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CASE

MEDIA RELEASE

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Beauty complaints top CASE's mid-year list as prepayment losses exceed $1.9 million

The Consumers Association of Singapore ("CASE") recorded more than $1.9 million in reported beauty-related prepayment losses in the first half of 2026 ("1H2026"), close to 18 times the $108,000 in losses recorded in 1H2025. CASE also received 1,124 complaints against the beauty industry in 1H2026, more than double the 558 complaints received in 1H2025. The increases in complaints and prepayment losses were largely driven by the abrupt closure of several beauty and wellness businesses.

The travel industry recorded 434 complaints in 1H2026, an increase of 76.4 per cent from 246 complaints in 1H2025, returning the industry to the top five most complained-about industries for the first time since the first half of 2022. The increase in complaints was largely driven by a 148.9 per cent rise in complaints against online travel agents ("OTAs"), from 139 cases in 1H2025 to 346 in 1H2026.

Total e-commerce complaints fell by 11.5 per cent in 1H2026, from 1,769 complaints in 1H2025 to 1,566 complaints in 1H2026. Of the e-commerce complaints received in 1H2026, CASE received 188 complaints relating to misleading claims, false claims and unfair sales or marketing tactics, a marginal increase from 187 complaints in 1H2025.

Breakdown of Complaints

CASE received 6,684 consumer complaints in 1H2026, a 6.9 per cent increase from 6,253 complaints in 1H2025. The top five industries by number of complaints were beauty, electrical and electronics, motorcars, travel, and renovation contractors.

January to June 2025 (1H2025)			January to June 2026 (1H2026)		
No.	**Industry**	**Total Complaints**	**No.**	**Industry**	**Total Complaints**
1	Motorcars	573	1	Beauty	1,124
2	Electrical & Electronics	571	2	Electrical & Electronics	530
3	Beauty	558	3	Motorcars	488
4	Renovation Contractors	408	4	Travel	434
5	Telecommunications	353	5	Renovation Contractors	402
6	Food and beverages	264	6	Telecommunications	260

7	Furniture	252	7	Food and beverages	217
8	Travel	246	8	Furniture	206
9	Hair	167	9	Educational	195
10	Airlines	161	10	Airlines	192

Table 1: Breakdown of complaints received for the top 10 industries in 1H2025 and 1H2026

Beauty

Nearly four in 10 complaints against the beauty industry related to businesses failing to honour their contractual obligations, including consumers being unable to utilise prepaid packages following the sudden business closures. About 15.3 per cent of complaints involved alleged unethical sales tactics, while a further 13.8 per cent concerned delayed, refused or withheld refunds.

Examples of sudden business closures include the closure of Royal Secrets Wellness on 28 February 2026, which resulted in prepayment losses exceeding $1 million, including one individual loss of approximately $50,000; and the closure of Wan Yang Health Product and Foot Reflexology Centre, which accounted for over $137,000 in losses for unutilised prepaid packages in 1H2026.

Mr Melvin Yong, President, CASE said: “The sharp rise in beauty-related prepayment losses is deeply concerning. Behind the reported losses are consumers who paid in advance for services they may never receive. This underscores the risks of making large upfront payments for beauty packages, especially when businesses close suddenly. CASE continues to call for stronger safeguards to better protect consumers’ prepayments. In the meantime, consumers should avoid making large advance payments where possible, and consider paying per use or in smaller instalments.”

Electrical & Electronics

The electrical and electronics industry ranked second with 530 complaints in 1H2026, a 7.2 per cent decrease from 571 complaints in 1H2025. About 38.9 per cent of complaints involved products that were defective or did not conform to contract terms. About 14.7 per cent of complaints related to businesses failing to honour their contractual obligations, while 9.4 per cent concerned delayed, refused or withheld refunds.

Motorcars

The motorcars industry, which received the highest complaints in 1H2025, fell to third place with 488 complaints in 1H2026, a decrease of 14.8 per cent from the 573 complaints in the same period last year.

Of the 488 complaints received, approximately 45.7 per cent were related to purchases and privately owned cars. Another 12.5 per cent of complaints were related to car-sharing services.

For complaints related to purchases and privately owned cars, common complaints involved cars that were defective or did not conform to contract, delayed, refused or withheld refunds, and businesses failing to honour contractual obligations.

Complaints related to car-sharing services decreased from 97 complaints in 1H2025 to 61 in 1H2026. Common complaints involved disputes over damage assessments and repair costs.

