

# De-dupe the Copycats

The Beauty and Cosmetics Factsheet: A guide to finding and removing brand threats.



# Dupe Culture: Can your brand protection keep up?

Why manual monitoring can no longer keep up with the speed of social commerce.

The mainstream rise of dupe culture has opened the door to both legal alternatives and illegal copycats, endangering your brand revenue and threatening customer health with toxic fakes. Since product formulas can be legally copied, your packaging and brand assets are your only true defense – but manual tracking cannot scale to protect them. **Can your current strategy scale to fully protect your brand?**

**73%**

global consumers will completely abandon a brand after accidentally buying a fake. (Coveo)

## THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM

<b>€3 Billion</b> Loss in annual beauty sales in European Market (EUIPO).	<b>10%</b> of all beauty products sold are Counterfeits (EUIPO).	<b>7.2 Billion</b> TikTok Views of #Dupe fueling the substitution wave (TikTok).
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## REVENUE DISPLACEMENT

- 72%** Gen Z consumers actively seeking copycat products to save money, directly impacting market value of premium products. (GWI).
- 1.2M** searches are generated for the term "dupes" in a single month, climbing rapidly as social media cycles accelerate. (SEMrush).
- 41%** beauty sales happen directly on social and unverified digital channels, making it incredibly easy for bad actors to intercept your customer's checkout journey. (NielsenIQ).
- 53%** global shoppers state they are openly willing to buy lookalike formulas of higher-priced brands if the product performance is visible (Accenture).

## HEALTH HAZARD

Social media normalises the search for 'dupes,' but malicious counterfeiters exploit this high demand by flooding marketplaces with dangerous, lookalike chemical fakes.

### Found in fake cosmetics:

Arsenic, beryllium, cadmium, aluminum, and severe bacterial contamination.

### Found in fake fragrances:

DEHP (a probable human carcinogen) and even animal urine.

**Real-world consequences:** Severe skin reactions, acne, psoriasis, rashes, and eye infections.

## BRAND PROTECTION AT SCALE

With 70% of beauty brands actively discovering counterfeits and copycats online, the sheer scale of the dupe trend has made manual monitoring unsustainable. Shifting to automated brand protection is now the industry standard, with elite brands adopting a hybrid "AI-first + expert review" model. This approach allows teams to instantly detect lookalikes across global marketplaces, remove malicious listings at scale, and protect legitimate trade channels without disruption.

<b>Up to 98%</b> Counterfeit Suppression Rate AI-enabled software scans marketplaces to locate fake listings in real time (SnapDragon-IP).	<b>&lt;2%</b> False-positives Human verification ensures precise enforcement without impacting legitimate sellers (SnapDragon-IP).	<b>24/7</b> Always On vigilance across global marketplaces, social platforms, search engines, paid ads, and domains.
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# Finding the Dupes

The rise of dupe culture has blurred the line between legal alternatives and dangerous counterfeits, putting both brand revenue and consumer safety at risk. When formulas can be copied, your brand assets become your strongest defence. Can your current strategy scale to fully protect your beauty brand?

## DUPE ACTIVITY

## HOW TO MONITOR

1

**Search and SEO Hijacking:** Copycats register look-alike domains. They rank for queries like "Where to buy [Your Brand] cheaper".

**Domain Scanning:** Manually search your brand and domain registrars, or utilise automated domain scanning to flag trademark matches in real-time.

2

**Paid Ads and Hashtags:** Infringers place Google Ads and social media sponsored posts targeting your brand keywords.

**Product Detection:** Manually check Google, Meta Ad Library, and TikTok hashtags, or deploy AI to continuously scan ad networks for trademark violations.

3

**Marketplace Asset Theft:** Unauthorised sellers steal your exact product descriptions, high-resolution imagery, and filtered "before & after" results.

