

Effects of Social Influences on Consumer’s Attitude toward Acquisition of Counterfeit Goods

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Abstract

Consumption of Counterfeit goods is a major issue locally and across the world. There is counterfeiting of products and services across sectors. Major cities and towns in Kenya. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of social influences on consumers’ attitude towards the acquisition of counterfeit goods. The study is anchored on the theory of planned behavior which posits that behaviors are determined exclusively on behavioral intentions. The theory enables marketers to understand the customers’ behavior and therefore predict their consumption behavior. The research employed a descriptive research design where the unit of analysis was 300 MBA students at Africa Nazarene University, Nairobi campus with a sample size of 50 students. The researcher developed a self-administered questionnaire using established scales administered through “drop and pick up later” method. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis. The raw data was processed, analyzed, and presented using graphs and tables. Among the key findings of the study is that Social influences (Reference group influence, Family influence, Peer pressure influence) strongly affect the consumer attitude toward acquisition of counterfeit product. The findings indicated that consumers are most likely to consider other people’s opinions, thoughts and affirmation when purchasing a particular product. These research findings can be useful in the formulation of strategies to check counterfeiting.

Keywords: Counterfeits, Attitude, Social Influence

Introduction

Counterfeiting is not a new phenomenon, Counterfeiting is becoming a major challenge across the world in the last two or three decades as quoted by (Xuemei Bian, 2011; Lutta, 2019). Counterfeiting got out of hand globally a long time ago after perpetrators began targeting everything that is in the market from life-prolonging drugs, to computer programmes, and food products there is nothing that has been left untouched (KAM Policy Brief, 2009). According to a report by the Anti-Human Trafficking and Emerging Crimes Unit of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), counterfeiting has changed dramatically and rapidly since it has become a terrible and dangerous criminal activity.

According to EAC Policy on Counterfeiting and Piracy/Inception Report/MM_IKM/ (Sept 2008), over the few decades, counterfeits have increased rapidly because of advancement in technology. Consequently, it has become much easier than ever before to copy genuine products. The introduction of digital technology, for instance, has made it particularly easy for counterfeiters to copy genuine copyright works to a level that makes the counterfeit product almost impossible to differentiate from the genuine product both in appearance and functionality. Another reason why we have an increase in counterfeit product is the advancement in marketing skills. These two coupled with the benefits of the internet, ensure that it is much easier for counterfeit products to reach wider markets at virtually no cost on the counterfeiter.

In the global market it was estimated that the value of counterfeit goods or product grew by 1,100 per cent between 1984 and 1994 as quoted by (Xuemei Bian, 2011). Recent figures estimated that counterfeits accounted for seven per cent of world trade (US\$512 billion) in 2004 (Balfour, (2005). Further According to International Anti-Counterfeiting Coalition (2008), it is estimated that counterfeiting is a \$600 billion a year problem. In addition, this problem has grown over 10,000 percent in the past two decades up from \$5.5 billion in 1982. The number of counterfeit items seized at European Union borders has increased by more than 1,000%, rising to over 103 million in 2004 from 10 million in 1998 (IACC, 2008). At U.S. borders, seizure of counterfeit goods has more than doubled since 2001 Gutierrez, *et al* (2006). According to a recent International Trade Commission study, a \$100 billion counterfeit market translates into a global loss to businesses of \$200 billion a year (Chaudhry, Cordel, & Zimmerman, 2005).

According to European Brands Association (EBA) reports reveal that the markets where counterfeiting is most extensive are computer software with 35%, , textile and ready-to-wear with 22%, toys with 12%, perfumes with 10%, pharmaceuticals with 6%, watches with 5% and Audio-visual products with 25%.

According to Kenya Association of Manufacturers Policy Brief (2009), “Globally, trade in counterfeit products has reached uncontrollable levels and has recently been described as ‘perhaps the world’s fastest growing and most profitable business’. According to (Lutta, 2019) the Anti-counterfeit Agency (ACA) estimates that 1 in every 5 goods or product sold in the Kenyan market is fake and that approximately 4 million Kenyans are currently using counterfeit products or goods, posing a serious threat to their security, health, and the economy of the country. According to the Kenya Association of Manufacturers (2009), it is estimated that the Kenyan government loses approximately Ksh. 200 billion annually due to counterfeits. Traders dealing with counterfeits unlike their counterparts, unfortunately, these products account for approximately 25 per cent of all manufactured products in the country (Kenya Association of Manufacturers Policy Brief 2009). Counterfeiting affects manufacturers in a number of ways, including, watering down of genuine brands, loss of market share and sales, the closure of production facilities and unfair competition from counterfeit goods.

