

Brand Vs Counterfeit: The Place for Counterfeit among Fashion & Brand Conscious Females

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate how brand consciousness and fashion consciousness influence the willingness to purchase counterfeit brands in the lawn wear market. Purchase intention serves as a mediator, while social influence acts as a moderator. The research focuses on a sample of 300 females from Lahore, Pakistan. Data will be collected using a structured questionnaire, and the analysis will be conducted using Smart PLS. This non-contrived study addresses a significant gap in the market literature.

Keywords: brand consciousness, social influence, fashion consciousness, counterfeits

1. INTRODUCTION

With a sizeable portion of the market, counterfeit goods constitute a notable and pervasive trend in luxury consumerism (Wiktor, Sonja, Grzegorz, 2024). In 2019, the value of internationally traded counterfeit goods was USD 464 billion, or roughly 2.5% of all trade. This tendency is particularly evident in the European Union (EU) market, where the estimated value of counterfeit goods imported is USD 134 billion, or 5.8% of the entire value of imports into the EU (OECD/EUIPO, 2021). The amount of counterfeit goods traded internationally has more than doubled over the last 15 years, highlighting the expanding scope of this issue. As a result, the consumption of fake goods has been the subject of research by numerous scholars (Feng et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2021; Samaddar & Menon, 2020; Wilcox & Zaichkowsky, 2020).

The range of counterfeit products is broad, spanning various fields from software to pharmaceuticals, which underscores the influence of counterfeits on trading industries and activities. Counterfeits are especially prevalent for products with high consumer demand and readily available low-cost manufacturing technology (Shultz & Saporito, 1996). For example, apparel items like headgear and footwear

are commonly counterfeited due to their high demand and the low level of production technology required (OECD, 2009).

In today's world, counterfeiting has become a significant issue. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the global value of counterfeit goods was almost USD 250 billion in 2007 (OECD, 2009). The Business Action to Stop Counterfeiting and Piracy forecasted that the global value of counterfeit products would rise to USD 960 billion by 2015 (BASCAP, 2011). Although the exact size and value of the counterfeit market are difficult to estimate due to its illegal nature, there is a consensus that the counterfeit market is continuously growing and could be significantly higher than forecasted (Chaudhry & Zimmerman, 2012; Lee & Yoo, 2009).

Counterfeit products can act as substitutes for genuine products. Previous studies have concluded that counterfeits are more commonly purchased by customers with lower incomes, less education, and younger age groups (Wee, Tan, & Cheok, 1995; Swami, Chamorro-Premuzic, & Furnham, 2009; Tom, Garibaldi, Zeng, & Pilcher, 1998; Ang, Cheng, Lim, & Tambyah, 2001; Bian & Veloutsou, 2007; Hamelin, Nwankwo, & El Hadouchi, 2013; Prendergast, Chuen, & Phau, 2002; Hsu & Su, 2008). The demand for counterfeit products is also affected by a country's economic conditions. There is a higher level of acceptance of substitute products in countries with lower income levels. The rate of acceptance for counterfeit products varies between countries (Rahman, Haque, & Rahman, 2011; Shultz & Saporito, 1996; Zimmerman & Chaudhry, 2009; Husted, 2000; Lee & Yoo, 2009).

In Pakistan, there has been limited research on counterfeit products, particularly concerning the growing trend towards counterfeit designer lawn wear. This presents a rational domain for conducting research to pave the way for future researchers and assist firms currently facing counterfeiting issues, which are diminishing the value of original brands.

1.1. Background

Counterfeits are sometimes purchased by consumers who believe they are genuine. However, some consumers knowingly purchase counterfeit goods (Tom et al., 1998; Phau et al., 2009). Counterfeits are more likely to appear in product categories where there is high demand, and the manufacturing technology is inexpensive and widely available (Shultz & Saporito, 1996). Consequently, many studies have shown that counterfeits are more likely to be purchased by consumers with lower incomes, less education, or younger age (Wee et al., 1995; Swami et al., 2009; Tom et al., 1998; Ang et al., 2001; Bian & Veloutsou, 2007; Hamelin et al., 2013; Prendergast et al., 2002; Hsu & Su, 2008).

This research is based on quantitative data collected from consumers of lawn wear in Lahore. Our project aims to examine the impact of consumer cognitive behaviors and consciousness towards fashionable and branded products, considering the availability of counterfeit products in the local market of Lahore and their willingness to purchase these counterfeit products, with social influence as a moderating factor. The strength of social influence varies across consumers (Park & Lessig, 1977; Girard, 2010; Lord et al., 2001). Social influence can significantly affect consumers' buying decisions, as humans often rely on others' perceptions and judgments as sources of evidence. Particularly, the more uncertain a person is about the correctness of their judgment, the more likely they are to be susceptible to social influences in making their judgment (Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975; Deutsch & Gerard, 1955).

