



二〇〇九年四月十五日

超市定價手法

大型連鎖超市定期大賣廣告，推出令人眼花撩亂的優惠和折扣。

但消費者在兩大連鎖超市「一百佳及惠康」看似是長期減價戰中，是否真的受惠？

實情是，就某些貨品而言，看似優惠的並沒有為顧客帶來得益，而只是促銷手法，吸引顧客選購，及購入更多。

以上觀察乃消費者委員會分析了於 2008 年 10 月至 2009 年 2 月期間，在該兩間連鎖超市的每日網上 288 件貨品（在全調查期都有價格資料）售價所得。

報告以一款 330 毫升罐裝啤酒的價格變動為例。

兩間超市同時在 11 月 14 日將每罐售價由 \$5.9 加至 \$6.1，再在 11 月 15 日加至 \$6.5，短短兩日的加幅達到 10.2%。

在短時間內加價後，一間超市在同日（11 月 15 日）提供買兩件 \$12.3 的優惠，另一間在翌日亦作出相同變動。

不過，折算後的平均優惠價 \$6.15（ $\$12.3/2$ ），比未加價前的每件售價 \$5.9 貴了 \$0.25，或 4.2%。

消費者在優惠期間被吸引不但買多了，亦買貴了。

在上述例子中，消費者若在優惠期前購買該貨品，付出會較低。而研究亦發現，即使在優惠期後亦可能較便宜。

再看看同一例子的罐裝啤酒，在 12 月 19 日優惠期過後，兩間超市同時將每罐售價減 \$0.05 至 \$6.1，比起優惠期內買兩件 \$12.3，即每件 \$6.15，還要低。

同樣的定價手法亦可見於其他納入調查的 288 件貨品中，先提高單件售價，再聲稱提供優惠，包括「多買多送」、「買一送一」、「加一元送多一件」等。

在調查的 21 個星期內，又發現有 79 次如消費者在優惠期內購物，可能因買多而多付了錢，其中 38 次是比優惠期前買貴了，另外 41 次則比優惠期後買貴了。

為保持市場佔有率，參考競爭對手的價格而定價的手法非常普遍，導致相同產品在不同商店的售價相近。

報告亦分析兩連鎖超市在研究期間同時有售的 375 件貨品，是否有互相「跟價」的情況。

報告引用另一款 330 毫升 12 罐裝啤酒為例。

兩間超市同時於 10 月 11 日將網上售價由 \$37 減至 \$35.8。而在 10 月 17 日，又同時調高售價至之前的 \$37。在研究期間兩間超市大多數同時間調整該貨品的售價。

