

Man convicted of engaging in commercial practice involving misleading omission for selling training services on dating techniques

A man was sentenced to 160 hours' community service order today (July 6) at the Eastern Magistrates' Courts after an earlier conviction of engaging in commercial practice involving misleading omission in the sale of training services on dating techniques, in contravention of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO).

Hong Kong Customs received information in April last year alleging that a man was suspected of omitting material information in the sale of training services on dating techniques. The man demanded that two victims purchase an additional image transformation service ranging from \$100,000 to \$330,000 after receiving over \$110,000 training fees in total from them. Otherwise, he would refuse to provide lessons. An investigation revealed that the two victims did not know that they were required to purchase an additional image transformation service before receiving the relevant training on dating techniques. Their total losses had exceeded \$540,000.

Customs welcomes the sentence. The sentence has delivered a clear warning to unscrupulous practitioners in the industry.

Customs reminds traders to comply with the requirements of the TDO. Consumers should also procure services at reputable traders and inquire about the service details before making a transactional decision.

Under the TDO, any trader who engages in a commercial practice that omits or hides material information or provides material information in a manner that is unclear, unintelligible, ambiguous or untimely, and as a result causes, or is likely to cause, an average consumer to make a transactional decision, commits an offence of misleading omissions. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

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Members of the public may report any suspected violation of the TDO to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002).