

Influence of Personality Traits on Consumers' Intention to Buy the Fashion Counterfeits: An Empirical Investigation with Special Reference to Young Consumers in Pakistan

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Abstract: The intrinsic purpose of this study was to investigate empirically that how young consumers' intention to buy the counterfeited fashion products is empowered by selected personality traits, such as fashion consciousness, public self-consciousness, ethical obligation and ethical judgment. The research was carried out on a sample of N = 269 respondents of different age groups and gender. Data for this study were collected by using a structured questionnaire containing six tiers, where Section-I contains seven statements using Likert scale, to assay the consumers' degree of fashion consciousness. Section-II deals with the questions related to the consumers' degree of public self consciousness. Section-III and IV contains two and three statements respectively to measure the consumers' degree of ethical obligation and ethical judgment. Two items were used in Section-V to measure the consumers' intention to buy the fashion counterfeits in the future. Questions related to the consumers' demographical profile were asked in Section-VI. One-Way ANOVA was employed to test the proposed hypothesis. To determine among which groups the true differences prevail, the Duncan Multiple Range Test was performed. It was disclosed that the young consumers with high level of fashion consciousness and public self consciousness are more interested in buying the counterfeited fashion products. On the ethical grounds, it was divulged that the consumers who think it as an unethical practice to buy the counterfeited products are less likely to buy the counterfeited brands.

Keywords: Consumers' intention, counterfeiting, ethical judgment, ethical obligation, fashion, public self consciousness

INTRODUCTION

Counterfeits are defined as reproduced copies that are identical to the legitimate articles, including packaging, trademarks and labeling (Kay, 1990). Counterfeiting is a significant and growing problem worldwide, occurring both in less and well developed countries (Matos *et al.*, 2007). Their appeal to consumers is clearly that they look like the real thing, yet cost only a fraction of the price of the original (Rath *et al.*, 2008). The phenomenal growth of counterfeiting causes serious economic and social problems that threaten the lives of unsuspecting consumers, wreak economic havoc and weaken consumer confidence in manufactured or branded products (Tom *et al.*, 1998).

According to the U. S. Customs and Border Protection Office of International Trade, 70% of counterfeited goods are fashion counterfeits, such as handbags, watches, jewelry, shoes, clothes, hats, sunglasses and perfume. Today counterfeiting trade

accounts virtually 7% of the global trade (Ergn, 2010). It is growing at the rate of 15% per annum. If it constantly grows at the same rate its value could increase up to \$960 billion by 2015 (Frontier Economics, 2011). China is the main producers of the counterfeit products in the world (Hung, 2003). Other sources of the counterfeits are Russia, Argentina, Chile, Egypt, India, Israel, Lebanon, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, Venezuela, Brazil, Paraguay and Mexico (Chaudhry and Zimmerman, 2009).

According to a recent survey, Pakistani markets are flooded with look alike and counterfeit products, including life saving drugs, which are being sold without fear of punishment and are produced with the patronage of government officials. This figure exceeds 60% in rural areas. And these products are being openly sold at public places like weekly bazaars, the lower courts, bus and truck stops, railway stations, schools, etc., with the full knowledge of government officials. The government is losing billions of rupees per year in revenue, in the form of taxes, excise duties, etc., as most of these

manufacturers of spurious and counterfeit products are unregistered and do not pay taxes. Unfortunately, the biggest enemy of the consumers in Pakistan is the consumers themselves, as they do not check or demand quality and accept what ever is sold to them. This has turned us into a “number two” nation and has affected our exports (The Citizen Newsletter).

It has come to know that in Pakistan the main areas of counterfeiting and piracy are consumer items, electronics, chemicals, paints, stationery, books, movies and CDs, engineering items and hi-tech products. Faisalabad, Lahore, Karachi, Gujrat and Multan are the main hub of counterfeiting and imitation of products. Lahore and Multan are known for counterfeiting in oil and lubricants, medicines and printing; Karachi for counterfeiting in paints, cigarettes and books and Quetta and Peshawar are hub of smuggled counterfeit items.

