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With the increasing rent and upcoming minimal wage proposals, unfair trade practices have been on the increase. I will use the beauty care centers as an example, but the problems and suggestions do not limit to this industry.

Firstly, a lot of the services are sold in large packages; they could be in units of 30s, 50s, or even 100s. Businesses attract customers to buy larger packages by offering cheaper prices per unit, provide a longer expiry date (2 to 6+ years), and allowing the count-down on the expiry to begin when you start the package, thus encouraging customers to buy more than one package of the same product. It sounds like a deal, however, due to the lack of transparency and documentation, it is more difficult for customers to keep track of the packages they have bought. Many times the package expires and they are forced to buy a new package in order to reactivate the old package, and so the vicious cycle continues.

Secondly, the selling tactics used by the beautician and the managerial staff at beauty centers can be very disturbing. Their income relies on the bonuses they receive from selling packages or they have a sales target to reach each month. In some cases, if Staff A helps Staff B to close a deal by just influencing the customer, this will allow Staff A to share the bonus with Staff B. This causes the staff to gang up on the customer in numbers of up to 3 staff members. Many times, this can happen while the customer is receiving the services, making customers feel they are under the knife. Of course, a customer can still refuse the staff, but continuous refusal eventually does ruin the customer-beautician relationship, which the customer might not want to risk since they still have packages to use.

Lastly, I would like to give some suggestions:

- Beauty businesses should give out customer cards documenting the customer's package: Type of product, cost of package, starting date and expiry date of the package etc... For packages that include more than one type of product, customers should be given a list in black and white of all the products allowed and how they are deducted from their package.
- Legislation should not allow businesses to sell excessive packages with expiry for more than 2 years.
- I agree that cooling-off arrangements should extend to services like yoga and fitness centers, and beauty centers, etc..
- Legislation should not allow businesses and staff to sell services and products whilst the customer is receiving services, i.e. a staff shouldn't be selling services or products to a customer while the customer is getting a massage or facial.

Getting a facial or massage is a way to relax for many HK women; unfortunately the practices of the beauty industry are making a visit to the beauty center like going into a warzone. I hope the new legislation can help customers feel more at ease and protected when making purchases of any goods, products and services.