

Research by:



Monika Faulkner
Lead Data Analyst

-

Want to learn more about what
our data can unlock for your
business?

Get in touch at:
data-solutions@trustpilot.com

Contents

Key findings	1
Background	2
How U.S. Consumers Are Reacting to Price Shifts from Chinese Retail Platforms (Q1-Q3 2025)	2
Deeper analysis	4
Sentiment related to tariffs	6
Conclusion	8

INSIGHT REPORT

Impact of U.S. Tariffs on Consumer Price Sentiment and Trust in Chinese Retail Platforms

How Real-Time Consumer Feedback Reveals the Hidden Impact
of Tariffs on Price Perception and Trust

Key findings

- Tariffs are **worsening price sentiment** for Chinese platforms like Temu, AliExpress, and DHgate, confirming that **U.S. consumers are sensitive to increased costs** and fees.
- SHEIN is an outlier - its sentiment improved post-tariff, likely due to its strategy of **embedding tariff costs into prices** and avoiding hidden fees. That said, the brand still attracted emotional criticism, with an uptick in mentions of "scam" and "rip-off."
- Alibaba's decline, despite its historically high ratings, may reflect **growing price sensitivity even in B2B transactions**.
- **Hidden fees and poor communication are the #1 triggers of negative sentiment.** Consumers react most strongly when **unexpected charges** appear during or after checkout.
- Tariff-related frustration is **emotional** and blame-heavy. Terms like "revenge," "scam," and "not worth it" became common in reviews, even when platforms tried to explain price increases.
- **Shipping and delivery issues were mentioned, but appeared to always have been an issue.** Some consumers actually expressed surprise at how smooth transactions remained, especially on Alibaba.

Background: Current Tariffs in Place

For some context, these are the tariffs that are currently in place as of 30 Jul 2025.

Countries

- A **universal 10 % tariff** on most imported goods from nearly all countries implemented in April 2025 remains in effect [Source](#)
- Tariffs on goods from mainland China and Hong Kong remain elevated: currently around **20 % for most goods**, and historically had spiked up to 145 % before being reduced under a temporary deal [Source](#)

Industries

- A **25 % tariff on automobiles and auto parts** came into effect on **April 3, 2025** [Source](#)
- Beginning March 12, 2025, a **25 % tariff** was imposed on all steel and aluminum imports. On **June 4, 2025**, that tariff was doubled to **50 %**, applying globally. [Source](#)

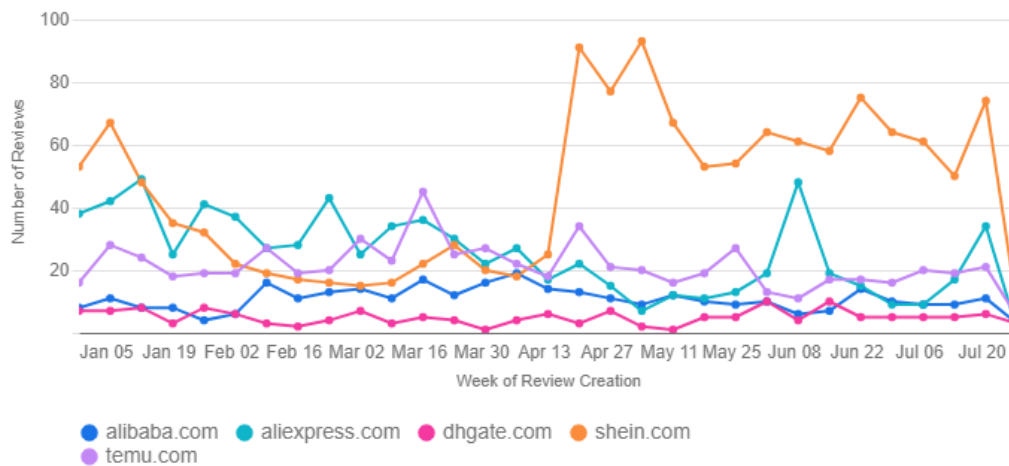
How U.S. Consumers Are Reacting to Price Shifts from Chinese Retail Platforms (Q1-Q3 2025)

The focus is on how **U.S. consumers are responding to price changes** from Chinese and Hong Kong based platforms, specifically:

