

MARKETING

## Facebook files suit to stop sales of fake followers

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*Dolce & Gabbana invited influencers to document their time in Capri. Image credit: Dolce & Gabbana*

By STAFF REPORTS

With brands relying heavily on influencer marketing on social media today, the sale of fake followers poses a significant threat to those who gauge partners based on number of followers, causing Facebook to crack down on the practice.

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Facebook and its subsidiary Instagram have filed suit against four companies and three individuals from the People's Republic of China for allegedly offering the sale of fake followers. Those involved were said to do so on multiple outlets including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Apple, Google, Amazon and LinkedIn.

### Facebook fury

The social media group has been in the headlines for the better part of 2018 and beyond due to privacy concerns and more.

But the group is hoping to combat an issue plaguing its platforms, with many accounts buying fake followers to up their numbers. This not only gives the user fake social clout, but more importantly it allows them to dupe brands into partnering with them for sponsorship.

Facebook states it is protecting the integrity of its platform.

The lawsuit aims to cease the creation and promotion of fake accounts, likes and followers on Facebook and Instagram, infringement on its trademarks on Web sites and the use of Facebook-branded domain names to operate Web sites in a process known as cyber squatting.

"Inauthentic activity has no place on our platform," Facebook said in a statement. "That's why we devote significant resources to detecting and stopping this behavior, including disabling millions of fake accounts every day.

"Today's lawsuit is one more step in our ongoing efforts to protect people on Facebook and Instagram."



*Facebook has faced ongoing scrutiny over its handling of users' data. Image credit: Facebook*

The lawsuit comes after a recent report released after more than 18 months of investigations in which lawmakers in the United Kingdom have accused the social network of violating data privacy laws.

Parliament's Digital, Culture, Media and Sport select committee found that the platform "intentionally and knowingly" violated both data privacy and competition laws. The committee also publicly requested that social media companies be held liable for harmful content on their platforms and that political advertising laws be updated ([see story](#)).

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