

The Influences of Attitude, Social Influence and Price Consciousness in Promoting Consumers' Intention to Purchase Counterfeit Products

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Abstract— Counterfeiting has been proven to be a serious issue around the globe since the last few decades where counterfeiting is linked with various problems that cause chaos in economic activities and social life. This article sets out to examine factors influencing consumers' intention to purchase counterfeit products. An intercept survey involving 390 respondents was conducted at three hot spot areas selling counterfeit products in Malaysia. A self-administered questionnaire was designed using established scales. This study utilized PLS-SEM to establish the validity and reliability of the measurement model and to test the hypotheses. The outcomes of this study show that intention to purchase counterfeit products is positively influenced by attitude and social influence of the consumers, while price consciousness does not significantly influence consumers' intention to purchase counterfeit products. This study offers theoretical and practical contributions for academics and professionals. This study provides an understanding of consumers' counterfeit purchase behavior of counterfeit products. The findings can be used by policy makers and genuine product producers to formulate strategies to curb counterfeiting activities.

Keywords— *Counterfeit Products, Attitude, Social Influence, Price Consciousness, Intention.*

1. Introduction

Undoubtedly, counterfeiting has emerged as a significant global phenomenon. Counterfeit products have embellished the global market together with genuine products. In fact, a study by [37] acknowledged the alarming advent of global economic phenomenon of counterfeiting. Although it originated in various categories such as luxury

clothing, handbags and accessories, counterfeiting now affects a wide range of industries [42]. To resolve the problems, many companies even employ lawyers and investigators to investigate this problem [13]. Many studies can be found in the literature that deal with anti-counterfeit strategies that are implemented globally to protect industries from this illegal practice [39]. However, despite various strategies and actions taken to stop counterfeiting, it continues to expand rapidly in many parts of the global market [7, 47].

Regardless of the tremendous efforts to overcome the issue of counterfeiting, it is still unstoppable. New ways are needed to control this phenomenon. Prior research on counterfeiting [43, 3, 31] have focused on study the supply of counterfeit products from the perspective of producer, retailer, government and other parties in the distribution channel. However, efforts to overcome the supply of counterfeits are most of the time failed. Since consumers purchase and use counterfeits, what is more significant is to examine the underlying factors that are associated with consumers' decision making with regard to counterfeit products as a way to gain control over this issue.

Past researches have revealed that about one-third of consumers would knowingly purchase counterfeit products [26]. Since demand is always the key driver of a market, a number of researchers have argued that consumer demand for counterfeits is one of the leading causes of the availability and growth of the counterfeiting phenomenon [32, 46]. As a direct result of these arguments, a good deal of research has focused on identifying important factors that influence consumers' purchase behavior of counterfeit products.

The present study tries to shed some light on the counterfeit literature by views the counterfeiting problem from the demand side. Nevertheless, it is a fundamental economic reasoning that if no request for counterfeit products exists, supply will erode automatically. Thus, as consumers play a leading and growing role in the existence of counterfeit trade [5], it is important to gain a deeper insight on potential factors influencing consumers' intention to purchase counterfeit products. As such, there is limited research on demand for counterfeit products and what stimulates it [49, 8, 26]. In particular, there is limited research that focuses on specific factors influencing intention of this unethical behavior and compares the findings [8].

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Influence of Attitude on Intention to Purchase Counterfeit Products

Phillips [7] refers attitude as the degree to which a person has a favourable appraisal of the behaviour in question by which her/his intention of conducting the specific behaviour can be predicted. Attitude towards counterfeiting is an important construct in the study of counterfeit purchase behaviour [41], and many studies have found that unethical decision making such as the purchase of counterfeits can be explained largely by attitudes, regardless of product category [26, 46, 33, 28]. Study conducted by [36] discovered that in the context of software piracy, attitude of the consumer is positively correlated with the consumer's use intention of pirated software. In the same vein, [45] in his study among Indonesian woman found that the tendency of the positive respondents' attitudes towards the counterfeit bags gives stronger encouragement towards the intention to buy the counterfeit bags. This is also supported by [17], that attitude towards internet piracy is closely related with individuals' intentions of engaging in internet piracy. This is also consistent with [1], who discovered that attitudes toward counterfeit products are positively affect the consumers' purchase intention to buy counterfeit luxury bags in Indonesia. In general, previous studies have found that attitude is very important in predicting intentional behaviour. Therefore, we hypothesized that:

H2: Attitude towards counterfeit products is positively related to intention to purchase counterfeit.

