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## TIC IN THE IMPROVEMENT OF CUSTOMER RELATIONS. Case of Malagasy SMEs

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### ABSTRACT

Subjected to a stronger competitive pressure, companies have greater requirements in terms of communication. In order to strengthen their position on the market, company managers are turning to TIC, which offers increasingly innovative means and tools of communication. The new communication challenges facing modern companies can be effectively met by using TIC. But the problematic that arises is how TIC could help companies in their relations with customers?

The objective of this work is therefore to identify the place of TIC in the relationship of companies with their customers. The results of a survey of a sample of 120 companies have confirmed that TIC improves the relationship of the company with its customers.

**KEYWORDS:** Company, TIC, communication, internet, customer.

## INTRODUCTION

Innovation is considered an essential step towards performance and efficiency. Information plays an important role in the development process of a company, the effectiveness of communication contributes greatly to the positioning of the company on the market. The diffusion of technological innovations is accelerating under the effect of the competition that the computer industries and the opening of the telecommunication markets are engaged in (**Jacques Champeaux and Christian Bret**)<sup>1</sup>. With the use of TIC, companies strengthen their position in the market, they insert themselves in new niches contributing necessarily to their communication policies.

TIC generally refers to new technologies used in the processing and transmission of information, mainly computers, the Internet and telecommunications. It brings a great opportunity for growth and development at the global level and particularly transformations of the management mode of companies by allowing more communication and access to information. It is in this sense that comes the idea of analyzing the place of TIC in the customer relationship of companies.

Indeed, the TIC constitutes a deep element of the management of the company especially in communication. The information and communication technologies contribute in parallel, to modify the relations between the company and its market. But the problem that arises is how TIC could help companies in their relations with customers?

An optimal customer relationship is a long-term relationship of trust that generates satisfaction, loyalty and reflects on the company's image and therefore on its results. This relationship is built and worked on according to the needs of these customers. Thus, in an environment where customers already recognize the opportunities offered by TIC, companies have no choice but to follow the pace in order not to leave room for competitors.

The objective of this work is therefore to identify the place of TIC in the relationship between companies and their customers based on the results of a survey of a sample of 120 Malagasy SMEs<sup>2</sup>. Statistical analysis of these results confirmed that TIC improves the company's relationship with customers.

## I- CONCEPTUAL BASES

The TIC is constantly bringing innovations especially in the field of communication. It includes the telecommunications sector, computer networks, software, computer services, multimedia and electronic equipment. The Internet is probably the best known example of all: it is a global network for the exchange

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<sup>1</sup> **Jacques Champeaux et Christian Bret**, « *La cyber Entreprise* »,

<sup>2</sup> Caractéristiques des entreprises en annexe

of information of the text, voice, data and video type with possibilities of dialogue in real time; it is a network on which an infinite number of databases is today available to all allowing to improve the relationship between entities. TIC is used daily by an ever-increasing number of active individuals. It has considerably evolved in the last few years, to the point of upsetting our daily life, these innovations have provoked a permanent debate in society. The tools offered are in some ways perfect supports for the production of a wide range of functionality<sup>3</sup>. The new challenges faced by modern businesses can be effectively met by the use of TIC.

The power of telecommunications allows the development of business applications that allow the company to communicate better without using traditional channels. The companies nowadays feel much more comfortable in the communication and have several choices on its mode of organization thanks to the multitudes of uses proposed by the TIC<sup>4</sup>.

Today, the immense growth of the TIC generates important impacts on the functioning of the companies. The development of the TIC is very promoting because it opens to the companies the possibility of diversifying their networks of distribution and of widening their market so of benefiting a good number of customer<sup>5</sup>. All exchanges tend to be virtualized, TIC is also at the conjunction of a revolution in both supply and demand because they challenge the traditional distribution channels. Thus, they give more power to the customer and they favor the emergence of new customer relationship tools.

The management of information such as collection, exchange and storage is becoming a major dimension of the company's activity and a real criterion of its communication performance. Companies are constantly on the lookout and competitive advantage is becoming a commodity that is all the more precious because it is more volatile. As for the new emerging markets, such as e-commerce, the most reactive and communicative players will quickly conquer the positions.

## **II-RESULTS**

In order to achieve our research objective, the results presented here will focus on the use of TIC in the customer relationship of Malagasy companies.

