

Balenciaga responds to accusations of racial discrimination

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Balenciaga is facing criticism for alleged discrimination. Image credit: Balenciaga

By STAFF REPORTS

Consumers are threatening to boycott French fashion label Balenciaga after an incident of reported racism at a Paris department store went viral.

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According to Jing Daily, a social media post from a bystander says that security guards manhandled a Chinese shopper who was attacked while waiting in line to buy Balenciaga's Triple S sneakers. The story became a trending topic on Weibo, with millions of consumers viewing posts about boycotting the brand.

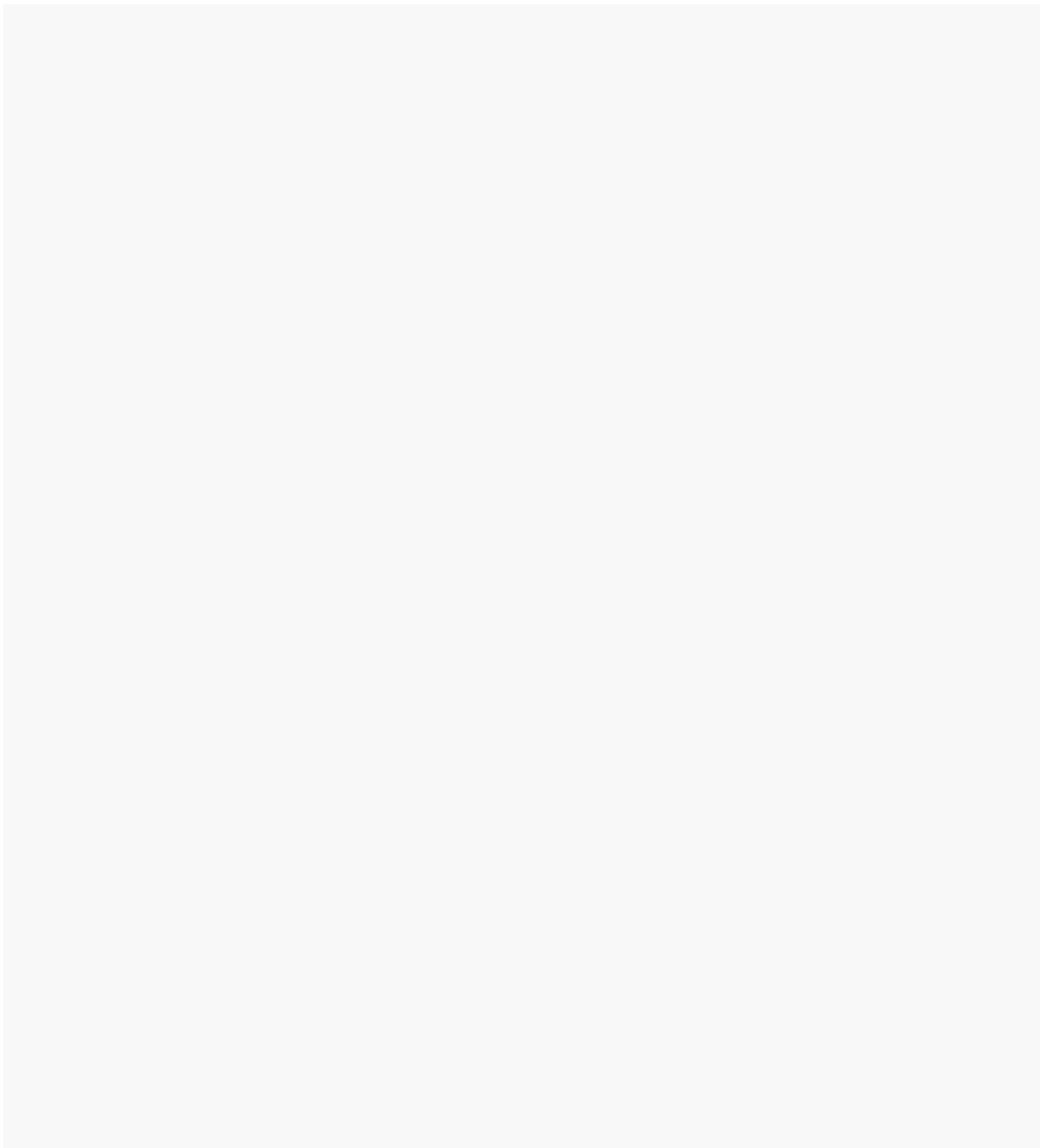
Chinese controversy

The witness' post says that a Chinese woman was waiting in line at Balenciaga when five Albanian-French men attempted to cut in front of her.

After she called the men out, they allegedly threatened to hit her. The woman's son stepped in, and the men beat him up.

When security guards stepped in, the witness says they only manhandled the Chinese man, allowing the Albanian men to continue their shopping. The poster also claims that security told Chinese consumers waiting in line to not come back to buy Balenciaga's shoes.

Consumers took to social media, posting on Chinese platforms as well as networks including Instagram and Twitter. Some consumers have shown support for the brand, saying that it was Printemps' security that was responsible for the incident.



Fall 18 Capsule Photography by @robbieaugspurger, styling by @lottavolkova Collection available now online and in stores

A post shared by Balenciaga (@balenciaga) on Apr 25, 2018 at 2:32am PDT

Printemps' own social channels have similarly been flooded with negative comments, with consumers asking them to apologize.

Balenciaga issued a statement about the event, saying, "The house of Balenciaga regrets the incident that took place yesterday at a department store in Paris while customers were waiting to enter its corner shop. The security staff acted immediately to restore the calm. Balenciaga sincerely apologizes to all the customers who were present and reaffirms its strong commitment to respect equally all its customers."

Chinese consumers are important to Balenciaga's business. Its parent company Kering, which reported 27 percent revenue growth this past quarter ([see story](#)), attributed its sales performance partly to a rebound in luxury spending by Chinese shoppers.

In just the past few years, China has evolved from being the "factory of the world" to the consumer of the world, according to an executive from Chinese ecommerce giant Alibaba.

Luxury brands should also take note of China's success, given that by 2025, China is expected to represent 45 percent of all global luxury sales ([see story](#)).

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