

Using Babel Street in the Fight Against Counterfeit Goods

The knockoff trade seems almost laughable. A luxury handbag that retails for thousands being hawked on the sidewalk for \$25? No one would believe it's the real thing, but what's the harm?

Then a house burns because a bootleg e-bike battery overcharged. A group of people grow ill after buying no-name acetaminophen online. A consumer learns that the high-quality counterfeit designer shoes she purchased were crafted by slave laborers, for the profit of organized crime rings.

The illicit goods landscape

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the counterfeit goods market now tops \$467 billion worldwide, or 2.3 percent of all global imports.¹ The most frequently counterfeited products include clothing, shoes, leather goods, electronics, and cosmetics. China is the primary source of these fakes, "accounting for 45% of all reported seizures."²

The production and sale of counterfeit products negatively impact corporate earnings, brand reputation, and in some cases, physical health. They also deprive governments of legitimate tax revenue. No wonder the OECD calls the counterfeit trade a "major threat to economies, consumers and supply chains worldwide."³

How Babel Street can help

Technologies for monitoring social media and resolving entities can help agencies, such as United States Customs and Border Protection, find online purveyors of counterfeit goods, then link those sellers to real people. Using this information, customs officials can build a case for prohibiting imports from certain individuals and companies.

Babel Street Insights is a data and analytics platform that can persistently search social media and online marketplaces for signs of counterfeit trade. These signs may include luxury brands offered at suspiciously low prices; the names of popular products appended with words such as "copy" or "replica;" and sales originating from outside a specialty brand's home country. Insights can perform similar searches on the harder-to-reach message boards, forums, and marketplaces of the dark web. Coalescing and collating this data can help connect screen names to real-world entities. So can accessing metadata that may contain geolocation information — providing insight into a group's physical location.

Name matching and advanced entity resolution further help spot counterfeiters. Entity resolution is the process of examining names appearing in unstructured text, then matching those names to entities appearing in a public knowledge base or the knowledge bases maintained by an organization. When coupled with name matching technology, this capability helps officials distinguish among multiple entities with the same or similar names. Name matching capabilities also help distinguish between similar corporate names based on semantic understanding.

Investigating counterfeit goods with Babel Street

To search for counterfeit goods, Babel Street users can:

Construct a query

Users can input query terms associated with counterfeit goods such as “fake,” “replica,” and “knockoff,” and then isolate specific consumer websites or online markets of interest. Users can also search by items, such as shoes, purses, or jewelry.

Enabling the smart search capability broadens queries to include variations of a word or different languages. Leveraging Babel Street’s extensive ontology saves users time and increases the efficiency of searches.

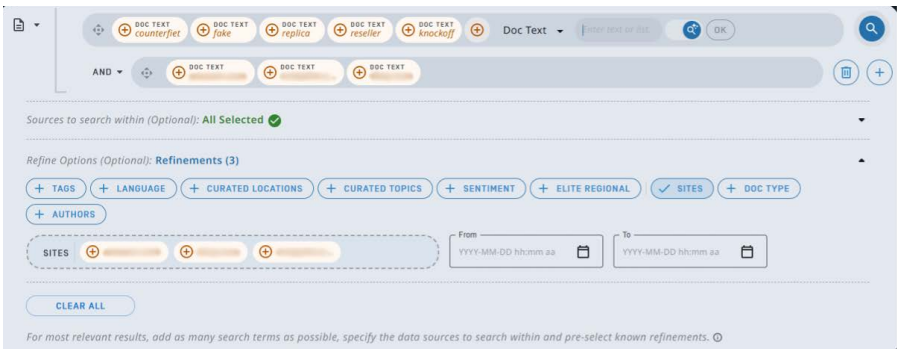


Figure 1: An Insights search for keywords across several sites that may purvey counterfeits

Focus on social media

Users can search for counterfeit goods in social media advertisements, a popular avenue for criminals to market counterfeit items. Using similar search terms, Babel Street Insights can quickly return documents from all popular social media sites in the U.S. and internationally. Author information, metadata, and contact details can help authorities identify individuals involved in counterfeit sales.

