

THE CONSUMER ADVOCACY AND PRICING TRANSPARENCY WORKING GROUP

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Background

The Working Group started work in September 2015

The Working Group is so far made up of nine (9) Core Group Members and sixty seven (67) and counting. Group Members including students, lecturers, CEOs of companies and many more

5 Quick Wins

1. Advocate on the importance of pricing transparency among stakeholders
2. Make recommendation for standard definition of what units of data are for consumers to know how much they are being charged.
3. Advocate for the publication of the definition of what units of data to enhance pricing transparency

Quick Wins

4. Advocate for internet to be seen as a critical national infrastructure and pricing transparency as essential for broadband development through policy reviews and/ or appropriate proposals.

5. Produce a document outlining the pricing transparency challenges in Ghana and how it undermines broadband development/affordability

Activities So Far

1. Review of existing policies/regulations

The following laws were reviewed;

- *National Communications Act 769*
- *National Information Technology Act 771*
- *Electronic Communications Act 775*
- *Electronic Transaction Act 772*

Activities So Far

The focus was on the following;

- Functions of the National Communication Authority
- Objectives of the National Information Agency
- Universal Access
- Electronic Transaction Bill
- Consumer Protection
- Recognition of Electronic Message
- Offences

Review of existing policies/regulations

- ✓ There are adequate regulations in Ghana on internet pricing transparency and the consumers' protection
- ✓ Internet service providers are mandated by law to provide transparent pricing to consumers and the NCA as the regulatory body has the sole mandate to apply penalties to offenders.
- ✓ There is an implementation gap as far as the regulations on internet pricing transparency in Ghana is concerned.

Activities So Far

2. Examined International best practices in pricing transparency to insure we do not reinvent the wheel for Ghana.

The Group ensured that whatever suggestions and/or proposals on pricing transparency is in conformity to international best practices.

Activities So Far

3. Data gathering of baseline on current consumer attitude and practices

A comprehensive questionnaire was developed by the group to gather data of baseline on current consumer attitude and practices.

Baseline Data

The questionnaire covered many areas but not limited to the following;

- Preferred internet service provider
- Amount of money spent weekly on mobile data
- Rating of data cost by service providers
- Consumers understanding of data roll over
- Whether consumers were happy with internet pricing

Baseline Data

The demographics;

1. Gender (equal numbers of males and females)
2. Age (18yrs to 65yrs)
3. Profession (Students, Traders, CEO's etc)
4. Location (all ten regions of Ghana)

Baseline Data

Questionnaires were administered online and offline.

For people who could neither read nor write an additional set of in-depth interview questions were used to get the required data on the questionnaire.

Over a period of 30 days from 16th November 2015 to 16th December 2015.

Results

1. Gender

58% of participants were males while 42% were females

2. Age

The targeted age brackets for the study was 18-65 years. The majority of users fell between the ages of 18-41 year however there were no candidates between the ages of 62 to 65 years.

3. Profession

The following are the breakdown of the candidates of the survey;

37% were students

32% were workers

22% were traders

9% were unemployed

Results

4. Location

The ten (10) regional capitals and towns of the country were targeted and yielded the following percentages;

- 28% Greater Accra Region
- 16% Ashanti Region
- 14% Central Region

Results

- 9% Western Region
- 7% Eastern Region
- 7% Northern Region
- 6 % Brong Ahafo Region
- 5% Upper West Region
- 5% Volta Region
- 3% Upper East Region

Analysis of Data

1. A total of 7,895 questionnaires were administered. 4,567 were online and 3,328 offline.
2. A total of 6,973 answered questionnaires were received from both online and offline
3. 43% were mobile data users only, 49% were both mobile and fixed broadband users and 6% were only fixed broadband users while 2% did not use the internet.

Analysis of Data

- 96% of the internet users said they had issues with the costing of data. 72% said the issues are with mobile data while the remaining 24% had issues with their fixed broadband
- 11% of all mobile internet users preferred daily notification on data usage charges, 6% preferred weekly notification while the remaining 83% preferred a USSD right after every internet usage

Analysis of Data

- While 19.7% of all internet users knew nothing about roll over data, 16.5% said they needed to subscribe to it from their service providers and the remaining 63.8% of all internet said their providers do not offer roll over services.
- 86.6% of all the mobile data users complained of lost data and 94.9% of these complainers were smart phone users

Findings

1. Data Charges

Mobile data users were the most complainers of a non-transparent data charges.

Some fixed broadband users complained of being short chained by providers who are providing lesser bandwidth than they were being charged for.

Consumers believe the existing USSD by operators in percentage as a pricing indicator of used purchased data is not transparent enough.

Findings

2. The Concept of Data Roll Over

- Many consumers were very dissatisfied and confused with the concept of roll over among the service operators. Again the issue was more common among mobiles data users.
- No internet service provider is providing automatic roll over services. Consumers have to subscribe to enjoy roll over services.
- Pre-paid customers have already paid for their unused data and so must enjoy roll over of unused data automatically from all internet service providers.

Findings

3. The concept of “lost or stolen” data

- Many consumers complained of losing data even when they have done nothing at all with their phones that requires data usage.
- Our investigations revealed that majority of these were smart phone users whose devices had been set on automatic applications update.

On Going Activities

A proposal on the findings and recommendations of the survey conducted by the Working Group on consumer data usage in Ghana was submitted to the NCA in January 2016.

Following the submission a meeting has been held with the Consumer and Corporate Affairs Unit of the NCA.

Way Forward

Launch a public education/awareness raising campaign on affordable internet and pricing transparency (Affordability Report)

Influence pricing transparency practices in the mobile data market by making policy/regulatory recommendations on data pricing transparency.

Do monitoring & evaluation of our work as a group to build a stronger and vibrant working group

Conclusion

- The Group is convinced beyond reasonable doubt that a more transparent internet pricing in Ghana has the potential of encouraging more users.
- The “perception” of some hidden charges is discouraging many people from using the internet more often than they would have loved to.
- Improved pricing transparency is an urgent need for the Ghanaian consumer

THANK YOU