Social influence can be defined as the action, response, and opinions of an individual that are influenced by other persons or groups. Social influence may be represented by peer pressure, reference groups, families, marketing persuasion, sales, and conformity. (Hamdani, 2016). Consumer attitude can be influenced by individuals that they come into contact with, through relationship, face-to-face contact, and even indirect contact. A reference cluster could also be either a proper or informal cluster. (Arslan, 2003). One of the most vital social influences for an individual is the family. A consumer’s family has a major influence on attitude and behavior; families themselves are critically significant in society as customer units. Many consumer decisions are usually made by some family members on behalf of the entire family; therefore it’s essential for marketers to understand the family consumer decision-making dynamics for their product. (Canada, 2020).

According to Blackwell *et al* (2006) an attitude is a global or overall evaluation judgment. In earlier studies of consumers' attitude toward purchase intention, the researchers found that consumers in various countries differ in their attitudes toward counterfeit products (Ang *et al.*, 2001; Wang *et al.*, 2005). According to Alexander (2008), there are strong attitude differences between those who have previously bought counterfeits and those that have never knowingly purchased counterfeit products. The result also showed that those who were interviewed agreed that counterfeits hurt the economy of U.S and those companies that manufactured the genuine product. They also found that those who never purchase counterfeits feel that people who buy and sell counterfeit product are criminals. Boumphrey (2007) reported that 76% of Americans perceived counterfeit product to have the same quality as the genuine ones. Those that have purchased counterfeits believe that it was a way to get back at "big business" who they believe have unfair prices for an equal product.

Counterfeits in some Neighboring Countries

Tanzania

According to Kenya Association of Manufacturers Policy Brief (2009), Tanzania suffers extremely from the adverse effects of counterfeit and substandard products in the country. According to the Confederation of Tanzania Industries (CTI), (2021) "the impact of counterfeit and substandard goods hurts the economy and occasioning declining government revenues. The government loses between 540 and 900 billion Tanzania shillings (Shs 54 billion and Shs 90 billion) annually due to tax evasions that are related to counterfeit and substandard goods like many other countries worldwide".

Uganda

According to Kenya Association of Manufacturers Policy Brief (2009), Uganda has for a long time been a dumping ground for various counterfeit drugs and other products. The existence of counterfeit products is a threat to the survival and future growth of local industries in Uganda mainly because they pose an unfair competition. Uganda's counterfeit problem is mainly encouraged by inadequate enforcement of trademark laws, lack of a specific institution task to deal with offenders and irregularities in the companies' registration office. Additionally, the institutions currently responsible for enforcing the trademark act, (KAM Policy Brief, 2009).

Anti – counterfeits Experts in Uganda allege that the COVID -19 had a very big impact on the economy potentially leading to shortages of genuine products, paving way to an increase in the of counterfeit products in the market. Companies’ adoption of online platforms in selling goods has exacerbated the issues of counterfeits product. Anti-counterfeit experts assert that consumers will prefer buying the counterfeits product to save on cost (Anti-Counterfeit Network, 2020)

With a projected budget of over Shs 41 trillion and a 54% of either counterfeit or inferior products in the market, it is projected that Uganda could be losing up to Shs 6 trillion to counterfeits and inferior products every year. (Anti-Counterfeit Network, 2020). Galukande (in Anti-Counterfeit Network, 2020) argues that fighting counterfeiters requires a joint effort from all the stakeholders which can be done by “addressing regulatory, legislative, technological, enforcement, and communication gaps. This calls for the unrelenting commitment of not only the government and its agencies but also industries, citizens. manufacturers, and other stakeholders to join the fight and tackle the problem of counterfeits that – if unsolved – can destroy both lives and businesses”.

Effect of Counterfeits

Counterfeiting affects manufacturers in many ways According to a KAM report (2019), counterfeiting results in the watering down of genuine brands, loss of market share and sales, the closure of production facilities and unfair. Traders in counterfeit products do evade taxes unlike their counterparts who deal with genuine products. Unfortunately, these products account for approximately 25 per cent of all manufactured products in the country (Kenya Association of Manufacturers Policy Brief 2009).

