

STRATEGIES TO REDUCE CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS AT A TELEPHONE SERVICE PROVIDER IN THE KINSHASA REGION, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

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ABSTRACT

The new mutations in the telecommunications industry lead to the fast growing of Value Added Service (VAS). However, many operators instead of promoting VAS with the traditional channels of communication and support media have decided to focus the promotion of VAS offers through Below the Line (BTL) channels and targeted the entire base of subscribers regardless of certain sensitive principles. This approach led to significant customers' complaints at a Mobile Telephone Service Provider (MTSP) in the region of Kinshasa in The Democratic Republic of Congo.

The objective of this research was to find strategies to reduce those complaints related to VAS at that MTSP in Kinshasa. The main pillars that oriented the entire research was improving the quality of customers' acquisition by driving segmentation, improving customers usage and retention by building a great customer experience and optimizing communication channels. A sample of 100 customers had been subjected to a questionnaire to collect information for the research. After analysing the data collected from the questionnaire, the key findings to reduce customers' complaints require segmenting the customer base by taking into account the gender and age category in order to acquire the right customers to which the right value proposition will be addressed. In addition, the analysis showed that the current customer experience is destroying value by evoking emotions such as disappointment, dissatisfaction, irritation driven by expensive pricing, unacceptable billing model, and bad quality of VAS offers. This situation could not drive usage and revenue growth but complaints only. Moreover, the analysis showed that the channels of communication were not appropriate and the frequency of communication was annoying for most of complainants.

To overcome that situation, it was recommended that the MTSP has to build a great customer experience, revising pricing as per the profile of customers' segment, moving from the daily recurrent billing to a weekly currently billing and revising the entire communication strategy of VAS offers. Finally, for quick intervention the MTSP has to set up a dedicated service recovery for VAS in order to handle complaints and issues.

Introduction:

This article describes the main reasons of customers' complaints related to Value Added Services in the region of Kinshasa at a MTSP. Strategies to overcome those complaints will be discussed in terms of the aim and objectives to achieve, and the sustainable manner for delivering better results will be broken down in the research questions.

Aim of the Study:

The aim of this research is to elaborate strategies to reduce customer complaints related to Value Added Services in order to ensure revenue growth and customers' engagement by:

- improving the quality of customers acquisition,
- improving customers usage and retention,
- optimizing of communication channels.

The challenges that need to be addressed to achieve this goal will be analysed from data of questionnaire which will be administered to customers who raise their complaints.

Objectives of the Study:

1.1.1 To ascertain if segmentation contributes to acquire the right customers and address the expectation of the market with the relevant value proposition

1.1.2 To examine the benefit of building great customers experiences with VAS offerings to reduce customers' complaints

1.1.3 To assess the impact of optimizing the usage of all BTL channels of communication for reducing customers' complaints

1.1.4 To make recommendations on suitable complaint handling and service recovery plan

This research will be based on theories to address broadly customers' complaints in businesses. Theoretical approaches and practical experiences related to market segmentation, customer experience, marketing communication and service recovery will be explored. Indeed, these theories will enable to make a critical analysis of customers' complaints at a Mobile Telephone Service Provider in Kinshasa region in order to propose strategies to reduce those complaints.

According to Shaw (2007:13) in the DNA of customer experience there are three clusters that drive value and one cluster that destroys value as illustrated in Figure 1.1 below:

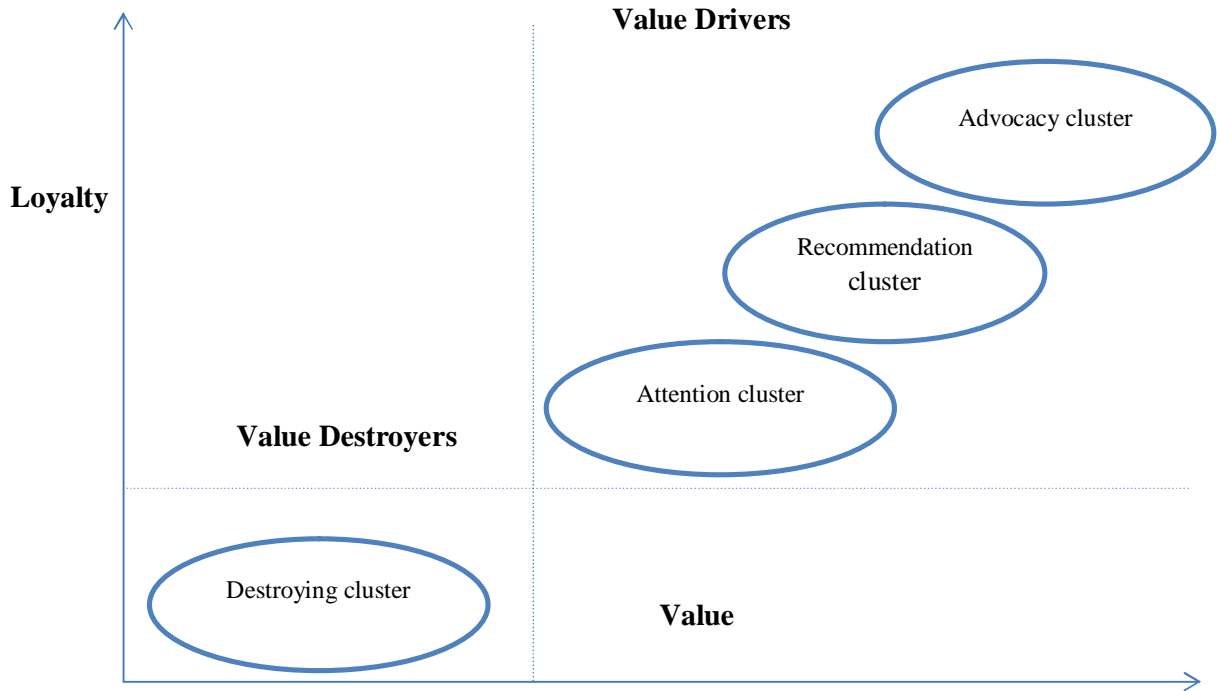


Figure 1.1: Emotional signature of value

As stated by Shaw (2007:13) for improving customer experience the focus needs to be in the destroying cluster of emotions. Indeed, this cluster not only destroys value but it also costs money, for example dealing with customers complaints, returns and so on.

For the MTSP it is critical to identify and address the destroying cluster of emotions evoked by value added services (VAS). Figure 1.2 illustrates the destroying cluster of emotions (Shaw, 2007:14). The circles contain the emotions that destroy value

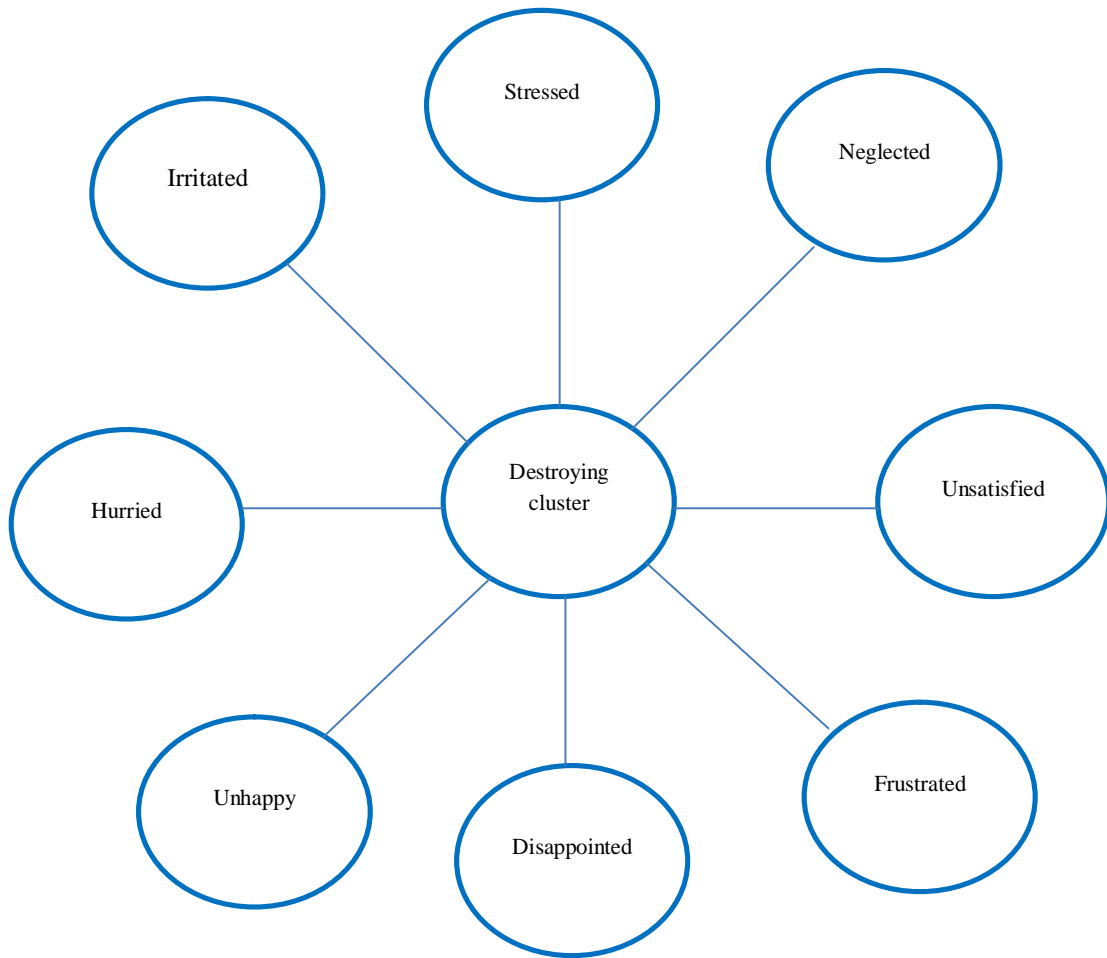
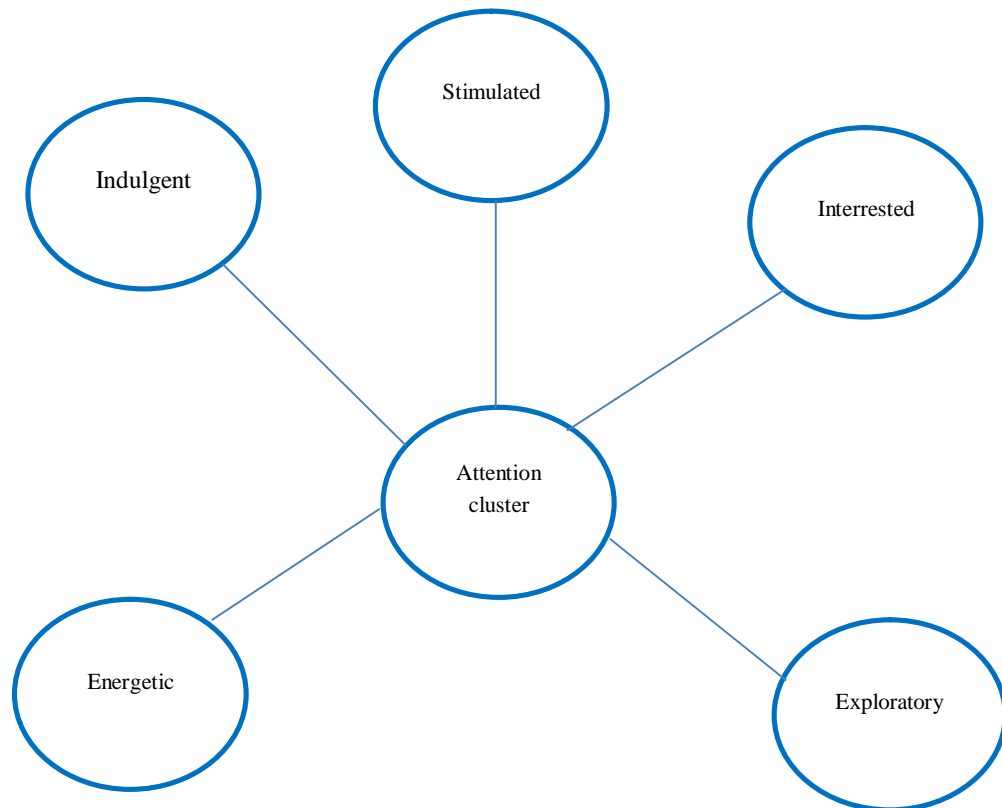


