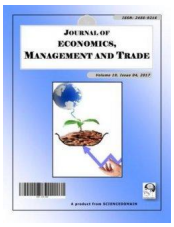

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Culture Effect on Repurchasing Intention of Counterfeits Products

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Author's Contribution

The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to illustrate the key cultural factors of consumers repurchase intentions toward counterfeit products. The study is also examining the influence of culture and social factors on attitudes towards counterfeiting products and repurchase intention among Saudi consumers. a survey was used, a total of 509 respondents (39% female) completed and usable responses from the sampling frame who lives in Saudi Arabia. The results indicate that consumer's culture by itself might not explain their counterfeit products repurchase intention. The consumer's attitude towards these products might help managers to understand their behavior. A social influence which considers as an external factor was not an important factor explaining consumers' behavior regarding counterfeits products. The current study adds to the literature by investigating the key culture antecedents of Saudi consumers repurchase intentions toward counterfeit products. Additionally, empirical evidence contributes to the practitioners in the Saudi culture.

Keywords: Repurchase intentions; attitudes of the counterfeit products; social influence; self-expression; power distance; collectivism.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In most countries consumers' needs and wants changed as per their lifestyle. Most consumers now want to buy, use, and get rid of products at a much faster rate. They want to buy and wear brands without paying too much for such expensive branded products [1]. However, major social transformations have affected the whole pattern of Arab society. Saudi Arabia, for example, has transformed in the past two decades, the rapid social, economic, and educational reforms the kingdom [2]. Therefore, the high demand for such branded products has encouraged some businesses to engage in the so-called counterfeit and imitation brands. Counterfeit is products by which consumers buy to satisfy their needs and wants of branded products. Hence, consumers' social tension is reduced at a much lower cost [3].

Luxury brands appeal to be premium quality, stylish, reputational, and/or have limited accessibility. Luxury brand's owners seek emotional, experiential, and/or symbolic value [4]. On the other hand, counterfeit products is a strict copy from the original brands [5]. Counterfeit products is a successful and profitable strategy based on the similarity with the original brands so that it finds acceptance by the consumers [6,7]. On other words, counterfeit products use deception to attract consumers to purchase them by displaying it as identical to the genuine brands as opposed to the imitation products in which deception is not used [8]. The understanding of the attitude and repurchase intention on counterfeits products is essential to illustrate personality factors such as attitude towards these products. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to investigate the cultural factors influencing repurchase intention on counterfeit products among Saudi consumers.

1.1 Problem Statement

The aim of this study is to investigate Saudi consumers' repurchase intentions of counterfeit products and figure out the most influential factors that affect their repurchase intentions.

1.2 Importance of the Study

The study will contribute to the literature in several ways. First, it investigates the influence of culture factors to repurchase counterfeit products. Second, it helps to clarify how self-expression, and cultural factors impact the intention to repurchase counterfeit products. Third, this paper provides some empirical evidence of intention to repurchase counterfeit products which will enhance our understanding of consumer behavior.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Background

This study is based on essential theories to explain the proposed model and the effects of personal/social and cultural factors in this study.

2.1.1 Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

According to [9] the action is a result of certain attitude thus as an action purchase is determined by the repurchase intention which is determined by attitudes. Therefore, the purchase decision of counterfeit products is explained by attitudes [10,11]. A significant influence on purchase decision by attitudes was found with a positive relationship between favorable attitudes and purchasing the counterfeit products [12].

2.1.2 Theory of moral reasoning and competency

Theory of Moral Reasoning and Competency in Kohlberg's [13] theory, most of the basic values and personal sense has a major role on consumer behaviors. In addition, personal values have significant role on the judgment towards unethical activities. According to Kohlberg`s theory, consumers who view integrity as an important value will be less favorable to purchasing counterfeit products [12]. Attitude towards piracy product determines consumer behavior [14].

2.1.3 Theory of goal-driven consumption

Theory of Goal-Driven Consumption explains the purpose of consumers' purchasing decisions. The theory argues that there is a known goal for each decision [15]. Consumers search for the best option to satisfy their needs and wants. Thus, consumers are trying to fulfill a particular goal; either personal or social.