在 10 類共 375 件貨品（兩超市在調查期內同時有售）中，有 55 件貨品有跟價的情況。

跟價最常見於麵包/蛋糕類（50%），10 件貨品中有 5 件。最低的類別為家居用品/衛生紙（0%），之後是糧油食品（6.7%）— 30 件中有 2 件。

整體來說，有 14.7% 的貨品出現跟價情況。故市場上仍有大量貨品存在價格差距，消費者若多格價即可選購到較便宜的貨品。

超市經常在星期五大賣減價廣告，那麼超市貨品是否在星期五最平？

根據調查，288 件在 21 個星期都有價格資料的貨品中，其中一間超市的 207 件（71.9%）貨品在周五最貴，另一間則有 158 件（54.9%）。

相反，同樣的 288 件貨品出現最低平均價最多的日子是星期四，一間超市有 151 件（52.4%），另一間有 137 件（47.6%）。

消費者如要到該兩間超市購物，星期四買到「平價貨」的機會會較大。

年度超市價格調查

大型連鎖超市的熱賣貨品中，大部分（75%）的售價在去年上升，由 0.8% 至 77.2%。

整體來說，去年一籃子 200 項超市貨品的總平均售價比 2007 年上升了 12.6%，貨品主要為日用品及食品。

調查資料來自三間連鎖超市 — 華潤萬家、百佳、惠康 — 200 項貨品的電子掃描數據，將 2007 年的與 2008 年作比較。

去年基本食品價格大幅上升，消費者飽受通脹之苦。

根據年度調查，除了一個組別外，其他的全年總平均售價都上升，幅度由 2.5%至 34.9%。

「糧油食品」和「罐頭/濃湯」可能是影響最多消費者的兩個類別，亦是升幅最大的，分別為 34.9%和 21.9%。

唯一錄得跌幅的類別是「酒類飲品」，下跌 8.3%。

各類別再細分為 39 組貨品作詳細分析。

調查顯示除了 6 組外，其餘 33 組的總平均售價都錄得升幅，由 0.3%至 36.7%。

食油的升幅最大，總平均售價上升了 36.7%，其中一款粟米油更上升了 77.2%。

緊隨的組別為罐裝豬肉（35%）和食米（32.6%）。

其他有顯著升幅的大部分為食品：罐裝魚（24.3%）、即溶咖啡（19.5%）、即食麵（16.8%）、急凍食品（13.1%）、蛋糕（12.9%）、芝士（12.2%）、奶粉（11.7%）、牙膏（11.6%）、乳酪/乳酸飲品（11.1%）和餅乾（11.1%）。

錄得跌幅的 5 組貨品為果酒（-9.7%）和啤酒（-5.1%）。一組貨品維持不變，為女士衛生用品。

摺合式單車

若將單車摺合後存放在車尾箱或家中的話，可以省卻不少煩惱。

防盜雖然重要，但摺合式單車可否安全使用，同樣值得關注。

消費者委員會測試 11 款摺合式單車的安全程度，包括 4 款車輪直徑 20 吋，6 款 16 吋和 1 款 6 吋。重量介乎 5.8 至 14.3 公斤，售價由 \$670 至 \$9,300。

摺合式單車的設計有不少鉸位以便調校及摺合。大部分樣本都用較傳統的摺合方法，即鉸位在車架的中間位置，收藏時將單車對摺，令前後輪重疊。

有兩個樣本的摺合方法較特別，車架呈三角形，鉸位設在車架的頂端，將車架的前後支柱摺合。

摺合式單車的鉸位較多，使用時能否穩固鎖實？特別是當騎單車者較重

或路面崎嶇不平。

樣本經過嚴格的測試項目，評估其安全表現，包括垂直堅固程度、軸向堅固程度、震動和煞車能力測試。

堅固程度測試模擬騎踏時樣本所承受的壓力。

震動測試模擬騎踏時的震動情況，檢視鉸位在騎踏後是否依然穩固鎖實。

所有樣本都通過堅固程度和震動測試，沒有出現損壞，結構亦沒有受影響。

此外，所有樣本的煞車能力無論在晴雨的環境都有不俗表現。

整體來說，所有樣本都通過以上測試，因此，各樣本的評分基於其功能設計和使用方便程度。

使用方便程度由多位評審員試用樣本，並評審樣本在搬運、攜帶、摺合、打開及騎踏方面的表現。結果顯示車輪直徑 6 吋的樣本最方便搬運及攜帶。

但該樣本由於車輪較細，在凹凸不平的路面騎踏時不夠穩定，特別是騎踏者是較重的話。

摺合及打開的方便程度結果令人滿意，各樣本沒有顯著分別。

評級標準為功能設計（40%）和使用方便程度（60%）。得分最高的在 5 分評分中得 4 分，共 5 個樣本，售價由 \$4,600 至 \$9,300。售價最低的樣本為 \$670，得 3.5 分，比得分最高的只低 0.5 分。得分最低的為 2 分，是車輪直徑只得 6 吋的樣本。

