



GAZDASÁGI  
VERSENYHIVATAL

## **Air freshener ads misleading consumers**

**The GVH established in its decision that a behaviour of Reckitt Benckiser was suitable for deceiving consumers. Although Reckitt Benckiser was not able to influence the retail prices, its Airwick Odor Stop air fresheners got to retailers with the labelling: 20% for free. Reckitt Benckiser was fined HUF 1 million (EUR 4000).**

Reckitt Benckiser Ltd. brought its Airwick Odor Stop products on the market in the August of 2006. The undertaking started a campaign in order to popularize the products. Therefore on the cap of the new air fresheners a labelling “20% for free” was to be read. Reckitt Benckiser sold its promoted products only to distributors and retailers, therefore it had only an indirect contact to consumers. Its market position did not allow the firm to promise favourable retail prices resulting in savings.

There are some ads that address consumers with promises, but only a closer circle of undertakings rather than consumers gain advantages of them,. According to the GVH, such ads are misleading. Consumers did not even know, whether the purpose of the campaign was to popularize the new product put on the market, or to advertise a clearance sale. This is a very important point, because there is a great demand for high quality and temporarily cheap products. Consumers rather purchase these products than other similar and substitute ones. The GVH established, that retailers could not offer sales action prices either. On the one hand, the questioned product was a completely new one, thus no original (i.e. earlier) price existed. On the other hand, they would not have advertised their own initial price. The GVH fined Reckitt Benckiser 1 million HUF because of the infringement.

By calculating the amount of the penalty, the GVH regarded as mitigating circumstances, that the campaign had a favourable impact on prices and the undertaking gave up the infringement voluntarily. It was considered as an aggravating circumstance, that the GVH has already initiated several proceedings against Reckitt Benckiser because of the deception of consumers.