

VOGUE

Sephora Faces Racial Discrimination Lawsuit

21 NOVEMBER 2014 Scarlett Kilcooley-O'Halloran



SEPHORA is being accused of racial discrimination for allegedly blocking users of Asian and Chinese origin, following an online marketing event on November 6 that saw its website crash.

The event, which offered a 20 per cent discount on its products, attracted such a high volume of traffic that the website buckled under the pressure. When it was back in working order, later that day, "email addresses with names that appeared to signify Chinese/Asian race/ethnicity/national origin/descent" were blocked, claims a lawsuit that was filed in the Southern District of New York US District Court on Tuesday, reports Fashionista.com.

The plaintiffs, Xiao Xiao, Man Xu, Jiali Chen and Tiantian Zou, allege that the company's reason for deactivating their accounts was based on "the ill-founded and discriminatory belief that all Chinese/Asian customers abuse discount sales to engage in bulk purchase for re-sale".

Sephora, which is owned by LVMH, repudiated the accusations, issuing the following statement: "This lawsuit significantly distorts the facts in this matter. We look forward to defending our actions in court," it said. "Among other points, we intend to make very clear

that clients from a number of countries around the world have been impacted by a temporary block we needed to place on accounts in order to restore the functionality of our site during a surge of activity by resellers during a promotional event two weeks ago."