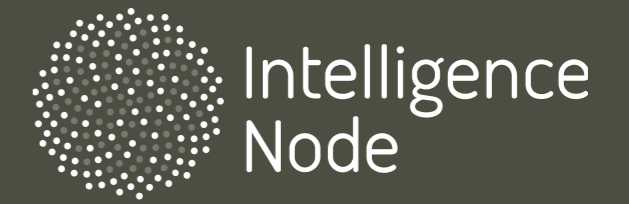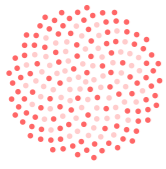# Reclaim Your Brand Control:
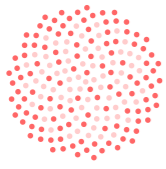# A Guide to AI-driven MAP Monitoring

Intelligence Node

Introduction

eCommerce expansion has given brands, retailers and manufacturers access to a larger consumer population and to a host of new channels and markets to leverage for growth. It has facilitated cross-border selling and has helped brands and manufacturers grow and prosper in ways once unimaginable. But, with manufacturers selling thousands of products through hundreds of retailers on multiple platforms and marketplaces, monitoring all of them for brand compliance can become a huge challenge.

According to a recent Forrester survey, online marketplaces in the US constituted **46%** of online sales and a whopping **61%** of global e-commerce sales, and that was *before* the pandemic. In addition, these marketplaces often act as a channel for selling counterfeit or unauthorized goods at cutthroat prices, harming traditional retailers, brands, and duping consumers into believing they are receiving the same products for lower prices.

And the more brands and manufacturers sell through these marketplaces and third party sites, the less control they have over their brand imagery, advertising, descriptions, and pricing, leading to an erosion of their brand value. Moreover, with COVID-19 disrupting the retail ecosystem and creating an urgency to pivot to eCommerce, there has been a further rise in counterfeits and fakes being sold on marketplaces and has been a growing cause of concern for online shoppers and brands alike.

