

ASCERTAINING THE LEADING ANTECEDENTS OF WILLINGNESS TO BUY COUNTERFEIT LUXURY FASHION PRODUCTS: AN EVALUATION AND EXTENSION

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Abstract

The drive of this research is to propose and experiment a model that incorporates the chief antecedents of consumers' attitude and willingness to buy counterfeit luxury fashion goods knowingly. The effects of several socio-economic and socio-psychological appearances are explored and reconnoitered. For bridging the gap, the study was conducted to point out the main determinants of willingness to buy counterfeit luxury fashion brands/product in Pakistan. This study was executed with a sample of 257 consumers from three big markets of Pakistan: Lahore, Faisalabad and Islamabad. Moreover, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique was exercised to test hypothesized relationships among variables. The study ended with few contributions and findings; economic benefits, past-experience and materialism towards counterfeit were playing a significant role towards willingness to buy the counterfeit luxury fashion products. While; hedonic benefits have not been proven as significant as they were hypothesized. The study discovers the leading determinants of attitude towards counterfeits and willingness to buy the counterfeit fashion products by testing a wide-ranging model concerning the literature and theories in the field of consumer behavior and marketing. From managerial perspective, manufacturers dealing in the original fashion product will be getting a deep insight into the factors playing vital role for purchase of counterfeits. However, few relationships in this study were redefined with respect to the local context. From theoretical perspective, Drive theory of motivation was brought into the marketing literature related to consumer buying decisions.

Keywords: Counterfeit Goods, Economic Benefits, Hedonic Benefits, Materialism, Willingness To Buy Counterfeits, Attitude Towards Counterfeits.

1. Introduction

The contemporary life of the consumers is being emblemized by the brands; few researches have argued that there is no single concern that prevails over the modern psyche as much as the consumption of the brands (O'cass & McEwen, 2004; O'cass & Frost, 2002). The role played by different brands could change the life drastically, as brands are the mark of quality and reliability (Chernev, Hamilton, & Gal, 2011; Van Gool et al., 2003) offering consumers more symbolic connotations about their personalities and lives that are far beyond than just fundamental product characteristics.

The brands don't have only intrinsic meanings, they have some social meanings as well, people use brands for self-expression trying to develop different perception of the people about themselves. Possessions are the major contributors towards identities; people take social, psychological and hedonic benefits out of the brands. As it is well said by the CEO of Louis Vuitton (LV) that, "*Luxury goods are the ordinary products of extraordinary people and the extraordinary products of ordinary people.*" Vincent Bastien Louis Vuitton CEO 1988-1995.

Having a consider the history of counterfeiting; it goes back to more than 40 years back (Veloutsou & Bian, 2008). When Levi's came to know very first time that unauthorized production of its jeans in South East Asia is carried on at massive level, it's being labeled and distributed widely in Western Europe (Knox & Walker, 2001). At that time, only a small number of manufacturers of up-priced and status products of textile, jewelry and accessories were affected. It was considered a phenomenon of inconsequential significance. Since then counterfeit goods are available abundantly in almost every market of the world. Counterfeiting of luxury fashion products like wrist watches, cloths, wallets, handbags and footwear has been increased at phenomenal rate. It has now been developed as an economic problem universally. The International Anti-Counterfeiting Coalition foresees that act of counterfeiting is going to be held responsible for around US\$200 billion per year in lost jobs, unpaid taxes and loss of sales (Furnham & Valgeirsson, 2007). Counterfeiting is becoming one of the serious-natured causes of harm to economic and social legitimate procedures as whole (Prendergast, Hing Chuen, & Phau, 2002).

South East Asia is an emerging market for the production and trade of counterfeit goods. This study becomes more significant as none of the studies has been conducted in the local context with the reference to consumption of counterfeit luxury fashion goods till now. Trade volume of counterfeit luxury goods has terrifically increased across the globe. The International Trade Commission (ITC) estimates that sale of counterfeits has grown from \$5.5 billion in 1982 to over \$500 billion in 2009, this increasing trend might go long way. Pakistan is expected to become reasonably bigger consumers of counterfeit luxury fashion goods. As luxury goods offer status, self-satisfaction and eminence which are far beyond than just functional utility of the products (Grossman & Shapiro, 1988).

2. Literature Review

Brands play an important role in building consumer identities and its role has changed from functional to instrumental. Social media has revolutionized the role of consumers in creating and understanding the branding process of a product.

