

PULSAR*



Dupe, Dope, Doop

Consumer trends around the “dupe” phenomenon



Redefining dupes: from knockoffs to cultural phenomenon

Dupes, once synonymous with cut-price knockoffs, have become a multi-faceted trend that has captured the interest of online communities.

As inflation continues to cause financial hardship for consumers, particularly younger generations, the demand for accessible alternatives has surged well beyond the traditional dupe domains of beauty and fashion. This surge has given birth to “doop” parody videos, which both reflect the shifting landscape within consumer behavior and are cultural artefacts in their own right.

What’s more, the amalgamation of dupe culture with internet trends has propelled this phenomenon into the spheres of more and more audiences. It has transcended the original association with budget-friendly alternatives; it is now a substantial cultural expression, moulding how consumers articulate their tastes and values.

Data Collection Period: Apr 1st – Oct 10th 2023

Channels:

- | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|----------------|---------------|
| X | TikTok | Blogs | Broadcast |
| Reddit | Pinterest | Forums | Radio |
| Facebook | Tumblr | Online News | Google Search |
| Instagram | YouTube | Amazon Reviews | |

Markets/Languages:

Global data collection. Analysis in English-language

The shifting meanings and associations of the “dupe”



there's dupe and then
there's doop

Shifting perception of dupes; from negative stigma to “cool”

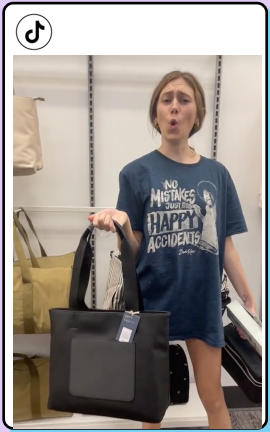
Although “Dupe” initially bore a negative association, often used as form of political insult, the term has gradually evolved into cultural trends like #foodtok and #perfumetok. These trends are fuelled by the imperative to deal with the mounting cost of living.

In December 2023, TikTok’s “Dupers” tackled a crisis with ingenuity and humor, playfully substituting high-end brands such as Prada and Gucci for household names like Walmart and Target.

The “twin peaks of attention” phenomenon, where search interest in January 2023 surged after the height of social interest, signifies the rise of a 'cool' dupe culture – one that deeply resonates with the younger generation. Further to that, brands have even embraced and capitalized on this trend, incorporating “dupe” into their own product names, further propelling the movement.

Search interest surpassing social interest when TikTok “dupers” went viral on making parody with a *doop* sound

Jan '23

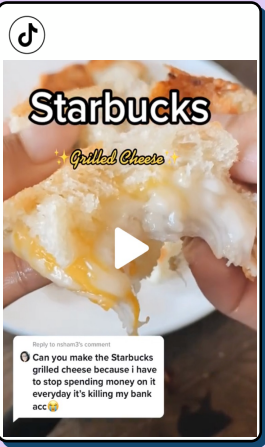


Brand launched Oladupe and its TikTok campaign took off

Sep '23

Perfume dupes taking off due to the popularity of #perfumetok

Jun '22



Budget-friendly Starbucks dupe recipes went viral on socials

Jul '21

“A fake FBI raid orchestrated by right-wing activists **dupes** The Washington Post.”

Sep '20

- Social (Negative)
- Social (Positive)
- Search

What makes up the dupe conversation?