### **2.1 Use of TIC in customer relations**

To ensure its competitive position, it is essential for the company to establish a long-term relationship with its customers. The relationship with the customers starts from the prospection and must never be

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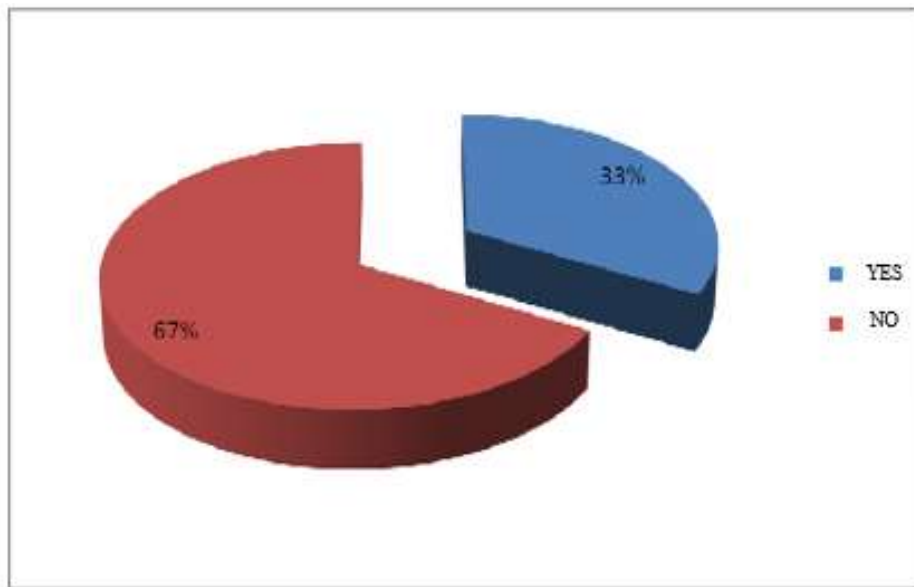
<sup>3</sup> **Davis, Olson, Ajenstat, Peaucelle**, « *Système d'information pour le management* », Paris 1986.

<sup>4</sup> **Kocoglu Y et Moattly F**, « *Diffusion et combinaison des TIC* », 2010.

<sup>5</sup> **Reix Robert**, « *Système d'information et management des organisations* », 5ème édition, Paris 2004.

broken to seize each opportunity which arises it is in this direction that the TIC must intervene. The survey carried out among the directors or managers of companies using TIC shows that 67% of them use it in their communications with customers. The 33% deny using it especially in their relations with customers.

**Figure 1: Use of TIC in customer relations**



Source: Authors, 2022

However, the use of TIC in customer relations depends largely on the activity of companies. Indeed, companies in the tertiary sectors communicate more with their customers by using TIC. This can be explained by the specificity of the customers.

**Table 1: Use of TIC in customer relations by activity**

use of TIC in customer relations/activity	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	TOTAL
Infrequent	0,0%	100%	0,0%	100%
Common	38,5%	61,5%	0,0%	100%
Very common	0,0%	3,2%	96,8%	100%
TOTAL	10,0%	30,0%	60,0%	100%

Source: Authors, 2022

### 2.2 Communication tools used

The slight delay in Madagascar in terms of internet connection limits the tools used by companies to communicate. Indeed, for this work, we considered five means of communication most frequent in the country to evaluate their use as a means of communication with customers within companies.

**Table 2: Communication tools used in customer relations**

Frequency of use Tools used	Not at all common	Not common	common	Very common	TOTAL
Phone	18,0%	62,0%	20,0%	0,0%	100%
Social networks	0,0%	3,0%	0,0%	97,0%	100%
mailing	87,0%	1,0%	12,0%	0,0%	100%
Application	0.0%	2.0%	60.23%	28.77%	100%
Website	0,0%	0,0%	26,0%	74,0%	100%

Source: Authors, 2022

The table of results below informs us first that the use of social networks is the common and leading practice of Malagasy companies. 97% of them use it very frequently to communicate with customers. The telephone is losing its place in communication as it is no longer used frequently by companies.

### 2.3 Utilité du TIC dans la relation client

Several actions in the commercial activity are concerned with the customer relationship, because as mentioned before the customer relationship starts from the prospecting and each step afterwards requires continuous communications. The results of our survey show that TIC is mainly used in sales and customer loyalty.

