TOPIC:

POOR INTERNET QUALITY

TABLE OF CONTENT

WHY INTERNET CONNECTIVITY IS POOR IN NIGERIA

Sonny Aragba-Akpore reckons that the harsh operating environment, among others, is affecting internet connection in the country

With no fewer than 568 out of 756 licensed Internet Service Providers (ISP) in comatose as at March 2022 and other challenges bedeviling that sub sector of the telecommunications industry, Nigeria may remain on the Global Internet Poverty Index for some time.

Only 188 ISPs are in business according to the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) records. And these are the ones that minister to the internet needs of Nigerians.

The internet is a backbone of the data superhighway that connects the global online computer networks through a web of fiber-optic cables. Between continents and land masses, the internet relies on cables crossing the sea floor. Besides the cable, connectivity also rides on satellite even though that too has its own vagaries.

But in Nigeria, there is a combination of both undersea cable and satellite which is also made possible via Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) that could provide speed of 20 megabytes per second (mbps).

But the NCC thinks that a harsh operating business environment among others partly accounts for poor internet connection in the country.

One of the plagues of poor internet in Nigeria has been traced to the issues of anti-competition practices in the industry. The NCC also lists what could be termed hydra-headed inadequate spectrum, high price of bandwidth, high cost of Right of Way, and lack of good corporate governance practice by the companies.

NCC Chief Executive, Prof.Umar Danbatta spoke recently at a function in Lagos saying that efforts are being put in place by the regulator to address the issues. He was quoted as saying, "As a result of these challenges, deliberate policies and regulations are being looked at in the Commission in ensuring that ISPs and other smaller players in the industry thrive."

Some of the measures put in place by the Commission include but not limited to embarking on continuous promotion of fair play and orderly development of the Nigerian communications ecosystem as well as boost competitiveness of the industry through provisions of the required regulatory frameworks and interventions in terms of policies, guidelines, determinations among others that will encourage fair play in the telecommunications industry."

The NCC also claims it is maintaining and mandating more openness and transparency in the activities of stakeholders within the industry in order to ensure healthy competition practices amongst competing licensees.

"We are actively engaging in strategic collaborations with stakeholders who have crucial roles to play in the growth and development of the Nigerian economy with an emphasis on the telecommunications sector", Danbatta was also quoted as saying.

Some of these challenges account for high cost of bandwidth and an equally high cost for connectivity in that regard.

Of the 109m population connected to the internet, Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) account for nearly 95% subscriptions, while the ISPs account for the rest. AS of Q1 of 2022, the total connected subscribers of the ISPs stood at 376,740, according to the data released by the NCC. Of the 188 active ISPs 10 of them stand out in terms of the number of subscriptions and speed in that regard.

In no particular order, these ISPs include Radical Technology Network with its head office located in Lagos but has presence in Abuja, Port Harcourt, Kano, and Onitsha. The company claims to have high level of customer responsiveness and service quality, a trait that may have earned it a long-standing relationship with its customers and made it one of the most reliable ISPs in Nigeria.

About 1,852 customers were connected to the ISP's service by the first quarter of 2022 and all of them are believed to be active.

Another operator is Astramix Limited said to be a provider of fast and reliable uninterruptible data and internet broadband. The company claims it uses first-class communication technology and has a reliable, uninterruptible, and efficient top-of-the-range data solutions in the market.

As of the quarter one of 2022, its connected customers stood at 2,040 and all of them are believed to be actively connected. It covers five locations in the country.

One of the top 10 is **Cobranet an Odua Company with headquarters in**

Ibadan. Launched in 2003, Cobranet Limited is rated as a leading Internet Service and data provider in Nigeria. The company provides every segment of the Nigerian society with a reliable and secure Internet Service and Data management solution to the digital universe.

It currently offers corporate internet plans for organizations and medium-sized businesses over a state-of-the-art -radio network in Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt as well as residential plans. The company has 3526 subscribers and interestingly all of them are active, thus achieving 100 per cent customer activeness. The company has presence in 84 locations.

Suburban Broadband Ltd is a next-generation multimedia service provider with fiber optics networks in major cities in Nigeria, including Lagos and Abuja. Its products include subscription access to premium content, TV, Internet and Voice services, as well as connected homes, security, and utility management solutions.

