

## FACT SHEET 3

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### **Becoming a smart telecommunications/ICT consumer**

Many Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) products, which includes telephones, mobile phones, computers, i-phones, i-pads and related services and products, have recently penetrated the Vanuatu telecommunications market at a rapid pace. Numerous effects and impacts of these ICTs, across many areas including social, cultural and economic aspects of life have been observed. At a global level, these effects and impacts have been, or are being, addressed by various organizations, interest groups, the government and private agencies in accordance with their objectives and goals.

The Telecommunications and Radiocommunications and Broadcasting Regulator (TRBR), likewise, is engaged in educating consumers so that they become informed and empowered to actively participate in the development of the country through the telecommunication sector, and that they effectively and appropriately utilize ICTs.

The increase in the number of service providers and, more recently, the landing of the submarine cable has promoted more competition and affordability of telecommunication services and products; now bringing ICTs within the reach of most Ni-Vanuatu and, as such, a growing number of citizens now enjoy access to telecommunication services and ICTs. Selection of the ICT, service or product to purchase therefore can become, at times, somewhat difficult. TRBR, in its effort to ensure Vanuatu citizens become smarter, wiser and more selective in their choices, encourages consumers to take note of the following, keeping in mind the need to make sure that they protect themselves from unfair and unsafe marketing practices

1. It is important that you, as a consumer or a customer, at all times, must be informed about and aware of the services offered to be in a position to make your desired and appropriate choice.
2. To ensure that you are not trapped, "locked in", as much as possible obtain much information regarding the service or product in advance of making any decision or signing a contract, and at least be aware of other consumers' experiences with similar services.
3. You must make decisions wisely considering the harmful consequences that may arise from making hasty/ill informed decisions on a particular service that you wish to purchase.
4. There is a need to compare prices and features of products and services offered by service providers, before deciding to make a purchase.
5. Avoid entering into any schemes that are promoted with fancy terms and those that you do not understand without enquiring about the details of the offer.



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6. Carefully analyze the word "FREE" in advertisements before making any decisions. Generally "free" has conditions attached to it.
7. As a customer of any service provider, you must be aware of the usage tariffs of any Value Added Services associated with your main account prior to using such value added service, like Ring tones for example.
8. Know and fully understand your financial capability before you enter into any contract.
9. Take and spend time to read and understand all the paperwork, including your contract terms and conditions, carefully (strive to understand each individual clause) before you decide to enter into any contract with a telecommunications/ ICT service provider. Some contracts are very long and complicated. However, you have the right to seek assistance to ensure you understand fully all terms and conditions expected and required from you.
10. If there are any changes made to your current contract, you must be made aware of them and agree to them, as well as you should keep copies of the contract to ensure you to avoid any potential confusion.
11. If you are a post-paid customer, you must ensure the receipt of your invoices, of your account(s) are delivered in time and the accuracy of the transactions.
12. If you are a prepaid customer, you should also ensure you know your balance before making any calls, SMS or using data services (which can be costly).
13. For postpaid customers, ensure your bills are paid promptly and before the due date to avoid disconnection or surcharge.
14. Be aware that you should not be pushed or forced to subscribe to any service. You have a right to say NO as equally as you wish to say YES.
15. Inform your service provider about any lost /stolen SIM Card as soon as you lose it.
16. If you wish to make any changes to your contact details, make sure you inform your service provider about any changes which might affect your contract.
17. It is advisable that you make sure you do not use telecommunications services, ICTs or products that are hazardous to the environment or other users.
18. Get into the habit of asking questions for clarification of issues which you do not fully understand.



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