Figure 1.2: Destroying cluster of emotions

Emotions evoked in the Attention cluster drive customer spend. Indeed, that cluster contains the emotions that trigger customers to spend more money in the short term and attract customers to organizations (Shaw, 2007:13). The MTSP has to evoke the emotions of this cluster in order to drive more revenue. Figure 1.3 illustrates the Attention cluster of emotions.

Figure-1.3: Attention cluster of emotions

The circles contain emotions that drive value.



Emotions evoked by the Recommendations cluster and Advocacy cluster drive customers' loyalty and build long-term relationship with customers (Shaw, 2007:15). For the MTSP, to evoke emotions of those clusters is an opportunity to get customers' loyalty for long-term.

Figures 1.4 and 1.5 illustrate the Recommendation and Advocacy clusters.

Figure-1.4: Recommendation cluster

The circles contain emotions that drive value.

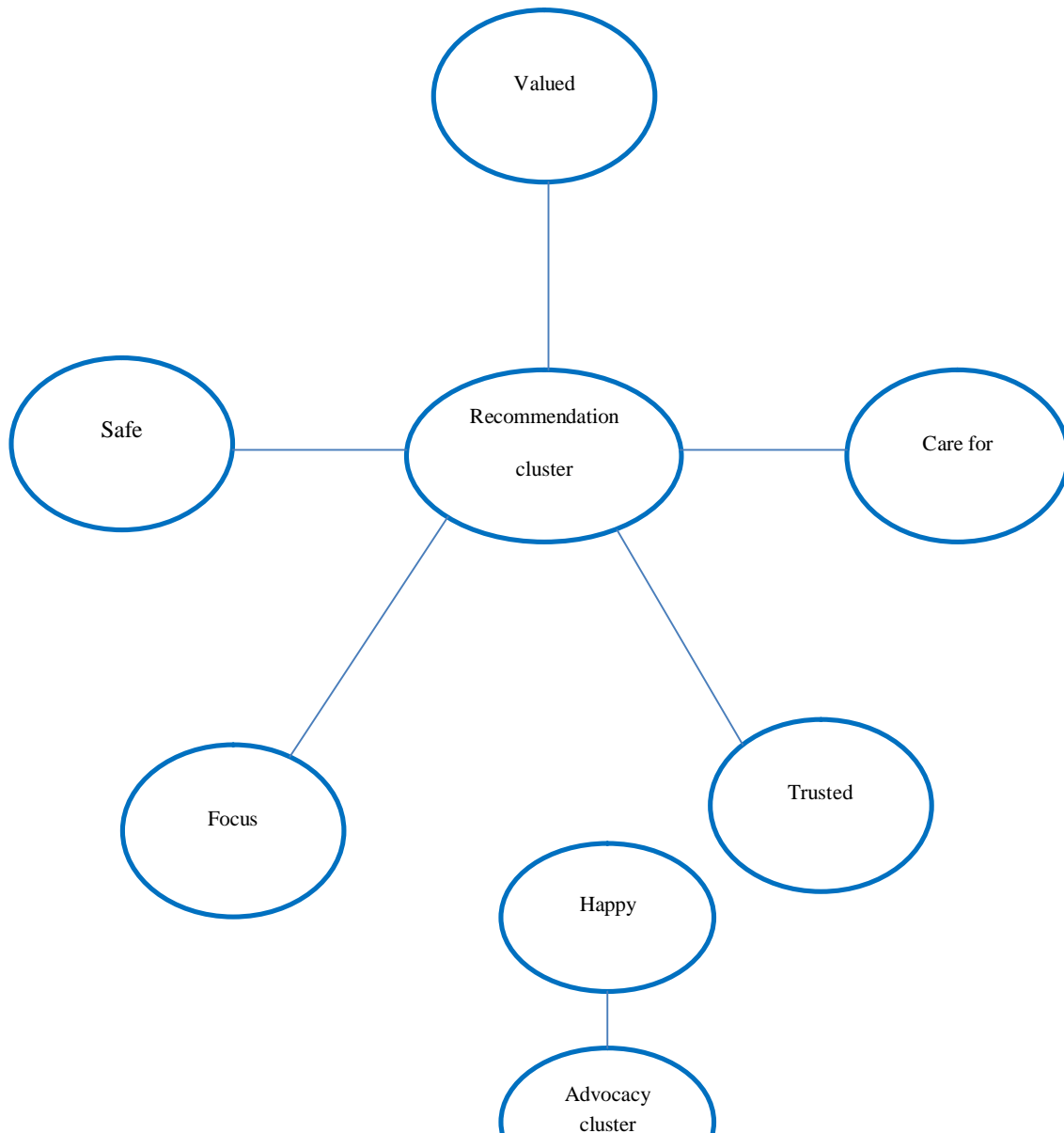
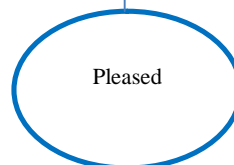


Figure-1.5: Advocacy cluster

The circles contain emotions that drive value.



Emotions within each cluster interact with each other and can be linked (Shaw, 2007:48). Indeed, frustration within an experience can lead to stress and alternatively feeling neglected can lead to disappointment. Thus, any improvement of process will have a positive impact on the experience and make customers less frustrated and less disappointed. Therefore addressing one emotion can have a positive effect on other emotions considering that emotions are interrelated (Shaw, 2007:48). For addressing customers' complaints the MTSP needs to know what emotions are evoked with each VAS offering and to identify which ones are in the destroying cluster. According to Shaw (2007:48) once emotions evoked are known, root causes of complaints can be identified and put in solutions to solve them.

- i) **Frustrated** refers to feeling of a goal thwarted, feeling a process inefficient, feeling wasting time and being inefficient (Shaw, 2007:54).

Among typical reasons of frustration which have been identified by Shaw (2007:55) there are: slow systems, long lines, inefficient process, keeping customers waiting, making something that is simple complex, and putting customers through a process that is more beneficial for the company than for them

The MTSP has to ensure that the process to activate any VAS offers or the switch between options of a service is less complex, simple and viable for customers. In addition all non-valuable steps for customers in all VAS need to be removed for improving the efficiency of processes, reducing waiting times and make more fast activation, deactivation and switching between services and options.

- ii) **Disappointed** is a feeling reflecting the failure to satisfy the hope or desire of a customer (Shaw, 2007:56).

The main causes of disappointment as stated by Shaw (2007:56) are: mismatch of customers' desires, not delivering the promise, declining of service quality and overpromising and under delivering

The MTSP needs to ensure that the communication on VAS offers is aligned with the performances deliverable and the quality of services will not decline over a period of time.

- iii) **Irritated:** is a feeling causing impatience and anger (Shaw, 2007: 59).

The causes of irritation according to Shaw (2007:60) are: Customers not getting what they want, putting obstacles in a customer's path, sending unsolicited information, measures and reward schemes that drive constant contact, and anything the customers do not like

The MTSP has to meet customers' expectations by delivering physical or rational and emotional performances that customers want and optimize the frequency of messages sent to customers by sending messages to appropriate segments at an acceptable frequency regardless of the nature and benefits of messages.

At the MTSP to evoke stimulated feeling, VAS offers have to be revised time to time with new options or performances and with more engagement and involvement with customers. In addition, introduce new products with innovative features and if possible combine learning and entertainment aspects in order to make customers paying attention, more active, enthusiastic and motivated to buy.

- i) **Interested:** according to Shaw (2007:75) it refers to gain someone's interest in something, wanting to give your attention to something and discover more about it, wanting to be involved with and find out more.

Shaw (2007:75) recommends some typical actions such as the following to evoke "interested" in a customer experience: understand the profile of your target audience and define what your customer would find interesting, change your experience periodically, and design something unusual

The MTSP needs to take into account the customization of its VAS offers according to the expectations and needs of each segment of its target market. Indeed, to gain the interest of the target audience the VAS offer has to match either the latent demand or need of customers. For existing offers the processes or performances could be modified occasionally with interesting options or features in order to excite customers.