According to Kenya Association of Manufacturers policy brief (2009), Counterfeit also discourages new investments because it poses an unfair competition. Manufacturers also waste resources and time tracking counterfeit activities in effort to regain their businesses. Additionally, the number of consumer complaints keeps on rising as a result of consuming fake products. What’s more damaging, consumers often blame known genuine manufacturers, oblivious of the fact that they did not produce the fake products.

Similarly, governments suffer losses of large amounts of revenue to be paid on imported goods since the market is dominated with counterfeit product which are manufactured locally. According to Kenya Association of Manufacturers Policy Brief (2009), adults and children all

over the world suffer injuries and deaths associated with the use of counterfeit products, and particularly drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, foods, personal care items, electrical products, spare parts and software.

In summary, counterfeiting has evolved rapidly into one of the world's leading criminal enterprises and it will require a coordinated effort by all stakeholders- consumers, governments and brand owners to keep pace with this evolution and stem the unwanted results (Gordon *et al* 2011). Therefore, the examination of the final purchasers' attitudes towards counterfeiting is significant.

Statement of the Problem

Counterfeiting is a significant and growing problem worldwide, occurring both in developing and developed countries (Chaudhry *et al.* 2005). According to the International Intellectual Property Institute (2003), and the International Anti-counterfeiting Coalition (IACC, 2005), almost five percent of all products worldwide are counterfeit. The IACC alleged that counterfeiting is responsible for at least \$200 billion a year in terms of losses in taxes, sales and jobs (Furnham and Valgeirsson, 2007). This suggests that this is a growing problem and is likely to cause much more damages in the future.

The question therefore arises- why do consumers still buy counterfeit products even when they are aware that these products are of lower quality and dangerous to their health? (Albers-miller, 1999). This research will examine if social influences affect the attitude of the consumers towards the acquisition of counterfeits good. Consumers are usually influenced by either internal or external factors. These factors can make a consumer act favorably or unfavorably towards the acquisition of a product. The social influences will be measured using the reference group influence, family influence and Peer pressure influence.

Objective of the Study

General Objectives

To determine the effects of social influences on consumers' attitude toward acquisition of counterfeit goods

Specific Objectives

To examine how social influences affects consumers' attitude toward acquisition of counterfeit goods

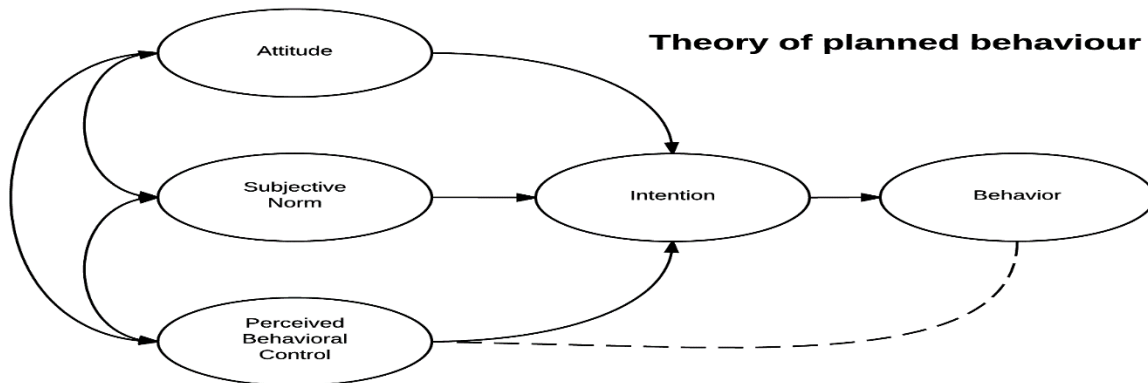
Theoretical Review

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

Theory of planned behavior was developed by Icek Ajzen as an attempt to foresee human behavior (Ajzen I, 1991). The theory maintains that there are three major elements which together shape an individual's behavioral intentions. These elements are attitude toward a certain behavior, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral. Theory of planned behavior suggests that a person's behavior is determined by his/her intention to perform the behavior and that this intention is, in turn, a function of his/her attitude toward the behavior of purchasing counterfeits products. The greatest way to predict consumer attitude toward purchase of counterfeit product is their intention. Intention is the cognitive representation of a person's readiness to perform a given behavior. (Ajzen and Fishbein 1975).

According to the Theory of Planned behavior (TPB), purchasing behavior is determined by the purchase intention, which is determined by attitudes (Ajzen & Fishbein 1975). However, the TPB also indicated that the opportunities and resources, such as the availability of counterfeit products, are presented before purchase behavior can be performed. Without such circumstances, regardless of how favorable intentions are, it would be hard to purchase (Chang , 1998).