2.1.4 Functional theory of attitude

Functional Theory of Attitude [16,17] to explain the model and the results of this study. Attitude serve an important role in consumer social and self-expression [10,18].

2.2 What are Counterfeit Products?

Counterfeit production is illegal type that appear in the market many years ago, serve the same purpose as the original brands and highly accepted by the consumers [19,20]. Counterfeit products was defined by the Allen consulting group (2003) as “the unauthorized duplication of a product protected by one or more intellectual property rights”. It is cheaper alternatives with unnoticeable difference in quality [21; Chen, Teng, Liu and Zhu, 2015].

Generally, some of which drivers of repurchasing these products are many; brand image, low price, social influence, self-expression and comparable quality. Studies shows that younger people purchase fewer counterfeit products compared to elderly people due to lower income [22; Wah-Leung & Prendergast, 2006). Consumers refers to their previous experience when making future shopping decisions, they usually buy things again in the long run (Bamberg, Ajzen, & Schmidt, 2003; 23]. More than that, consumers in the long run become less sensitive to marketing programs because they rely on their inertial choice behavior in the past [24]. The ‘dark-side’ of consumer behavior is as important as the normal consumers and needs to be explained. On the other hand, some producers believe that copycats are not contradicting the genuine brands but rather support and diffuse the original brands.

2.3 Social Influence

Social pressure play a major role in shaping a person’s purchase intention on counterfeit products, through forming a like or dislike attitude towards counterfeits products [19]. In addition to the internal factors, self-expression and perception, external factors also contribute to the consumer to purchase luxury brands [25]. This effect increases when the purpose of purchasing luxury brand is to signal wealth, social status, and/or seek approval [25]. Consumers are more connected now than any other point of time in history. Social function defined as the consumer tendency to purchase brands to gain approval in social connection [18,26].

The social influence is important especially for consumers who strive to meet the expectation of a peer group and gaining approval [27]. Consumers are in the look to purchase “the right brand” that their peer consumer approve. Luxury brand on the other hand are “the right brand” and are thus used as a status symbol [28]. In Eastern societies, individuals seek their peer approval and experience the need to align with their peer group.

2.4 Self-expression

Self-expression is the tendency of consumer to purchase a brand to communicate an individual identity to others [18]. Purchasing luxury brand would convey a unique identity and intrinsic value due to their high price, restricted distribution [29]. On the other hand, purchasing counterfeit products lead to enhance Inner-self expressiveness and leads to brand resilience [30,31].

2.5 Culture

Several researchers suggested the most appropriate culture dimensions [e.g., 32,33]. However, Hofstede’s work is the most widely used in marketing and management. He identifies five different dimensions for any culture that effect their behavior: uncertainty avoidance, individualism and collectivism; power distance; masculinity and femininity; long-term orientation and short-term orientation. However, the most important factors in purchasing luxury brand are uncertainty avoidance and individualism and collectivism [34].

2.6 Power Distance

Power distance means the way power is distributed in the society. [34] pointed that there is differences in low / high power distance culture relationship between bosses and subordinates ranging from interdependence in contrast to dependence.

According to Hofstede’s definition "the power distance is connected with the social acceptance of unequal distribution of the power. This inequality can be connected with prestige, wealth and power (Hofstede 2001, p. 79).

2.7 Collectivism

In any certain society there is a relationship between the individual and the group. The individualist society would rely more on personal objectives and independence values. On the other hand, the collectivist society rely more on group objectives and interdependence values [35]. Most luxury goods consumed in public where other can notice and signal them. In Saudi, where most of the people are collectives and interdepended consumers consume brand.

2.8 Long Term Orientation

Long term orientation is one of the culture dimensions. It was defined by (Hofstede, 2001, p. 359) as "Long Term Orientation stands for the fostering of virtues oriented towards future rewards, in particular, perseverance and thrift. Its opposite pole Short Term Orientation, stands for the fostering of virtues related to the past and present, in particular, respect for tradition, preservation of 'face,' and fulfilling social obligations".

2.9 Uncertainty Avoidance

Each society has different level of stress, anxiety and the need to work which might be measured by uncertainty avoidance construct [34]. The society's degree of uncertainty avoidance is measured when facing unexpected situations.

