Exploring the role of brand image in explaining consumer shopping behavior of counterfeits

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ABSTRACT
Nowadays in many countries, demand for counterfeit branded products increased and this event makes the study of determinants of consumers counterfeit branded products purchase behavior more worthwhile than ever before. The purpose of this paper was examining the impact of perceived brand image on consumer purchase intention of counterfeits such as clothes and shoes in the context of non-deceptive counterfeiting. The explanatory construct in this study include a brand image (Brand Personality, Perceived product attributes, Perceived benefits). This study conducted in Tehran, Iran. The sample size was 188 consumers in Tehran. The results indicated two of three dimensions of the brand image constructs appear to be significantly influential to consumers purchase intention of counterfeit branded products. The reliability of all adopted scales and validity of questions measured and discussed by conducted Cronbach Alpha coefficient and content validity.

Introduction
According to previous studies such as Bian and Moutinho (2009) nowadays counterfeiting has become an important phenomenon in the modern economy. In many countries such as middlest countries, demand for counterfeit branded products increased and this event makes the study of determinants of consumers counterfeit branded products purchase behaviour more worthwhile than ever before. According to Clunas (1991), counterfeiting has existed for a long time. Charity and Blatt (1994, 1993) believe that between 1984 and 1994 the value of counterfeit goods in the global market has increased around 1,100 percent. Penz and Stöttinger (2005) states:”

Counterfeiting, the production and sale of fake products, which seem identical to the original product, have been spreading across the globe at an alarming rate”. International Anticounterfeiting Coalition(2002) reports show preferred targets of counterfeiters are products which carry a high brand image and require a relatively simple production technology, such as cigarettes, wearing apparel, media, consumer electronics, media, cigarettes. Several researchers such as, (e.g. Green & Smith, 2002; Kay,1990) studied on counterfeiting and they state manufacturers of the original products are well aware of these developments and leave no opportunity untapped to limit damages to their company’s brand reputation and profits. The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of perceived brand image on consumer purchase intention of counterfeits in the context of non-deceptive counterfeiting.

Theoretical background and hypotheses
Brand image
According to definition of brand image by several researchers such as McEnally and De Chernatony (1999); Brand image inconsistencies, namely the difference between the identity of a brand and its image, embody the threat of brand dilution or might even change the values incorporated into the brand. Brand image consistency is crucial to the success of any brand (McEnally and De Chernatony, 1999; Phau, 2009).

One of the definition of brand image that is widely accepted in the literature is the on contributed by Keller (1993), which defines this term as the “perceptions about a brand reflected as associations existing in the memory of the consumer”. According to Martinez and Pina (2003) studies to building the brand image is necessary to refer to both tangible and intangible aspects, intrinsic or extrinsic, and can be the result of both external and internal stimuli to each individual, depending on their own experience with the brand question. The extant literature shows that brand image is a multi-dimensional concept, but there is no consensus on how to empirically measure it, Keller (1993), when posing a theoretical method for measuring brand equity, observes that brand image included associations related to the product (attributes, benefits and attitudes), variety of brand associations , strength of brand associations, and uniqueness of brand associations. Several researcher such as Bian and Moutinho 2009; Martinez and Chartony , 2004; Plummer, 2000 argue that brand image has the three key components include the product attributes, the benefits/consequences of using a brand, and brand. The following provides conceptualization of these constructs as well as related hypotheses.

Brand personality
The brand personality concept focuses on providing a brand with a personality that provokes an emotional response (Park et al., 2008). Brand personality is defined as “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (Aaker, 1997, p. 347).The brand personality factor enables a consumer to express his/her own self or specific dimensions of the self (Kleine et al., 1993). It also creates an image of the brand’s typical user (de Chernatony and McDonald, 1998). The favourable brand personalities are a central driver of consumer preference and
usage as consumers are more likely to associate them with a
desired group, or ideal self-image (Bian & Moutinho 2009; Aaker, 1997). According to Bian and Moutinho (2009) as
symbolic attributes are captured by brand name, and by its
nature counterfeit branded product is not only a product, but
more importantly it is a brand – a counterfeit one that bears a
brand name of an original branded product, it is rational to
assume that the existing brand theory can be applied to
counterfeit branded product. Their study showed the personality
appears to have the greatest positive effect on the model, judging
by its larger beta value in comparison with other variables.
These results provide empirical support for the critical role
played by the perceived brand personality of a counterfeit
branded product in consumer purchase decisions larger beta
value in comparison with other variables. These results provide
empirical support for the critical role played by the perceived
brand personality of a branded product in consumer purchasing
decisions.