詳細的測試結果可參考 4 月分《選擇》月刊。

牙刷及漱口水

必須使用漱口水才可保持口腔衛生？

答案是並不一定。但需要有好的牙刷，與及正確和持續使用，及用牙線徹底清潔牙齒，才能有效去除牙垢。

4 月份《選擇》月刊詳細報告了清潔和保持牙齒健康的兩款基本口腔用品－牙刷及漱口水。

報告強調要令口腔健康，最有效的方法是每日早晚刷牙及每天使用牙線徹底清潔牙齒。

怎樣才是好的牙刷？刷頭的大小以細小、易放入口腔內為佳，且能操作自如，能刷到口內所有位置的牙和牙齦，配以柔軟的刷毛。

刷毛用至歪斜或散開時，是時候更換了，舊牙刷不但無法有效清潔牙齒，更可能蘊藏引致牙齦炎或牙周病的有害細菌。

一般來說應每 3 至 4 個月更換新牙刷。

至於要清潔牙縫，市面上有不少相關產品，例如牙線和牙縫刷。

牙線分含蠟和不含蠟兩種，對牙齒和牙齦較溫和。牙縫刷有不同大小，適合用於牙齒間的牙齒鄰面。兩種產品都比用牙簽佳。

大部分人只需每日兩次使用含氟牙膏徹底清潔牙齒及每天使用牙線，即可保持口腔衛生。

一般來說，並不一定需要使用漱口水才可保持口氣清新。

一些漱口水可能含有殺菌成分，幫助降低牙齦疾病和控制牙菌膜。

含有葡萄糖酸氯己定的漱口水已被證實有效抑制牙菌膜滋長，適合剛完成口腔手術人士。但不應長期使用該類產品，以免令牙漬容易沉積。雖然沉積物可以請牙醫或口腔護理員清除。

使用前應徵詢牙醫意見，並跟從製造商的使用指引。

漱口產品可能含有酒精，顏色鮮艷，但未必有防止兒童誤用的樽蓋。家長須妥善存放，防止兒童錯誤飲用。

此外，用漱口水後不應再用清水漱口，半小時內不要飲食或吸煙，才能發揮產品的最佳功效。保持口腔衛生的其他建議包括：

- 徹底清潔牙齒；
- 培養良好的飲食習慣，減少攝入過量糖分、酸性食物或飲品；
- 定期接受口腔檢查；
- 不要吸煙。

網上保安軟件

使用互聯網已成為不少人生活的一部分，電腦病毒和黑客等保安問題絕對不容忽視。故此應小心選擇和使用網上保安軟件。

消費者委員會與國際消費者研究及試驗組織（ICRT）聯合測試了 15 款網上保安套裝、3 款免費防毒軟件和評估了 3 個電腦操作系統。

測試包括保護效能(60%)、易用程度(25%)、管理及資源佔用(10%)、安裝及解除(5%)。保護效能測試時使用不同病毒和惡意程式例如特洛伊木馬、蠕蟲和巨集病毒。

15 個網上保安套裝中，7 個聲稱具備了 7 個主要功能：防惡意程式、防火牆、防間諜程式、防網絡釣魚、防撥號程式、家長監控功能和防垃圾郵件。

在最高為 5 分的評級中，沒有一個套裝在整體表現上得到滿分，但有一個在防火牆效能測試中得到 5 分。

表現最佳的 3 個樣本得 4 分，4 個只得 2.5 分。

消費者應留意不同保安軟件對電腦的資源需求相差很大，包括記憶體和硬碟空間。

一些軟件在操作時會佔用系統的大量資源，選購前應了解電腦的配備能否配合軟件的硬體要求。

舉例說，軟件安裝後佔用硬碟空間由 39MB 至 380MB，佔主記憶 11MB 至 93MB。

購物網上保安套裝要注意的事項還包括：

- 售價一般由 \$312 (1 台電腦使用) 至 \$802 (3 台電腦使用)；
- 大部分軟件已設多台電腦版本，例如供 2 台、3 台、5 台或 10 台電腦使用；
- 部分防毒軟件可免費下載；

《選擇》月刊現已上網，網址為 <http://choice.yip.com.hk>，同時可透過電訊盈科固網及流動電話服務接收。

今日(四月十五日)《選擇》月刊記者招待會主持為消委會宣傳及社區關係小組主席何沛謙先生。

歡迎被邀出席新聞發布會的傳媒引用新聞稿的內容。

消費者委員會保留所有關於《選擇》月刊及網上《選擇》的權利(包括版權)。



Supermarket Pricing Tactics

Major supermarket chains regularly churn out and advertise a dazzling array of promotional packages and price discounts.

But are consumers really benefitting from this seemingly perpetual price competition between the two biggest supermarket chains – ParknShop and Wellcome – in the market?

