



Exploring Visual Marketing Strategies of Counterfeit Beauty Products to Boost Sales

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Abstract. This research explores the role of visual marketing in counterfeit beauty products, focusing on its impact on consumer behavior, brand differentiation, and national brand loyalty. Adopting a mixed-methods approach (literature review, online surveys via SOJUMP, and interviews), the study reveals key findings: 60% of respondents report visual design plagiarism undermines product trust; 35% and 25% are drawn to counterfeits by low prices and attractive packaging, respectively. The research provides insights for brand protection and contributes to understanding visual stimuli's long-term effects across cultural contexts.

Keywords: Visual Marketing; Counterfeit Beauty Products; Consumer Behavior; Brand Differentiation; Purchasing Decision-Making; Brand Protection Strategies.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background & Scope

In recent years, counterfeit beauty products have surged in China, driven by social media and e-commerce, which expand counterfeiters' reach and streamline distribution. These products often mimic genuine brands' visual aesthetics, blurring authenticity and deceiving consumers, thereby threatening industry integrity.

1.2 Research Problem, Objective & Importance

Existing research focuses on visual marketing for legitimate brand differentiation, but its application by counterfeiters remains understudied. This study aims to analyze counterfeiters' visual marketing strategies and their impact on consumer recognition, perception, and purchasing decisions. Findings will inform brand protection efforts, safeguard consumer and legitimate brand interests, and deepen understanding of visual marketing's broader implications.

2 Literature Review

Visual marketing uses visual elements such as product packaging, advertising images, and displays to attract consumers and promote products or brands to attract consumers and build brand identity. It forms through several mechanisms. Firstly, it taps into consumers' visual perception, appealing to their sense of aesthetics. Secondly, it builds brand identity by creating a distinct visual presence. Thirdly, it influences consumer psychology by evoking emotions and associations. Finally, it spreads through various channels like social media, amplifying its impact on consumer behavior and decision-making. In the realm of domestic beauty markets, visual marketing has emerged as a crucial tool for brand differentiation and consumer engagement. Previous research has emphasized the significance of visual elements in shaping consumer behavior and decision-making processes. Studies have demonstrated that the aesthetic appeal of product packaging can influence consumer preferences, even in the absence of information about the product's quality. This highlights the power of visual elements in consumer psychology and the need for strong brand protection measures against counterfeit beauty products, which often exploit these visual cues to deceive consumers.¹

Our study builds on this foundation by examining how counterfeit beauty products utilize visual marketing strategies to imitate legitimate brands, a gap that has been insufficiently researched despite its critical implications for consumer behavior and brand protection. We aim to contribute to the existing literature by providing a comprehensive analysis of the visual marketing tactics employed by counterfeiters and their impact on consumer perception and brand loyalty. Our research is related to and inspired by the findings of Liu, who explored the context of postal enterprise brand visual marketing, and extends this understanding to the beauty industry, particularly focusing on the role of social media platforms in the dissemination of visual marketing by counterfeiters.² This study will also consider the long-term effects of visual marketing on consumer behavior, an area that has been limited in previous research, and will incorporate visual marketing into a broader framework of consumer behavior theories, offering a more refined understanding of how visual elements direct consumer attention and influence decision-making.

3 Research Design & Methods

3.1 Data Collection

- **Questionnaire:** 191 valid responses from sophomore and junior business English majors, distributed via WeChat/QQ (convenience sampling). Questions included

¹ Li, D. J., Li, Y., & Wu, R. J. (2013). Consumer aesthetic experience in product design. *Advances in Psychological Science*, *21*(2), 336–346. <https://doi.org/10.3724/SP.J.1042.2013.00336>

² Liu, S. Y. (2023). Research on brand visual marketing of China Post. *Studies on Posts*, 39(2), 62–69. <https://doi.org/10.13955/j.zyzj.2023.02.12.08>

single/multiple-choice items on brand information access, purchase factors, and attitudes toward counterfeits.

- **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews with 4 participants (18-20-year-old college students, 45-50-year-old middle-class professionals) via face-to-face or online voice calls, recorded and transcribed for content analysis.

3.2 Analytic Procedure

Questionnaire data was statistically analyzed; interview records were coded by dimensions (Emotional Appeal, Imitation of Trusted Brands, etc.). Quantitative and qualitative results were integrated to draw conclusions.

4 Research Results & Analysis

4.1 Research Question 1: How does Visual Marketing Influence Consumer Behavior in the Counterfeit Beauty Product Market?

Table 1. Factors Influencing Consumer Behavior regarding Counterfeits

Factor Class	Key Factors	Percentage
Visual Design Impact	Trust influence (plagiarism undermines trust)	60%
	Brand confusion (plagiarism causes confusion)	50%
Market Attitudes	Tolerance for plagiarism	55%
	Acceptance of counterfeits	45%
Purchase Motives	Price attraction	35%
	Design appeal	25%

As shown in Table 1, visual design plagiarism significantly impacts trust (60%)³. Consumers often experience "brand confusion" (50%), where the visual mimicry successfully masks the counterfeit nature of the product.