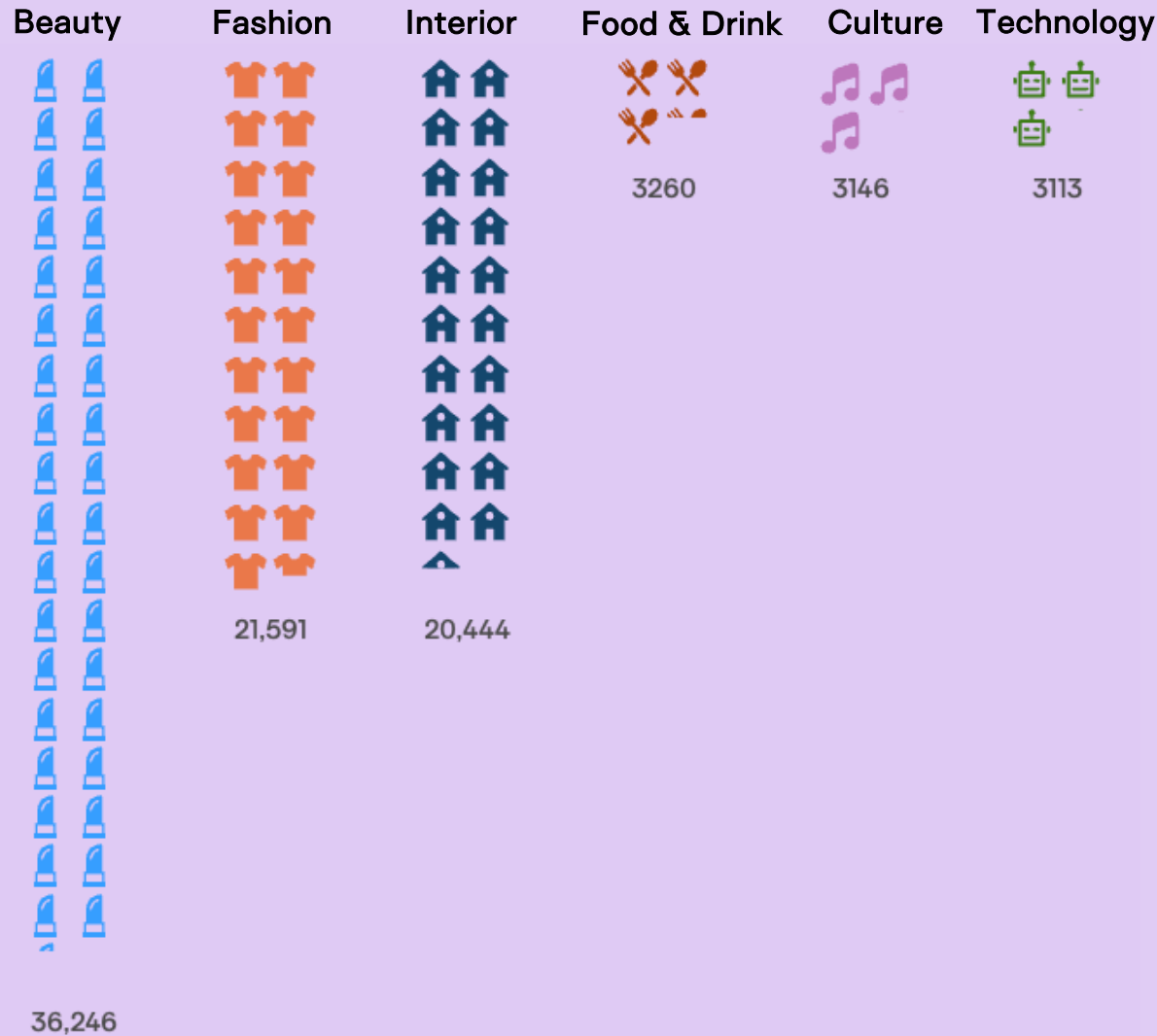
The intersection of beauty, fashion, interiors and more

Unsurprisingly, dupes have established a prominent presence in the beauty and fashion sphere. And not simply as a product of necessity for consumers; they also serve as a wellspring of inspiration for brands.

When we break this conversation down by sector, we see that the quest amongst audiences for budget-friendly options reaches beyond beauty and fashion to influence lifestyle and dining choices.

Even within the technology sector, where brand values are traditionally entrenched, there's an emerging trend in the pursuit of affordable alternatives for tech accessories.

Furthermore, dupes have evolved beyond mere functionality, seamlessly woven into the fabric of younger generations' internet culture. Individuals create memes to satirize or question the dominant capitalist social structure and enduring economic recession – given the parodic nature of these posts, they can touch on almost any industry, extending to even the wellness and therapy spaces.



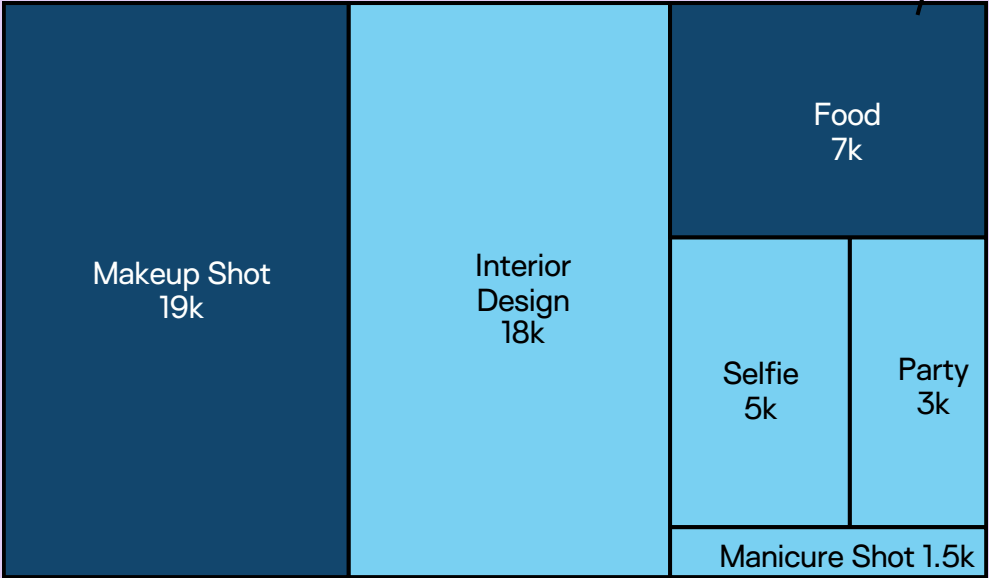
What's the most-engaged dupes image type?