Economic Benefits

Consumers are more interested rationally in useful life of the product, they consider durability and reliability of the product to the greater extent specifically when the product is functional one (Greenberg, Siegel, & Leitch, 1983). Price sensitive consumers are seeking another benefit in their purchases of low price as well. The two major areas of benefits are; economic benefits and hedonic benefits. As the prices of the counterfeits are just negligible percentages of the original ones. Counterfeit users found appreciating the economic benefits (Albers-Miller & Royne Stafford, 1999) and there is vibrant difference between price and quality of counterfeits and originals, choice lies with consumer always (Gentry, Putrevu, & Shultz, 2006; Prendergast et al., 2002). Consumers select the products according their affordability, if they have selected counterfeits, henceforth, they don't mind the poor quality of counterfeits (Hoon Ang, Sim Cheng, Lim, & Kuan Tambyah, 2001; Nia & Lynne Zaichkowsky, 2000).

H₁: As consumers take real economic benefits from counterfeit purchases, they will have more positive attitude towards counterfeits.

Hedonic Benefits: It has also been studied that consumers buy counterfeits not only because of economic benefits, they take other benefits like they enjoy brand's name, logo, reputation, popularity, and prominence. Moreover, they associate themselves with the brands. Such benefits-taken are known as hedonic ones (Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994). Counterfeits are the better and cheaper choices when consumers are looking for hedonic benefits

rather than some practical needs; they are less concerned with quality of counterfeits. Style and design of counterfeits both matter for consumers at the time of purchase decision. Outer look and perceptibility of counterfeit luxury fashion goods come into play along with the capability to perform intended function in short run. Therefore, these benefits-sought by counterfeit users can be linked positively with purchase intentions of counterfeits. This relationship can be hypothesized as:

H₂: As consumers take better hedonic benefits from counterfeit purchases, they will have more positive attitude towards counterfeits.

Materialism: According to the classic treatise of Thorstein Veblen, one of the renowned economists and sociologists, labeled as *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), the accumulation of wealth doesn't represent status. Status is more about demonstrated evidence of wealth. Such display of wealth needs lots of money to be spent extravagantly, which is considered rationally meaningless. This kind of behavior exhibiting wasteful reveal of wealth is known as conspicuous consumption. It is all about spending money on immoderate and over-the-top thing with sole intentions to impress other and get prestige and status in the society (Veblen, 1899/1994).

It starts from the Middle Ages, when it was pre-defined by the Sumptuary Laws that people from social class can have possessions up to specific limit of monetary value only. Different kind and class of clothing were available to grooms and knights. Most of the classes were outlawed to wear gold, jeweled embroidery and ermine (Berry, 1994).

The logic behind all this ceiling was simple; to make few social classes feel distinguished and dominant in societal ladder. This is quite evident from the lavish wardrobe of Elizabeth I (1533-1603) a noticeable proof of her divinity and position in the society (MacKendrick, Brewer, & Plumb, 1982). The brands like Gucci, Rolex, Bottega Veneta, Coach, Louis Vuitton are targeting the elites believing in status consumption.

It is believed that Veblen (1899, 1953) studied 'Status' in the *Theory of Leisure Class* for the first time. It was found that clothing was one of the major indicators of status. Consumers most often buy clothing to certify their privileged status that reflects their leisure-state and independence from their job commitments. Veblen's economic idea further describes that people usually buy the products to portray their dominance and superiority of status both to themselves and to others as well (Packard, 1959a) & (Richins & Rudmin, 1994). "*The basis on which good repute in any highly organized industrial community ultimately rests are pecuniary strength; and the means of showing pecuniary strength, and so of gaining or retaining a good name, are leisure and a conspicuous consumption of goods.*" Thorstein Veblen the *Theory of the Leisure Class* (p. 51)

H₃: As the consumers believe more in materialism, they will have more positive attitude towards counterfeits.

Past-Experience: Past behavior has been thought one of the sound forecasters of later behavior than any other impact of perceptions and intents of behavioral control (Bagozzi, 1981; Ouellette & Wood, 1998). If the behavior is executed repeatedly, it converts into a habit. The later behavior stars relying more on the past-experience or behavior than cognitive deliberations (Bamberg, Ajzen, & Schmidt, 2003).

