Limited anti-counterfeiting budgets and new tactics used by counterfeiters to traffic fake goods online are just some challenges that brand owners and companies can expect in 2018 and beyond.

But strategic partnership and cooperation as well as new developments in hologram technology will provide opportunities to counter some of the risks.

The International AntiCounterfeiting Coalition (IACC) says the trafficking of counterfeit goods online, including the exploitation of legitimate platforms and services to facilitate the sale of illicit goods, will continue to be a priority for brand owners in 2018.

“Counterfeiters continuously evolve, changing their tactics so that it’s harder for online shoppers to distinguish between authentic goods and fakes online,” says IACC President, Bob Barchiesi.

“This is why the IACC is working with other responsible partners in the online ecosystem, including the credit card and payments sectors, and e-commerce platforms. Only by working together in strategic partnership, can we hope to develop effective mechanisms to address the sale online of these illegal, and often dangerous, products.”

With the estimated value of fake and pirated goods expected to soar in the next few years, brand owners’ limited anti-counterfeiting budgets will force them to pick battles in the war against counterfeiting, said Maysa Razavi, Manager, Anticounterfeiting at the International Trademark Association (INTA).

Last February, INTA along with Business Action to Stop Counterfeiting and Piracy, released a report which forecasts that by the year 2022, the total estimated value of counterfeit and pirated goods will reach an astounding $1.90 to $2.81 trillion.

INTA says the increase in small packages seized at borders is further evidence that the problem is mounting. Counterfeiters can sell goods online from anywhere worldwide, and send them directly to the consumer.

In 2015, postal and courier traffic still accounted for 77 percent of all detentions in the EU. In terms of number of articles detained in postal traffic, other electronic equipment (32 percent) came first with medicines in second place (16 percent).

Ms Razavi adds, “With all these small packages and the multitude of internet sites in existence, anti-counterfeiting efforts surmount to searching for a needle in a haystack.”

INTA says ultimately, when unsuspecting consumers purchase these counterfeit goods, they do not know about the severity of the crime of counterfeiting. All of this adds up to potential damage to the public as well as to a brand owner’s reputation.

“Brand owners must work together in order to effectively overcome the demand for counterfeits by educating consumers about the harm of counterfeiting as well as the challenges associated with anti-counterfeiting enforcement,” INTA said.

The International Hologram Manufacturers Association (IHMA) sees increased integration of holograms alongside other authentication and track and trace technologies which will be used to offer protection.

This will strengthen holography’s role in tax stamp programmes in the next 12 months, combatting the multi-billion global trade in illicit or counterfeit tobacco and alcohol products.

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While Europe and North America will continue to Offer opportunity, IHMA says it is in the hot spots of Asia, where counterfeiting appears systemic, that offers massive commercial potential.

IHMA chair Manoj Kochar said: "Countries across Asia, notably India and China, will continue to offer unprecedented scope for growth for holograms in the battle to stem the tide of counterfeit goods flooding onto the market.

“We will continue to see over the coming months increased integration of holograms in these territories as part of brand protection strategies being adopted by government and security agencies looking to tackle the problem.”

IHMA will build on its work with Chinese authorities to address the problems. Such moves will protect those retail brands destined for export markets against the threat of counterfeit criminals and organised crime.

“Counterfeiting cannot be defeated in isolation, so collaboration with the likes of the IHMA will be paramount,” adds Mr Kochar.

“What we offer in terms of helping to tackle counterfeiting particularly with the use of the Hologram Image Register, has to be a welcome priority. International communication, open-mindedness and closer collaboration will be beneficial as we move forward, helping us to tackle and solve this together.”

* CIB operates the Hologram Image Register for IHMA. More information can be found here.