Tackling the Unwarranted Rise in the Counterfeit Industry

The counterfeit market has been cannibalizing the market share of brands and manufacturers and eroding consumer trust in these brands. In a recent Intelligence Node survey, we found that consumers are getting increasingly concerned about *accidentally* purchasing counterfeits and have noticed a rise in fake products online since the onset of COVID-19.
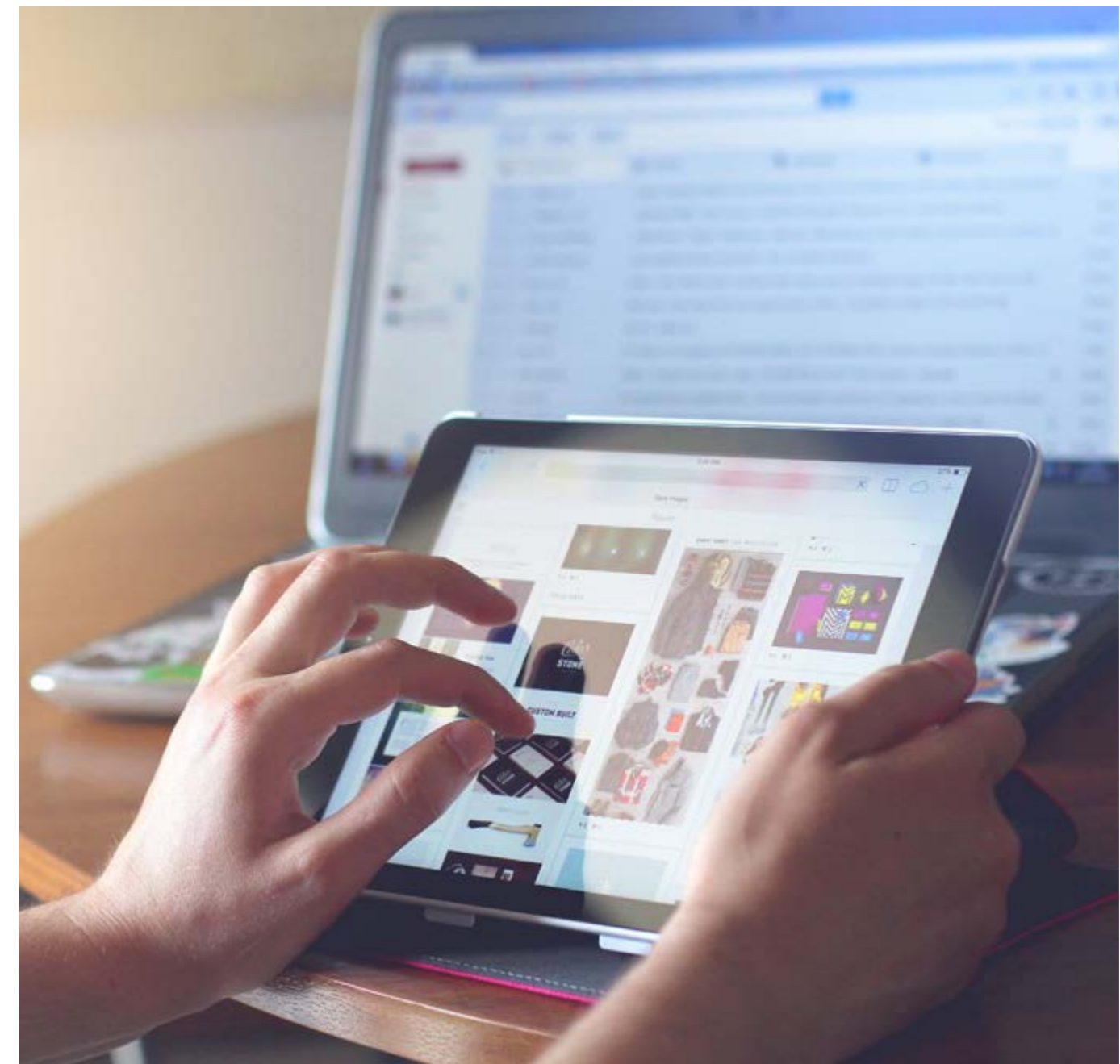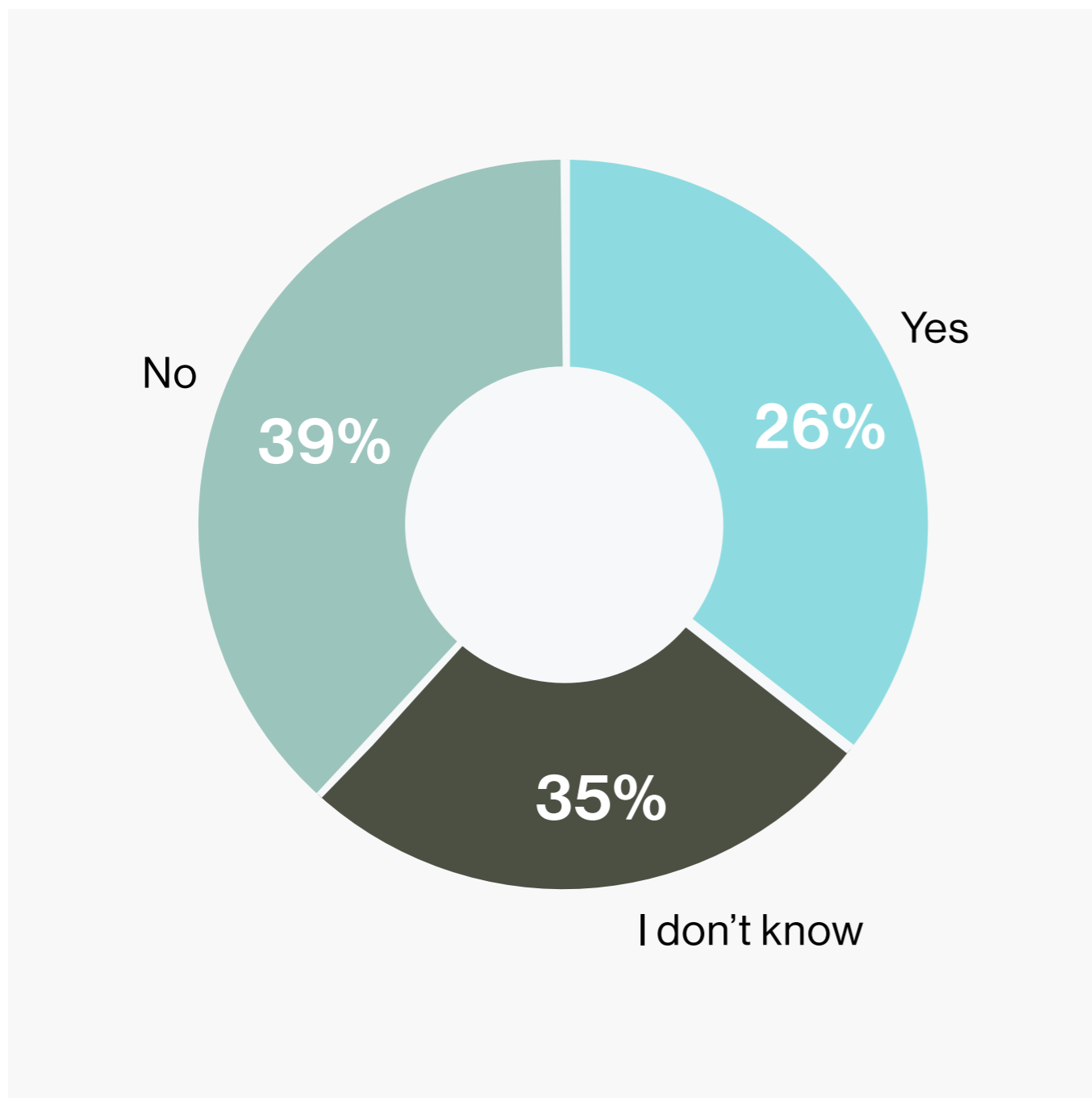
" 1 in 4 shoppers has encountered a rise in counterfeit products online since the start of the pandemic "
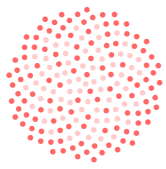
Q.

