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UNDERSTANDING THE DRIVERS OF COUNTERFEIT PRODUCT CONSUMPTION: PRIMARY DATA EVIDENCE FROM AMRITSAR

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ABSTRACT

The ease with which counterfeit products can be made and sold poses both an ethical dilemma and an economic challenge to international and local marketplaces. This study examines what drives consumer behaviour regarding the purchase of counterfeit products in Amritsar District, India. Five determinants were selected to be the basis of the research: consumer price sensitivity, brand loyalty, ethical concern, and social influence. The study is quantitative and regression based. Primary research data were obtained from 300 respondents via a structured questionnaire. Among the variables under analysis, social influence and price sensitivity were the greatest positive contributors to the purchase of counterfeit products. This pointed to social and economic drivers as the primary motivators in the consumption of counterfeit products. Conversely, brand loyalty, ethical concern, and perceived risk acted in opposition by restricting the intentional purchasing of counterfeit products. This pointed to the moral and psychological factors of concern revealing possible low quality and social stigma which inhibit purchasing counterfeit products. Economically driven and socially controlled behaviour were the primary motives for the consumption of counterfeit products in Amritsar with little to no restrictions in the domain of brand loyalty or ethical concern. The study elaborates on the applicability of the Theory of Planned Behaviour and Social Identity Theory to understand the consumption of counterfeit products in emerging markets. By highlighting the importance of the consumer education, provision of genuine products at reasonable prices, and the enforcement of regulations to anti-counterfeiting, it also outlines the considerations for marketers and policy makers.

Keywords: Counterfeit, Theory of Planned Behaviour, Consumer Behaviour, Social Identity Theory.

INTRODUCTION

The trade in counterfeit goods has grown in recent twenty years enormously becoming one of the most widespread types of market fraud and consumer misleading. According to the prediction made by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), more than 3.3 percent of worldwide trade is covered by the use of counterfeit and pirated products, which is estimated at a turnover of over USD 500 billion per year (OECD, 2021). Counterfeiting intellectual property right weaken it, corrupt consumer confidence, and destabilize fair economic structures (Bian, Wang, Smith, and Yannopoulou, 2016). More importantly, it has been evolving into an advanced, globalized business that consists of luxurious brands, electronics, pharmaceutics, and daily consumer goods (Eisend and Hartmann, 2017). Although previous studies regarded counterfeit consumption as the main form of deception on the part of consumers, more recent studies have shown that many consumers buy counterfeit products with knowledge (Sharma and Chan, 2016). This intentioned-non intentioned consumption has caused many academic issues to be raised in realms of marketing, psychology and ethics. Studies have increasingly acknowledged that pattern of counterfeit buying is a complicated manifestation of an interaction between the

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economic, psychological, and social conditions and does not exist in the form of ignorance (Quoquab, Pahlevan, and Mohammad, 2017; Verma, Kumar, and Yadav, 2018).

In the developing world, including India, counterfeit is now firmly embedded, dependent on the income gap, lifestyle aspiration and low brand availability (Bhatia, 2018). The consumers in the India with increasing materialism and exposure to luxury branding tend to view counterfeit products as a good alternative that can satisfy social and symbolic demands (Khan, Fazili, and Bashir, 2021). A study by Chinese, Malaysian, and Pakistani researchers also reveals that affordability, peer influence, and moral rationalization are excellent predictors of counterfeit consumption (Jiang, Miao, Jalees, and Zaman, 2019; Paracha, 2022). Nevertheless, this kind of dynamic in behaviour is not well studied at the regional level in India where cultural diversity and social structure affect the consumer psychology.

