Antecedents of Young Consumer's Purchase Intention towards Counterfeit Fashion Wear in Pakistan

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Abstract

Counterfeiting is a major threat faced by established legal manufacturers. In addition to being a direct threat to the legal manufacturers', counterfeiting causes loss of future employment opportunities, threatens the existing jobs at the legal manufacturer, causes an increase in the marketing expenditure, and more seriously, damages the value of the brand. The objectives of this study are to understand how consumers' personalities and other social-factors shape their purchasing behavior, specifically related to the purchase of counterfeited products. Data were collected from 311 students of different public sector universities operating in Pakistan. The results indicate that materialism has an insignificant impact on purchase intentions and that this relationship is mediated by the respondents' attitude towards counterfeited products. The other variables that were included in the model i.e. ethical sensitivity, legal sensitivity, personal gratification, and product quality, all registered a significant impact on the purchase intentions and confirmed the mediating role of attitude towards counterfeited products.

Keywords: Legal sensitivity, Ethical sensitivity, Product quality, Personal gratification, Materialism, Purchase intentions, Attitude

Introduction and Background

The problem of counterfeiting is not a new one; archeologists have unearthed counterfeited gold coins from the Roman Empire. As with the advancements in other aspects of day to day life, the ability of counterfeiters to produce their products has improved exponentially. These counterfeiters are taking advantage of the same tools that are employed by the legal manufacturers for expanding their commerce. For example, where brand-owners have leveraged the potential of e-commerce for expanding their market base, counterfeiters employ the same e-commerce technologies for expanding their reach into previously untapped markets. New technologies have enhanced the ability of counterfeiters to reverse-engineer (Minagawa, Trott, & Hoecht, 2007) the manufacturing process employed by the original legal manufacturer. This has expedited the pace with which counterfeited products are introduced in the market.

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Due to the many adverse outcomes associated with counterfeiting, there have been concerted efforts to document the net-cost of such activities to the legitimate businesses. In this regard, Llano (2017) reports that in the US, 29-41 million USD are spent on counterfeited products. Preventing the trade of counterfeit products in the US is the mandate of the Customs and Border Protection Department (CBPD). According to the statistics available from CBPD, 40% of the total counterfeited goods that are imported into the US come through Los Angeles and Long Beach ports (Llano, 2017; Wright & Baur, 2013). It is estimated that by the end of the year 2020, the total value of the world's counterfeit activities will reach USD 1.82 trillion (Research and Markets, 2018).

Counterfeiting is generally done of luxury goods or high-end products. Consumers generally procure these products to enhance their social status (Cannon & Rucker, 2018). An individual's social status determines his/her position in the societal-hierarchy. The privileges afforded by the status are bestowed upon individuals occupying a certain status by other individuals who generally belong to a similar or lower stratum of the society. Luxury goods impress upon others the social status of the products' owners. The satisfaction the owner of the luxury good draws from the ownership of the product depends upon how much the ownership of the product is associated with a certain level of status (Puwanto *et al.*, 2019). Individuals are inclined to procure counterfeited items that offer a similar level of satisfaction as afforded by the ownership of the original product.

The literature on consumer behaviors identifies several factors that affect the purchase decision. These include, but are not limited to social impact (Ames, 2006), value for money (Furnham & Valgeirsson, 2007), risk associated with the procurement of counterfeited products (Sugita & Miyakawa, 2010), materialistic frame of mind (Furnham & Valgeirsson, 2007), and brand appreciation (Leung, 2012). Research also indicates that self-esteem plays an important role in regulating the desire to procure counterfeited goods (Cordell *et al.*, 1996; Prakash & Pathak, 2017). The results from the study conducted by Djuhardi and Kusumawati (2017) indicate that brand recognition also influences the decision to procure counterfeited goods. Lastly, numerous studies have looked at the role attitudes play in shaping the behavior to procure counterfeited goods (Djuhardi & Kusumawati, 2017; Gentry, Putrevu & Shultz, 2006; Prakash & Pathak, 2017). However, most of the studies cited above are conducted in developed countries, and very limited literature is available in the context of developing countries like Pakistan. Moreover, the selected variables are very well aligned with the current situation of Pakistan, where economic conditions are motivating the customers to purchase counterfeit products. Furthermore, there are vague laws regarding the sale/purchase of counterfeit products which enables the producers to manufacture counterfeit products.

