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Combating Brand Counterfeiting: An Empirical Study on Consumer Behaviour in the State of Tamilnadu

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ABSTRACT

The present empirical study was aimed to analyze consumer's perception and purchasing behavior towards counterfeit products and to determine variations among people of different age groups, gender, income and their background. This study adopted survey method and collected primary data from 100 respondents from the State of Tamilnadu to understand their level of awareness on the illegal practice of brand counterfeiting. The statistical tools such as Independent T - Hypothesis test, one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test, and Chi – squared test have been applied to draw feasible solutions to the research problem. The result of the study proves that non – deceptive counterfeiting is comparatively higher than deceptive counterfeiting nowadays. This study proposes various suggestions and strategies to the three primary stakeholders in combating the practice of brand counterfeiting: the Government, registered brand owners and consumers.

Keywords: Awareness, purchasing behavior, consumer preferences, deceptive and non – deceptive counterfeiting

I. INTRODUCTION

Brand counterfeiting has emerged as a critical global issue, posing serious risks to economic stability, consumer safety, and intellectual property rights. Counterfeit goods—deliberate imitations of authentic products intended to deceive buyers—have penetrated nearly all major industries in India. According to the Global Brand Counterfeiting Report 2018 by Business Wire, the total estimated value of this illicit trade reached \$1.2 trillion, accounting for around 2.5% of global commerce. This growing menace affects businesses through lost revenues and brand erosion, while governments suffer from reduced tax collections and increased circulation of fake currency. Consumers, often unknowingly, fall victim to inferior and potentially harmful products. In some cases, the appeal of lower prices drives voluntary demand for such goods.

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The widespread uses of digital platforms and evolving production technologies have only made it easier for counterfeiters to operate.

In response, Indian lawmakers have embedded anti-counterfeiting mechanisms across multiple legal statutes. The Trademarks Act, 1999, the Copyright Act, 1957, and the Patents Act, 1970 form the foundation of intellectual property enforcement, while complementary laws such as the Information Technology Act, 2000, Customs Act, Designs Act, and Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 play vital roles in tackling this issue across sectors. Additionally, Section 28 of the Indian Penal Code criminalizes the act of counterfeiting by punishing those who produce or deal in deceptive imitations with fraudulent intent.

Apart from statutory remedies, both governmental and non-governmental organizations have undertaken notable initiatives to raise awareness and empower consumers. Campaigns such as ‘Jaago Grahak Jaago’ by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs aim to inform the public about the risks of counterfeit goods. The involvement of corporations such as HUL and TATA in commemorating World IP Day and Anti-Counterfeiting Day reflects a growing alliance between public and private stakeholders to protect intellectual property. Moreover, educational initiatives in schools and youth festivals have focused on early sensitization, signaling a proactive approach by the Indian state. Recognizing the transnational nature of this challenge, the International Trademark Association (INTA) has strongly advocated for the development of cohesive anti-counterfeiting laws, international regulations, and trade agreements. These collaborative global efforts are essential to effectively curb counterfeiting and protect the integrity of brands and consumer interests.

(A) Review of Literature

In recent years, the phenomenon of counterfeit consumption has drawn considerable academic attention, particularly in the Indian context. Researchers have sought to understand the psychological, economic, and social dimensions of consumers’ willingness to purchase counterfeit goods, as well as the broader implications of such behaviour on brand image, market integrity, and legal enforcement. Studies have delved into variables such as personal integrity, materialism, moral reasoning, education levels, and globalization-induced shifts in consumer access and preferences. The following literature traces the evolution of academic thought on these issues, offering a multi-faceted understanding of consumer behaviour towards counterfeit products and their perceived impact on original brands.

In a 2009 article, **Phau I.** observed that consumers’ willingness to purchase counterfeit goods is closely tied to their personal moral standards. The study also emphasized that individual

integrity plays a significant role in shaping perceptions about the legitimacy and ethics of counterfeit product sales. Similarly, **Verma S.** (2018), in his research titled "Why Consumers Buy Counterfeit Products," offered an in-depth analysis of India's textile and apparel industry. He described the Indian market as a major hub for raw materials and manufacturing. While globalization has brought substantial benefits and modernized the industry, it has simultaneously opened doors for counterfeiters to produce and distribute substandard goods at lower costs. This development has posed challenges not only to policymakers and legitimate businesses but also to consumers.

In their 2018 study titled "A Study on Counterfeit Brands, Consumer Attitude, and Initiatives to Stop Counterfeiting in India," **Ashok Kumar Patel and Anurag Singh** examined existing literature on consumer perceptions of counterfeiting alongside related legal interventions. They highlighted the widespread presence of counterfeit goods across various sectors in India and the considerable market share these products occupy. Their research also assessed ongoing awareness campaigns and the effectiveness of legal frameworks in combating counterfeiting. The study provides valuable insights for genuine manufacturers and retailers seeking to develop targeted marketing strategies and enforcement mechanisms to address the challenges posed by counterfeit markets.

