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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.

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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 middle 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 one 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. Cho et al., 2002; Bove and Johnson, 2000). Ang et al (2001) stated 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 f 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 (1) Sample Profile

Variable	Total Cases	N	(%)
Gender			
Male	188	114	60.6
Female		74	39.4
Education			
High School		24	12.8
Students/Bachelor	188	149	79.2
Master or over		15	8

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 (2) Perceived benefits

Variable	Cronbach Alpha
Perceived product attributes	0.70
Brand personality	0.91
Perceived benefits	0.84

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 independents 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 ($\beta = -.181, p < .05$). 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.

Coefficients ^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	8.753	0.598	-	1.464	0.000
Brand personality	-0.061	0.024	-0.181	-2.503	0.013
a. Dependent Variable: purchase intention					

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 ($\beta = -.03, P > .05$) predictor of the purchase intention of counterfeit products (clothes and shoes).

Coefficients ^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	7.819	0.986	-	7.930	0.000
Product attribute	-0.014	0.030	-0.033	-0.456	0.649
a. Dependent Variable: Purchase intention					

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.

Coefficients ^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	9.184	0.636	-	14.429	0.000
Perceived benefits	-0.099	0.032	-0.218	-3.052	0.003
a. Dependent Variable: 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 Biean and Moutinho (2009) studies’ results that perceived brand personality plays a more important role in explaining the consumers’ purchase intention of counterfeit branded product than other influential factors (e.g. Benefit and product attribute). Both counterfeit owners and non-counterfeit brand 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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