Money-saving makeup shot & interior prevail

Analyzing the most-engaged-with image categories in what has become a predominantly visual dialogue allows us to pinpoint content that resonates with audiences in specific contexts.

Among various sectors, two types of images have gained significant traction. The first of these revolves around comparative visuals, in which the effects or character of a dupe is measured against the original.

In contrast, the food sector is dominated by user-generated content, which intersects with trends like SnackTok and FastfoodTok.



The audiences – and motivators – behind the dupe trend



Anyone growing up in my generation and in my neighborhood never got the name brands. We always got the knock offs and we survived.

The motivations behind dupes

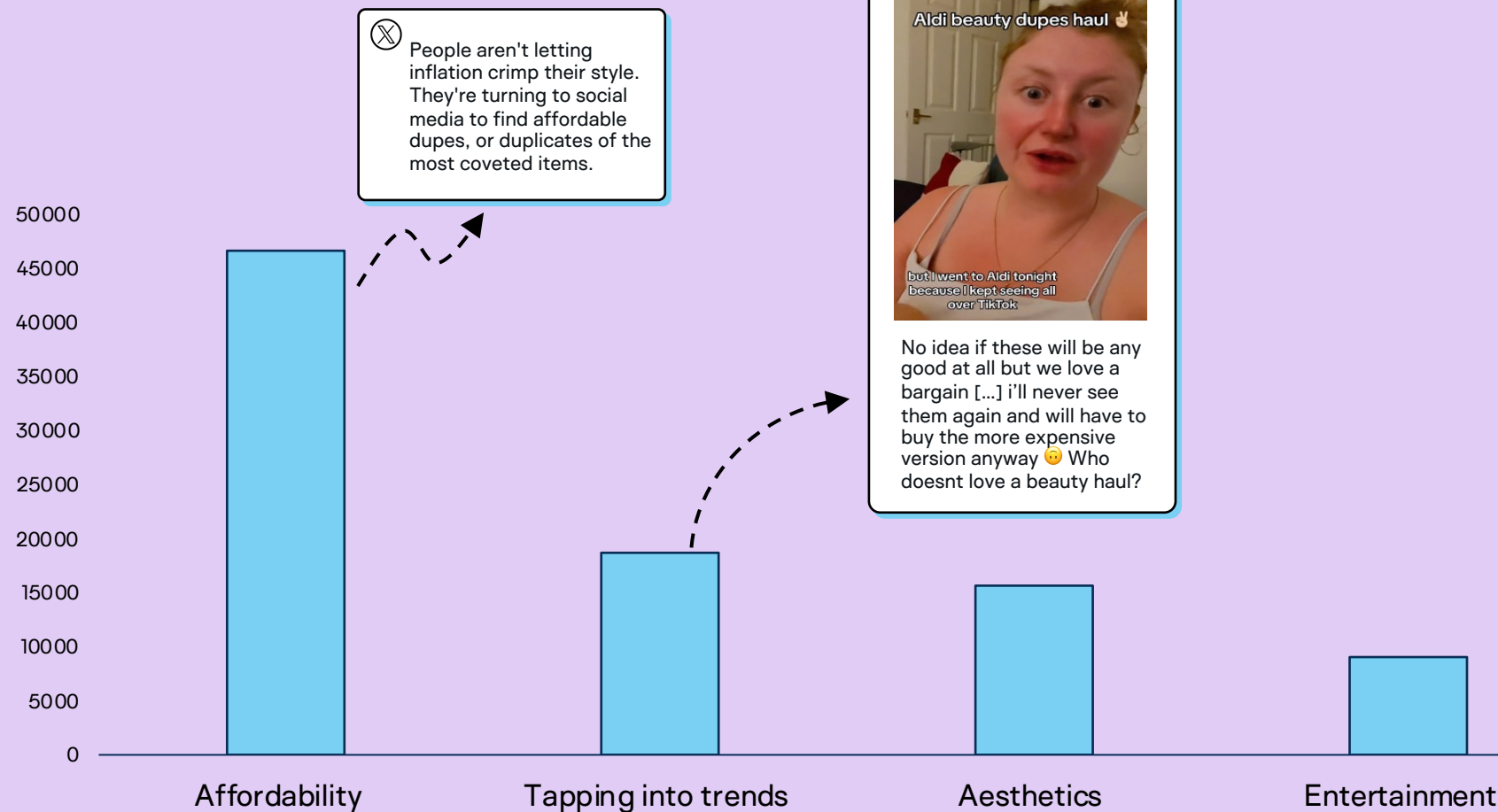
From cost of living to entertainment

Clearly, the term “dupes” continues to carry with it connotations for price and increased value. If anything substantive has changed, it appears to be the relative quality customers experience.