Dr. Sandeep Bhanot (2019) in his 'Study on Consumer Behaviour of Counterfeit Luxury Brands among Indian Consumers', explores factors influencing the appeal of counterfeit luxury goods. He identifies external drivers like brand image, social influence, and advertising, as well as internal traits such as materialism, vanity, public self-awareness, integrity, and price sensitivity. The study finds that vanity and materialism, coupled with a desire for social acceptance, often lead consumers to favor counterfeits. Conversely, individuals with strong ethical values and a preference for authenticity tend to avoid them. Exposure to luxury-focused advertising and admiration for global brands also contributes to this trend.

Sowder, A. (2019) in his research on 'Harmful effects of Counterfeit goods' emphasized that counterfeiting extends far beyond clothing and fashion accessories. A wide range of everyday products—such as pharmaceuticals, artwork, and electronic devices—are also frequently replicated and distributed through illicit markets. Each of these categories serves a distinct function, and the severity of harm caused by their counterfeit counterparts is closely tied to how effectively the fake versions fulfill those intended purposes. Given the diversity across industries, the adverse effects of counterfeiting on employment are not confined to a single sector, thereby posing a broader threat to social and economic progress.

Sowder also highlights how the proliferation of black markets for counterfeit goods compromises national economic stability and undermines legitimate employment opportunities. A key contributor to this issue is the lack of reliable authenticity checks on online retail platforms, which often results in consumers unknowingly purchasing counterfeit items. Particularly alarming is the circulation of counterfeit pharmaceuticals, which can lead to serious and sometimes irreversible health risks for large segments of the population. These consequences not only strain public health systems but also indirectly impair economic performance. The study underscores the importance of recognizing that even seemingly minor actions—such as buying counterfeit products—can have far-reaching, and in some cases, life-threatening implications.

In their 2020 research paper titled "Consumer Perception and Purchasing Behavior towards Counterfeit Products – Effect on Original Brand Image", **Dr. Aarthy Chellasamy, Abhijith Satya Varma, and Nikithaa Paarakh** explore consumer awareness and attitudes toward counterfeit goods. Their study examines how varying levels of consumer knowledge influence purchasing behavior and identifies key factors that drive these decisions. The findings suggest that the existence of counterfeit products has a minimal impact on the brand image of original products. Based on this observation, the authors argue that well-established brands need not be overly alarmed by the prevalence of counterfeit goods, as their reputation remains largely intact. Instead, such brands are advised to focus on strengthening their market presence and gaining a competitive edge through strategic sales and marketing initiatives.

Fei Liu and Gi-young Chung (2024), in their paper "The Impact of Counterfeit Purchasing Behavior on Brand Image", published in the Journal of Economics and Law, explore how buying counterfeit products affects consumer trust and the broader market environment. Relying on a theoretical framework grounded in the humanities and social sciences, the authors argue that repeated exposure to counterfeit items can erode consumer confidence, harm brand loyalty, and disturb fair market competition. They also emphasize that such consumer behaviour contributes to a larger disruption in market order by blurring the lines between genuine and fake products. They further recommend strategic responses for brand owners, including better brand protection initiatives and efforts to educate consumers on distinguishing counterfeits.

While existing literature has extensively examined consumer behaviour toward counterfeit products, there is a lack of empirical research analysing how different demographic segments—such as age, gender, income, and socio-economic background—perceive counterfeiting and how these perceptions influence purchasing decisions. The author has undertaken this study to address the identified research gap by analysing the influence of demographic factors on

consumer behaviour toward counterfeit products, while also evaluating both deceptive and non-deceptive counterfeiting.

(B) Statement of Problem

India's counterfeit market poses a serious threat to legitimate businesses, public health, and the economy. Nearly every sector is affected, with counterfeit goods causing brand damage, discouraging legal imports, and leading to significant tax revenue losses. Common tactics include trademark infringement, mislabelling, price manipulation, and use of substandard materials. Despite legal frameworks and joint efforts by authorities and brand owners, counterfeit sales persist. A joint report by Crisil and the Authentication Solution Providers Association (ASPA) revealed that consumer perceptions estimate counterfeiting to make up for 25-30% of the market, surpassing industry expectations. Tackling this issue requires raising consumer awareness and assessing their understanding of counterfeit accessibility to design effective interventions.

(C) Objectives

This study aims:

- a) To analyze consumer's perception and purchasing behavior towards counterfeit products and to determine variations among people of different age groups, gender, income and their background.
- b) To differentiate deceptive and non – deceptive counterfeiting to understand the mentality of the consumers.
- c) To investigate the various markets captured by counterfeit products and the existing legal framework and Government initiatives in India to educate consumers on the same.
- d) To propose strategies to the three primary stakeholders in combating the practice of brand counterfeiting: the Government, registered brand owners and consumers.