The truth is that, in some cases, they are not what they appear to be but mere promotional sale tactics to lure customers into buying – and buying more.

The revelation was borne out in an analysis of the Consumer Council based on its daily surveillance of online prices of the two supermarket chains on 288 items over a 5-month period between October 2008 and February 2009.

(Prices of these 288 items were available and monitored throughout the entire study period).

The analysis cited, as an example, the case of the price movement of a popular brand of canned beer 330ml in a promotion.

On November 14, both supermarket chains raised the unit price of the item from \$5.9 to \$6.1, and again on November 15, to \$6.5 bringing the increase to a total of \$0.6 or 10.2% within a brief span of two days.

Having raised the price in rapid succession, later on the same day (November 15), one of the chains offered a promotional package priced at \$12.3 for 2. This was matched by the other chain the following day.

It transpired that, however, the promotional unit price of \$6.15 (at \$12.3 for 2) was actually \$0.25 ($\$6.15 - \5.9) or 4.2% higher than the individual selling price prior to the price escalation immediately before the promotion.

Consumers lured to the promotion had not only purchased more of the item but also paid a higher cost.

In this case, the consumers would have been better off had they made the purchase before the promotion. Or, indeed, as observed in the

study, after the promotion.

Using the same example of the canned beer, it was shown that, on 19 December, both supermarket chains simultaneously adjusted the price to \$6.1 each, down from the promotional package price of \$12.3 for 2 (\$6.15 each), thus a reduction of \$0.05 after the promotion.

This similar pattern of pricing tactic was observed in some other commodities of the 288 items under study – by first raising the unit price, then offering purportedly promotional packages such as “the more you buy the more you get for free”, “buy one get one free”, “\$1 more to get one item more” etc.

The study found a total of 79 occasions, for the 288 items in the 21 weeks covered by the study period, in which consumers could be lured into buying more and paying more – for 38 occasions compared to prices before the promotion and 41 occasions after the promotion.

It is not unusual that in order to capture their market share, businesses would take reference of the prices of their competitors in marking their own.

This would inevitably lead to the same products at different shops being priced at almost the same levels.

The analysis also examined the prevalence of this practice of “price copy” – identical price marking – for 375 items simultaneously sold by the two supermarket chains over the study period.

The study cited, as an example, the case of a 12-pack canned beer 330ml.

On October 11, both supermarket chains were observed to reduce in unison their online price of this item from \$37 to \$35.8. But on October 17, both raised the price to their pre-promotional level of \$37. Very similar price movements between the two chains were observed for the item throughout the study period.

“Price copying” was found in a total of 55 items out of the 375 items in 10 product categories throughout the entire study period at the two chains.

It was most common (50%) in the bread/cake category – 5 out of 10 items. The least common (0%) was in the household products/toilet rolls category, followed by the staple food category (6.7%) – 2 out of 30.

Overall, 14.7% of the items under study were observed to “price copy” each other. There still exist, therefore, plenty of products with price

differences in the marketplace which consumers can take advantage of by price comparison to achieve savings.

Supermarkets regularly advertise large sale on Friday. Does that indicate supermarket goods are cheaper on Friday? Or vice versa?

According to the study, out of the 288 items analysed, 207 (71.9%) were, in fact, found to be most expensive on Friday (based on the average price of the same item every Friday for 21 weeks) in one major supermarket chain. The other chain, by comparison, had 158 items (54.9%).

Contrary to common belief, the study found the same 288 items had their lowest average prices mostly on Thursday – 151 items (52.4%) in one chain, and 137 items (47.6%) in the other chain.

Consumers shopping on Thursday may probably stand a better chance of price savings in these two supermarket chains.

Annual Supermarket Price Survey

The vast majority (75%) of some of the top-selling items in the major supermarket chains had their prices increased ranging from 0.8% to 77.2% last year.

Overall, the aggregate average price increase of a basket of 200 items comprising predominantly daily food and necessities was 12.6%.

This was indicated in the annual supermarket price survey of the Consumer Council on the three supermarket chains of CRVanguard, ParknShop and Wellcome, in a year of inflation and economic downturn.

