



Instagram as a wholesale store for fake Apple products?

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Italy, US · March 11 2021

1.

INTRODUCTION

This study plans to shed some light on a widespread but overlooked phenomenon: a counterfeit market exchange for Apple products quietly growing on one of today's largest social media platform, Instagram. A journey inspired by a simple episode happened last fall to our chief programmer, Andrea.

When he borrowed from a friend a new power charger for his drained iPhone, the charger simply exploded into pieces, risking to cause real harm to them. His friend told him that he bought it as “a special offer” from an Instagram seller profile. However a quick visit on Instagram revealed that that profile no longer existed. Certainly not a first time, but still a quite serious situation - for both a charger that explodes and a seller profile that went missing.

Our research starts right here: an Apple power charger, advertised and sold on Instagram as an “original Apple product”, that suddenly explodes and its shop seller that mysteriously vanished. Being this far from a unique case, we decided to further analyze this issue, not only because it confirms Instagram's difficulties in addressing its long-standing counterfeit market but also because it could open up a disturbing scenario for Apple itself.

As our first project carried in 2021, this research builds on previous data analysis, starting with a 2013 study about illicit activities on Twitter¹. Our overall results unveiled a complex illegal marketplace taking shape on major social media platforms, something that deserves greater attention from all stakeholders involved – police and judicial systems, platform owners, high-tech companies.

¹ Nicole Perloth, “Fake Twitter Followers Becomes a Multimillion Dollar Business”, The New York Times, <https://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/04/05/fake-twitter-followers-becomes-multimillion-dollar-business/>

The same is true for other dangerous activities we uncovered in recent years: the Islamic State use of Instagram to spread news and recruit new members²; digital propaganda campaigns to push then-candidate Donald Trump in 2016³, and to attack him as President in 2019⁴; QAnon conspiracy theories in 2020⁵ and Facebook unwillingness or inability to stop them.

Based on innovative methods of analysis and a collaborative approach, such independent projects enabled other researchers and entities to further address and understand the depth and complexity of such phenomena involving current social media platforms.

This new research on illicit markets of fake Apple products combines proven data analysis techniques, visual recognition methods, and hands-on knowledge to expose a new level of illicit behaviors taking place online and their serious consequences for consumers and companies at large.

² Lori Hinnat, "Islamic State backers find ephemeral platform in Instagram", AP News, <https://www.apnews.com/97119155ed934ad9ad438890a29828a27>

³ Thomas Brewster, "Donald Trump's Instagram Following Is Full Of Bots And Russians", Forbes, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/thomasbrewster/2016/11/07/25000-russians-follow-trump-instagram-bots-everywhere/>

⁴ Crispian Balmer, "Coordinated anti-Trump campaign emerges on Instagram: study", Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-instagram/coordinated-anti-trump-campaign-emerges-on-instagram-study>

⁵ Alex Heath, "Facebook's QAnon Ban Fails to Curb Its Reach, Security Firm Says", The Information, <https://www.theinformation.com/briefings/677ccf>

2.

OUR PREVIOUS STUDIES ON ONLINE COUNTERFEIT ACTIVITIES

As mentioned earlier, our Ghost Data team conducted a series of research projects on online counterfeit activities.

In a 2014 study originally published on Bloomberg⁶, we exposed several users that openly bought advertising space on Facebook in order to sell their counterfeit merchandise. Two years later, a Washington Post story was based on our research on sales of various counterfeit products taking place on Instagram⁷.

A 2018 update⁸ was exclusive published by NBC News, which later run another story about our investigative analysis on fake US banknotes circulating again on Instagram⁹.

Finally, last year in an exclusive study for The Wall Street Journal¹⁰ we exposed thousands of sellers filling Instagram with uncertified or counterfeit face masks in the midst of the Covid pandemic.

⁶ John Hendrickson, "Turns Out Those Facebook Ads Are too Good to Be True", Esquire, <https://www.esquire.com/style/a31911/facebook-counterfeit-goods/>

⁷ Andrea Stroppa et al, "Social media and luxury goods counterfeit: a growing concern for government, industry and consumers worldwide" , Washington Post, https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-switch/files/2016/05/IG_A2016_ST2.pdf

⁸ Andrea Stroppa et al, "Instagram and counterfeiting in 2019: new features, old problems", Ghost Data, https://ghostdata.io/report/Instagram_Counterfeiting_GD.pdf

⁹ Michael Cappetta, "On Instagram, counterfeit cash is for sale – and a short search away", NBC News, <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/instagram-counterfeit-cash-sale-short-search-away-n1031821>

¹⁰ Andrea Stroppa et al, "COVID-19 EMERGENCY MASKS & PPE MONITORING UNRELIABLE SALES & SCAMS ON SOCIAL MEDIA", Ghost Data, https://ghostdata.io/report/gd_covid19_masks_.pdf

3.

REACH AND DANGER OF ONLINE COUNTERFEIT MARKETS

A 2020 U.S. Government report for the President highlighted the rapid growth of counterfeit merchandise sold through digital channels¹¹, despite more stringent measures deployed by police and custom officials.

A similar report, issued in February 2017 by EUIPO, European Union Intellectual Property Office, underlined a widespread economic damage in the (fake) smartphone market: 45.3 billion euros were lost worldwide in 2015 (12.9% of all legitimate sales)¹².

Yet when we talk about counterfeit electronic products and accessories, we should consider not only the economic impact for the industries involved, but also the safety of electronic devices themselves and their impact on people's health.

Given the major role played by Apple in this sector, we should also mention an extensive report issued by Electrical Safety First, a UK charity dedicated to reducing deaths and injuries caused by electrical accidents – whose title says it all: “Counterfeit and imitation Apple chargers: 98% Safety Test Failure Rate”¹³.

¹¹ DHS, "Combating Trafficking in Counterfeit and Pirated Goods Report to the President of the United States", DHS.Gov, https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/20_0124_plcy_counterfeit-pirated-goods-report_01.pdf

¹² EUIPO, "THE ECONOMIC COST OF IPR INFRINGEMENT IN THE SMARTPHONES SECTOR", Euiipo.europa.eu, https://euipo.europa.eu/tunnel-web/secure/webdav/guest/document_library/observatory/resources/research-and-studies/ip_infringement/study11/smartphone_sector_en.pdf

¹³ Electrical Safety First, "Counterfeit and imitation Apple chargers Counterfeit", ESF, <https://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/media/1119/counterfeit-and-imitation-apple-chargers.pdf>

This detailed study shows unequivocally that counterfeit chargers can cause serious technical problems to Apple devices and are a danger to safety and health of people using them. Quoting the report conclusions: “Over half of the chargers failed the electric strength test. Adequate insulation and creepage distances are critical to prevent users from coming into contact with potentially harmful voltages and currents over the lifetime of the product ...[and from] real and unnecessary risk of fire and electric shock.”

At the same time, several media outlets published stories about seizures of counterfeit Apple products around the world^{14 15 16}. It is worth noticing that such lucrative market is not limited to devices like iPhones, iPads or iWatches, but more importantly to their spare parts and accessories: screens, cameras, keys, batteries, headphones, and power chargers.

Our study will focus on headphones, power chargers, and cable wires, even if it's obvious that Instagram has now become a showcase for a comprehensive global counterfeit marketplace of Apple products. Rather than addressing online "resellers", we will expose those China-based suppliers and intermediaries selling wholesale counterfeit Apple products across the world.

¹⁴ Clifford Lo, "Apple iPhone and Samsung fakes among HK\$1 million counterfeit haul seized in raid on Hong Kong repair shop, which also served clients in United States, United Kingdom and Australia", Scmp, <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/law-and-crime/article/3015210/apple-iphone-and-samsung-fakes-among-hk1-million>

¹⁵ Ben Lovejoy, "Guy who smuggled 40,000 fake Apple products into US gets three years in prison", 9to5Mac, <https://9to5mac.com/2019/07/31/fake-apple-products/>

¹⁶ Chance Miller, "Counterfeit iPhone and iPad repair scheme costs Apple over \$6 million, authorities say", 9to5Mac, <https://9to5mac.com/2019/11/13/counterfeit-iphone-ipad-repair-scheme/>

4.

OUR METHODOLOGY: REVERSE ANALYSIS

In our previous research, we started by looking for hashtags leading to sellers of counterfeit goods and then we re-build their networks by analyzing their shared followers and user following. For example, in the fake fashion market, we monitored hashtags like #LouisVuitton or #Gucci.

However, this methodology didn't work here: hashtags such as #Apple, #iPhone, or #AppleWatch are being used in millions of online posts and thus produce too much "noise", meaning that the majority of these posts have no relation whatsoever with counterfeiting.

Also, as we will see later on, wholesale counterfeiters prefer to avoid any hashtags, in order to remain invisible to the general public and thus hard to track down.

After an in-depth analysis of the overall phenomenon, we therefore decided to directly focus on those (virtual or physical) Instagram stores selling Apple products or offering assistance and repairs for them.

It should be noted that Apple sells parts and/or provide services through its online site and its physical stores, along with a chain of authorized resellers and service providers¹⁷.

Recently Apple also launched MFi Program: a licensing system to certify peripherals compatible with iPod, iPhone and iPad products. A very limited number of manufacturers have obtained this license¹⁸.

¹⁷ Authorized Apple, Apple.com, <https://locate.apple.com/pr/en/>

¹⁸ Authorized Manufacturers, Apple.com, <https://mfi.apple.com/account/authorized-manufacturers>

5.

OUR METHODOLOGY: REVERSE ANALYSIS

In order to properly sift throughout this broad environment, we started by monitoring a sample of 100,000 followers (out of 25 million total) of the official Apple account, we were able to identify over 286 Apple stores and/or service providers around the world.

In particular, we analyzed name, bio and last 5 posts for each account, extrapolating any reference to an Apple store/provider or to certain keywords (in blue here below) but excluding all emojis.

Apple	Tecnico	Assistencia	accessories
iPad	offer	Reparatur	Support
iPhone	garantia	am	Recovery
iWatch	warranty	pm	acesories
airpods	garanzia	Seller	street
macbook	garantie		avenue
Fix	Reparacion		zip
Repair	iOS		square
celular			Shop
phone			[...]
cell	Technician		

We also translated those keywords in several languages (including Russian, Chinese, Thai, Malay, Arabic [...]) and applied a visual recognition software: using the logo detection API¹⁹, we quickly identified those posts including an Apple brand reference in any form.



OCR²⁰ was also used to look up the same keywords within both post descriptions and images themselves.

Here below are some pictures of Instagram stores promoting their Apple products or technical support. Often they are an online showcase of legitimate brick-and-mortar stores, while some are just obscure "digital entities" – we could not determine their actual operative structure and whether they were official Apple licensees.

¹⁹ "Detect Logos", Google, <https://cloud.google.com/vision/docs/detecting-logos>

²⁰ "Detect text in images", Google <https://cloud.google.com/vision/docs/ocr>

To confirm our findings, we also carried out a manual verification on the entire sample.