The city of Amritsar, one of the leadings in terms of urban and cultural life in Punjab, presents one of the microcosms to examine counterfeit consumption. Vitality of trade, tourism, and the fast-changing shopping environment characterize the economy of the city which makes it a suitable location to observe the interaction between the price sensitivity, brand aspiration and ethical attitude. Demographic factors, such as income, and education have proven to moderate counterfeit purchase behaviour in similar socio-economic settings; accordingly, similar socio-economic research, including Malaysia (Quoquab et al., 2017) and Romania (Tachiciu, 2021) demonstrates this trend. Since Amritsar is a heterogeneous society with high-income, brand-conscious consumers, and middle-class value consumers, the motivations behind counterfeit consumption on that case will be multifactorial and context-dependent.

Economic, psychological, social, and ethical are four general types of drivers of counterfeit purchasing behaviour that are identified to be in existent literature. Purchase consideration usually begins with economic factors, like affordability and value consciousness (Verma et al., 2018; Hieke, 2010). The consumers can justify their actions through psychological factors, which include hedonic gratification and moral disengagement (Malik, Merunka, and Akram, 2020). The tendency is enhanced by social influence (especially in collectivist cultures) that orients towards accepted imitation and materialism (Eisend & Hartmann, 2017; Iyer, Babin, Eastman, and Griffin, 2022). Ethical awareness is bypassed, but it does not stop the practice of consumption counterfeit since moral costs are addressed less than the perceived advantages (Bian et al., 2016; Thaichon and Quach, 2016).

Theories including the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and the Social Identity Theory (SIT) are theoretical frameworks that have largely been utilized to explain counterfeit consumption. According to TPB, attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioural control influence behavioural intention (Ajzen, 1991), whereas, SIT individuals prefer consumption as a way of gaining or pursuing social identity (Sharma and Chan, 2016). The application of these frameworks to the urban consumer market in Amritsar would help to better understand the interaction between socio-economic factors and expectations of culture and influence the nature of counterfeit purchasing. Empirical research on Asia, Europe, and Africa has corroborated the applicability of these constructs, nevertheless, pointing to the necessity of local research (Ndereyimana and Lau, 2022; Kasber, El-Bassiouny, and Hamed, 2023). Scarcely any study has been conducted in India that focuses on consumption of counterfeited products in a regional perspective that incorporates the aspects of the economy and social and cultural communities. Thus, this study will be used to fill this gap by undertaking primary data research in Amritsar in order to investigate consumer intention determinants in order to purchase counterfeits.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumption of counterfeit products has become a compelling issue in all part of the world including economic, social, and ethical aspects which differ due to different cultural and regional backgrounds. The growing rate of fake products in the developing markets such as India has made scientists examine the psychology and behavioural motivations behind the observed consumption behaviour. Some of these research's state that the buying behaviour of counterfeit is not a consequence but rather a deliberate action motivated by the economic rationality, social pressure and new-morality slippage (Quoquab, Pahlevan, and Mohammad, 2017; Bian et al., 2016). In other markets like Amritsar where trade activities are lively and middle-class consumers dictate buying behaviour, the knowledge of these determinants using primary data would offer vital information about the psychology of consumption.

The most glaring reasons are the economic ones and they drive the consumption of counterfeits. This has provided consumers with a rational to believe that counterfeit goods are a cheaper and reasonable substitute of original branded products (Verma, Kumar, and Yadav, 2018). Research on the emerging markets has shown that the price sensitivity continues to be the strongest predictor of the counterfeit purchase intention (Quoquab et al., 2017; Bhatia, 2018). In cases where the perceived advantage is better than the moral cost the consumers will use rationalization to justify the purchase as a logical decision instead of a moral crime (Hieke, 2010). Hamelin and Nwankwo (2013) also remark that financial constraints drive people to reason pro-counterfeit buying, particularly when they seek to satisfy instrumental or symbolic wants to be satisfied by the counterfeit products. Regarding the attitudes toward counterfeiting, Bhatia (2018) explored in connection with Indian consumers residing in urban areas and found that the level of value consciousness and insufficient disposable income contribute to the development of the economic side of the phenomenon.