The result of a report generated by OECD/EUIPO (2016) shows that Pakistan falls in the top ten countries where buying, selling and production of counterfeit goods is very easy, and where there is a lax attitude of the state towards such practices (Ahmed *et al.*, 2014). The objective of this study is to explore the major factors behind the attitude and purchase intention of counterfeit fashion goods in Pakistan. The conceptual framework of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) is used to develop the relationship of the above-mentioned objective. The theoretical model developed for this study incorporates ethical sensitivity, legal sensitivity, materialism, personal gratification, price, perceived quality, and demographic variables (age, gender, and income) to inspect the influence of these factors on the attitude and purchase intention towards counterfeit fashion wears.

Review of Literature

Counterfeits

Products having the same attributes as that of the genuine product are known as counterfeit products (Ha & Lennon, 2006). According to Kay (1990), the piracy or copying of the packing, label, and trademark of the genuine or original good represents a counterfeit good. On the other side, counterfeit goods are those which are being sold in the market place without the authentication and permission of the legitimate producer (Mcdonald & Roberts, 1994). It was also noticed that most of the time counterfeit products were a copy of luxury goods offered at a cheap price, and were a threat to the fashion industry (Yoo & Lee, 2009).

There are two types of counterfeiting practices: (a) deceptive, and (b) non-deceptive. In the case of deceptive counterfeiting, the consumer is not aware of the fact that the product being procured is counterfeited. On the other hand, when consumers themselves opt to procure a counterfeited product, counterfeiting is said to be non-deceptive. The scope of this study is limited to developing an understanding of the factors that drive consumers to partake in non-deceptive counterfeiting of fashion wears.

An article in Women's Wear Daily reported that 76% of fake products are fashion-wear counterfeits like jewelry, ladies' handbag, shirts, perfumes, etc. The counterfeit of food, pharmaceuticals, and other health-related products is considered very dangerous or life-threatening, but counterfeits of fashion-wear are considered safe for purchase and consumption (Akunyili & Nnani, 2004). People remain reluctant to purchase counterfeit goods if they believe in the quality of the original goods (Eisend, 2019; Bhatia, 2017; Nia & Lynne Zaichkowsky, 2000).

Materialism

Individual attributes of desiring more and better than others are known as materialism (Phau, Sequeira, & Dix, 2009). Consumers with a materialistic approach

generally ignore the spiritual and psychological prospects of life (Furnham & Valgeirsson, 2007; Phau *et al.*, 2009). These people consider wealth as the single major factor behind the success and pleasures of life (Phau *et al.*, 2009). The basic reason behind this motivation to achieve more and more precious goods is to flaunt these in their social circle to make an impression on other people (Eastman, Goldsmith, & Flynn, 1999). To fulfill this desire, they are engaged in purchasing high-status products rather than general products (Wang *et al.*, 2005).

People with such intentions and materialistic approach significantly influence the sale of counterfeit products (Furnham & Valgeirsson, 2007). There are some contradictions to the opinion that people with a highly materialistic approach do not buy counterfeits (Harun *et al.*, 2012). Research regarding the impact of materialism on the attitude and purchase intention of fashion wear has not yet been conducted in Pakistan, especially in geographical areas where access to counterfeits is easy.