- ii) **Exploratory:** according to Shaw (2007: 76) it is the feeling of wanting to explore; to enjoy the search, to discover more about something.

Shaw (2007: 76) recommends some typical actions such as the following to evoke "exploratory" in customer experience: change your experience regularly, make your experience interesting, create stages for your experience, understand your customer profile and how they would like to explore.

The MTSP can create stages in some VAS offers and allocate different benefit and advantages to each stage. In addition, for different customized offers and by taking in account the particular experience has to change accordingly.

- iii) **Indulgent:** according to Shaw (2007:78) it refers to give someone something they know they should not really have or is special; something expensive or luxurious.

Shaw (2007: 78) recommends some typical actions such as the following to evoke "indulgent" in a customer experience for example find out what your customers would consider indulgent and decide how to provide it to them and give customers something they would value and would not normally consider to be part of your service.

The MTSP could reward customers based on a selective process with gifts or extra advantages without requiring any condition. The indulgent offers should be designed and customized by segment. The indulgent benefits can be used for driving acquisitions of new customers in VAS offers or for driving loyalty and making the differentiation with competitors.

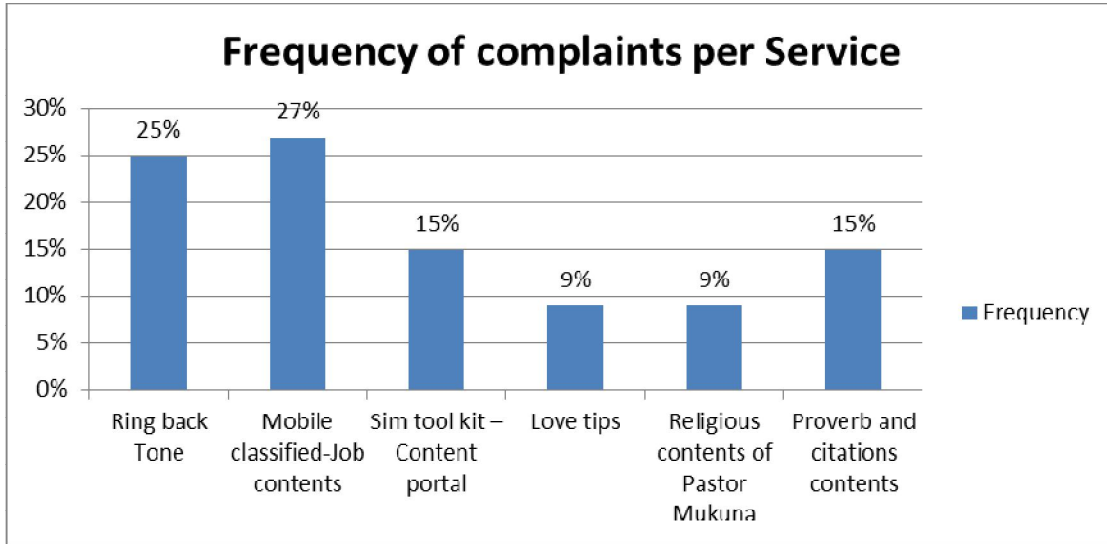
Research methodology:

The quantitative methodology has been used to conduct the research. Indeed, the complaints of customers have been measured and broken down by different variables to examine the casual relationship between those variables and to test theories by analyzing data.

Target population:

The target population was customers who called the call center of the MTSP between 1st June and 14th June 2013 complaining on one VAS offer.

Graph 1: Frequency of complaints per Service



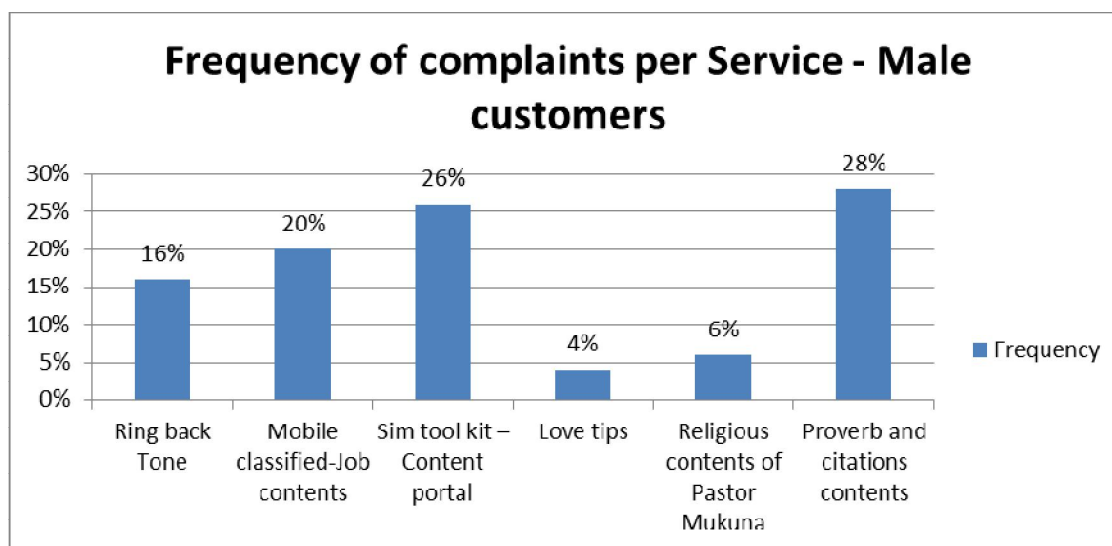
According to the Table 3, there are six services that drive customers’ complaints at the MTSP and their frequencies are illustrated in Graph 1 above.

This graph shows that 52% of complaints are due to the Ring back tone and Mobile classified services regardless of the gender. The following tables and graphs give the trends of complaints for each gender of customers.

Table 18: Frequency of complaints per service (Male customers)

| Code Service | Service | Number of complaints | Frequency |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------|
| 1 | Ring back Tone | 8 | 16% |
| 2 | Mobile classified-Job contents | 10 | 20% |
| 3 | Sim tool kit – Content portal | 13 | 26% |
| 4 | Love tips | 2 | 4% |
| 5 | Religious contents of Pastor Mukuna | 3 | 6% |
| 6 | Proverb and citations contents | 14 | 28% |
| Total | | 50 | 100% |

Graph 2: Frequency of complaints per service (Male customers)



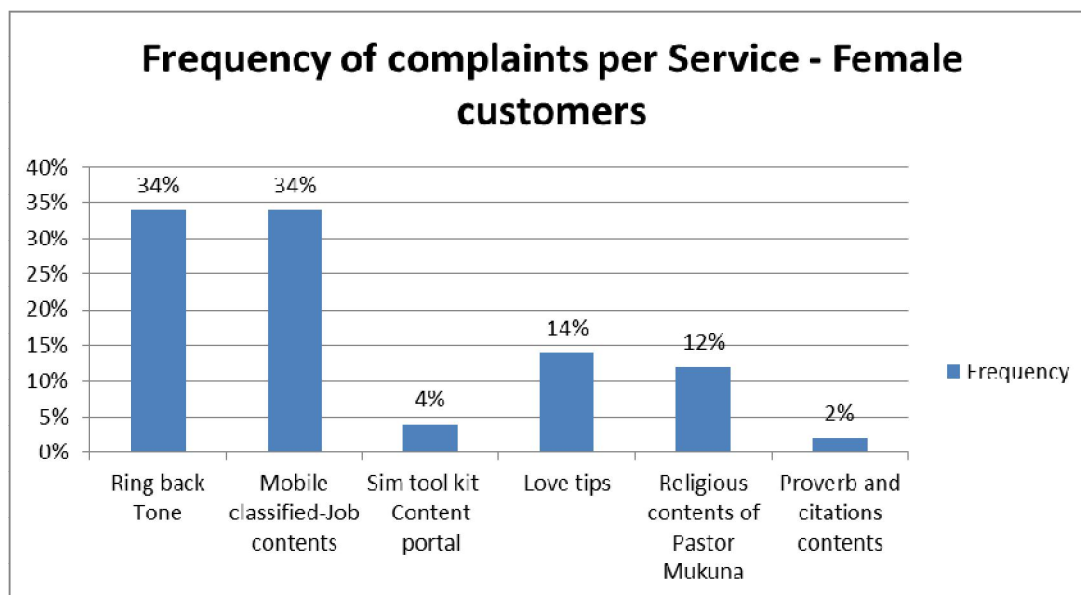
The trends of complaints from male customers show that the two key products which drive those complaints and represent 54% of complaints are Sim tool kit-content portal, and Proverb and citation contents. In addition, 13 of 15 complaints related to Sim tool kit-content portal and 14 of 15 complaints related to Proverb and citation contents content came from male customers.

In addition, these trends show the interest of male customers on 4 services and less interest on Love tips and Religious content. Indeed, according to the number of complaints one can extrapolate on the number of customers who are using those services.

Table 19: Frequency of complaints per service (Female customers)

| Code Service | Service | Number of complaints | Frequency |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------|
| 1 | Ring back Tone | 17 | 34% |
| 2 | Mobile classified-Job contents | 17 | 34% |
| 3 | Sim tool kit – Content portal | 2 | 4% |
| 4 | Love tips | 7 | 14% |
| 5 | Religious contents of Pastor Mukuna | 6 | 12% |
| 6 | Proverb and citations contents | 1 | 2% |
| Total | | 50 | 100% |

Graph 3: Frequency of complaints per service (Female customers)



The trends of complaints from female customers indicate that the Ring Back Tone and Mobile classified services represent 68% of complaints. Compared to male customers, female customers seem to have interest on Love Tips and Religious contents by extrapolating the number of female customers who are using those services.

Key findings:

The analysis of the frequency of complaints per gender demonstrates the variance existing between female and male on the adoption of some services. This variance inspires the necessity to have a segmented approach based on the gender criteria for the go-to-market strategy of some VAS offers. Segmentation enables to target market segments with customized offers to satisfy their needs and demands. Thus, it’s an opportunity to reduce customers’ complaints by addressing the right offer to the right segment of customers.

