

COMMERCE

La Martina heightens pursuit of counterfeits

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Polo helmets from La Martina

By JOE MCCARTHY

La Martina, official supplier of the Federation of International Polo, has ramped up efforts to combat digital counterfeit sources.

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Luxury Daily

The polo outfitter enlisted anti-counterfeiting and brand protection agency OpSec Security to pinpoint and neutralize phony offers online. For luxury brands that derive much of their status from exclusivity, counterfeits masquerading as authentic on ecommerce sites pose a significant threat.

"Polo brands face many of the same challenges encountered in the luxury industry today," said Melissa K. Palardy, marketing associate at [OpSec Security](#), Boston. "Because polo is a lifestyle luxury sport, these products are at high risk for counterfeits.

"Poor quality counterfeit products harm brand reputation and tarnish brand exclusivity," she said. "According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, apparel/accessories, and handbags/wallets accounted for 43 percent of items seized in 2013."

Locate, destroy

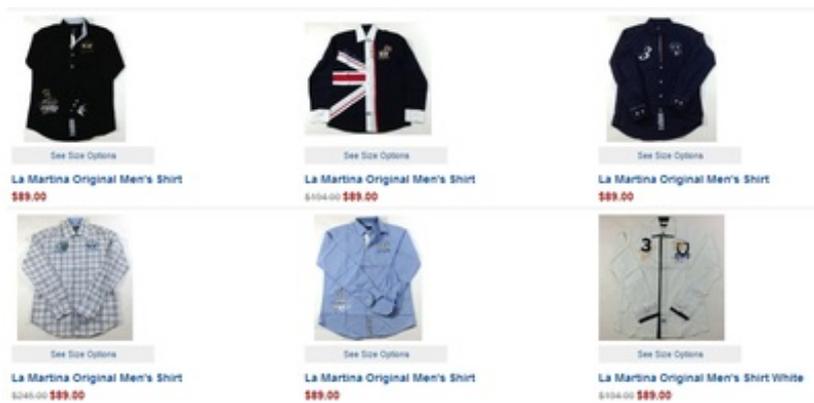
La Martina supplies clothing and technical equipment to polo clubs from universities

such as Harvard, Yale, Oxford and Cambridge. The brand outfits the Guards Polo Club, Polo de Paris and Milano Polo club and has partnerships with the Federation of International Polo.

Product categories on the brand's Web site include helmets, saddles, boots, elbow pads and knee pads.

Since La Martina only sells to consumers in its retail locations and on its Web site, product listings that appear elsewhere are suspect.

As of press time, there were 24 La Martina product listings under Amazon's "Sports & Outdoors" section and 187 under the ecommerce hub's "Clothing and Accessories" section.



La Martina listings on Amazon

La Martina is aggressively committed to vanquishing imposters. The brand's Web features a call-to-arms page titled "Fakes."

Such militant diction is not out of place. In fact, the brand claims to be "waging a war against counterfeits."

La Martina encourages consumers to join the battle by filling out a form on the Web site.

Suspect Site

How did you get there?

- Search Engine (Google, Yahoo, Bing)
- Online ad (banner or text)
- Email (spam or not)
- Referrer

If you received counterfeited La Martina Products and want to help us report scams, please provide name and email address, or contact: CustomerService@lamartina.com

Name

Email

Z 5 9 F

SEND

Form for filing a counterfeit sighting

A legal team carries out inspections in various countries and has seized thousands of fake garments already. The monitoring so far has led to a drop in counterfeits, according to the brand.

However, La Martina felt that increased pressure was needed and recruited OpSec for help. The security company plans to use its expertise to monitor the brands products on online trade boards, ecommerce sites, social media and search engine sponsored links.

OpSec also monitors the entire supply chain to maximize the traceability of each unit and can verify the authenticity, production and destination of goods anywhere in the world, according to the company.

In a brand statement, La Martini's CEO Enrico Rosseli said, "It is critical to prevent counterfeit polo equipment and apparel from entering the market and we are very pleased to work with OpSec who will remove counterfeit products from nefarious online sites from anywhere in the world."

Constant battle

Luxury brands continually fret over counterfeit goods that can sink their reputation. Since counterfeiting takes so many forms, the fight against it also assumes different costumes.

For instance, a bill was floated last year to curtail the rampant sale of counterfeit luxury items in New York and protect brand integrity honing in on consumers rather than vendors.

Up to a \$1,000 fine or a year in prison was proposed to be dispensed to those guilty of buying counterfeit luxury items. Perhaps the most intrepid tactic seen in years against the counterfeit specter, the bill sought to fortify luxury brand integrity by discouraging the purchase of phony products ([see story](#)).

In addition to state-sponsored help, loyalists are often enlisted.

Mobile application uFaker aims to stave off the growing problem of counterfeiting by arming brands with timely information and getting consumers involved in the fight.

The counterfeiting technology also extends to a Web site and social platform that together mobilizes brand enthusiasts to document suspicious activity for chances to win monthly "Brand Hunter" prizes. As the technology grows, brands will likely develop a stronger hold on the issue and coordinate more focused anti-counterfeiting gambits ([see story](#)).

For La Martina and others, erasing counterfeits to shore up brand control is the end game.

"OpSec will help alleviate this problem by monitoring and enforcing against illicit La Martina sales on ecommerce sites around the globe," Ms. Palardy said.

"Also, OpSec's sophisticated proprietary software will scour the web to locate and take down infringing listings," she said.

Final Take

Joe McCarthy, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

Embedded Video: [//www.youtube.com/embed/zhpqWNZKpEA](https://www.youtube.com/embed/zhpqWNZKpEA)

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