

SUCCESS CASE

Fighting for the badge:

How baseball club Tomateros de Culiacán eliminated counterfeit products



The client:

Tomateros de Culiacán, one of the largest baseball clubs in Mexico, took new steps to safeguard its unique brand against illegal reproduction in online marketplaces.

Tomateros de Culiacán is a professional baseball club of the Mexican Pacific League (LMP) based in the city of Culiacán Rosales, with a history going back over 60 years. Throughout this time, Tomateros has won 13 championships in the Pacific Mexican league (LMP) and 2 championships in the Caribbean Series, becoming a symbol of its hometown and an institution for its fans. With over 2 million followers spread across Mexico and the southern part of the United States, Tomateros has three main sources of income: merchandising, ticket sales and sponsorships. The club has 9 shops in its home city, spreading from the main shopping centres to the international airport of Culiacán, making Tomateros the club with the most points of sale of all the teams in the Mexican Pacific League.

The club is committed to innovation and technology as a cornerstone of its future so is constantly investing in improving its digital presence.

For example, in order to get more insights into the online behaviour of its fans, the club has implemented a social listening platform that provides valuable information and helps to design appealing new products and create personalised experiences for its global fanbase. As an international club with a unique brand, Tomateros felt the negative impact of counterfeit products, both in terms of revenue and in the experiences that fans were reporting. Emma Sandoval, Marketing Director of the club, stated: "All brands suffer from piracy, but the consumer is affected the most. It's important that the public understands the consequences of buying counterfeit items: poor quality materials and designs, lack of support in the event of a problem with a product, and even false promotions and contests."

"The connection between the city and the club is so strong that people often say it's difficult to see where Culiacán begins and where Tomateros ends"

Emma Sandoval
Marketing Director,
Tomateros de Culiacán



The challenge:

Understand the impact of pirated products

Tomateros de Culiacán, like most sports clubs, has always been a victim of piracy and counterfeiting, but the need for a change arose when the club began to understand the impact on its online sales, including its best-selling products such as sweatshirts and hats.

The impact was quantified both from an economic point of view and from a brand point of view (the low quality of fake products promoted negative reviews from fans), which prompted the club to take decisive action.

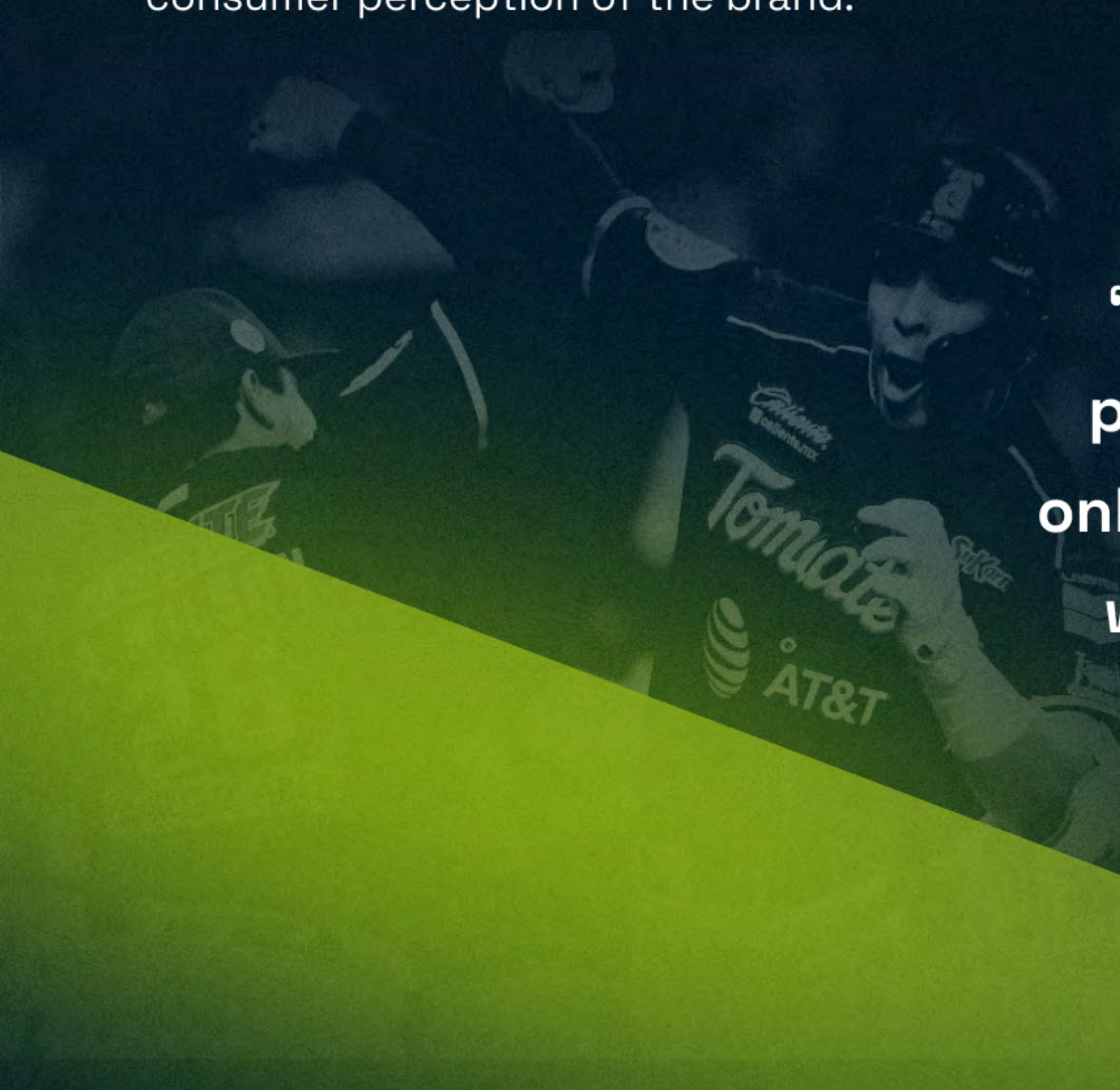
For a company with an international profile, a large catalogue of products and sales around the world, Tomateros needed a solution that could detect and remove illegal products in real time.

