



CONSUMERS ASSOCIATION OF SINGAPORE

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MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Pressure sales tactics and unsatisfactory services rampant at beauty salons

Complaints regarding the Beauty industry have been ranked in the top five industry complaints received by the Consumers Association of Singapore (CASE) for the past five years. The top reason behind such complaints is the aggressive or deceptive sales tactics, followed closely by unsatisfactory services rendered by the beautician (see Table 1). Almost 90% of all complaints were lodged by female consumers.

Table 1: Breakdown of nature of complaints for beauty cases handled by CASE from Jan 2011 to Jun 2016.

No.	Nature of complaint	No. of cases (Filed & Assisted) ¹
1	Sales tactics	485
2	Unsatisfactory services	311
3	Refund issues	189
4	Failure to honour	171
5	Misrepresentation	148
6	Redress	123
7	Others	35
8	Overcharging	23
9	Pricing	17
10	Enquiry	11
11	Defective goods	9
12	Delay delivery	3
	TOTAL	1,525

Between January 2011 to June 2016, CASE handled 485 cases involving complaints against sales tactics in the beauty industry. Pressure sales tactics are employed frequently by beauticians to influence

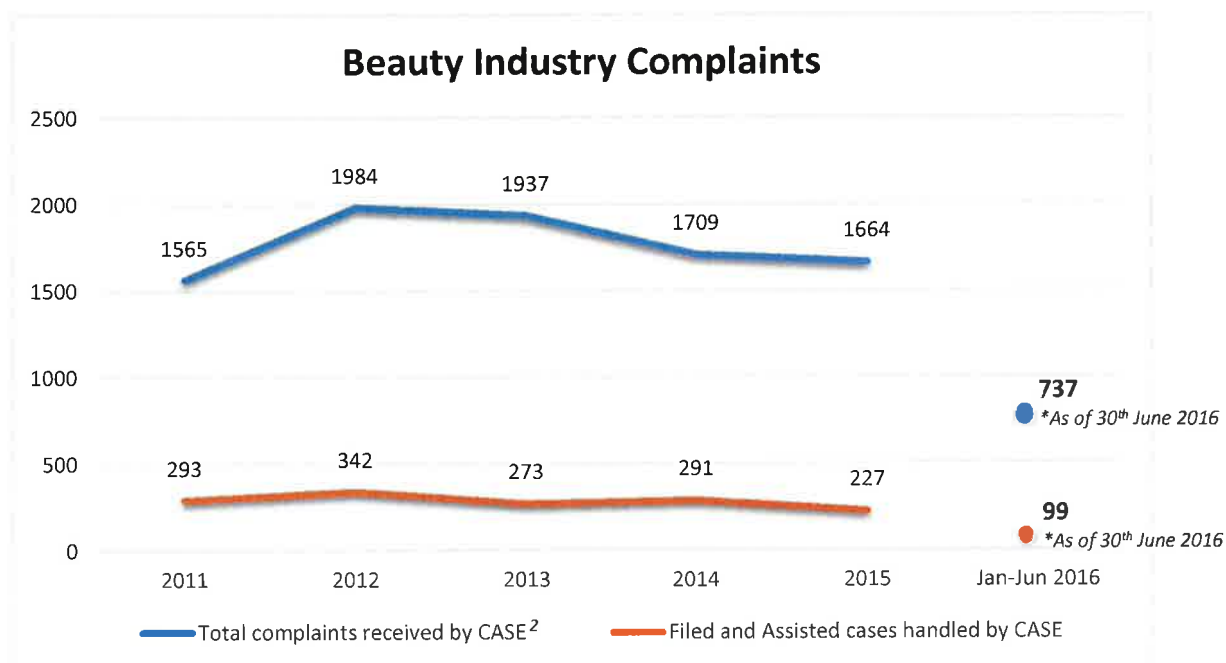
¹ Filed and assisted cases refer to beauty complaint cases that are officially taken up by CASE. For assisted cases, CASE will help the consumers to draft a letter. The consumer will have to negotiate directly with the retailer with the help of the letter. For filed cases, the consumers authorise CASE to handle the complaint on their behalf. Our CASE officer will follow up directly with the retailer to negotiate for an amicable settlement.