Therefore, the past purchase experience of counterfeits is expected to lead the consumer's purchase intentions for counterfeits again. Counterfeit shoppers are different from non-shoppers and they don't view such purchases some unethical ones (Ang, 2005).

H₄: As the consumers have much pleasant past purchase experience of counterfeits, they will have more positive attitude towards counterfeits.

The TRA was proposed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) presented the Theory of Reasoned Actions (TRA). It talks about the three main areas; Behavioral Intentions (BI), Attitude and Subjective Norms (SNs) the theory proposed that BI is the output of one's attitude about behavior and SNs. BI is nothing other than power of one's intentions to execute certain behavior. Attitude is consisting of several beliefs about the consequences of executing the behavior

multiplied by the evaluations of these outcomes. SN consists of perceived expectations of individuals and intents to conform the expectations. However, the validity of the theory could be under stake if the behavior is not being studied under intentional control (Sheppard, Hartwick, & Warshaw, 1988). In this study, Theory of Reasoned Actions substantiates the use of the construct which is “Willingness to buy Counterfeits” as a replacement for the real purchase of counterfeit goods.

H₅: As the consumers, have more positive attitude towards counterfeits, they will have stronger willingness to buy counterfeits

Willing to buy counterfeits: Hull (1884-1952) referring to the drive theory of motivation, individuals are always motivationally-driven to perform certain action to moderate internal dissatisfaction caused by unmet needs. One of the serious critiques faced by this theory was its limitations to the biological needs only. Most of the times; the human behaviors are not encouraged exclusively by the physiological needs. Let’s suppose another situation; people often take food even when they are not truly feeling hunger. Let this critique come into play here, the scope and utility of this theory could have been widened if the social and psychological unmet-needs and human arousal to reduce this tension were considered.

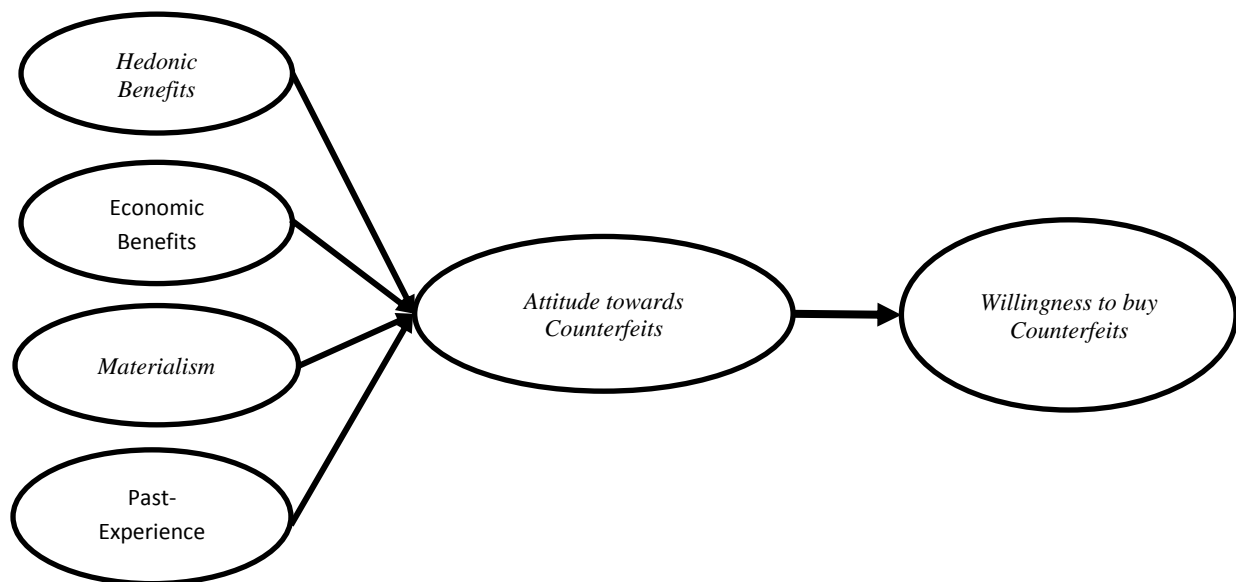


Figure-1: Proposed conceptual model for Antecedents of Willingness to Buy Counterfeit Products

3. Research Methodology

For this study, the anecdotal antecedents of buying intent for the counterfeit luxury goods were tried to be revealed. It was getting more like an exploratory study as few of the constructs were not very well defined and measured. These dynamics of willingness to buy or purchase intent for counterfeit luxury goods were felt under-researched in the consumer markets of Pakistan. The quantitative technique of research was opted when data is collected in numeric format and different statistical and mathematical techniques are implanted to analyze the data. It also refers to the systematic empirical investigations of any phenomena via statistical, mathematical/computational techniques with objective to develop and employ mathematical models, theories and hypotheses related to the phenomena (Blumberg, Cooper, & Schindler, 2008).