According to previous studies such as (e.g. Bian &
Moutinho 2009) when counterfeit branded products are
perceived to process positive and favorable brand personalities
they are more likely to be purchased. The following hypothesis
is proposed.

H1: The level of consumers’ favorableness to the brand
personality of a counterfeit branded product has a relationship to
the purchase intention of a counterfeit branded product.

Perceived product attributes

The attributes are those descriptive features that
characterize a product (Keller, 1993). Myers and Shocker (1981)
stated product attributes can be categorized in a variety of ways.
A product can be viewed as a bundle of intrinsic and extrinsic
attributes, or as a bundle of perceived attributes and The intrinsic
attributes of the product are information cues directly linked to
the product, and the extrinsic attributes are information cues,
which are indirectly connected to the product (Stokman, 1991).
Many researchers since the 1960s indicated a positive
relationship between linkage of the brand and perceived product
attributes and brand choice/preference. In general, the results
reveal that functional product attribute is, indeed, a positive,
statistically significant predictor of the purchase intention of
counterfeit and the level of impact of the perceived functional
attributes on consumer purchase behavior comes after the brand
personality and benefit, judging by its smaller beta value. (Bian
& Moutinho, 2009). This research therefore proposes the
following.

H2. Consumers’ perceptions of product attributes have a positive
influence on the purchase intention of a counterfeit branded
product.

Perceived benefits

Many previous studies indicated a positive relationship
between perceived benefit and consumer decision making (e.g.
staed consumers who willfully buy a counterfeit branded
product believe they are getting the prestige. In relation to
counterfeit branded products, benefits are what consumers
believe the counterfeit branded products can bring them.
“Benefits are what consumers seek when purchasing a
product/brand” (Kotler, 1999).

According to J Biean and Moutinho(2009) study the results
show that benefit-related factors – satisfactory benefit is a
significant predictor of the purchase intention; functional benefit
and image benefit are not, however. According the literature, the
proposed hypothesis is as follows:

H3. Consumers’ perceptions of benefits have a positive
influence on the purchase intention of a counterfeit branded
product.

Methods

This study focused on clothes and shoes, because these
products are general products, and thus familiar to the target
respondents.

Procedure and sample

This study was conducted in Tehran, Iran. The reasons for
the choice of Tehran are because the Iran is perceived to be one
of the main recipients of counterfeits in the world and
counterfeits are widespread in Tehran. The researcher and ten
trained fieldworkers collected the data at the shopping mall
entrances rather than in the shopping mall to avoid length-biased
sampling (Nowell & Stanley, 1991). The researcher/fieldworkers
invited every five shopper who passed the data
collection points to participate in the study. In order to avoid
respondent bias, the research preceded over a 21-day period that
included weekends and weekdays, as well as covering all of
each shopping mall opening hours. The sample consists of 220
consumers in Tehran: of those, 188 of the responses are useable
(approximately 85 per cent useable rates).

A total of 60.6 percent are male and 39.4 percent are
female. Some 12.8 per cent of the participants have an
educational attainment lower than degree level, with 79.2 per
cent having a bachelor’s and students degree and 8 percent
having a Master’s degree or higher. Table (1) presents the
sample profile.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Total Cases</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>60.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>39.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students/Bachelor</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>79.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master or over</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research instrument

The explanatory construct in this study include a brand
image (Brand Personality, Perceived product attributes,
Perceived benefits) In All involved constructs were measured
using 7-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree, 7= strongly
agree). In this research to measure of brand image dimensions
(Brand Personality, Perceived product attributes. Perceived
benefits the researcher used items, which were developed by
Bian and Moutinho (2009).

