

First successful prosecution of beauty parlour female staff member engaging in bait and switch practice

A female staff member of a beauty parlour was sentenced to 120 hours of community service today (December 13) at Eastern Magistrates' Courts for engaging in a bait and switch commercial practice, in contravention of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO). This is the first successful prosecution against the beauty service industry involving the practice of bait and switch.

Hong Kong Customs earlier received information alleging that a female staff member of a beauty parlour was suspected of engaging in unfair trade practices in the sale of beauty treatment services.

After investigation, it was found that the beauty parlour had sold online a beauty treatment service at a specified price. Later when a consumer approached the beauty parlour with the voucher purchased online to redeem the beauty treatment, the female staff member promoted other beauty treatments to the consumer and refused to provide the beauty treatment service specified on the voucher.

Customs reminds traders to comply with the requirements of the TDO and consumers to procure services at reputable shops.

Under the TDO, any trader who offers a service for purchase at a specified price but subsequently, with the intention of promoting a different service, refuses to deliver the service within a reasonable time commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

Members of the public may report any suspected violations of the TDO to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).