

5 ways brands can win the battle against dupes

Article

The concept of dupes (cheaper products that serve the same function as a more expensive item) isn't new for retailers. The rise of TikTok paired with a challenging economic environment has led to a surge in consumers looking for lower-priced alternatives to brand-name products.

Here are five strategies to fight against the rising tide of dupes and examples of brands currently employing them.

1. Host a trade-in day

Sometimes the answer is as simple as giving consumers a chance to sample your product. That's what **lululemon athletica** bet on when it hosted a "Dupe Swap" in Los Angeles earlier this month, where consumers could trade in knockoff leggings and receive a pair of the brand's Align pants.

"It felt like a very fun way to step into a cultural conversation," chief brand officer Nikki Neuburger told Fast Company. "Part of why we had total confidence doing that is because we really do know our products are the best; and if you try them, we felt folks would have that sensory aha moment."

Half of the shoppers who came to the swap were new customers, lululemon said. Lululemon is considering expanding the idea to other markets as a way to engage new consumers.

"Dupes are going to happen, so let's not fight it, let's not arm wrestle," said Neuburger. "Let's have some fun with it, and actually really deeply understand our consumers and how they'll actually have fun with it, too, by starting the conversation."

2. Offer a cheaper alternative

If consumers are struggling to afford groceries, most are probably not going to splurge on luxury items, instead seeking less expensive alternatives that serve the same purpose.

By creating a more affordable line of products under the same name, companies can lure in consumers looking for name-brand recognition without the high price. For example, the **Koolaburra by UGG line of shoes** offers consumers the **exact same shoe designs as the classic UGG brand** for nearly \$100 less.

Though this strategy may not be of interest to high-luxury companies (which build their brand on exclusivity and curation), it could be a smart play for mid-tier brands struggling to bring in customers amid a decline in discretionary spending.

3. Lean into secondhand

It seems like every brand is getting into resale to capitalize on cost-conscious and sustainability-driven consumers.

Brands can use resale to target a different segment of consumers (e.g., first-time luxury buyers looking for an affordable splurge).

Many first-time buyers may not be ready to shell out on a new brand, but secondhand retail makes it easier for consumers to choose a branded item over a dupe, giving them an opportunity to compare the quality to cheaper products (a la lululemon's strategy with swaps).

Gucci entered resale earlier this year by partnering with luxury resale platform Vestiaire Collective. The brand encouraged consumers to take their Gucci bags to participating stores for evaluation. Then, customers could sell the items for store credit.

Not only does this service help Gucci to bring in first-time shoppers, it also keeps previous customers in the ecosystem by offering them store credit.

4. Use social media to educate consumers

One of the biggest advantages brands have over dupes is the quality. With dupes, carefully chosen materials are swapped for cheaper alternatives and artisan craft is traded for the efficiency of factories.

Using social media, brands can show the care and artistry they put into making a product.

For example, Italian company Loro Piana uses TikTok to give a behind-the-scenes look at how it **sources its high-quality textiles** or how it **handcrafts the finishing on its shoes**. It even uses its platform to **poke fun at dupes**, reminding consumers that the brand has “sophistication that can't be imitated.”

5. Choose where to sell your products

While it may be hard to prevent the sale of dupes, companies can control where they allow their products to be sold, partnering only with platforms they trust to take measures to keep their brand safe.

In January 2020, **LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton CEO Bernard Arnault** said the brand had no intention of selling its goods on Amazon or similar ecommerce platforms because “[Amazon] use[s] their database to connect customers to sellers and they take a percentage, which leads them ... to sell counterfeit products.”

While counterfeits aren't quite the same as dupes, they both negatively impact a company's reputation and bottom line.

Since then, **Amazon has partnered with an authenticated reseller of vintage luxury goods**, What Goes Around Comes Around, which does sell some Louis Vuitton items. But LVMH has continued to keep new items off the ecommerce giant's site.

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