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PRESS RELEASE

Mobile Data Plans: Shrinking Value, Rising Costs - Raises Questions About Fairness

Mobile users across the country are voicing growing concern over the repeated and increasingly aggressive changes to some prepaid data plans by mobile network operators in Fiji. These changes, marked by rising costs, shorter validity periods, and the elimination of benefits like data rollover, are disproportionately burdening consumers, forcing them to pay more for diminishing returns. The core issue lies not just in individual adjustments, but in their relentless frequency and compounding effect, which together systematically degrade the value users once relied on.

Over the past few years, most of these prepaid data plans have undergone multiple adjustments. Prices have crept upward, validity periods have shortened, and consumer-friendly features such as data rollover are now reportedly being withdrawn. The result is that consumers are paying more for less, with little consistency in how plans are structured from month to month.

One of the examples from a mobile network provider, is a former \$15 plan which initially lasted for 15 days. That plan became a \$16 plan, increasing the price for the same 15-day period. Most recently, the validity has been reduced to just 14 days while the price remains at \$16. The weekly \$8 plan initially valid for 7 days, was changed to a 6-day plan, and has now changed to a \$9 plan, valid for only 5 days.

Similarly, the well-known \$25 plan, previously regarded as the go-to 30-day option, now offers only 20 days. To access a full 30-day plan, consumers are being directed to a new \$35 option, representing a significant cost increase for the same timeframe. There are many more examples of these changes, across both major mobile service providers in Fiji.

While the service providers may point to changes in data volume and customers being notified, these shifting structures have made it extremely difficult for consumers to track what they are getting for their money. The constant tweaking of prices, periods, and plan features has created a landscape where customers are left unsure of what they're purchasing, even if the individual changes are technically disclosed.

The situation has been further exacerbated by news that one internet provider is phasing out data rollover on several plans. This means that users who have paid for data but haven't fully used it will now see their remaining balance simply expire. Such a move strips consumers of their ability to manage their data usage flexibly and efficiently, and it risks being seen as yet

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another tactic to force repurchasing while the actual value of previous purchases has not been realized.

“This isn’t just about notifications, it’s about the systematic reduction of value for consumers,” said Seema Shandil, CEO of the Consumer Council of Fiji. “Network providers have changed most of their data plans multiple times in a relatively short span, and every change follows the same pattern: less for more. Consumers are feeling squeezed, confused, and increasingly powerless to keep up.”

The Council will be demanding a thorough review of the pricing strategy of these 2 major mobile network operators, and the rationale behind these continued changes. A formal submission will be made to the Telecommunications Authority of Fiji and Ministry of Trade Cooperatives MSME’s and Communications, urging them to investigate whether these practices comply with fair trading principles and whether further consumer protections are needed in the telecommunications sector.

“Mobile data is essential, and most people in Fiji rely on these weekly, fortnightly, or monthly mobile data plans. That makes fairness in pricing a matter of public interest, not just a business decision,” Ms. Shandil added. “These service providers must stop treating their customer base as a captive market and start showing a commitment to stability, consistency, and fairness. Consumers deserve stable, equitable plans that respect their needs and budgets.

Consumers who are unhappy regarding data plan changes are urged to lodge a complaint with the Council via its toll-free National Consumer Helpline 155 or Complaints@consumersfiji.org

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