The image displays seven overlapping screenshots of Instagram profiles, each representing a different business. The profiles are as follows:

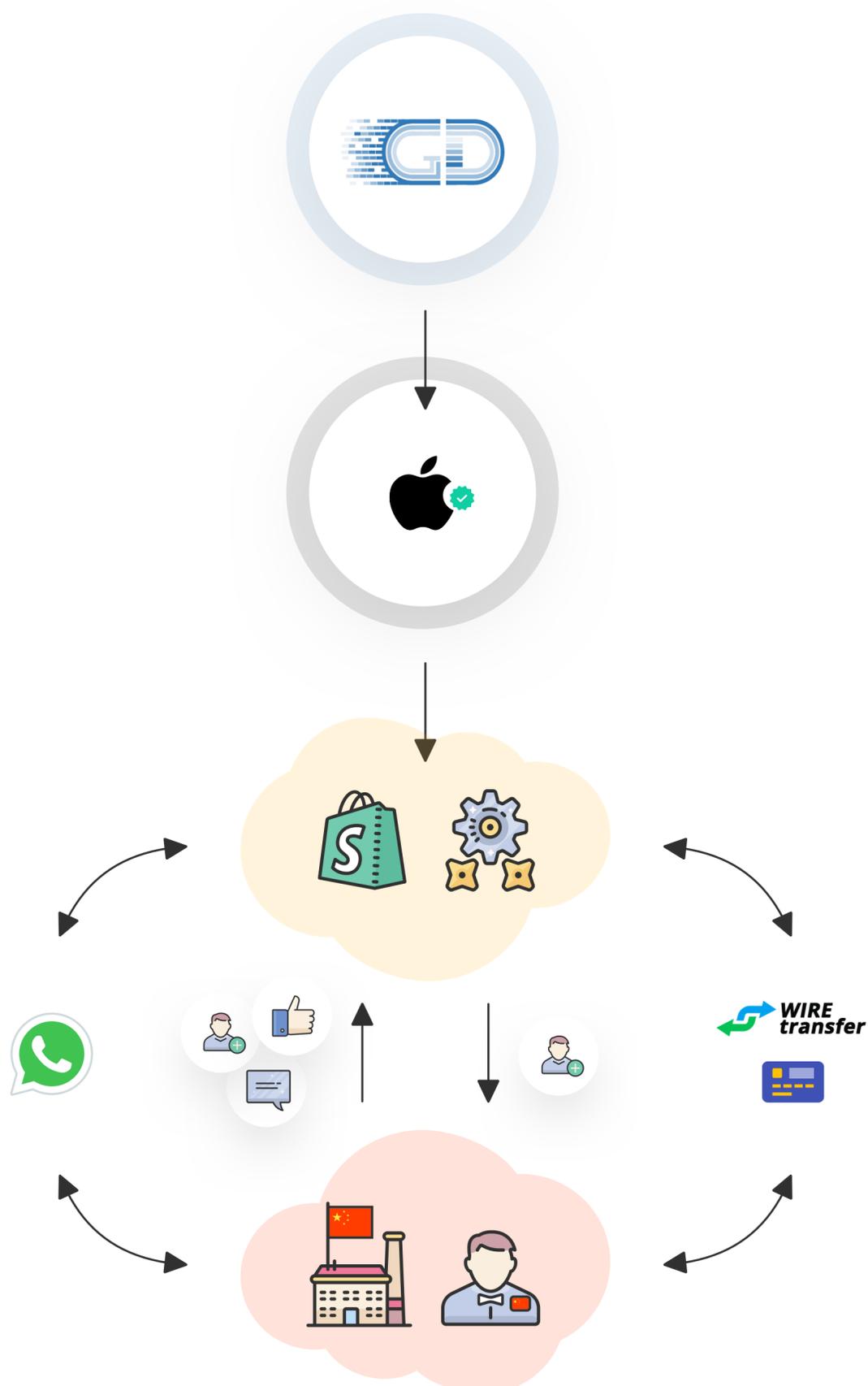
- Profile 1:** A profile with a black and white circular profile picture. It has 717 posts, 6,762 followers, and 3,039 following. The bio lists "Assistência técnica especializada premium em produtos Apple;" and "Vendas de Iphone, Apple watch, Ipad, Macbook e Imac;".
- Profile 2:** A profile with a black and white circular profile picture. It has 24 posts, 19.7k followers, and 6,713 following. The bio is "Assistência Apple" and "Assistência especializada em Apple #iPhone #iPad #AppleWatch". It also lists "Conserto em 20 minutos" and a WhatsApp contact.
- Profile 3:** A profile with a circular profile picture featuring an Apple logo. It has 312 posts, 12.4k followers, and 1 following. The bio is "Apple_Shop" and "Product/Service". It includes a location "KZ" and a link "Ссылка на Whastapp wa.me".
- Profile 4:** A profile with a circular profile picture featuring the rainbow Apple logo. It has 145 posts, 5,049 followers, and 992 following. The bio is "Apple Shop". It lists "Direct", "Whatsapp:", and "Dubai".
- Profile 5:** A profile with a circular profile picture featuring a red square with a white cross. It has 6 posts, 255 followers, and 17 following. The bio is "Iphone Repair".
- Profile 6:** A profile with a circular profile picture featuring a red ring. It has 436 posts, 1,088 followers, and 37 following. The bio is ".gadgets" and "Kenya KE". It lists "Product/Service" and "ONLINE SHOP".
- Profile 7:** A profile with a circular profile picture featuring a black and white Apple logo. It has 12.4k followers and 1 following. The bio is "Apple_Shop". It includes a location "KZ" and a link "Ссылка на Whastapp wa.me".

Each profile includes a "Follow" button and a three-dot menu icon. The screenshots also show various icons for services like "Lockdown", "Clientes", "Promoção", "Delivery", "Nossa histó...", "Apple Watch", and "WhatsApp".

6.

METHODOLOGY USED TO IDENTIFY WHOLESALE COUNTERFEIT AND CHINA-BASED SELLERS

As mentioned earlier, however, our research goal is not to identify Apple resellers, unauthorized providers or Instagram users selling counterfeit Apple products as an amateur merchant. We were rather focusing on wholesaler sellers or factories using Instagram as a vehicle for large illicit sales of counterfeit Apple products.



We therefore proceed to monitor 75,000 randomly-chosen followers of those over 286 Apple stores and/or service providers active on Instagram. This step enabled us to identify such factories and wholesale resellers that are most presumably based in China and have no interest in selling directly to a customer, given that they all require a “minimum quantity” order. In other words, these Instagram accounts seek to become “trusted suppliers” to legitimate virtual and physical stores and services around the world.

To identify these wholesale sellers, we looked up for specific keywords which were then validated by each profile analysis. These keywords were searched in each account name, bio, description and images (with OCR) of their latest 50 posts.

Here is a list of keywords used:

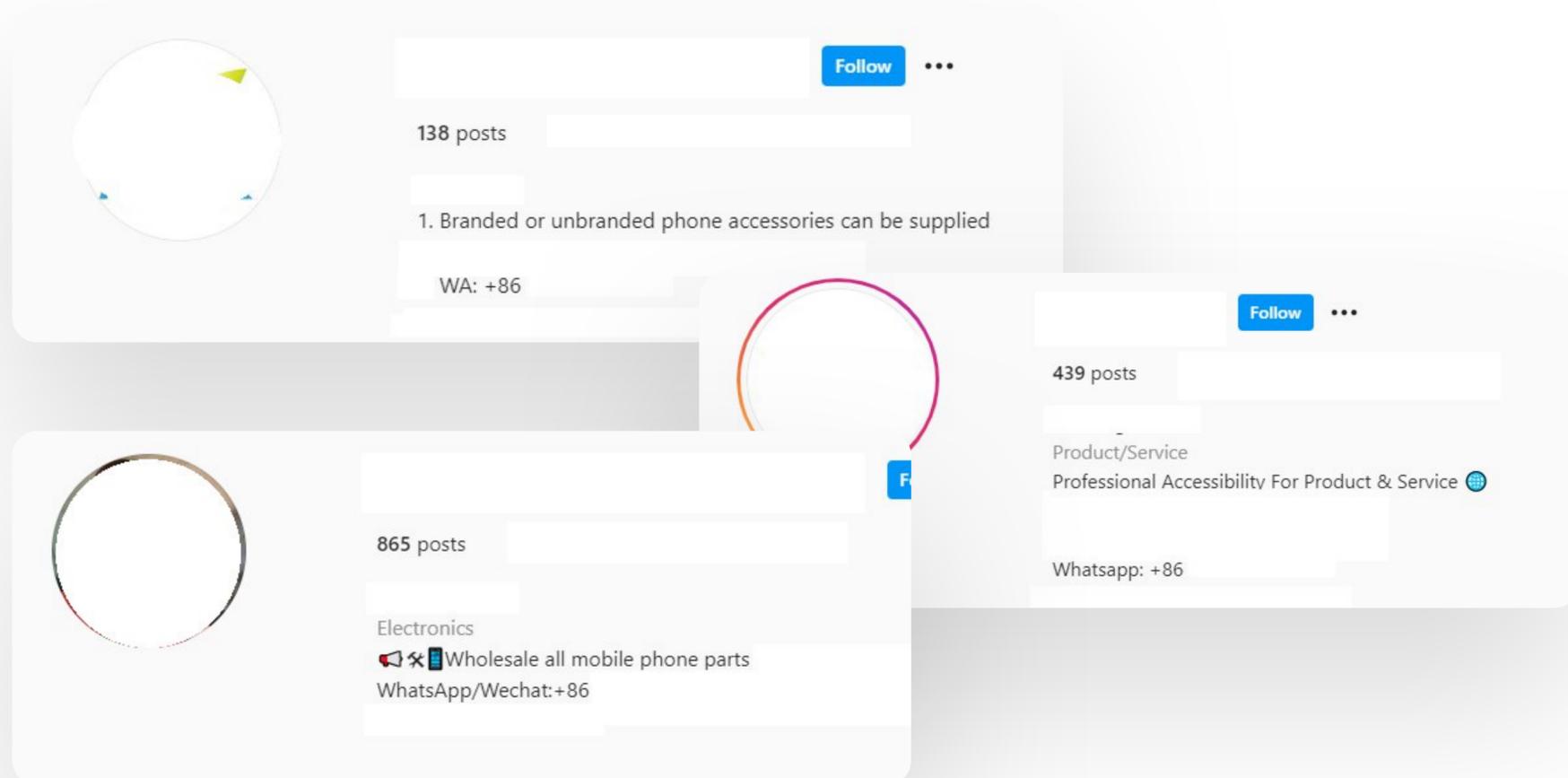
Apple	outlet
iPad	china
iPhone	parts
iWatch	airpods
airpods	cable
macbook	charger
factory	iOS
wholesale	earpod
manufacturer	[0086]
supplier	[+86]
distributor	battery
export	screen
machines	lcd
oled	[...]

We focused indeed on resellers and companies presumably from China: that's where are based hardware companies with extraordinary manpower capacity²¹ and also numerous entities dedicated to counterfeiting. It is also interesting, from a strategic and political viewpoint, to note that, while Instagram access is blocked in China²², those accounts are eager to use a US social media platform to damage a major US company and to spread everywhere their communication and business strategy.

In addition to keywords related to China telephone country code, we analyzed geotags, web hosting and email services, and languages and character coding²³ used.

These techniques and visual recognition tools enabled us to find a large number of sellers of counterfeit wholesale goods, most likely based in China. These data were then validated with a careful manual review.

Here below are a few wholesale profile examples:



²¹ People's Daily Online, "China remains world's largest producer, consumer, exporter of consumer electronics", People.cn, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2019/0409/c90000-9564908.html>

²² Paige Leskin, "Here are all the major US tech companies blocked behind China's 'Great Firewall'", Business Insider, <https://www.businessinsider.com/major-us-tech-companies-blocked-from-operating-in-china-2019-5>

²³ „Detecting languages, Cloud translate API”, Google, <https://cloud.google.com/translate/docs/detecting-languages>

7.

GENERAL DATASETS

Our research study was a month long, from 8 February to 8 March 2021.

The following data were taken into consideration for each Instagram account identified a wholesaler/factory:

id	biography	N° Followings
user private (Y/N)	External URL	Posts (last 50)
username	N° Posts	Stories
profile picture	N° Followers	

The following data were taken into consideration for each post analyzed:

Date	N° Comments
Post Description	Geotags
Tags	URL media
N° Likes	

The following data were taken into consideration for each Instagram Story analyzed:

Date	URL Stories
Stories caption	Geotag
Tags	

8.