Have you encountered an increase in counterfeit products online since the onset of the pandemic?

Yes
26%

No
39%

35%
I don't know

The pandemic disrupted the retail ecosystem and strained eCommerce sites early in the economic cycle. With the ensuing lockdown, there was a sudden demand surge for essentials which opened an opportunity for counterfeits to enter the eCommerce space. As a result, **26%** of the shoppers said they encountered an increase in counterfeit items since March 2020 while **39%** thought they haven't seen any increase. Another **35%** were unsure of the rise in counterfeits or failed to notice any difference.
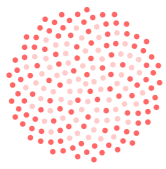
" **Nearly 40% of shoppers discovered counterfeit essential goods online during the pandemic "**

Q.

During the pandemic, have you come across any essential products online, such as masks, hand sanitizer and gloves that you suspect are counterfeit?

No

62%

38%

Yes
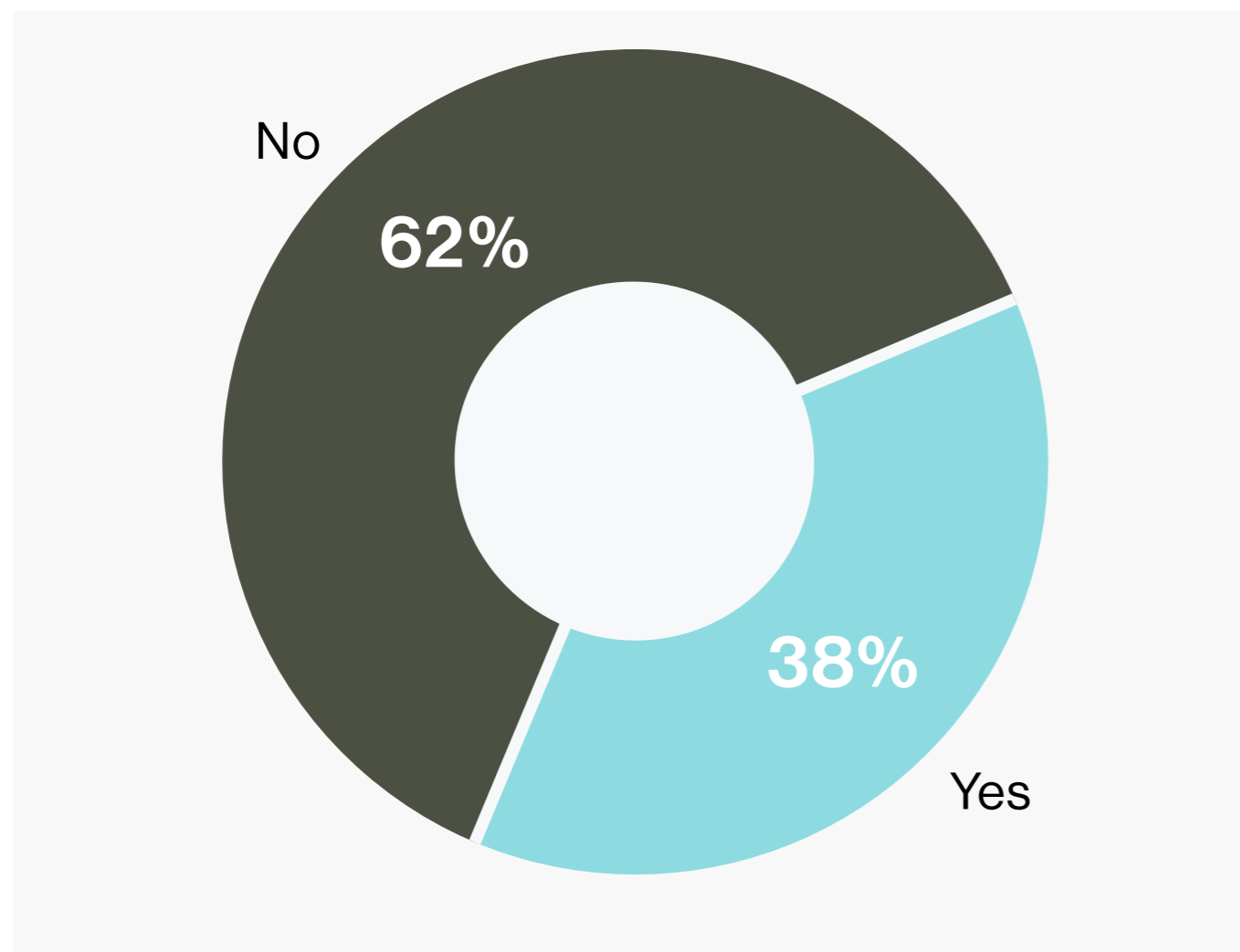
38% of shoppers thought they saw a rise in counterfeit essential items like masks, sanitizers, and gloves, during the pandemic. Also, almost 1 out of 4 consumers said they purchased such counterfeit essentials online during this time. These findings show that along with other retail concerns, the disruption caused by the pandemic opened doors to counterfeit essentials, which are now eating into the margins of brands and retailers.
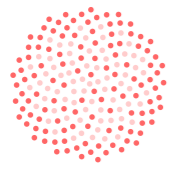
" Majority of the consumers believe eBay sells the most counterfeit products amongst online sellers "

