



COMPETITION & CONSUMER
COMMISSION | SINGAPORE

MEDIA RELEASE

18 May 2026

Three Online Retailers Caught Using False Urgency Tactics and Misleading Claims to Pressure Shoppers

1. The Competition and Consumer Commission of Singapore (“**CCS**”)—Singapore's regulator for competition and consumer protection—has found three online retailers namely, Seager Inc. (which operates Boarding Gate), Origin Sleep, and Light In The Box, using misleading website features commonly known as “dark patterns” to influence consumers’ purchasing decisions. The three retailers were found displaying fake visitor counts, fabricated countdown timers, and false discount claims to create artificial urgency and demand around their products.

Fake Numbers and Fabricated Countdown Timers

2. Investigations revealed misleading website features used to pressure consumers into making quick purchase decisions. At Boarding Gate's website, the message “XX people are looking at this product right now,” gave shoppers the illusion of real-time visitor activity and high demand. However, when CCS examined the website's source code, it discovered that these numbers were randomly generated. The site also claimed “XX people added this item to cart” without any evidence to support these assertions.

3. Origin Sleep’s website featured similar misleading tactics. The mattress retailer displayed misleading cart activity claiming “Other people want this. XX people have this in their carts now” without any real-time data backing these statements. Their checkout pages even featured countdown timers warning “Hurry! Your order is reserved for xx:xx minutes,” implying purchases had to be completed before time expired. In reality, these messages and timers had no impact on product availability or shoppers' ability to buy.

Continuing Sales Disguised as Time-Limited

4. Origin Sleep also ran what appeared to be a time-limited sales offering “Up to 40% off,” but investigators found these supposed flash sales continued for nearly two years under rotating names. What started as a “Flash Sale” in January that was supposed to last for only a week seamlessly became a “Valentine's Day Sale” in

February, then a "CNY Sale," followed by a "3.3 Mega Sale," and so on, revealing the time-limited nature was entirely fictional.

False Scarcity

5. CCS was alerted to Light In The Box's conduct by a European regulator, demonstrating how these misleading practices can span multiple countries. The retailer displayed "Almost sold out" warnings on products to suggest scarcity, but operated on a made-to-order procurement model and maintained minimal or no standing inventory. In reality, these scarcity labels were applied randomly for promotional effect. The company also showed discounted prices against higher "original" prices that were never actually offered, creating false impressions of savings.

No Excuse for Misleading Consumers

6. The investigation revealed that one retailer claimed that its website design was based on a template purchased from an overseas vendor. CCS stressed that businesses cannot disclaim responsibility for their obligations to consumers regardless of whether they purchased third-party templates or designed the websites themselves.

7. "Dark Patterns are insidious as they are difficult to detect and erode consumer trust in the digital marketplace. CCS will continue taking firm action to protect consumer trust and honest businesses from those who choose to compete unfairly," said CCS Chief Executive Mr Alvin Koh.

8. All three companies have provided formal undertakings to CCS, ceased their misleading practices, and committed to avoiding unfair trade practices in the future. Light In The Box has also removed misleading claims from its Singapore-facing and European-facing website and mobile application.

9. This enforcement action signals Singapore's commitment to protecting consumers from misleading practices that create false impressions of popularity, scarcity, and urgency. The cases highlight how these misleading practices can spread across borders through off-the-shelf templates and multi-market platforms. Consumers who encounter unfair trade practices can report them to the Consumers Association of Singapore at 6277 5100 or through their online complaints portal at <https://complaints.case.org.sg/>.

10. Please refer to **Annexes A, B and C** for screenshots of the dark patterns found on the websites of Boarding Gate, Origin Sleep and Light In The Box respectively.

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About the Competition and Consumer Commission of Singapore

The Competition and Consumer Commission of Singapore (“**CCS**”) is a statutory board of the Ministry of Trade and Industry. Our mission is to make markets work well to create opportunities and choices for businesses and consumers in Singapore.

CCS administers and enforces the Competition Act 2004 and the Consumer Protection (Fair Trading) Act 2003, to guard against anti-competitive activities and unfair trade practices. Additionally, CCS ensures that businesses observe fair trade measurement practices by administering the Weights and Measures Act 1975 and ensures the supply of safe consumer goods by enforcing and implementing the Consumer Protection (Trade Descriptions and Safety Requirements) Act 1975 and its associated Regulations.

