# Shein faces fresh EU complaint over manipulative dark pattern tactics



The fast-fashion retailer Shein is facing renewed scrutiny with the recent complaint lodged against it by the pan-European consumer group BEUC. The complaint, submitted to the European Commission, accuses Shein of employing manipulative marketing tactics, commonly referred to as "dark patterns." These tactics reportedly aim to pressurize consumers into making unintended or excessive purchases through features such as persistent pop-ups discouraging users from exiting the site, countdown timers that artificially create urgency, and endless scrolling designed to prolong user engagement. An alarming figure highlighted in the complaint indicates that one device received as many as 12 push notifications in a single day, demonstrating the extent to which Shein seeks to drive consumer interaction.

Moreover, Shein’s gamification elements, such as the "Puppy Keep" game which rewards users for daily logins and purchases, have drawn particular criticism. BEUC argues these strategies are not only detrimental to consumer trust but also contribute to a culture of mass consumption that underpins the fast-fashion business model. In a broader context, this complaint is part of a larger global movement towards regulating digital spaces, with regulators in various countries, including India, increasingly focussed on curbing manipulative online practices.

In India, the issue of dark patterns has gained prominence, prompting the Ministry of Consumer Affairs to engage with major e-commerce platforms like Amazon and Flipkart. The government's proactive approach aims to establish guidelines aimed at preventing deceptive interface designs that could mislead consumers across various sectors. This Indian response aligns with European regulators' concerns regarding Shein's practices, indicating a growing global consensus on the need for transparency and fair consumer treatment in digital commerce.

Shein's situation is further complicated by its ongoing legal challenges in Europe. The European Commission has already launched an investigation into various business practices reported to violate consumer protection laws. This inquiry follows Shein's admission of cooperating with EU authorities, although the company claims its attempts to engage with BEUC have been unsuccessful. SPECIFIES include allegations of false discounts, misleading information regarding product durability, and inadequate contact details for consumer complaints. Should Shein fail to comply with the regulatory requirements set forth, it could face significant penalties, including sanctions proportional to its business volume.

Meanwhile, as part of its strategic response to increasing regulation, Shein has enlisted the services of Günther Oettinger, a former European Commissioner who now acts as a lobbyist for the company. His role appears aimed at shaping EU regulations that could adversely affect Shein's operational model, especially as the company prepares for its Initial Public Offering (IPO) on the London Stock Exchange. By lobbying against proposed regulations, including textile labeling and measures addressing forced labor, Shein aims to safeguard its market position amidst growing environmental and ethical scrutiny.

