

Investigating Interpersonal and Ethical Factors' Impact on Counterfeit -Branded Clothing Purchase Behaviors

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In recent years, the presence of counterfeit-brand products has increased, and original brands are increasingly becoming the target of counterfeit brand manufacturers (Chiu & Leng, 2015). The dimensions of both the supply and demand for these products have been effective in making counterfeit-branded products a global problem (Grossman & Shapiro, 1988). In order to prevent economic losses to countries' economies and to the original brand manufacturers, the demand for these counterfeited products needs to be controlled (Albers-Miller, 1999). Therefore, more attention needs to be drawn to the demand side in order to better understand the factors that push consumers to willingly buy counterfeit products (Penz & Stöttinger, 2005). In this context, brand managers' and owners' understanding of why consumers prefer counterfeit-branded products is vital. The aim of this study is to explain consumer attitudes toward counterfeit-branded clothing in Turkey within the framework of interpersonal effects and ethical factors.

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The Concepts of Counterfeiting and Counterfeit Branded

In its simplest form, counterfeiting is defined as the fraudulent reproduction of an original product (Hopkins et al., 2003). Meanwhile, counterfeit-branded products are counterfeit products presented to the consumer as an original product with the same packaging, brand, and label as the original (Tom et al., 1998).

Factors Affecting Consumer Attitudes Toward Counterfeit-Branded Clothing

Many factors such as demographics, psychology, environment, personality, ethics, and situation are found to affect consumer attitudes toward counterfeit products. Revealing all these factors in one single study is very difficult. This study examines the factors of interpersonal effects and ethics. The factor of interpersonal effects is expressed as the pressure an individual feels to do or not do a certain behavior and is one of the main reasons determining consumer attitudes toward counterfeit products (Ajzen, 1991). Consumer sensitivity toward interpersonal effects can be divided under two headings: information sensitivity and normative sensitivity (Ang et al., 2001; Wang et al., 2005; Phau et al., 2009).

Information sensitivity is defined as the tendency an individual has to believe the information gathered from others is correct (Wang, 2017). Studies have shown that the benefit consumers gain from information about the different advantages and/or differences of original products compared to counterfeit products will negatively impact consumer perceptions toward the disadvantages of purchasing counterfeit products (Wang et al., 2005). This study expects individuals with a high information sensitivity to have negative attitudes toward counterfeit-branded clothing. Accordingly, hypothesis H1 has been developed as:

H1: Information sensitivity has a negative effect on consumer attitudes toward counterfeit-branded clothing.

Normative sensitivity is the tendency an individual has to behave in accordance with others' expectations (Thurasamy et al., 2002). Many studies are found to have suggested normative sensitivity to possess a negative effect on attitudes toward counterfeit products (Kim & Karpova, 2010; Ang, 2001; Wang, 2005; Cheng et al., 2011; Ting et al., 2016). As a result, consumers who tend to conform to social expectations are likely to have negative attitudes toward counterfeit-branded clothing. In this direction, hypothesis H2 has been developed as:

H2: Normative sensitivity has a negative effect on consumer attitudes toward counterfeit-branded clothing.

Consumer ethics is defined as the moral rules, principles, or standards that guide the behaviors of an individual or a group in selecting, purchasing, using or selling a good or service (Muncy & Vitell, 1992). Quoquab et al. (2016) suggested religiosity, anxiety, and attitudes toward legality to be the ethical factors affecting attitudes toward counterfeit products.

The concept of religiosity expresses the extent to which an individual adheres to their religious beliefs, values, and practices as well as the extent to which they use these in their daily life (Shukor & Jamal, 2013). Studies have shown religious beliefs to strengthen negative attitudes toward unacceptable behaviors (Vitell et al., 1993; Kennedy & Lawton, 1998). In addition, studies exist that show religiosity to have a negative effect on attitudes toward counterfeit products (Vida, 2007; Casidy et al., 2016). According to the relevant literature, religious individuals are more likely to have more negative attitudes toward purchasing counterfeit products. Accordingly, hypothesis H3 has been developed as:

H3: Religiosity negatively affects consumer attitudes toward counterfeit-branded clothing.

Ethical concerns are defined as the degree to which individuals believe their questionable behaviors to be right or wrong (i.e., ethical or unethical; Vitell & Muncy, 1992). Consumer demand for counterfeit products and brands is generally characterized as an unethical behavior (Bian et al., 2016). Many studies exist that have revealed consumers' ethical concerns to negatively impact their attitudes toward counterfeit products (Quoquab et al., 2016; Riquelme et al., 2012). This study expects ethical concerns to negatively affect attitudes toward counterfeit-branded clothing. Accordingly, hypothesis H4 has been developed as:

H4: Ethical concerns have a negative effect on consumer attitudes toward counterfeit-branded clothing.

The literature has studies showing a negative correlation to exist between consumers' intentions to willingly purchase counterfeit products and their attitudes toward legality (Bloch, 1993; Cordell et al., 1996). This study expects the level of an individual's attitude toward legality to negatively affect their attitude toward counterfeit-branded clothing. Therefore, hypothesis H5 has been developed as:

H5: Perceived attitudes toward legality negatively affect consumer attitudes toward counterfeit-branded clothing.