In addition to economic, psychological and behavioural attributes have a great influence on the purchase of counterfeit. The internal drivers which can often be found in the literature include hedonic motives, materialism, and moral disengagement (Bian et al., 2016; Sharma and Chan, 2016). Even though they know that they are unlawful, consumers get emotional satisfaction, pleasure, and a feeling of prestige by owning fake luxury goods (Malik, Merunka, and Akram, 2020). The authors state that moral rationalization allows consumers to reduce the effects of ethical guilt by considering the act of counterfeit purchase as an acceptable social intervention (Sharma and Chan, 2016). Jiang, Miao, Jalees, and Zaman (2019), the studies reported that moral disengagement and perceived behavioural control are significant predictors of counterfeit purchase intentions, and Bose, Mukherjee, and Roy (2025) reported that aspirational motives decrease the level of cognitive dissonance in the low-income population. Such results indicate that psychological reasons and emotional satisfaction are major factors in maintaining counterfeits consumptions regardless of ethical consciousness.

Another key factor that is playing a significant role in the formation of consumer perception of fake products is social influence. An example of this is the peer pressure, social conforming, and the need to be socially recognized, which are widespread (Iyer, Babin, Eastman, and Griffin, 2022). Studies that have been carried out at collectivist societies reveal that raising the question of social approval and acceptance tend to supersede the moral or the legal aspect in the case of buying fake products (Eisend and Hartmann, 2017). Priporas, Chen, Zhao, and Tan (2020) established that counterfeit buying among consumers in China as belonging to upper-middle classes was used as a tool of social signalling, but not as unethical conduct. In a similar manner, Cunningham (2025) reported that social and personality

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characteristics, including the need to achieve status and peer approval have a profound impact on intentions to buy. These social factors are intensified in such developing markets as India by cultural ambitions and the luxury of brand products (Khan, Fazili, and Bashir, 2021). All these religiously oriented consumption patterns, as Amritsar is a city with a blend of both traditional and modern consumption patterns, portray such a socially motivated behaviour that imitation is a socially acceptable consumption form.

Ethics and morality also come to the play in counter-consumption in an indirect fashion. Though a negative relationship between ethical awareness and counterfeit purchase intention is confirmed in the majority of studies (Bian et al., 2016; Quoquab et al., 2017), the correlation is not linear and consistent. Thaichon and Quach (2016) realized that online shopping sites reduce the ethical restraint, as the perception of accountability decreases. As shown by Malik et al. (2020), the moral opposition can be overcome by the nature of self-concept fit of consumers in counterfeit brands. Tachiciu (2021) reported that ethical tolerance differs according to demographic aspects, especially education, whereas Kasber, El-Bassiouny, and Hamed (2023) also found that religiosity is a moderating factor that decreases the counterfeit purchase intention of morally oriented consumers. The findings in these examples imply that ethical decision making is situational and arts and culture based as well as demographic based instead of being founded on universal moral principles.

Markets have become digital, which has further diversified the patterns of consumption of counterfeit. The accessibility of the Internet has made the process of purchasing fake products a normal phenomenon, and it has eliminated the distinctions between original and fake products (Jazdzewska-Gutta, 2024). Madhav and Dangi (2025) performed a bibliometric analysis and discovered that the research on digital counterfeiting has grown exponentially with a particular focus on social media impact and e-commerce. Akhtar, Gupta, and Alsabban (2025), applied this argument to tourism products, where the presence of emotional betrayal and distress is demonstrated upon the discovery of counterfeit goods after purchasing the product or service. These digital dimensions become more and more important to such cities as Amritsar, where online shopping and international trade become more common.

The other studies have conducted cross-national empirical research in known markets supports the premise of context-sensitive analysis. Quoquab et al. (2017) revealed that in Malaysia, price sensitivity, ethical concern, and social influence are positively associated with predicting the counterfeit purchase intention. Verma et al. (2018) and Bhatia (2018) established parallel predictors in India, and Paracha (2022) conducted comparable research in Pakistan and discovered that attitudes towards counterfeit products are influenced by the level of income and perceptions of legality. In line with Ndereyimana and Lau (2022), social influence and status orientation were confirmed to be significantly mediating counterfeit purchasing within the Sub-Saharan Africa. All these findings highlight the fact that counterfeit consumption is the result of complex socio-economic and cultural realities in developing economies, and exists as a result of such interrelated forces. In the case of Amritsar, it means that there are interactions among social identity, peer norms, and ethical tolerance that were dynamically used to predict the effects of counterfeit behaviour.