2.2 The Influence of Social Influence on Intention to Purchase Counterfeit Products

The social influence of an individual is referred to as the perception of individual towards his/her social influences that are around him/her, expect him/her to act or not to act towards certain behaviour [24, 22]. Applying this notion, studies have confirmed a strong association between social influence and intention to perform certain behaviours. [15] discovered that social influence acts as an important precursor of intention. [6] in his study of counterfeit fashion discovered that social influence is a significant factor for the consumer that is likely to purchase counterfeits. Study by [36] in Taiwan revealed that social influence is a positive contributor to consumer's use intention of pirated software. In a similar vein, [1], found that the social influences have positive effect on the purchase intention of buying luxury counterfeit hand bags. Therefore, social influence is chosen as potential factor influencing intention to purchase counterfeit products to be investigated in the present study. We hypothesize that:

H2: Social influence is positively related to intention to purchase counterfeit products.

2.3 The Influence of Price Consciousness on Intention to Purchase Counterfeit Products

Price, or value-for-money, consciousness indicates the extent to which consumers are concerned with paying low prices [10]. Previous research suggests that price consciousness reflects consumers' orientation to engage in price comparisons [2, 14]. Such consumers have high intentions for searching for lower prices and process more price related information before purchase decisions [34]. Consumers who are price conscious are concerned with getting the best value for money, are likely to be comparison shoppers, and will generally put more effort into finding lower prices and cheaper alternatives [14]. In relation to that, price consciousness is a major factor that drives the purchase of counterfeits [26]. [21] argued that price consciousness is an influential factor of purchases of counterfeits. In line with this research, it is expected that price consciousness is positively affect intention to purchase counterfeit products. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H3: Price consciousness is positively related to intention to purchase counterfeit products.

Based on the discussion above, the framework for this study is shown in Figure 1 below.

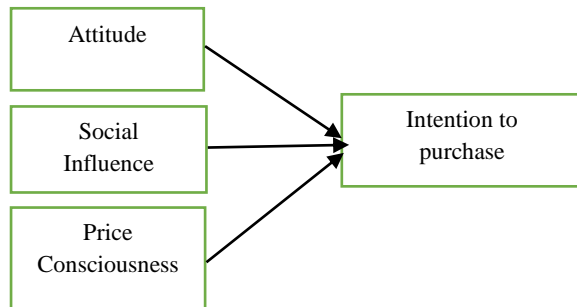


Figure 1. Theoretical framework

3.0 Methodology

This study was conducted with the intention to obtain a good grasp of the consumer purchasing behavior of counterfeit products. A survey method was employed because this study strongly believes that survey research is best adopted to obtain personal and social facts, beliefs, and attitudes [12]. The unit of analysis for this study was the individual consumer who went for shopping at hot spot areas that sell counterfeit products. This study treats each consumer's response as an individual data source.

Data was collected via intercept survey at three hot spot areas selling counterfeit products in Malaysia. Shoppers were approached to participate in a self-administered questionnaire. Following the method by [26], every fifth individual that crossed a designated spot outside the main entrance of the area was approached to participate. Out of the number of shoppers intercepted, 74 percent of them agreed (390 respondents) to take part in the survey. The main variables in this study were measured using multiple items drawn from previous research except for the socio-demographic characteristics. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure all of the items for the main variables to minimize the confusion among respondents and to make sure of the equality among variables [4, 9].