Table-1: Internal Consistency of constructs

Scale	Developed by	Internal Consistency
Willingness to buy counterfeits	Bai, Law, and Wen (2008)	0.88
Attitude towards Counterfeits	Huang, Lee, and Hsun Ho (2004)	0.82
Materialism	Richins and Dawson (1992)	0.81
Benefits	Yoo and Lee (2009)	0.84
Past-Experience	Yoo and Lee (2009)	0.75

Research instrument for data collection was well-built questionnaire comprising of different close-ended questions to measure ultimate dependent constructs like; attitude toward counterfeit products and willingness to buy counterfeits subsequently (Sekaran, 2003). The data were collected from the respondents by the researchers with the help of 03 research assistants, these research assistants were the students of MBA at one of the largest Public Sector Universities of Punjab, Pakistan having utmost interest in Marketing and Business Research. They were belonging to 03 different big cities of Pakistan; Faisalabad, Lahore and Islamabad. These cities are considered as bigger consumer markets. The study enquired about purchase intent for following counterfeit luxury fashion goods, many of these are strongly supported by literature and considered as luxury fashion ones almost in every culture across the globe. Previous studies have shown that consumers purchase; watches, clothing, perfumes, purses/Wallets and software to show their wealth and status ((Bloch, Bush, & Campbell, 1993; Kwong, Yau, Lee, Sin, & Alan, 2003; Phau & Lau, 2001; Wee, Ta, & Cheok, 1995).

Sample size of this study was initially targeted to 300, around 100 consumers from each market. Three hundred consumers were accessed to fill in the questionnaires. Few of those were reporting missing values, which were discarded later. In the last, 257 questionnaires were found useful yielding a response rate of 85.67%. It took more than three and half months to reach said response rate (Min & Mentzer, 2004).

Non-Probability sampling more precisely judgmental sampling and convenient sampling were executed in the pilot study.

Table-2: Constructs adoption and their Definitions

Construct	Definition	Source
Willingness to buy (WTB)	The desire of consumers to make a purchase of counterfeit goods	(Bai et al. (2008); Ramayah, Lee, & Mohamad, 2010)
Attitude toward Counterfeit (ATT)	Consumers' psychological tendency to behave in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to counterfeit goods	(Mathieson, Peacock, & Chin, 2001; Van der Heijden, 2004)
Benefits	All positive outcomes generally promoting the wellbeing, taken or expected to be taken from any decision	Yoo and Lee (2009)
Materialism	Materialism is a set of centrally held believes about the importance of possessions in one's life	Richins and Dawson (1992)
Past-Experience	Observation of or participation in an event based on knowledge	Yoo and Lee (2009)

All the constructs were measured by 5-item Likert Scale; (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral,4=agree and 5=strongly agree). All the scales were already developed and established. Few scales were modified little, according-to the purpose. However, internal consistencies of modified ones were checked duly.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was conducted to estimate path values for theorized relationships amongst the constructs. LISREL 8.80 was used for analysis with Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE) procedure. Error variances of single-indicator constructs were fixed as -1 average reliability coefficients.

4. Results

Total sample size comprised of 257 respondents, out of which there were 140 males and 117 were females. Males represented 54.5% of the sample; rest was represented by the females. However, majority of the counterfeit users are between 20 to 30 years of their ages. This majority is representing 70% of the users, however, the sizable number (25.3) of the users lie between 31 to 40 years. Respondents above 40 were quite low in number. It is important to highlight that majority of counterfeit users are well educated. 88% of the total counterfeit users are having education either up to graduation level or more than that. The total sample size was consisting of 257 respondents; out of which 28.8% belong to Faisalabad city, 34.6% were from Lahore city and remaining 36.6% were from Islamabad city. The table shows that 45.1% users are earning either or below Rs. 25,000 /month, 40.1% users are earning between Rs. 26,000 to Rs. 50,000/month. Monthly income of 7.4% users is between Rs. 51,000 to Rs. 75,000. Rests of the users are earning more than Rs. 75,000 a month.