2.10 Attitudes toward Counterfeits Products

Attitude***s*** can be defined as "an individual's favorable or unfavorable inclination towards an attribute of an object which will lead to a tendency to act or behave in a predictable way in relation to it" [36: p. 483]. Attitude is an independent factor in the relationship between customers' perception of products and their action decisions to buy these products (Jin & Kang, 2011). Consumers usually differ in their attitudes towards counterfeit brands. Consumers who have positive attitudes encourage further purchase activities. Studies shows that consumers who are more susceptible to social pressure will perceive counterfeit products negatively [12].

Prior research concluded those consumers' attitudes toward luxury brands may serve as a social or a value function or both. For example, someone might buy a Louis Vuitton bag because this brand adds value to his/her personality. On the other hand, some believe that those who purchase counterfeits products are criminals (Walthers & Buff, 2008). Therefore, the counterfeit products entice consumers because they resemble genuine brands but with lower prices and status affiliation.

2.11 Intention to Purchase Counterfeit Products

The genuine industry faces a serious threat from counterfeiting products when consumers knowingly buy copycat products. The decision to purchase counterfeiting products is directed by attitudes more than any other factor [37]. When consumers sometimes find original brands overpriced, they resort to counterfeit products. However, there are consumers who are anti-counterfeit products and thus have negative attitudes towards them and will never purchase them. Several studies found that consumers who have positive attitudes towards counterfeit products are higher in intention to repurchase these products and vice versa. Many factors were identified that motivate consumers for purchasing counterfeits products; cost effectiveness, social conformity and consumer-brand relationships [27,38,39].

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Model

This study will be based on the proposed model. See (Fig. 1).

3.2 Hypotheses

- H1a. There is a significant and positive relationship between social influence and repurchase intention.
- H1b. Attitude towards counterfeit products mediates the relationship between social influences and repurchase intention.
- H2a. There is a significant and positive relationship between self-expression and repurchase intention.
- H2b. Attitude towards counterfeit products mediates the relationship between self-expression and repurchase intention.
- H3a. There is a significant and positive relationship between power distance and repurchase intention.
- H3b. Attitude towards counterfeit products mediates the relationship between power distances and repurchase intention.
- H4a. There is a positive relationship between collectivism and repurchase intention.
- H4b. Attitude towards counterfeit products mediates the relationship between collectivism and repurchase intention.
- H5a. There is a significant and positive relationship between long term orientation and repurchase intention.
- H5b. Attitude towards counterfeit products mediates the relationship between long term orientations and repurchase intention.

H6a There is a significant and positive relationship between uncertainty avoidance and repurchase intention.

H6b. Attitude towards counterfeit products mediates the relationship between uncertainty avoidance and repurchase intention.

H7. There is a significant and positive relationship between attitudes towards counterfeits products and repurchase intention.

3.3 Data Collection Method and Sampling Framework

The data for this study was collected via a self-administered questionnaire, distributed online to Saudi consumer participants who intended to repurchase counterfeiting products. This sample was selected based on the required knowledge about factors influence their repurchase decisions for counterfeiting products. Participants had been informed of the purpose of the research, and their responses would remain confidential. The selected participants were given the instructions before filling out the questionnaire, no incentives were provided. The planned time from questionnaire distribution until receive them again is almost two months.

We collected the data using online platform and we deleted uncompleted respondents. The data were collected in May 2018 using snowballing technique (i.e., whatsApp). To recruit quality respondents, screening questions were asked, such as whether they buy counterfeit products. After that, the main survey was presented. In approximately three weeks, a total of 509 respondents (39% female) completed and usable responses from the sampling frame. To ensure non-response bias we compared the mean of responses for the early and late respondents and we found no difference. To control for common method bias, the researchers used the Harman One Factor test and found that no single construct accounts for more than 66% of the variance [40] thus indicating that common method bias is not an issue.

All metrics are retrieved from the same respondents and no Marker-Variable Technique was employed (King and Malhotra, 2015). We noticed that 31% of the responses spend 10% of their income in buying luxury product per year, and 25% of them spend between 10-20% of their income in buying luxury products. When asked why they buy luxury products, 80% of the respondents revealed that they buy luxury products for their personal use and just 20% for gifting. See Table 1 for more details.