1.2. Problem Statement

Brand consciousness among people, especially among the youth and the lower middle class, is increasing significantly. Nowadays, people are highly obsessed with brands. In the past, women were more budget-conscious and rarely spent beyond their means. Today, famous brand labels in footwear, outfits, and food satisfy their conscious customers. To address this obsession, the market has developed the concept of counterfeits. Counterfeit goods are deliberately made to look genuine and involve the manufacturing or distribution of products under someone else's name without their permission. These goods are generally made from lower quality components, aiming to sell cheap imitations of well-known and trusted brands. This study investigates the prevalence and acceptance of counterfeit products among fashion- and brand-conscious females.

1.3. Objectives

The following objectives are developed for the current study:

- To identify the willingness to purchase counterfeits among fashion-conscious women.
- To analyze the impact of counterfeit lawn wear on brand-conscious women.
- To analyze the impact of social influence on the willingness to purchase counterfeit lawn wear.
- To investigate the impact of social influence on brand- and fashion-conscious women.
- To analyze the impact of counterfeit lawn wear among fashion-conscious women.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term "purchase of unauthorized copies of trademarked or copyrighted goods" refers to the consumption of counterfeit goods (Shan et al., 2022, p. 59). Counterfeits are copies that have the exact same appearance as authentic items, including the packaging, name, and label. Although they appear to be genuine, counterfeit goods are of inferior quality and cost (Amar et al., 2018). Wearing a fake item puts one at risk of being discovered and apprehended for engaging in this behavior (Wiktor and Sonja, 2024).

Brand consciousness refers to consumers' mental orientation to pay for well-recognized branded products over other brands. Consumers with strong brand consciousness tend to purchase expensive, well-known, and heavily marketed brand products. Brand-conscious consumers use brands to portray their fashion consciousness, reduce risk in purchase decisions, and express their personality traits (Liao & Wang, 2009). The concept of brand consciousness was developed to capture the consumer socialization process, explaining why people prefer certain brands over others (Sproles & Kendall, 1986). Consumers with high levels of brand consciousness believe that brands are symbols of their status and prestige (Liao & Wang, 2009).

A significant element of consumer traits is brand awareness and the intensity to process information. Thus, brand consciousness is generally described as a personality trait indicating the extent to which a consumer is oriented towards acquiring well-recognized branded products (Gehrt, 1996). Nowadays, young consumers are becoming more brand-conscious, prioritizing well-known brands' clothes due to their concern about peers' opinions. When the quality of a product is difficult to evaluate, brand consciousness may be based on the belief that a higher-priced brand signals higher quality.

For brand-conscious consumers, brands act as a medium to express one's identity due to their considerable symbolic value (Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Jamal & Goode, 2001). Consumers who purchase expensive and high-status brands tend to be more brand-conscious because they believe brands can demonstrate prestige and status (Jamal & Goode, 2001). Brand consciousness is considered a significant decision-making style and an important component of consumer language, associating branded goods with status (Liao and Wang, 2009). Consumers' level of involvement affects their perceived brand status, as a high level of involvement indicates perceived differences in product attributes among brands (Zaichkowsky, 1985). The use of branded goods can enhance an individual's self-image, with brand-conscious customers more likely to wear branded products to express their

ideal self-image and relate to a high social class (Wee, Tan, & Cheok, 1995; Bian & Moutinho, 2011). Brand-conscious consumers are less inclined towards purchasing counterfeit products (Gentry, Putrevu, & Shultz, 2006). Literature suggests that purchase intention of counterfeit goods may be negatively influenced by brand consciousness.

Counterfeits can be defined as goods with a specific and renowned symbol similar to the sign of an authorized company's brand (Bian & Moutinho, 2011). Counterfeits are available only for products with high customer value due to the distinguishing attributes of that famous brand (Eisend & Schuchert-Guler, 2006). Their prices are lower than genuine brand products (Zaichkowsky, 1985; Wilcox, Kim, & Sen, 2009). Non-price determinants of willingness to purchase counterfeits include personality (Wee, Tan, & Cheok, 1995), demographic factors (Norum & Cuno, 2011; Wee, Tan, & Cheok, 1995), product-specific characteristics (Wee, Tan, & Cheok, 1995), motivations (Wilcox, Kim, & Sen, 2009), brand image (Bian and Moutinho, 2011), and market conditions (Miyazaki, Rodriguez, & Langenderfer, 2009). Counterfeits are categorized into two types from the customer outlook (Grossman & Shapiro, 1988): products purchased because consumers think they are original, and those bought knowingly as counterfeits (Tom, Garibaldi, Zeng, & Pilcher, 1998; Phau, Teah, & Lee, 2009).