(D) Research Methodology

This study is primarily empirical and descriptive in nature, employing both quantitative and qualitative data to assess consumers' awareness regarding brand counterfeiting. It also seeks to explore their opinions and attitudes toward the issue. The geographical scope of the study is limited to the state of Tamil Nadu, India, with a sample of 100 respondents drawn from various districts. Survey method was adopted for data collection. The questionnaire was distributed both online and through in-person interviews to ensure adequate representation across various demographic groups. The structured, close-ended questionnaire began with questions capturing

the demographic characteristics of the respondents and concluded with variable-specific items related to the topic under study.

A combination of convenience sampling and snowball sampling techniques was employed to select participants from the target population. Additionally, secondary data was sourced from academic journals, online platforms, and articles to supplement the primary data and provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

Data collection was conducted over a three-month period, from January to March 2025. The primary data was gathered predominantly through a questionnaire created using Google Forms. The responses were analysed using IBM SPSS software to address the research objectives effectively. Statistical tools such as the Independent T-test, One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and Chi-Square test were applied to derive meaningful findings and propose evidence-based solutions to the research problem. On the basis of its research design, this study can be classified as conclusive, as it aims to provide definitive insights and recommendations to address the issue of brand counterfeiting.

(E) Limitations of the Study

- a. The study is confined to the state of Tamil Nadu, and hence, the findings may not be generalizable to the entire Indian population or other regions with different socio-economic and cultural dynamics.
- b. With only 100 respondents, the sample size is relatively small, which may limit the statistical power of the analysis and affects the representativeness of the findings.
- c. Since a major portion of the data was collected through Google Forms, individuals without access to the internet or digital devices may not have been adequately represented, thereby affecting the inclusiveness of the sample.
- d. The research adopts a cross-sectional design, capturing consumer perceptions and behaviour at a single point in time. It does not account for changes in consumer attitudes over time.

II. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The primary data collected for the research is expressed in the following tabular

Gender		Background	
Male	44 (44%)	Rural	40 (40%)
Female	56 (56%)	Urban	60

			(60%)
Other	0		
Educational qualification		Age	
No formal education	9 (9%)	Below 18	11 (11%)
Primary level education	14 (14%)	18-24	53 (53%)
School student	13 (13%)	25-32	14 (14%)
Currently pursuing a degree	45 (45%)	33 - 40	11 (11%)
Graduate	19 (19%)	41 - 48	5 (5%)
		49 and above	6 (6%)
Income per month		Having the ability to differentiate original and fake products	
Less than Rs. 50,000	13 (13%)	Strongly agree	32 (32%)
Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 1,00,000	18 (18%)	Agree	33 (33%)
Rs. 1,00,000 to Rs. 2,00,000	8 (8%)	Neutral	21 (21%)
More than Rs. 2,00,000	13 (13%)	Disagree	6 (6%)
Not earning	48 (48%)	Strongly disagree	8 (8%)
Experienced getting a fake product instead of the original one?		Is there an increase in availability of counterfeit products nowadays?	
Yes	65 (65%)	Yes	91 (91%)
No	35 (35%)	No	9 (9%)
Counterfeiting has		Driving force behind	

increased with the usage of E-commerce		buying branded products	
Strongly agree	17 (17%)	Product quality	66
Agree	33 (33%)	Sales promotion techniques	23
Neutral	27 (27%)	Convenience to use	28
Disagree	12 (12%)	Emotional branding and self satisfaction	20
Strongly disagree	11 (11%)	Status symbol	21
Purchased luxury counterfeits knowingly?		Your action if you receive a fake product instead of the original one	
Often	15 (15%)	I'll feel disappointed but will try using the product	32 (32%)
Rarely	48 (48%)	I'll return the product back	49 (49%)
Never	37 (37%)	Report it to concerned authorities	17 (17%)
Using counterfeit products is unethical		Preference towards using counterfeits	
Strongly agree	28 (28%)	1	33 (33%)
Agree	31 (31%)	2	29 (29%)
Neutral	23 (23%)	3	22 (22%)
Disagree	14 (14%)	4	7 (7%)
Strongly disagree	4 (4%)	5	9 (9%)

Do counterfeits give the same level of satisfaction?		Selling of counterfeit products is legal in India	
Yes	20 (20%)	Yes	25 (25%)
No	44 (44%)	No	25 (25%)
Sometimes	36 (36%)	Not aware	50 (50%)
Which market is prominently filled with counterfeit products?		Best measure to prevent counterfeiting	
Fashion industry	25	Adding digital authentication	17
Accessories	44	Selling in Direct-to-Consumer models	14
Drugs and Pharmaceuticals	9	Online monitoring and legal action	26
Electronics	13	Adding distinctive features for brand differentiation	15
Automotive parts	7	Increasing consumer awareness	27
Aware of Government Initiatives to Control Counterfeiting?		Major factor affecting the purchase of counterfeit products	
Yes	32 (32%)	Cheaper price	61
No	68 (68%)	Brand image and Social status	40
		Quality similar to original brands	26
		Similarity in appearance to luxury brands	36

