

CASE STUDY

# OpSec Security Helps Protect Valentino Icon by Shutting Down Global Counterfeit Operation



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**Thanks to Valentino's ongoing relationship with OpSec Security, the fashion house has been able to tackle brand infringements head on.**

Founded in 1960 by Valentino Garavani and Giancarlo Giammetti, Valentino is one of the world's most well-known fashion houses. With its Creative Director, Pierpaolo Piccioli, being awarded the prestigious 'Designer of the Year' award at the 2020 CFDA Awards, Valentino is a major player in the luxury division and its iconic Rockstud shoes among the most instantly recognizable designs in today's fashion industry.

For brands across the luxury goods market, brand protection is of paramount concern. These high value brands with iconic designs can often find themselves a target for online bad actors who are part of a **\$460 billion counterfeit goods industry**.

Understanding the importance of brand protection, Valentino has worked with OpSec since August 2015, in order to monitor for threats and take immediate action. A cornerstone of its collections, Valentino's Rockstud range of shoes have sold out every year since their debut in 2010 and generated over \$152 million in sales between 2014 and 2019 alone. This demand has been capitalized on by counterfeiters who have been imitating the iconic Rockstud design and selling these products on various online platforms.

However, thanks to Valentino's ongoing relationship with OpSec Online, the fashion house has been able to tackle brand infringements head on, and recently worked with them and Amazon to hold a prolific counterfeiter to account.



# Threats to the iconic Valentino Rockstud design

In February 2019, OpSec's online monitoring solutions alerted Valentino's legal department to a new online threat, identifying several listings on Amazon platforms featuring shoes that were identical to the protected Rockstud design.

By working together, Valentino's legal team was able to approach Amazon with the information that its brand was being misused on the website. Equipped with the initial information about the infringements, Valentino shared this information with Amazon, which allowed it to identify the seller of the counterfeit goods as Jing Li or Kaitlyn Pan.

Following this, OpSec's Shanghai team was able to locate additional information on the online presence of the seller, including its business license. After thorough investigations, additional infringing listings were identified and the contact details of the seller were found on Taobao, an online marketplace and part of the Alibaba Group.

This combination of information provided the basis for further offline investigations into how the brand was being misused by Kaitlyn Pan.

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The Valentino Legal Team said, “Armed with the knowledge of the seller provided by OpSec, we were able to facilitate a test purchase of the counterfeit goods by our law firm, Aren’t Fox LLP. OpSec then helped us target all of the brand infringements relating to the Rockstud design it had identified on social media, websites and auction sites, including Instagram, Facebook, Taobao, and eBay.”

With the good understanding of how the Valentino brand was being misused and by whom, Aren’t Fox was able to send a cease and desist letter to Kaitlyn Pan, which stated:

- Immediately discontinue the unauthorized use of the Rockstud designs, including by ceasing all manufacturing and sale of the infringing shoes and removing the infringing shoes from your website(s), Amazon.com, social media pages, and all other sales and marketing channels;
- Provide the details, including company name, contact name, address, and telephone number of your supplier and/or manufacturer (if different) of the infringing shoes; and
- Undertake to not engage in any future unlawful use of Valentino’s intellectual property, including, but not limited to, the Rockstud designs and any confusingly similar design elements.



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### **Taking legal action alongside Amazon**

After liaising with OpSec about the brand infringements it had detected on its website, Amazon reached out to the Valentino legal team about progressing its case against Kaitlyn Pan.

The Valentino Legal Team worked with the Amazon IP Crime Unit and filed a joint lawsuit against Kaitlyn Pan Group, LLC based in Buffalo, New York, and New York resident Hao Pan for counterfeiting the brand's iconic Rockstud shoes. Thanks to insight provided by OpSec, they were able to pinpoint that the Kaitlyn Pan Group, LLC was offering the infringing products for sale on its own website, as well as Amazon, which is in violation of Amazon's policies and Valentino's intellectual property rights.

### **How Valentino continues to protect its brand**

With the continuous support of OpSec, Valentino has been able to successfully carry out online brand protection activity on online platforms. This has had a profound effect, enabling the removal of more than 7,000 listings selling counterfeit Valentino products across several marketplaces, more than 360 websites and over 1,000 social media accounts. This minimizes the risk of customers being deceived into buying fake products and helps Valentino ensure its customers only ever receive authentic products and the high quality of service associated with its brand.

The Valentino Legal Team added, "The swift enforcement action means Kaitlyn Pan is no longer an active threat to the Valentino brand, but we're very aware of the continued presence of counterfeiters. Working with OpSec gives us peace of mind that we'll be able to catch any new threats early and be able to swiftly take the appropriate action to shut these counterfeiters down. The damage these bad actors do to the fashion industry is staggering, so protecting our brand remains of vital importance."

OpSec Security prides itself on the superior and ongoing service it provides to Valentino and others in the fashion industry and remains committed to ensuring that consumers are enjoying authentic products. For more information on how OpSec's forward-thinking technology and end-to-end solutions could play a vital role in safeguarding your brand's products, reputation and revenue, get in touch today:



## About OpSec

OpSec is a market leader in brand, transaction cards, and government protection and provides a comprehensive suite of end-to-end solutions, including advanced physical security technologies, supply chain track and trace services, and online and e-commerce monitoring and analysis. We can help you find the right solution for your brand or agency, your budget and your protection goals.

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