

Travel agent and its salesperson convicted for engaging in bait and switch practice

A travel agent and its salesperson were fined \$10,000 and sentenced to 80 hours of Community Service Order respectively on March 1 and today (March 18) at West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts for engaging in bait and switch practice, in contravention of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO). The travel agent was also ordered to pay the victim \$2,320 in compensation.

Customs earlier received information alleging that a travel agent and its salesperson were suspected of engaging in unfair trade practices in the sale of travel services.

After investigation, it was revealed that the travel agent had sold an air ticket voucher at a discounted price on a group purchase website. When the customer redeemed the voucher, the travel agent and its salesperson refused to provide an air ticket. The customer was allowed to use the voucher only after he purchased a more expensive air ticket and hotel package.

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).