From the analysis of the above data, it can be inferred that a majority of the respondents (53%) belong to the age group of 18–24 years, and 45% are currently pursuing a degree—representing a segment of the population whose purchasing behaviour is highly dynamic. The sample consisted of 44% males and 56% females, with 40% from rural areas and 60% from urban backgrounds. A significant proportion of respondents (91%) acknowledged that counterfeit products are increasingly available in the market. Additionally, half of the respondents strongly agreed that the rise in counterfeit goods is closely linked to the increasing use of e-commerce platforms. Alarming, 65% of the respondents reported having experienced a situation where they purchased a product believing it to be an original brand, only to later discover it was counterfeit.

Out of the 100 respondents, 63% admitted to having knowingly purchased counterfeit products in the past. These findings provide valuable insights into consumer purchasing behaviour and help distinguish between deceptive and non-deceptive counterfeiting. When identifying factors influencing the purchase of counterfeit goods, the majority (61 respondents) cited a lower price as the primary motivator, followed by considerations such as brand image and social status (40 respondents), similarity in physical appearance to luxury brands (36 respondents), and comparable quality to original products (26 respondents). Furthermore, 44% of respondents felt that counterfeit products do not offer the same level of satisfaction as genuine ones. With regard to product categories, accessories such as sunglasses, jewellery, shoes, handbags, and wallets were identified as the most commonly counterfeited items in India (44%), followed by products in the fashion industry (25%), electronics (13%), pharmaceuticals (9%), and automotive parts (7%).

INDEPENDENT SAMPLE T – TEST

An Independent Samples T-test was conducted to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the means of two independent groups. A p-value less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant, indicating sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis. The following hypotheses were tested using this inferential statistical method.

Relationship between an individual's background and their awareness on brand counterfeiting:

H₀: There is no significant difference between the background of the respondents regarding their awareness on brand counterfeiting and the ability to differentiate between original and fake products.

H_A: There is significant difference between the background of the respondents regarding their awareness on brand counterfeiting and the ability to differentiate between original and fake

products.

Group Statistics					
	5. Background	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
6. I am aware of brand counterfeiting and I can differentiate between fake products and original products.	1	40	2.43	1.338	.211
	2	60	2.13	1.096	.142

Independent Samples Test											
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance One-Sided p	Significance Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
6. I am aware of brand counterfeiting and I can differentiate between fake products and original products.	Equal variances assumed	3.328	.071	1.192	98	.118	.236	.292	.245	-.194	.777
	Equal variances not assumed			1.146	72.193	.128	.256	.292	.254	-.216	.799

Independent Samples Effect Sizes					
		Standardizer ^a	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
6. I am aware of brand counterfeiting and I can differentiate between fake products and original products.	Cohen's d	1.198	.243	-.159	.644
	Hedges' correction	1.208	.242	-.158	.639
	Glass's delta	1.096	.266	-.138	.668

It can be observed from the above tables that p-values were significant at 5% and 1% level for the two variables. Further, the grouping variables and testing variables exhibited a mean of 2.43 and 2.13 respectively, and a standard deviation of 1.338 and 1.096 respectively. Thus, the hypothesis essentially was tested in order to know whether or not, there were any differences between the background of the respondents in correlation to the respondent's awareness on brand counterfeiting and the ability to differentiate between original and fake products. The P value of 0.236 (Equal variance not assumed) expresses that there is no significant difference between the respondents based on their background, i.e., rural or urban. Therefore, the null hypothesis remains satisfied and the alternative hypothesis ought to be rejected.

The absence of this correlation can be reasonably attributed to the widespread penetration of e-commerce platforms and digital awareness across both urban and rural regions in contemporary India. Although it is often assumed that individuals from rural areas may exhibit lower levels of awareness regarding such issues, this gap appears to be narrowing. The increasing access to digital resources and exposure to online marketplaces has contributed to a more uniform level of consumer awareness across different demographic segments.

Influence of gender on preferences towards counterfeit products:

H₀: There is no significant relationship between the gender of the respondents and their preference for counterfeit products.

H_A: There is significant relationship between the genders of the respondents and their preference for counterfeit products.