Q.

Which online retailers do you think sells the most counterfeit goods?
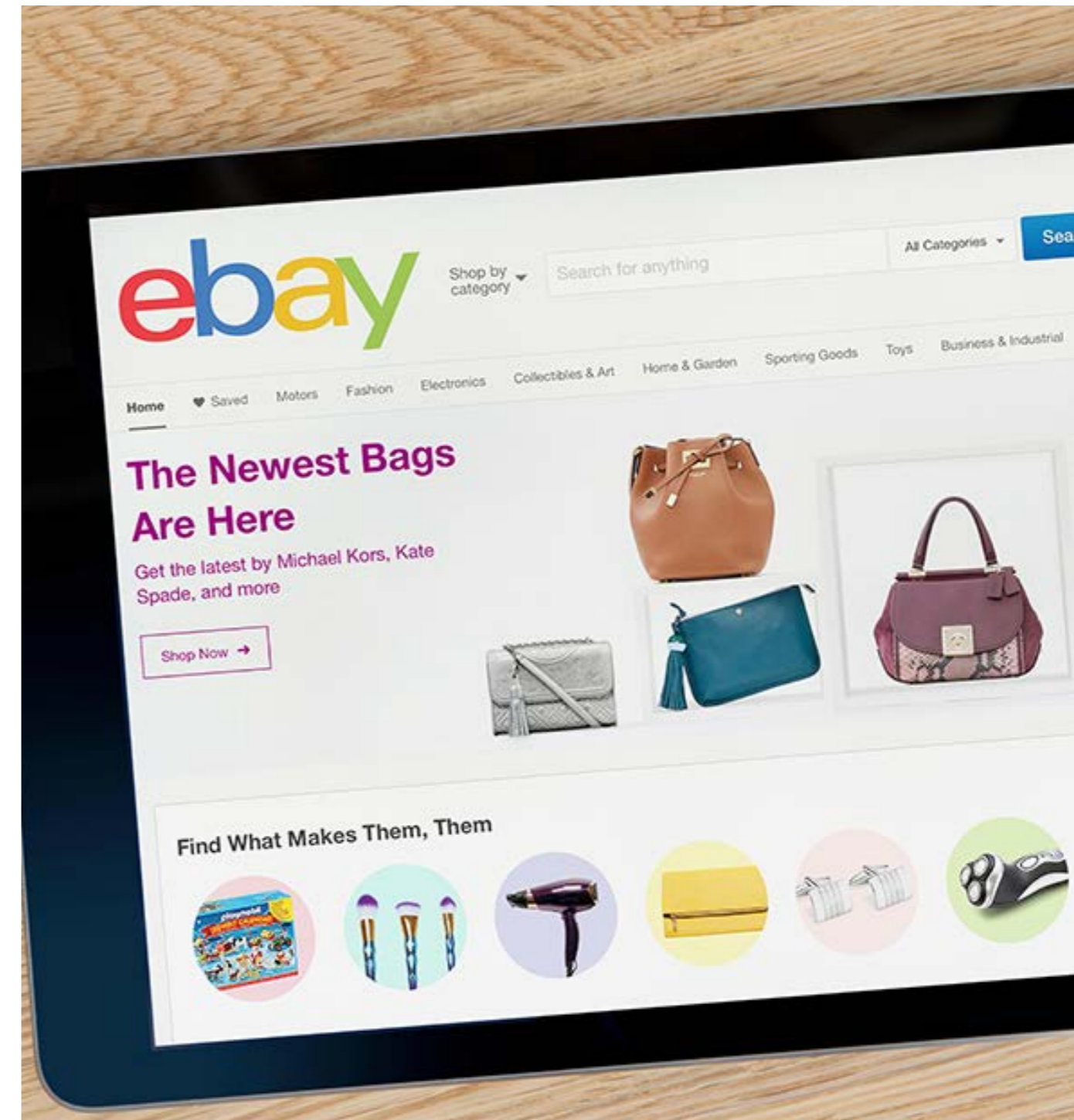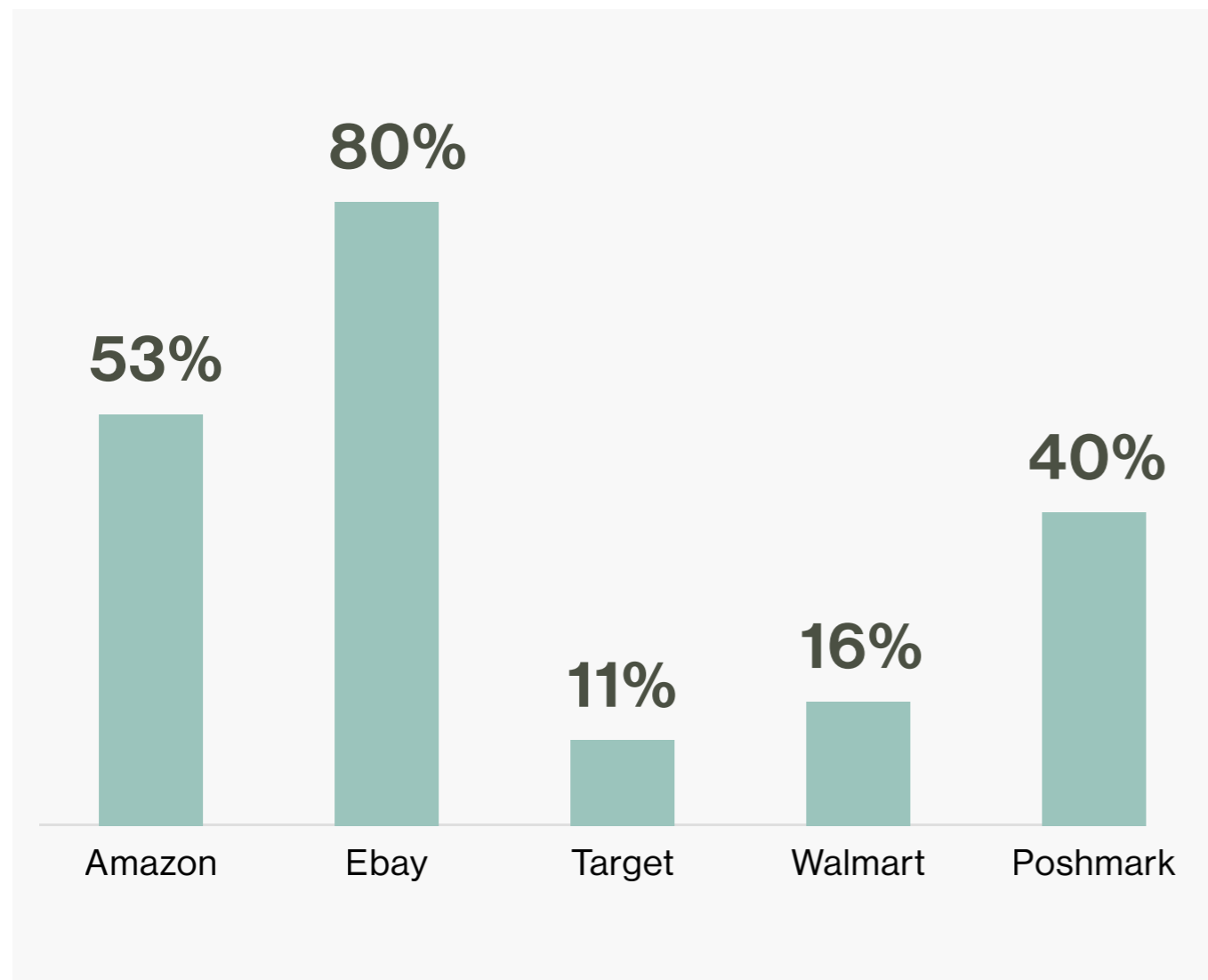
According to **80%** of respondents (up by 4% since March), eBay sells the most counterfeit products followed by Amazon with **53%** of votes. This finding indicates that consumers' trust in eBay has further dwindled. Infact, **26%** of shoppers said they have stopped buying on eBay out of counterfeit concern, which is a sign of consumer distrust and a diminishing reputation.
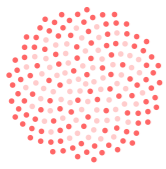
Protecting your IP and Brand Integrity with Rigorous E-Governance

