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## **Exploring Attitude and Purchase Intentions on Luxury Fashion Counterfeiting: Application of the Theory of Planned Behavior**

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Master in Marketing

Supervisor:

PhD Inês Vazão Miguel, Invited Assistant Professor, Department of Marketing, Operations, and General Management at ISCTE Business School

September, 2024



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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores consumer attitudes and purchase intentions toward counterfeit luxury fashion goods through the lens of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). By examining key constructs such as attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, availability, affordability, and fashionability, the study aims to illuminate the factors driving counterfeit consumption. Data collected from 141 respondents reveal that positive attitudes, social influences, and a sense of control over the purchasing process significantly contribute to the intention to purchase counterfeit goods. However, the study challenges prevailing assumptions by demonstrating that neither availability nor affordability exerts a meaningful impact on consumer attitudes, suggesting that other psychological and social factors, such as perceived value and ethical concerns, hold greater sway. The findings offer nuanced insights into the counterfeit market, particularly regarding how demographic variables like income and age shape consumer behavior. By addressing both the cognitive and affective dimensions of consumer decision-making, this study contributes to the broader discourse on counterfeit luxury fashion goods and offers strategic recommendations for mitigating their prevalence in the luxury fashion market.

## **Keywords**

Purchase Intentions; Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB); Counterfeiting; Luxury Fashion Counterfeiting; Luxury Fashion

**JEL Classification System - L67, M31**

## **Resumo**

Esta tese explora as atitudes e intenções de compra dos consumidores relativamente a produtos contrafeitos de moda de luxo através da Teoria do Comportamento Planeado (TPB). Ao examinar construtos-chave como a atitude, as normas subjetivas, o controlo comportamental percebido, a disponibilidade, a acessibilidade e a moda, o estudo pretende iluminar os fatores que impulsionam o consumo de produtos contrafeitos. Os dados recolhidos junto de 141 inquiridos revelam que as atitudes positivas, as influências sociais e a sensação de controlo sobre o processo de compra contribuem significativamente para a intenção de comprar bens contrafeitos. No entanto, o estudo desafia os pressupostos prevaletentes ao demonstrar que nem a disponibilidade nem a acessibilidade económica exercem um impacto significativo nas atitudes dos consumidores, sugerindo que outros fatores psicológicos e sociais, como o valor percebido e as preocupações éticas, têm maior influência. Os resultados oferecem uma visão diferenciada do mercado da contrafação, particularmente no que diz respeito à forma como as variáveis demográficas, como o rendimento e a idade, moldam o comportamento do consumidor. Ao abordar as dimensões cognitivas e afetivas da tomada de decisão do consumidor, este estudo contribui para o discurso mais amplo sobre a contrafação de artigos de moda de luxo e oferece recomendações estratégicas para mitigar a sua prevalência no mercado da moda de luxo.

## **Palavras-chave**

Intenções de Compra; Teoria do Comportamento Planeado (TPB); Falsificação; Falsificação de Moda de Luxo; Moda de luxo

**Sistema de Classificação JEL - L67, M31**

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## **List of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

AFF - Affordability

ATT - Attitude

AVE - Average Variance Explained

HTMT - Heterotrait-monotrait Ratio

INT - Purchase Intention

PBC - Perceived Behavior Control

PF - Perceived Fashionability

SEM - Structural Equation Modeling

SN - Subjective Norms

TPB - Theory of Planned Behavior

## **2. Introduction**

### **2.1. Relevance and Interest**

The luxury fashion market, characterized by its opulence and centuries-old craftsmanship (Moore & Birtwistle, 2004), is emblematic of high-quality materials, exquisite designs, and unparalleled brand prestige, captivating the imaginations of predominantly young fashion enthusiasts (Shen et al., 2023). However, this prestigious sector faces a substantial challenge posed by the escalating presence of businesses engaged in counterfeiting, giving rise to a parallel and clandestine market (Kapferer & Michaut, 2014).

The magnitude of this issue is underscored by the assertion that luxury counterfeits represent 60 to 70% of the total \$4.5 trillion reproduction trade, according to Harvard Business Review (2019). This surge is primarily attributed to the continuous growth in the popularity of authentic luxury goods among consumers (Gentry et al., 2001; Phau & Teah 2009). Counterfeiting poses economic threats and raises concerns about the authenticity and integrity of the luxury fashion world, necessitating vigilant efforts to combat this pervasive issue (Song, L. et al., 2021). This phenomenon not only devalues brand equity but also threatens the sustainable development of the luxury goods industry, disrupts economic order, and contributes to environmental pollution (Wu & Zhao, 2021).

### **2.2. Research Questions and Objectives**

Despite the undeniable challenges presented by counterfeiting, the literature reveals a spectrum of consumer reactions toward authentic brands. Some studies indicate that counterfeits exert a negative impact on consumer perceptions, leading to decreased purchase intentions (Commuri, 2009; Fournier, 1998; Hellofs and Jacobson, 1999). Conversely, other studies suggest that counterfeits may have no relevant impact or, surprisingly, even a positive effect on consumer perceptions of authentic brands, potentially increasing purchase intentions (Bian & Moutinho, 2011; Nia & Zaichkowsky, 2000; Baghi et al., 2016; Romani et al., 2012). Song L. et al. (2021) emphasize the influence of culture on consumers' perceptions of luxury brands in the context of counterfeits, affecting perceived quality and purchase intentions. Understanding the factors influencing attitudes towards luxury fashion counterfeit products is crucial for comprehending consumer behavior in this context. This study aims to investigate the

impact of affordability, availability of counterfeits, and perceived fashionability on attitudes toward luxury fashion counterfeit products. Previous research has indicated that materialistic values positively influence attitudes towards counterfeit luxury goods Singh et al. (2021). Additionally, factors such as brand image, quality, and price have been recognized as key determinants of consumer attitudes towards fake luxury goods (Fenitra & Haryanto, 2019). Social influences, including informational susceptibility and normative susceptibility, have also been found to affect attitudes toward purchasing counterfeits (Kim & Karpova, 2009). Moreover, the affordability of luxury fashion counterfeits, the prevalence of counterfeit products in the market, and the perceived fashionability of these items are likely to be crucial in shaping consumer attitudes. Understanding how these factors interact and influence attitudes towards luxury fashion counterfeits can offer valuable insights for policymakers, brand managers, and consumers which will lead to better understand the purchase intentions of these counterfeit luxury fashion products. By examining the interplay of affordability and perceived fashionability concerning attitudes towards luxury fashion counterfeit products, this research aims to contribute to the existing knowledge on counterfeit consumption behavior. Ultimately, this study, through a TPB model, seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics that influence consumer attitudes toward counterfeit luxury fashion products and provide a better understanding of luxury fashion counterfeit purchase intentions which leads to the two research questions of this thesis: Do factors such as affordability, availability, and perceived fashionability influence the attitude toward luxury fashion counterfeit products?

What factors affect the intention to purchase luxury fashion counterfeit products?