GENERAL DATASET SUMMARY



100 000

Followers of the @Apple
Instagram account



286

Sellers or service providers
following @Apple



75 000

Followers of accounts identified as Apple
product sellers or service providers



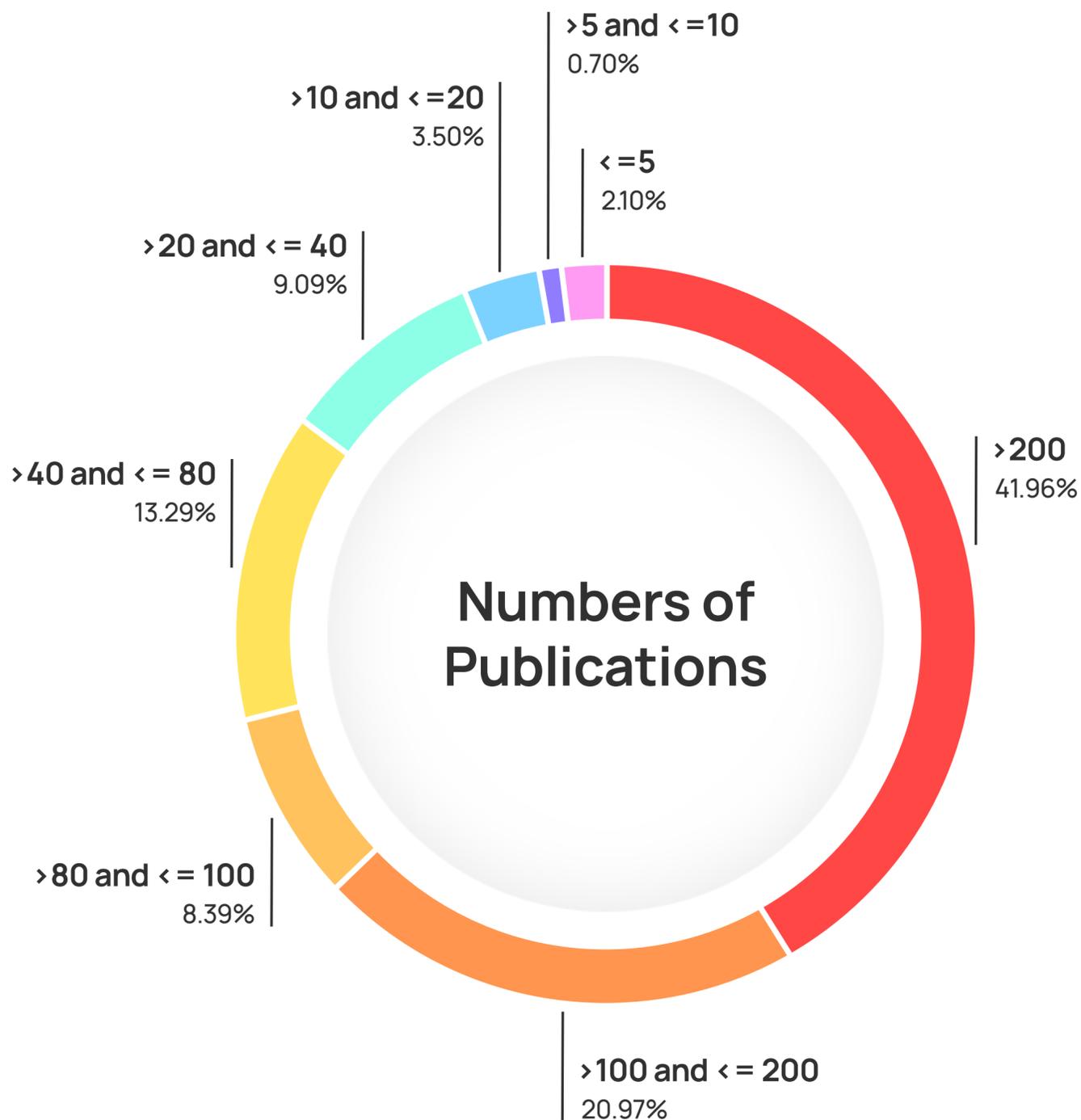
163

Wholesale sellers of counterfeit
Apple products

9.

BEHAVIOR OF COUNTERFEIT-PRODUCT SELLERS

We analyzed all posts and Stories published by each targeted accounts – as shown here below:



As we can see from the graph, these Instagram accounts uploaded a significant number of posts. About 60% of them have published over 100 posts. The overall total was 53,362 posts – with approximately 600,000 interactions (likes and comments).

As for the Stories section, from 15 to 21 February 2021 we counted a total 262 images and videos.

10.

DIFFERENT ACCOUNTS FOR DIFFERENT PURPOSES

It is interesting to note that these posts rarely include some hashtags, otherwise a very popular feature to reach and involve potentially interested users.

Instead these merchants avoid using hashtags probably because they create too much “noise” and to reach their target customers (stores, retailers, service shops) they prefer to follow a huge number of accounts.

We found that only 32% on a sample of 1,000 posts includes at least one hashtag, while a whopping 68% has no hashtag whatsoever.

It is also worth underlying the ratio between following and followers. While counterfeiters of luxury goods in the fashion industry try to have more followers than followings, especially those who seem to be legitimate online shops, these counterfeit-product accounts follow many more users compared to those that follow them. They have zero interest in producing “attractive” profiles: their goal is simply to reach and attract as many buyers as possible, leaving aside those Instagram “vanity metrics”.

Finally, here are the 12 most used keywords, as detected by our OCR analysis on a sample of 500 images.

Apple

iPhone

Quality

[+86]

WhatsApp

1:1

Wholesale

Airpods

Charger

Order

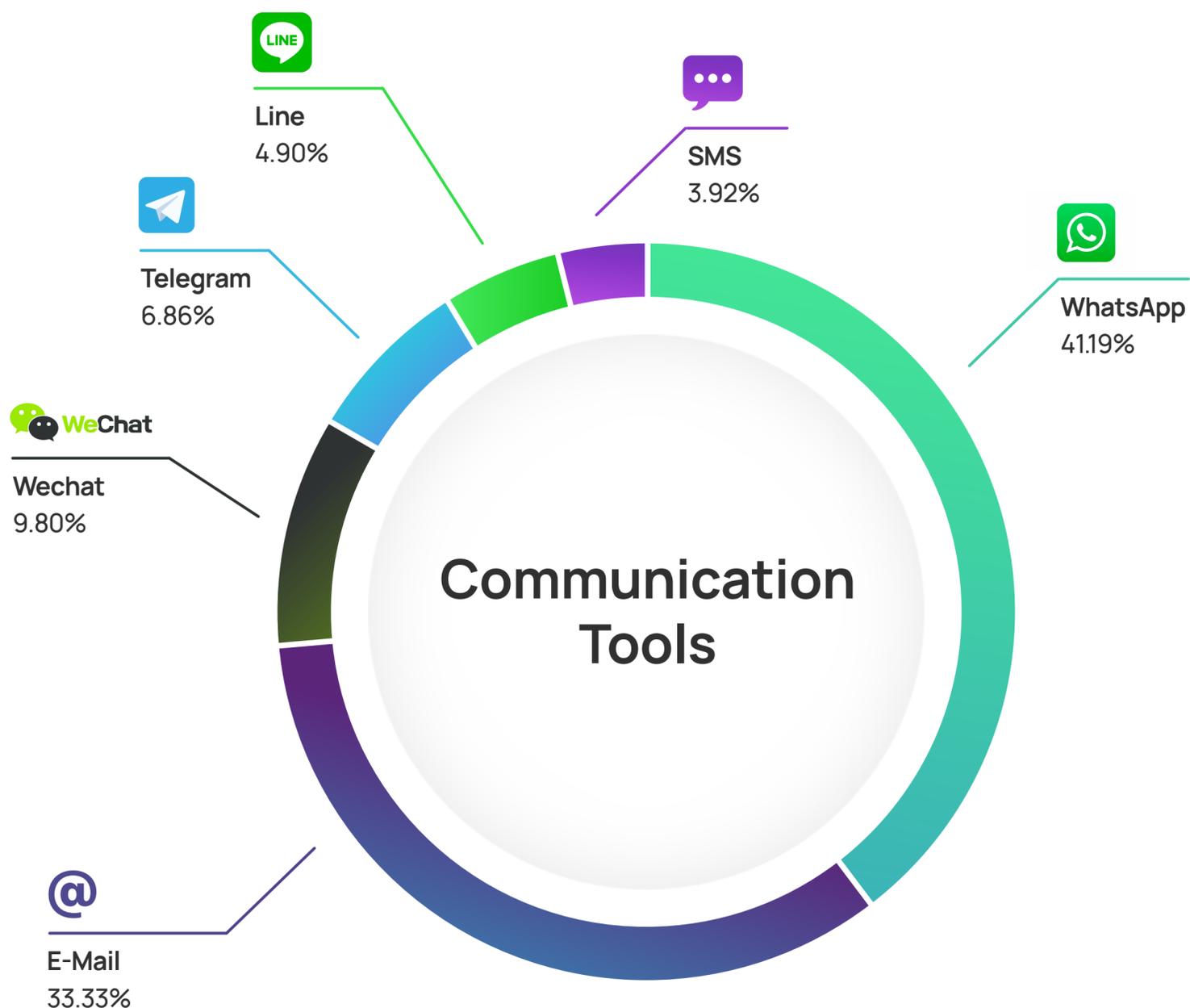
Cable

Screen

11.

COMMUNICATION TOOLS USED BY COUNTERFEIT-PRODUCT MERCHANTS

While Instagram is the top showcase platform for counterfeiters, their methods of IM communication are mostly based on mobile external applications. This is both for ease of use and security. Should Instagram close down a user account for some violation of their Terms of Service (ToS), the counterfeit merchant would lose any contact with his/her potential buyers.



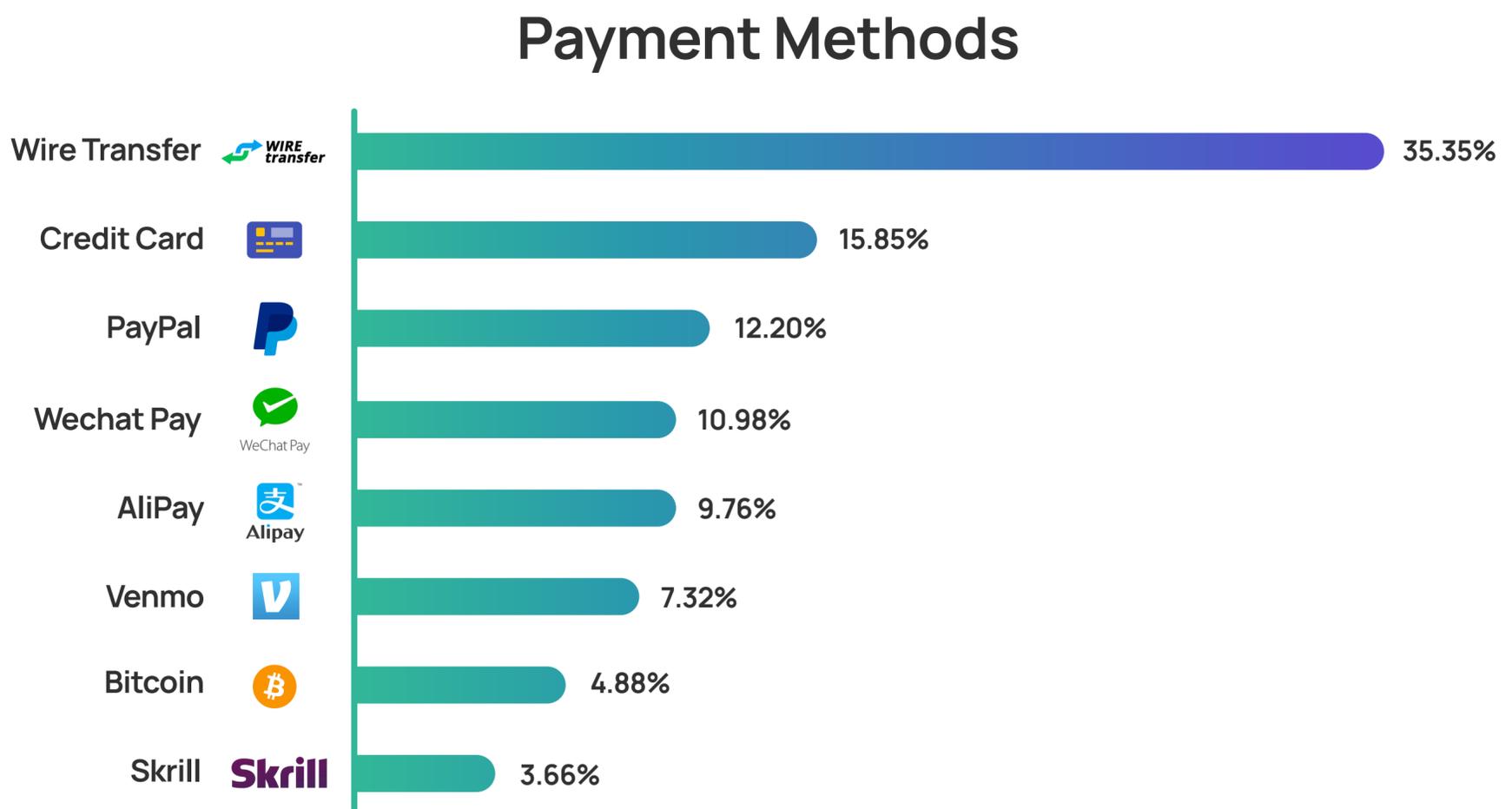
IM apps are usually more reliable and secure, providing end-to-end encryption, plenty of options and ease of use. Very low is also the risk of account closure due a violation of their ToS. Indeed, both Whatsapp and Wechat require detailed evidence that an account is being used to facilitate a sale of counterfeiting products. But even if an account on such IM apps is forcibly closed, it's easy and cheap to quickly open a new one: activating a virtual phone number today costs just a few cents²⁴.