Many online marketplaces don't monitor or limit gray-market sellers and counterfeiters from selling products on their platforms, including stolen goods, parts, and imagery. As such, brands can no longer distribute freely to any distributor willing to sell their products. Supply chains need to tighten controls and brands need to enforce e-governance and MAP policies online to manage who sells what products and at what costs around the world. They must ensure that branded products are authentic, authorized for sale, and in line with every condition and guideline the brand demands. Brands must also patent their products and solutions to protect their intellectual property while continuing to invent new products for customers.

According to a recent Forrester report, Dyson, the household appliance company, has one of "the tightest distribution processes and explicitly pushes customers to purchase directly from its website with several unique features such as price matching and product financing". In addition, Dyson is one of only a few brands that explicitly talks about counterfeit product issues on its website and maintains instructions to its customers for reporting counterfeit Dyson products from unauthorized sellers.

These measures have helped Dyson curtail unauthorized sellers and counterfeiters across global markets. In contrast, according to the same Forrester report, the beauty category has lacked e-governance and has been facing issues in maintaining control over its prices and margins.
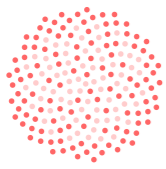
Leveraging AI-driven MAP monitoring for Brand and Price Protection

Gone are the days when your Minimum Advertised Pricing (MAP) policy could serve as the control gate and guideline for stating pricing, promotion & product terms for resellers. In the US alone, a whopping $2.6 billion is lost in revenue every year from MAP violations. Any brand with an online presence today needs a legally comprehensive, AI-enforced automation process in place to ensure complete MAP compliance. You need technology to automatically monitor thousands of your SKUS sold across diverse global marketplaces, and notify you of violations through email, and alerts, 24x7.

Let us look at some reasons why it is high time brands invest in AI-led, automated MAP monitoring solutions and reclaim control over their brand and pricing:


1. Tracking New and Unauthorized Sellers Across the Globe

An advanced MAP monitoring solution like the one offered by Intelligence Node can track new and unauthorized sellers across the globe with:

- AI-powered similar product matching to identify identical products with inconsistent product names, images, and pricing

- Automated email notification system to violating parties

- Geography, currency, and language-agnostic for true round-the-clock global monitoring

- Rich attribute library extracted from the world's largest retail dataset to uncover sellers misrepresenting your brand

- Real-time price monitoring to comb for violators every minute

- Historical reporting for thorough records of price fluctuations for every seller
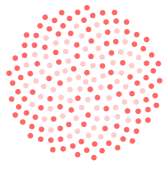
Typically, sellers change names and entities to avoid suspension or blocking. With a robust MAP monitoring solution, brands can probe into sellers worldwide to:

- Check if they are selling on other platforms unregistered

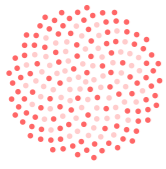- Flag product reviews for counterfeit products and inconsistent brand experience

2. Identifying Price Deviations from the Market Average

Brands and retailers can keep pricing violations under control if they can accurately detect deviations in advertised pricing across the market. These deviations are often linked to non-compliant pricing practices and suspect counterfeiters. With an advanced MAP solution, you as a brand or a retailer can rest assured that any abnormal prices will be detected and brought to your radar. You can even automate the reporting to ensure timely action!

With AI-driven MAP solutions, you can get access to:

- Historical pricing data for accurate reporting of every single product sold under your brand name

- Best-in-class refresh rate and product matching accuracy to ensure thorough vetting and avoid false reports

- Capability to get fully landed price of products to account for the final checkout prices including delivery charges, zonal pricing, and taxes

- Image analytics to detect promotional offers and banners that advertise unhealthy discounts and prices lower than the agreed MAP
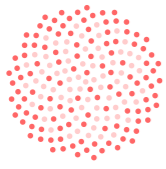
3. Monitoring Brand Representation on Third Party Websites

