

Importance of reading and understanding advertisements

ICT devices, including Mobile phones, smart phones and other telephony products and services lead the way in terms of the proliferation of ICTs into Vanuatu. A study by the Pacific Institute of Public Policy in 2011, noted that the mobile phone is the "most common electrical appliance in Vanuatu homes", with 95.5% of households surveyed, owning a mobile phone.

The same study also noted that 4 out of 5 persons surveyed own a mobile phone and that 99.4% of household's surveyed use only mobile phones. These statistics indicate and confirm a very high level of use of mobile phones in our country.

The World Development Indicators published in July 2014, indicated that Vanuatu has a literacy rate of 83.4%. With a 16.6% illiteracy rate, a good part of the population of Vanuatu face challenges when it comes to reading and understanding advertisements.

Reading and understanding an advertisement is very important because the telecommunications market in Vanuatu has grown considerably and became more complex, given that a variety of service offerings are provided by various service providers. Much more variety of services and products are now available, with competing prices allowing consumers more options and, more importantly, approaches and service charges; considering that a large variety of advertisements are published to attract consumers' attention.

Apart from the illiteracy issues faced, a reality for consideration includes the notion that even consumers, who are literate, might be ignorant, disinterested or are too busy or simply do not have access to or seek relevant and important information

In addition, although safeguards are being developed, and some are in place, there currently is a lack of comprehensive and cohesive laws and regulations developed to protect consumers from unscrupulous marketing practices they may be faced with.

Recognising this, TRBR wishes to encourage all consumers to take on self-ownership and the 'personal' responsibility of protecting themselves by practicing the following:

1. Paying close attention to and being fully aware of promotions and advertisements to assist your understanding and avoid being misled.
2. Carefully reading advertisements to fully understand and be aware of the terms and conditions of a service, to ensure that you are not trapped ("locked in") by a misleading advertisement.



FACT SHEET 4

TRBR is here to help you



3. Before entering into a contract with a service provider or before buying a product, you, as a responsible consumer, must make sure you read the terms and conditions of the service offered very carefully and ensure you understand them. If you are not sure, ask questions. Continue to do so until you fully understand and can make a reasonable choice/decision.
4. Make sure that you fully understand terms such as "unlimited", "free", "bonus", etc., in the context for which any advertisement using any of those terms was made. Seek clarification if you are unsure but NEVER make assumptions.
5. Make sure that, when subscribing for a promotion, you receive the special charge or product as advertised and the promotion service is available for the full duration stated in the promotion advertisement.
6. Ask questions and more questions! If you are unsure of a product you are interested in, a potential service offered by a service provider, or a new concept, ask the appropriate persons for clarification.
7. Request help if you need it. Your service providers are obliged to provide customers with assistance and they should ensure you are aware, understand and are able to make informed decisions.
8. When buying a service or product, particularly new ones, always ask questions if you are unsure of how they work, how to make good use of and get the best from them, and how to ensure you can be protected when using them.
9. Read the fine print of the advertisements – carefully - to ensure you fully understand what is expected of you and what is being provided - again ask questions if you do not understand.



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