²⁴ <https://valar-sms.com/>

12.

PAYMENT METHODS

As shown below, for most merchants a bank wire transfer is the top payment method, followed by credit cards and PayPal. They usually accept more than one payment method and an increasing number of them now also accepts Bitcoin payments.

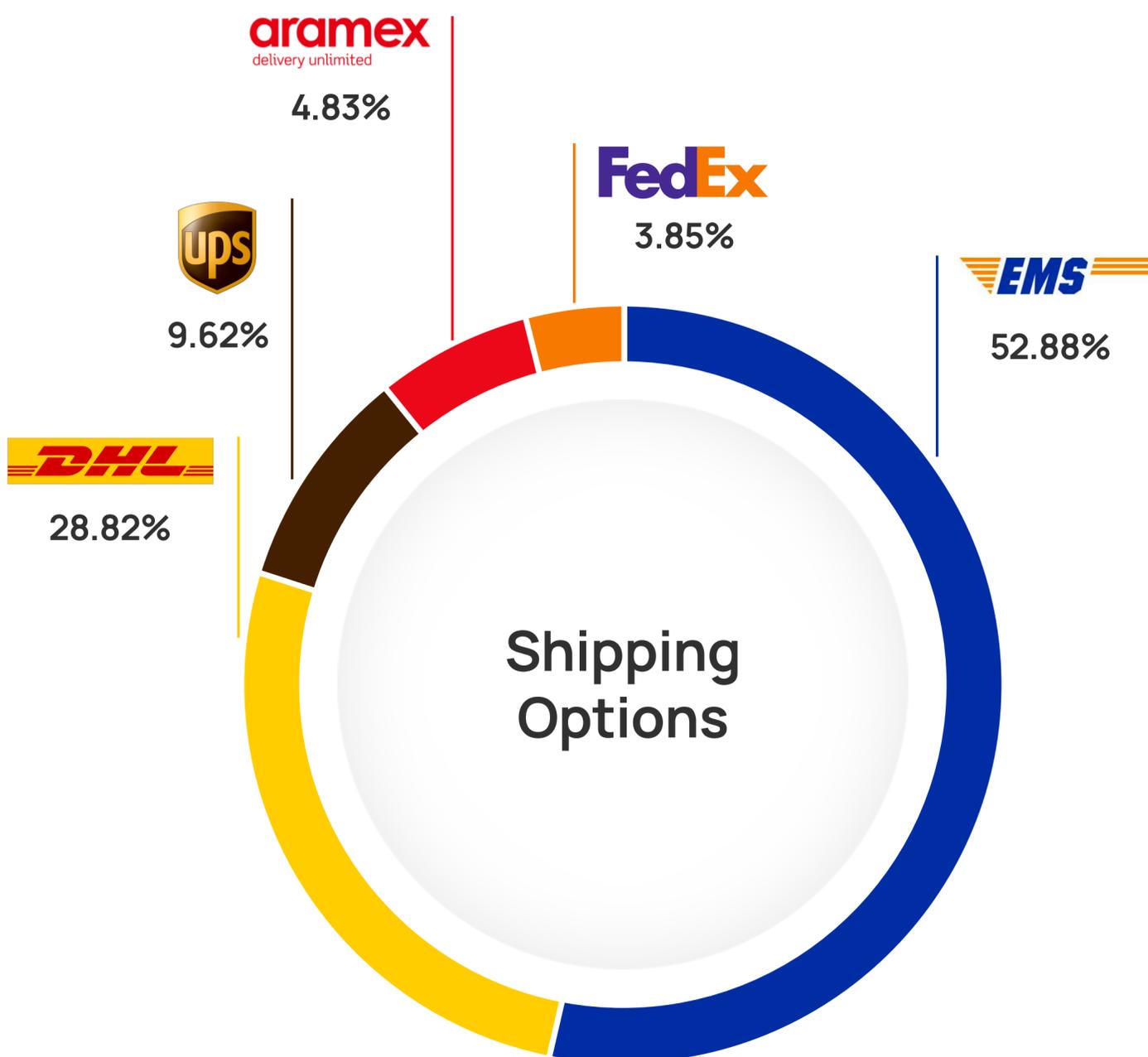


Unlike the market of counterfeit luxury items, mostly based on WeChat Pay and Paypal transactions, here bank wire transfers and credit cards combined account for about half of overall payments – probably due to a higher amount of money involved.

13.

SHIPPING OPTIONS

As shown in the chart below, DHL²⁵ e EMS²⁶ combined account for about 80% of overall shipping methods used by counterfeit-products merchants. A figure similar to shipping methods preferred by online sellers of fake luxury items, as mentioned in our previous research²⁷.



²⁵ "About us", DHL, <https://www.logistics.dhl/gb-en/home/about-us.html>

²⁶ "About us", EMS Global Delivery Network, <https://www.ems.post/en/about-us-contacts/about-us>

²⁷ Andrea Stroppa et al, "Instagram and counterfeiting in 2019: new features, old problems", Ghost Data, https://ghostdata.io/report/Instagram_Counterfeiting_GD.pdf

It is also worth to note a recent report by OECD²⁸ that outlines the exponential growth of shipping counterfeit items as “small parcels” anywhere in the world and the role played by shipping companies like DHL and others in this context.

After all, products such as cables, small accessories and generic spare parts, especially if sold without the original Apple packaging, can be easily packed into small cardboard boxes or padded envelopes.

²⁸ OECD, “TRADE IN FAKES IN SMALL PARCELS: FACTS AND TRENDS”, https://euipo.europa.eu/tunnel-web/secure/webdav/guest/document_library/observatory/documents/reports/Trade_in_fakes_in_small_parcel/Trade_in_Fakes_in_Small_Parcels_en.pdf

14.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTS VS. COUNTERFEITER ITEMS PRICING

Here below is a comparison chart about prices of some original Apple products (from its US online store) and those of randomly-chosen 10 wholesale counterfeit merchants on Instagram.

MagSafe Charger Apple (US pricing, \$)	39
Counterfeit (\$)	5,5
18/20W USB-C Power Adapter (US pricing, \$)	19
Counterfeit (\$)	3,25
USB-C to Lightning Cable (1m) (US pricing, \$)	19
Counterfeit (\$)	2,28
USB-C to Lightning Cable (2m) (US pricing, \$)	35
Counterfeit (\$)	3,5
USB-C Charge Cable (1m) (US pricing, \$)	19
Counterfeit (\$)	2,25
USB-C Charge Cable (2m) (US pricing, \$)	19
Counterfeit (\$)	2,5
AirPods with Charging Case (US pricing, \$)	159
Counterfeit (\$)	17,75
AirPods Pro (US pricing, \$)	249
Counterfeit (\$)	25
Apple Watch Magnetic Charger to USB-C Cable (1m) (US pricing, \$)	29
Counterfeit (\$)	3,5

We should note that counterfeit vendors always add shipping costs and offer some discount if a buyer doesn't need an "Apple Packaging included". Often they also require a Minimum Order Quantity of at least 100 items.

15.

POPULAR PRODUCTS AND PARTS

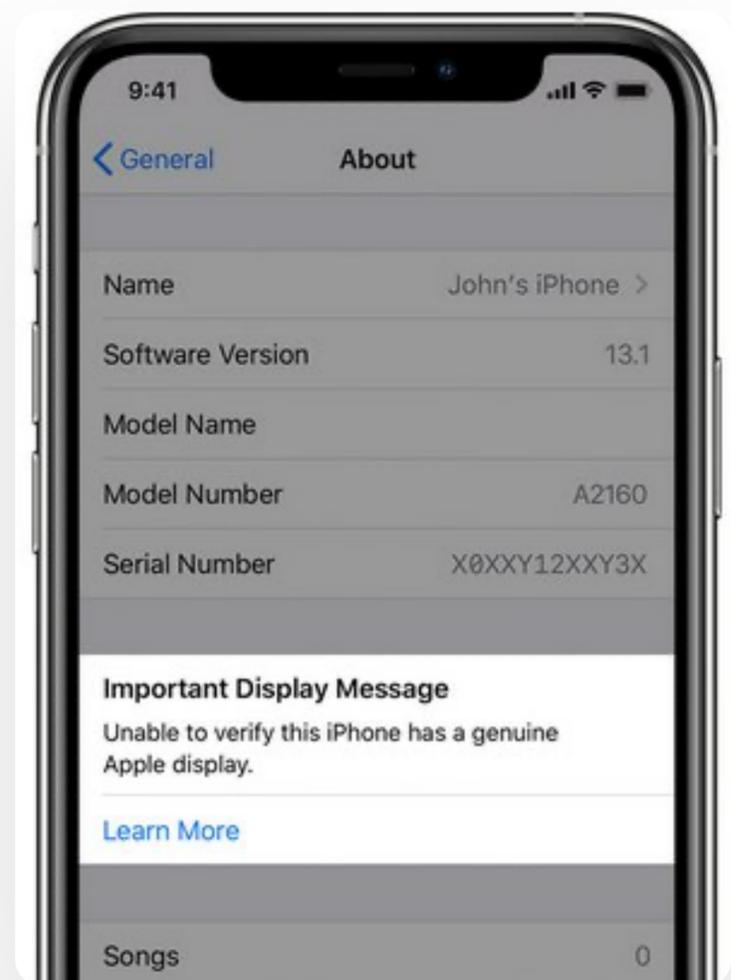
In regards to counterfeit parts, the online Apple tech support section features a specific warning:

“Beware of counterfeit parts.

Some counterfeit and third party power adapters and batteries may not be designed properly and could result in safety issues. To ensure you receive a genuine Apple battery during a battery replacement, we recommend visiting an Apple Store or Apple Authorized Service Provider. If you need a replacement adapter to charge your Apple device, we recommend getting an Apple power adapter.

Also non-genuine replacement displays may have compromised visual quality and may fail to work correctly. Apple-certified screen repairs are performed by trusted experts who use genuine Apple parts.”²⁹

A specific page of that website is also dedicated to device screen replacements³⁰. This is a lucrative sub-business section, as confirmed by the recurring use of keywords as "display", "screen", "LCD" both in user bios and descriptions/images of counterfeit-products merchants on Instagram. At least one of the above keywords appears in 25% of those account content.