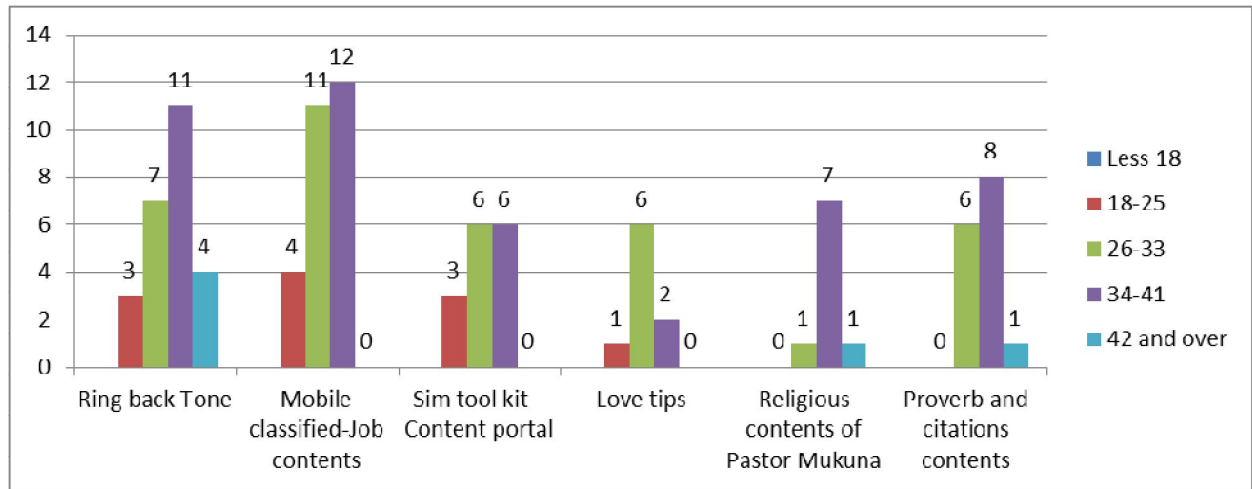
However, the gender is not the only criteria to design the segmentation strategy. One must analyse the frequency of complaints per class of ages to fine tune the segmentation approach to apply.

Table 20: Frequency of complaints per Service and per Age (all genders)

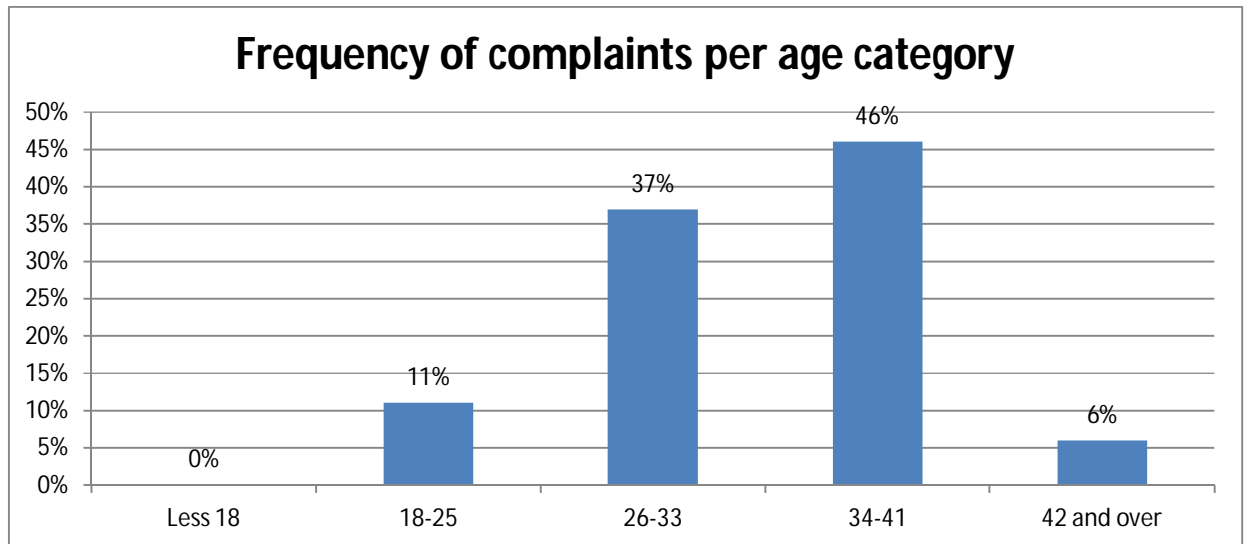
| | | Age (in years) | | | | | Total |
|---------|--------------------------------|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|-------|
| | | Less 18 | 18-25 | 26-33 | 34-41 | 42 and over | |
| Service | Ring back Tone | 0 | 3 | 7 | 11 | 4 | 25 |
| | Mobile classified-Job contents | 0 | 4 | 11 | 12 | 0 | 27 |
| | Sim tool kit – Content portal | 0 | 3 | 6 | 6 | 0 | 15 |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|----|-----|-----|-----|----|------|
| Love tips | 0 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 9 |
| Religious contents of Pastor Mukuna | 0 | 0 | 1 | 7 | 1 | 9 |
| Proverb and citations contents | 0 | 0 | 6 | 8 | 1 | 15 |
| Number of complaints | 0 | 11 | 37 | 46 | 6 | 100 |
| Frequency | 0% | 11% | 37% | 46% | 6% | 100% |

Graph 4: Frequency of complaints per Service and per Age (all genders)



Graph 5: Frequency of complaints per age category

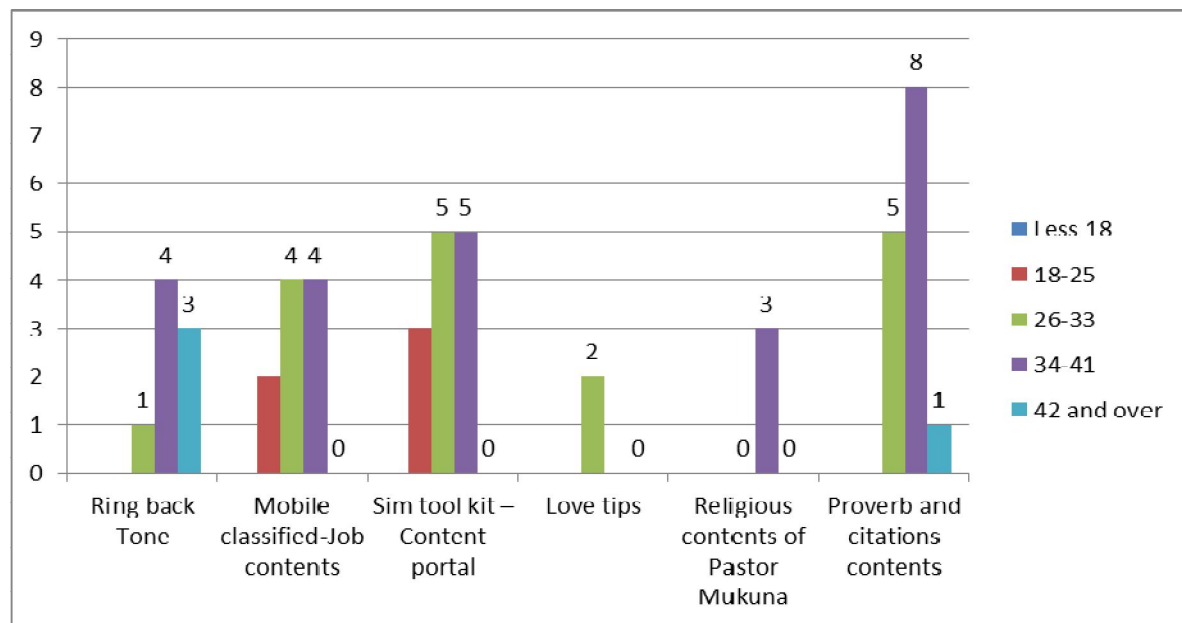


The illustration of complaints by age category shows that the age category [34-41 years] had the most complainants regardless of the gender. Considering that customers who are most likely to complain belong to higher social and economic classes because of their level of education, income and social involvement (Lovelock et al., 2009:341) this trend indicates that most of the VAS offers do not address the expectations of high value customers.

Table 21: Frequency of complaints per Service and per Age (Male customers)

| | | Age (in years) | | | | | Total |
|---------|-------------------------------------|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|-------|
| | | Less 18 | 18-25 | 26-33 | 34-41 | 42 and over | |
| Service | Ring back Tone | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 8 |
| | Mobile classified-Job contents | 0 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 10 |
| | Sim tool kit – Content portal | 0 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 13 |
| | Love tips | 0 | 0 | 2 | | 0 | 2 |
| | Religious contents of Pastor Mukuna | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| | Proverb and citations contents | 0 | 0 | 5 | 8 | 1 | 14 |
| | Number of complaints | 0 | 5 | 17 | 24 | 4 | 50 |
| | Frequency | 0% | 10% | 34% | 48% | 8% | 100% |

Graph 6: Frequency of complaints per Service and per Age (Male customers)