To address these research questions and shape the statistical approach of this dissertation, the research objectives have been established as follows:

- Examine the influence of affordability, the availability of counterfeits, and perceived fashionability on consumer attitudes toward luxury fashion counterfeit products.
- Investigate the role of attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control in shaping the intention to purchase luxury fashion counterfeit products.
- Analyze the mediating effects of attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control between external factors (affordability, availability, perceived fashionability) and counterfeit purchase intention.

- Assess the impact of demographic variables (age, income, gender, education, ethnicity) on the relationship between the identified factors and the intention to purchase counterfeit luxury fashion products.

## 2.3. Structure of the Dissertation

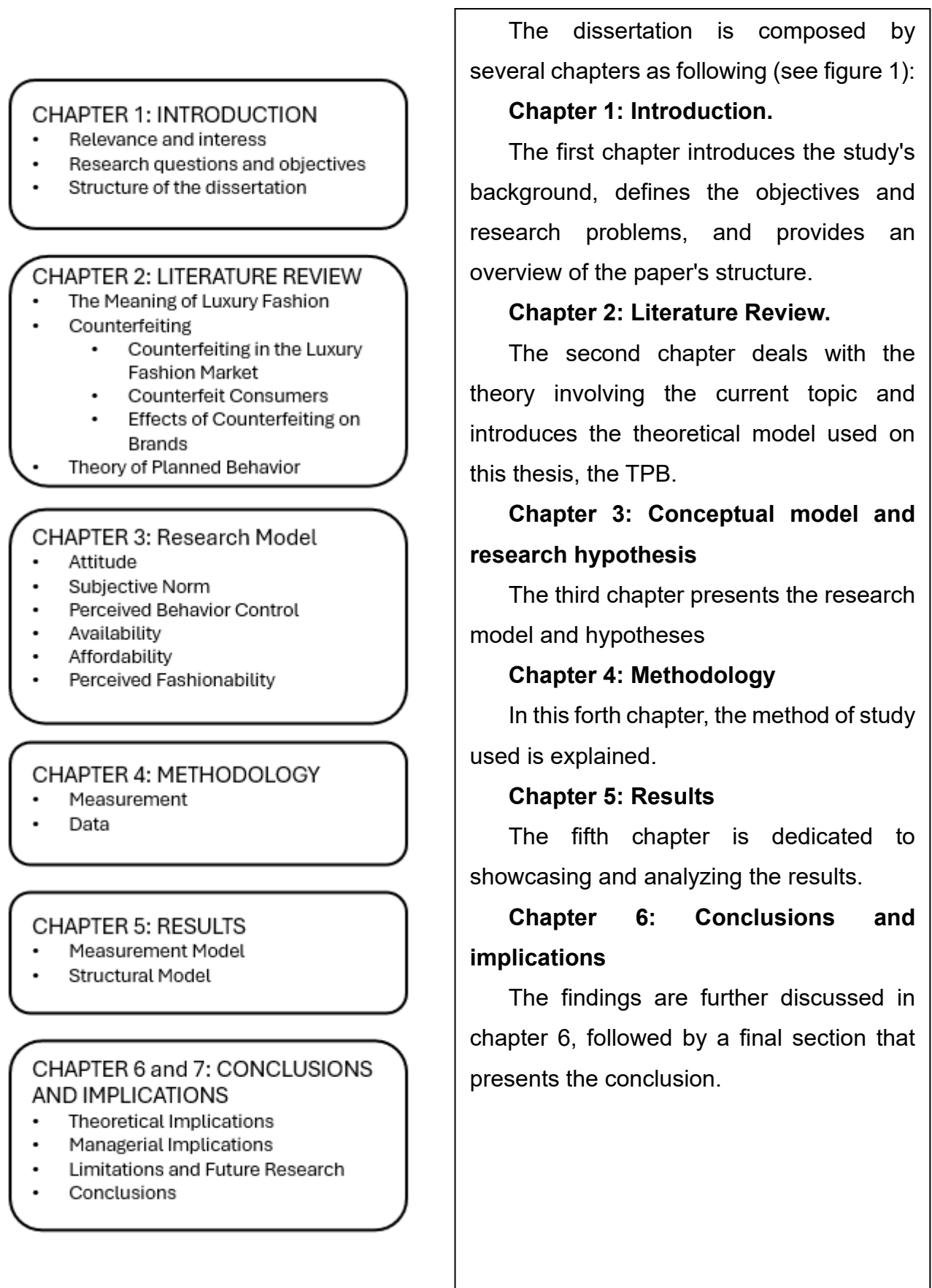


Figure 1 – Structure of the thesis

### **3. Literature Review**

#### **3.1. The Meaning of Luxury Fashion**

Historically considered a niche market, luxury goods have recently transitioned towards a "massification" trend (Brun & Castelli, 2013) and this shift is characterized by a surge in demand, an expansion into emerging markets, and a wider product range that now includes more accessible mass-luxury items. Consumers have found ways to engage with luxury through second-hand possessions, emphasizing the symbolic value and authenticity associated with such products (Turunen & Leipämaa-Leskinen, 2015). Luxury consumption today is not solely about showcasing wealth and it has evolved to encompass various aspects such as hedonism, sharing economy practices, and sustainability (Christodoulides et al., 2021; Jhamb et al., 2020; Chen & Petersen, 2022). Luxury brands emphasize creating emotional connections with consumers by appealing to human emotions, rarity, extraordinariness, and aesthetics (Grigorescu & Ion, 2020; Seo & Buchanan-Oliver, 2015).

The luxury market is increasingly influenced by younger generations, with Millennials projected to steer the future of luxury consumption (Shin & Jeong, 2022; Sayed et al., 2016). With this, luxury brands leverage technology to enhance customer experiences and loyalty, particularly in luxury hospitality services.

Luxury fashion is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon (Porter, 1980) and more than just high-end clothing, accessories, and other goods. Dittmar (1992) said that material objects and possessions can form a complex network of symbols. Luxury fashion is also a cultural and social construct that prevails with material objects that can be associated with status, wealth, and exclusivity (Elliot, 1997). High prices come with the opportunity to follow these cultural and social trends posed by luxury fashion brands (Jenner & Artun, 2005) as they come to be aware of the desirability, but not necessity, of these products among consumers (Parguel et al., 2016).

## **3.2. Counterfeiting**

### **3.2.1. Counterfeiting in the Luxury Fashion Market**

In the last two decades, researchers have shown increasing interest in counterfeiting (Lee & Workman, 2011; Cordell et al., 1996), which involves the replication of trademarks, and their legal dimensions (Chow 2000; Stone 2001) and approaches to mitigate counterfeiting efforts (Chaudhry et al., 2005). Imitation products mimic the appearance of authentic items but are characterized by inferior quality and a more affordable price point, as indicated by Amar et al. (2018).