Group Statistics										
	1. Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean					
14. On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you prefer counterfeit products?	1	44	2.25	1.123	.169					
	2	56	2.34	1.352	.181					

Independent Samples Test										
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Significance One-Sided p	Significance Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Upper
14. On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you prefer counterfeit products?	2.403	.124	-.353	98	.363	.725	-.089	.253	-.592	.413
			-.361	97.671	.360	.719	-.089	.248	-.581	.402

Independent Samples Effect Sizes					
	Standardizer ^a	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval Lower	95% Confidence Interval Upper	
14. On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you prefer counterfeit products?	Cohen's d	1.257	-.071	.466	.324
	Hedges' correction	1.267	-.070	.462	.322
	Glass's delta	1.352	-.066	.461	.329

It can be observed from the above tables that p-values were significant at 5% and 1% level for the two variables. Further, the grouping variables and testing variables exhibited a mean of 2.25 and 2.34 respectively, and a standard deviation of 1.123 and 1.352 respectively. Thus, the hypothesis essentially was tested in order to know whether or not, there were any differences between genders in correlation to the respondent's preference for counterfeit products. The P value of 0.725 (Equal variance not assumed) expresses that there is no significant difference between the respondents based on their gender. Therefore, the null hypothesis remains satisfied and the alternative hypothesis ought to be rejected. This finding reveals that the gender of a consumer has no significant role in their preference for buying or using counterfeit products.

ONE WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE TEST

One way analysis of variance test (ANOVA test) was conducted to know the significant difference between class means by analysing the variances with regard to the awareness on brand counterfeiting and the ability to differentiate between original and fake products.

H₀: There is no significant difference between the age group of the respondents regarding their awareness on brand counterfeiting and the ability to differentiate between original and fake products.

H_A: There is significant difference between the age group of the respondents regarding their awareness on brand counterfeiting and the ability to differentiate between original and fake

products.

ANOVA					
6. I am aware of brand counterfeiting and I can differentiate between fake products and original products.					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	29.136	5	5.827	4.821	<.001
Within Groups	113.614	94	1.209		
Total	142.750	99			

ANOVA Effect Sizes ^{a,b}				
6. I am aware of brand counterfeiting and I can differentiate between fake products and original products.	Eta-squared	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower	Upper
		.204	.046	.306
		.162	-.005	.269
		.160	-.005	.267
		.037	-.001	.068

It can be observed from the above table that the p-values were significant at 5% and 1% level for the two variables. Further, the dependent list and factor exhibits a mean square of 5.827 and 1.209 respectively, and an F value of 4.821. Thus, the hypothesis essentially was tested in order to know whether or not, there were any differences between the age group of the respondents in correlation to their awareness on brand counterfeiting and the ability to differentiate between original and fake products. The P value of less than 0.001 (Equal variance not assumed) expresses that there is a significant difference between the respondents based on their age. Therefore, the null hypothesis remains unsatisfied and the alternative hypothesis ought to be accepted (as, $P < 0.05$).

Influence of income levels on purchase of counterfeits

H₀: There is no significant difference between the incomes of the respondents regarding their wilful purchase of counterfeit products for use.

H_A: There is significant difference between the incomes of the respondents regarding their wilful purchase of counterfeit products for use.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3.326	4	.832	1.802	.135
Within Groups	43.834	95	.461		
Total	47.160	99			

ANOVA Effect Sizes ^{a,b}			
	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
		Lower	Upper
		.071	.000
		.031	-.042
		.031	-.042
Eta-squared		.152	
		.116	
		.115	
		.031	
Epsilon-squared		.031	
		-.042	
		.115	
		.031	
Omega-squared Fixed-effect		.031	
		-.042	
		.115	
		.031	
Omega-squared Random-effect		.031	
		-.042	
		.115	
		.031	

It can be observed from the above tables that p-values were significant at 5% and 1% level for the two variables. Further, the dependent list and factor exhibit a mean square of 0.832 and 0.461 respectively, and an F value of 1.802. Thus, the hypothesis essentially was tested in order to know whether or not, there were any differences between incomes of the respondents in correlation to the respondent's wilful purchase of counterfeited products in the market. The P value of 0.135 (Equal variance not assumed) expresses that there is no significant difference between the respondents based on their income level. Therefore, the null hypothesis remains satisfied and the alternative hypothesis ought to be rejected.

Co-relation between educational background and reaction towards counterfeit products

H₀: There is no significant relationship between the educational qualification of the respondents and their reaction towards receiving counterfeit products instead of original ones.

H_A: There is significant relationship between the educational qualification of the respondents and their reaction towards receiving counterfeit products instead of original ones.

ANOVA

12. If so, how would you feel/act in such a situation?

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5.400	4	1.350	3.102	.019
Within Groups	41.350	95	.435		
Total	46.750	99			

ANOVA Effect Sizes^{a,b}

	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
		Lower	Upper
Eta-squared	.116	.002	.212
Epsilon-squared	.078	-.040	.179
Omega-squared Fixed-effect	.078	-.039	.177
Omega-squared Random-effect	.021	-.009	.051

It can be observed from the above table that, p-values were significant at 5% and 1% level for the two variables. Further, the dependent list and factor exhibit a mean square of 1.350 and 0.435 respectively, and an F value of 3.102. Thus, the hypothesis essentially was tested in order to know whether or not, there were any differences between educational qualifications in correlation to the respondent's reaction towards counterfeit products. The p-value of .019 (Equal variance not assumed) indicate that there is a significant difference between the respondents based on their educational qualification. Therefore, the null hypothesis remains unsatisfied and the alternative hypothesis ought to be accepted (as, $P < 0.05$).