As Shein re-establishes its foothold in markets like India, where it recently relaunched through a partnership with Reliance Retail, the implications of these regulatory challenges and consumer complaints could profoundly impact its business model. The dichotomy of Shein’s digital strategies against the backdrop of rising international consumer protection initiatives underscores a critical juncture for fast-fashion retailing in a digitised economy.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://legaldesire.com/shein-accused-of-dark-patterns-in-eu/), [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/shein-hit-with-complaint-eu-consumer-group-over-dark-patterns-2025-06-05/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://legaldesire.com/shein-accused-of-dark-patterns-in-eu/), [[4]](https://www.huffingtonpost.es/economia/bruselas-acusa-shein-fraude-a-sus-consumidores-anunciar-falsos-descuentos-presionarles-comprar.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.cadenaser.com/nacional/2025/06/05/asociaciones-de-consumidores-de-toda-europa-denuncian-a-shein-por-practicas-que-incitan-a-la-compra-compulsiva-cadena-ser/), [[5]](https://www.reuters.com/business/retail-consumer/temu-shein-ordered-provide-info-eu-tech-rules-compliance-by-july-12-2024-06-28/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/economy/article/2024/08/28/shein-enlists-the-lobbying-services-of-a-former-european-commissioner-to-protect-its-business-model-in-the-eu_6722981_19.html), [[7]](https://www.ft.com/content/e50624cc-3820-4d6c-aaf0-0b5a0773ffca)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://legaldesire.com/shein-accused-of-dark-patterns-in-eu/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/shein-hit-with-complaint-eu-consumer-group-over-dark-patterns-2025-06-05/> - The pan-European consumer organization BEUC has filed a complaint with the European Commission against fast-fashion retailer Shein, accusing it of employing "dark patterns"—manipulative design tactics on its app and website intended to boost purchases. These tactics include pop-ups discouraging users from leaving, countdown timers to create urgency, infinite scrolling, and frequent push notifications, with one instance showing 12 alerts in a single day. BEUC’s report argues such strategies drive mass consumption, a core requirement for fast fashion's business model. A notable feature criticized is Shein's gamification strategy, like the "Puppy Keep" game, which incentivizes daily engagement for rewards. The organization urged a broader investigation into similar practices among other clothing retailers and noted 25 member organizations from 21 countries supported the complaint. Although Shein stated it is cooperating with EU consumer authorities, it claimed attempts to meet with BEUC were rebuffed. This action follows a prior EU warning to Shein over violations of consumer law and comes amid scrutiny of Shein's adherence to online content regulations. Shein and rival Temu have gained popularity in Europe, leveraging similar engagement-driven app experiences. ([reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/shein-hit-with-complaint-eu-consumer-group-over-dark-patterns-2025-06-05/?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.cadenaser.com/nacional/2025/06/05/asociaciones-de-consumidores-de-toda-europa-denuncian-a-shein-por-practicas-que-incitan-a-la-compra-compulsiva-cadena-ser/> - Twenty-four European consumer associations, including Spain's Asufin and Cecu, have denounced Chinese company Shein for applying commercial practices that promote compulsive consumption. These organizations accuse Shein of using deceptive techniques such as false discounts, pressure sales, infinite scrolling, persistent pop-ups, and timers that induce urgency, which violate European Union consumer protection legislation. The pan-European organization BEUC considers these practices potentially aggressive and designed to foster mass consumption inherent to the fast fashion business model. The European Commission already has an open investigation against Shein and urged the company in May to comply with community regulations, although not specifically addressing these now-denounced tactics. In response, Shein has stated it is cooperating with European authorities to demonstrate its commitment to legal compliance. Associations are calling on the EU to adopt measures to curb these harmful behaviors towards consumers. ([cadenaser.com](https://cadenaser.com/nacional/2025/06/05/asociaciones-de-consumidores-de-toda-europa-denuncian-a-shein-por-practicas-que-incitan-a-la-compra-compulsiva-cadena-ser/?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.huffingtonpost.es/economia/bruselas-acusa-shein-fraude-a-sus-consumidores-anunciar-falsos-descuentos-presionarles-comprar.html> - The European Commission has formally accused Chinese online store Shein of consumer fraud after detecting multiple deceptive commercial practices. Among the irregularities noted are the offering of false discounts, the use of pressure techniques such as fictitious deadlines for purchases, and providing inaccurate information about return and refund rights. Brussels also denounces the misleading labeling of products, false claims about the durability of its items, and the omission of necessary contact details for consumers to file complaints. The investigation, initiated in February in collaboration with authorities from France, Ireland, and the Netherlands, has led the EU to give Shein a one-month deadline to commit to correcting these issues. If it does not comply, member countries may impose economic sanctions proportional to its business volume. At the same time, the consumer protection network (CPC) has requested additional information to verify the legality of other commercial practices of the platform. ([huffingtonpost.es](https://www.huffingtonpost.es/economia/bruselas-acusa-shein-fraude-consumidores-anunciar-falsos-descuentos-presionarles-comprar.html?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.reuters.com/business/retail-consumer/temu-shein-ordered-provide-info-eu-tech-rules-compliance-by-july-12-2024-06-28/> - EU regulators have ordered Chinese e-commerce retailers Temu and Shein to detail their compliance with the EU Digital Services Act (DSA) by July 12, 2024. The companies must explain how they manage illegal and harmful content, protect minors, ensure transparency in recommendation systems, trace traders, and prevent user manipulation through deceptive interfaces, known as dark patterns. This directive comes after complaints from consumer bodies. Both companies are classified as Very Large Online Platforms and are thus subject to stringent DSA requirements. Temu has stated its cooperation and commitment to legal compliance, while Shein has yet to comment. Non-compliance could result in substantial fines, up to 6% of their global turnover. ([reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com/business/retail-consumer/temu-shein-ordered-provide-info-eu-tech-rules-compliance-by-july-12-2024-06-28/?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.lemonde.fr/en/economy/article/2024/08/28/shein-enlists-the-lobbying-services-of-a-former-european-commissioner-to-protect-its-business-model-in-the-eu_6722981_19.html> - In 2016, Günther Oettinger, a former European Commissioner, made critical remarks about Chinese businessmen. Eight years later, he has become a lobbyist for Shein, a Chinese online fashion giant. Shein is seeking to bolster its image and influence EU regulations that might negatively affect its business model. Valued at nearly €60 billion, Shein is preparing for its IPO on the London Stock Exchange amidst calls for greater transparency and better sourcing practices. Shein faces scrutiny over environmental concerns, labor conditions, and the presence of toxic substances in its products. The company could be impacted by the EU's proposed removal of customs duty exemptions for parcels under €150. Oettinger, leveraging his experience and connections, aims to influence upcoming European regulations. Shein is actively lobbying against around 20 EU policies, including textile labeling and a ban on unsold product destruction. Additionally, new EU regulations targeting forced labor could also impact Shein as allegations have been made against the company's labor practices. ([lemonde.fr](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/economy/article/2024/08/28/shein-enlists-the-lobbying-services-of-a-former-european-commissioner-to-protect-its-business-model-in-the-eu_6722981_19.html?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.ft.com/content/e50624cc-3820-4d6c-aaf0-0b5a0773ffca> - Chinese fast-fashion retailer Shein has re-entered the Indian market, almost five years after being banned due to border tensions between India and China. Shein’s return occurred through a partnership with Reliance Retail, which initially nested Shein’s offerings inside the Ajio app before quietly launching it as a standalone app. The app and products will be hosted and manufactured in India, circumventing previous concerns about Chinese access to Indian consumer data. Reliance’s strategy may include leveraging the Shein brand for domestic sales and international exports. ([ft.com](https://www.ft.com/content/e50624cc-3820-4d6c-aaf0-0b5a0773ffca?utm_source=openai))