The club's goals were:

- ◆ To limit the sale of counterfeit products that were impacting sales and deteriorating the consumer perception of the brand.
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To overcome this challenge, Tomateros needed a partner that not only understood the sport industry and the impact of piracy in this sector, but also had the ability to quickly identify, report and eliminate sources of counterfeit products.

“Fighting piracy will help us make the public aware that the original brand is only available through official channels, where the quality of the merchandise they buy is guaranteed”



Implementing Sportian

As part of its continuing digital transformation, Tomateros understood the importance of choosing a solution based on advanced technologies such as AI and machine learning, which could automatically analyse the main online commerce platforms and identify fake products among millions of items. The club turned to Sportian, provider of advanced technology tools for the sport industry, which introduced Tomateros to its Fuoco tool. This solution, managed by the Sportian Content Protection department, is exclusively designed to monitor, report and remove the sale of counterfeit products online.

Sportian products apply machine learning algorithms that can help to quickly and identify illegal content. In the case of Fuoco, different aspects of the product are considered including its price, the sales channel, the security certificates of the selling website, delivery times or user comments. Potential risks are automatically flagged by the tool and investigated by a Sportian analyst. Removals can be made almost instantly due to the strong working relationships that Sportian holds with the world's largest online platforms.



The implementation phase was completed in under one month, and consisted of the following steps:

1- Gathering Information and Documentation: Sportian team set up calls with Tomateros to understand the club's goals, its portfolio of products, and its customers. The team also established relevant keywords for each customer profile, parameters such as price, volume of views and sales, etc. Part of this collection phase was also spent gathering the intellectual property documentation so that the team could file reports on behalf of the company.

2- Adapting the algorithm: the team used these parameters to launch its monitoring through Fuoco. Its machine learning capabilities quickly refined the search terms and allowed the club to set up different whitelists containing sites where its products could be sold legally.

3- Customising dashboards: although customisation is an ongoing process, the team began adapting the Fuoco dashboard to the needs of the club from the beginning of the process. This dashboard is constantly updated allowing Tomateros to access valuable information at any time, download reports or learn about trends related to certain products that are being counterfeited more than usual.

4- Fine-tuning and reporting illegal activities: in accordance with how product offerings, customer priorities and online selling strategies change, the Sportian team is constantly fine-tuning Fuoco. As soon as the implementation was complete, Fuoco began detecting illegal products, which are automatically sent to a team member who reviews each case and reports said the product to the relevant marketplace that is hosting it.

5- Ongoing support: Sportian team organises weekly calls to update the client on different topics such as which new types of products are being sold illegally, as well as report on which environments have the most illegal sellers and which products are pirated the most. The club uses these insights to take measures such as modifying the design of certain products.