> H_1: *Materialism positively affects the attitude and purchase intention of counterfeit fashion wear products*

Legal Sensitivity

One of many reasons behind the worldwide growth of counterfeiting is the poor execution of anti-counterfeiting law systems. Putting aside the inadequate implementation of anti-counterfeiting laws, the non-serious attitude towards these laws by consumers also needs to be addressed. On the other hand, some people think of it as an illegal and unlawful activity (Swami, Chamorro-Premuzic, & Furnhamd, 2009). Besides this, some people take it as officially permitted and purchase the counterfeit products (Norum & Cuno, 2011; Phau, Sequeira & Dix, 2009). In this regard, the American counterfeit product users believe that the consumption of such products does not have any adverse effect on the US economy (Commuri, 2009). Furthermore, consumers in China are even more unmindful of the legal issues related to the purchase of counterfeit goods. Mir (2013) suggested that consumers are less sensitive towards anti-counterfeiting laws which positively impact their understanding, behavior and purchase intention towards counterfeit goods. When anti-counterfeiting laws are inoperative in society, consumers show less sensitivity to these laws, thereby reducing the legal bodies' ability to indict counterfeiters (Amendolara, 2005; Chaudhry & Stumpf, 2011). In U.S and Brazil, some factors which lead to the consumption of counterfeit products are poverty and widespread illiteracy, which actually lead to the consumption of counterfeit products among masses (Stumpf *et al.*, 2011).

> H_2: *Legal insensitivity positively affects attitude and purchase intention of counterfeit fashion wears*

Ethical Sensitivity

People with low ethical sensitivity have more inclination towards counterfeited products. Ethical sense could be defined as how people take their moral and social values in society; they have an idea or sense about what is right and wrong. Low ethical sensitivity means that people do not consider moral issues while purchasing something. Low ethical sensitivity raises the consumption patterns of pirated goods in customers (Shaw & Clarke, 1998). Ethical sensitivity sets the foundations for positive and negative behavior of buyers to buy counterfeit products (Mir, 2012). This study clarifies that people with lower ethical values develop intentions to purchase pirated or bogus goods.

H₃: Low ethical sensitivity directly influences the attitude of the consumer, which ultimately leads to consumer purchase intention for counterfeit products

Personal Gratification

Personal gratification concerns the need for a sense of accomplishment, social recognition, and enjoyment of the finer things in life (Ang *et al.*, 2001; Wang *et al.,* 2005). Purchase intention is significantly correlated with all the independent variables, including personal gratification. Some other studies also confirmed that the effect of personal gratification on attitude towards counterfeit products was significant. Consumers who seek to have a sense of accomplishment have positive attitudes (De Matos *et al.*, 2007; Rishi & Mehra, 2017). On the other hand, some researchers contradicted this as their studies showed no significant influence of personal gratification on consumer attitudes toward counterfeits. Rather, they concluded a negative predictor of attitude towards counterfeit brands. This is following Phau and Teah's (2009) study in which it was found that consumers with less personal gratification will not purchase counterfeit luxury branded products.

Personal psychological factors such as personal gratification and status consumption have an effect on attitude. Moreover, attitude and behavior towards countering fake goods also vary from one country to the other (Ang *et al.*, 2001; Bloch, *et al.*, 1993; Cockrill *et al.*, 2017). Perceived behavioral control and subjective norms significantly affected Taiwanese students in their intention to purchase counterfeit sporting goods. This shows that if customers evaluate counterfeit products positively based on different factors, then there is a high probability that they develop strong purchase intentions for counterfeit products (Haseeb & Mukhtar, 2016). As far as the role of attitude towards counterfeit brands as a mediating variable is concerned, Saeed *et al.* (2016) concluded that it serves as a mediating variable for all independent variables, namely novelty seeking, personal gratification and status consumption.