Part of the reasons for this lucrative business is that the margins are high and demand is strong (Ang *et al.*, 2001). Counterfeiting has flourished due to strong worldwide demand; there is a continuing demand among many buyers (Bloch *et al.*, 1993). Consumers who purchase counterfeit merchandise risk funding nefarious activities, contributing to unemployment, creating budget deficits and compromising the future of their country in the global economy (IAAC, 2008). Some researchers consider counterfeit purchasers to be indirect conspirators with counterfeiters' criminal and illegal economic activities when they purchase counterfeits (Bloch *et al.*, 1993).

Despite the seriousness of the counterfeiting problem, there is limited research on the subject in the literature, particularly in the area of understanding consumer behavior towards counterfeits (Ha and Lennon, 2006; Penz and Stottinger, 2005; Wee *et al.*, 1995). This study is aimed to empirically investigate the influence of selected personality traits like fashion consciousness, public self consciousness, ethical judgment and ethical obligation on consumers' intention to buy the fashion counterfeits. This is comparatively a narrow attempt to thicken the literature on consumer behavior in Pakistan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

When consumer behavior comes to the selection of fashion-related goods, some very specific factors determine buying behavior (Rath *et al.*, 2008). We have taken these factors as selective personality dimensions i.e., fashion consciousness, public self consciousness, ethical judgment and ethical obligation to investigate the impact of these factors on consumers' intention to buy the fashion counterfeits.

Fashion consciousness: Fashion consciousness refers to a person's degree of involvement with the styles or fashion of clothing. An individual does not have to be

either a fashion opinion leader or a fashion innovator to be considered fashion conscious. Rather, fashion consciousness is characterized by an interest in clothing and fashion and in one's appearance (Summers, 1970). Fashion involvement is a consumer's perceived importance of fashion clothing (O'Cass, 2001). Previous researches had demonstrated that fashion involvement influences consumer behavior on fashion product (Penz and Stottinger, 2005; Wee *et al.*, 1995; Bertrandias and Goldsmith, 2006; Goldsmith, 2002). Penz and Stottinger (2005) found that fashion involvement had a strong influence on an embarrassment potential and a weaker influence on smart shoppers. That is, the smart shoppers' attitude is negatively influenced by fashion involvement. A higher interest in fashion weakens the attitude that purchasing counterfeit products is a smart behavior. So, it is very important to investigate the consumers' fashion involvement while studying the consumers' intention to buy the fashion counterfeits.

Public self consciousness: Consumers form positive attitudes toward things that help them define their social and personal identities by expressing who they are, who they want to be and how they want others to see them (Shavitt, 1989). Fashion-related goods as well as clothing may be an especially effective product category in this regard (O'Cass, 2001; Dodd *et al.*, 2000; Solomon, 1985). Individuals who have a rather vague and uncertain self-concept tend to possess low self-esteem. This renders them less certain that they will be able to meet what they believe are others' standards for worthiness and more susceptible to the effects of outside influences on their self-concept (Campbell *et al.*, 1991). When people achieve upward mobility, they may adopt new patterns of consumption to symbolize their new social position (Barber and Lobel, 1952). Consumers who are buying branded products may be described as self-conscious and especially concerned about the impressions that they make (Penz and Stottinger, 2005). According to Roux and Korchia (2006) consumers who are buying counterfeits are similarly concerned about their impressions, although those images they project sometimes seem to betray a tension or conflict between an original identity and a borrowed appearance to the consumers who select a counterfeit over a genuine product. Some try to keep at a distance the conspicuous display they appear to favor and despise at the same time, while deriving a certain cynical pleasure in deceiving others. This paradoxical position appears to be what could be termed a social ruse.

Ethical obligation and ethical judgment: Ethical obligation represents an individual's internalized ethical rules, which reflect personal beliefs about appropriate behavior (Shaw *et al.*, 2000). According to Trevino (1992) ethical judgment is a cognitive process in which an individual is to judge which course of action is morally

right. According to Jones (1991) and Rest (1986) the linkage between judgment and behavioral intentions, defined as an individual's intent to act in a certain way, has been postulated in ethical decision making models. In other words, if an action is judged as ethical, one is more likely to form an intention to perform it. Conversely, if an action is judged as unethical, one is less likely to form an intention to engage in the action (Nguyen and Biderman, 2008).

