# Meghan Markle's As Ever brand faces controversy over retail partner's discrimination issues



The Duchess of Sussex, Meghan Markle, has recently launched her lifestyle brand, As Ever, which includes a selection of jams, honey, and edible flowers, all of which sold out within half an hour of their release in the United States. However, this success has been overshadowed by controversy regarding her choice of an online retail partner, Snow Commerce, which has faced serious allegations of discrimination against blind consumers.

Snow Commerce, based in Ohio and acquired by Printful in 2023, operates various online shopping platforms for well-known global brands, including Paramount and the SpongeBob Shop. The company has come under fire for claims that its websites are "inaccessible to visually impaired individuals." Josue Paguada, who filed a federal lawsuit in 2020, argued that he was 'effectively barred' from purchasing items due to the site's failure to comply with industry standards necessary for screen-reading software, a crucial tool for blind and visually-impaired internet users. His lawyer stated that without proper design, these individuals cannot access the websites.

Paguada later withdrew his lawsuit but Snow Commerce faced further legal challenges. Another case was brought by Edery Herrera, who claimed he suffered increased isolation and stigma from being denied access to merchandise through the Paramount website and app. Although both plaintiffs have been labelled as 'serial plaintiffs' by critics, a law firm advising businesses on disability compliance urged that companies follow federal, state, and local disability laws to ensure accessibility.

While denying any breach of discrimination laws, Snow Commerce reached a settlement in response to the lawsuits, agreeing to modify its websites within the next 24 months to improve accessibility for blind users. The company has also faced significant customer dissatisfaction, as evidenced by its one-star rating from the Better Business Bureau (BBB) and a barrage of negative reviews online. Many customers have recounted experiences of poor communication, delays, and lack of support after making purchases.

Notably, in a public statement announcing the launch of As Ever, Meghan Markle expressed her excitement over the brand that she described as a 'love language' rather than just a commercial venture. On social media, she invited consumers to shop the collection, sharing her personal investment in the products and expressing hopes that they would resonate with others.

The choice of the brand name As Ever has also met its share of complications, as it was previously associated with a clothing company in New York. Markle’s initial aim was to market her products under the name American Riviera Orchard, referencing her residence in Santa Barbara, California, but this was prevented due to trademark regulations.

In addition to these issues, Snow Commerce has faced financial problems, including lawsuits in Ohio over unpaid commercial activity tax totalling nearly $33,000, as well as a recent tax lien filed in March for $1,618.

As Ever customers, who pay prices ranging from $12 for herbal tea to $28 for honey, are advised on the website that Snow Commerce is "solely responsible for all aspects of your purchase." Despite Meghan Markle's commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion through her new brand, the partnership with Snow Commerce has raised questions regarding the effectiveness of these ideals in practice. Representatives for the Duchess and Netflix, which collaborates with Markle on As Ever, have been approached for comments regarding the situation.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.townandcountrymag.com/society/tradition/a64342723/meghan-markles-brand-as-ever-launches/> - This article supports Meghan Markle's launch of her lifestyle brand, As Ever, and her description of the brand as a 'love language' rather than just a commercial venture. It also highlights the initial products under the brand.
* <https://people.com/meghan-markle-celebrates-as-ever-launch-makeup-free-video-line-sells-out-hour-11707541> - This source corroborates the successful launch of As Ever, noting that the entire product line sold out in under an hour. It also mentions Meghan Markle's role in developing the brand.
* <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/celebrity/latest/a64365011/meghan-markle-as-ever-collection-sold-out/> - This article confirms the rapid sell-out of Meghan Markle's As Ever collection and discusses the brand's seasonal approach to product releases.
* <https://www.bbb.org/us/oh/cleveland/profile/ecommerce/snow-commerce-llc-0113-3459560> - This Better Business Bureau page might include customer reviews and ratings for Snow Commerce, which is relevant to the information about customer dissatisfaction.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - As the primary source of information on the controversy surrounding Snow Commerce, it addresses allegations of discrimination and financial issues faced by the company.