Table 3: Demographic Profile of the Respondents (N-257)

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	140	54.5
	Female	117	45.5
Age	20-30	180	70.0
	30-40	65	25.3
	41-50	8	3.1
	51-60	4	1.6
Region/Area of respondents	Faisalabad	74	28.8
	Lahore	89	34.6
	Islamabad	94	36.6
Occupation	Student	104	40.5
	Employed	153	59.5
Education	Higher Secondary	31	12.1
	Graduation	139	54.1
	Post-Graduation	87	33.9
Income	Less than 25K	116	45.1
	26K to 50K	103	40.1
	51K to 75K	19	7.4
	76K to 100K	9	3.5
	Above than 101K	10	3.9

The table-3 corresponds to the respondent's preference which compels them to employ counterfeit fashion goods in their daily life. The result implies that people are conscious about their outlook and they are very sensitive about their perception prevailing among the public. It also amplifies the fact that our people will employ any tool to earn their general respect. It further indicates that brands have pivotal role to determine status in this society and the public wants to try them or try their counterfeit fashion goods to satisfy their desire to rest on higher status. Correlation matrix between variables is given in table-4. The correlation matrix reveals mostly significant correlations between antecedents and attitude as well as willingness to buy counterfeit products. Hedonic benefits, economic benefits, past-

experience and materialism showed significant relationship with attitude and willingness to purchase counterfeit products.

Table-4: Descriptive statistics of constructs

	Mean	Std. Dev	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.Hedonic Benefits	3.1390	.625	1					
2.Economic Benefits	3.5282	.664	.507**	1				
3.Past-Experience	3.5052	.646	.568**	.517**	1			
4.Materialism	3.7782	.594	.467**	.421**		1		
5.ATC	3.5631	.677	.421**	.511**	.638**	.385**	1	
6.WTP counterfeit	3.3862	.741	.347**	.528**	.555**	.264**	.579**	1

**p < 0.01 level, *p < 0.05

In our structural model, the structural relations were included from antecedents to attitude towards counterfeit; and then a path was included from attitude towards counterfeit leading to willingness to buy counterfeit.

Table-5: Average Variance Extracted & Composite Reliability of constructs

Indicator	Average Variance Extracted	Composite Reliability
Hedonic Benefits	0.599	0.699
Economic Benefits	0.699	0.599
Past-Experience	0.750	0.750
Materialism	0.729	0.729
ATC	0.819	0.819
WTP counterfeits	0.730	0.730

The paths were specified according; to the hypotheses 1 – 5. Thus, each of the antecedents was affecting attitude towards counterfeit; and attitude towards counterfeit, in turn, was affecting willingness to buy counterfeit. The model showed a good fit to the data with $\chi^2 = 59.389$ (P = 0.0), DF = 25; SRMR = 0.0565; RMSEA = 0.0733; NFI = 0.960; CFI = 0.976; and GFI = 0.963. The model was modified based on modification indices and non-significant paths were removed. The modified model revealed much better fit to the data with $\chi^2 = 50.940$ (P = 0.0), DF = 25; SRMR = 0.0559; RMSEA = 0.0637; NFI = 0.965; CFI = 0.981; and GFI = 0.968. The parameter estimates from completely standardized solution along with respective t-values and standard errors.

Table-6: Parameter Estimates

Path from	To	Estimate	Std. Err.	T-value
Economic Benefits	→ Attitude toward Counterfeit	0.616**	0.289	2.133
Hedonic Benefits	→ Attitude toward Counterfeit	0.071	0.091	0.772
Materialism	→ Attitude toward Counterfeit	0.792*	1.415	1.776
Past-Experience	→ Attitude toward Counterfeit	0.499*	0.274	1.819
ATC	→ Willingness to buy Counterfeit	0.565***	0.11	5.12

***p < 0.01 **p < 0.05 * p < 0.10

The path estimate from economic benefits to attitude towards counterfeit was positive and significant (0.616, p < .05). The path estimate from past-experience to attitude towards counterfeit was positive and significant (0.499, p

< .10). Materialism also showed a positive and significant path estimate with attitude towards counterfeit (0.792, $p < .10$). Overall, the structural model showed significant effects of antecedents on attitude towards counterfeit and on willingness to buy counterfeit. Economic benefits, past-experience, and materialism exhibited positive effects on attitude towards counterfeit.