According to Penz and Stottinger (2005) the ethical considerations of what is "importantly right and wrong" play an important role in the consumption behaviors, as they may have a self-binding effect on the individual. They further elaborated that the individual's ethical disposition influences embarrassment potential and the subjective norm. In other words, consumers who have a higher ethical disposition would be more embarrassed if they were discovered wearing counterfeits. A strong ethical disposition seems to supersede the subjective norm from relevant others. Also, Prandergast *et al.* (2002) found that consumers rated ethical issues more important when purchasing counterfeit clothing than when purchasing counterfeit video compact discs.

However, the game doesn't end here. After an in-depth study of literature, it has come to know that there is a disagreement among the researchers on the issue that either ethical ideology is a significant predictor of the intent to buy counterfeit products or not. According to Ha and Lennon (2006) the ethical ideology was not a significant predictor of the intent to buy counterfeit products while the Hunt and Vitell (1986) suggests that it should be. Ha and Lennon (2006) explained that ethical judgments could mediate the effects of idealism on purchase intent, because idealism was found to be positively related to ethical judgments and ethical judgments were strongly related to purchase intent. According to Sykes and Matza (1957) consumers might tolerate and participate in no normative behaviors by excusing themselves from blame and deflecting such blame to another party. Such situational ethics-holding others but not self as responsible-encourage the further purchase of counterfeits.

PROPOSED HYPOTHESIS

After an intensive review of literature, the study was aspired to investigate the following research questions. These research questions were explicitly developed for empirical investigation as they have preponderance in literature. To better understand the possible differences in terms of consumers' response within each study construct (Fashion Consciousness, Public Self Consciousness, Ethical Obligation, and Ethical Judgment); the

respondents were divided into three categories across each construct as mentioned underneath.

- **Fashion Consciousness:** HFC, MFC, LFC
- **Public Self Consciousness:** HPSC, MPSC, LPSC
- **Ethical Obligation:** HEO, MEO, LEO
- **Ethical Judgment:** HEJ, MEJ, LEJ

H1: There are no significant differences among High Fashion Conscious (*HFC*), Moderate Fashion Conscious (*MFC*) and Low Fashion Conscious (*LFC*) consumers in terms of their intention to buy the counterfeited fashion products.

H2: There are no significant differences among High Public Self Conscious (*HPSC*), Moderate Public Self Conscious (*MPSC*) and Low Public Self Conscious (*LPSC*) consumers in terms of their intention to buy the counterfeited fashion products.

H3: There are no significant differences among High Ethical Obligation (*HEO*), Moderate Ethical Obligation (*MEO*) and Low Ethical Obligation (*LEO*) consumers in terms of their intention to buy the counterfeited fashion products.

H4: There are no significant differences among High Ethical Judgment (*HEJ*), Moderate Ethical Judgment (*MEJ*) and Low Ethical Judgment (*LEJ*) consumers in terms of their intention to buy the counterfeited fashion products.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sampling and data collection: A survey was conducted at Govt. Postgraduate College, Sahiwal. Sample students were chosen randomly from the database of the college. A detailed questionnaire was distributed among 300 sample students. Selection of the students as sample is justifiable because many researchers followed the same mechanism in the past. Further, the students are considered as identical in their attitudes, perceptions and behaviors (Brown and Stayman, 1992; Calder *et al.*, 1981). All the jargons being included in the questionnaire were fully explained as an opening paragraph in the questionnaire. Fortunately, 281 questionnaires were received back of which 12 were not completely filled hence reduced the sample to the level of 269.

Measurement instruments: To measure the degree of fashion consciousness, a 7-item fashion consciousness scale suggested by Bruner and Hensel (1998) was used in this study. Prior studies using this scale suggested good reliability (Wilkes, 1992). Each item was measured on a 6-point Likert scale, with 1 = strongly disagree and 6 =

strongly agree. Public self-consciousness was measured by 7 items measuring the degree to which a person expresses an awareness of self as a social object with an effect on others (Bearden *et al.*, 1989). The items are measured on a 7-point scale with 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. Two items were used to measure respondent's ethical self-identity and ethical obligation (Shaw *et al.*, 2000; Sparks and Shepherd, 1992). Each item was measured on a 7-point scale, with 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. Three items were used to measure respondent's ethical judgment regarding the purchase of fashion counterfeits (Sparks and Shepherd, 1992; Bian and Veloutsou, 2007). Each item was measured on a 7-point scale, with 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. Two items were used to measure the consumers' intentions to buy the fashion counterfeit products in the future. These questions were measured on 7-point Likert scales, with 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree.