3.4 Instrument Design

In this study, the independent variables were adopted from existing literature. Repurchase intention of counterfeits products was measured by four items adopted from [27]. To measure attitudes toward counterfeit products, a scale with six items was used [27]. Social influence was measured by five items adopted from [41]. Cultural dimensions at the individual level (uncertainty avoidance, power distance, long-term orientation and collectivism) measured by using five and six items adopted from Yoo, Donthu and Lenartowicz (2011). Self-Expression scale measured by using six items adopted from [30]. The initial scales were in English and were translated to Arabic. Reverse translation was performed to ensure consistency. Demographic questions were added in a separate section at the end of the questionnaire.

3.5 Data Analysis

We used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) procedure (AMOS SPSS) to analyze the data due to the presence of higher-order constructs in the model [42]. Then, we used the two-step process [42]. We first assessed the measurement model to check for reliability and validity. After that, the researchers conducted face validity through the translation and reverse translation process, as mentioned earlier. Then, we performed exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to develop the measurement model. EFA extracted eight factors for this model. After disregarding one cross-loading item, the factor analysis was confirmed by using SEM [42].

The data and the model show an acceptable fit, indicated by the global fit indices. The model fit was appropriate (x^2 = 708.103; df = 403; *P*-value = 0.000; CFI = 0.970; RMSEA = 0.039; NFI = 0.934; IFI = 0.971; RMR (SRMR) = 0.058(0.00); GFI = 0.917) (see Table 2 for more details). The CFI and the other fit indices are within the acceptable range [43]. The literature on SEM suggests that several indices should be examined together (CFI<IFI<RMSEA< SRMRM, and others) instead of looking at only one individually (Iacobucci, 2010). All composite reliability values are greater than <0.647>, thus ensuring the reliability

of the measures (Nunnally, 1978). All AVEs are greater than <0.50> except for long-term orientation with an AVE 0.471, thus confirming the convergent validity. As the guidelines of Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggested that all the square roots of AVEs are greater than the inter-construct correlations. Moreover, AVEs are greater than the average shared variance (ASV) [43], thus further confirming discriminant validity. Please see Table 2 for details of the measurement model.