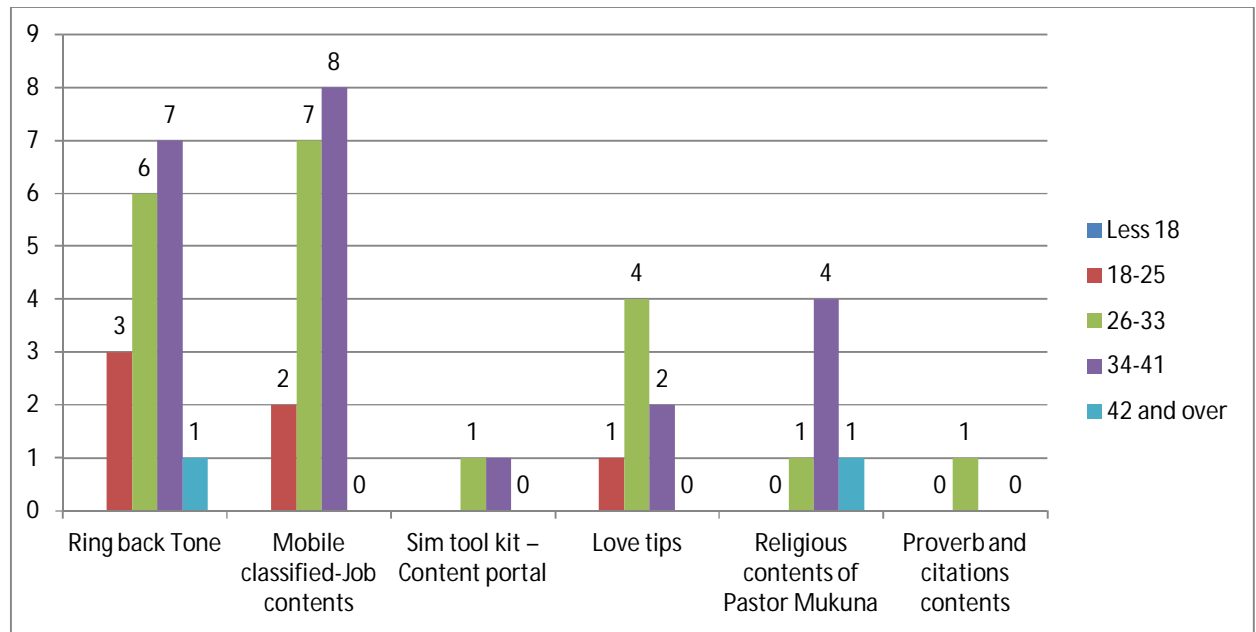


The trends of complaints show that male customers of the class of age [34-41 years] are leading complainants across the services with a frequency of 48%. Almost the profile of half of male customers does not match with VAS offers proposed by the MTSP.

Table 22: Frequency of complaints per Service and per Age (Female customers)

| | | Age (in years) | | | | | Total |
|---------|-------------------------------------|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|-------|
| | | Less 18 | 18-25 | 26-33 | 34-41 | 42 and over | |
| Service | Ring back Tone | 0 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 1 | 17 |
| | Mobile classified-Job contents | 0 | 2 | 7 | 8 | 0 | 17 |
| | Sim tool kit – Content portal | 0 | | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| | Love tips | 0 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 7 |
| | Religious contents of Pastor Mukuna | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 6 |
| | Proverb and citations contents | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | Number of complaints | 0 | 6 | 20 | 22 | 2 | 50 |
| | Frequency | 0% | 12% | 40% | 44% | 4% | 100% |

Graph 7: Frequency of complaints per Service and per Age (Female customers)



The female customers of the classes of ages [26-33 years] and [34-41 years] had the highest frequencies of complaints, 40% and 44% respectively. This case shows that the VAS offers do not address their needs and demands.

Key Findings:

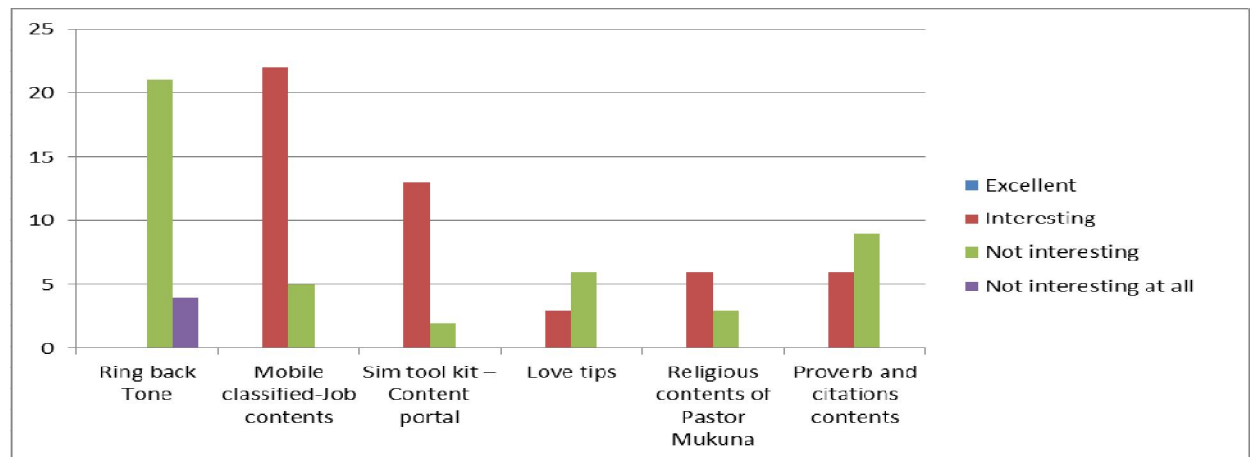
The analysis of the frequency of customers’ complaints per service and per class of ages shows that services are differently adopted or rejected by customers of the same gender. To complete the previous key findings, achieving customers’ satisfaction and overcome customers’ complaints requires targeting the right customers segment by driving a segmentation strategy which ensures that the variables of marketing mix are designed to meet particular needs of different group of customers (Palmer, 2012:218). In addition, segmentation

is an opportunity to focus on and satisfy customers’ needs in the most efficient and effective way (Palmer, 2012:218).

Table 23: Assessment of Quality per Service

| | | Assessment of Quality per Service | | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| | | Excellent | Interesting | Not interesting | Not interesting at all |
| Service | Ring back Tone | 0 | 0 | 21 | 4 |
| | Mobile classified-Job contents | 0 | 22 | 5 | 0 |
| | Sim tool kit – Content portal | 0 | 13 | 2 | 0 |
| | Love tips | 0 | 3 | 6 | 0 |
| | Religious contents of Pastor Mukuna | 0 | 6 | 3 | 0 |
| | Proverb and citations contents | 0 | 6 | 9 | 0 |
| | Total | 0 | 50 | 46 | 4 |

Graph 8: Assessment of Quality per Service



The trends of quality as assessed per customers regardless of their gender show that for some services like Ring back tone and Proverb and citations, quality has a significant impact on the experience the customers receive and leads to complaints. Indeed, among 100 customers 46 did not find the Ring Back Tone interesting and 4 found Proverb and citations not interesting at all.

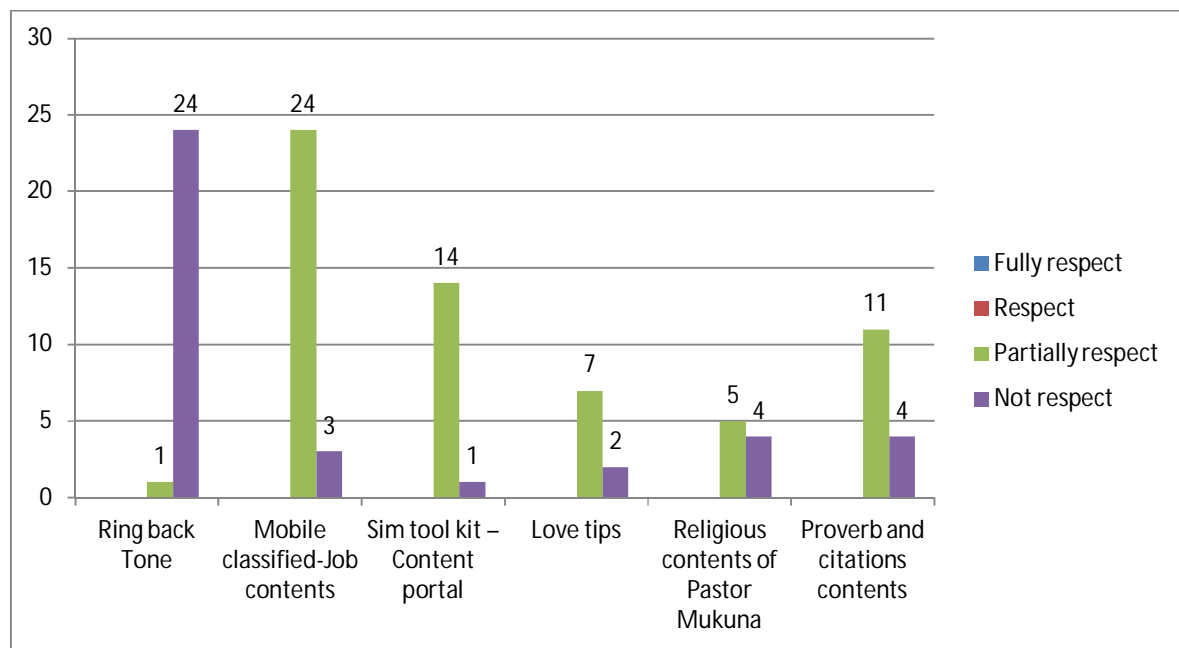
This trend shows that the quality of those services has to be improved to match customers' expectations.

Quality is a part of rational aspects of customer experience and any dissatisfaction of customers evokes the destroy cluster of emotions leading customers to be unhappy and unsatisfied. This cluster destroys value and it also costs money for the company (Shaw, 2007:13)

Table 24: Assessment Respect of Promise per Service

| | | Assessment Respect of Promise per Service | | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|---|----------|-------------------|-------------|
| | | Fully respect | Respect | Partially respect | Not respect |
| Service | Ring back Tone | 0 | 0 | 1 | 24 |
| | Mobile classified-Job contents | 0 | 0 | 24 | 3 |
| | Sim tool kit – Content portal | 0 | 0 | 14 | 1 |
| | Love tips | 0 | 0 | 7 | 2 |
| | Religious contents of Pastor Mukuna | 0 | 0 | 5 | 4 |
| | Proverb and citations contents | 0 | 0 | 11 | 4 |
| | Total | 0 | 0 | 62 | 38 |