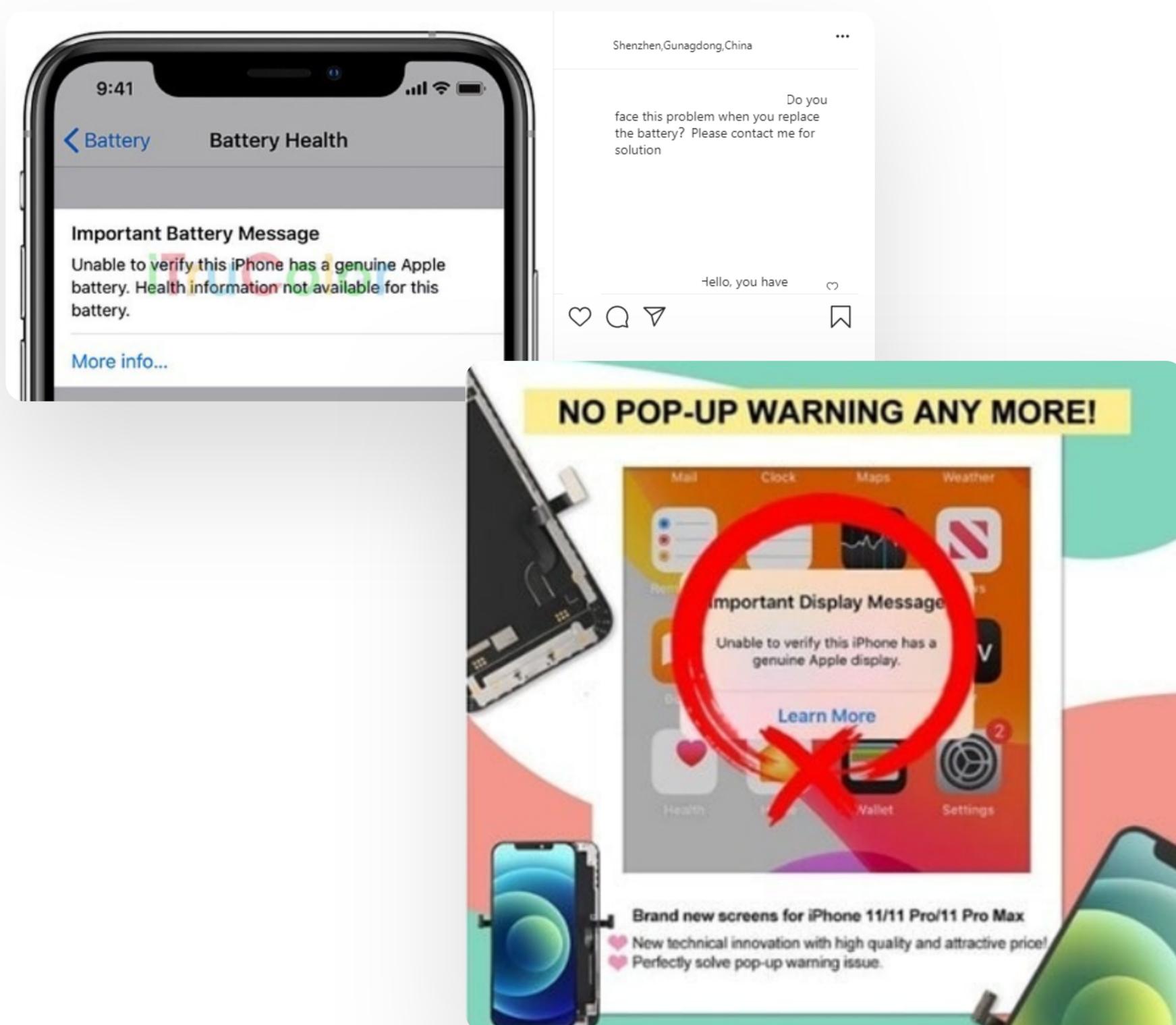


²⁹ "Support", Apple, <https://support.apple.com/>

³⁰ "About Genuine iPhone Displays", Apple, <https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT210321>

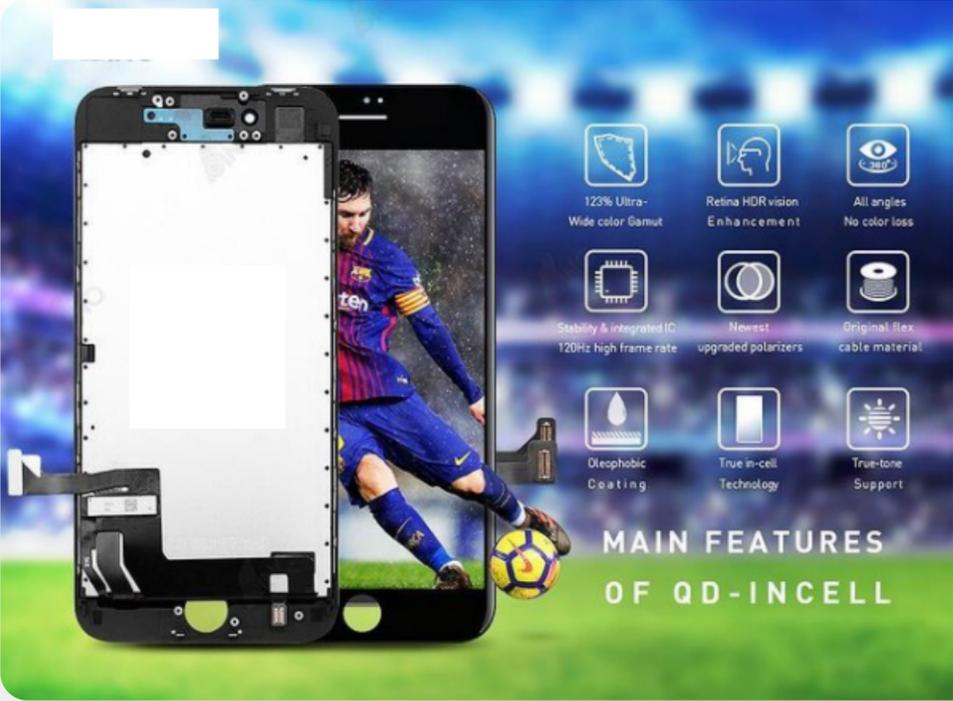
However, we noticed that Apple iOS attempts to notify its user when a non-genuine screen has been installed (see above screenshot). The same happens with batteries that are not original Apple replacements³¹.

Yet, according to two of these Instagram merchants, specialised in iPhone batteries and displays, those problems can be easily solved – as shown here below:



³¹ "About Genuine iPhone Batteries", Apple, <https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT210323>

Another vendor claims that his screens are of such high quality (“better than original”), that some of his customers resell them as Apple genuine replacements:



Shenzhen, Guangdong

New product available for iPhone

is better than original ,some of our customers even sold it as original!

MAIN FEATURES OF QD-INCELL

- 123% Ultra-Wide color Gamut
- Retina HDR vision Enhancement
- All angles No color loss
- Stability & integrated IC 120Hz high frame rate
- Newest upgraded polarizers
- Original flex cable material
- oleophobic Coating
- True in-cell Technology
- True-tone Support

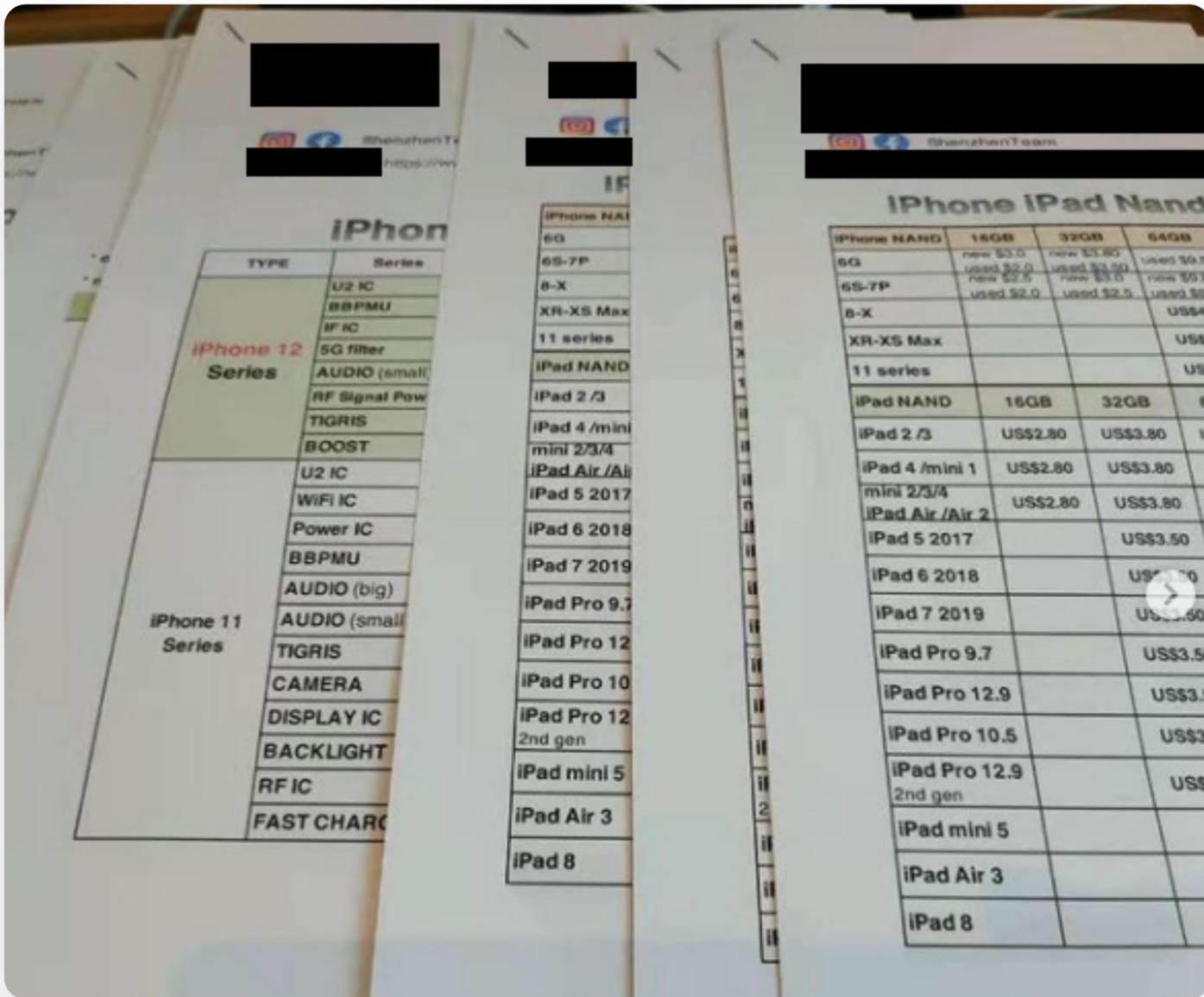
Here below is another picture published by a wholesale seller of iPhone LCD screen:



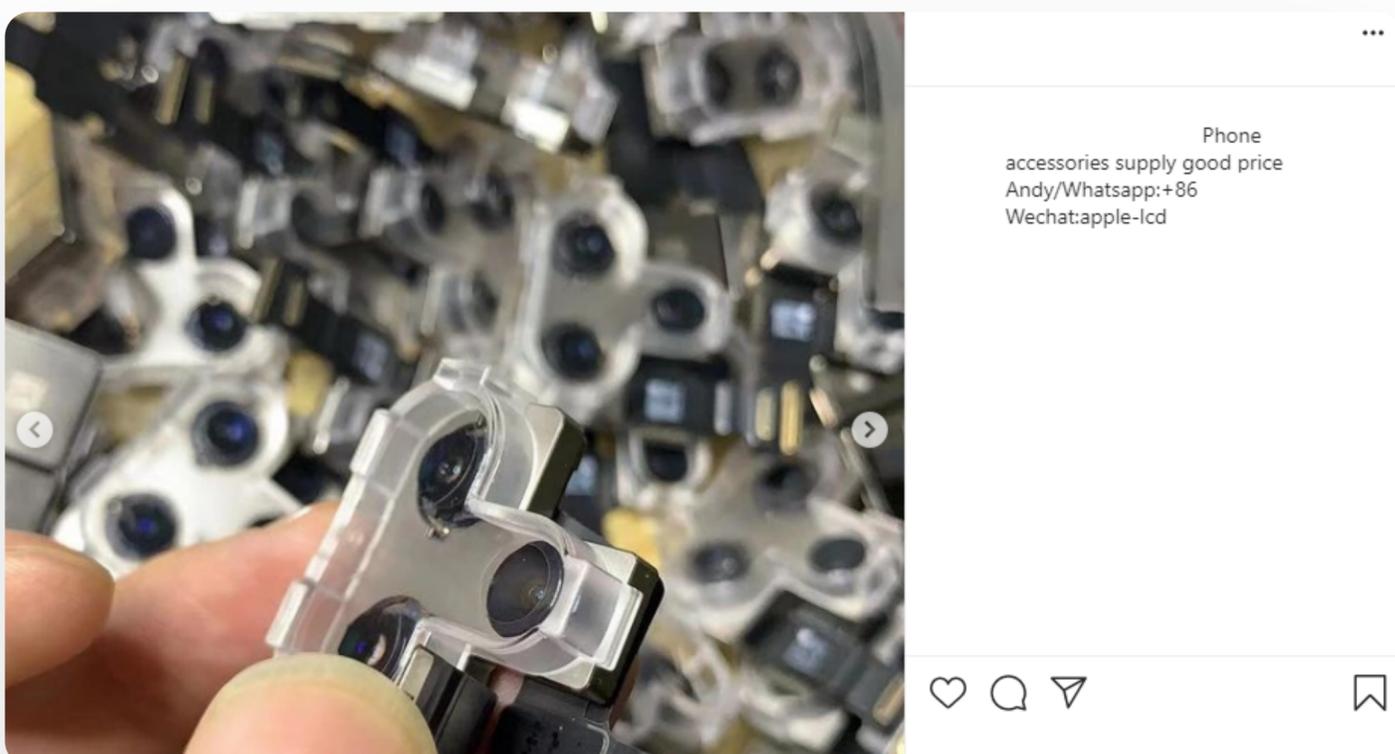
iPhone LCD in stocks, win time to order now. :)

The Large stock for iphone lcd screens ! Big quantity enjoy VIP big

There is also no lack of vendors specialized in parts, accessories and devices: here below is a listing of items offered by one of those counterfeit accounts we identified.