When confronted with the sale of counterfeit goods in place of genuine branded products, a

consumer may choose to return the product, accept the situation passively, or report the incident to the appropriate authorities. The survey findings indicate that among these available options, the consumer's decision is significantly influenced by their educational background. This suggests that the level of awareness and the likelihood of taking proactive measures are closely linked to an individual's level of education. Higher educational attainment appears to correspond with greater consumer vigilance and responsiveness in addressing counterfeit-related issues.

CHI – SQUARED TEST

The chi – squared test was conducted to know the association between the respondent's income level, an independent variable, and the level of satisfaction obtained from counterfeit products, the dependent variable.

H₀: There is no significant relationship between the income of the respondents and the level of satisfaction they obtain from counterfeit products.

H_A: There is significant relationship between the income of the respondents and the level of satisfaction they obtain from counterfeit products.

4. Income per month * 16. Do counterfeit products give you the same level of satisfaction as the original ones? Crosstabulation

Count		16. Do counterfeit products give you the same level of satisfaction as the original ones?			Total
		1	2	3	
4. Income per month	1	3	4	6	13
	2	6	6	6	18
	3	3	3	2	8
	4	1	6	6	13
	5	7	25	16	48
Total		20	44	36	100

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.505 ^a	8	.483
Likelihood Ratio	7.400	8	.494
Linear-by-Linear Association	.347	1	.556
N of Valid Cases	100		

a. 8 cells (53.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.60.

Chi – squared test was run between the variables – income per month and the level of satisfaction obtained from counterfeit products and a P value of 1.60 was obtained, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis remains satisfied and the alternative hypothesis ought to be rejected. It is inferred that there is no association between the respondent's income

level and the level of satisfaction they obtain from counterfeit products.

III. FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

From the primary data collected, the author observes that the majority of the respondents specified cheaper price as a driving force towards buying counterfeit goods, rather than selecting brand image or status symbol as a major factor affecting them. In light of this, it can be understood that the consumers have shifted from being brand conscious to being money conscious. Moreover, with 65% of respondents asserting that they can distinguish between counterfeit and genuine products, it can be reasonably inferred that public awareness regarding such goods has increased considerably. This growing awareness is a positive sign, especially from an economic standpoint.

When respondents were asked whether counterfeit products offer the same level of satisfaction as genuine ones, a significant portion—44%—disagreed. This suggests that, despite the efforts of counterfeit manufacturers to replicate original products in terms of design and apparent quality, consumers still perceive a disparity in the overall experience and satisfaction derived from using authentic branded items.

As highlighted in the problem statement, the persistence of counterfeit goods in the market—despite the presence of regulatory frameworks and joint initiatives by brand owners and government enforcement bodies—underscores the ineffectiveness of current measures. In order to curb the adverse economic effects of counterfeiting, immediate and strategic intervention is necessary. The author, therefore, presents the following recommendations directed at the three primary stakeholders: the government, registered brand owners, and consumers.

(1) BRAND OWNERS

When respondents were asked to identify the most effective strategy that luxury brands should adopt to combat counterfeiting, the majority (27%) favored increasing consumer awareness. This indicates a strong public belief in the role of informed consumer behavior as a deterrent to the proliferation of fake goods. Accordingly, it becomes essential for brands to sustain and enhance consumers' ethical awareness regarding counterfeiting, as it directly impacts both consumer perception and long-term brand equity. Closely following this, 26% of respondents supported measures such as robust online surveillance and initiating legal proceedings against counterfeit sellers. Other proposed strategies included implementing digital authentication systems, incorporating unique product identifiers to strengthen brand differentiation, and adopting direct-to-consumer sales models to reduce the risk of supply chain infiltration [Refer to Chart – 1].

