

Sephora deactivates thousands of Asian customers' accounts due to racial stereotype: suit

Four women of Chinese descent claim that the cosmetics giant cut off Asian customers' accounts during a 20% sale due to a racist belief that they would have resold the discounted beauty products for a profit.

BY [STEPHEN REX BROWN](#)

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Sephora defended its efforts to combat reselling, which it calls 'a pervasive issue.'

It's a case of racial e-profiling.

Cosmetics giant Sephora has deactivated the online accounts of Asian customers due to its racist belief they take advantage of discount sales to buy beauty products in bulk and resale them for a profit, a class-action suit charges.

"This is an egregious example of a retailer singling out individuals based on racial stereotypes," said attorney Doug Wigdor.

The suit, brought by four women of Chinese descent, stems from Sephora's decision to shut down numerous accounts during a 20% sale earlier this month due to reselling, which it called "a pervasive issue." But that was only part of the story, the Manhattan Federal Court suit charge



A group of Asian customers claims that the cosmetics company's decision was racist.

The deactivated accounts were almost exclusively associated with email addresses or names that appeared to signify Asian ethnicity, or tied to Web domains originating from Asia, documents charge. Many users still have not been able to reactivate their accounts despite pleas they don't hustle beauty products on the black market, documents claim.

Wigdor would not say how many people were affected by the decision, but said his firm believes "it is well into the thousands as Sephora is one of the largest cosmetic retailers in the world."



Attorney Doug Wigdor (not pictured) says the incident is an example of the 'shop and frisk' mentality entering e-commerce.

The suit comes after Sephora's Facebook page was flooded with complaints about the mass-deactivation — mostly from women with Asian surnames.

Two of the plaintiffs named in the suit are New Yorkers: Xiao Xiao of Manhattan and Tiantian Zou of Queens. Wigdor said it's an example of the "shop and frisk" mentality infiltrating e-commerce.

Wigdor seeks damages to be determined at trial, but estimated he would seek a sum well into the millions.

Sephora did not respond to a request for comment.