It might not quite match the original, but it’s not longer a shorthand for misspelled logos and potentially harmful ingredients.

With affordability remaining a key driving force in the adoption of dupes, it’s unsurprising that the trend should have exploded within the fashion and beauty ecosystems. These spaces as disproportionately populated by women and young people – demographics that are especially likely to be exposed to financial hardship

But what’s even more intriguing is the way dupe culture is intersecting with various internet trends, becoming aligned with whatever is currently in vogue. This is evident in the prevalence of hashtags like #Xfinds.



Who are talking about dupes?

Millennials & Gen-z dominate conversation

The discussion on dupes is for the most part led by millennials and gen-Z.

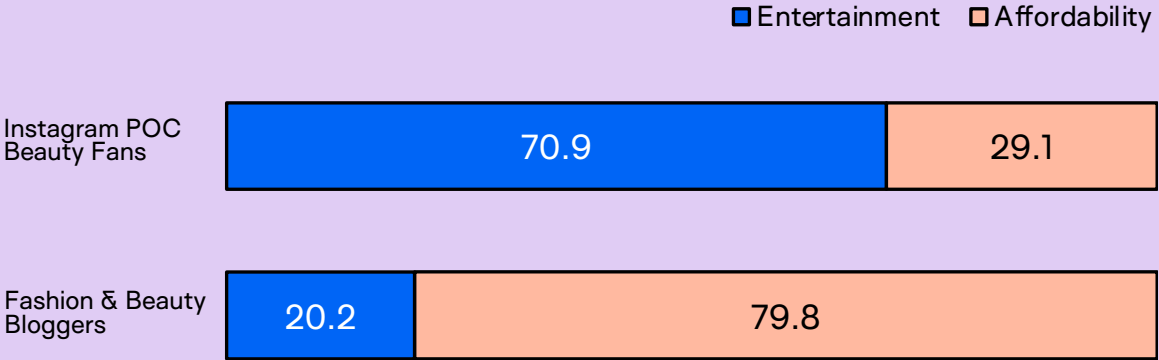
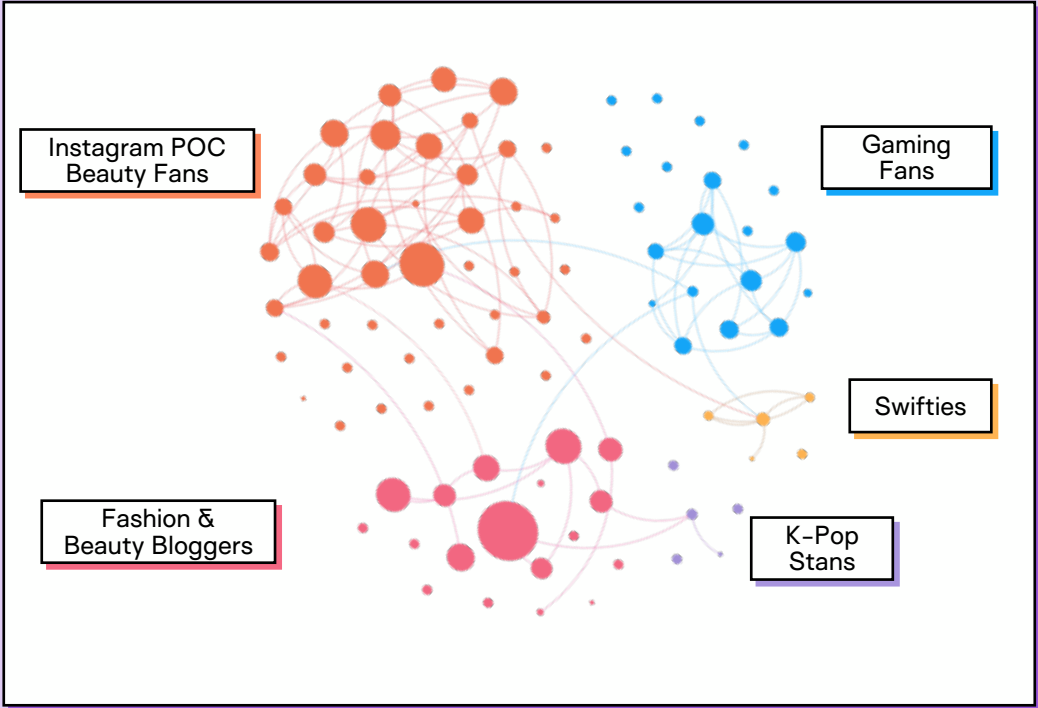
In this conversation, two key millennials groupings – POC Influencer Followers & Fashion Enthusiasts – take center stage, focusing on the fashion and beauty aspects, which are the traditional roots of the dupe discourse.