Brands can preserve their reputation and service quality by monitoring product copy and images to check for sellers and websites that are not complying with the brand policy. An automated and comprehensive MAP monitoring solution can help you preserve your brand equity and retain value perception by allowing you to reign in seller activities that are tarnishing or diluting your brand's reputation and pricing. This is only possible with:

- Superior AI-powered image analytics to monitor and control visual factors critical to buying decisions

- Bulk email upload & seller contact capabilities

- Rich attribute extraction to help you benchmark product copy and promotional elements

- Ensure accurate size, color and fulfillment options to avoid returns and poor reviews

- Spot counterfeits, grey goods, and unauthorized sellers by analyzing cases involving product misrepresentation

Best Practices to Implement a Robust MAP policy

1. Create a Comprehensive MAP Policy Unique to Your Brand

Every manufacturer or brand has unique requirements, goals, and market value and their MAP policies need to reflect these. Copy pasting MAP policy templates available online might not always work for your brand and might leave behind loopholes that come back to haunt you in a matter of time. Identify all the key aspects of your brand that need to be covered in the policy and draft a policy that aligns with your advertising needs. State detailed guidelines that retailers and resellers need to comply with while advertising your product and encourage them to do so by offering cooperative advertising funds wherever possible.

2. Keep it Simple and Easy to Understand

Your MAP policy should be drafted in simple language and should be easy to understand and user-friendly. Make sure your policy lays down procedures and guidelines that retailers need to follow and specifies the consequences of not complying with the terms of the MAP policy.
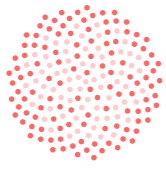
3. Implement Your Policy Consistently Across Channels

Consistency while enforcing your MAP monitoring policy is of utmost importance. Your retailers and sellers may be of all sizes and may use different channels to sell your products. Make sure they are informed about your MAP policy and alert them whenever you update any terms. Let retailers know the benefits of adhering to your policy both from the point of making healthy margins and selling the best-quality goods with high brand value. Ensure you enforce your policy across channels as any discrepancy in enforcement will lose you credibility amongst your retailers.

4. Monitor Your MAP Policy & Penalize the Violators

The success of your MAP policy ultimately depends on how well you can enforce it. From widespread enforcement across the globe to constant monitoring to identify and eliminate violators, your MAP monitoring policy needs to cover all ground. Though this requirement sounds nearly impossible to carry out, automating your MAP monitoring by implementing smart, intuitive MAP solutions is your answer, as it will not just save you thousands of dollars in map violations but also restore brand value and reclaim brand and price control.
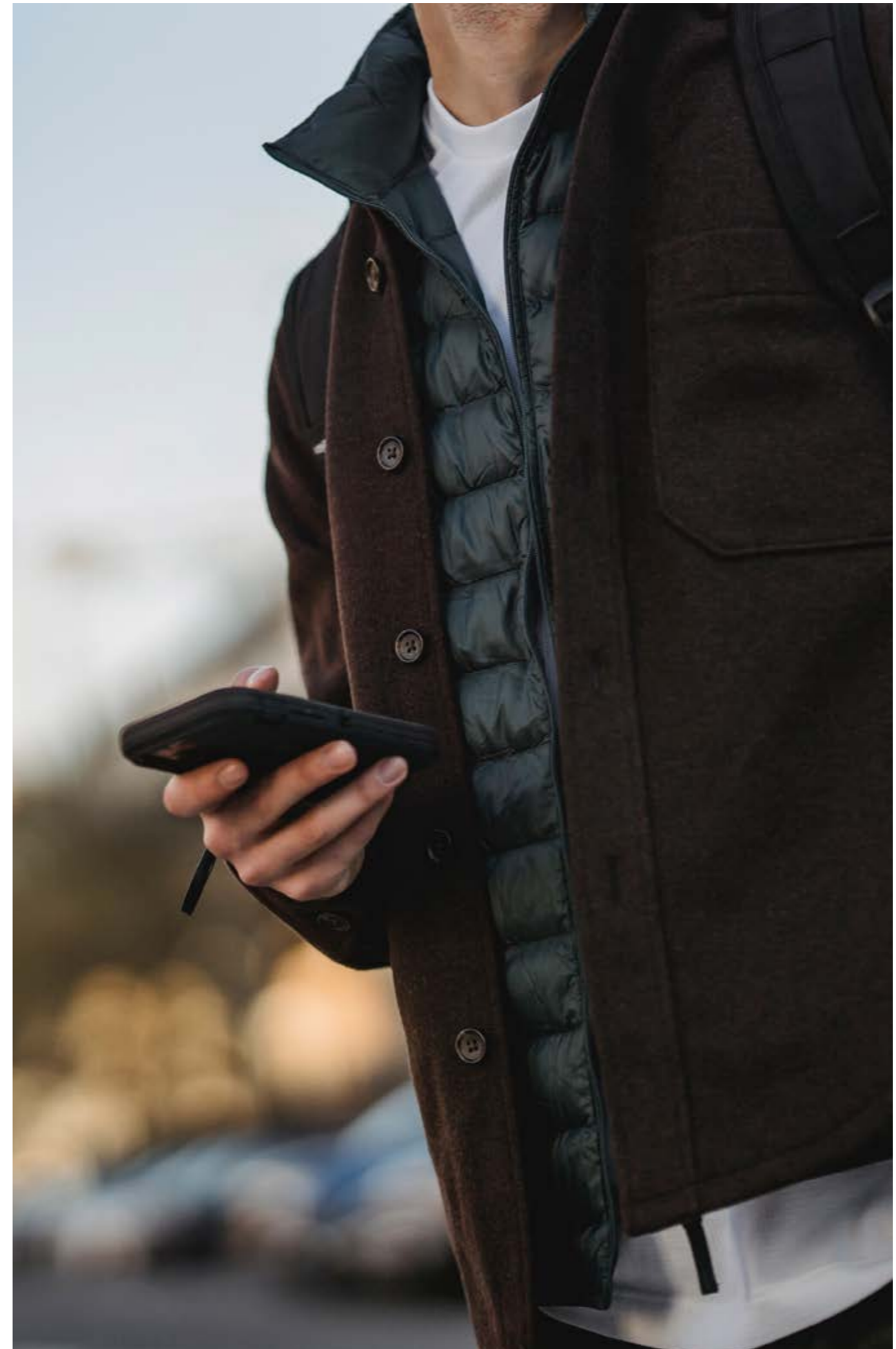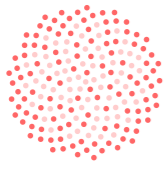
5. Invest in Automated MAP Monitoring Solutions