Data analysis: Sooner the questionnaires were received back from the respondents; the responses were properly coded and entered in the database using SPSS 17[®] version. One-Way ANOVA was used to test the proposed hypothesis. To determine among which groups the true differences are positioned, the Duncan Multiple Range Test was performed. Out of the 269 respondents, 49.3% were females and 50.7% were males. In terms of age, 91.2% were in the range of 18 to 23 years old. In terms of academic class, 76.2% were enrolled in BS (Hons) program and 23.8% were enrolled in Master level class.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The summarized adaptation of output of One-Way ANOVA and Duncan Multiple Range Test is depicted in Table. 1. The F-Ratio of 205.37, with 2 and 267 degrees of freedom (*df*) was statistically significant at $p = .000$. It implies that there are significant differences in

consumers' intention to pay money for the counterfeited fashion products based on three different levels of fashion consciousness (*FC*). Thus, hypothesis one (*H1*) was substantiated. Based on Duncan Multiple Range Test, it was found that the consumers with high level of fashion consciousness (*HFC*) boast higher intention (*HI*) ($M = 6.4$) to buy the counterfeited fashion products. Those with moderate level of fashion consciousness (*MFC*) have mixed intention (*MI*) ($M = 5.3$) and those with lower level of fashion consciousness (*LFC*) have lower intention (*LI*) ($M = 4.2$). This finding is consistent with the findings of Penz and Stottinger (2005). They, as well, confirmed that the higher interest in fashion weakens the attitude that purchasing counterfeited products is a smart behavior.

To check whether there is a significant difference in consumers' intention regarding buying expensive fashion brands, triggered by public self consciousness, One-Way ANOVA was applied. The second hypothesis (*H2*) with F-Ratio of 303.27 was also found to be statistically significant at $p = .000$. It implies that there are significant differences in consumers' intention to buy the counterfeited fashion products based on three different levels of public self consciousness (*PSC*). Consequently, second hypothesis (*H2*) was factual. By means of Duncan Multiple Range Test, it was found that the consumers are heterogeneous in terms of their intention to pay money for the counterfeited fashion products at three different levels of public self consciousness. Consumers with high level of public self consciousness (*HPSC*) encompass higher intention (*HI*) ($M = 6.1$) to buy the counterfeited fashion brands. Those with moderate level of public self consciousness (*MPSC*) have mixed intention (*MI*) ($M = 5.5$) and those with lower level of public self consciousness (*LPSC*) exhibit lower intention (*LI*) ($M = 4.4$). In Pakistan, the working class with stumpy salary package cannot manage to pay for expensive fashion stuff. Therefore, they prefer reasonably priced copied brands. An individual can be a public self conscious even the element of fashion consciousness is

Table 1: One-way ANOVA and duncan multiple range test output

DV	IV	Intensity	Mean	F	Sig.*	Diff.**
Buying intention	FC	High FC	6.4942	205.37	0.000	X>y>z
		Moderate FC	5.3571			
		Low FC	4.2714			
	Psc	High PCS	6.1337	303.27	0.000	X>y>z
		Moderate PCS	5.3714			
		Low PCS	4.4786			
	Eo	High Eo	5.2294	11.80	0.001	Z>x, Y, Y>x
		Moderate EO	5.4150			
		Low EO	5.9167			
	Ej	High EI	4.6019	11.97	0.000	Z>y>x
		Moderate EO	5.8636			
		Low EJ	6.4357			

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level; **The differences were based on Duncan Multiple Range Test: x-HI, y-MI and z-LI

not an integral part of his personality and it is more often than not the case with the working class. It is perhaps due to the veracity that they at least have to harmonize with the contemporary trends of wearing at the workplace.