POC Beauty Fans, who hold significant influence on Instagram, are disproportionately likely to engage with dupes as a source of entertainment.

Why? They embrace dupes as an integral part of internet culture, often referencing them into humorous content shared within their community. Conversely, some are also earnestly voicing concerns about the normalization of dupes that undermine originality and promote overconsumption.

Millennial Fashion & Beauty Bloggers view dupes as a means of finding better deals. This understanding drives them to diligently share their budget-friendly discoveries and promptly provide #dupealerts whenever new, value-packed items emerge in the market.

Gen-Z entertainment fans are also diversifying the dupe conversation. K-Pop stans, for instance, immerse themselves in the intricacies of dupes, particularly within the K-Pop photocard culture, fueling the subculture around the dupe trend.



What language do audiences use to talk all things dupe?

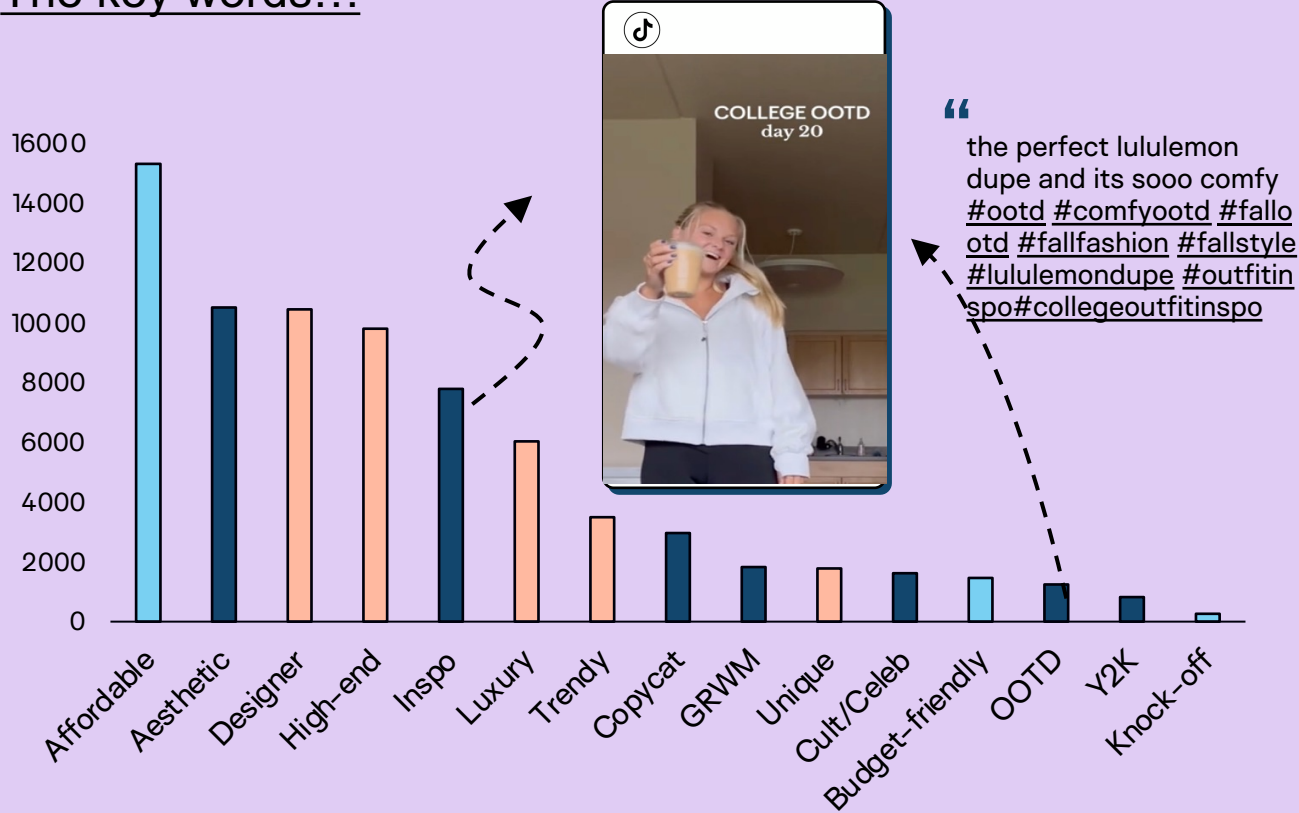
Exploring dupe-associated terms in the fashion and beauty industry unveils a multifaceted narrative.