H₄: Personal gratification of consumers significantly influences the attitude and purchase intention of counterfeit products

Product Perceived Quality

The quality of a product as perceived by the customer is a major determinant in the buying intention of the consumer. A quality product is a product or service which meets or exceeds the customer's requirements. The difference between actual products and alternative products that could be made available or provided by the particular industry develops "product quality" (Hardie & Walsh, 1994). It can also be checked by the way how consumers observe product quality in the market (Wankhade & Dabade, 2006). A survey was conducted on customer perception of quality and buying patterns in 1980-88, which established that customers place first preference on the quality of a product, second on the price, and third on the service (Besterfield, 2003). The quality of a product is strongly associated with higher purchase intention. Products which consumers perceive as high quality are more likely to be purchased, such that the quality of the product is strongly correlated with buying intention in transactions (Chang & Wildt, 1994; Lange, Rousseau, & Issanchou, 1998).

A direct positive impact of perceived product quality towards the purchase intention was found from the results of past researches on such factors (Boulding *et al.*, 1993). Along with this, using "customer satisfaction" as a mediating variable, an indirect influence among perceived product quality and purchase was also found in past studies (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Llusar *et al.*, 2001; Madu *et al.*, 1995). However, it was found that the intention to purchase through perceived product quality had a dual effect on manufactured goods and a single effect for services, which may have been direct or indirect (Tsiotsou, 2005).

H5: perceived quality of product influences the attitude of the consumer, which further builds purchase intention for counterfeit products

Attitude and Purchase Intention of Counterfeit

According to Ang *et al.* (2001), the thinking or feeling of an individual about any object, thing or environment in the surrounding is known as attitude. The individual's expected behavior to perform is based on attitude (Commuri, 2009). A study conducted by Kim and Karpova (2010) elucidated that counterfeit of fashion wear products have a positive relationship with the attitude of the consumers. The study examined the relationship between pirated T-shirts and consumers' attitude/intention with positive findings (De Matos, 2007). A bundle of researches has made it evident that consumers' attitude has a positive impact on counterfeit goods of luxury items (Ang *et al.*, 2001; De Matos *et al.*, 2007; Park-Poaps and Kang, 2018). The TRA (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) is used to explain the relationship between the various determinants of consumer and the purchase intentions of counterfeit fashion wear products.

H6: Attitude significantly influences consumer's purchase intention of fashion wear products
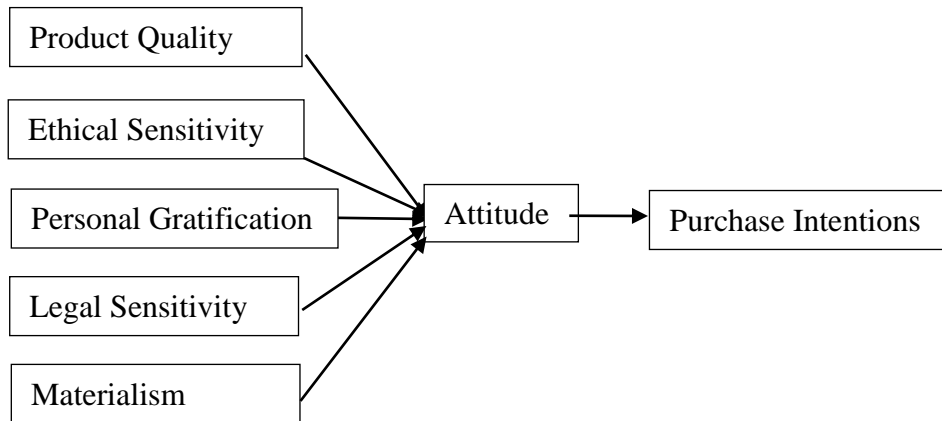

Fig. 1: *Conceptual Framework*

Research Methodology

Research Design

The research is intended to identify the relationship and impact of different variables on counterfeit purchase intentions with the mediating mechanism of attitude towards the counterfeited product. For identification, the current research adopted the positivist research philosophy followed by the deductive approach. The theory of planned behavior was used for testing the relationship. Primary data was collected using the purposive sampling technique. Self-administrated questionnaires were used for data collection. The units of analysis were the students of different public sector universities. The sample obtained and used for further analysis was three hundred and eleven (311).