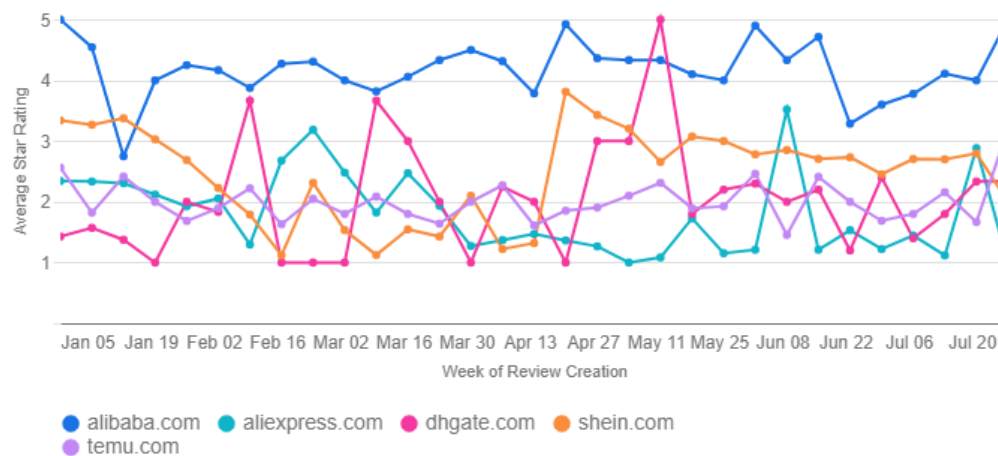
- [TEMU](#) (656 reviews)
- [AliExpress](#) (772 reviews)
- [SHEIN](#) (1,403 reviews)
- [DHgate](#) (154 reviews)
- [Alibaba](#) (331 reviews)

This analysis draws on Trustpilot reviews submitted by **U.S. consumers** from **January through July 2025**, covering all above companies. It's notable that SHEIN saw a significant increase (3x) in the number of reviews post-tariffs.

Trend of Number of Reviews Over Time by Platform



Trend of Weekly Average Star Rating Over Time by Platform



Deeper Analysis

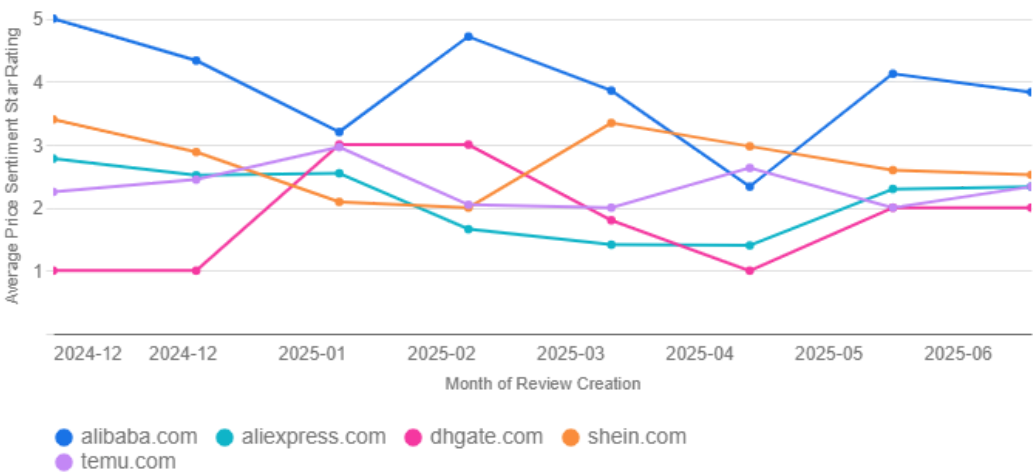
Sentiment Related to Price Pressure

Filtering reviews that discuss price e.g. included terms like: 'expensive', 'cheap', 'value', 'price', 'rip-off', 'good value', 'bad value', 'cost', 'bargain', 'affordable', 'overpriced', 'discount', and 'pricy'.

Average Star Rating for Price Sentiment:

Platform	Pre-Tariff	Post-Tariff
Temu	2.40	2.24
AliExpress	2.23	2.01
SHEIN	2.48	2.86
DHgate	2.00	1.86
Alibaba	4.17	3.75

Trend of Monthly Price Sentiment Average Star Rating Over Time by Platform



Overall Price Sentiment (Pre-Tariff):

- Before the tariffs, most platforms (Temu, AliExpress, Shein, and DHgate) already exhibited relatively low average star ratings concerning price, suggesting pre-existing consumer concerns about value for money. Alibaba was an exception, consistently showing a strong perceived value. This is likely because it is a B2B company.