Established fashion terms like “designer” and “luxury” have long held sway in the dupes conversation, commanding a significant share (42%).

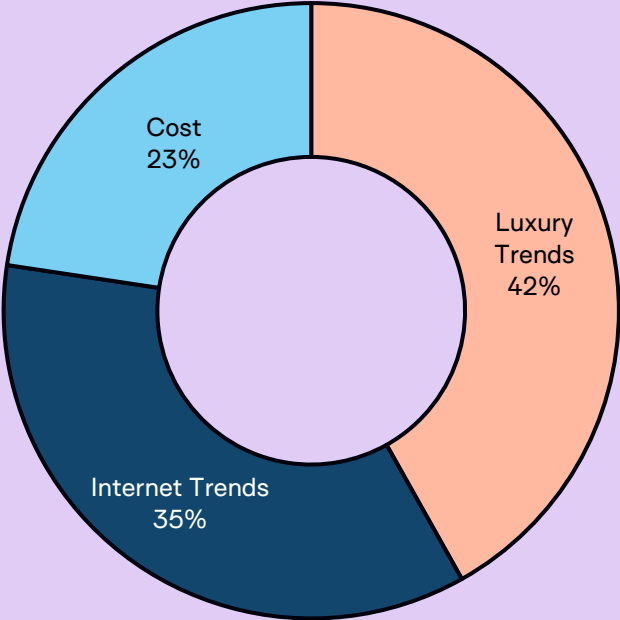
Yet, internet trends like “GRWM” (Get Ready With Me) and “OOTD” (Outfit Of The Day) are also significant contributors to this conversation. These trends are primarily led by young women who showcase their personal styles attained using dupes on image-orientated platforms like TikTok and Instagram.

This evolution underscores that dupes now encapsulate more than just cost-efficiency, emerging as a vibrant reflection of contemporary style and inspiration.

The key words...