Instrumentation

The questionnaire contained two separate sections; one section was related to the demographic/background information of customers vis-à-vis the other section consisted of different independent, dependent and mediating variables. The six-item scale of Phau and Teah (2009) was used to assess the purchase intentions of customers regarding counterfeits. Legal and ethical sensitivity were measured through Mir's (2013) scale. The said scale consisted of five to seven items. Product quality was measured using Yoo and Donthu's (2007) scale. The attitude towards counterfeit was measured using the eight-item scale of Mir (2013). Personal gratification and materialism related scales were adopted from the study of Davidson, Nepomuceno, and Laroche (2019). All items were measured on a five-point rating scale.

Profile of Respondents

Overall, 311 questionnaires were finalized for the study. Category-wise demographics of the respondents are presented in the table below:

Table 1: *Demographic Category*

Demographics Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	258	83%
Female	53	17%
Age		
15-20 Years	93	29.9%
21-25 Years	180	57.9%
26-30 Years	35	11.3%
31- 35 Years	3	1%
Education		
Intermediate	137	44.1%
Graduation	173	55.6%
Master	1	.3%
Specialization		
Management Sciences	167	53.7%
Social Sciences	143	46.0%
Other	1	.3%
Income		
Rs. 1000-5000	78	25.1%
Rs. 6000-10000	112	36.0%
Rs. 11000-15000	79	25.4%
Rs. 16000-20000	31	10.0%
Rs. 21000 & above	11	3.5%

The demographic table revealed that 258 male respondents participated in the study, with a percentage of 83%, and only 53 females participated, with a percentage of 17%. 93 respondents reported their ages between 15 to 20 years, 180 respondents were 21 to 25 years of age, 35 reported their ages as 26-30, while 3 respondents were 31-35 years of age. Students also reported their education level i.e. intermediate, graduate and master (137, 173 and 1) with their respective field of specialization. The most important demographic factor which can contribute to the purchase of counterfeit products is the income level of respondents.

Measurement Model

Before running the formal test, the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted, and skewness and kurtosis were run on the data to test their normality. The results suggest that the data is normally distributed (i.e. the values of skewness and

kurtosis for Legal Sensitivity -.384, .283, Personal Gratification -.745, .542, Materialism -.778, .446, Product Quality -.424, -.149, Attitude -.695, .187, Purchase intentions -.651, .508. and ethical sensitivity -.658, -.135 respectively) and encouraged to move further for hypothesis testing. The hypothesized model results are shown in the figure and table below.
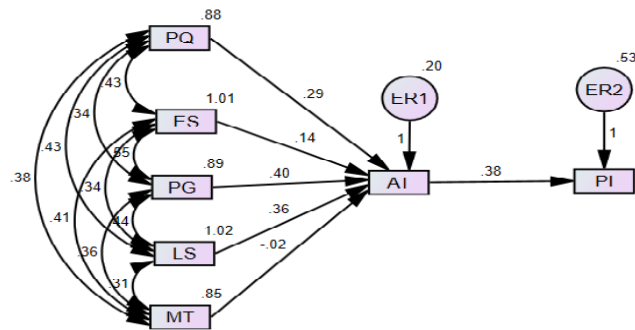

Fig. 2: *Path Diagram*

The table below reveals the results of the hypotheses vis-à-vis the results of the overall model using AMOS. The model fitness revealed the values of RMSEA= .057, SRMR=.071, CFI=.902, and CMIN/DF=2.018, which are acceptable. The results indicate a significant relationship between ethical sensitivity, personal gratification, legal sensitivity, and product quality and purchase intentions through the mediational role of attitude towards counterfeit products. However, the results of materialism were insignificant with p>.05 value. So, the hypothesis of materialism (H_1) was rejected based upon the results.