Other vendors provide useful close-ups of various spare parts:



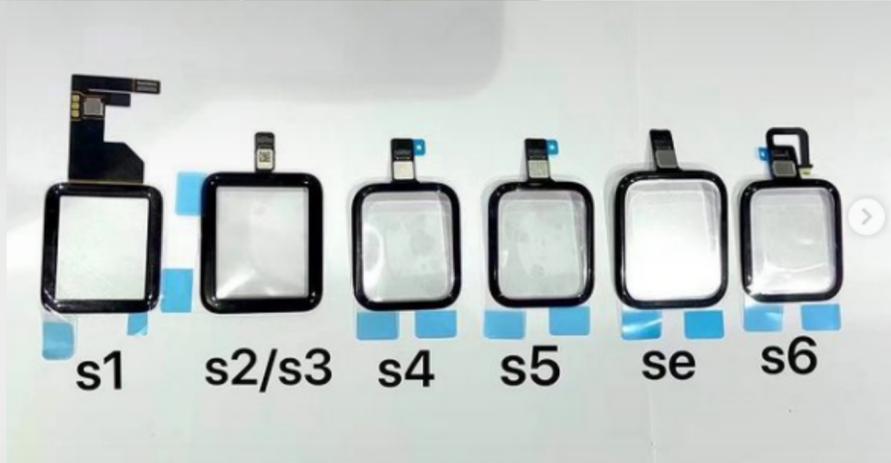


Shenzhen, Guangdong

iPhone parts
.Who interested?Just let me know .



Follow



Apple Watch glass ,
touch , lcd
Original and copy available
WhatsApp +86



Original home buttons for
iphone

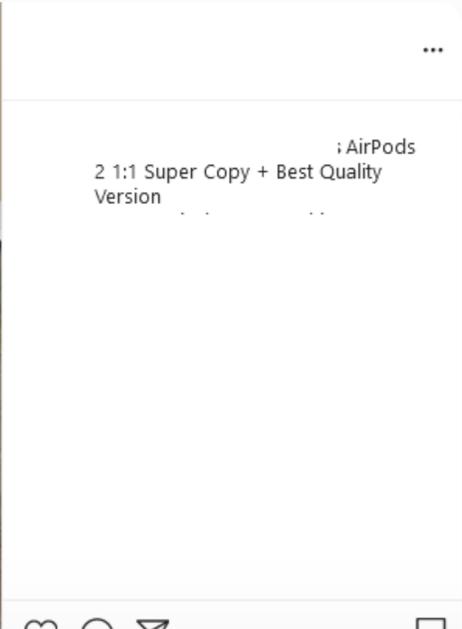
Follow



中國廣州 China Guangzhou



Finally, here are a few screenshots of some counterfeit products we focused on in our study: Apple cables, power chargers, and headphones. These images are a small fraction of the thousands available on Instagram, a sure sign of a flourishing illicit market that now extends to every part of the world, particularly in Europe and the US, through planes, trucks or containers loaded on commercial ships.





Apple don't provide the charger for their customers from phone 12mini/12/12 pro/12 pro max ?
😁😁😁Contact us to get them with VIP price!
📱📱📱Mobile/ Whatsapp: +(86)



20W PD chargers for iPhone 12

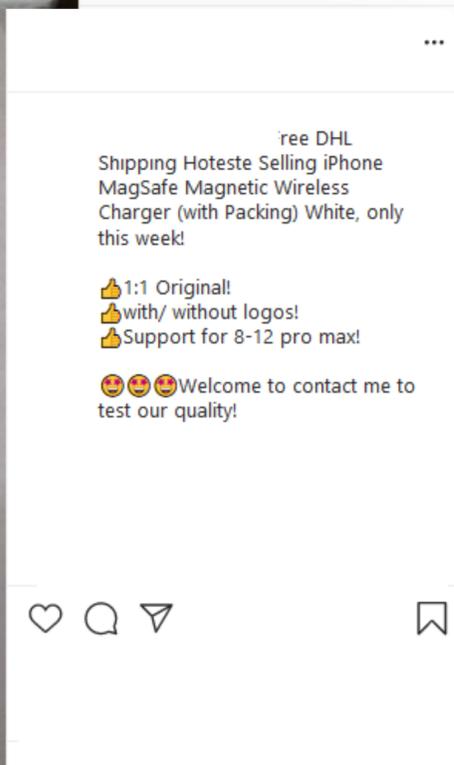
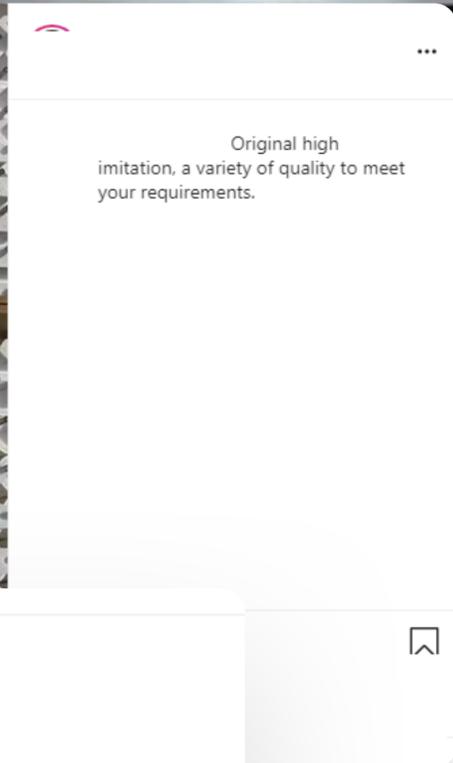
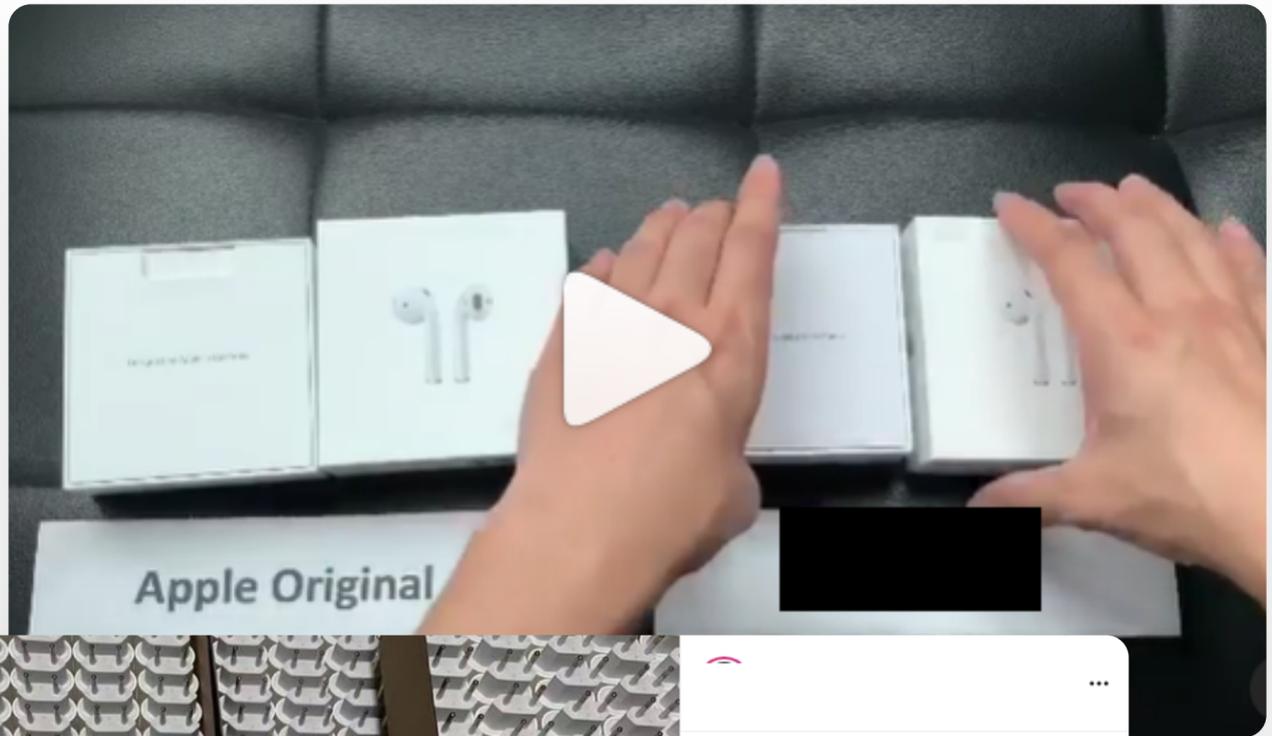


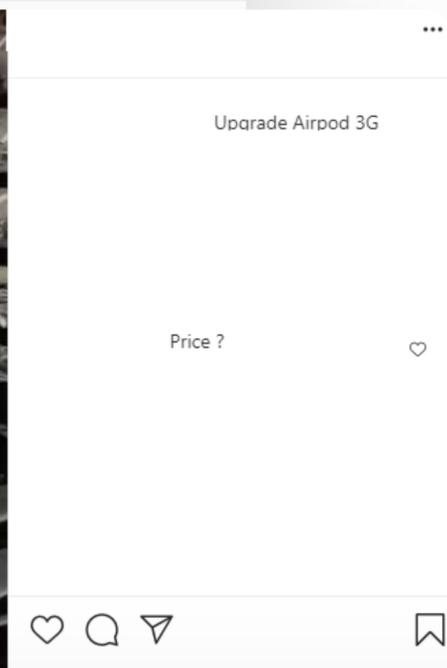
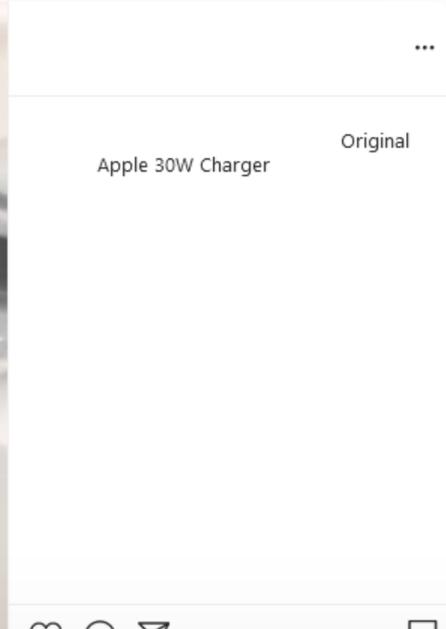
cable for iPhone 11