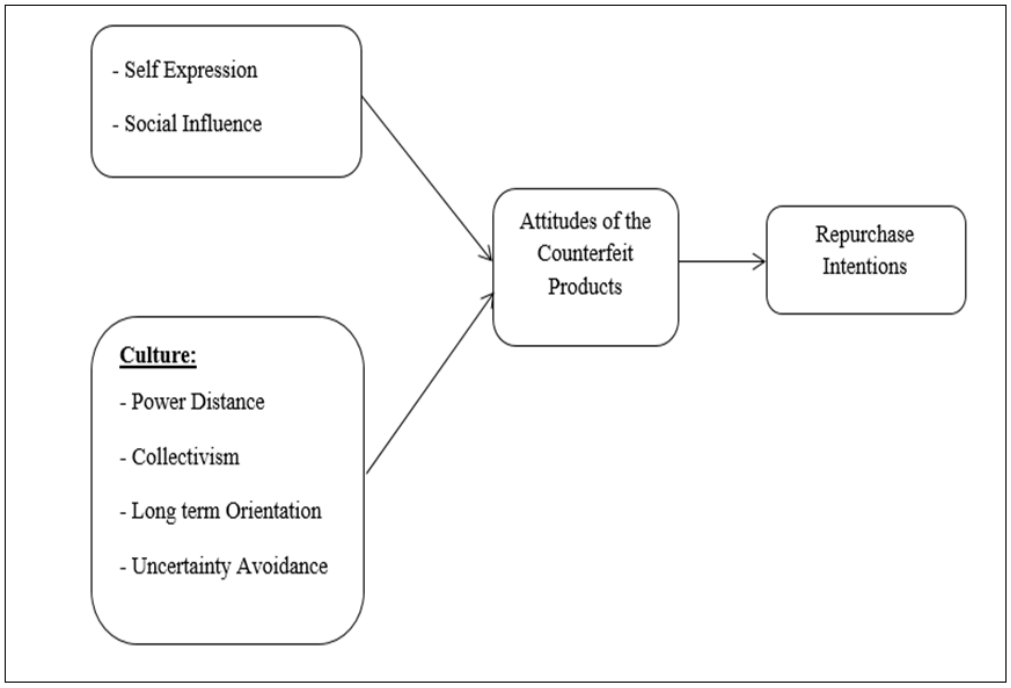

Fig. 1. Research model

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents

Demographic profile of respondents		Frequency	%	Saudi Arabia's census data *
Gender	Male	310	60.90%	43%
	Female	199	39.10%	57%
Age	18–24	210	41%	15%
	25–32	118	23%	19%
	33–45	147	29%	20%
	46–55	28	5.5%	12%
	55+	6	1%	9%
Education	High school	75	15%	
	Two years college	40	8%	
	Bachelor	329	65%	
	Graduate school	65	13%	
Monthly income	Less than 3,000 SR	171	34%	
	3,000–8,000 SR	99	19%	
	8,001–12,000 SR	108	21%	
	12,001–17,000 SR	63	12%	
	17,001–25,000 SR	37	7%	
	25,000+ SR	31	6%	

**General authority for statistics*

Table 2. Assessment of construct validity

	CR	AVE	AttCount	SelfEx	Purchase	Power	Collect	UnAviod	Longtrm	Social
AttCount	0.958	0.792	0.89							
SelfEx	0.896	0.59	0.055	0.768						
Purchase	0.954	0.838	0.639***	0.012	0.915					
Power	0.807	0.595	0.158**	0.169**	0.191***	0.772				
Collect	0.777	0.539	0.063	0.105*	-0.081	0.187***	0.734			
UnAviod	0.756	0.51	-0.117*	0.012	-0.072	0.021	0.431***	0.714		
Longtrm	0.726	0.471	-0.190***	-0.053	-0.269***	-0.085	0.421***	0.331***	0.686	
Social	0.752	0.505	0.094†	0.678***	0.051	0.132*	0.150**	0.158**	-0.043	0.711

Note: the numbers in bold are $\sqrt{AVE}$ and those in italics are inter factor correlation (ϕ)
*Significance of Correlations: † $p < 0.100$, * $p < 0.050$, ** $p < 0.010$, *** $p < 0.001$*

Table 3. Global fit indices for the measurement model

Measure	Estimate	Threshold	Interpretation
chi-square	708.103	--	--
DF	403	--	--
CMIN/DF	1.756	Between 1 and 3	Acceptable
CFI	0.970	>0.95	Acceptable
SRMR	0.000	<0.08	Excellent
RMSEA	0.039	<0.06	Excellent

Table 4. Structural relationships

Hypothesized relationships	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Results
H1a: social ➔ Purchase Intention	0.065(ns)		Hypothesis Not supported
H2a: SelfEx ➔ Purchase Intention	- 0.084(ns)		Hypothesis Not supported
H3a: Power ➔ Purchase Intention	0.237***		Hypothesis supported
H4a: Collect ➔ Purchase Intention	-0.245***		Hypothesis supported
H5a: Longtrm ➔ Purchase Intention	-0.014 (ns)		Hypothesis Not supported
H6a: UnAviod ➔ Purchase Intention	-0.26(ns)		Hypothesis Not supported
Indirect effect through Att. Counterfeits			
H1b: Social ➔ Att. Counterfeit ➔ Purchase	0.053	0.113 (ns)	No mediation
H2b: SelfEx ➔ Att. Counterfeit ➔ Purchase	-0.031	0.336 (ns)	No mediation
H3b: Power ➔ Att. Counterfeit ➔ Purchase	0.100	0.002	Partial Mediation
H4b: Collect ➔ Att. Counterfeit ➔ Purchase	-0.067	0.020	Partial Mediation
H5b: Longtrm ➔ Att. Counterfeit ➔ Purchase	-0.090	0.001	Full Mediation
H6b: UnAviod ➔ Att. Counterfeit ➔ Purchase	0.077	0.016	Full Mediation

**=p<0.05; **=p<0.001; ns= "not significant"*

3.6 Hypotheses Testing

We used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique to test our hypotheses (more details in Fig. 1) [15,42]. The global fit indices suggest an acceptable fit with the sample [x^2 = 708.103; df = 403; p-value = 0.0; RMSEA = 0.039; NFI = 0.934; IFI = 0.971; CFI = 0.970; RMR (SRMR) = 0.058 (0.00)]. Further, the x^2/df ratio (708.103/403) does not exceed the recommended value of 3. The overall indices were examined, such as SRMR, CFI, NFI, and IFI, consistent with existing literature (Iacobucci, 2010). Taking all the indices together, the model is acceptable (see Table 3 for more details).