Table 2: *Hypothesis Model Results*

Hypothesis			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
AT	<---	ES	.142	.033	4.249	***
AT	<---	PG	.399	.036	11.226	***
AT	<---	LS	.359	.030	11.888	***
AT	<---	MT	-.024	.033	-.744	.457
AT	<---	PQ	.286	.034	8.532	***
PI	<---	AT	.375	.042	8.930	***

*** *p<=.0001, AT=Attitude towards counterfeits, ES=Ethical Sensitivity, PG=Personal Gratification, LS=Legal Sensitivity, MT=Materialism, PQ=Product Quality, PI=Purchase Intentions. Model fit Measures (CMIN=110.668, DF=478, CFI=.902, SRMR=.071, RMSEA=.057, P Close=.011. Acceptable ranges (CMIN/DF>1, Excellent, CFI <.95, RMSEA<.06, Excellent).*

Discussion

The results of the study suggest that other than materialism, all antecedents significantly impact the attitude of the consumer. The insignificant findings of materialism are consistent with the previous study by Davidson *et al.* (2019). Moreover, the individual who has a materialistic approach tends to have fewer purchase intentions towards counterfeit products due to embarrassment. The findings suggested that the attitude towards counterfeit is playing a role in the relationship of the different discussed factors and results are consistent with the previous study of Batra and Homer (2004). The attitude of a consumer can be affected due to certain components (affective, cognitive and behavioral) which leads to the adoption of behavior (Compeau, Grewal, & Monroe, 1998; Gobe, 2001; Gountas & Gountas, 2007; Jang & Namkung, 2009).

The other variable is related to the product quality and purchase intentions, which is providing strong support to the previous literature. For instance, Tsiotsou (2006) described that product quality through attitude is having a significant impact on the purchase intentions of counterfeit products. Chaniotakis *et al.* (2010) identified that consumer attitude can play a pivotal role in the purchase decision process. The said study mainly discussed one element of product quality i.e. meeting customer expectations and found the results as significant. Nowadays, various researchers are working on other dimensions of product quality which can drive purchase intentions through attitude (Yu, Hudders, & Caubeghe, 2018). The famous signaling theory is also supportive and could be used for finding the mediating role of attitude between product quality and purchase intentions (Drake *et al.*, 2015).

Researchers (Hussain, Kofinas, & Win, 2017; Souiden, Ladhari, & Amri, 2018) have identified that ethical sensitivity has an influential role in the relationship of purchase intentions of counterfeit products, and the results also support this relationship. The study of Hussain, Kofinas, and Win (2017), conducted in Pakistan and the United Kingdom, shows the relationship of ethics and purchase decision as having values of .032 (Pakistan) and .596 (UK). The results are very much consistent with the current study.

Legal sensitivity and purchase intentions through attitude have significant results as the beta value is .359 (p<.001). A study defined that the weak system of law enforcement is facilitating the sale/purchase of counterfeit products. Individuals with low tendencies towards legal complications are inclined towards the purchase intentions of counterfeit products. Mir (2013) conducted a study on cellular phones in Pakistan and the findings are consistent with the current study.

Implications and Conclusion

Every study is a blend of some new contributions and limitations. This study also has some limitations, especially as the sampling technique was purposive sampling and the age group of the respondents was narrow. If any other sampling technique is used on

some other population, the results may be different. A small sample size was used, which can be increased. This may increase the generalizability of the investigation. Demographic factors such as ethnicity, geographic areas, and different product category in counterfeits could be used in future investigations.

This study is very useful for the manufacturers and sellers in the fashion industry as it gives insight into the determinants behind the purchase intention of the consumer i.e. psychographic factors (personal gratification and materialism), legal sensitivity, ethical sensitivity, and product quality. The results of the current study reveal that young and low-income consumers are attracted to counterfeit goods. Therefore, original brand manufacturers are suggested to produce some fashion wear with low cost to restrain the group from the consumption of counterfeit products. Some brands have already introduced secondary brand lines like Marc by Jacob and Lauren by Ralph Lauren.

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