**Table 3: Usefulness of TIC in customer relations**

Utility Action	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	TOTAL
Prospecting	5,0%	7,0%	88,0%	0,0%	100%
Sales	4,0%	1,0%	90,0%	1,0%	100%
Loyalty	0,0%	0,0%	89,0%	11,0%	100%

After sales service	81,0%	19,0%	0,0%	0,0%	100%
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Source: Authors, 2022

### III- DISCUSSION

The following analyses will validate our hypothesis which suggests that the use of TIC improves the relationship of companies with their customers. The analyses will turn successively around the fluidity of the communications, the satisfaction of the needs of the customers, the improvement of the quality of service and the practicality of the TIC in the customer relationship.

Firstly, the tools offered by TIC are designed to bring innovations in the field of communication. In the case of the companies surveyed, the majority (86.66%) recognize that there is an improvement in the relationship after the implementation of the tools that allow the company and the customers to be linked.

**Table 4: Fluidity of communication through TIC**

Fluidity of communications	Frequency
Strongly agree	66.33%
Agree	20.33%
Disagree	11.33%
Strongly disagree	2%

Source: Authors, 2022

Secondly, the effectiveness of customer relations also depends on the satisfaction of the needs of the latter. And as the table below shows, the majority of respondents (82.67%) say that the use of TIC allows them to satisfy the needs of customers. And the 18.33% do not accept this idea.

**Table 5: Meeting customer needs through TIC**

Satisfaction	Frequency
Strongly agree	56.02%
Agree	26.65%
Disagree	13.33%
Strongly disagree	5%

Source: Authors, 2022

Improving the quality of service allows companies to ensure a good customer relationship in the long term. On this, our results in table 6 show that 73.33% agree that the use of TIC has allowed the company

to improve the quality of services offered to customers, and 26.67% declare that there has been no improvement.

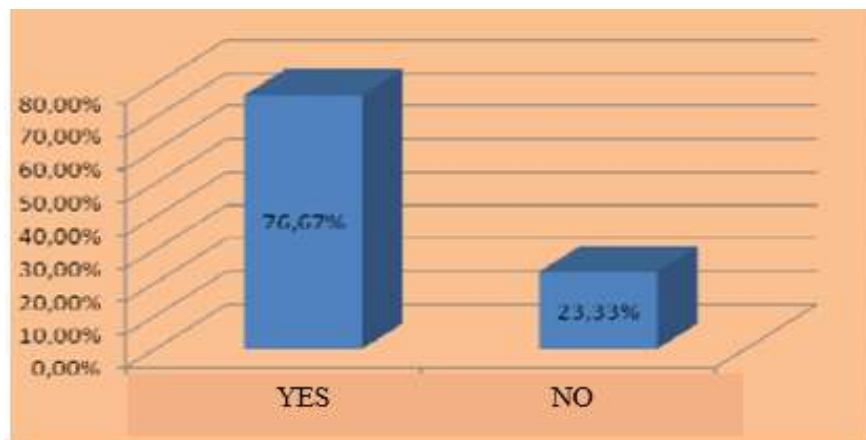
**Table 6: Improving service quality through TIC**

Improvement of the quality of service	Frequency
Strongly agree	53.13%
Agree	20.20%
Disagree	21.53%
Strongly disagree	5.24%

Source: Authors, 2022

And finally, the evolution of information and communication technology is supposed to bring more simplicity in the work to be done. The majority (76.77%) of the business leaders or managers surveyed recognized the practicality of TIC in their communications with customers. The reluctance of the remaining 23.33% can be explained by the lack of mastery of the tools or the lack of connections.

**Figure 2: Use of TIC in customer relations**



Source: Authors, 2022

We can thus confirm following these results that the use of the TIC improves the relation of the companies with their customers because not only this one ensures the fluidity of the communications but also it makes it possible to satisfy the needs for the customers and especially brings improvements in the quality of the services. Moreover, the practicality of TIC tools facilitates the relationship with customers.

## CONCLUSION

The information and communication technologies considered to be the results of a convergence between technologies allow the exchange of information as well as their treatment. They offer to the companies new means and methods of communication. The results of analysis near a sample of 120 Malagasy SME's allow to confirm that the use of the TIC improves the relation of the companies with their customers by acting on the fluidity of the communications, on the satisfaction of the customers and on the quality of the services.

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## ANNEX

**Table 7: Characteristics of the companies**

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Sectors of activity	Tertiary: 80	Secondary: 30	Primary: 10
Status	SARL: 84	Individual: 32	SA: 4
Age of the company	5 à 10 old: 65	Over 10 years: 33	Under 5 years old: 22
Annual turnover	Less than 100 million ariary: 73	Between 100 and 200 million ariary: 43	More than 200 million ariary: 4

Source: Authors, 2022