Graph 9: Assessment Respect of Promise per Service

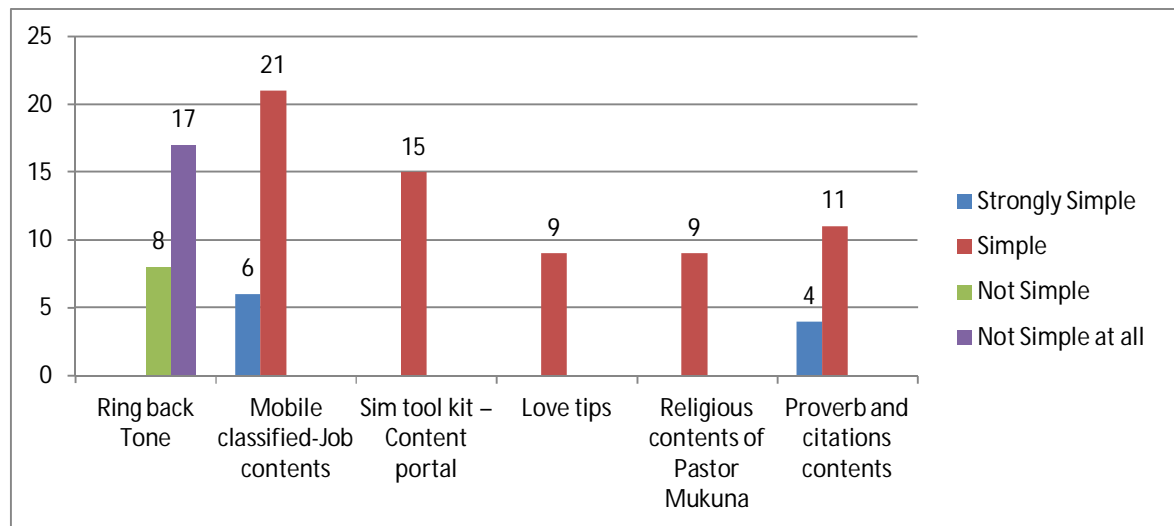


The trends of the assessment of the respect of promise show that the promise is not fully respected regardless of the service and the gender. The promise is partially respected at 62% and at 38% totally not respected. This situation demonstrates that the content of services do not fully match customers' needs, demands and expectations. The customer experience is affected and the destroying cluster evokes emotions such as disappointment and frustration leading customers to complaints.

Table 25: Assessment of the Simplicity to use

| | | Assessment of the Simplicity to use | | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|------------|-------------------|
| | | Strongly Simple | Simple | Not Simple | Not Simple at all |
| Service | Ring back Tone | | | 8 | 17 |
| | Mobile classified-Job contents | 6 | 21 | | |
| | Sim tool kit – Content portal | | 15 | | |
| | Love tips | | 9 | | |
| | Religious contents of Pastor Mukuna | | 9 | | |
| | Proverb and citations contents | 4 | 11 | | |
| | Total | 10 | 65 | 8 | 17 |

Graph 10: Assessment of the Simplicity to use



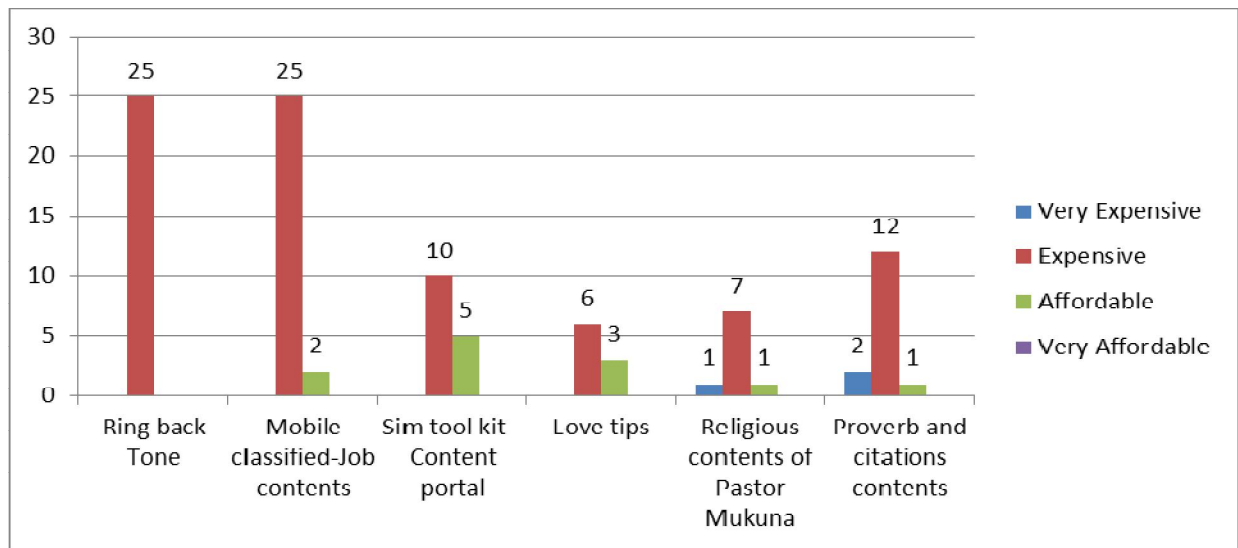
The trends of the assessment of the simplicity to use of services show that all services except the Ring Back Tone are simple to use. All complaints related to the Ring Back Tone show that this service is not simple to use and get customers frustrated, irritated, disappointed and dissatisfied.

The customer experience with this service is not delightful and lead to customers' complaints.

Table 26: Price assessment

| | | Price assessment | | | |
|---------|-------------------------------------|------------------|-----------|------------|-----------------|
| | | Very Expensive | Expensive | Affordable | Very Affordable |
| Service | Ring back Tone | | 25 | | |
| | Mobile classified-Job contents | | 25 | 2 | |
| | Sim tool kit – Content portal | | 10 | 5 | |
| | Love tips | | 6 | 3 | |
| | Religious contents of Pastor Mukuna | 1 | 7 | 1 | |
| | Proverb and citations contents | 2 | 12 | 1 | |
| | Total | 3 | 85 | 12 | 0 |

Graph 11: Price assessment



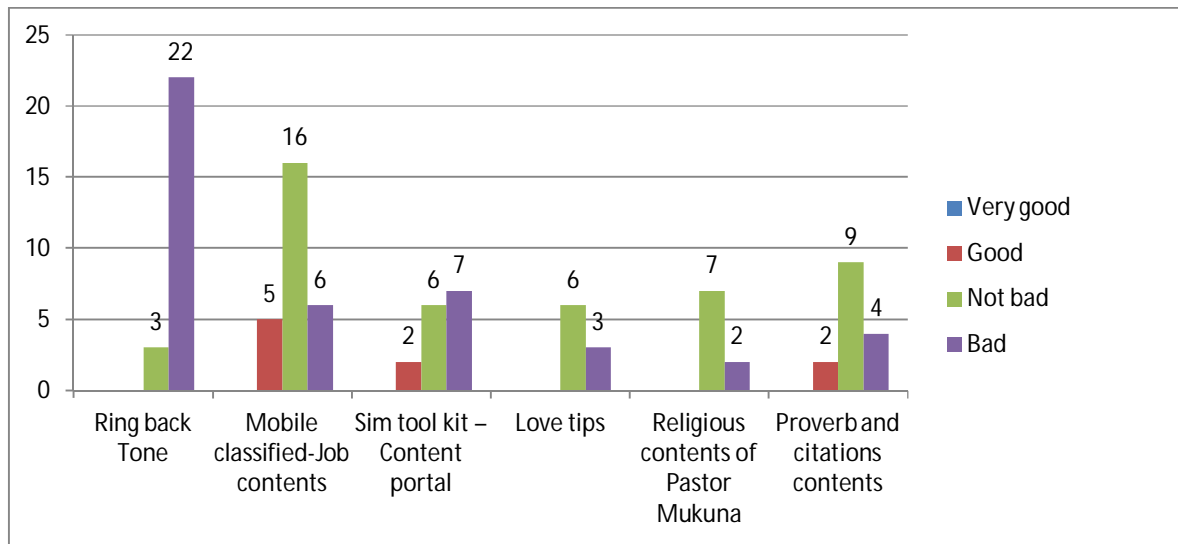
The trends of the price assessment show that 85% of complainants found the price expensive. Only 12% found the price affordable. The level of the price having an impact on the customer experience leads to customers complaints requesting to be removed from the services.

The price is perceived as expensive also due to the quality and the contents of some services. Indeed, previous analysis above have shown that some services are not interesting and do not respect the promise. Thus, the value proposition mismatches the expectation of customers.

Table 27: Billing model assessment

| | | Billing model assessment | | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| | | Very good | Good | Not bad | Bad |
| Service | Ring back Tone | | | 3 | 22 |
| | Mobile classified-Job contents | | 5 | 16 | 6 |
| | Sim tool kit – Content portal | | 2 | 6 | 7 |
| | Love tips | | | 6 | 3 |
| | Religious contents of Pastor Mukuna | | | 7 | 2 |
| | Proverb and citations contents | | 2 | 9 | 4 |
| | Total | 0 | 9 | 47 | 44 |

Graph 12: Billing model assessment

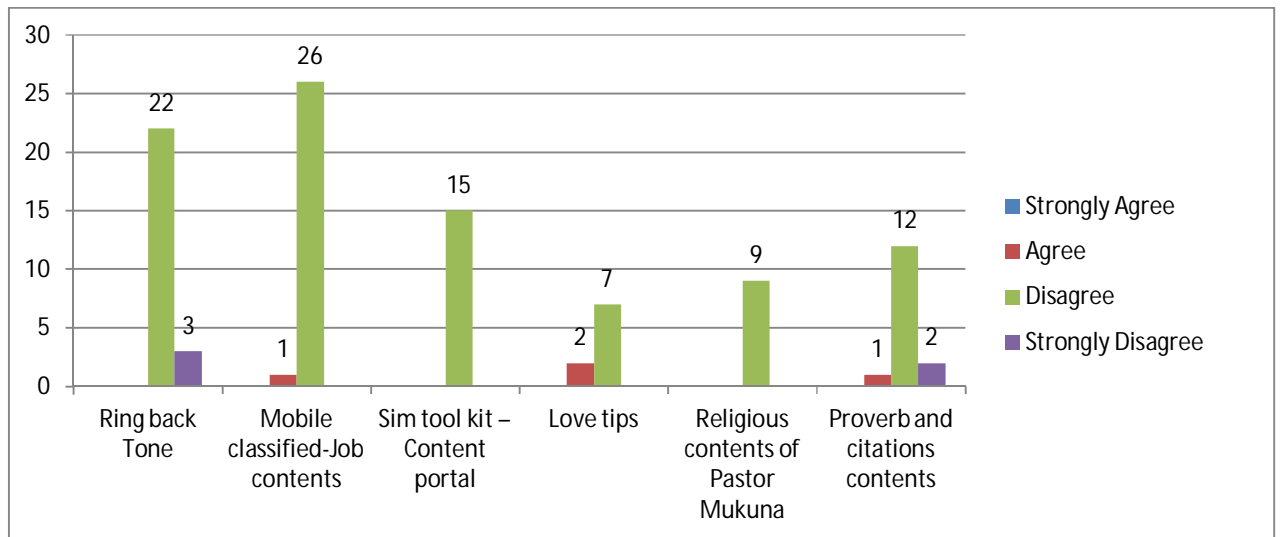


The trends of the assessment of the billing mode show that only 9% of complainants found the daily recurrent billing model acceptable. The other 91% rejected the recurrent billing model. This model has a negative impact on the customer experience and leads customers to raise complaints regardless of the quality and the contents of services. This type of complaints destroys the value of services.