The counterfeit product research is conceptually based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and the Social Identity Theory (SIT). According to the TPB tool, attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control are the determinants of behavioural intention (Ajzen, 1991), which are in line with empirical evidence showing that integrates economic, ethical, and social factors (Sharma and Chan, 2016; Bian and colleagues, 2016). SIT adds to this by describing counterfeit consumption as an identity building and status declaration

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(Khan et al., 2021). All these theories combine to come up with a strong basis of an analysis of the predictors of the counterfeit purchasing behaviour in Amritsar where collective identity and price-oriented rationalization coexist.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a quantitative methodology for understanding the factors driving consumer intention toward counterfeit product purchases within the Amritsar district. Descriptive and correlational methods were used to explain the behaviour and evaluate the relational strength among the various factors. This method fit the study purpose since it focused on measuring the consumer's opinion, perception, and behaviour toward counterfeit products, and was able to empirically evaluate the proposed relationships through regression analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study is cross-sectional since it was focused on data collection during one specific time period. A structured questionnaire was used to collect the data from various participants within the city of Amritsar and the surrounding urban areas. The study was conducted in the Amritsar District, located in the northwestern part of Punjab, India. Due to its highly developed business ecosystem, cross-border commerce, and considerable consumer exposure to branded products, Amritsar is a counterfeit product consumption hotspot. The intended demographic included individuals aged 18 and older, who were residents of the Amritsar district. They were either previous purchasers or had knowledge of counterfeit or imitation products, be it faux items for clothing, accessories, cosmetics, or electronics. To gather the widest range of perceptions and the most diverse behavioural drivers, the study included both male and female consumers across different occupational and income levels. The study utilized a non-probability purposive sampling technique. This technique is described as such because the study in question was targeted, and the participants needed to have prior knowledge of or experience with counterfeit products. This sampling technique was appropriate for guiding the selection of respondents who possessed relevant knowledge and who were able to describe the issue under study in detail (Etikan & Bala, 2017). The present study examined 5 independent variables (price sensitivity, brand loyalty, ethical concern, perceived risk, social influence) and 1 dependent variable (purchase intention). A total of 312 questionnaires were collected from different localities of Amritsar, which included Ranjit Avenue, Lawrence Road, Hall Bazaar, Mall Road, and nearby marketplaces. From the 312 questionnaires, 300 were fully completed, and were included for the final analysis after those that were incomplete and invalid responses were removed. A structured self-administered questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section A requested demographic information regarding gender, age, education, occupation and income. In Section B, respondents expressed their level of agreement with statements regarding the independent variables: price sensitivity, brand loyalty, ethical concern, perceived risk, and social influence. Section C contained questions regarding the respondents' purchase intention toward counterfeit products. Responses for each of the statements regarding the independent variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale, the ranges of which were 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree. The scale offers the researcher a quantitative way to measure the respondents' attitudes.

Analysis

The two main statistical techniques involved are; Summarizing the data using the Descriptive Statistics and then using Regression Analysis to examine the supposed relationships among the variables.