In conclusion, the Theory of planned behavior can be used by marketers to explain the and predict customer behaviors. It contends that behaviors are determined exclusively on behavioral intentions that are determined by the three components that is attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Together, these three factors predict a consumer's intention to behave in a certain way. Additionally, it also requires a consumer to evaluate their attitude toward a particular product or services to determine if they are favorable or unfavorable. Finally, an attitude towards counterfeiting is a significant influencer of purchase intention. It is suggested that if consumers' attitudes towards counterfeiting is favorable, the higher the chances that they will purchase the counterfeits product. (Ang S. H., 2001 ; Wang F. Z., 2005).



Empirical Literature Review

Counterfeit Products

Yang (2002), suggested that there were generally two kinds of counterfeits, the counterfeiting of commodities and that of symbols attached to products. According to Cancun (2009), two-thirds of the consumers who were interviewed reported that they have bought some counterfeit products from time to time and 14% admitted that they buy them regularly. Only 20% of those interviewed said they have never purchased a counterfeit product. Further, most of the consumers around the world are buying fake products in huge numbers and they are seeing nothing wrong in buying those illegal and potentially dangerous products. Further, people who have previously bought counterfeit goods believe that they are as good as genuine products and this encourages them to repeat their actions.

According to Lee (2009), past buying of the counterfeit products or goods has a positive drives customers to buy more counterfeit products. However, Narashikin (2009) argues that a consumer's consumption status influenced the intention to buy counterfeit product.

Consumer Attitudes Towards Counterfeiting

Blackwell *et al* (2006) defines attitude as global or overall evaluation judgment. In the earlier studies on consumers' attitude toward purchase intention, the researchers found that consumers in various countries differ in their attitudes toward counterfeits product (Ang *et al.*, 2001; Wang *et al.*, 2005).

Norashikin (2009) findings indicated that price consciousness, perceived risk and social influence are the independent variables that strongly influence consumers' attitude towards counterfeit product. Attitude towards counterfeit product was also central in influencing purchase intentions of the consumers. This brings about the mediator role played by attitude in relation to purchase intentions. Customers ethical principles affects their perception of counterfeit goods. (Ang *et al.*, 2001).

Teah *et al* (2008), suggest that attitudes towards counterfeits of luxury brands were found to influence the consumers purchase intention. Both price consciousness and social influence has a significant influence on attitudes towards counterfeits of luxury brands.

Alexander (2008), observes that in general, there were strong attitude differences between those who have previously bought counterfeits and those that have never knowingly purchased counterfeit products. Those who were interviewed agreed that counterfeits hurt the economy of U.S and companies that manufacture the genuine product. The research also indicated that those who have never purchased counterfeits regard people buy and sell counterfeit product as criminals. Boumphrey (2007), reported that 76% of Americans felt that a counterfeit products has the same quality as any genuine manufactured goods. Those that have purchased counterfeits believe that counterfeits are a way to get back at "big business" who they believe have unfair prices for an equal product.

Social Influences

According to Ang *et al.*, (2001), social influence refers to the effect that other people pose on an individual's behavior. Social pressure can influence individuals to follow or break rules. The extent to which consumers are influenced by social pressure in their attitude is dependent on their vulnerability to such pressure.

The opinion of significant others play an important role of a point of reference especially when consumers have little or no knowledge about the product category they want to purchase. (Ang *et al.*, 2001). Peers or reference groups were to have expert knowledge on the differences between originals and counterfeits (such as product quality), the negative consequences of being perceived to purchase counterfeits will therefore have an effect on consumers' perception towards counterfeit products therefore, consumers would have a negative attitude towards

counterfeit products. On the other hand, social influence concerns purchase decisions that are based on the expectations of what would impress others (Ang *et al.*, 2001; Wang *et al.*, 2005).

Teah (2008), in their findings reflected that social influence and price consciousness have significant influences on the attitudes towards counterfeits of luxury brands. In support of previous findings (e.g. Teah and Phau, 2008; Bian, 2007), they found that price determinants are not the only influencing factors that affect consumer attitudes and purchase intention towards counterfeits of products. They further found that social influence plays an important role as well. Consumers are more likely to purchase counterfeit products under the influence of their peers.

Ang *et al* (2001) found that consumers' attitudes toward the purchase of counterfeit depend on the extent to which their reference groups approve of it. Relatives and friends may contribute to the consumption of counterfeit, depending on whether they approve this behavior.