The structural path estimates provide support for H3a, H3b, H4a, H4b, H5b and H6b and show that power distance and collectives are important factors in repurchasing counterfeits products. However, no support for H1a, H1b H2a, H2b, H5a, and H6a was found, which indicates that self-expression and social influence have no influence on repurchasing counterfeits products. Table 4 presents the structural path estimates. Next, we discuss the theoretical and managerial implications.

4. DISCUSSION

This study attempts to enhance our understanding of repurchasing counterfeits products on the Saudi context. The results indicate that consumer's culture by itself might not explained their counterfeit purchase intention. The consumer's attitude towards these products might help managers to understand their behavior. Social influence which consider as an external factor was not important factor explaining consumers' behavior regarding counterfeits product. Also, how consumer express themselves does not explain their behavior as well.

Because counterfeit products are a strict copy from the original brands [5], consumers are trying to form a positive attitude to repurchase them to be acceptable. The consumer's culture is an important to purchase a product. However, consumers in our context seems they do not care about other people opinion. Another explanation is that consumers in our context might not know the difference between original and counterfeits product. Thus, consumers in our context use counterfeit product without other people consents.

Purchasing counterfeits product would convey a unique identity and intrinsic value [29]. However, we found that consumers in our context does not purchase counterfeits product to express themselves because other than attitude towards counterfeits product mediate the relationship between self-expression and purchasing counterfeits products.

5. CONCLUSION

This study provides insights for brand marketers to understand buying counterfeits products. Our study confirms pervious results that attitude towards counterfeit product is the most important factor in buying counterfeit product [37]. We theorized that attitude towards counterfeit product is mediate the relationship between our independent variables and dependent variable.

In our study, we find that social influence is not a predictor of purchasing counterfeit product. This result might happen due to social desirability bias because we found in this study that Saudis are collectivist in general. However, other studies insist that social influence is an important predictor of repurchasing counterfeit products [19]. Even though that repurchasing counterfeit brand lead to enhance Inner-self expressiveness [30,31], we found no support for the self-expression and repurchasing counterfeit products. The accessibility and the availability of luxury product might explain the finding because Saudi consumers have higher purchase power and they can afford original brand, so they do not express themselves by counterfeit products.

As we discussed above, that buying counterfeits products is acceptable practice among some consumers and this finding confirm other research in other contexts (e.g., college students) [8]. Therefore, consumers may not take counterfeits products as a serious issue and do not think that it is illegal or unethical. To help consumers realize the problem and the dark side of consuming counterfeits products, special educational campaign might help consumers to realize the problem.

6. IMPLICATIONS

Based on the results of this study there are several theoretical and managerial implications. To start with, our results extends our understanding of consuming counterfeits products in different context and culture (e.g., Saudi). Also, this study might help authorities in fighting counterfeit products by campaigning against counterfeits. Governments authorities are trying to limit the negative impact of counterfeit product by seizing the unauthorized product and it might help to undermine the appeal of counterfeit products because attitude towards counterfeits is the most predictor of buying counterfeits.

7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

This research has some limitations which might provide some suggestions for future research. The major limitation is that we had relatively low response rate which may affect the generalizability of the finding. Further research may use a large heterogeneous sample on term of gender, age, educational and income. It may be important to investigate more collectivist culture such as India and Indonesia. The investigation of larger sample might increase the generalizability of the findings.

In this study, the average variance explained (AVE) for the construct long-term orientation is relatively low (0.471). Although research shows that the AVE lower than the acceptable 0.50 [43], the findings involving the variable should be interpreted with caution. Further studies may consider additional items to improve the average variance explained of the variable.

Throughout this study, we find that consumers' culture (e.g., collectivism and power) is the most important predictor of buying counterfeit products. To tap into consumers' perceptions and behavior of buying counterfeits, an in-depth investigation of the topic is needed.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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