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Sephora accused of stopping Asian women buying its products by blocking their online accounts

- Four customers are suing Sephora for allegedly blocking and deactivating the accounts of 'Asian-sounding' customers during a 20per cent off sale
- The plaintiffs' lawyer, Wigdor LLP, believes Sephora will have to pay damages 'well into the millions'

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Four American women of Chinese decent are suing Sephora for allegedly blocking and deactivating the accounts of 'Asian-sounding' customers during a 20per cent off sale.

The women, Xiao Xiao, Jiali Chen, Man Xu, and Tiantian Zou, who live in New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, have filed a class action complaint in a New York federal court against the beauty retailer.

'Sephora has blocked and/or deactivated customers of perceived Chinese/Asian descent based on the ill-founded and discriminatory belief that all Chinese/Asian customers abuse discount sales to engage in bulk purchasing for re-sale,' the claim states.



The plaintiffs' lawyer, Wigdor LLP, believes Sephora will have to pay damages 'well into the millions,' according to [Stylite](#).

Earlier this month, the retailer's Facebook page was flooded with more than 100 complaints from users demanding that Sephora unlock their accounts so that they could shop the store's VIP Rouge promotion, which offered a 20per cent discount to customers who spend more than \$350 a year.

Sephora was quick to issue an apology via its [website](#), blaming a high level of bulk purchases from 'automated accounts'.

The statement read: 'What caused the disruption yesterday was a high level of bulk buys and automated accounts for reselling purposes from North America and multiple countries outside the US.'

The company made no reference to the accusations of ethnic profiling but explained that 'we have identified certain entities who take advantage of promotional opportunities to purchase products in large volume on our website and re-sell them through other channels.

'After careful consideration, we have deactivated these accounts in order to optimize product availability for the majority of our clients, as well as ensure that consumers are not subject to increased prices or products that are not being handled or stored properly.'

In complaints posted on Facebook and Reddit, users noted that those registered under Asia-based email addresses, such as qq.com and 126.com, were among those blocked – though customers with 'Asian-sounding' names registered under a U.S. or Canadian address were also affected.

Reddit user huaer, who first posted about the controversy on the site's [MakeupAddiction](#) forum Friday, expressed disappointment with the store's response.

'I do not agree with the way Sephora has handled the situation, and believe that they have disappointed many of us in these past few days,' she wrote.

Angry customers continued to post grievances on the company's Facebook page.

Chenyi Ebe Zhu, a California resident who hails from Zhuhai, in China's Guangdong province, wrote: 'Thank you Sephora. Thank you for blocking my account, which makes me decide NOT to shop at Sephora any more. Why should I still give my money to such a racist company?'

Shuo Wang, of Waterloo, Ontario, wrote on Facebook: 'My online account is locked without any reason! I am really disappointed at it!'

Nanjing University student Zoey Shen added: 'I want to unlock my account because I am not a reseller. I just want to buy something for myself.'

“Sephora [has a] discriminatory belief that all Chinese/Asian customers abuse discount sales to engage in bulk purchasing for re-sale.”

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