However, Gosline (2009) stated that brands started to notice a paradoxical relationship between them and counterfeits which led researchers to start investigating demand (Penz & Stöttinger 2005) and the increased purchase intentions of consumers toward counterfeit products (Kaufmann et al., 2016; Hussain et al., 2017). The estimated value of imported counterfeits into the European Union is USD 134 billion, accounting for 5.8% of the total value of imports into the EU (OECD/EUIPO, 2021), where globally counterfeiting represents approximately 2.5% of the global trade. Nevertheless, the pace of change has outpaced the capabilities of enforcement agencies. Many nations are now transitioning into significant contributors and consumers of counterfeit products, viewing counterfeiting as a potential source of income for the population and a means of technology transfer (Staake et al., 2009). However, consumers who deliberately engage in the purchase of counterfeit products predominantly opt for imitation branded fashion luxury items, including designer handbags, watches, sunglasses, and clothing (Chaudhuri, 1998).

Purchase intention refers to the inclination or readiness to acquire a particular product or service in the future (Michaelidou & Christodoulides, 2011). The popularity of luxury fashion comes from the strive of consumers to optimize their social status (Eastman et al. 1999) as their products become symbols. Luxury fashion brands are endowed with both social functions and personal purposes, whereas counterfeit products predominantly serve social functions (Turunen & Laaksonen, 2011). This has a positive incline on consumers' desirability of these expensive luxury symbols which provokes, in some consumers, an increased intention to buy counterfeit products due to their lower price (Rizwan et al. 2014; Bloch et al., 1993). Some consumers may not be aware of the difference between genuine and counterfeit luxury goods, and this is especially true in developing countries,

where consumers may not have access to information about counterfeit goods. A study by the World Intellectual Property Organization found that only 30% of consumers in developing countries can identify counterfeit luxury goods. The International Chamber of Commerce Counterfeit also found that luxury goods are often more widely available than genuine luxury goods and their counterfeits can easily be found at street markets, online retailers, and even in some brick-and-mortar stores.

### **3.2.2. Counterfeit Consumers**

Counterfeit consumers are considered those who are aware of the product being a reproduction of the original luxury product (Wilcox et al., 2009). Although many studies tried to characterize these consumers, Green and Smith (2002) found that counterfeit consumers also vary based on the development of their country and its legal infrastructures. In a deeper study, Song (2021) has found differences in culture such as the prevalence of counterfeits exerts a negative influence on the perceived quality of authentic luxury fashion brands owned by Anglo-American brand owners. It was also found that the dominance of counterfeits does not have a negative impact on the perceived quality of authentic luxury fashion brands owned by Asian brand owners.

Kaufman et al. (2016) also propose a model where purchase intentions come from various personal reasons like economic and hedonic benefits or materialism and relationships with the brand like brand attachment.

### **3.2.3. Effects of Counterfeiting on Brands**

It was taken liberty to create a separation between the effects of counterfeiting on brands across several studies: Direct effects include the fact that counterfeits compete directly with genuine products, which can lead to reduced sales and profits for brands. A study by the OECD estimated that counterfeiting costs global businesses \$2.3 trillion in lost sales each year. However, Chuchinprakarn (2003) claims that a decline in sales stemming from non-deceptive counterfeit purchases was not deemed significant, as these customers never had the intention (or means) to purchase the genuine product in the first place.

Counterfeits are often of inferior quality and may not meet the safety standards of genuine products, which can damage the reputation of brands and erode consumer trust. A study by the University of Southern California found that consumers are less likely to

buy genuine products from brands that have a problem with counterfeiting. Brands must spend a significant amount of money on combating counterfeiting, including the cost of developing anti-counterfeiting technologies, hiring investigators, and pursuing legal action against counterfeiters (International Anti-Counterfeiting Coalition, 2022).

The indirect effects of counterfeiting are also significant. The International Anti-Counterfeiting Coalition (2022) stated that counterfeiting can discourage brands from investing in innovation because brands know that their new products will be quickly counterfeited, which leads them to be less likely to invest in research and development. Additionally, counterfeit products can be harmful to consumers. In the case of counterfeit clothing, Goh et al. (2017) stated that poor clothing quality can provoke different types of dermatological problems such as dermatitis.

#### **3.2.4. Theory of Planned Behavior**

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, I., 1991) is a widely recognized and extensively applied model in the field of social psychology for understanding and predicting human behavior. This theory posits that human behavior is primarily guided by three key considerations: behavioral beliefs (beliefs about the consequences of the behavior), normative beliefs (beliefs about the expectations of others regarding the behavior), and control beliefs (beliefs about factors that may facilitate or hinder the behavior) (Mai & Thi, 2023).

Ajzen's TPB extends the earlier Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Fishbein, M.) by incorporating the element of perceived behavioral control, which emphasizes the individual's perception of their ability to perform the behavior. This addition enhances the predictive power of the model, particularly in cases where the behavior is not entirely volitional (Kurland, 1995). By providing a comprehensive framework that considers not only attitudes and subjective norms but also perceived behavioral control, the TPB offers a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing humans. The TPB has been successfully applied in various domains, including weight loss (Bagozzi & Kimmel, 1995; Schifter & Ajzen, 1985) taking vitamins (Madden, Ellen, & Ajzen, 1992), academic achievement (Ajzen & Madden, 1986), among others (Mannetti et al., 2002). Its widespread application across various disciplines underscores its significance in elucidating the complexities of human decision-making and behavior prediction,

therefore its use in this study's attempt to fill in the research gap in the luxury fashion market by exploring the attitudes of consumers towards its counterfeits.