Table 28: Billing transparency assessment

| | | Billing transparency assessment | | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------|-----------|-------------------|
| | | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| Service | Ring back Tone | | | 22 | 3 |
| | Mobile classified-Job contents | | 1 | 26 | |
| | Sim tool kit – Content portal | | | 15 | |
| | Love tips | | 2 | 7 | |
| | Religious contents of Pastor Mukuna | | | 9 | |
| | Proverb and citations contents | | 1 | 12 | 2 |
| | Total | 0 | 4 | 91 | 5 |

Graph 13: Billing transparency assessment



The figures of Table 28 show that 96% of complainants have rejected the transparency of the billing model. Customers complained about the fact they are billed when they are not expecting any billing event. The recurring daily billing seems to be not appreciated by customers despite they still are using the service when recurrent billing occurs. This situation has a negative impact on the customer experience and evokes emotions of the destroying cluster such as frustration, disappointment, dissatisfaction, and irritation.

Key findings:

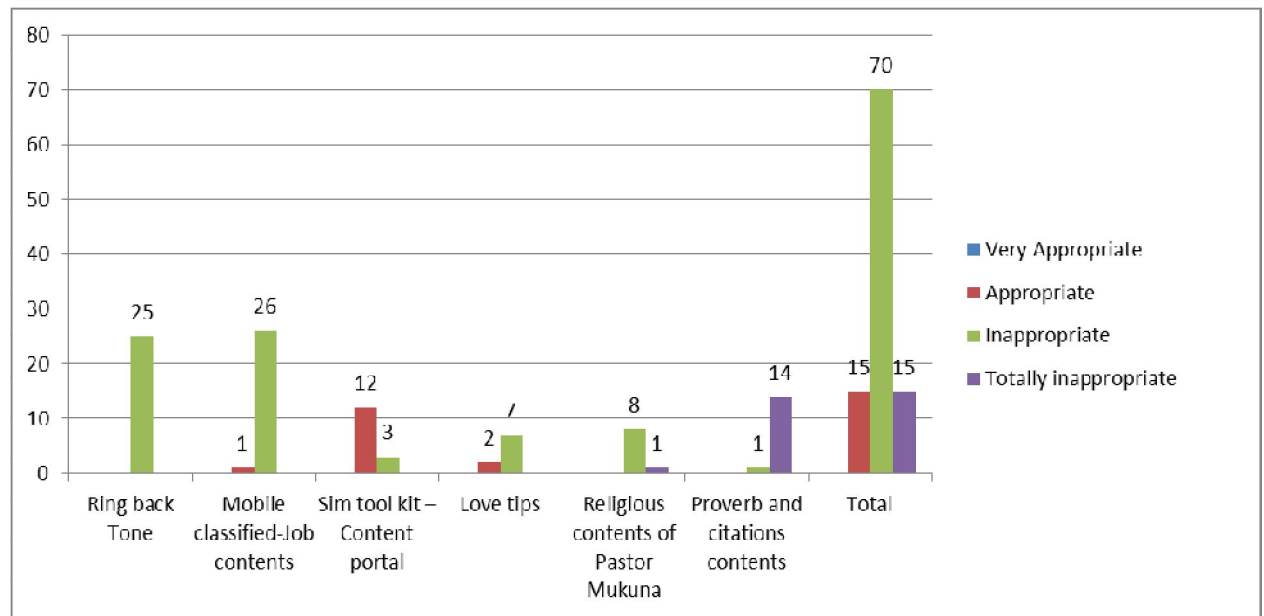
The analysis of the trends related to quality, content, simplicity to use, pricing and billing show that the customer experience with VAS offers evokes more emotions of the destroying cluster that destroys value in long term. To overcome this situation, the go-to-market strategy

of VAS offers has to be revised and more emphasis needs to be put in building a great customer experience by exceeding rational and emotional expectations.

Table 29: Channels of communication assessment

| | | Channels of communication assessment | | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| | | Very Appropriate | Appropriate | Inappropriate | Totally inappropriate |
| Service | Ring back Tone | | | 25 | |
| | Mobile classified-Job contents | | 1 | 26 | |
| | Sim tool kit – Content portal | | 12 | 3 | |
| | Love tips | | 2 | 7 | |
| | Religious contents of Pastor Mukuna | | | 8 | 1 |
| | Proverb and citations contents | | | 1 | 14 |
| | Total | 0 | 15 | 70 | 15 |

Graph 14: Channels of communication assessment

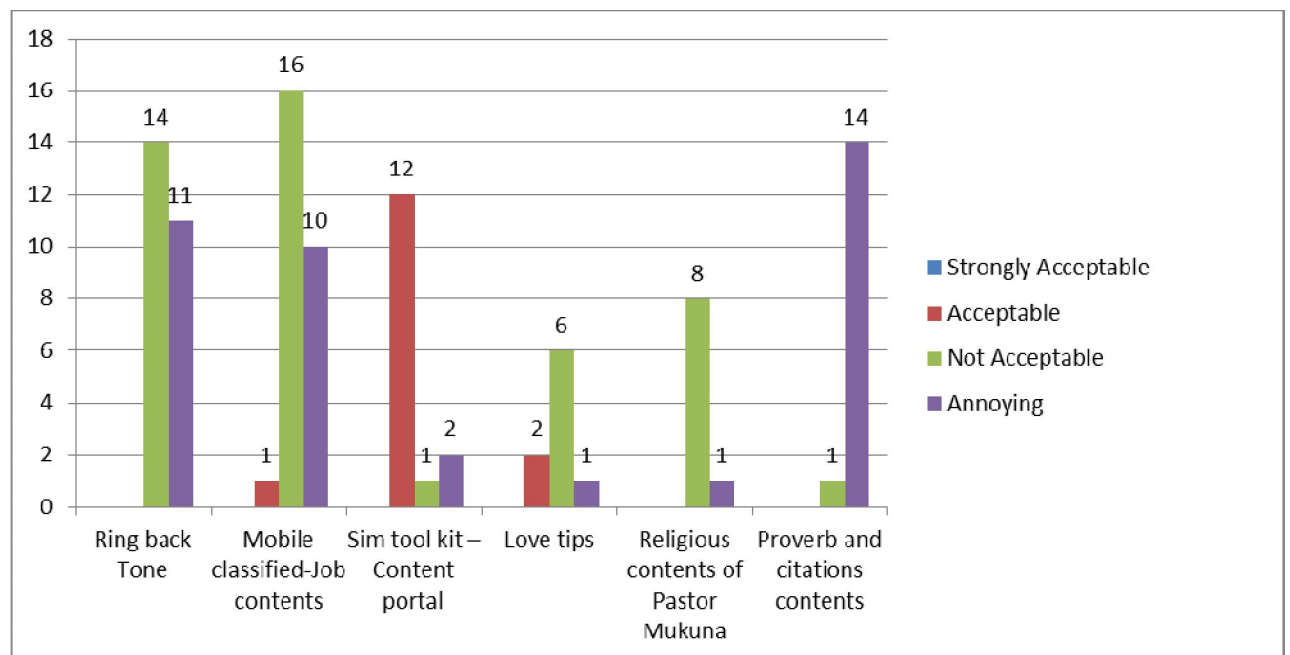


The table 29 and Graph 14 show that 85% of complainants do not approve the channels of communication used for the promotion of VAS offers. In addition, as the channels were not appropriate, some services have been advertised to the wrong segments leading to complaints. The contact with brand by those channels weakens customers’ views of the company. Indeed, according to Kotler and Keller (2009:512) every brand contact delivers an impression that can strengthen or weaken a customer’s view of a company.

Table 30: Assessment of Communication Frequency

| | | Assessment of Communication Frequency | | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------|----------------|-----------|
| | | Strongly Acceptable | Acceptable | Not Acceptable | Annoying |
| Service | Ring back Tone | | | 14 | 11 |
| | Mobile classified-Job contents | | 1 | 16 | 10 |
| | Sim tool kit – Content portal | | 12 | 1 | 2 |
| | Love tips | | 2 | 6 | 1 |
| | Religious contents of Pastor Mukuna | | | 8 | 1 |
| | Proverb and citations contents | | | 1 | 14 |
| | Total | | 0 | 15 | 46 |