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Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of respondents and the distribution of responses for each study variable.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 300)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	164	54.7
	Female	136	45.3
Age (Years)	18–25	74	24.7
	26–35	122	40.7
	36–45	66	22.0
	46 and above	38	12.6
Education Level	Undergraduate	94	31.3
	Graduate	128	42.7
	Postgraduate	78	26.0
Occupation	Student	35	11.6
	Salaried	158	52.7
	Business	105	35.0
	Unemployed	2	0.7
Monthly Income (INR)	Below 25,000	88	29.3
	25,000–50,000	124	41.3
	Above 50,000	88	29.3

The majority of respondents were aged between 26–35 years (40.7%) and held a graduate or higher qualification (68.7%) and were from salaried class (52.7%). Both genders were well represented, ensuring balanced perspectives on counterfeit product consumption.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Key Study Variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Price Sensitivity	4.10	0.61	2.80	5.00
Brand Loyalty	3.35	0.74	1.90	4.90
Ethical Concern	3.02	0.86	1.40	4.80
Perceived Risk	2.85	0.77	1.00	4.70
Social Influence	3.89	0.68	2.20	5.00
Purchase Intention	3.78	0.72	1.80	4.90

Respondents showed high price sensitivity (M = 4.10) and moderate purchase intention (M = 3.78) toward counterfeit products. Ethical concern (M = 3.02) and perceived risk (M = 2.85) were relatively lower, suggesting that ethical and risk perceptions did not significantly deter counterfeit consumption.

Regression Analysis

To determine the predictive strength of independent variables (Price Sensitivity, Brand Loyalty, Ethical Concern, Perceived Risk, and Social Influence) on the dependent variable (Purchase Intention), a Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was performed.

The regression equation was specified as:

$$\boldsymbol{PI = \beta_0 + \beta_1(PS) + \beta_2(BL) + \beta_3(EC) + \beta_4(PR) + \beta_5(SI) + \varepsilon}$$

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Where:

- PI = Purchase Intention toward Counterfeit Products
- PS = Price Sensitivity
- BL = Brand Loyalty
- EC = Ethical Concern
- PR = Perceived Risk
- SI = Social Influence
- ε = Error Term

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of Estimate
1	0.782	0.611	0.602	0.455

The model explains 61.1% of the variation in consumers' purchase intention toward counterfeit products. The remaining 38.9% is attributable to other factors not included in this model. This R^2 value indicates a strong predictive capability for the selected variables.

Table 4: ANOVA Results

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	59.472	5	11.894	57.45	0.000
Residual	37.755	294	0.128		
Total	97.227	299			

The ANOVA results show an F-statistic of 57.45 ($p < 0.001$), confirming that the overall regression model was statistically significant. Therefore, at least one of the independent variables significantly predicted purchase intention.

Table 5: Coefficients of Regression Model

Predictor Variable	Unstandardized β	Std. Error	Standardized β	t-value	Sig. (p)
Constant	0.582	0.231	—	2.52	0.012
Price Sensitivity (PS)	0.411	0.054	0.412	7.61	0.000
Brand Loyalty (BL)	-0.167	0.062	-0.136	-2.69	0.008
Ethical Concern (EC)	-0.238	0.057	-0.214	-4.18	0.000
Perceived Risk (PR)	-0.142	0.048	-0.127	-2.95	0.003
Social Influence (SI)	0.288	0.051	0.276	5.65	0.000

Price sensitivity ($\beta = 0.412$, $p < 0.001$) was the strongest positive predictor of intention to purchase counterfeits. More aware of the price a consumer is, the higher the likelihood of buying a counterfeit product. This explains the economic motivation as the strongest drive to purchase counterfeits. Also, social influence ($\beta = 0.276$, $p < 0.001$) is positive, indicating that the direct social pressure and social acceptance to purchase counterfeit products is present. In the same manner, the pressing need to acquire counterfeits as a social acceptance is present.

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Ethical concern (β = -0.214, $p < 0.001$) and perceived risk (β = -0.127, $p < 0.01$) were negatively associated to purchase intention which suggests that fear of social disapproval, poor quality, or other perceived risk collateral damage do counterfeit concern social engagement is present. Moreover, brand loyalty (β = -0.136, $p < 0.01$) displayed a comparatively weaker, but just as important, negative correlation to intention to purchase counterfeits. This means that a consumer's emotional attachment to genuine brands or trust in them restricts the purchase of counterfeit products. The additional diagnostic statistics reiterated the confidence in the regression model. With no evidence of autocorrelation among the residuals, the Durbin-Watson statistic (1.92) confirmed the independence of the errors, while the variance inflation factor (VIF < 2) for all predictors reinforced the absence of multicollinearity. These factors contribute to the overall reliability and validity of the regression results.