Mr Yong said: "While motorcar-related complaints have fallen, the sector remains among the top three most complained-about industries. This is a reminder that consumers should exercise care when purchasing a vehicle or using car-sharing services, given the high value of such transactions and the potential costs involved when disputes arise. Consumers should carefully review contracts, seek clarification on warranty coverage and fees, and keep proper records before committing. For car-sharing services, CASE has worked with the Land Transport Authority to introduce the CaseTrust accreditation scheme, which gives consumers a clearer reference point when choosing an operator."

Travel and Airlines

About 36.9 per cent of complaints against the travel industry concerned delays or refusals in processing refunds. A further 17.3 per cent related to businesses failing to honour confirmed bookings or agreed travel arrangements.

The airlines industry recorded 192 complaints in 1H2026, a 19.3 per cent increase from the 161 complaints received in 1H2025, largely relating to refunds, cancellations and changes to flight itineraries.

The rise in complaints against the travel and airline industries comes amid recent air travel disruptions caused by geopolitical tensions and changes to flight schedules. These conditions have increased the likelihood of cancellations, itinerary changes and service disruptions, particularly where transactions are made through intermediaries such as OTAs.

Delayed, refused or withheld refunds accounted for the largest share of OTA-related complaints at 39.3 per cent. This was followed by businesses failing to honour confirmed bookings or agreed travel arrangements, which made up 17.6 per cent of complaints, including cases where hotels did not recognise confirmed bookings or refused check-in despite consumers holding valid booking vouchers. Misleading claims accounted for a further 10.1 per cent of complaints.

Mr Yong said: "The increase in travel and airline complaints reflects the challenges consumers may face when travel plans are disrupted by events beyond their control. Consumers should review booking terms carefully, especially refund, cancellation and change policies, and ensure they understand whether they are dealing directly with the airline, hotel or an online travel agent. We also encourage consumers to purchase comprehensive travel insurance with adequate coverage for trip cancellations, delays and disruptions."

Renovation Contractors

The renovation contractor industry recorded 402 complaints in 1H2026, a marginal 1.5 per cent decrease from 408 complaints in 1H2025. Complaints were primarily driven by consumers reporting dissatisfaction with the quality of services rendered such as poor workmanship (27.1 per cent) and failure to honour obligations (26.9 per cent), which together accounted for more than half of all cases. Defective or non-conforming goods (11.4 per cent) and delays in delivery (10.0 per cent) were also key concerns.

E-Commerce
About 23.9 per cent of e-commerce complaints concerned delayed, refused or withheld refunds. A further 22.5 per cent related to businesses failing to honour their contractual obligations, while 12.1 per cent involved defective or non-conforming goods.

Approximately 12.0 per cent of all e-commerce complaints involved misleading or false claims and pressure sales. Consumers reported that businesses had misrepresented or omitted important information about products, services, pricing, promotions, warranties and return policies. Some consumers also encountered hidden fees, restrictive terms, misleading promotions, pressure selling and unclear pricing, which led to unexpected costs, refund disputes and difficulties cancelling purchases.

Mr Yong said: "While overall e-commerce complaints have fallen, CASE remains concerned about misleading online claims and sales tactics, including the use of 'dark patterns' that nudge consumers into making purchases or accepting terms they may not have intended to. Such practices undermine consumer trust and make it harder for consumers to make informed choices. Businesses must ensure that their online listings, pricing and terms are clear, accurate and fair."

Conclusion
Mr Yong said: "Consumers should be able to transact with confidence, knowing that businesses will honour their commitments and that safeguards are in place when things go wrong. The complaint trends in the first half of 2026 show that consumer protection must continue to evolve alongside changes in the marketplace, from prepaid packages to online transactions, shared mobility services and the growing use of artificial intelligence in e-commerce. CASE is closely monitoring how AI may shape the way products are marketed, priced and recommended to consumers, so that consumers can continue to make informed choices in a fair and transparent marketplace. We will continue to work with government agencies, industry partners and consumers to promote fair trading, strengthen consumer confidence and encourage responsible business conduct."

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About the Consumers Association of Singapore:
The Consumers Association of Singapore ("CASE") is an independent, non-profit organisation that is committed to protecting consumers' interest through information and education and promoting an environment of fair and ethical trade practices. One of its key achievements is in advocating for the Consumer Protection (Fair Trading) Act (CPFTA) 2003 which came into effect on 1 March 2004.

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