Following [9], intention is operationalized as, the likelihood of an individual's motivation and willingness to participate in counterfeit product purchase. Consumer intention was measured using the scale adapted from [18], and [19]. Five items

were assessed in terms of will, intend, want and expect to purchase on the statements relating to counterfeit products. In line with definitions provided by [27] and [8], this study operationalized attitude towards counterfeit products as consumer overall evaluation towards counterfeit products. The structured questions regarding consumer attitude towards counterfeit products are based on [8] and [19]. Social influence is operationalized as a person's perceptions of social pressure in which buying the counterfeit products is approved/expected/supported by their important or significant others [48, 22]. Social influence was measured using the scale adapted from [48], which consisted of five items. [35] defined price consciousness as the extent to which consumers focus exclusively on paying lower prices and suggested that individuals' negative perceptions of high prices dictate their intention to search for lower prices. The structured questions regarding consumer price consciousness in purchase products are based on [38].

4.0 Results

The results showed that majority of the respondents are female (60%) and aged between 21 to 30 years (38%). Most of the respondents are Malays (40%), followed by Chinese (38%) and Indian (22%). More than half of the respondents are singles (60%). The majority of the respondents are working in private organization (33%), followed by government servants (18%) and self-employed (13%).

This study employs Partial Least Square (PLS) as the statistical tool. The original model included 19 reflective measurement indicators for four variables or constructs. There is only direct relationship tested in this study. In total, there are three hypotheses were tested in this study. SmartPLS follows a two-steps approach: measurement model and structural model. Measurement model validates the data collected by examine the convergent validity and discriminant validity. Firstly, factor loadings and average variance explained (AVE) are accessed to validate the convergent validity while composite reliability is referred to examine the reliability of the construct. According to [30], loadings below 0.4 should be eliminated while above 0.7 are accepted, whereas the loadings between 0.4 and 0.7 are considered for deletions if the deletion leads to an increase of composite reliability and AVE. AVE value shows how much the construct explains the variance of its indicators or items. The recommended AVE value

should be above 0.5, indicating that the constructs explain more than half of the variance of its indicators [30]. Last but not least is the composite reliability (CR) in the convergent validity. Composite reliability refers to the degree to which a set of items consistently indicate the latent construct [30]. Higher level of CR indicates higher level of reliability of the construct. The recommended value for CR is above 0.7. The values for loadings, AVE and composite reliability are all above the threshold value suggested as shown in Table 1. Therefore, the results confirm the convergent validity of the measurement model of this study.

Table 1. Analysis of Convergent Validity

Construct	Item	Loadings	AVE	CR
Attitude	Att1	0.803	0.667	0.923
	Att2	0.821		
	Att3	0.762		
	Att4	0.857		
	Att5	0.802		
	Att6	0.853		
Intention	Inten1	0.897	0.801	0.953
	Intent2	0.913		
	Intent3	0.890		
	Inten4	0.864		
	Inten5	0.910		
Price Consciousness	PriceCon1	0.751	0.781	0.934
	PriceCon2	0.923		
	PriceCon3	0.933		
	PriceCon4	0.915		
Social Influence	Social1	0.759	0.727	0.914
	Social2	0.905		
	Social3	0.882		
	Social4	0.858		

*AVE = Average variance explained; CR = Composite reliability

In this study, we employ Fornell-Larcker's criterion to access the discriminant validity. Fornell-Larcker's criterion is the most conservative approach by comparing the square root of the AVE with the latent variable correlations [30]. As indicated in Table 2, the values in the diagonal are higher than the other values in the same row and column. This indicates discriminant validity is fulfilled in this study.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity Analysis

	Att	Inten	PriceCon	Social
Att	0.817			
Inten	0.840	0.895		
PriceCon	-0.046	-0.163	0.884	
Social	0.789	0.754	-0.108	0.853

Bootstrapping technique is used to obtain the standard error value in SmartPLS 2.0. To run bootstrapping, we used 5,000 samples with the 390 cases. The t-value accompanying each path coefficient was generated using bootstrapping as reported in Table 3. Standard error was used to determine the significance of coefficient. The coefficient is considered significant if the t-value is larger than the critical value in a certain error probability. For two-tails test, the critical value is 1.96 at the significance level of 0.05; while for significance level of 0.01, the critical value is 2.57 [30].