Original
USB-C To Lightning Cable 1m

📱📱📱

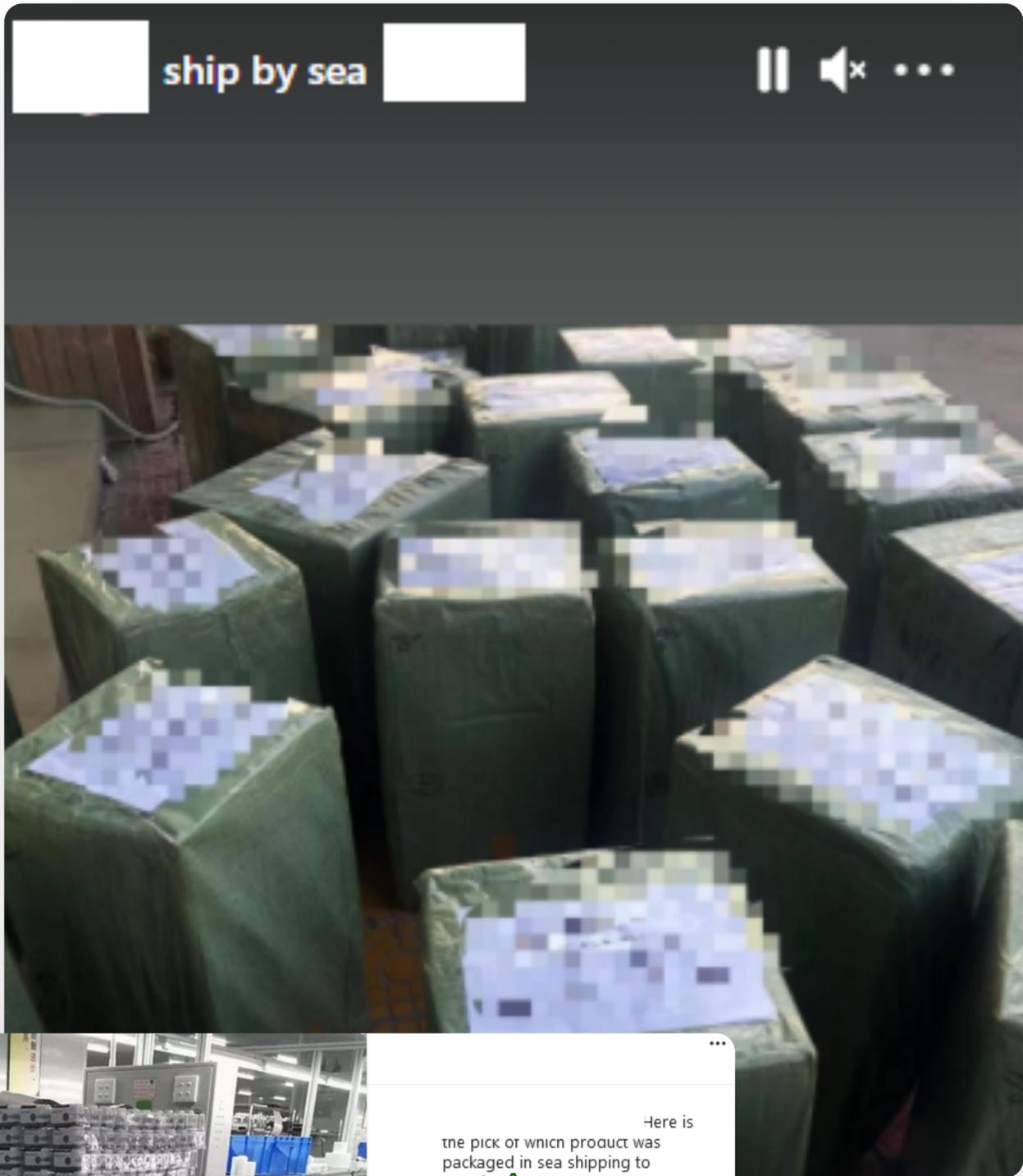




列表: 切换版本 -> 英文版

日期时间	服务地点	详细信息
2020-06-13 18:14	LOS ANGELES GATEWAY, ...	海关状态更新
2020-06-13 18:43	HONG KONG - HONG KONG	DHL已收件
2020-06-13 18:58	HONG KONG - HONG KONG	正在安排下一站转运 HONG KONG - HONG KONG
2020-06-13 19:40	HONG KONG - HONG KONG	离开转运中心 HONG KONG - HONG KONG
2020-06-13 20:54	HONG KONG - HONG KONG	到达转运中心 HONG KONG - HONG KONG
2020-06-14 12:39	LOS ANGELES GATEWAY, ...	到达转运中心 LOS ANGELES GATEWAY - USA
2020-06-14 12:58	LOS ANGELES GATEWAY, ...	海关已放行 LOS ANGELES GATEWAY - USA
2020-06-14 13:01	LOS ANGELES GATEWAY, ...	正在安排下一站转运 LOS ANGELES GATEWAY -
2020-06-15 02:38	LOS ANGELES GATEWAY, ...	正在安排下一站转运 LOS ANGELES GATEWAY -
2020-06-15 02:39	LOS ANGELES GATEWAY, ...	离开转运中心 LOS ANGELES GATEWAY - USA
2020-06-15 06:34	SOUTH SAN DIEGO, CA - ...	已经到达营业地点, 即将安排派送 SOUTH SAN
2020-06-15 10:03	SOUTH SAN DIEGO, CA - ...	快件正在派送中
2020-06-15 12:19	SAN DIEGO	已派送-签收人: ANDY

位置0-49 (航班前) 50-99 (航班后), 200-255为自定义信息, 100-199为自动跟踪信息。



Here is the pick of which product was packaged in sea shipping to America 🇺🇸

👍 🗨️ 📌



France, Paris

Chargers for iPhone have in stock now. OEM Original, best price. If you need any products, please inform in advance.

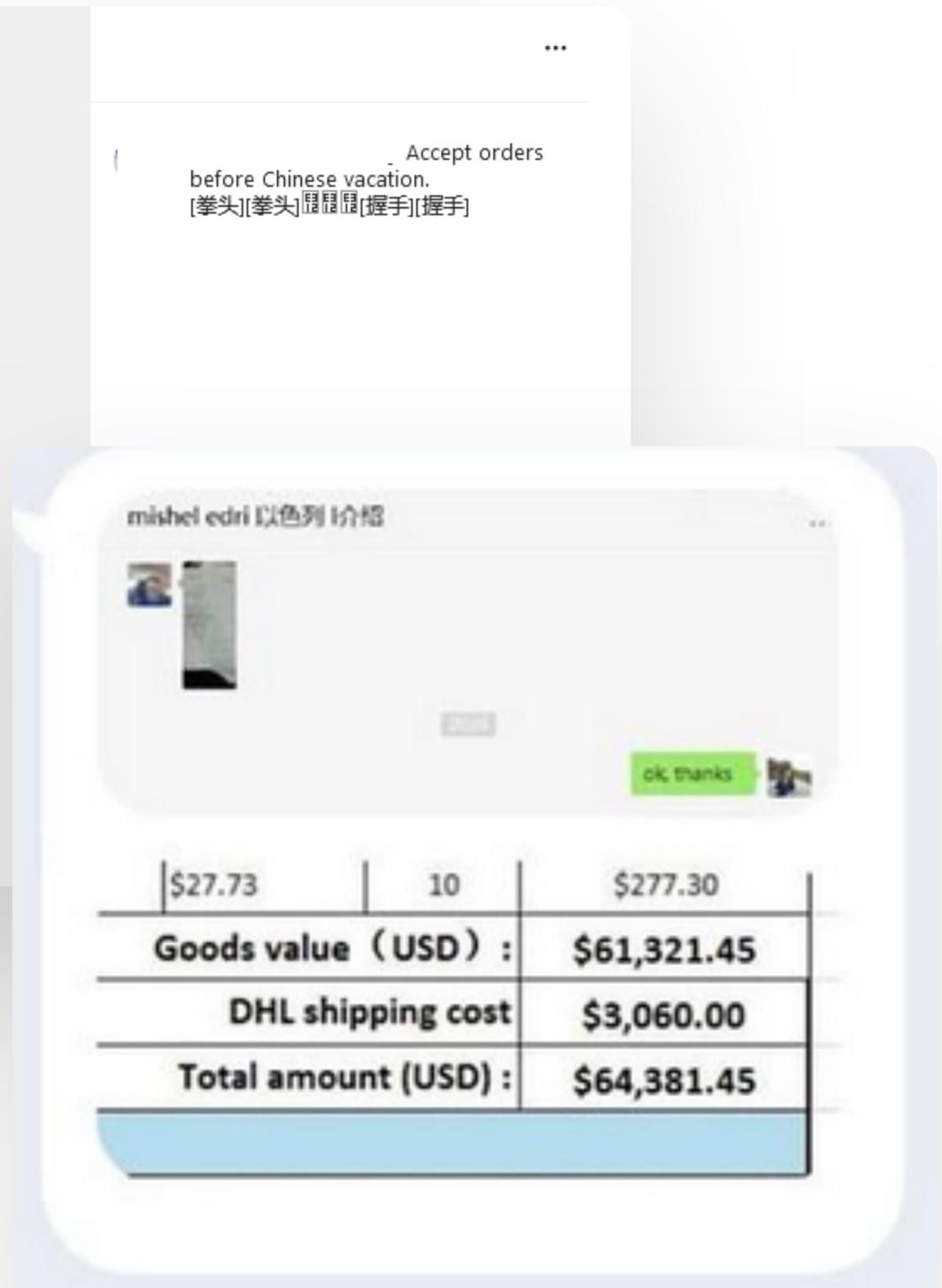
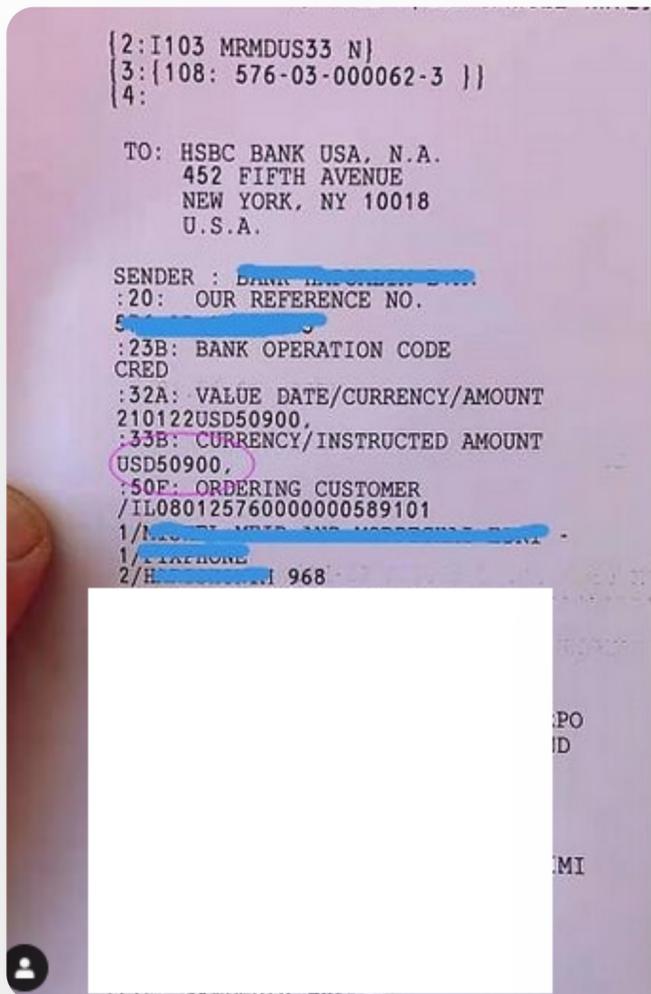
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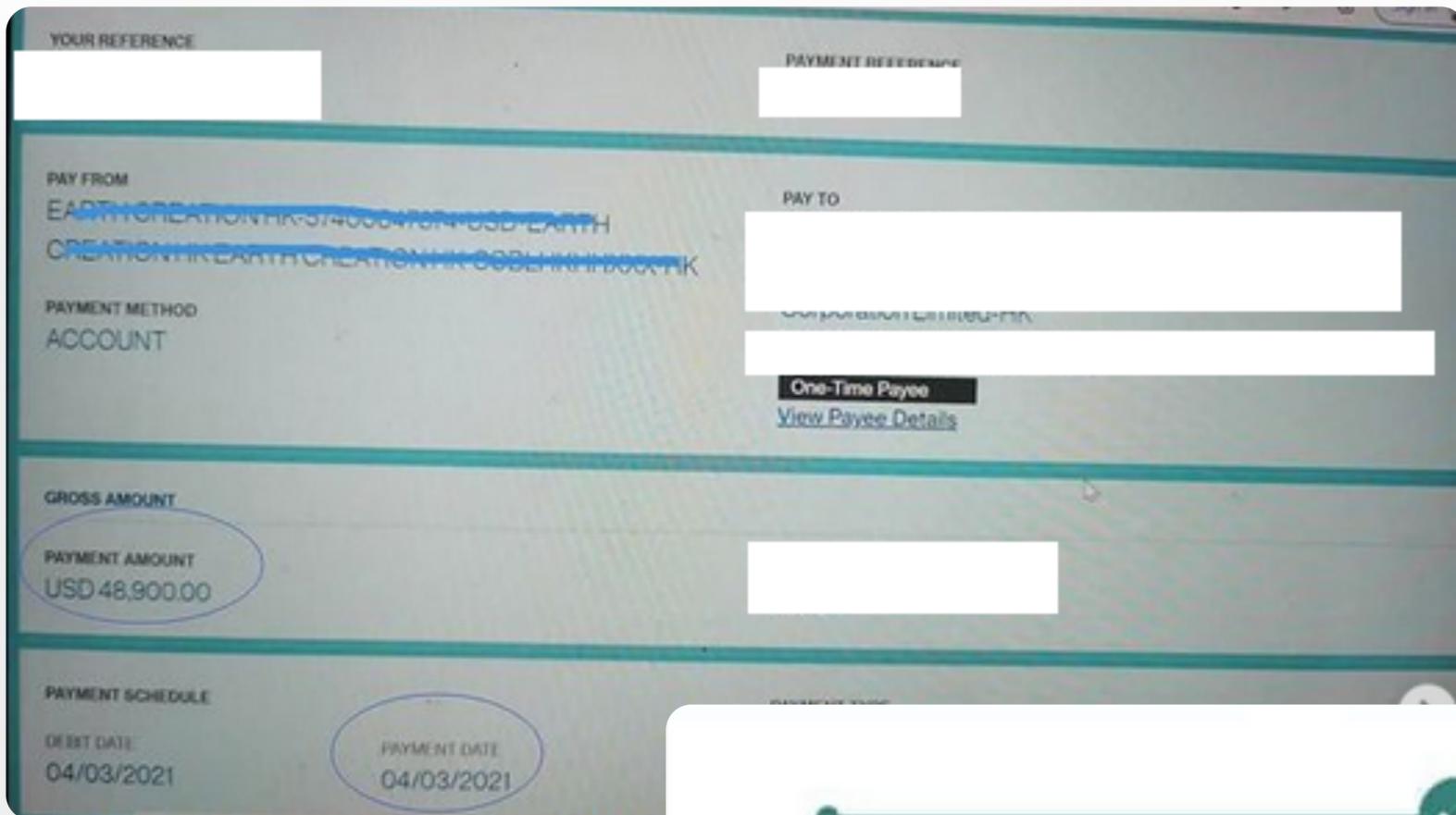
16.