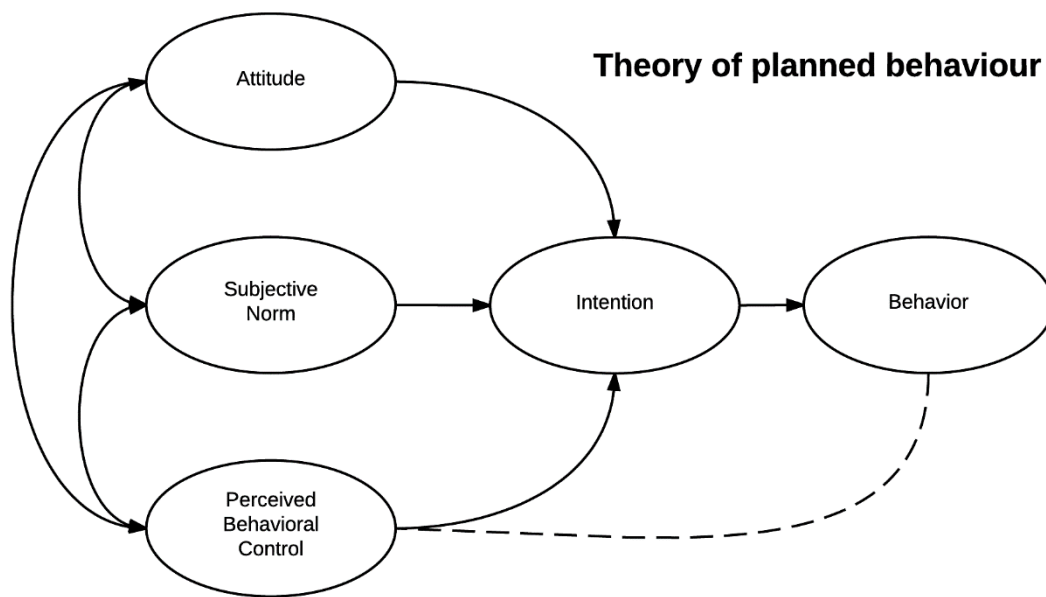


Figure 2 – Theory of Planned Behaviour

#### **4. Research Model**

The TPB model is crucial in this research as it offers a structured and comprehensive framework to understand the complex interplay of factors influencing the intention to purchase counterfeit products. The first component is the consumer attitudes that reflect the psychological predispositions of consumers towards counterfeit goods, impacting their behavior in predictable patterns regarding the purchase of such products (Ndofirepi et al., 2022). The following component Ajzen (1991) named it subjective norm which refers to how an individual perceives social pressure or influence from significant people in their life regarding a particular behavior. Lastly, Ajzen (1991) describes perceived behavioral control as an individual's belief about how easy or difficult it is to carry out a particular behavior.

By incorporating behavioral, normative, and control beliefs, the TPB model allows for a detailed examination of how attitudes, social pressures, and perceived control shape consumer intentions. Moreover, the TPB model's inclusion of perceived behavioral control is particularly relevant for understanding counterfeit purchase behaviors, which may not always be entirely volitional due to legal and social constraints. This aspect of the model can help in identifying potential barriers and facilitators that consumers perceive in the context of purchasing luxury fashion counterfeit products. Additionally, individual behavior can also be influenced so this study controls for these sociodemographic aspects by incorporating all pertinent variables into the research model, including age, gender, and education. Applying the TPB model in this research can provide a robust theoretical foundation that enhances the explanatory and predictive power of the study, offering valuable insights for both academic research and practical applications in marketing and consumer behavior strategies for luxury fashion companies.

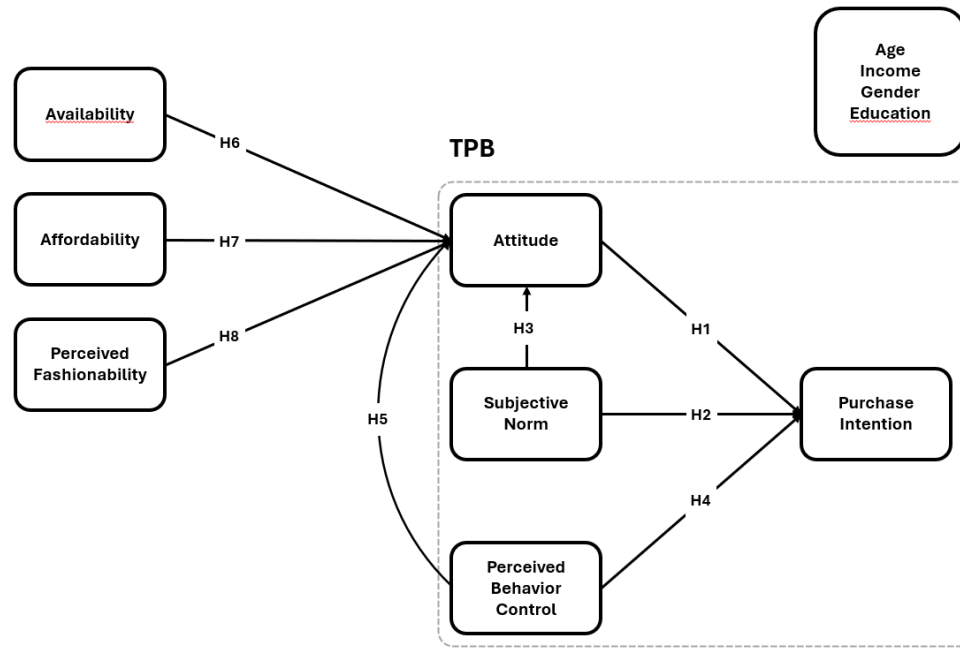


Figure 3 – Conceptual Model

#### 4.1. Attitude

In the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), developed by Icek Ajzen (1991), attitude refers to the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of a specific behavior.

Positive attitudes towards counterfeit items have been identified as a key predictor of the intention to buy counterfeit goods, particularly within the realm of luxurious fashion brands (Hà & Tam, 2015).

The relationship between attitude and purchase intention is crucial in the context of counterfeit luxury goods. Studies have demonstrated that consumer attitudes toward counterfeit products significantly impact their purchase intentions (Mayasari et al., 2022). Positive attitudes towards counterfeit items can lead to a higher willingness to purchase such goods, underscoring the importance of understanding and addressing consumer attitudes to combat counterfeiting in the luxury fashion industry. Research has proven this matter, confirming a strong positive influence of attitude toward counterfeit (Patiro & Sihombing, 2014) and luxury counterfeit (Kim & Karpova, 2010) products on the intention to buy them revealing that the attitude toward luxury fashion counterfeits can

have a positive effect on the intention to purchase them, therefore, the first hypothesis is formulated:

**H1.** Attitude toward luxury fashion counterfeit products has a positive influence on the purchase intention of luxury fashion counterfeit products.

#### **4.2. Subjective Norm**

Subjective norm, as defined in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by Ajzen (1991), refers to an individual's perception of social pressure or influence from important others regarding a specific behavior. In the context of counterfeit purchase intentions, subjective norms have been shown to play a crucial role in shaping consumers' attitudes and intentions towards buying, not only counterfeit products in general (Patiro & Sihombing 2014) but also counterfeit sporting products in the research by Chiu & Leng (2015) and fashion counterfeits by Kim & Karpova (2010) and it highlights that subjective norms have a positive influence purchase behavior through their impact on purchase intention. In the subject of the current study, this suggests that individuals' perceptions of social expectations, approval, or disapproval regarding luxury fashion counterfeit purchases can significantly influence their intentions to engage in such behavior proposing the following hypothesis:

**H2.** Subjective Norms toward luxury fashion counterfeit products have a positive influence on the purchase intention of luxury fashion counterfeit products.

Research has shown that subjective norms or social orientation as the authors construct, toward luxury counterfeit products positively influence attitude and perceived behavior control toward counterfeit luxury (Zaman et al., 2017) and fashion (Kim & Karpova, 2010) goods which proposes that the same can be assumed and hypothesized for luxury fashion counterfeit products proposing the following hypotheses:

**H3.** Subjective norms toward luxury fashion counterfeit products positively influence on attitude toward luxury fashion counterfeit products.

#### **4.3. Perceived Behavior Control**

Perceived behavioral control, as a component of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by Ajzen (1991), refers to an individual's perception of ease or difficulty in performing a specific behavior. Research by Das & Sabbir (2019) proposed an Extended Theory of Planned Behavior (ETPB) that includes perceived behavioral control as one of

the key factors affecting consumers' intention to purchase counterfeit jewelry. This suggests that consumers' perceptions of their ability to control and execute the behavior of buying luxury fashion counterfeit products can impact their overall purchase intentions suggesting the following hypothesis:

**H4:** Perceived Behavior Control toward luxury fashion counterfeit products has a positive influence on the purchase intention of luxury fashion counterfeit products.