Consumer attitude is defined as an evaluation of how much an individual likes to perform a behavior or which behaviors they prefer (Das, 2014). Individuals with

more positive attitudes toward counterfeit products are more likely to purchase these products (Albers-Miller, 1999; Ang et al., 2001; Kim & Karpova, 2010; Michaelidou & Christodoulides, 2011). This study expects attitudes toward counterfeit-branded clothing to positively affect one's intention to purchase counterfeit products. Accordingly, hypothesis H6 has been developed as:

H6: Attitudes toward counterfeit-branded clothing positive affect consumers' intention to purchase counterfeit-branded clothing.

Method

Research Sample and Scales Used in the Research

The universe of the study consists of consumers over the age of 18 in Turkey. Because the entire population could not be reached due to time and cost constraints, the sample of the study consists of consumers over the age of 18 in Mersin Province.

In order to measure the variables used in the research, a detailed literature review was made, and scales suitable for the purpose of the research were determined. The Interpersonal Impact Scale was adapted from Bearden et al.'s (1989) Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence (SUSCEP) Scale. The current study has benefitted from Quoquab et al.'s (2017) study for the scales on religiosity and attitudes toward legality. Chaudry and Stumpf's (2011) study was benefitted from for the Ethical Concern Scale. The Attitudes Toward Counterfeit Products Scale was adapted from Matos et al.'s (2007) study. Zeithaml et al.'s (1996) was benefitted from for creating the Purchase Intention Scale.

Findings

According to the analysis results, information sensitivity, one of the sub-dimensions for the factor of social impact, has a statistically significant and negative effect ($\beta = -0.15$, $t = -3.44$) on attitudes toward counterfeit-branded clothing, with hypothesis H1 being supported at a significant level ($p < 0.01$). Normative sensitivity ($\beta = 0.38$, $t = 7.80$) as the other sub-dimension of the factor of social impact was found to have a statistically significant effect ($p < 0.01$) on attitudes toward counterfeit-branded clothing. However, the direction of the effect is positive, contrary to the negative direction predicted by hypothesis H2. Therefore, H2 is not supported. When examining the effects from ethical dimensions on attitudes toward counterfeit-branded clothing, religiousness ($\beta = -0.14$, $t = -2.82$, $p < 0.01$), ethical concerns ($\beta = -0.22$, $t = -4.58$, $p < 0.01$), and attitudes toward legality ($\beta = -0.18$, t

= -3.49, $p < 0.01$) were observed to have statistically significant and negative effects. According to the research findings, hypotheses H3, H4, and H5 are supported. Lastly, attitudes toward counterfeit-branded clothing ($\beta = 0.72$, $t = 13.86$, $p < 0.01$) were observed to have a statistically significant and positive effect on purchase intention; thus, hypothesis H6 is supported.

Conclusion

According to the research results, information sensitivity as one of the sub-dimensions for the factor of interpersonal effects, was found to negatively affect consumer attitudes toward counterfeit-branded clothing. This finding is in line with those from Phau et al. (2009), Jayieoba et al. (2015), and Kasuma et al. (2020). According to this result, consumers are affected by information about the harm and other negative effects of counterfeit products and develop negative attitudes toward counterfeit branded products.

Another social impact factor whose effect on attitude the study examined is normative sensitivity. According to the research findings and contrary to the developed hypothesis H2, normative sensitivity was determined to have a positive, rather than a negative, effect on attitudes toward counterfeit-branded products. When examining the literature, various studies are seen to have revealed different results. For example, Ting et al.'s (2016) study argued normative sensitivity to positively affect attitudes toward purchasing counterfeit products. On the other hand, Penz and Stöttinger (2005) argued from a different point of view, where purchasing counterfeit-branded products leaves a bad impression on others, and therefore normative sensitivity negatively impacts attitudes toward counterfeit-branded products. The current study also attempted to reveal the effect ethical factors have on attitudes toward counterfeit-branded clothing. Religiosity is considered an ethical factor and, as a result of the hypothesis tests, was concluded to negatively affect attitudes. This result supports the studies from Souiden et al (2018), Casidy (2016), and Vida (2007). Another result from the study is that an individual's level of ethical concerns negatively affects their attitude toward counterfeit-branded clothing. The studies from Maldonado (2005), Chaudhry and Stumph (2011), and Koklic (2011) suggested people with high ethical concerns to have negative attitudes toward counterfeit products. However, individuals perceive the same action differently in accordance with their level of ethical concerns (Quoquab, 2016, p. 840).

The current study has also revealed the factor of attitudes toward legality, which is also considered an ethical factor, to negatively affect attitudes toward coun-

terfeit-branded clothing. This result supports those from the studies of Cordell et al. (1996) and Michaelidou and Christodoulides (2011). Consumers with more sensitivity to legality want to avoid this type of exchange relationship and consider selling counterfeit products to also be illegal, despite the lack of criminal sanctions for purchasing these types of products. According to moral competence theory, this is because their moral judgments cause them to disapprove of illegal transactions such as selling counterfeit products (Ramayah, 2002). Finally, the effect of attitudes toward counterfeit-branded clothing on people's intentions to purchase counterfeit-branded products was examined and determined to have a positive effect. Supporting this study, Michaelidou and Christodoulides (2011) and Ting et al. (2016) argued attitudes toward counterfeit products to positively affect purchase intentions.

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