... and the priorities they map onto



Dupes change how people shop

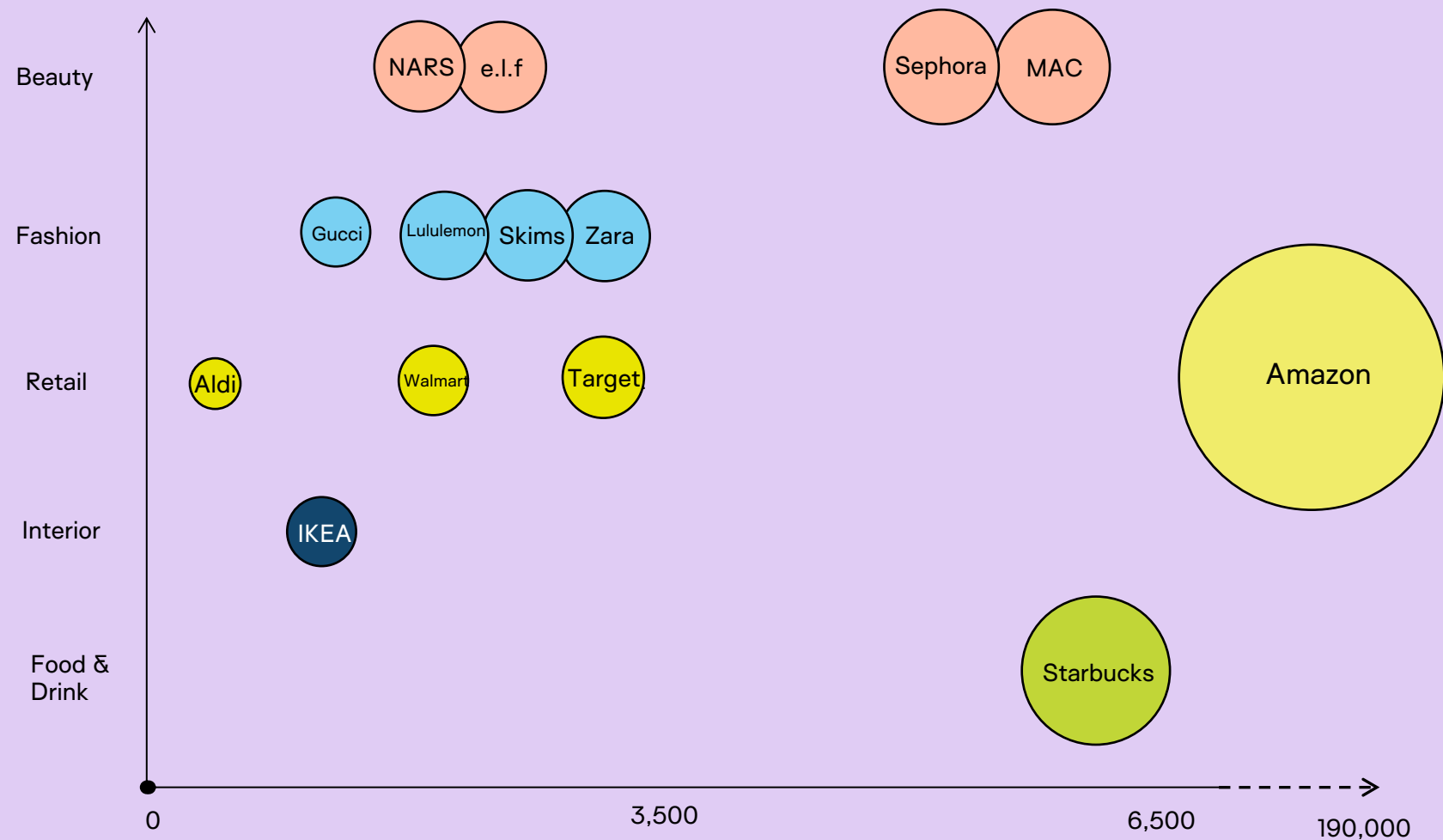
ⓧ The way "dupe" went very quickly from a pejorative / synonym for counterfeit to "better value for your money while maintaining signaling power," to the point where brands are explicitly using the term in paid media... really something.

Who are the big players in the Dupes conversation?

Mapping various brands across different industries allows us to gain a deeper understanding of which brands are more or less associated with dupes.

While dupes continue to be prevalent in the Beauty & Fashion sector, major supermarkets and retailers are increasingly becoming key players in the dupe conversation. Their presence reinforces the popularity of the most frequently mentioned cult brands such as Skims and Lululemon, which are gaining momentum due to their ability to offer cost-effective alternatives without being seen to compromise quality.

Additionally, we're observing the dupe trend making its mark in various lifestyle segments, including Food & Drink. Starbucks, for instance, emerges as one of the foremost brands, second only to Amazon. An extensive repertoire of “copycat” and inventive recipes amongst audiences caters to the dual desire for both cost and familiar consumption experience – with or without the consent of the brand in question.



Amazon as a platform for dupes of cult brands

Amazon become the go-to dupe hub for both dupe enthusiasts and cult brand followers, with mentions of the e-commerce platform alongside 'dupes' garnering a colossal 19k online mentions. This surge is particularly focused on two cult brands – SKIMS and Lululemon (Lulu).

The four-year-old shapewear brand SKIMS, has experienced a remarkable surge in popularity, thanks in part to its strong presence on both Instagram and TikTok.

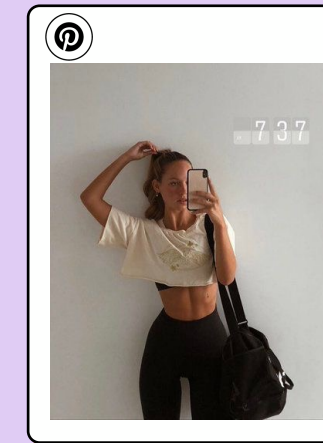
SKIMS campaigns has leveraged the massive popularity of its founder, Kim Kardashian, to develop not a large following, but also an association with a particular kind of luxury.

The relative minimalism of SKIM's designs, meanwhile, has also helped establish the brand as one viewed as eminently 'dupe'-able.

At the same time, we see an explosion of Lululemon dupe. The brand's popularity is drawn steadily on Instagram and Pinterest, fueled by the "workout girl" or "gym girl" aesthetic. This surge in dupe-buying behavior owes much to fashion influencers. Amazon storefront lists not only simplify the process for followers to effortlessly emulate their styles but also foster a greater appreciation for Lulu among their fanbase.