According to TPB by Ajzen (1991), Perceived Behavior Control can directly or indirectly influence attitudes toward a behavior. In counterfeit luxury fashion, if individuals perceive that they have high control over the ability to access and purchase counterfeit goods (e.g., they are affordable, easily available), this sense of control might shape their attitude positively toward buying such products.

**H5:** Perceived Behavior Control toward luxury fashion counterfeit products has a positive influence on Attitude toward luxury fashion counterfeit products.

#### **4.4. Availability**

Availability refers to the extent to which counterfeit products are easily accessible in the market. Research by Ergin (2010) indicates that the degree of availability significantly impacts consumers' purchase decisions regarding counterfeit brands. When counterfeit products are readily accessible, consumers are more likely to develop favorable attitudes towards them, viewing them as convenient alternatives to genuine luxury items and this lowers barriers to purchase, making counterfeits a more attractive option for consumers who prioritize fashionability and affordability. Consequently, the widespread presence of counterfeits in the market can enhance their perceived legitimacy and acceptance among consumers. With this, it can be proposed that the availability of luxury fashion counterfeit products can positively influence the attitude toward them suggesting the following hypothesis:

**H6.** The availability of luxury fashion counterfeit products can positively influence the attitude toward luxury fashion counterfeit products.

#### **4.5. Affordability**

Affordability plays a critical role in shaping consumer behavior, particularly in the context of luxury items, which are often associated with high price points and exclusivity. Research by Phau and Teah (2009) has shown that luxury counterfeit products are perceived as more affordable compared to genuine products and individuals may develop more positive attitudes towards purchasing counterfeits. The affordability of counterfeit goods can influence consumers' perceptions of value and accessibility, potentially leading to more favorable attitudes toward counterfeit products so it can be assumed that the affordability of luxury fashion counterfeits can have a positive influence on the attitude toward the same kind of products leading to the following hypothesis:

**H7.** The affordability of luxury fashion counterfeit products positively influences the attitude toward luxury fashion counterfeit products.

#### **4.6. Perceived Fashionability**

Appadurai (1996) suggests a shift in the way consumption is perceived and valued over time contrasting traditional consumption, which values lasting quality and enduring experiences, with contemporary consumption trends that favor short-lived, quickly replaceable products and experiences. This shift reflects broader changes in cultural values and consumer behavior, where the immediate and the ephemeral (Appadurai, 1996) are increasingly prized over the durable and the enduring, suggesting that the thought of timelessness in consumers can somewhat influence the attitude on counterfeiting since the luxury market has been leaning towards fleeting trends and counterfeit products may seem a more viable and cheaper choice. Supporting this assumption, research by Phau et al. (2009) suggests that consumers' attitudes toward counterfeit products can be influenced by their perceptions of authenticity and value. When consumers perceive genuine products as overpriced or unattainable due to their timelessness and enduring appeal, they may develop more favorable attitudes towards counterfeit products as more accessible alternatives proposing the last hypothesis:

**H8.** The Perceived Fashionability of luxury fashion products positively affects the attitude toward luxury fashion counterfeit products.

## **5. Methodology**

### **5.1. Measurement**

Constructs were measured using items sourced from relevant literature, with variables emerging from the literature review. The measurement instrument relied on various established and reliable scales with all items being derived from previously validated measurement scales found in the literature.

As stated in Appendix A, the availability items were adapted from Marde and Verite (2023), while the affordability measures were sourced from Notami (1997). Additionally, perceived fashionability was derived from the work of Dowling and Midgley (1986). The attitude construct was adapted from Ha and Tam (2015). Furthermore, the measures for subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, and purchase intention were adapted from Kim and Karpova (2010).

A questionnaire-based survey incorporating the aforementioned items was developed to test the research model and the items were measured using a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (7) "strongly agree". The questionnaire was distributed through an online research platform called Prolific where the participants had the study's meaning and purpose and also, the instructions to answer the questions properly with the guarantee of the confidentiality and anonymity of their answers. For a better understanding of the purchase intentions and attitudes of the average consumer, participants were restricted to being 18 years old or older. In the survey, there was also an "Attention Check" question where it was asked for the participants to choose a specific option, that would disqualify and reject all the answers of those who failed to choose it.

### **5.2. Data**

The first data collected was meant to test the model in which there was conducted a pilot test with 25 participants who were close friends and family. This data was not utilized in the main questionnaire data used for this study's research. The pilot allowed to identify the items pilot test participants found difficult, leading to adjustments for coherence by revising ambiguous sections and either replacing or eliminating questions

that did not seem fit or clear. The Appendix A shows the items chosen for the main research.

With this, a total of 154 responses were recorded of which 13 were rejected due to failing the Attention Check question. With this, 141 different responses were accounted for the main research of this study. Looking at the data of this study and specifically the inner structural model, it shows that all VIFs are lower than the threshold of 3.3 (Kock, 2015) indicating the model can be considered free of common method bias.

The age of the 141 respondents in the sample falls 99.3% in 3 age groups with 50 respondents in the 18-24 age group (35.5%), 70 in the 25-34 age group (49.6%), and 20 in the 35-44 age group (14.2%) and finally with only one respondent in the 45-54 age group. The gender distribution among respondents is relatively balanced, with 65 males (46.1%) and 74 females (52.5%). Additionally, 2 respondents identified as "Other." 39 of the respondents (27.7%) only have secondary school finished while more than half of the respondents have a bachelor's/associate's degree with 75 responses (53.2%) and also 26 respondents (18.4%) have a master's degree with only 1 having the PhD degree. With this, 72.3% of respondents have a superior education. The annual income levels of the respondents varied significantly. A substantial portion, 53 respondents (37.6%), reported earning less than \$15,000 per year. Following this group, 37 respondents (26.2%) had an annual income ranging from \$15,000 to \$24,999. Additionally, 29 respondents (20.1%) reported earnings between \$25,000 and \$49,999. In the higher income brackets, 13 respondents (9.2%) earned between \$50,000 and \$75,000, while 3 respondents reported incomes between \$75,000 and \$99,999. Only 2 respondents fell within the \$100,000 to \$150,000 range, and 4 respondents reported an annual income of \$150,000 or more. Regarding respondents' past purchases of luxury fashion counterfeits, 54 individuals (38%) reported that they had never made such a purchase, while 87 respondents (62%) indicated that they had bought counterfeit luxury fashion items at least once.

## 6. Results

The validity of the questionnaire items was assessed using structural equation modeling (SEM). Subsequently, the partial least squares (PLS) approach was employed to estimate the model and test the significance of the hypotheses. All analyses were conducted using SmartPLS 4.1.0.6 software.