Graph 15: Assessment of Communication Frequency

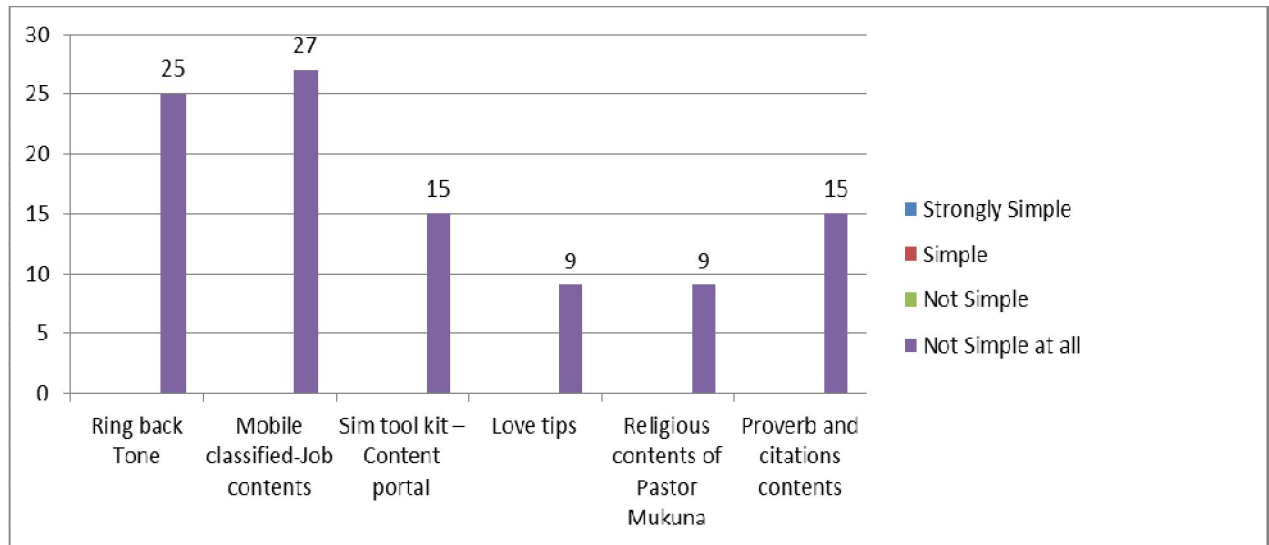


The Table 30 and Graph 15 show that 85% of customers complained about the frequency of promotion messages. The channels and the frequency of communication need to be optimized in order to reassign to the communication its fundamental role which is to inform, persuade, and refresh the awareness about offerings. Currently the communication approaches lead more to complaints and does not help to achieve the objectives

Table 31: Assessment of the ease to complain

| | | Ease to complain | | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|--------|------------|-------------------|
| | | Strongly Simple | Simple | Not Simple | Not Simple at all |
| Service | Ring back Tone | | | | 25 |
| | Mobile classified-Job contents | | | | 27 |
| | Sim tool kit – Content portal | | | | 15 |
| | Love tips | | | | 9 |
| | Religious contents of Pastor Mukuna | | | | 9 |
| | Proverb and citations contents | | | | 15 |
| | Total | | | | 100 |

Graph 16: Assessment of the ease to complain



The analysis of the figures of the Table 31 and the Graph 16 show that 100% of customers complain about the difficulty to raise complaints related to VAS offers. This situation indicates that the customers are demanding for a simple and smooth process to raise complaints. In addition, this situation inspires to have a suitable service recovery for complaints and issues related to VAS offers.

Findings from study:

Findings from the Literature Review:

The profile of customers was diversified as per their gender, their age and also their income because of their sensitivity to pricing of services. The theory of segmentation as described by Palmer (2012:218) has enabled to understand the strategic approach to divide the market in groups of customers having the same behavior or some common characteristics. Indeed, the value can be perceived by customers only if the value proposition satisfies or goes beyond their expectations. Otherwise the customers will ignore the offers. In addition, the research has demonstrated that applying the right segmentation is profitable for the company. Indeed, the acquisition strategy focus is to acquire customers matching the profile of the segment for adopting the segmented offers, being loyal and being able to buy more. Missing the segmentation leads to acquire all customers even those the profiles do not match with the characteristics of customized offers and finally they react by raising complaints, reducing their usage and eventually stopping to use offers. That was the case of the majority of complaints related to VAS offers.

The key finding related to segmentation is that for VAS offers, gender and age are more efficient than income for driving segmentation.

The set of complaints related to quality, the contents, pricing, billing model, and technical stability of offers described the customer experience with VAS offers. The analysis of that customer experience shows the predominance of the value destroyers. This means the current customer experience of VAS offers is not sustainable for the long term. Indeed, the key drivers of complaints evoke mostly the emotions that destroy value, for example disappointment, irritation, frustration, and dissatisfaction. The DNA of customer experience with VAS offers seems to be driven only by the destroying cluster of emotions. To overcome this situation, the MTSP has to build a great customer experience by recreating a new DNA of customer experience with the three other clusters that drive value such as, the Attention cluster, Recommendation cluster, and Advocacy cluster.

The way the communication is driven shows that the current approach weaken the customers' views of the company due to complaints related to the current marketing communication strategy. Indeed, the failure of applying a rigorous segmentation led to address the message to the wrong audience consistently. Thus, the marketing communication strategy was not effective. In addition, all channels of communication cannot be used for all products and all segments as the MTSP used to do. Indeed, the marketing communication mix has to differ according to the type of product and the targeted segment. Therefore, the optimization of the channels of communication is the key success to enable the communication to inform, convince, and refresh the awareness about current offers in order to avoid a mismatch with the wrong segment.

For service recovery and complaints handling the key factor of success is to make easy to customers to report complaints. Thus, implementing alternatives channels such as web links, electronic emails, SMS and social networking will help to reduce the existing complaints barriers.

Findings from the Primary Research:

The research questions will orient the reporting of findings from the Primary Research:

i) *Does segmentation contributes to acquire the right customers and addresses the expectation of the market with the relevant value proposition?*

The analysis of data showed that when a product is not addressed to the right segment regardless of the gender the complaints are raised significantly mostly when the product does not match the expectation of the customers belonging to a certain age category. In addition, the adoption of some VAS offers varies from one gender to another and complaints are raised when offer does not match the expectations of a gender.

The key finding is that the segmentation can reduce complaints significantly if the market is targeted by taking into account the gender and ages of customers.

ii) *Does building great customer experience with VAS offerings reduce customers' complaints?*

The data analysis shows that the current statement of the key rational variables of the customer experience (price, billing model, quality, content, and simplicity of use...) are the key drivers of customers' complaints. Those complaints are destroying value by evoking emotions like disappointment, frustration, and irritation leading customers to request to be removed from the service.

Customers do not like the recurrent billing model which is applied on a daily basis when their balances have not enough airtime. They forgot that they were the ones who selected that model when they subscribed the first time to the services. In addition, customers do not find transparent the manner in which this billing is applied because any notification is not sent to inform them they have been billed. But sending a notification every day when the content is delivered will make the notification annoying.

Customers complain about the fact that VAS offers do not respect their promise. The content or the performance of offers does not fill their expectations despite what was advertised.

The value proposition of some VAS offers are perceived as expensive because the benefits received by customers are not assessed at the level of their costs.

All of those rational variables demonstrate that customers are not receiving a memorable customer experience that can lead them to be loyal, buy more, recommend and to advocate the offers. However, the current customer experience leads to complaints, customers' dissatisfaction and even to churn.

To overcome customers' complaints one of the key solutions is to build a great customer experience that will exceed customers' expectations, lead them to buy more, and to be loyal. Some actions can help to deliver that great customer experience such as rewarding customers based on the number of services used or their usage to sustain their engagement, activating for free a service of their choice to one of their relatives during a limited period, associating customers to the improvement of services by calling them time to time for feedback and comments, bundling certain offers as per customers' behaviour and profile to address affordability challenges and going beyond their expectations.

iii) *Does optimizing the usage of all BTL channels of communication reduce customers' complaints?*

Almost all complainants found inappropriate the channels used for the communication of VAS offers. Indeed, as direct channels their frequent intrusions in the privacy of customers also destroyed value and lead to customers complaints. This negative appreciation of those channels is also a consequence of targeting the wrong audience. In addition, the big mistake which also drives customers' complaints is the hours during which promotional messages are

sent and their frequency. Furthermore, some channels are not convenient for some VAS offers as they do not enable to customers to gather the right information.

This communication challenge has a negative impact in the experience customers receive.

iv) What recommendations can be made regarding suitable complaints handling and service recovery plan?

All complainants recognise that it's not easy to raise complaints related to VAS offers. Some procedural barriers do not enable to share their feedback or comments which could help the MTSP to enhance the performances of VAS offers or the quality of the customer experience. This fact is a clear indication of the inexistence of a dedicated process to handle complaints and service recovery of VAS offers.

Conclusions:

This research has enabled to understand the strategic approach to reduce customers' complaints by focusing first on acquisition quality of service's customers based on a rigorous segmentation strategy addressing expectations as per gender and per age category. Indeed, acquiring the right customers sustains revenue growth in the long term. Secondly, this research demonstrates the advantages of delivering good customer experience for driving loyalty, usage, customer relationship and competitiveness of VAS offers. Additionally, optimizing the exploitation of channels of communication to target the right audience with the right messages at acceptable frequencies in order to build the awareness of offers and sustain their selling. Finally, implementing a suitable complaints handling and service recovery for VAS only in order to provide support and assistance to overcome any challenge which can lead to complaints.

Recommendations:

The recommendations to the MTSP to overcome customers' complaints and ensure competitiveness of VAS offers are as follows:

- i) Applying a new segmentation of the customer's base to ensure that the characteristics of each group of customers take in account the gender and the age category. Promoting VAS offers only to the segments for which the value propositions address expectations of those segments.
- ii) Revise the pricing of all VAS offers as per segments' economic and non-economic characteristics and the benefits promised for each value proposition. The objective is to drive affordability and value for money.
- iii) Changing the billing model from the daily recurrence to the weekly recurrence with notifications before any automatic renewal to be applied at the end of each week. The objective is to overcome the challenge of the billing transparency and the affordability as well.
- iv) Providing rewards based on customer's usage to drive loyalty and usage
- v) Removing the most annoying channels of communication and revising the communication strategy as per the characteristics of the new segments.
- vi) Revising the customer experience delivered by all VAS offers to ensure that they are playing on both the rational and emotional sides.
- vii) Setting up a recovery service for handling customers' complaints and providing support and assistance to Non-Voice customers.

Areas for further Research:

This research can be extended to other regions in which the MTSP is operating also for getting the entire view on customers' complaints related to VAS offers in the country. Considering the size of the country and customers' behaviors vary from one region to another region.

Conclusion:

This research is an advocacy that the MTSP needs to move from the product-centricity approach to customer-centricity approach. Indeed, the analysis of data shown that the product should be designed, and advertised to target segment as per the profile of customers. The objective is to address customers' demands and expectations with offers that match their needs. Thus, offers have to be designed in order to satisfy customers and ensure consistently a delightful customer experience.

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