would get much diminished in acceptance and value since consumers always wish to be able to interact with the entire universe of subscribers, whether by voice or by messages/mail. Without this, digital connectivity is of little use.

In these days, voice is vastly reduced in importance and messaging transcends mere text, incorporating a multitude of dimensions such as

location, audio, video, pictures, links, end-to-end encryption, and tailored business solutions. From the consumer's standpoint, the expectation is clear: messages, rich in content and functionality, should seamlessly traverse networks and devices, ensuring a consistent and reliable communication experience. This necessitates interoperability, where diverse networks, systems, and devices seamlessly communicate, enabling the unhindered exchange of messages regardless of their complexity or origin. As we navigate the complexities of modern telecommunications, it's essential to place customers at the forefront, ensuring their ability to communicate freely and securely across diverse platforms.

MANY PLATFORMS

Interoperability has always been recognised as a fundamental telecom requirement, allowing communication systems to communicate without hindrance, degradation or distortion. However, with the digital revolution, came a proliferation of messaging platforms, each operating within its own closed ecosystem. This fragmentation created barriers to effective communication, relegating users to isolated islands of connectivity.

The global apex body for mobile standards, GSMA, has played a pivotal role in establishing standards for messaging in future networks, including 5G. Through initiatives like the Future Networks programme, GSMA aims to promote interoperability and scalability for new mobile technologies, ensuring that communication remains unhindered by technological barriers.

Recognising the importance of interoperability, European Union (EU) took a decisive step forward with the Digital Markets Act (DMA), making mandatory for designated gatekeepers for core platform services to allow third parties to inter-operate with the gatekeeper's own services in certain specific situations and to not treat services and products offered by the gatekeeper itself more favourably in ranking than similar services or products offered by third parties on the gatekeeper's platform. However, the European Commission recently decided that instant messaging is not a "gatekeeper service", meaning that strict DMA regulations won't apply to it.

One of the other significant developments in recent times is the announcement by a market leader about its decision to adopt the RCS standard aligning its instant messaging with the GSMA standard enabling interoperability with another key messaging platform, while preserving their USP and without degrading the message. This move will represent a pivotal moment for universal

interoperability. While industry initiatives are crucial, government and regulatory intervention may also be desirable to ensure interoperability across devices and platforms, particularly in the context of 5G networks and IoT. Above all, the age-old SMS lacks adequate security and needs to be phased out and replaced with RCS.

For consumers, interoperability translates into seamless communication between devices, regardless of brand or provider, enhancing user experience and convenience.

Moreover, it empowers consumers by enabling them to choose equipment based on performance. This fosters healthy competition among manufacturers, ultimately benefiting consumers with a wider range of options and improved products. By placing customers at the forefront and embracing modern standards, stakeholders can create a more connected, inclusive, and secure digital ecosystem.

The writer is President, Broadband India Forum. Views are personal. Research inputs by Sundeep Kathuria, Consultant.