Table 3. Path Coefficient and Hypotheses Testing

Relationship	Std. Beta	Std. Error	t-value	Decision	Hypo
Social -> Inten	0.220	0.049	4.54**	Supported	H2
PriceCon -> Inten	-0.107	0.032	3.30**	Not supported	H3
Att -> Inten	0.660	0.043	15.28**	Supported	H1

Out of the three hypotheses, two hypotheses are supported. Results show that for the factors influencing intention, attitude and social factors show significant relationships with intention to purchase counterfeit products, thus supports hypotheses 1 and 2. Although the relationship between price consciousness with intention is significant, but the relationship is negative, therefore hypothesis 3 is rejected.

Last but not least, R^2 value is the most common measure used to evaluate the structure model. R^2 value is a measure of the model's predictive accuracy and shows the amount of the variance explained in the endogenous variable by all exogenous variables which are linked to the endogenous variable [30]. Based on

the results of the path model, the R^2 for intention is 0.49. This indicates that 49% of the variance in intention to purchase counterfeit products is explained by attitude and social influence.

5.0 Discussion and Conclusion

Concerning the influences of attitude, social influence, and price consciousness on intention to purchase counterfeit products, the results show that attitude and social influence appeared as significant predictors of consumer intention. As hypothesized, attitude has a positive significant influences on consumer intention. Thus, this is consistent with [44] who discovered that attitude was significantly correlated with gambling intention among the Chinese respondents. This relationship was also supported by previous studies in the context of purchasing illegal products such as pirated music CDs, software and counterfeited fashion products (for example [46, 8, 33, 26, 11]). As illuminated by [5], consumers with favorable attitudes toward counterfeit products may not aware that purchasing these products can be a social concern and hence promote strong intention to buy them [1]. The result makes theoretical sense because the more favourable the perception in one's instrumental attitude toward counterfeit products, the greater likelihood that the person will purchase counterfeit products in the future. This finding is consistent with past studies using Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour whereby the attitude variable has consistently produced strong effect on behavioural intention in a wide variety of context [11].

We found that intention to purchase counterfeit products is positively related to social influence. The finding suggests that when consumers perceive more external pressure/support to engage in counterfeit product purchase, intention to perform behavior is likely greater. This echoes findings by [6] and [1] that consumers are more likely to purchase counterfeit products under the influence of their peers.

Consumers who are price conscious and look for value for money have a positive attitude towards counterfeits. In this case, price conscious consumers perceive counterfeit products as acceptable alternatives to genuine products and thus may desire to pay lower prices for them. However, we found non-significant influences of price consciousness on purchase intention towards counterfeit. This finding

contradicts previous research, which suggests that consumers with highly conscious on value have higher intention to purchase counterfeit luxury brands [26].

As what has been highlighted in the beginning of this article, counterfeiting has become a global issue that cannot be alleviated overnight. Nevertheless, it needs long-term planning and implementation of appropriate strategies that meet target consumers and suppliers to be able to accomplish. Thus, it is essential for managers to understand the fundamentals of consumer purchase behavior of counterfeits to be able to counter the counterfeit epidemic. In relation to that, as attitude towards counterfeit products and social influences affect consumers' intention to purchase counterfeit products, therefore building undesirable attitude to counterfeit products and building a consensus among peers is one of the methods of combating counterfeit purchase.

The important role of social influences in shaping consumer's intention to purchase counterfeits provides original producers further insights into strategizing anti-counterfeiting campaigns. This implies that interventions to hinder counterfeit products purchase should focus towards persuasions via peer and social groups.

Also, the government should allocate more resources and work closely with original product manufacturers to increase the quantity and quality of its enforcement officials. In any of the anti-counterfeiting communication/educational programs organized, the government should clearly define and communicate to consumer at large the legal liabilities faced by counterfeit products buyers. These strengthened enforcement and assertive communication methods would increase what [44] called as the "punishment certainty" and consequently would contributes to individuals' lower perceived ability to make any counterfeit purchase.

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