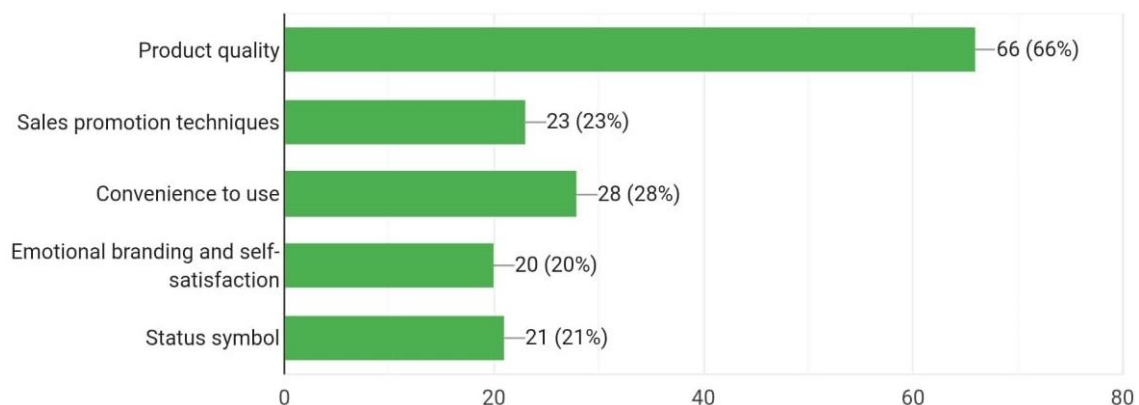
In determining which strategies to prioritize, brand owners must also consider what motivates customers to purchase their products. Notably, 66 out of 100 respondents indicated that product quality is the most influential factor in their purchasing decisions. This reinforces the need for luxury brands to maintain rigorous quality control standards, as consistent product excellence serves as a key differentiator from counterfeit alternatives. Other motivating factors can be found in Chart – 2.

In conclusion, the author strongly recommends that luxury brands deploy advanced anti-counterfeiting technologies such as holograms, RFID tags, QR codes, and block chain-based authentication methods, enabling consumers to easily verify product authenticity. To effectively combat counterfeiting, brands should invest in consumer education campaigns that highlight the ethical and economic harms of fake products, collaborate with e-commerce platforms and enforcement agencies to detect and remove counterfeit listings, and introduce loyalty programs or authenticity certificates to reward genuine purchases. Additionally, brands can strengthen emotional connection through strategic storytelling and enhance online protection by leveraging AI tools to monitor and take down suspicious activity across digital platforms.

Chart 1: Which of the following measures employed by luxury brands is the most effective in preventing the counterfeiting of their products?



Chart 2: What is the driving force behind buying branded products?



(2) GOVERNMENT

It is melancholic to observe that 65% of the respondents have faced a situation where they purchased a product expecting it to be of the original brand and later found it to be a counterfeit [Refer chart 3]. Yet, the number of individuals who report it to the concerned authorities is meager [17%, as mentioned in Chart 7]. Alarming, Chart 4 reveals that 50% of respondents were unaware of the illegality of selling counterfeit goods in India, while 25% mistakenly believed the practice to be legal. This reflects a significant gap in consumer awareness. Despite governmental efforts to curb counterfeiting through legislation, awareness campaigns, and enforcement, 68% of respondents indicated they were unaware of these initiatives [Chart 5].

Although the government has taken commendable steps in promoting awareness through educational drives and public campaigns, the author recommends stronger collaboration with industry bodies, consumer rights organizations, and enforcement agencies to ensure consistent messaging and coordinated action. Additionally, cross-border cooperation must be enhanced to address international dimensions of counterfeiting. To further strengthen its approach, the government should streamline reporting mechanisms for consumers, introduce counterfeit-related content in school and college curricula, and impose stricter penalties for repeat offenders to deter such practices effectively.

Chart 3: Have you ever bought a product expecting it to be of the original brand and later found it to be a fake product?

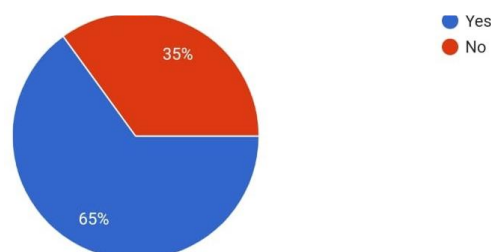


Chart 4: Selling of counterfeit products is legal in India.

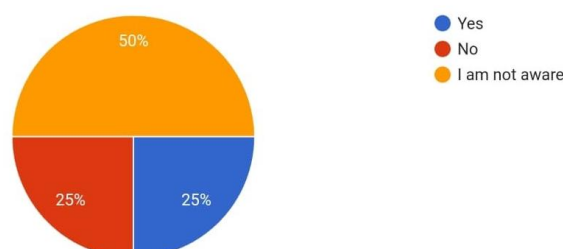
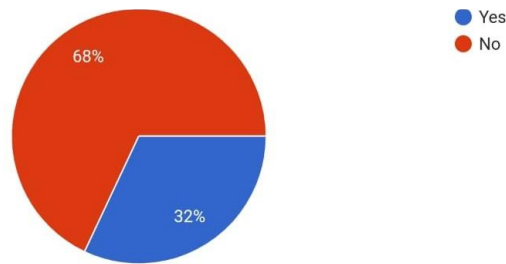


Chart 5: Are you aware of any Government Initiatives to Control Brand Counterfeiting in India?



(3) CONSUMERS

A joint report by CRISIL and the Authentication Solution Providers Association (ASPA) highlights that counterfeiting is no longer confined to luxury goods; it now extends to everyday essentials—from cumin seeds and cooking oil to baby care products and medicines. Nakul Pasricha, President of ASPA, stated that the illicit trade in counterfeit goods amounted to ₹2.6 trillion in FY 2019–20 in India, impacting nearly every sector. He emphasized that this growing menace severely harms the economy, industries, and consumers alike. Pasricha underscored the importance of consumer awareness, noting that informed consumers are the first line of defence against counterfeiting. (Livemint, 2023).