5. Discussion

The rationale behind this hypothesis acceptance is simple and easy to understand if we analyze the demographic profile of counterfeit users, they usually have scarce resources; they are young adult with high need for prominence and appreciation in their social circles. They want to prove themselves as smarter and wiser shoppers; they spend lesser amount of money on the counterfeits, wishing to utilize their resources in utmost efficient manners. As the prices of the counterfeits are just negligible percentages of the original ones. Counterfeit users found appreciating the economic benefits (Albers-Miller, 1999). Veblen's economic idea further describes that people usually buy the products to portray their dominance and superiority of status both to themselves and to others as well (Packard, 1959b) & (Harrison & Mason, 1992). The people who have high need for status but do not have required financial capability to earn the prestige and status in the society rely more on the counterfeits. Counterfeit shoppers are different from non-shoppers and they don't view such purchases as unethical ones (Hoon Ang et al., 2001).

Therefore, past purchase experience of the counterfeit users positively influences the attitude towards counterfeits. If the past-experience of the users was pleasant they will be happy to repeat it and vice versa. Past-experience plays a vital role in future buying decision always. It has also been studied that consumers don't buy counterfeits not only because of economic benefits, they take other benefits like they enjoy brand's name, logo, reputation, popularity, and prominence, moreover, they associate themselves with the brands. Such benefits-taken are known as hedonic ones (Babin et al., 1994). As volume of counterfeits trade is expanding every coming day, in the countries like Pakistan, where sale and purchase of counterfeits is very common and not considered illegal one. White collars are also found counterfeit users; they don't bother about their act of buying counterfeits from morality point of view. Purchase and use of counterfeits is a common fashion in every social class of the society. If the purchase intent for counterfeit luxury goods is concerned, it is shaped by the favorability of circumstances; like counterfeit are widely distributed and conveniently available in many countries as compared to the original ones.

6. Conclusion

The counterfeiters are getting popularity with every coming moment. They have developed their online stores. They are selling the counterfeits of original authentic status goods openly while copying their registered designs. They use same brand names and logo along with all product specifications apparently. China and India have their own statuses in counterfeiting. They are successfully making money exploiting the brand heritages, values and equities of originals. It is as popular in developed countries as in developing ones. Some of the counterfeit users don't agree with undesirable results unless they meet unexpected damage caused by the counterfeit products (Bian & Veloutsou, 2007). A part from the monetary losses suffered by the counterfeit, imperceptible losses such as loss of intellectual property and other legitimate procedures; like brand's prestige ((Barnett & Duvall, 2005; Jacobs, Samli, & Jedlik, 2001; McDonald & Roberts, 1994; Nia & Lynne Zaichkowsky, 2000; Wilke & Zaichkowsky, 1999), downturn in brand popularity, prominence and ultimately the brand equity (Nia & Lynne Zaichkowsky, 2000).

The modern life of the consumers is well equipped with the brands; few researches have argued that there is no single concern that overcomes the modern psyche as much as the consumption of the brands (O'cass & McEwen, 2004; O'cass & Frost, 2002);. The role played by different brands could change the life significantly, as brands are the mark of quality and reliability (Chernev et al., 2011; Van Kempen, 2003) offering consumers more figurative connotations about their characters and lives that are far beyond than just essential product features. Counterfeit users

try to make wiser buying decision by taking economic benefits. The need for hedonic benefits seem playing important role in parallel behind counterfeit purchases. Geographic locations of the respondents also matter to their purchase intent for counterfeits; there is a chance that highborn consumers can rely on counterfeit luxury fashion brands to move forward in the society. The common fashion and luxury products are counterfeited on large scale now days. This study undertook; wrist watch, sun-glasses, mobile phones/gadgets, two piece suits, hand bags, wallets, footwear, and shirts/tee-shirts/jeans/denim. These fashion goods have become marks of stature and status in the modern life.

It carries number of limitations; convenience and judgmental sampling was practiced; these techniques are the part of non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling is not representing the whole population truly. Results of non-probability sampling are not generalizable fully. Sample size was not as big as that should be. This study proved that cultural context is important when designing branding strategy and they should be given weightage. It was concluded that if the counterfeits are developing as most sought products the supply side can't be exhausted in such circumstances. Future studies should consider the role of brand awareness during willing to buy counterfeits products.

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