

#RippedOff: New Wave of Call-Out Culture in the Fashion Industry

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by Case Collard and Lexie Ross

A new means for fighting back against copycats in the fashion industry is on the rise: online call-outs. Brands can take their grievances directly to the public on social media to draw attention to design imitations (and in the process educate consumers about authenticity). Posts like these are gaining significant traction in the fashion world, which is awash with intellectual property rights violations.

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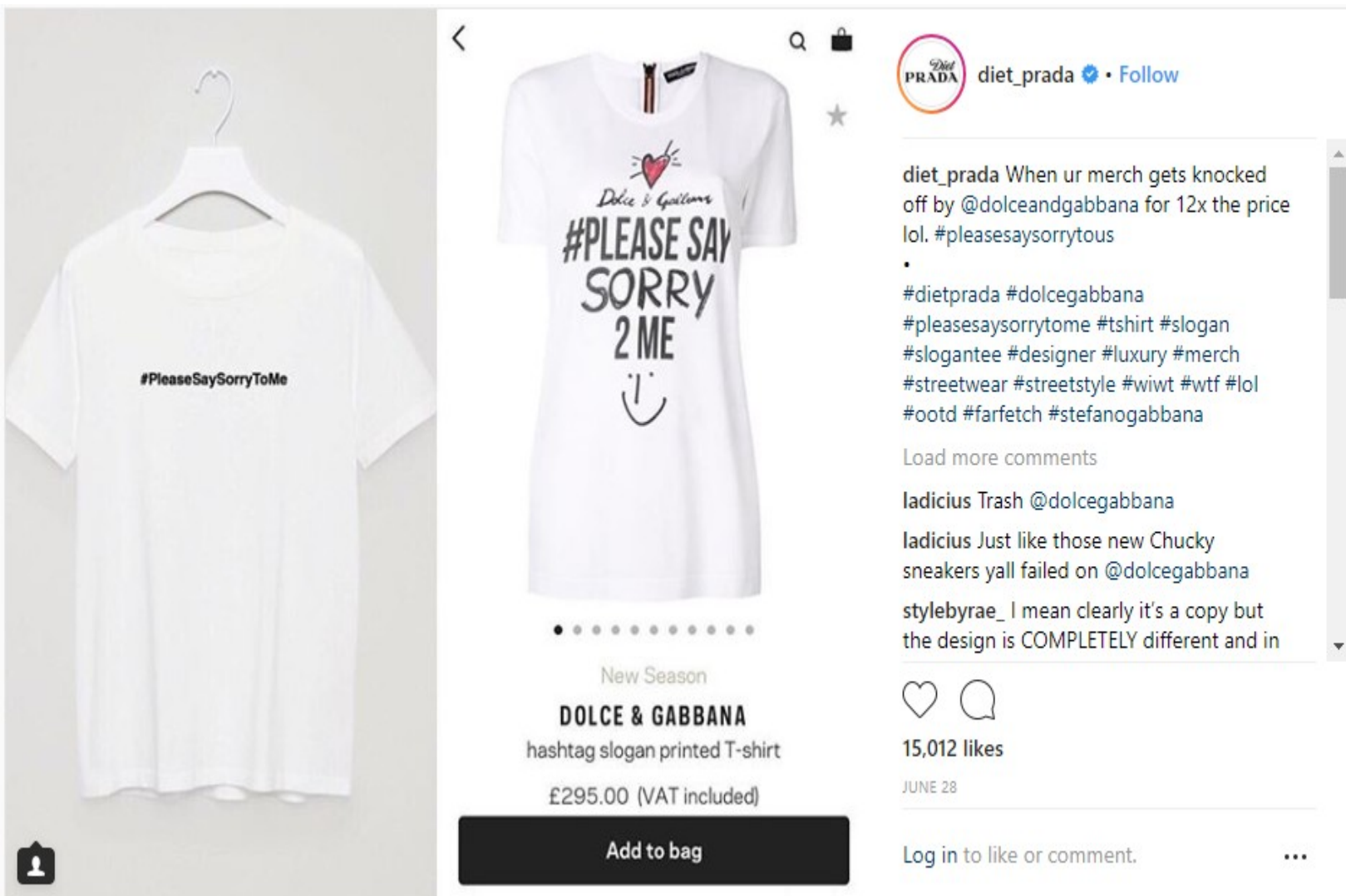
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Ironically, a fashion brand that vigorously polices infringements has become the namesake of one of the most visible online outlets for highlighting copycat fashion designs. The Instagram account @Diet_Prada (also tied to dietprada.com) airs the dirty laundry of fashion brands to its almost 600,000 followers by displaying side-by-side photos of copycat designs and similar originals, generating passionate comments from

consumers and designers alike, and bringing bad press to the copycat design creators. In some cases, the implicated designers comment directly by issuing clarifying statements. The two fashion insiders who have now been identified as running the account – Tony Liu and Lindsey Schuyler – refer to themselves as “knockoff detectives.” In an interesting turn of events, on June 28, 2018, Diet Prada shared a photo of a shirt sold by Dolce & Gabbana (whose co-founder is an outspoken detractor of Diet Prada), which displayed the same hashtag as that used on a shirt sold by Diet Prada itself as merchandise with the caption “When ur merch gets knocked off by @dolceandgabbana for 12x the price lol. #pleasesaysorrytous”.



Even where photos of copycat fashion designs are not flagged on Diet Prada's accounts, Diet Prada has found itself in the middle of designer disputes. For example, in January 2018, the founder of active wear brand Outdoor Voices, Tyler Haney, accused another high-end active wear company, Bandier, of ripping off her designs. She pointed out the design similarities on her Instagram Stories, claiming: "Each new style in @bandier's 'new' line is a rip of an Outdoor Voices style. . . . Embarrassed for you. People should boycott everything about you." Some Outdoor Voices fans called for the Instagram account @Diet_Prada to step in and help. Fans also directly confronted Bandier on its social channels. When Bandier posted a photo of its new collection on Instagram, Outdoor Voices fans shamed the brand through their comments. One particularly irate fan even commented that "OV is coming to end you bandier".



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serafiz @madeleinekettle



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The popularity of the Diet Prada platform shows that posting photos of a “ripped off” fashion design may be one potential PR strategy for fashion brands to take a stand against copycats. And in some cases, it could serve as a first attempt to shame a copycat infringer into pulling a product before embarking on costly and time-consuming legal action.