Drafting an on-point MAP policy is one thing but deploying it successfully across channels is a completely different ball game. To track MAP violations across hundreds of retailers and multiple websites and marketplaces needs constant vigilance and around the clock monitoring. As this type of implementation is not humanly possible, invest in automated, AI-driven solutions that can be your eyes and ears across the global retail marketplace and identify and alert you of violations and non-compliance at all times.

6. Educate Customers on Counterfeits and Unauthorized Sellers

Apart from enforcing a robust MAP policy, it is important that brands educate customers about counterfeit and fake products and ways to identify these. Websites should have content addressing this parallel economy, how it hurts both brands and customers and information on what customers can do if they suspect buying counterfeit products from unauthorized sellers. Forrester found that **55%** of US online adults say it's important for a retailer's website to offer professional ratings and reviews. This puts the onus on brands and manufacturers to encourage and incentivize their customers to leave reviews on the websites they buy from to ensure consumers have access to the right information before making a purchase.

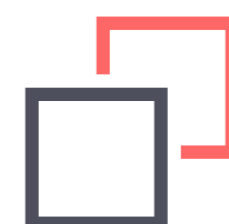## Benefits of Implementing an AI-driven MAP Monitoring Solution

Identify
high-risk sellers and
products across the globe

Grow
& control a robust sales network by converting
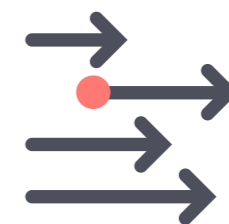unregistered sellers into legitimized sellers

Prevent
counterfeit goods from cannibalizing
your market share significantly

Reduce
operational and seller compliance costs
by almost half

Boost
brand equity, margins,
and overall revenue

About Intelligence Node

Intelligence Node is a real-time retail price intelligence platform that empowers businesses to drive product level profitability and grow margins using data-driven competitive insights. Leading as a premier independent data powerhouse, it has created the world's largest pricing dataset with unmatched accuracy - feeding the growth of more than $600 billion in retail revenue globally.

Intelligence Node's proprietary AI-driven algorithms are packaged in an intuitive and beautiful user interface, simplifying onboarding by providing easy-to-use plug & play capability.

It is the platform of choice for hundreds of retailers and brands worldwide, including category leaders like Jockey, Lenovo, Unilever, Macy's, Li & Fung, Landmark, and many others.

Please visit: www.intelligencenode.com

Intelligence
Node

Reclaim control over your brand & pricing

Plug-N-Play
No tech integration needed

Automated Reporting
Customizable alerts and email intimation system

Builts for Real Teams
Intuitive UI. No training needed

See our AI-driven MAP (Minimum Advertised Pricing) monitoring,

enforcement, and compliance solution in action.

BOOK A DEMO