The Durbin–Watson statistic (1.92) indicated no autocorrelation among residuals, and Variance Inflation Factors (VIF < 2) confirmed the absence of multicollinearity.

The results confirmed that all the independent variables influenced the intention of Amritsar consumers to purchase counterfeit products. Social influence and price sensitivity were the most important positive predictors indicating that affordability and peer influence lead to counterfeiting. On the other hand, ethical concern, brand loyalty, and perceived risk were significant negative predictors. The overall model has a strong explanatory power with an R^2 of 0.611, which testifies to the strength of the regression model.

DISCUSSION

In terms of purchase intention, the counterfeit products were focused at the factors (from the five outlined) of price sensitivity, brand loyalty, ethical concern, perceived risk, and social influence within Amritsar District, India. Study demonstrates strongly that, counterfeit products as a behavioural consumption activity, faces relatively low socially driven ethical scrutiny and perceived risk as behavioural consumption activity face socially low driven ethical scrutiny and perceived risk. The most significant positive effect on counterfeit buying intention was found for price sensitivity (β = 0.412, $p < 0.001$). Thus, reinforcing the view that most important factors explaining counterfeit buying are the economic factors, particularly in mid-income cities like Amritsar. This is consistent with Verma, Kumar, and Yadav (2018) and Bhatia (2018), for whom the price and value perception are central to the purchase of counterfeits by the Indian populace. For instance, in Malaysia, Quoquab, Pahlevan, and Mohammad (2017) showed that price difference, in terms of genuine and counterfeit products, is an important factor of consumer intention. This affirms the constrained economic environment's preference for value in greater fully across emerging economies. In Amritsar, economic rationale overrides brand loyalty, and consumers are comfortable sacrificing brand authenticity for a low price. This corroborates the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) suggesting that purchasing intentions are influenced by economic barriers as perceived behavioural control.

Social influence also emerged as a significant predictor of counterfeit product purchase intention (β = 0.276, $p < 0.001$), exhibiting a tendency of buyers to conform to the consumption behaviours of their social circle. In a socially cohesive and status-oriented city like Amritsar, peer influence and social comparison are instrumental in driving consumer behaviour. This supports the findings of Eisent and Hartmann (2017), where social imitation and the desire for social acceptance drove counterfeit purchases. Likewise, Iyer, Babin, Eastman, and Griffin (2022) showed that interpersonal influence steers consumer attitudes towards luxury and counterfeit products. The impact of social reinforcement is greatest in

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collectivist countries, where people are more focused on the symbolic status in the purchase than the functional and instrumental value (Sharma & Chan, 2016). Amritsar residents, who are surrounded by branded products, appear to suffer from status anxiety, which triggers mimicry, that is, to purchase what others already have. The result supports Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), which states that people buy symbolic products to connect with desired out-groups and have a higher social rank. The study further verified the existence of a notable negative correlation between the construct of ethical concern and the purchase intention ($\beta = -0.214$, $p < 0.001$). Specifically, it denotes that consumers with high ethical concern are less inclined to acquire counterfeit items. Regardless, the moderate value of the relationship indicates that a lack of moral awareness will, at times, lead to ethical misconduct when the perceived financial gain is high. This is consistent with Bian, Wang, Smith, and Yannopoulou (2016), which noted that ethical dissonance is often nullified by a process of moral rationalization, where consumers consider the purchase of counterfeits a socially acceptable act. Likewise, Jiang, Miao, Jalees, and Zaman (2019) noted that, in the absence of moral factors, consumers are free to consider counterfeiting as a negative act that doesn't carry moral repercussions. Although ethical concern had a measurable effect in this case, hedonic motives and social norms seemed to trump ethical concerns, validating Sharma and Chan (2016) that the conduct of deliberately purchasing counterfeits is more a function of situational morality than a pre-determined ethical framework.