### 6.1. Measurement Model

In the model analysis, several tests were conducted to ensure the robustness and validity of the constructs. As shown in Table 1, Cronbach's alpha values exceeded the threshold of 0.7, and construct reliabilities were also above 0.7, indicating strong internal consistency (Hair et al., 2022). The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for all constructs was above the recommended threshold of 0.5, demonstrating satisfactory convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Furthermore, all construct loadings exceeded their respective cross-loadings for every item, confirming discriminant validity (Götz et al., 2010). The Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) was below the value of 0.85 (Appendix C), further supporting discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). Additionally, the Fornell-Larcker criterion was satisfied, as the diagonal values were larger than all values in the same row and column, reinforcing the model's discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>	<b>Composite reliability (rho_a)</b>	<b>Composite reliability (rho_c)</b>	<b>Average variance extracted (AVE)</b>
<b>AFF</b>	0.884	1.003	0.926	0.806
<b>ATT</b>	0.865	0.886	0.896	0.554
<b>AV</b>	0.835	0.884	0.887	0.662
<b>INT</b>	0.979	0.979	0.986	0.960
<b>PBC</b>	0.865	0.897	0.906	0.708
<b>PF</b>	0.822	0.878	0.892	0.736
<b>SN</b>	0.842	0.844	0.904	0.759

Table 1 - Construct Reliability and Validity

## 6.2. Structural Model

Using 5,000 bootstrapping iterations to calculate t-statistics and standard error deviations, the analysis of the path coefficients (Figure 4) reveals that the model accounts for 68.4% of the intention to purchase counterfeit luxury fashion products.

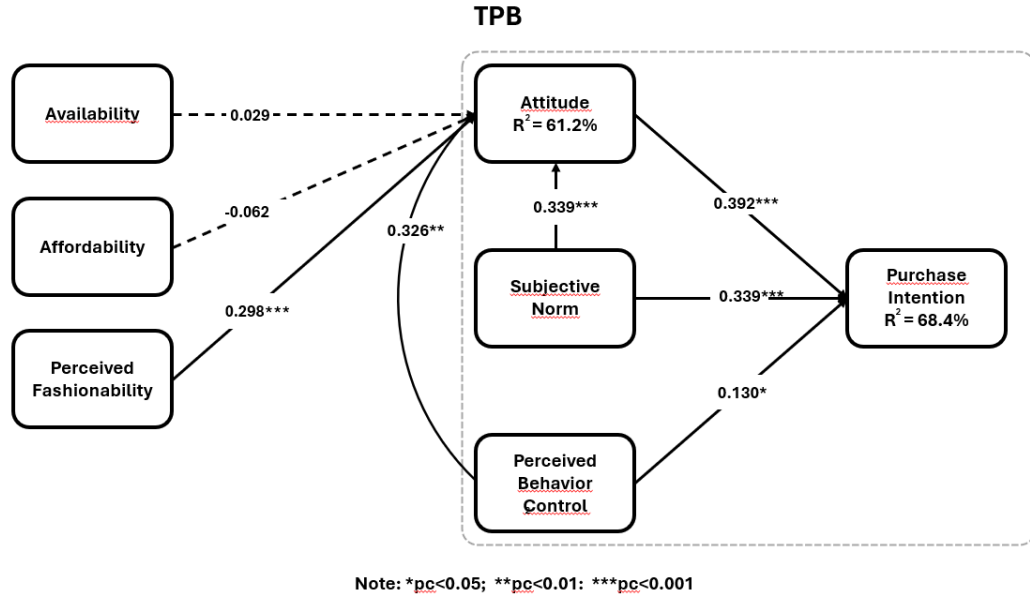


Figure 4 – Structural Models Results

Perceived Fashionability ( $\hat{\beta} = 0.298$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), Subjective Norm ( $\hat{\beta} = 0.339$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and Perceived Fashionability ( $\hat{\beta} = 0.326$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) are statistically significant for explaining 61.2% of the variation of Attitude. With this, we can confirm the hypotheses H3, H5 and H8. Attitude ( $\hat{\beta} = 0.392$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), Subjective Norm ( $\hat{\beta} = 0.339$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and Perceived Behavior Control ( $\hat{\beta} = 0.130$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) are statistically significant for explaining 68.4% of Purchase Intention. With this, hypotheses H1, H2 and H4 can be confirmed. On the other hand, Availability and Affordability were found to have no statistical significance on Attitude and so, hypotheses H6 and H7 were refuted.

About the control variables Education ( $\hat{\beta} = 0.104$ ,  $p < 0.5$ ) and Income ( $\hat{\beta} = 0.108$ ,  $p < 0.5$ ) has direct influence on Purchase Intention, while Gender and Age did not.

	<b>Original Sample (O)</b>	<b>Sample Mean (M)</b>	<b>Standard Deviation (STDEV)</b>	<b>T statistics ( O/STDEV )</b>	<b>P values</b>
<b>AFF -&gt; ATT</b>	-0.062	-0.062	0.071	0.881	NS
<b>ATT -&gt; INT</b>	0.391	0.392	0.078	5.033	<0.001
<b>AV -&gt; ATT</b>	0.029	0.030	0.066	0.441	NS
<b>PBC -&gt; ATT</b>	0.327	0.328	0.088	3.733	<0.01
<b>PBC -&gt; INT</b>	0.131	0.129	0.064	2.056	<0.05
<b>PF -&gt; ATT</b>	0.298	0.301	0.083	3.608	<0.001
<b>SN -&gt; ATT</b>	0.339	0.340	0.076	4.455	<0.001
<b>SN -&gt; INT</b>	0.423	0.426	0.066	6.451	<0.001

Table 2 – Path coefficients – Mean, STDEV, T values, p values

## **7. Implications**

The research was undertaken to explore the determinants shaping consumers' cognitive processes and attitudes toward counterfeit luxury fashion goods, as well as the underlying factors influencing their intention to purchase such items. A theoretical framework was devised, integrating the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) with additional constructs, namely Perceived Fashionability, Affordability, and Availability. The model empirically validated six out of the eight direct hypotheses initially proposed.

However, the findings of this research present a departure from the existing body of literature, notably, the study revealed that Availability does not exert a significant impact on Attitude toward counterfeit products, a conclusion similarly drawn for Affordability. Conversely, the construct of Attitude was notably influenced by Perceived Fashionability, aligning with previous research that underscores its importance (Appadurai, 1996; Phau et al., 2009). This finding is consistent with the established significance of Perceived Fashionability, alongside the other key components of the TPB—Subjective Norm and Perceived Behavioral Control—in shaping consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions.

The constructs of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) demonstrated a strong alignment with prior research findings (Mayasari et al., 2022; Patiro & Sihombing, 2014; Kim & Karpova, 2010; Ajzen, 1991; Patiro & Sihombing, 2014; Chiu & Leng, 2015; Zaman et al., 2017; Das & Sabbir, 2019), particularly in their ability to predict and explain consumers' intentions to purchase counterfeit luxury fashion products. This congruence highlights the robustness of the TPB framework in capturing the psychological and social factors that drive such purchasing behaviors.