The company has 4,435 connected customers and all of them are said to be active. It, however, has only three points of presence.

21st Century Technologies Limited is a Licensed Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Services Provider in Nigeria incorporated in 1997. The company owns and operates one of the most extensive optical fiber cable metropolitan networks in Nigeria with speeds up to 10Gbps, high-speed Corporate Dedicated Internet Access and Indefeasible Right of Use (IRUs) for a total of 10 gigabyte per second (Gbps), and fully redundant International subsea fibre capacity with two separate vendors.

As at Q1 of 2022, it had 5,296 customers out of which 2,571 were actively subscribed to its service. The ISP had a presence in 50 locations.

Cyberspace is another company founded in 1995 and commenced operation the same year as a wholly-owned Nigerian company. With a mission to provide excellent value-added ICT services and cutting-edge networking solutions, the company claims to be a complete network and software solution provider in the industry with its state-of-the-art and world-class internet protocol (IP) infrastructure.

In 2014, it deployed its fourth generation (4G) network infrastructure with a promise to deliver 10x more speed, mobility, and security to its customers. The NCC database says Cyberspace had 3,593 connected customers as at the first quarter of 2022 and all of them were actively subscribed. The ISP is present in 138 locations across Nigeria.

Another company is VDT Communications with license for Private Network service specializing in the provision of Enterprise-Wide Area Network (WAN) and Metropolitan Area Network (MAN) link connectivity using Fiber Optic and Wireless Communication infrastructure and access networks.

VDT is a Broadband communication service provider to corporate organizations with leased Fiber Optic trunks to the 36 states in Nigeria and the FCT, where they have 59 Point-OfPresence (POP) and complement of technical support staffers.

VDT had 11,216 total connected subscribers with 7, 146 active users as at quarter one of 2022. IpNX is one of the high flying operators in terms of customer numbers among licensed ISPs in Nigeria. The company is one of the country's fastest-growing ISPs, serving a multitude of needs across enterprises, small businesses, and residents with innovative services.

As a pioneer and leading Fiber-To-The-Home (FTTH) operator in Nigeria, IPNX as of Q1 this year had 17, 499 connected subscribers, while 12, 516 of those customers were active. Its points of presence are in 53 locations including Abuja, Lagos, Port Harcourt, among others.

Although relatively quiet in the industry, Tizeti is another company that provides high-speed broadband internet to residences, businesses, events, and conferences and deploys public Wi-Fi Hotspots at locations across Africa. The company is leveraging the large wireless capacity available with Wi-Fi and plummeting the cost of solar panels to create a low Capital Expenditure and Operating Expenditure (CAPEX/OPEX) network of owned and operated towers to offer disruptive, customer-friendly pricing for unlimited internet service right in Africa.

The NCC's database, says "the company is the second-largest ISP in Nigeria in terms of the subscriber number. Tizeti's total connected subscribers as of Q1 2022 were 29, 397 while 17,438 of those customers are active. The ISP had points of presence in 126 locations."

Another major player is Spectranet which got its license to operate since 2009 to promote internet services across Nigeria. Spectranet was among the first Internet Service Providers to launch 4G internet service in Nigeria and aims to be a leader in the Internet Services space.

The NCC data shows that Spectranet had the largest connected and active customers out of all the ISPs licensed by the Commission. "While the company has 260,725 connected customers, its active customers stood at 121, 281 with point of presence in 630 locations across Nigeria."

Despite the robust connectivity provided by these operators through fiber optic and satellite via VSAT, the MNOs are believed to be providing a large number of access to the public primarily because subscribers do not need modems and other devices to get connected. All a subscriber needs is a smart device, data on demand and pronto, one is connected. MTN, Globacom, Airtel, 9mobile and Intel are jostling to be market leaders.

SOLUTIONS TO POOR HOME INTERNET CONNECTION

- ❖ Check your router settings. ...
- ❖ Avoid wireless signal interference. ...
- ❖ Beware of worms and other malware. ...
- ❖ Stop background programs that hog bandwidth. ...
- ❖ Make sure your router and other network equipment are working. ...
- ❖ Call your Internet service provider.