This study conducted two separate pilot tests of the research
instrument to explore about the validity and reliability of the
instrument. The researcher also invited three academic
researchers who were not directly involved with the design of
the questionnaire to look for technical errors in the first pilot
test. After revision, the researcher used a pilot test sample of 30
consumers recruited from the five selected shopping mall
following the general agreement that the pilot test sample should
be as similar as possible to the target population (Oppenheim,
2000). The second pilot-test examined the mode of
administration, individual questions and their sequences (Bolton
et al., 1990). The test did not reveal any major flaws of the
survey instrument. Overall, the pilot-tests helped to ensure that
the respondents understood these items and could provide
meaningful responses. To test for the reliability of all adopted scales, the researchers conducted a Cronbach Alpha analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table (2) Perceived benefits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived product attributes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand personality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived benefits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

Hypotheses are tested with a linear regression. The application of linear regression analysis in this study is also because this data analysis technique is one of the common means of detecting effects independent variables on the dependent variable.

H1 predicts that the perceived brand personality of a counterfeit branded product must relate to the consumer’s purchase intention of the counterfeit version of a product brand. The results support H1 ($\beta = -0.181$, $p < .05$). The brand personality significantly influences consumer purchase intention of counterfeit clothes and shoes. It mentioned the personality appears to have the negative effect on the model. These results provide empirical support for the role played by the perceived brand personality of a counterfeit branded product in consumer purchasing decisions.

The second hypothesis predicts that statistical analysis must illustrate that counterfeit branded product -prone consumers are more likely to possess a more positive product attribute perceptions of a counterfeit branded product. The results reveal that functional product attribute is not significant ($\beta = -0.03$, $P > .05$) predictor of the purchase intention of counterfeit products (clothes and shoes).

H3 predicts that consumers who consider buying counterfeit branded products are also pursuing perceived benefits, as they do with the consumption of other products. The results provide full support for this hypothesis. The model shows that benefit-related factors – satisfactory benefit ($\beta = -0.218$, $p < .05$) is a significant predictor of the purchase intention.

Discussion

As the amount of counterfeit branded products continues to increase in the marketplace worldwide, understanding the determinants of consumers who willingly purchase counterfeit branded products becomes more important to both academics and marketers. The main purpose of this study is to explore relations between the most exploratory construct of consumer behavior (brand image) and shopping intention in the context of non-deceptive counterfeiting. The results of this study are discussed as follows.

Two of three dimensions of the brand image constructs appear to be significantly influential to consumers purchase intention of counterfeit branded products. More importantly, this research is also supported by Bian and Moutinho’s (2009) studies’ results that perceived brand personality plays a more important role in explaining the consumers’ purchase intention of counterfeit branded products than other influential factors (e.g. Benefit and product attribute). Both counterfeit owners and non-counterfeit branded product owners perceive a satisfactory benefit related to counterfeit branded products (Nia & Zaichkowsky, 2000). According the result of this research can suggest that there is more chance that non-counterfeit branded products owners will knowingly purchase counterfeit branded products in the future if they perceive the counterfeit branded products to be satisfactory.

Generally, there is still a long way to go before we achieve any sound understanding of counterfeit-related behavior. In view of the important role played by brand image in the shopping tendency of counterfeit branded products, what have yet to be investigated are the antecedents of the brand image of counterfeit branded products, the differences between brand image of counterfeit branded products and brand products, and brand personality in particular of brand products might influence consumer purchase behavior of counterfeit branded products. Future studies should choose other widely counterfeited brands, in an effort to test the applicability of the current research findings in other contexts. Consumers’ perceptions of other counterfeit versions might differ. Thus, there is an important issue, care should be taken in generalizing the results reported in this study until additional research verifies the findings across different brand and different product categories.

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