

Paying the price for being taken in by sales gimmicks

Written by 3K Admin

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SHOPPING malls are full of people during this festive period. Even those who do not celebrate Chinese New Year are flooding the malls because of the sales.

But have you ever wondered whether these are real or scams?

I have some shopping stories to share. One was in a mall where the shops were decorated with attractive signs to woo shoppers. Another was decorated with a big sign saying ♦All stock 50% off on second item♦. The strategy seemed to work as the shop was crowded.

Then I noticed a skirt being sold for RM99 according to the price tag that had been recently stuck on it. This new sticker was placed over the original price tag of RM89. Thus, the discount was based on the new price.

Another case was in a boutique where I noticed that the price tag on a shirt had been amended with corrector fluid. The new price of RM89 was written with a ball pen over the original one, which was RM79. The shirt wasn't even a sales item.

At the same shop, the price tag on a bag had also been changed in a similar way. Well, they could give the excuse that they changed their price or wrongly inserted the price code, but this is so unprofessional.

Another shop had a skirt with a 10% discount on the price tag. However, the cashier told me that the discount period was over and she couldn't give me the 10% discount any more.

Consumers are actually protected under the law which states that the sale of any product with elements of false or misleading descriptions is an offence. However, weak enforcement allows the sellers to get away with this and these incidents usually become worse during the sales period.

The relevant authorities approve the sales, but there is no follow-up action to monitor the shops during the promotion period. The number of complaints on cheap sales lodged with the National Consumer Complaint Centre has risen from 1,410 in 2007 to 1,673 in 2008, an increase of 18.7% within one year. When will the voice of consumers be heard?

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

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