

## SALES GIMMICKS: Put a stop to dishonest tactics

Written by 3K Admin

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YU KIN LEN, Consumer Research and Resource Centre, Petaling Jaya

SHOPPING malls are full of people spending their money at Chinese New Year sales. But are the sales real or just a scam? Like every Chinese in town, I was busy with my festive shopping last weekend. At one shop, there was a big sign with the words "All stocks 50 per cent off on second item". The strategy seemed to be working as the shop was full of people, almost as though everything in the shop was for free. I saw a skirt that was selling for RM99. I noticed that the RM99 price tag had been stuck on the original price tag, which read RM89. Therefore, the discount was calculated from the new price. At a boutique, the price tag on a shirt had been amended with correction fluid and the new price was written with ballpoint pen. When I erased the correction fluid, the original price was RM79 and not RM89 as written with the ballpoint pen. The same had been done to several other items. After selecting a skirt with a "10 per cent discount" tag, I went to the payment counter. The cashier told me the discount period was over. Are consumers unprotected from such dishonest marketing techniques? The law states it is an offence to sell any product with false or misleading descriptions. However, weak enforcement has allowed the traders to get away with it. The authorities approve sales promotions but don't monitor the shops during the promotion period. The number of complaints about "cheap sales" lodged with the National Consumer Complaints Centre increased from 1,410 in 2007 to 1,673 in 2008, an increase of 18.7 per cent within one year. When will the voice of consumers be heard?

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