The findings also showed that perceived risk ($\beta = -0.127$, $p < 0.01$) had a negative impact on intention to purchase counterfeits. This means that consumers who think there are negative consequences such as poor product quality, safety issues, or feelings of embarrassment are less likely to purchase counterfeits. However, even if there are negative consequences of purchasing a counterfeit product, people may still purchase the product if it serves some social purpose, as risk perception could even be less significant than the perceived social value of the counterfeit product. Similar findings were obtained by Malik, Merunka, and Akram (2020) and Paracha (2022) where perceived risk had a small yet substantial impact on counterfeit purchasing behaviour in developing economies. Also, brand loyalty ($\beta = -0.136$, $p < 0.01$) negatively predicted purchase intention towards counterfeits. This is in line with Ndereyimana and Lau (2022) and Kasber, El-Bassiouny, and Hamed (2023). This means that consumers who are loyal to a certain brand tend to be more loyal to that brand and are less likely to purchase counterfeits. In Amritsar, however, the influence of brand loyalty is minimal when compared to the social and economic factors, as it is a market that is largely driven by price.

The study's results have significant syncretic theoretical and empirical contributions, especially in refining the generalizability of TPB and SIT in the Indian context, especially in the semi-urban Amritsar region. Other studies, including Malaysia (Quoquab et al., 2017), China (Jiang et al., 2019), Egypt (Kasber et al., 2023), and Romania (Tachiciu, 2021), have observed similar patterns and explained the counterfeit purchase behaviour through economic rationalization, social learning, and ethical relativism. When such competing phenomena have been observed consistent, even across socio-cultural divides, they are indicative of a robust phenomenon. This study reconfirms that, at least in the case of Amritsar, the economic incentive coupled with social pressure outweighs ethical restraint, and this phenomenon is similar to that observed in a semi-urban Indian context. In empirically reinforcing TPB, the study also advances the literature, particularly with the integration of social identity constructs with traditional economic ones, to explain that purchase intention is rational and socially constructed. The study also localized theoretical constructs regionally, especially for Amritsar, a city that, despite rapidly becoming of great research interest in counterfeit

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consumption and behaviour literature, has been, until now, singularly absent, with its contributions largely for the inventory of uninvestigated places in counterfeit consumption research literature. The model's empirical strength and relevance to behavioural theories of consumer ethics and marketing is manifested in the high explanatory power of the behavioural model ($R^2 = 0.611$).

From a managerial standpoint, the implications pertain to the brand managers, policymakers, and policymakers. Campaigns targeting young, price-sensitive buyers may be designed to highlight the ethical and quality threats of counterfeit items. True brands may need to target the less affluent, thereby lessening the lure of counterfeits, by offering lower priced variations of their products. Also, social norm-based select interventions may help to brand the value of counterfeits by redefining the prestige of counterfeits to their elimination. Emotion-based and loyalty reward programs engendered-systems may further reduce purchasing counterfeits. The local authorities of Amritsar may also need to work with local vendors to monitor the channels of counterfeit goods and the enforcement of intellectual property rights.

In spite of the study offering valuable insights, there are a number of weaknesses. The findings may not extend to other Indian contexts given the narrow scope of the Amritsar District for the research. Social desirability bias may be a concern with self-reports and only five predictors were analysed. Future research ought to examine other appropriate variables including but not limited to personality, moral intensity, and digital involvement. Comparative analyses of other regions as well as structural equation modelling (SEM) may also be helpful in understanding the dynamics of counterfeit consumption.

This study has illustrated the behavioural, economic, and ethical factors regarding the consumption of counterfeit products in Amritsar. The results show that social influence, price sensitivity, and brand loyalty, along with perceived risk, ethical concern, and social concern and the absence of regulation, economically justify counterfeit consumption. The Case of Amritsar shows the economic rationality, social approval, and ethical reasoning where the consumers value price and social approval more than the moral or the brand.

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