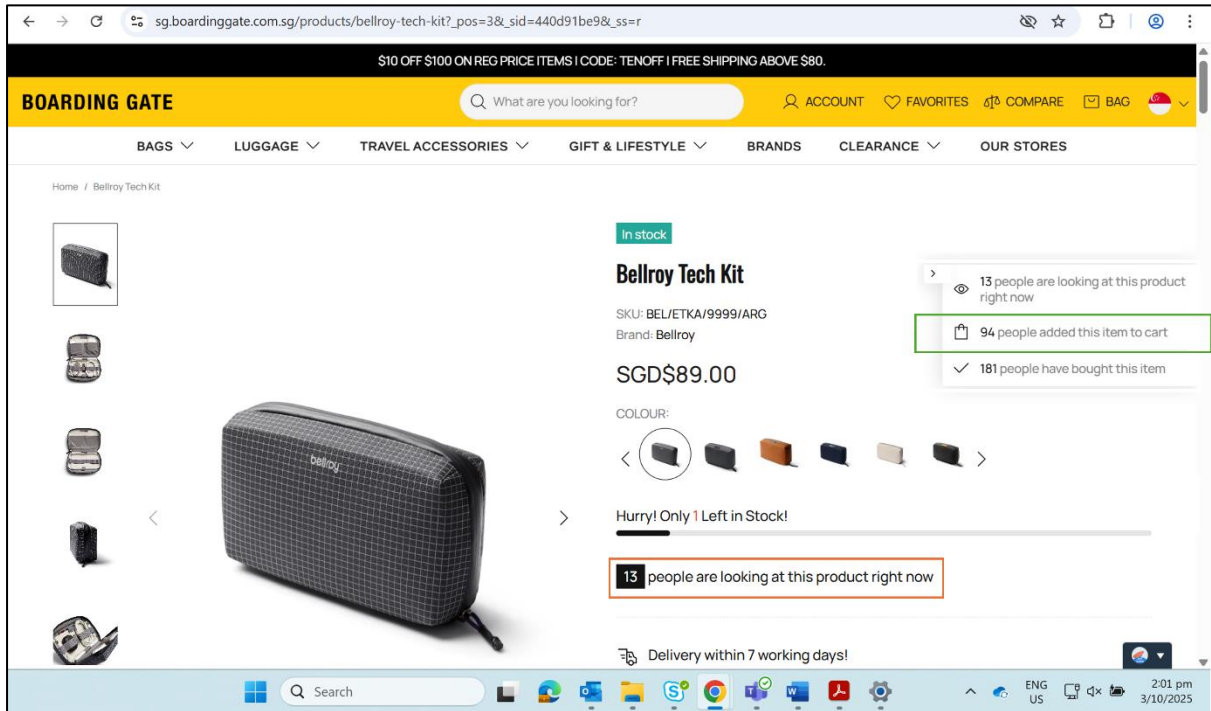
For more information, please visit www.ccs.gov.sg.

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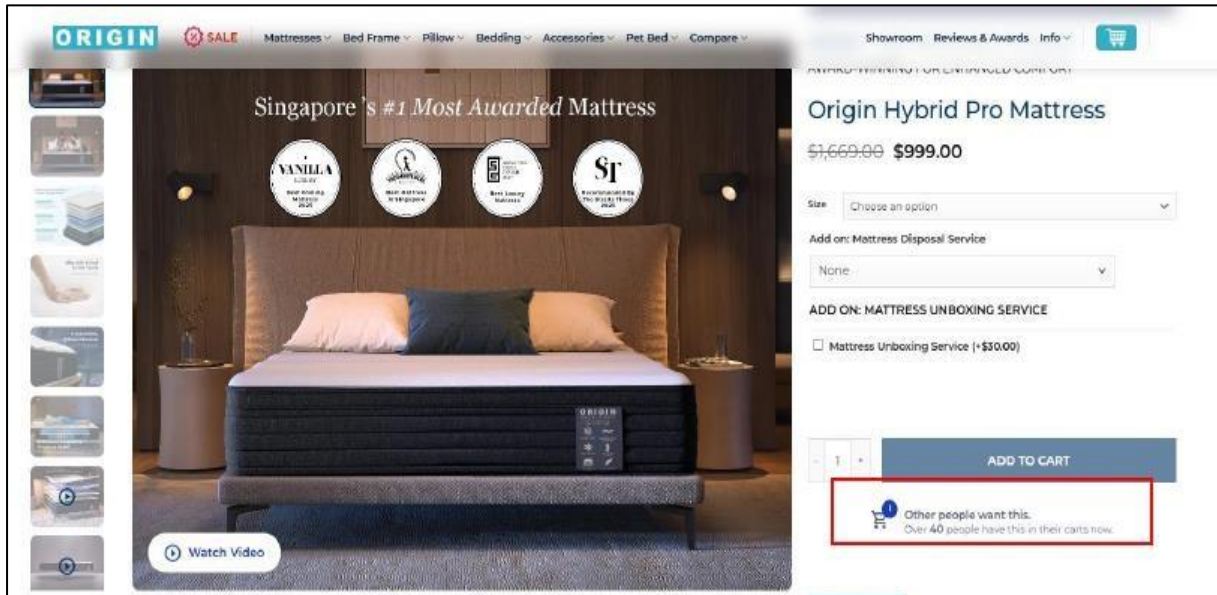
Annex A: Dark patterns on Boarding Gate's website