In view of these insights, the author also agrees that raising consumer awareness is essential—but not sufficient. This is because not all counterfeit purchases occur unknowingly. According to Chart 8, 63% of respondents admitted to knowingly purchasing counterfeit products in the past. This distinction helps classify counterfeiting into deceptive and non-deceptive types. As shown in Chart 6, the predominant reason cited for such purchases is the lower price. To address this, consumers must be encouraged to prioritize safety and quality over short-term savings, verify product authenticity using available tools, and actively report counterfeit goods to the authorities to contribute meaningfully to the fight against fakes.

Chart 6: What is the major factor affecting the purchase of counterfeit products?

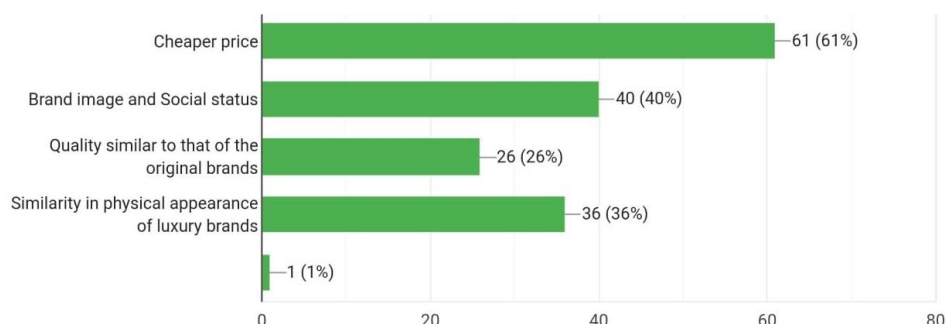


Chart 7: How would you feel/act when you receive a fake product instead of original ones?

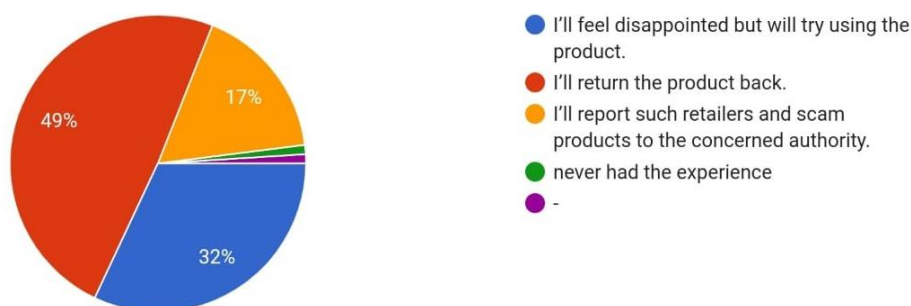
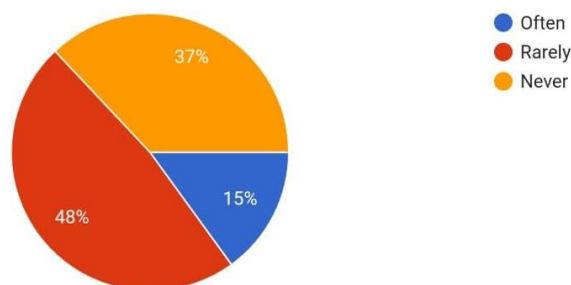


Chart 8: Have you purchased luxury counterfeits knowingly?



IV. CONCLUSION

The major findings from statistical analysis are summed up in the following pointers: (i) there is significant relationship between the educational qualification of the respondents and their reaction towards receiving counterfeit products instead of original ones; (ii) there is no significant relationship between the income of the respondents and the level of satisfaction they obtain from counterfeit products; (iii) there is no significant difference between the incomes of the respondents regarding their wilful purchase of counterfeit products for use; (iv) there is significant difference between the age group of the respondents regarding their awareness on brand counterfeiting and the ability to differentiate between original and fake products; (v) there is no significant relationship between the gender of the respondents and their preference for counterfeit products; and (vi) there is no significant difference between the background of the respondents regarding their awareness on brand counterfeiting and the ability to differentiate between original and fake products.

In conclusion, this research has highlighted that counterfeit products remain a grey area for the general public. Individuals with the financial means to afford branded goods typically prefer them due to the perceived assurance of quality. Conversely, many consumers do not prioritize whether a product is counterfeit or genuine, as long as it offers satisfactory quality at a

reasonable price. Overall, the findings clearly indicate that non-deceptive counterfeiting—where consumers are aware that the product is counterfeit—is more prevalent today than deceptive counterfeiting, where consumers are misled into believing they are purchasing a genuine product.

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