“Kim Kardashian knows what she's doing when it comes to shapewear and style. [...] I'm going to show you how to get her amazing looks for less on **Amazon!** You know I love to **save money** where I can and these dupes are just like Skims, so you aren't losing out on quality here.”



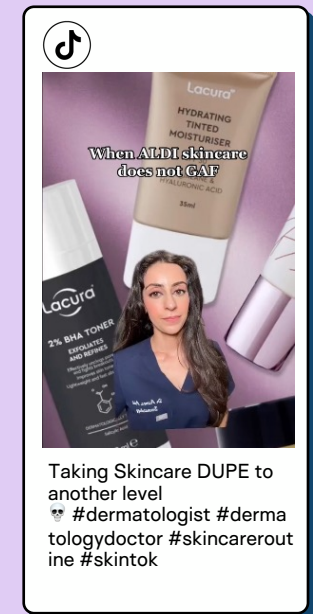
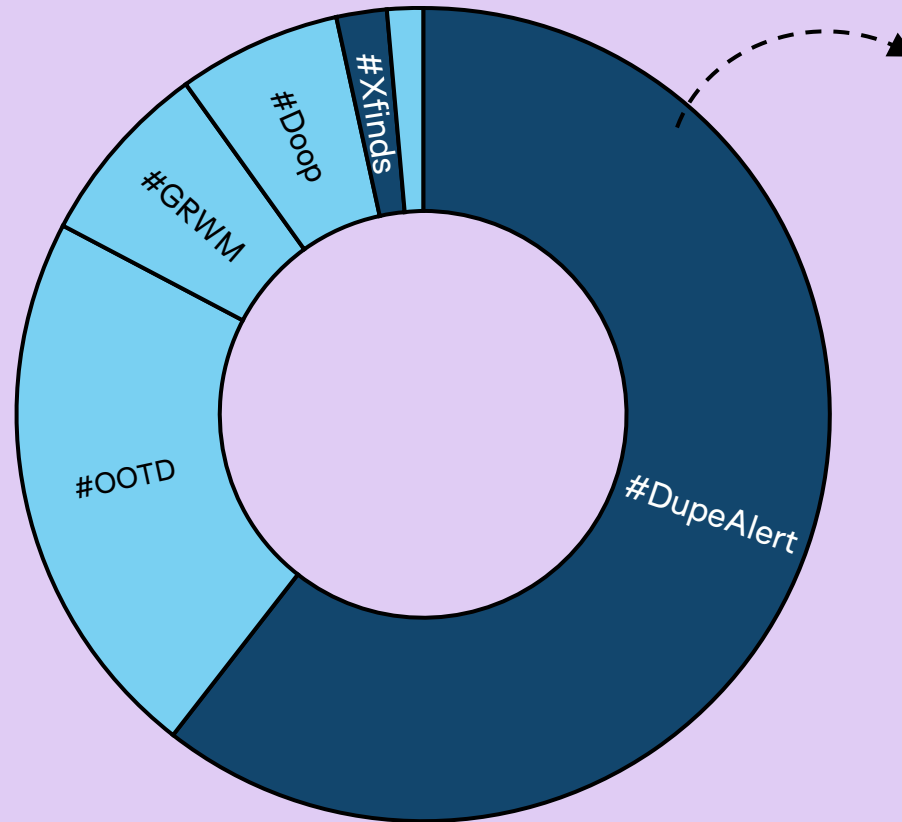
“The best **Lululemon** dupes on **Amazon**. Never pay \$100 for a pair of compression leggings again. **Workout aesthetic, gym aesthetic, workout girl aesthetic, health and fitness aesthetic. gym aesthetic.** #lululemon #lululemondupes #amazonfinds”

Aldi riding the TikTok wave as a dupe search engine

In the wake of the January 2023 TikTok dupe trend, the platform has evolved into a thriving dupe-hunting search engine, driven by Gen-Z dupe-hunters with specific hashtags like #beautyfinds and #foodfinds, often used in conjunction with “dupe.”

Notably, Aldi has benefited from the trend thanks to distinctive beauty finder content created on TikTok. What began as a comparatively small social trend has now evolved into a substantial surge in search interest, indicated by the trending hashtag #dupealert.

What’s more, healthcare professionals active on TikTok frequently add an extra layer of credibility to this alert. When dermatologists, especially, verify Aldi’s dupe alert, it often gains viral traction that goes beyond the platform itself.



PULSAR*

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