The annual survey was based on the actual scan data of 200 most commonly carried items in these chains to analyse the price trend of 2008 in comparison to 2007.

Consumers were hard hit in their pocket last year which saw soaring prices in many basic food commodities.

According to the annual survey, all but one of 12 categories recorded an upward price trend ranging from 2.5% to 34.9% in aggregate average.

Staple food and canned food/prepackaged soup, the two categories with probably the most impact on the widest section of consumers, unfortunately, were the worst hit with the highest increase of 34.9% and 21.9% respectively.

But good news to consumers of alcohol. Alcoholic drinks was the only single category that reversed the trend by registering a price decrease of 8.3%.

For a more detailed analysis, the categories were broken down into a total of 39 product groups.

The annual survey showed that all but 6 of the product groups recorded price increases of an aggregate average ranging from 0.3% to 36.7%.

Edible oils topped the list with the biggest aggregate average price increase of 36.7%. A corn oil product in this product group rose by a hefty 77.2%.

This was followed closely by the product groups of canned meat (35%) and packaged rice (32.6%).

Other notable increases were recorded in mostly foodstuffs: canned fish (24.3%), instant coffee (19.5%), instant noodles (16.8%), frozen food (13.1%), prepackaged cake (12.9%), cheese (12.2%), milk powder (11.7%), toothpaste (11.6%), yoghurt/yoghurt drinks (11.1%), and biscuit (11.1%).

Among the 5 product groups that went down in price were: wine (-9.7%) and beer (-5.1%). The one group that remained unchanged in price went to: ladies sanitary protection products.

Foldable Bikes

Imagine a foldable bike that can be stored inside in the security of the home, or the trunk of the car.

But security from theft is one thing, security from bodily injuries from riding a foldable bike is quite another.

That is the chief concern and the focus of a Consumer Council test on 11 foldable bikes varying in wheel diameters from 20 inches (4 samples), 16 inches (6 samples), and 6 inches (1 sample).

The samples also varied vastly in weight from 5.8 kg to 14.3 kg, and in price from \$670 to \$9,300.

Foldable bikes are designed, with more hinges and joints than the traditional types, so as to allow folding and adjustment.

Most samples use the conventional folding mechanism, with the hinge

at the centre of the frame to fold the front and rear wheels together. 2 samples use a different folding mechanism: the frame is in triangular shape with the hinge at the top to fold the front and rear supporting tubes together.

With all those hinges and joints, could a foldable bike still remain safely secured and sustain the load during riding, particularly if the cyclist is heavy and the road rough and bumpy?

In the test, the bikes were put through a series of stringent tests to assess their safety performance, including saddle compression and axial compression tests, vibration test and braking test.

The compression tests were carried out to simulate the load during riding and to verify if the foldable bikes could withstand the load.

The vibration test sought to verify if the different connection parts of the foldable bikes could remain safely secured after vibration in simulated actual riding conditions.

The results showed that all foldable bikes performed well in both the compression and vibration tests, without any damage and all connection parts remained intact and secured after testing.

In addition, all samples were found to give satisfactory braking performance in both dry and wet conditions.

As all samples passed these performance tests, the bikes were assessed overall on their design, quality and ease of use.

On ease of use which involved a user test to check how easy a foldable bike is to use in respect of riding, handling, carrying, folding/unfolding, it was found that the sample with 6-inch wheels is much easier to handle and carry.

However, because of its very small wheels, it is not sufficiently stable when riding on rough surface especially for heavy cyclist.

For folding and unfolding, the results were generally satisfactory with no significant differences among the samples.

The samples were rated on the basis of their design and quality (40%) and ease of use (60%). The top performers with 4 points on a scale of 5 went to 5 samples ranging in price from \$4,600 to \$9,300.

The cheapest model priced at \$670 at 3.5 points was just ½ point behind these 5 top performers. The lowest score of 2 points went to the sample with 6-inch wheels.

For details, consumers can refer to the test report in this April issue of CHOICE.

Toothbrush and Mouthwash

Is it necessary to use mouthwash to maintain oral health?