Screenshot of the website taken on 3 October 2025

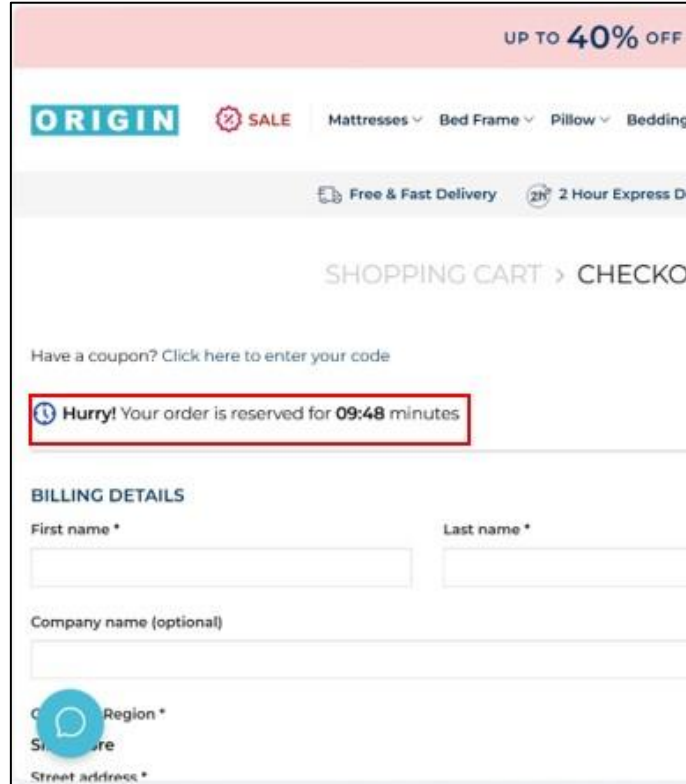
Annex B: Dark Patterns on Origin Sleep's website

a. Misleading cart activity claim:



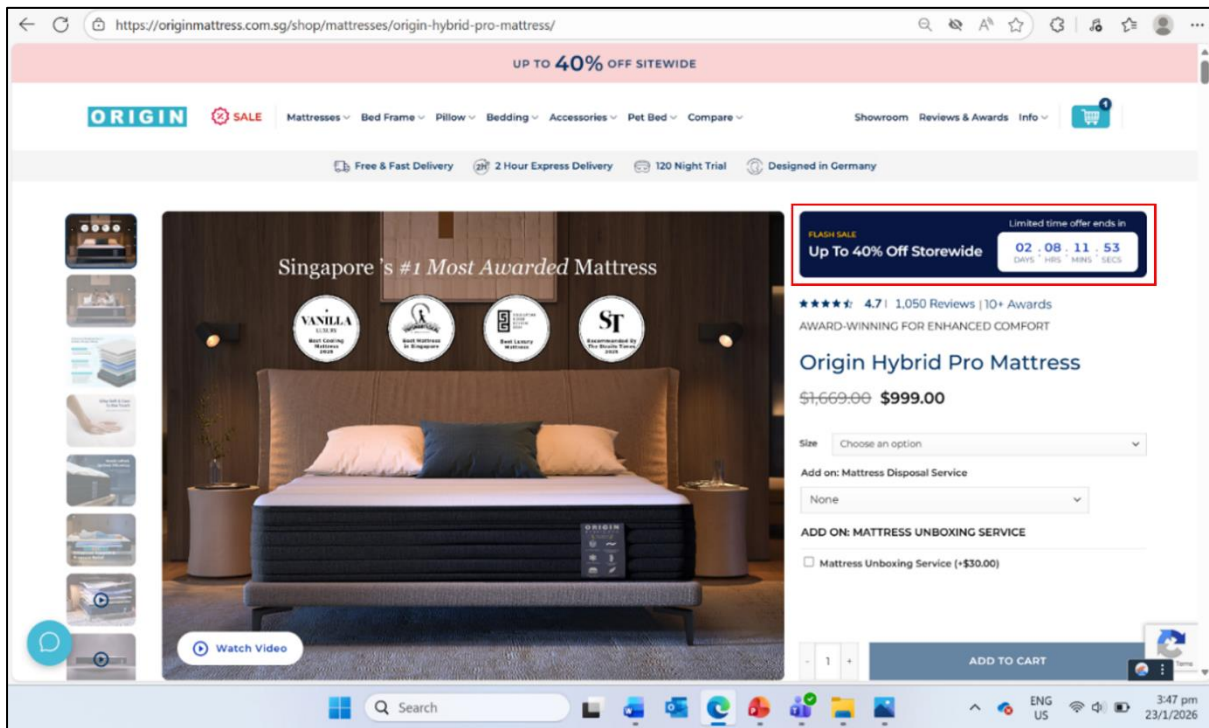
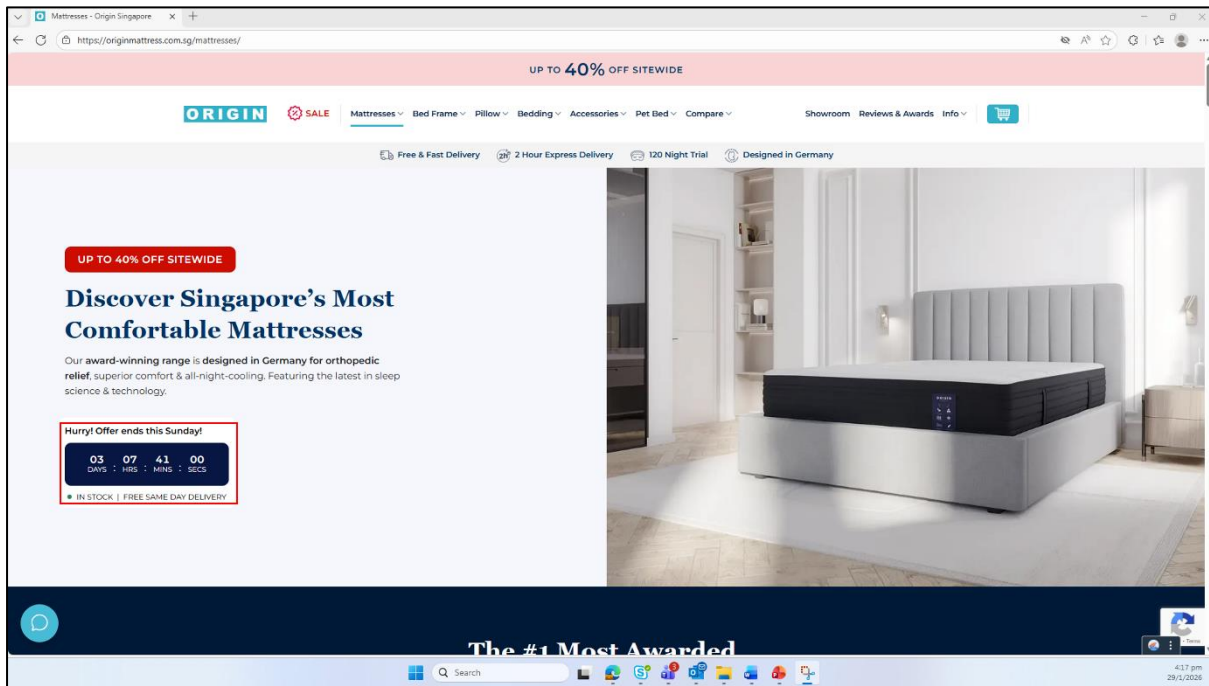
Screenshot taken on 29 January 2026

b. Fake countdown timer:



Screenshot taken on 3 December 2025

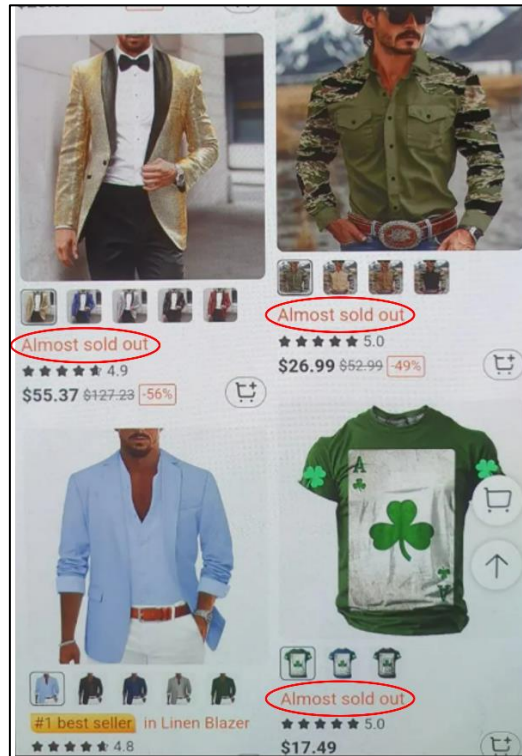
c. Time-limited Sales



Screenshots taken on 29 January 2026

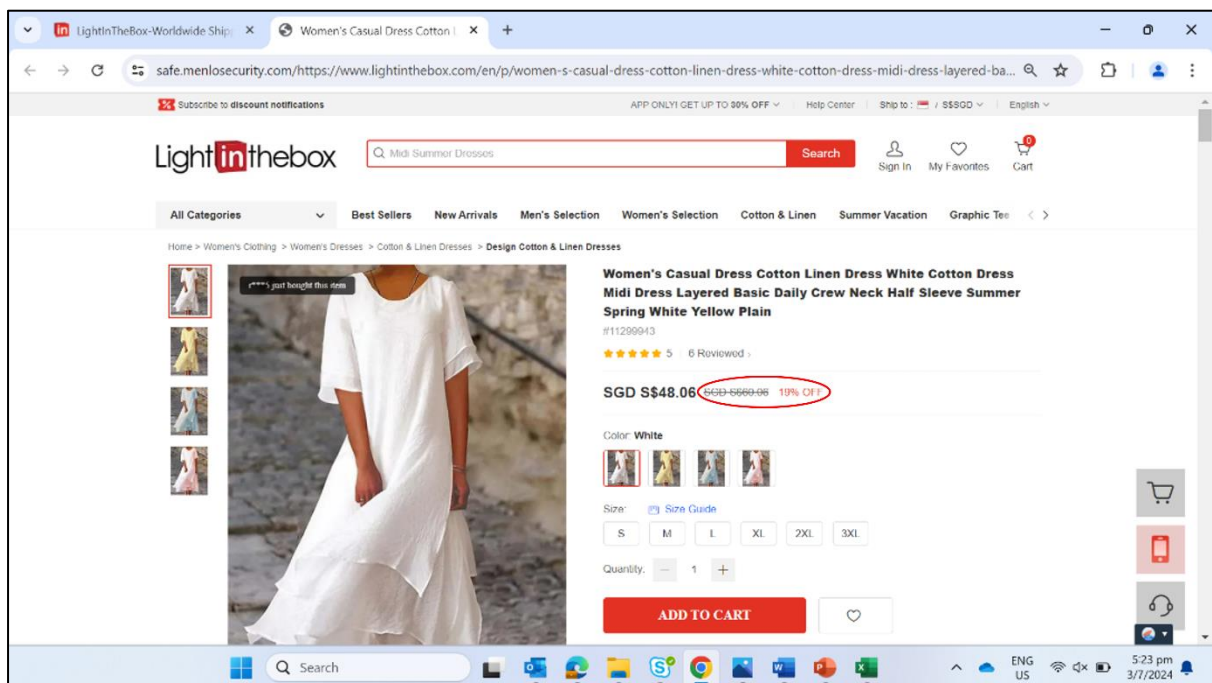
Annex C: Dark Patterns on LITB's platforms

a. "Almost sold out" warnings:



Screenshot of mobile application taken on 15 February 2025

b. False Discounts:



Screenshot of the website taken on 3 July 2024