Sportian team leads monitoring from its two global hubs, in Madrid and Mexico, ensuring that the client has 24/7 support. The versatile team created for Tomateros includes different profiles such as journalists, social network specialists, developers and engineers. The project started in Madrid but is currently run by a team of 15 people in Mexico.

Results achieved

With the implementation of Fuoco, the club achieved a qualitative leap in two areas:

1.116

MERCHANDISING:
ILLIGAL PRODUCTS

have been reported (caps, t-shirts, scarves, mobile+ phone cases, etc.) and 90% of these products have been removed from 10 marketplaces: eBay, MercadoLibre, Wish, Facebook, Alibaba, AliExpress, DHGate, Etsy, Redbubble and Amazon.

1.302

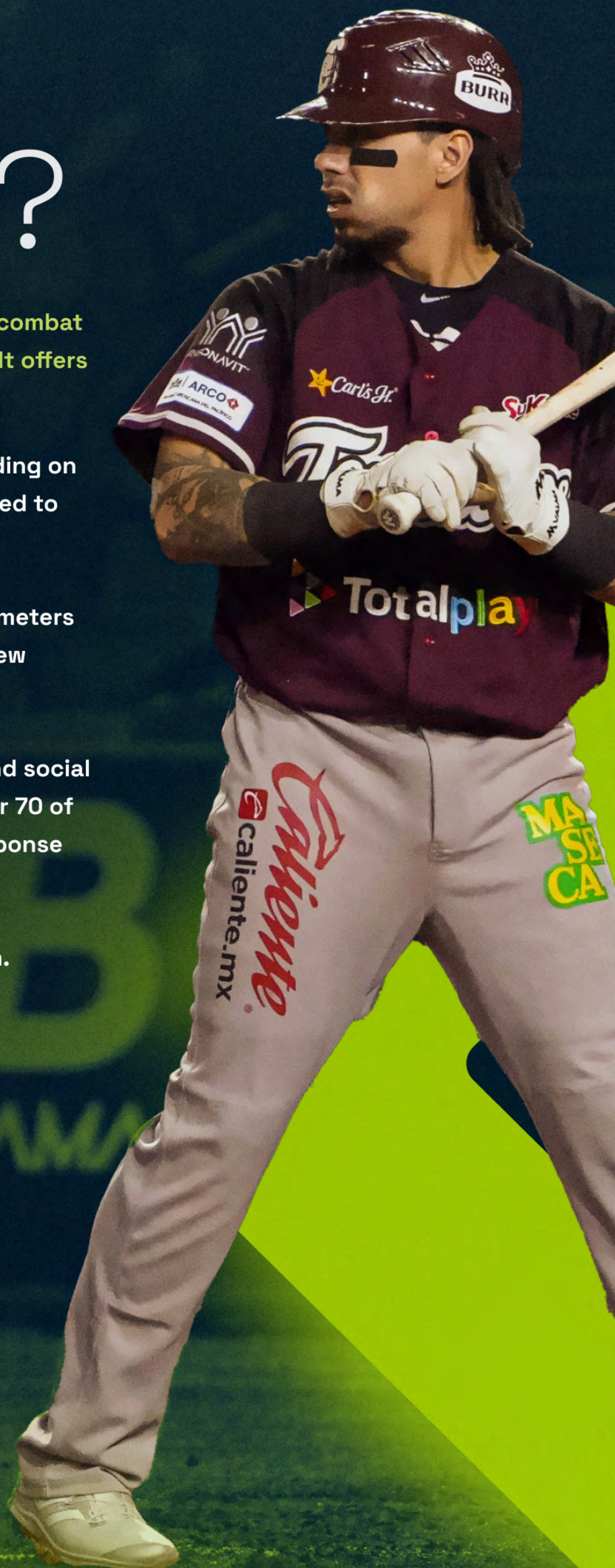
MARKETING IN SEARCH
ENGINES: URLS

Sportian has requested the deindexation that were promoting illegal products and 90% of these have already been deindexed.

Why Sportian and Fuoco?

Fuoco is an advanced tool that was specially designed to combat counterfeiting and protect brands in the sports industry. It offers the following capabilities:

- Easy and quick implementation: Under 1 month, depending on how long it takes to gather the legal information required to file a counterfeit product complaint.
- Short adaptation period: Once the analysis of the parameters and consumer profiles are done, adapting Fuoco to a new client takes little time.
- Established agreements with the main marketplaces and social networks: Sportian holds working agreements with over 70 of the world's largest online platforms. Therefore, the response and action times are significantly reduced.
- Constant monitoring 24 hours a day by the Fuoco team.



WORK SMART IMPROVE RESULTS