The third hypothesis (*H3*) with F-Ratio of 11.80 was found to be statistically significant at $p=.001$. It confirmed that there are significant differences in consumers' intention to buy the counterfeited fashion products based on three different levels of ethical obligation (*EO*). Thus, third hypothesis (*H3*) was also supported. Ethical obligation represents an individual's internalized ethical rules, which reflect personal beliefs about appropriate behavior (Shaw *et al.*, 2000). Most of the people believe that they are not socially or legally enforceable on some accounts like e.g. regarding the purchase of counterfeited brands. As we discussed earlier, the case of working class, as they don't have handsome pockets to stay with original branded stuff. So, they don't take it as an ethical obligation to buy expensive branded products. In the context of ethical obligation, notable variations were not observed, in a sense that the element of homogeneity was observed at three different levels of ethical obligation regarding purchase intent about fashion counterfeits. Based on Duncan Multiple Range Test, it was found that the consumers with higher ethical obligation (*HEO*) and moderate level of ethical obligation (*MEO*) are homogeneous in terms of their intention to buy the counterfeited fashion products at three different levels of ethical obligation (*EO*). Consumers with high level of ethical obligation (*HEO*) and moderate level of ethical obligation (*MEO*) have mixed or hybrid intention (*MI*) ($M=5.2$, $M=5.4$ respectively) and, those with lower level of ethical obligation (*LEO*) have higher intention (*HI*) ($M=5.9$). This finding was contrary to the finding of Ang *et al.* (2001), who found that consumers not consider counterfeit purchases to be unethical. Such ethics that vary with different situations encourages purchase of counterfeits.

According to Trevino (1992) ethical judgment is a cognitive process in which an individual have to judge which course of action is morally right. The fourth hypothesis (*H4*) with F-Ratio of 11.97 was also found to be statistically significant at $p = .000$. It signifies that there are significant differences in consumers' intentions to buy the counterfeited fashion products based on three different levels of ethical judgment (*EJ*). Thus, fourth hypothesis (*H4*) was substantiated. Based on Duncan Multiple Range Test, it was found that the consumers are heterogeneous in terms of their intentions to buy the counterfeited fashion brands at three different levels of ethical judgment. Consumers with high level of ethical judgment (*HEJ*) exhibit lower intention (*LI*) ($M = 4.6$) to buy the counterfeited fashion products. Those with moderate level of ethical judgment (*MEJ*) have mixed intention (*MI*) ($M = 5.8$) and those with lower level of

ethical judgment (*LEJ*) exhibit high intention (*HI*) ($M = 6.4$). This result is consistent with the previous study of Penz and Stottinger (2005) who also confirmed that ethical considerations regarding what is right and wrong play an important role in consumption behavior, as they may have a self-binding effect on the individual.

CONCLUSION

Literature on fashion consciousness provides loaded verification that the higher interest in fashion, weakens the attitude that purchasing counterfeited products is a smart behavior. Therefore, it is extremely important to investigate the consumers' fashion involvement while studying the consumers' intention to buy the fashion counterfeits. This study has confirmed that the young consumers with high level of fashion consciousness are more interested in buying the fashion counterfeits. This finding is consistent with the finding of Cordell *et al.*, (1996) who also confirmed that the college students are frequent users of counterfeited products and, the same is the case with young consumers in terms of their degree of public self consciousness. The intention to hold the fashion counterfeits is directly proportional to the degree of public self consciousness i.e., higher the level of public self consciousness, higher will be the intention to buy the fashion counterfeits. Consumers' intention to hold the counterfeited brands is also triggered by the ethical concerns. Also, Penz and Stottinger (2005) urged that the ethical considerations of what is "importantly right and wrong" play an important role in the consumption behaviors, as they may have a self-binding effect on the individual. The research findings have confirmed that the young consumers who believe that it is an unethical practice to buy the counterfeited products are less likely to buy the fashion counterfeits. Individuals were found to be different in terms of their perceptions about what is "importantly right and wrong", because, it depends on the individual's own ability of judgment. Ha and Lennon (2006) explained that ethical judgments could mediate the effects of idealism on purchase intent, because idealism was found to be positively related to ethical judgments and ethical judgments were strongly related to purchase intent. Our research findings have confirmed that the young consumers with lower degree of ethical judgment were more intended to buy the fashion counterfeits.

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