**Marketplace Monitoring:** Regularly browse major e-commerce marketplaces to check for copied product descriptions and stolen imagery. AI enabled software can help manage this at scale - 100s of marketplaces, globally.

4

**Trade Dress Infringement:** Modern beauty dupes use "visual camouflage." They tweak your logo, colours and packaging just enough to fool basic text-based search filters.

**Image Recognition:** Run reverse-image searches on your packaging and visually scan competitor listings for look-alike branding. To scale, use AI visual recognition to catch colour and geometry copycats that text filters miss.

# Brand Threat Assessment

Is your brand staying ahead of beauty dupes, counterfeits and online impersonation? Use this 5-point audit to identify the critical gaps where infringers are currently outperforming your beauty brand protection strategy.

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## PROTECT YOUR INNOVATIONS BEFORE LAUNCH

**Do you have active monitoring in place to detect dupes, imitation packaging or lookalike designs before your official launch date?**

**The Risk:** In beauty, copycats move within hours of launch, replicating packaging, formulations and design cues. Pre-launch monitoring gives your brand the chance to detect, disrupt and contain threats early.



## ENSURE PACKAGING INTEGRITY

**Are you tracking the illicit use and sale of your brand assets (logos, labels, and packaging details) independently of finished products?**

**The Risk:** Beauty counterfeiters often target branded packaging before the finished product itself. When labels, cartons and other visual assets are copied, the result is a convincing fake — and greater risk to consumer safety, brand trust and product integrity.



## MONITOR ONLINE STOREFRONTS

**Do you have an automated system to identify online stores using stolen product imagery, fake before-and-after results and imitation reviews?**

**The Risk:** 36% of consumers are influenced by social proof. In beauty, results sell. Fraudulent storefronts use fake before-and-after content, imitation reviews and misleading imagery to imitate performance, win consumer confidence and capture sales.



## DETECT DUPES AT SCALE

**Are you monitoring where beauty dupes are actually discovered (branded search, lookalike domains, paid ads, hashtags, etc.)?**

**The Risk:** Beauty demand is shaped in real time across search, social and commerce platforms. If those channels are not being actively monitored, infringers can intercept intent, redirect purchase journeys and dilute brand value at the point of discovery.



## ENFORCE AT SPEED

**Is your current enforcement setup capable of detecting and reporting an infringing listing in under 24 hours?**

**The Risk:** Today's beauty dupes are designed to bypass basic text-based detection, mimicking colour palettes, product designs and packaging. Fast, visually led enforcement is critical to stopping these threats before they scale.

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## CASE STUDY: PROTECTING THE BRAND'S TRUE COLOURS

# Crazy Color

Category: Beauty



**4.7K+**

Counterfeit Listings Detected

**83%**

Success Rate



**Real Product**



**Counterfeit**

Crazy Color, a bold global brand renowned for its innovative hair coloring products, faced a critical threat when unauthorised sellers began saturating international online marketplaces. Rogue listings bypassed the company's rigorous standards for quality control, pricing, and brand presentation posing an immediate risk to Crazy Color's reputation and consumer health.

### **The Solution: AI-Driven Brand Protection:**

In close partnership with Crazy Color, SnapDragon deploys a bespoke brand protection strategy, utilizing AI-powered software and human expertise to target and eliminate listings exploiting "Crazy Color" trademarks across major global marketplaces. By leveraging advanced capabilities - including Optical Character Recognition (OCR) and logo detection - SnapDragon continuously intercepts and prevents unlawful sales, successfully safeguarding Crazy Color's revenue, reputation, and, most importantly, their consumers.

*"SnapDragon's software is exceptional at detecting trademark infringements, and their expert team efficiently takes them down, ensuring our consumers access only authentic Crazy Color products, safeguarding our revenue and reputation."*

**Victoria Barnet**

Marketplace & Brand Protection Executive

# Get ahead. Stay ahead.

If you wait until fakes hit the market, you're already behind. Talk to SnapDragon today.

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