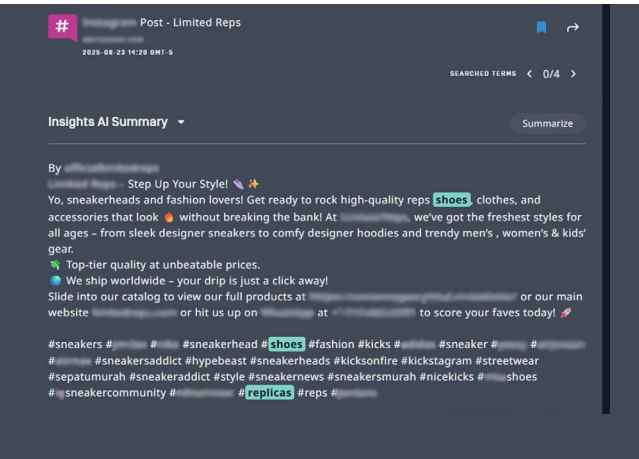
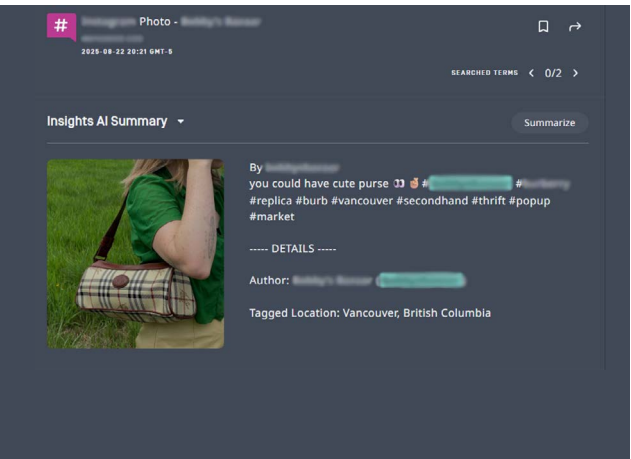


Figure 2: Social media ads hawking counterfeit goods

Check the dark web

Babel Street Insights can search for conversations and activities around counterfeit goods on the dark web. In addition to searching for sites selling counterfeit goods on dark web markets, investigators can also look for guides on how to make counterfeit items, sell them, and pass counterfeit items through customs or security. Counterfeit money, passports, driver's licenses, and other identification cards are commonly advertised through the dark web.

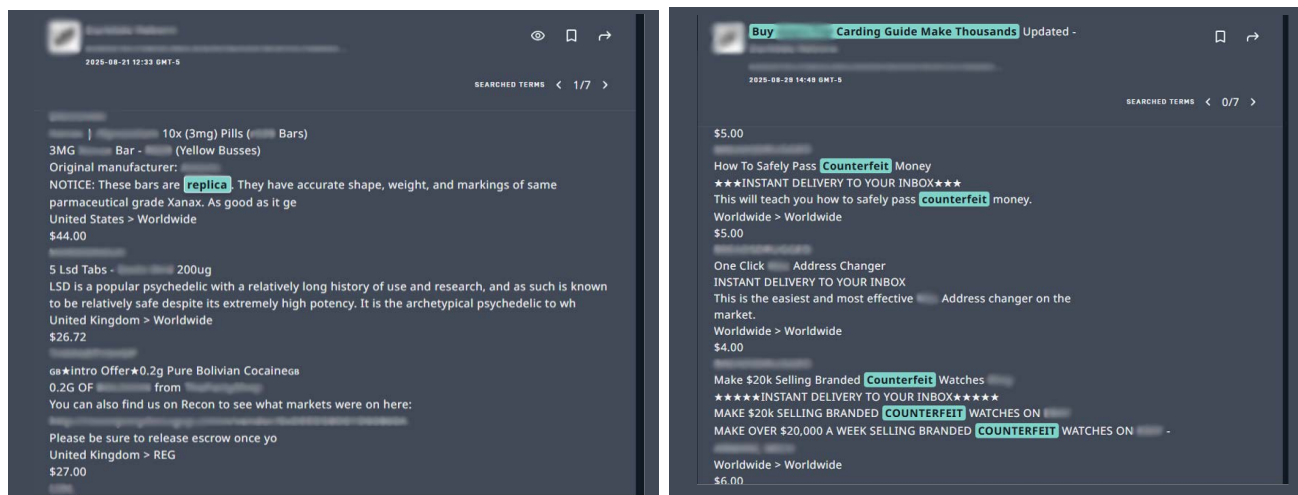


Figure 3: Dark web search results for counterfeit and replica items

Endnotes

1. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the European Intellectual Property Office, "Mapping Global Trade in Fakes 2025: Global Trends and Enforcement Challenges," May 2025, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/mapping-global-trade-in-fakes-2025_94d3b29f-en.html
2. Ibid
3. Ibid

Babel Street is the trusted technology partner for the world's most advanced identity intelligence and risk operations. The Babel Street Insights platform delivers advanced AI and data analytics solutions to close the Risk-Confidence Gap.

Babel Street provides unmatched, analysis-ready data regardless of language, proactive risk identification, 360-degree insights, high-speed automation, and seamless integration into existing systems. We empower government and commercial organizations to transform high-stakes identity and risk operations into a strategic advantage.

Learn more at babelstreet.com.