

How Government-Owned Companies Deal with Customers "Reflection Experience from UAE"

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Abstract

This short communication paper aims to address the issue of: how does telecommunication companies in United Arab Emirates deal with potential and current customers? Answering this question relies on available written communication, personal experience, and reflection of companies' practices in dealing with customers. The paper concludes that companies use several manipulating tools to force customers paying money, and escaping from responsibility when clients submit complaints. In addition, government agency takes companies side and does not protect customers' rights. This article calls both companies and government agencies to follow the good governance practices in relationship to costumers especially when dealing with individual clients.

Keywords

Telecommunication Companies, UAE, Customers, Responsibility, Complaints, Governance

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1. Introduction

Companies may be fully or partly owned by governments; this ownership allows companies many opportunities in manipulating customers or at least affects dealing with them. How companies with strong government ties deal with customers. To be specific - how do telecommunication companies (TEL.COM) in United Arab Emirates (UAE) deal with potential and current customers? Answering this question relays on written communication, personal observations, and available secondary data on companies' practices.

2. Monopoly & Customer Complaints

Two TEL.COM are operating in UAE, Du and Etisalat; both are owned partially by the government. There is no plan to add more TEL.COM, which means keeping the circle of

current monopoly for the two companies. TEL.COM provides services to individuals and organizations, however, its worth to say that several Telecommunication applications are prohibited or / and does not properly work in UAE such as: what's up, Skype, some social chatting messengers. Regardless of government justification, people view this as a way to capture fully the market and generate profits as could to benefit TEL.COM [1, 2, 3].

With current monopoly, customers whom are interested in any of telecommunication services: phone, mobile, and Internet cannot escape from dealing with the two TEL.COM. Customers complain for many reasons: not satisfied from companies' services, high prices, have forced and manipulated by TELCOM when dealing with them. More than 13 thousands complaints have submitted from clients in 2016 regulatory authority in UAE. However, doubling of this number have submitted to TEL.COM and does not reached the regulatory authority regardless if complains have solved fairly or not. Situation does not stop on clients' complaints

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but become worst due to TEL.COM ties to government. Specialized government body is protecting TELCOM instead of monitoring and controlling them; specialized government body does not play an independent role in protecting customers at first stage [4].

3. Ordering – Forcing Clients

One client submitted a complaint describing current relationship with TEL.COM, “TEL.COM is not an army and their clients are not soldiers to follow blindly thier orders.” This sentence describes how do people feel towards TEL.COM companies. In the service side, relationship with customers start from providing information on existing services; TEL.COM provides information for selective services that generate high profitability to companies. TEL.COM focuses on long-term contract 2-3 years in order to secure more revenue. Long-term contract works in two ways; when customer’s decide to continue or disconnect their relations with companies. Please note that residency in UAE is not permanent and unsecured; residents on employment contract and business permit can be removed by the government, and have to leave the country. Residents-noncitizen who count about 90% of UAE population are tightly besieged by *Kafala*, a sponsorship system that requires clearance to allow people receive their financial benfits and go back to their original countries. TEL.COM clearance is must for both individuals and organizations [5, 6, 7].

Customers face many problems when dealing with TEL.COM. One major problem is disclosure of information, the exact info for services and legal info when they ask clients to sign legal contracts. Companies’ service channels provides very limited info and escapes intentionally from providing customer with sufficient info although companies websites referring people to ask these channels. TELCOM tries to look good when they address to media and communities; they pay attention to the decoration issues but manipulating the meaning of governance by limited it to clients’ obedience. TEL.COM in away or another ensures their sovereignty and control over customers i.e. holding clients necks in their hands to squeeze them whenever they want [8]. Many examples can be listed here regarding TEL.COM practices:

TEL.COM Asks thier clients to pay additional – money for transactions called services but it does not requested by clients. Companies continue charging on these not requested services; when clients complain, the reply its clients’ responsibilities to ask for stopping additional services. Strange, TEL.COM creates the problems and escapes from the responsibility, putting it on customers’ shoulders. When problems occur, TEL.COM do all possible things to escape

from responsibility as most of complaints associated with financial transactions and TEL.COM does not want to give people money back.

Adding further amount to what was agreed upon although clients are very confident that they have asked many times for all kinds of cost associated and received clear-cut answers.

TEL.COM does not declare proper information or provide proper electronic instructions, and does not have good application or system step-up. It is possible to argue that these problems happened because of poor system design or might it has been designed that way to cheat clients.

Companies staff insists that clients have to sign contracts without seeing or reading them. Staff forced clients in many ways to sign contracts on electronic screen, a two CM2 space, by electronic pen cheating them saying it’s a request of services but not a contract. Clients sign on requesting services not on the contents of hidden electronic contracts. Later when problem occur, TEL.COM answer clients already have signed the services contract.

The strange in TEL.Com contracts; they are ambiguous, people with higher education cannot understand it contents, refers clients to several legal items and article in the law that does not appears in the form. Also, they have more written obligations and limited general rights.

TEL.COM provides wrong or incomplete info, when clients complain, companies escape from the responsibilities.

Although clients have documents in thier hands TEL.COM still accuse them and put responsibilities on clients’ shoulders.

TEL.COM does not admit their mistakes.

TEL.COM tend to procrastinate in solving problems for weeks and months aiming that clients might be impatient and forget their complaints [9, 10, 11, 12, 13].

TEL.COM should be under serious government monitoring with the absence of civil – community- watching organizations. However, government agency defends government-owned companies against clients. Customers conclude that government agency exists to protect companies rather than clients’ rights [14].

4. Conclusion

It’s a call for both TEL.COM and government agencies to follow good governance practice in their relationship to costumer especially when dealing with individual customers. Transparency and accountability cannot be separated from rule of law. Finally, TEL.COM should take responsibility-

financially and morally for their action including their staff mistakes. TEL.COM cannot create problems and ask clients to solve it by paying money to maintain their false records. Also, government agencies should serve clients at the first place [15].

Customers face problems when dealing with TEL.COM because of current market monopoly by these two companies that are operated and owned by government. TEL.COM should understand that their tight relationship to government does not mean that they should order clients, and customers must follow. TEL.COM relationship with clients based on commercial relationship; mutual benefits in which both should fulfill their obligations. TEL.COM should provide services as agreed on without any additional fee or extra amount. In addition, the most important is that companies should take responsibility of their action including staff mistakes. Such development stage cannot be reached if both parties-companies and responsible authority has continued their current practice.

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