### **7.1. Theoretical Implications**

The confirmation that a positive attitude toward counterfeit luxury products significantly influences purchase intention suggests that both cognitive (beliefs about the product) and affective (emotional response) components of attitude are crucial in shaping consumer behavior. This implies that consumers' favorable beliefs about the functionality, style, or symbolic value of counterfeit goods, combined with positive emotions such as satisfaction or excitement when considering these products, contribute to their intent to purchase.

Since income was an influential control variable, the variation in its levels and the propensity to purchase counterfeit goods might suggest that socioeconomic status influences the degree of moral flexibility consumers exhibit toward counterfeiting. Individuals in lower income brackets may be more willing to overlook the ethical issues associated with counterfeit goods, prioritizing affordability and social status over legal or moral considerations. Many respondents earn less than \$25,000 annually and still exhibit a significant interest in purchasing luxury fashion counterfeits and this same occurrence is verified in the higher income brackets as well, which indicates that economic factors are not a big motivator of purchase intention. Other factors, such as the desire to appear wealthy, the perceived quality of counterfeits, or the thrill of owning a forbidden item, may also play a role.

Regarding the influence of previous purchases, the data showcased that 62% of respondents have previously bought at least 1 counterfeit luxury item, indicating that past behavior plays a significant role in shaping current attitudes and purchase intentions, potentially leading to the reinforcement of positive attitudes toward counterfeit products through repeated exposure and normalization.

The data shows that a significant proportion of the sample consists of younger individuals, particularly in the 18-34 age range, who are often influenced by trends, social media, and peer pressure. However, the finding that age was not statistically significant in predicting purchase intention suggests that younger consumers, despite their exposure to influencer culture and online communities that may normalize or glamorize counterfeit products, are not necessarily more inclined to purchase counterfeit luxury goods than older consumers.

High availability could reduce the novelty or perceived exclusivity of counterfeits, leading to a neutral or even negative attitude rather than a positive one. In markets where counterfeit goods are highly available, consumers might become desensitized to their presence, losing their allure and failing to enhance consumer attitudes. In these environments where counterfeits are widespread, consumers may also become increasingly aware of the associated legal risks and moral issues, such as supporting illegal activities or harming the original brands. Additionally, the high availability of counterfeit goods might raise concerns about their quality, as consumers may associate easy accessibility with poor quality, unreliability, or a lack of authenticity.

Similar to the rejection of H6, this finding challenges the conventional wisdom that affordability drives positive attitudes toward counterfeit goods. The rejection indicates that low cost does not necessarily lead to favorable attitudes toward counterfeit luxury items suggesting that the perceived value, quality, or status associated with the counterfeit product may play a more crucial role in shaping attitudes than affordability alone.

## **7.2. Managerial Implications**

One key insight is the importance of addressing both the cognitive and affective components that drive consumer attitudes toward counterfeit goods. Brands should develop targeted educational campaigns that highlight the superior quality, craftsmanship, and ethical production of genuine luxury products, thereby reshaping consumer beliefs and emotional responses. By emphasizing not only looks, but also the unique heritage, authenticity, and exclusivity that genuine products provide, brands can effectively counter the perceived value of counterfeits and enhance the appeal of authentic luxury items.

Given the theoretical implication presented above that lower-income consumers may exhibit greater moral flexibility regarding the purchase of counterfeit goods, luxury brands should craft messaging that resonates with this demographic. Emphasizing the ethical implications of purchasing counterfeits, while offering accessible alternatives such as entry-level luxury items or financing options, could help these consumers align their purchasing decisions with their ethical standards without sacrificing the desire for luxury.

Although age does not statistically predict purchase intention for luxury fashion counterfeit products, luxury brands should still maintain strong connections with influencers and social media platforms to engage younger consumers effectively. Younger demographics are highly active on social media, and while age alone may not drive their intention to purchase counterfeits, their attitudes and brand perceptions are still shaped by the content they consume. By collaborating with influencers who align with the brand's values and promote the authenticity and quality of genuine luxury products, companies can continue to build loyalty among younger consumers. Maintaining these connections helps ensure that young consumers remain engaged with the brand and are less likely to be swayed by the allure of counterfeit goods, even if age alone is not a direct predictor of purchase intention.

The finding that availability did not significantly impact consumer attitudes toward counterfeit luxury goods suggests that simply increasing or controlling the supply of counterfeit items in the market may not be enough to influence consumer perceptions. For luxury brands, this implies that efforts to curb counterfeiting by focusing solely on reducing the availability of counterfeit products may be less effective than anticipated in shaping consumer attitudes.

Finally, developing strong relationships with customers through loyalty programs and personalized engagement can help luxury brands reinforce the value of purchasing authentic products. Offering exclusive experiences, early access to new collections, and personalized services can increase customer loyalty and create a sense of belonging that counterfeit goods cannot replicate. By focusing on these strategies, luxury brands can control the counterfeit market more effectively, protect their brand equity, and maintain consumer loyalty to genuine luxury items.

## **8. Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research**

This study, while providing valuable insights into consumer attitudes and purchase intentions regarding counterfeit luxury fashion goods, is not without its limitations. First, the sample size and demographic composition may limit the generalizability of the findings. The majority of respondents were young adults within a specific age range (18-34) and with a particular socioeconomic background, which may not fully represent the broader population of luxury consumers. This demographic skew could influence the study's results, particularly in how attitudes and purchase intentions are formed, so future research should aim to include a more diverse and representative sample expanding the age range to include older consumers and higher income levels who may have different perspectives on luxury goods and counterfeiting, would provide a more comprehensive view of the issue.

Second, the study relies on self-reported data, which can be subject to biases such as social desirability or recall bias. Respondents may have underreported their engagement with counterfeit products due to the stigma associated with such behavior, or they might have inaccurately recalled their past purchasing habits. This limitation can affect the accuracy and reliability of the findings and future studies could employ a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative surveys with qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews or focus groups.

One of the things this study brings into focus is the moral and ethical dimensions of consumer attitudes toward counterfeit products. Even though consumers may hold positive attitudes toward these goods, it is important to consider how ethical considerations, such as the awareness of supporting illegal activities or the impact on the original brand, might interact with these attitudes. It is suggested that future theoretical models could benefit from integrating moral reasoning as a moderating factor in the relationship between attitude and purchase intention.

Lastly, the cross-sectional nature of the study captures consumer attitudes and intentions at a single point in time, which does not account for how these factors may change over time. Consumer perceptions and market conditions are dynamic, and longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into how attitudes toward counterfeit goods evolve. Such studies could add valuable knowledge to the long-term effects of repeated exposure to counterfeit products and the impact of ongoing anti-counterfeiting measures by luxury brands.