Narashikin (2009) observes that Malaysia consumers are very likely to consider other people's opinions and thoughts when purchasing a particular product. The consumers feel that it is important that others approve the products and brands they purchase. They want to make a positive impression on others and would often consider the expectations of the significant others before making a purchase.

Peer pressure has been reported as a factor leading to inappropriate consumption behavior (Albers-Miller, 1999). The extent to which customers are influenced by social pressure in their attitude is dependent on their vulnerability to such pressure (Ang, Cheng, Lim and Tambyah, 2001). Consumer vulnerability is defined as the need to identify with others or to align one's image to the opinion of the significant others through the purchase and consumption of products and brands. There is a readiness to conform to the expectations of others in reference to buying decisions, and the tendency to learn about products by observing others or seeking information from others (Bearden *et al* 1989).

Research Methodology

A research design is the structure or glue that frames all of the elements in a research project (Kombo & Delno, 2006). To adequately achieve the objective of this study, descriptive survey was adopted. Descriptive survey is a method of collecting information by interviewing or administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals (Orodho, 2003)., It can also be used to collect data on people's attitudes, opinions, habits or any variety of education (Orodho, 2003;

Kombo, 2002). The researcher used descriptive survey to collect data on respondent's attitudes towards purchase of counterfeit products.

The sample population site choice was Nairobi since there is a high concentration of counterfeit products there. (Omondi, 2015). The Africa Nazarene University, Nairobi CBD campus, MBA Students were selected as the respondents. This is because the MBA students at Africa Nazarene University at Nairobi CBD campus are believed to have a considerable amount of spending power and substantial exposure and knowledge of counterfeit products. They are mature and mostly independent and are able to discern between counterfeit and genuine products. The assumption was that the MBA students at Africa Nazarene University in Nairobi CBD campus would represent the views of most Kenyan consumers.

Population is defined as a group of persons, objects, or items from which samples are taken for measurement. The population of interest was 300 MBA students at Africa Nazarene University, Nairobi CBD campus. This population size was obtained from the office of the Registrar, Africa Nazarene University. A survey was conducted among MBA students at Africa Nazarene University. The respondents were both male and female students-working professionals from various institutions and organizations or self-employed or even retirees.

A sample of 50 Masters of Business Administration students of Africa Nazarene University Nairobi CBD campus were selected because most of the MBA students are employed , parents who usually make buying decision, also possess a high purchasing power. The researcher used simple random sampling technique to arrive at the desired representative number of students.

Data collection refers to the gathering of information to serve or prove some facts. The researcher formulated a self-administered questionnaire which was designed using established scales and was administered through "drop and pick up later" mode. This was to ensure that the questionnaires administered for the final study would elicit the required information (validity). The reliability of data was tested through Cronbach coefficient-alpha whereby if it's above 0.5 the information obtained from the questionnaires would be considered reliable. The data collected was analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The raw data collected was processed, analyzed and presented using graphs and tables.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive analysis was done to observe the pattern and frequency of the respondents' Demographics and variables under study. Preliminary analysis such as normality, reliability, validity and factor analysis were conducted.

Normality tests were done to determine whether the data obtained were normal, while the reliability test was done to see whether the instrument that make up a scale are all measuring the same construct. The validity test was to see whether the item measures what it is supposed to measure, and factor analysis was to verify the dimensionalities of measured constructs.

A total of 49 out of 50 questionnaires distributed were completed. The response rate was 98 percent, however, some variables, for example: in the age of the respondents, were ignored.

Social influences

Social influences towards counterfeit products were relatives, friends and experience. The results were tabulated in the table 4.5

Table 4. 1: Social influences

Responses	SA%	A%	MA%	NS%	SD%	D%	MD%
My relative and friends approve my decision to buy counterfeit products	6.1	6.1	6.1	26.5	40.8	8.2	6.1
I observe what others are buying and using before buying a products	20.4	20.4	28.6	6.1	12.2	10.2	2
If I have little experience with a product, I ask around	36.7	28.6	10.2	8.2	10.2	4.1	2
My relative and friends think I	6.1	4.1	8.2	30.6	24.5	18.4	8.2

should buy counterfeit products

I consult other people to help choose the best alternative available from a product class	24.5	22.4	26.5	8.2	12.2	0	6.1
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I gather information from friends or family about a product before I buy	22.4	16.3	28.6	8.2	16.3	4.1	4.1
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It is important that others like the products and brands I buy	8.2	10.2	34.7	12.2	20.4	4.1	10.2
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Where SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, MA = Moderately Agree, NS = Not sure,

SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree and MD = Moderately Disagree.