A HUGE GLOBAL BUSINESS

Some of these counterfeit-products accounts also published receipts for incoming payments or bank wire transfers – probably in order to build a positive reputation and a trusting relationship with prospective customers.

We found evidence of payment receipts for tens and hundreds of thousands of dollars per transaction – as shown here below:





处理中

付款详情 状况

付款人	
入账账户	商业综合账户 - 欧罗储蓄 124-0693
金额	EUR 99,650.00
入账日期	2020年10月10日

< 明细

6230***

交易金额 **-227,800.00**

交易时间	13:21:03
交易摘要	转支
收款方	黄建烽
收款账户	62284800868880
交易类型	转账
交易渠道	掌上银行
本次余额	10.52

New orders
Thanks for the support always 🙏🙏
www. . .

♥️ 💬 📌

BIRT Report Viewer

Showing page 1 of 1

DBS Incoming Telegraphic Transfer

Transaction Advice/s

Date : 04-Jan-2021 Customer Reference :
 Transaction Reference : 1513I Counter Party Account Number :
 Remitting Party Name :
 Remitting Bank :

Transaction Details

	Remittance Amount	Exchange Rate	Transaction Amount	Account Number
Principal	USD 103,062.55		USD 103,062.55	
Bank Charges			USD 13.37	

Payment Details

Page 1 of 1

Follow

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BIRT Report Viewer

Showing page 1 of 1

DBS Incoming Telegraphic Transfer

Transaction Advice/s

Date : 24-Feb-2021 Customer Reference : 8442
 Transaction Reference : 1513IT10 Counter Party Account Number :
 Remitting Party Name :
 Remitting Bank :

Transaction Details

	Remittance Amount	Exchange Rate	Transaction Amount	Account Number
Principal	USD 133,586.32		USD 133,586.32	001
Bank Charges			USD 13.36	001

Payment Details

Printed On : 24-Feb-2021 10:12:00 (HKT) Page 1 of 1
 Printed By :

Good beginning after the holiday 🥳🥳

♡ 💬 📌

BIRT Report Viewer

Showing page 1 of 1

DBS Incoming Telegraphic Transfer

Transaction Advice/s

Date : 05-Mar-2021 Customer Reference :
 Transaction Reference : Counter Party Account Number :
 Remitting Party Name :
 Remitting Bank :

Transaction Details

	Remittance Amount	Exchange Rate	Transaction Amount	Account Number
Principal	USD 119,706.90		USD 119,706.90	
Bank Charges			USD 13.35	

Payment Details

Printed On : Page 1 of 1
 Printed By :

Follow

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The following image was posted by a vendor eager to show that he grossed US \$ 140,000 in a single day of online sales through his HSBC personal banking account.

29 Jul 2020	[Redacted]	Business Integrated USD Savings 561-740004-030	USD 15,199.80	▼
29 Jul 2020	[Redacted]	Business Integrated USD Savings 561-740004-030	USD 1,016.80	▼
29 Jul 2020	[Redacted]	Business Integrated USD Savings 561-740004-030	USD 1,816.80	▼
29 Jul 2020	[Redacted]	Business Integrated USD Savings 561-740004-030	USD 49,614.72	▼
29 Jul 2020	[Redacted]	Business Integrated USD Savings 561-740004-030	USD 9,650.80	▼
29 Jul 2020	[Redacted]	Business Integrated USD Savings 561-740004-030	USD 9,664.10	▼
29 Jul 2020	[Redacted]	Business Integrated USD Savings 561-740004-030	USD 3,150.00	▼
29 Jul 2020	[Redacted]	Business Integrated USD Savings 561-740004-030	USD 12,491.80	▼

Finally, the same Instagram seller posted a screenshot of a single day income dating back to last August, with a total exceeding US \$ 57,000.

Deposited date ⓘ	Payer	Into account	Amount	
25 Aug 2020	[Redacted]	Business Integrated USD Savings	USD 36,385.66	▼
25 Aug 2020	[Redacted]	Business Integrated USD Savings	USD 731.11	▼
25 Aug 2020	[Redacted]	Business Integrated USD Savings	USD 10,551.63	▼
25 Aug 2020	[Redacted]	Business Integrated USD Savings	USD 3,412.00	▼
25 Aug 2020	[Redacted]	Business Integrated USD Savings	USD 4,058.40	▼
25 Aug 2020	[Redacted]	Business Integrated USD Savings	USD 237.10	▼
25 Aug 2020	[Redacted]	Business Integrated USD Savings	USD 1,975.60	▼

17.

RESEARCH LIMITS AND POSSIBLE FOLLOW UPS

Our independent analysis has two important limitations: first, we considered a small sample of illicit vendors, albeit a significant one, while many more operate in the open on Instagram; second, not all these vendors follow the official Apple account on Instagram, which was our starting point in order to identify them.

Both these limits imply that a larger and more in-depth analysis could be undertaken in future studies by other organizations and experts – including a network analysis of these counterfeit Apple wholesalers/factories and who they publicly interact with.

As mentioned earlier, our study aims at exposing Instagram's difficulties (or unwillingness) to properly address its long-standing counterfeit market and also to highlight the many dangers of such illicit business for Apple and consumers alike. Our hope is that, as with our previous research, other entities with larger means and resources could step in to further study and understand the depth and complexity of such phenomena involving current social media platforms.

As a final step for our part, we did a follow-up with one suspicious account and were quite surprised to learn that this vendor actually had several interactions with an official iPhone service provider in Italy. In addition to providing Apple tech support, this online store also sells adaptors for various iPhones models – even if it is not an officially authorised Apple reseller.



For further confirmation, we called the Apple tech support service in Italy. They confirmed that the only stores or chains authorised to sell Apple products are those listed on the main Apple.com website.

So, here we have an Apple tech support service that is not an authorised vendor but does sell Apple accessories and also had interactions with a China-based wholesale vendor: is this just a coincidence? Maybe. Or maybe not.

18.

MAJOR FINDINGS

- Our research study documented that Chinese factories/vendors are using Instagram to sell counterfeit Apple products, accessories and parts around the world.
- We identified over 160 wholesale merchants, most likely based in China, of Apple's counterfeit merchandise.
- In the 30-days span of our study, these Instagram accounts have published over 53,000 posts and generated about 600,000 interactions.
- By analyzing a small sample of those accounts, we found hundreds of individuals selling Apple products or accessories, without a proper authorization by Apple. It is therefore possible that tens of thousands of Instagram profiles are currently selling Apple products and/or offering tech services, with no way to verify their business legitimacy.
- Over 60% of those identified counterfeit wholesalers posted more than 100 posts
- About 4 in 10 counterfeit-products vendors use mobile external apps such as WhatsApp or WeChat to communicate with their customers.
- Most vendors rely on international shipping services EMS and DHL, which jointly account for 80% of the total shipping methods used.
- The top payment methods are bank wire transfers and credit cards, which combined account for more than half of overall payments to those vendors.
- These Instagram accounts offer a wide variety of counterfeit Apple accessories: EarPods, AirPods Pro, power chargers, cables and much more, including parts such as screens, batteries, and various components.
- Some counterfeiter sellers also offer a variety of new devices, mostly iPhone and Apple Watch, in some cases even featuring fake Apple logos on devices and packaging.
- Counterfeiter vendors claim to be able to circumvent iOS checks regarding fake components and spare parts installed on user devices.

- We found evidence of payment receipts for tens and hundreds of thousands of dollars per transaction, proving that this is a multimillion-dollar global business, with Europe and the US as top customer destinations.
- Counterfeiter vendors are deploying effective strategies, such as avoiding the use of hashtags but rather following Apple stores and tech support profiles, in order to attract potential new customers by gaining their attention through various interactions and, most likely, through private messages.
- Despite several statements on internal policing measures, Instagram has clearly failed to identify and block or delete those counterfeit-products accounts: some of them have been in business since 2016.

19.

CONCLUSION

As mentioned in our introduction, this research builds on a 2013 study about illicit activities on Twitter and other dangerous activities taking places on major social media platforms in recent years. This study, our first for 2021, aims at exposing Instagram's difficulties (or unwillingness) to properly address its long-standing counterfeit market and also to highlight its potentially broad damage for Apple and consumers alike.

Our research identified more than 160 wholesale vendors that are selling worldwide via Instagram a variety of counterfeit Apple products and accessories, such as power chargers, cables, parts, headphones, and more.

Based on data gathered in our month-long close analysis, we can confidently say that tens of thousands of Instagram profiles are offering assistance, repair and sale services for many Apple products – with a good probability that they are not legitimate.

By combining complex data and network analysis, visual and OCR recognition, we were able to uncover such profile accounts, even if they do not use any particular hashtags and are not easy to find on Instagram.

However, this is not a definitive or conclusive work. We have analyzed a relatively small sample of users, which seem to be the typical tip of the iceberg. As for previous research by our Ghost Data team, we simply hope that other researchers will follow up to better address and understand the depth and complexity of such phenomena involving current social media platforms.

The figures and behaviors detailed in our major findings above summarize the current level of counterfeiting activities on Instagram and Facebook, confirming that we are facing a widespread and global phenomenon covering different items, from high-tech devices/accessories to surgical face masks.

Counterfeit vendors are quick to take full advantage of today's online tools: proxies, botnets, fake accounts, ephemeral contents, encrypted chats, anonymous payment system, and more. All stakeholders variously involved in management and design of these platforms must rethink their strategies for a long-term fight against these dangerous activities.

In this case, such unmonitored sale of counterfeit electronic goods and accessories can potentially cause real harm to their users, while also damaging the entire industry. It seems also quite ironic that Chinese individuals and organizations are using a US-based social media network, blocked in their own country for security reasons, exactly to do business particularly at the expense of a major US company.

We believe Facebook is guilty of failing to adequately invest and protect American businesses and citizens around the world who use its platform. From the technologies available, we can confidently say that Facebook could drastically reduce these improper phenomena.

To be entirely fair, such sales of counterfeit Apple products also take place elsewhere, through other social media and e-commerce platforms, digital and physical direct contacts. However, Instagram has become a major showcase for such activities and made counterfeiting easier at a global level. The ease of use of the platform and its worldwide popularity have brought two worlds closer together: an explosion of China-based counterfeit vendors and factories on one side, a greater need and a wider market for these products on the other.

It is true that Instagram primarily profits from its ads, but that certainly that does not mean it can relinquish its responsibility to monitor how its platform is being used. Counterfeit activities enrich criminal organizations, take away employment, cause countries to forgo income and tax revenues, damage legitimate business enterprises, endanger people's health.

As for other illicit activities happening on today's social media platforms, this issue of counterfeit Apple products deserves greater attention from all stakeholders involved – police and judicial systems, platform owners, high-tech companies. But first and foremost, it's Instagram that has the responsibility to properly and quickly address such a serious problem.