consumers to buy their products or services. Consumers complained that the beautician withheld their personal belongings while pushing more products or services to them, or that beauticians used harsh and critical words to make consumers feel self-conscious about their looks or body, or even making their sales pitch for hours in an enclosed room resulting in mental exhaustion by the consumers. Many of these pressure sales sessions occur when the consumer is undergoing the beauty treatment or placed in a vulnerable position.

In addition, approximately 20% of all cases lodged involve complaints about unsatisfactory services such as unprofessional, untrained or incompetent beauticians administering the beauty treatment or selling a beauty product to the consumer. Some examples include beauticians causing injury to consumers during the beauty treatment, failing to administer the treatments competently or acting unprofessionally towards consumers.

Complaints in respect of the beauty industry generally remain high across the years (see Figure 1). CASE receives more than a thousand enquires and complaints involving the beauty industry every year. Depending on the type and validity of the complaint, CASE will officially take up about 10% to 15% of these complaints and follow up with the business to negotiate for an amicable settlement.

Figure 1: Total number of beauty industry complaints received from Jan 2011 to Jun 2016.



² The total number of complaints received by CASE includes all complaints from phone calls, letters, faxes, emails, online submissions, counselled cases, rejected cases as well as assisted and filed cases. The complaints may also include enquires or feedback about the issue.

To deal with the high number of beauty complaints, CASE has adopted a two-pronged approach. We will work with businesses to encourage fair trading practices in the industry and we will also educate consumers about their rights and responsibilities.

Under the provisions of the Consumer Protection (Fair Trading) Act (CPFTA), CASE is appointed as one of the bodies that are able to enter into a Voluntary Compliance Agreement (VCA) against a business engaging in unfair practices. To date, we have signed a VCA/Letter of Undertaking with four businesses in the beauty industry to cease their unfair practices, such as the adoption of pressure sales tactics against consumers.

Our CaseTrust accreditation scheme for spa and wellness businesses has been largely successful in implementing measures for fair trading in the industry. All accredited businesses have pledged to provide a five-day cooling-off period and a 'no selling' policy in the treatment room to deter the use of pressure sales tactics. Out of the 1,525 beauty complaint cases lodged with CASE, only 129 cases (8.5%) are against CaseTrust accredited businesses (see Table 2). As of 30th June 2016, we have 641 businesses accredited under the CaseTrust spa & wellness accreditation scheme.

Table 2: Yearly breakdown of beauty cases lodged against CaseTrust accredited and non-CaseTrust accredited businesses from Jan 2011 to Jun 2016.

Year	CaseTrust accredited businesses	Non-CaseTrust accredited businesses
2011	14	279
2012	20	322
2013	18	255
2014	35	256
2015	29	198
Jan-Jun 2016	13	86
Total	129	1,396

To educate consumers about what they can look out for when buying beauty products or services, CASE will be holding a *Beauty Fair* on 30 July 2016 (Saturday) at the NTUC Centre. It will be a half-day educational seminar from 10am to 1pm. Topics include "SWAS Registry of Complementary Therapists – Be sure, be safe" presented by the Spa & Wellness Association of Singapore (SWAS), "Selecting good skin care" presented by the National Skin Centre and "Fair Trading and You" presented by CASE. Consumers can also visit the exhibition booths set up by our partners to learn more on how they can protect themselves. Please visit <https://www.case.org.sg/events.aspx> to register. Admission is free.

CASE is committed to protecting the interests of consumers, and will continue working hard to raise the professional standards of the beauty industry.

Lim Biow Chuan
 President
 Consumers Association of Singapore (CASE)