Post-Tariff Changes (April onwards):

- Temu, AliExpress, DHgate and Alibaba experienced a **decrease in price sentiment after the tariffs**. This indicates that U.S. consumers are feeling increased price pressure on these platforms.
- Notably, **AliExpress** experienced a significant **increase** in 1-star reviews, rising from 65.60% pre-tariff to 74.58% post-tariff, an increase of 8.97 percentage points. This indicates a heightened level of dissatisfaction among its users.
- Another AliExpress finding was that there was a **decrease** in mentions of positive price terms such as "great deal" or "cheap". This aligns with the overall negative shift in price sentiment for this platform, indicating fewer instances where consumers perceive or praise "bargains" post-tariffs.
- Interestingly, **SHEIN's price sentiment improved** post-tariffs. This suggests that SHEIN might have successfully adapted to the tariffs. From research, SHEIN stated "No tariffs will be collected on delivery, they will be included in the price". Some of the other companies with more negative sentiment have complaints related to hidden fees; SHEIN is avoiding this by **including it directly in their prices** and therefore consumers have not noticed the affect of this price change as much and have not been caught off-guard by hidden fees.

- However, **SHEIN** showed a notable **increase** in reviews containing strong negative language like "scam" and "rip-off". This suggests that despite a decrease in the *proportion* of 1-star reviews, those who are dissatisfied are expressing their anger more forcefully.

Sentiment Related to Tariffs

- **Hidden Costs and Fees:**

- Many users reported new customs and tariff fees that were **not previously disclosed or expected**, leading to frustration.
- For example, a Shein reviewer (1-star) stated:

"DO NOT ORDER FROM SHEIN ANYMORE AFTER JAN 2025. your Order will be sent and not delivered unless you pay customs and tariffs fees."
- Another Temu reviewer (1-star) said their purchase was significantly more than expected:

"I ordered \$30 worth of product and was charged \$70. I will no longer be buying from them.. thank you for the tariffs."

- **Impact on Pricing and Deals:**

- Some users noted that the **tariffs led to higher prices** and made previously "super deals" less attractive.
- A Temu reviewer (1-star) mentioned:

"Yes, Trump's tariffs have an impact on exports/imports; however, Temu has increased their prices significantly and charge \$2.99 S/H each item. So...A once 99 cents ring will cost \$3.98. No longer super deals..."
- Another Temu review (4-star) highlighted:

"The unfortunate thing is, as soon as the tariffs hit, TEMU's prices all went up... All the prices went up, obviously because of the tariffs."

- Some users stated that they felt it was **out of revenge** and the companies raised their prices on purpose, not due to the tariffs.
- A Shein reviewer (1-star) stated:
"I don't think that the tariff situation is really a big cause for them raising their prices, but that's what their excuse is apparently."
- Another Shein review (1-star) even accused companies of "getting revenge on us for the tariffs and they are scamming us."
- **Shipping and Delivery Issues:**
 - Tariffs were **sometimes linked to changes in shipping processes or delays**, but long delivery times were common pre-tariffs.
 - One Shein reviewer (1-star) mentioned:
"Now Tariff fees are wrapped in it too. I order my stuff a while ago. Still have not received the stuff."
 - An Alibaba reviewer (5-star) noted a smooth transaction
"due to the new tariffs and all the noise surrounding the trade, but it was really smooth transaction."
 - This indicates that for some, the impact might not have been as severe or was well-managed by the platform.

Out of a total of 1,244 non-5-star reviews post-April 1st, 2025:

- Percentage mentioning Hidden Costs and Fees: 7.96%
- Percentage mentioning Impact on Pricing and Deals: 4.10%
- Percentage mentioning Shipping delays or delivery issues: 18.97%

Conclusion

Analysis of over 3,300 U.S. consumer reviews shows tariffs have had a measurable, negative impact on price sentiment across most Chinese retail platforms, with average star ratings on pricing falling by up to 0.4 points post-tariff and 1-star reviews spiking nearly 9 p.p. on AliExpress alone. Hidden fees and unclear communication drove the sharpest declines, while SHEIN's strategy of embedding tariff costs into upfront pricing correlated with a 15% improvement in price sentiment versus peers. For investors and operators, the signal is clear: price transparency and cost predictability directly influence brand trust and customer retention under tariff pressure — factors that can materially affect growth trajectories and risk profiles in exposed sectors.

Want to explore more insights? Get in touch at data-solutions@trustpilot.com