The answer is not quite. But what you do need is a good toothbrush, as well as its correct and consistent application, to effectively remove dental plaque.

Additionally, clean the adjacent tooth surfaces by flossing.

Included in this April issue of CHOICE is a comprehensive report on two basic products to keep your mouth clean and healthy – the humble but indispensable toothbrush, and the ever refreshing mouthwash.

The report stressed that there is no better alternative to good oral health but to brush your teeth thoroughly every day in the morning and before bed, and clean the adjacent tooth surfaces by flossing.

So what makes a good toothbrush? Essentially, a toothbrush head should be small for easy access to all areas of the mouth, teeth and gum, and preferably with soft bristles.

And when its bristles become splayed and frayed, change to a new one. Not only are old toothbrushes ineffective, they may harbour harmful bacteria that can cause infection such as gingivitis and periodontitis.

In any case, it is recommended to change toothbrushes every three to four months.

For interdental (between the teeth) cleaning, there are available in the market a number of aids such as dental floss and interdental brush.

Dental floss may or may not be waxed and is gentle on teeth and gum. Interdental brush comes in various sizes to suit the spaces between the teeth. Both options are preferable to toothpicks.

For most people, brushing thoroughly with fluoride toothpaste twice daily and flossing will suffice to maintain oral health.

In general, there is little or no need to use mouth rinse which people often use to help freshen their breath.

Some mouthwashes may contain anti-bacterial ingredients to help

reduce gum disease and control plaque.

Mouthwash products that contain chlorhexidine are particularly effective in treating gum infections and maintenance of oral hygiene of people after oral surgery.

Products with chlorhexidine must be used in moderation and not over a prolonged period of time as they can cause staining though this can be removed by a dentist or a dental hygienist.

Users are advised to consult their dentist before use and follow the manufacturers' instructions at all times.

Parents are reminded to keep mouthwash products away from children to prevent accidental ingestion. The products may contain alcohol, are usually in attractive colours, and may not always have child resistant caps.

Further, do not rinse, eat or smoke for 30 minutes after using mouthwash to keep its effects in full. More advice to maintain good oral health:

- Thoroughly clean the teeth.
- Establish good dietary habits. Reduce the intake of sugars, and avoid taking acidic food and beverages.
- Have regular dental check-up.
- Do not smoke.

Internet Security Software

Internet hacking is ever on the rise and becoming more devious.

Sensible choice and application of internet security software can go a long way for your protection.

The Consumer Council in a joint test with the ICRT (International Consumer Research and Testing) has evaluated a total of 3 computer operating system, 3 anti-virus software (freeware that can be downloaded from the homepage of software developers) and 15 internet security suites.

The test covered: protection performance (60%), ease of use (25%), management and resources (10%), installation and uninstallation (5%). Used in the protection performance test were various viruses or malware such as trojan horse, worms and macro.

7 of the 15 internet security suites included in the test claimed to include all 7 main functions: anti-malware, firewall, anti-spyware, anti-phishing, anti-dialer, parental control and anti-spam. All these are major potential problems with internet hacking.

The suites were rated on a scale of 5. None scored the full 5-point rating in overall performance, though one was awarded 5 points for its performance test on firewall.

The top 3 performers were awarded 4 points, while 4 others received only 2.5 points.

Consumers should take note that usage of computer resources (e.g. memory and hard disk space) differs from software to software.

As some software may occupy a large proportion of system resources during operation, they should be aware of the system requirement of different software before purchase.

For instance, the space used by the software on the hard disk varies vastly from 39 MB to 380 MB; and on memory from 11 MB to 93 MB.

Other tips in purchase of internet security suites:

- In general, they range in price from \$312 (with 1 user) to \$802 (with 3 users)
- Many suites provide multiple-users version of either 2, 3, 5 or 10 users.
- Some anti-virus software are freeware which can be used free of charge.

CHOICE magazine is now also available online (at <http://choice.yp.com.hk>) and via fixed-line and mobile services of PCCW.

Chairing the press conference today (April 15) on the publication of CHOICE issue number 390 is Mr. Ambrose HO, Chairman of Publicity and Community Relations Committee of the Consumer Council.

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