Key Analysis: Visual marketing influences consumers via emotional appeals (40% consider quality, 30% features), imitation of trusted brands (60% trust impacted), social identity (45% accept counterfeits to fit in), and price sensitivity (48% cite high sensitivity as a plagiarism driver). Social media amplifies tolerance (55%) by normalizing counterfeits.

³ Cai, L. F. (2009). The role of packaging in visual marketing in the era of the eyeball economy. Jiangsu Commercial Forum, (9), 128–130. <https://doi.org/10.13395/j.cnki.issn.1009-0061.2009.09.030>

4.2 Research Question 2: How does Visual Marketing Provide a Differentiated Advantage for Beauty Products?

As shown in Table 2, visual marketing differentiates products through unique aesthetics ⁴. Consumers rely on quality and LOGO recognition to distinguish authenticity.⁵ According to Shahid, perceived luxury and quality are essential for sustainable differentiation in emerging markets.⁶

Key Analysis: Visual marketing differentiates brands through distinct identity (logos/designs), emotional resonance, aspirational imagery, and social media engagement. Unique packaging (30% design impact) and trend alignment attract consumers, while clear value communication aids decision-making.

Table 2. Drivers of Brand Differentiation and Purchase

Factor Category	Key Factors	Percentage
Awareness	Judge by function/quality	30%
	Judge by quality alone	25%
	No counterfeit awareness	20%
	Judge by LOGO	15%
Purchase Drivers	Price sensitivity	35%
	Design appeal	30%
Tolerance	Tolerance for counterfeits	40%
	Aversion to counterfeits	20%

⁴ Chebat, J.-C., & Slusarczyk, W. (2005). How emotions mediate the effects of perceived justice on loyalty in service recovery situations: An empirical study. *Journal of Business Research*, *58*, 664–673. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2003.12.012>

⁵ Cai, L. F. (2009). The role of packaging in visual marketing in the era of the eyeball economy. *Jiangsu Commercial Forum*, (9), 128–130. <https://doi.org/10.13395/j.cnki.issn.1009-0061.2009.09.030>

⁶ Shahid, S., & Paul, J. (2022). Examining guests' experience in luxury hotels: Evidence from an emerging market. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *38*(13–14), 1278–1306. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2022.2085768>

4.3 Research Question 3: How can Visual Marketing Increase Sales and Loyalty of National Brands?

Table 3. Impact of Visual Marketing on National Brand Loyalty

Factor Category	Key Factors	Percentage
Brand Uniqueness	International brand influence (visual design)	50%
	Reinforce brand uniqueness	45%
China Chic Revival	Reasons for buying China chic brands	60%
	Outsourcing for uniqueness + China chic	55%

As shown in Table 3, effective visual strategies for national brands involve leveraging "China Chic".⁷ As noted by Jiao, the "Shanzhai" phenomenon reflects a complex sociological resistance that brands must navigate by reinforcing genuine cultural uniqueness rather than simple imitation.⁸

Key Analysis: Effective visual marketing enhances national brand loyalty via brand recognition (distinct visuals), emotional resonance (nostalgia/cultural connection), aspirational imagery (60% buy China chic for lifestyle appeal), and social proof (influencer endorsements). Consistency across channels and trend adaptability also strengthen loyalty.

5 Conclusion & Future Research

5.1 Conclusion

Visual marketing grants beauty brands competitive advantages via distinct identity and emotional bonds, while counterfeits exploit packaging and low prices to drive purchases. Plagiarism causes brand confusion and erodes trust, demanding robust brand protection. For national brands, visual strategies leveraging cultural uniqueness (China chic) boost loyalty, but a balance between visual appeal and value is critical amid economic sluggishness.

⁷ Laros, F. J. M., & Steenkamp, J.-B. E. M. (2005). Emotions in consumer behavior: A hierarchical approach. *Journal of Business Research*, *58*, 1437–1445. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2004.10.007>

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⁸ Jiao, R. S. (2010). Global consumption and grassroots resistance: A sociological interpretation of the shanzhai phenomenon. *Journal of Humanities*, (4), 155–159. <https://doi.org/10.15895/j.cnki.rwzz.2010.04.023>

5.2 Limitations & Future Research

Limitations include small sample size, geographical/age biases, and self-reported data subjectivity. Future research should explore visual marketing's interplay with intellectual property, adaptation to economic fluctuations, and cross-cultural comparisons of domestic/international brands to enhance global applicability.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaire (Abbreviated)

1. Basic Information: Gender, Age, Occupation, Monthly beauty expenditure.
2. Core Questions:
 - Main access to brand information (social media/physical stores/etc.).
 - Key purchase factors (brand/quality/price/packaging design/etc.).
 - Whether visual design influences new brand purchases or rejection.
 - Experience of mistaking counterfeits due to visual elements.
 - Attitudes toward counterfeit visual plagiarism and purchase motives.
 - Views on national brands' visual marketing (cultural elements/eco-friendly packaging).

Appendix 2: Interview Outline (Abbreviated)

1. Beauty purchase experiences and encounters with counterfeits via visual misleading.
2. Attitudes toward counterfeits' visual imitation and impact on purchasing decisions.
3. Attractive visual elements (packaging/logo/advertising images).
4. Effective visual marketing strategies for national brand loyalty.
5. Social media's influence on beauty product choices.
6. Attitudes toward visual design plagiarism and brand trust.

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