In conclusion, this study offers significant contributions to the understanding of consumer behavior in the context of counterfeit luxury fashion goods by applying the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). The findings confirm that positive attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control are critical drivers of purchase intentions, reinforcing the TPB's relevance in this domain. However, the study also challenges conventional assumptions by revealing that factors such as availability and affordability do not necessarily enhance consumer attitudes toward counterfeits, suggesting that perceived value and ethical considerations play a more nuanced role. Moreover, the influence of demographic variables, particularly socioeconomic status and age, underscores the complexity of consumer motivations, which extend beyond mere financial constraints to encompass deeper psychological and social factors. While the study's limitations, such as its demographic skew and reliance on self-reported data, highlight areas for further investigation, the insights gained provide a robust foundation for future research and practical strategies aimed at curbing the demand for counterfeit luxury fashion goods. Ultimately, this research not only advances theoretical understanding but also offers actionable guidance for luxury brands seeking to protect their integrity and market position in an increasingly challenging landscape.

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## APPENDIX A - Questionnaire

Questionnaire items			
Constructs		Item	Adapted from
Availability	AV1	I find that luxury fashion counterfeit products are constantly available for purchase.	(Marde & Verite, 2023)
	AV2	I think it's easy to find luxury fashion counterfeit products near me	
	AV3	I think there are more and more luxury fashion counterfeit products available.	
	AV4	I know multiple places where I can purchase luxury fashion counterfeit products.	
Affordability	AFF1	If I want to, I could easily afford luxury fashion counterfeit products	(Notani, 1997)
	AFF2	It is manageable to me, to spend money on counterfeit luxury fashion products.	
	AFF3	My personal income permits me to easily spend on counterfeit luxury fashion items.	
Perceived Fashionability	PF1	I consider counterfeit luxury fashion products to be fashionable.	(Dowling & Midgley, 1986)
	PF2	Luxury fashion counterfeit products are trendy.	
	PF3	I think that counterfeit luxury fashion products are popular among fashion consumers.	
Attitude	ATT1	I prefer buying luxury fashion counterfeit products.	(Ha & Tam, 2015)
	ATT2	Generally speaking, buying luxury fashion counterfeit products is a better choice.	
	ATT3	Buying luxury fashion counterfeit products generally benefits the consumer.	
	ATT4	Luxury fashion counterfeit products provide similar functions to the genuine products.	
	ATT5	To me, luxury fashion counterfeit products look similar to the genuine products.	
	ATT6	Luxury fashion counterfeit products are as reliable as the genuine products.	
	ATT7	It is acceptable to buy counterfeit luxury fashion products.	
Subjective Norm	SN1	Close friends and family think it is a good idea for me to buy luxury fashion counterfeit products.	(Kim & Karpova, 2010)
	SN2	The people who I listen to could influence me to buy luxury fashion counterfeit products	
	SN3	Important people in my life want me to buy luxury fashion counterfeit products.	
Perceived Behavior Control	PBC1	I see myself as capable of purchasing luxury fashion counterfeit products	(Kim & Karpova, 2010)
	PBC2	For me, to buy luxury fashion counterfeit products is easy.	
	PBC3	If i want to, I could easily buy luxury fashion counterfeit products.	
	PBC4	I would have the time to search and purchase luxury fashion counterfeit products.	
Purchase Intention	INT1	I intend to buy luxury fashion counterfeit products in the future.	(Kim & Karpova, 2010)
	INT2	I will try to buy luxury fashion counterfeit products in the future.	
	INT3	I will make an effort to buy luxury fashion counterfeit products in the future.	
Filters and Controls	Age	What is your age (in years)?	
	Gender	What is your gender?	
	Education	What is the highest education degree you have earned?	
	Income	What is your income level?	

APPENDIX B – PLS loadings and cross loadings

	<b>AFF</b>	<b>ATT</b>	<b>AV</b>	<b>INT</b>	<b>PBC</b>	<b>PF</b>	<b>SN</b>
<b>AFF1</b>	0.839	0.206	0.566	0.137	0.497	0.212	0.143
<b>AFF2</b>	0.943	0.392	0.441	0.345	0.580	0.350	0.341
<b>AFF3</b>	0.909	0.250	0.435	0.199	0.479	0.220	0.259
<b>ATT1</b>	0.315	0.800	0.362	0.706	0.530	0.646	0.655
<b>ATT2</b>	0.353	0.883	0.305	0.711	0.497	0.545	0.637
<b>ATT3</b>	0.347	0.753	0.359	0.481	0.497	0.575	0.445
<b>ATT4</b>	0.206	0.678	0.286	0.347	0.474	0.500	0.304
<b>ATT5</b>	0.202	0.625	0.289	0.316	0.437	0.375	0.240
<b>ATT6</b>	0.138	0.787	0.211	0.608	0.407	0.443	0.499
<b>ATT7</b>	0.147	0.649	0.176	0.582	0.452	0.270	0.455
<b>AV1</b>	0.456	0.232	0.786	0.166	0.304	0.247	0.101
<b>AV2</b>	0.475	0.240	0.830	0.161	0.359	0.285	0.153
<b>AV3</b>	0.303	0.289	0.782	0.258	0.396	0.428	0.134
<b>AV4</b>	0.459	0.414	0.855	0.356	0.570	0.443	0.290
<b>INT1</b>	0.269	0.729	0.305	0.979	0.589	0.617	0.716
<b>INT2</b>	0.304	0.740	0.311	0.986	0.583	0.621	0.748
<b>INT3</b>	0.240	0.735	0.297	0.975	0.543	0.596	0.719
<b>PBC1</b>	0.385	0.629	0.330	0.642	0.855	0.477	0.505
<b>PBC2</b>	0.596	0.524	0.539	0.472	0.895	0.466	0.394
<b>PBC3</b>	0.580	0.362	0.493	0.293	0.782	0.352	0.253
<b>PBC4</b>	0.475	0.531	0.473	0.460	0.830	0.457	0.417
<b>PF1</b>	0.339	0.663	0.415	0.659	0.556	0.903	0.611
<b>PF2</b>	0.224	0.586	0.387	0.554	0.437	0.924	0.496
<b>PF3</b>	0.209	0.381	0.359	0.326	0.333	0.735	0.242
<b>SN1</b>	0.273	0.615	0.282	0.658	0.499	0.531	0.857
<b>SN2</b>	0.248	0.529	0.173	0.602	0.421	0.446	0.860
<b>SN3</b>	0.254	0.556	0.135	0.677	0.351	0.469	0.896

Note: AFF – Affordability; ATT – Attitude; AV – Availability; INT – Purchase Intention; PBC – Purchase Behavior Control; PF – Perceived Fashionability; SN – Subjective Norms

APPENDIX C – Discriminant Validity – Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) -  
Matrix

	<b>AFF</b>	<b>ATT</b>	<b>AV</b>	<b>INT</b>	<b>PBC</b>	<b>PF</b>	<b>SN</b>
<b>AFF</b>							
<b>ATT</b>	0.352						
<b>AV</b>	0.620	0.424					
<b>INT</b>	0.270	0.783	0.318				
<b>PBC</b>	0.684	0.707	0.606	0.601			
<b>PF</b>	0.332	0.742	0.521	0.665	0.600		
<b>SN</b>	0.319	0.727	0.245	0.816	0.544	0.627	