From Table 4.5 it is evident that 40.8% of the respondents strongly disagreed that relatives and friends approved their decision to buy counterfeit products, those who were not sure and those who disagreed were 26.55% and 8.2% respectively. Those who strongly agreed, agreed, moderately agreed and moderately disagreed yielded similar result of 6.1%.

Additionally, 28.6% of the respondents moderately agreed that they observed what others were buying and using before buying a product, 20.4% strongly agreed and the same percentage agreed. Those who strongly disagreed, disagreed, moderately agreed and not sure accounted for 12.2%, 10.2%, 6.1% and 2% respectively.

Moreover, 36.7% of the respondents strongly agreed that where they have little experience with a particular product, they would inquire. Those who agreed, not sure, disagreed and moderately disagreed scored 28.6%, 8.2%, 4.1% and 2.0% respectively. Those who moderately agreed and strongly disagreed accounted for same result of 10.2%.

Additionally, 30.6% of the respondents indicated that they were unsure as to what relatives and friends would think if they bought counterfeit products. Those who strongly disagreed, disagreed, strongly agreed and agreed represented 24.5%, 18.4%, 6.1% and 4.1% of the

respondents, respectively. Those who moderately agreed and moderately disagreed made up 8.2% each.

Moreover, 26.5% of the respondents moderately agreed that they would consult other people to help them choose the best alternative available from a product class. Those who strongly agreed, agreed, strongly disagreed, not sure and moderately disagreed comprised of 24.5%, 22.4%, 12.2%, 8.2% and 6.1% of the respondents, respectively. Those who disagreed accounted for zero results.

Also 28.6% of the respondents moderately agreed that they would gather information from friends or family about a product before they buy, while 22.45% strongly agreed. Those who agreed and strongly disagreed accounted for same result of 16.3%. Meanwhile, those who disagreed and moderately disagreed accounted for similar result of 4.1%. while those who were not sure accounted for 8.2% of the respondents.

Finally, 34.7% of the respondents moderately agreed that it was important that others like the products and brands one buys. Those who strongly disagreed, not sure, strongly agreed and disagree accounted for 20.4%, 12.2%, 8.2% and 4.1% respectively. Those who agreed and moderately agreed accounted a similar result of 10.2%.

Discussion of the Findings

Social Influence strongly impacts on the consumer attitude toward counterfeit products which indicated 48%. This supports the findings of Teah *et al* (2008), who found that Kenya consumers, are most likely to consider other people's opinions and views when purchasing a particular product. This also concurs with the Narashiki (2009) findings. However, this study deviates from Sharah Alfia Djuhardi (2017) who found that social influence indicator shows that respondents' consumption patterns suggested that they are not purchasing counterfeit branded products because of the market trend. Respondents also prefer to use goods or products that are different from other people around them even if it is counterfeit, good looking or interesting. Respondents also buy counterfeit branded product like sneakers not because of others recommendation but of their own volition.

Conclusion

Consumer attitude towards purchase of counterfeit products was shaped by social influences. Social influences had an effect on consumer attitude toward counterfeits products since consumers are most likely to consider other people's opinions, views and affirmation when purchasing a particular good. The research findings can be used to formulate strategies to improve anti-counterfeiting.

Recommendations

It was evident that the social influence has a significant impact on consumers' attitude towards counterfeit. Marketers and manufacturers should formulate a diversity of strategies to address a variety of consumers in the market and improve anti-counterfeiting. Since consumers prefer to use goods or products that are unique, marketers should ensure they differentiate their product to offer consumers wider choices. Another strategy would be to use celebrity endorsers, as consumers prefer to purchase the same products and brands of their role models.

Recommendations for Further Research

Other variables that should be researched, include novelty, value consciousness and status consumption to find their possible influence on consumer's attraction to counterfeit products. Additionally, inclusion of product specification in packaging should be researched on. A product specific research would be more preferable than a general one, for instance, research on specific products, such as electronics, pharmaceuticals and other products. Future research can be conducted to determine whether the results of this study are replicable apply across the country, for example, Kisumu, Mombasa or Nakuru, Sampling should be done more evenly rather than concentrating on one particular area. For example, future researchers may choose to use both private and public universities as their sample areas, or countries.

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