There are two types of counterfeit deception explained in the literature. When a customer voluntarily purchases a product believed to be original, it is known as non-deceptive counterfeiting. When a counterfeit product is knowingly purchased, it is a non-deceptive purchase, depending on consumers' counterfeit purchase intention (Eisend & Schuchert-Guler, 2006). The quality of counterfeit products has improved over the last few years, with counterfeit products often delivering similar characteristics to original brands, including durability, quality, and design. Consumers' demand for counterfeit products is encouraged by low pricing strategies (Dematos, Ituassu, & Rossi, 2007; Penz & Stottinger, 2005; Phau, Teah, & Lee, 2009; Chiu, Lee, & Won, 2014). People selling counterfeit products cannot explicitly promote these goods due to their illegal nature. Counterfeit products are sold through various sources, such as e-commerce websites, street vendors, and retail markets. Despite availability, consumers may find it difficult to access counterfeit products as compared to original products (Lan, Liu, Fang, & Lin, 2012). When counterfeit products are readily available, customer intention to purchase them increases (Chiu, Lee, & Won, 2014; Prendergast, Chuen, & Phau, 2002).

When imagining counterfeit products, apparel, clothing items, and handbags come to mind because these product categories are considered luxury brands and are highly prone to high-profile legality suits. In these situations, customers are more

inclined to purchase counterfeit brands willingly. The degree of consumers' willingness to match up with the latest fashion styles and wear fashionable products of a well-recognized brand drives counterfeiting (Bloch, Bush, & Campbell, 1993). Social influence involves cognition, attitude, and behavior, such as being influenced by a policeman to move a car or by a teacher to use the best method to solve a mathematical problem (Raven, Bertram H). Social influencers are remarkably smart and knowledgeable compared to individuals (Galton F, 1907). Women are less influential than men (Linda L. Carli). Social networks and their availability endorse individuals and influence within a group (Ingrid Alina Christensen).

3. THEORATICAL FRAMEWORK

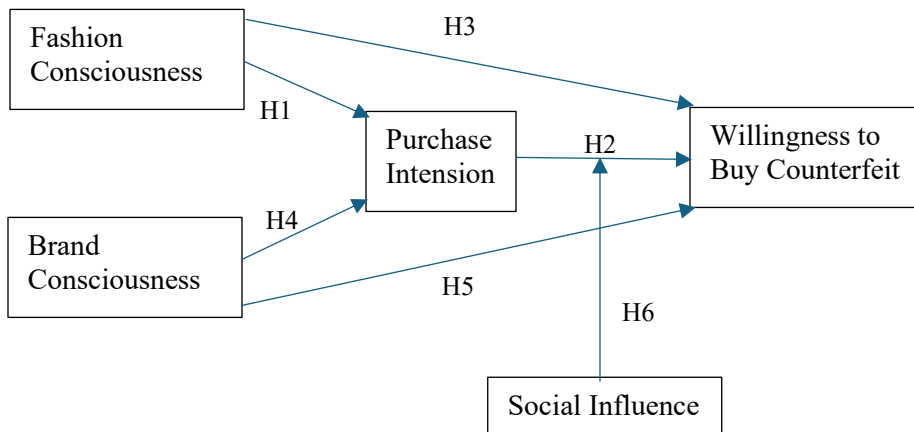


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

The framework above illustrates the impact of fashion consciousness (independent variable) and brand consciousness (independent variable) on willingness to purchase counterfeits (dependent variable), with purchase intention acting as the mediator and social influence as the moderator.

3.1. Hypotheses

H1: Fashion consciousness has a significant impact on purchase intention.

H2: Purchase intention has a significant negative impact on willingness to buy counterfeits.

H3: Fashion consciousness has a significant negative impact on willingness to buy counterfeits.

H4: Brand consciousness has a significant impact on purchase intention.

H5: Brand consciousness has a significant impact on willingness to buy counterfeits.

H6: Social influence moderates the relationship between purchase intention and willingness to buy counterfeits positively.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Nature of Research

The present research adopts a quantitative and explanatory approach. Quantitative research methods were utilized to analyze data, establish logical relationships between variables, and support obtained results with statistical analysis.

4.2. Sample Characteristics

The study was conducted across four locations in Lahore to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Stratified sampling was employed in this cross-sectional study, with a total sample size of 300 participants (75 for each stratum). The target areas included Auriga, Link Road Model Town, Emporium, and Liberty Market.

4.3. Data Collection Method

Data were collected from women who wear lawn clothes, specifically targeting areas such as Emporium, Mall of Lahore, and Link Road. A structured questionnaire, adapted from previous studies within a similar context and theoretical framework, was used as the research instrument. The questionnaire comprised 23 well-designed questions related to five variables: fashion consciousness, brand consciousness, social influence, purchase intention, and willingness to buy counterfeits. Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 for "strongly disagree" to 5 for "strongly agree"). The questionnaire was distributed to participants via email. Smart PLS will be utilized for data analysis.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using statistical tools to ensure the consistency of the scale in measuring data. Reliability, in this context, refers to the extent to which the scales are free of errors. Cronbach's Alpha was employed as a convenient technique to analyze the internal reliability of the data. A Cronbach's Alpha value of more than 0.7 is generally considered indicative of good reliability.

For data analysis, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using Smart PLS software was utilized. SEM can effectively reveal the amount of variance in the dependent variable caused by independent variables, considering the effects of moderators and

mediators, which can indirectly impact dependent variables in the proposed theoretical model.

Table 1: Outer Loadings

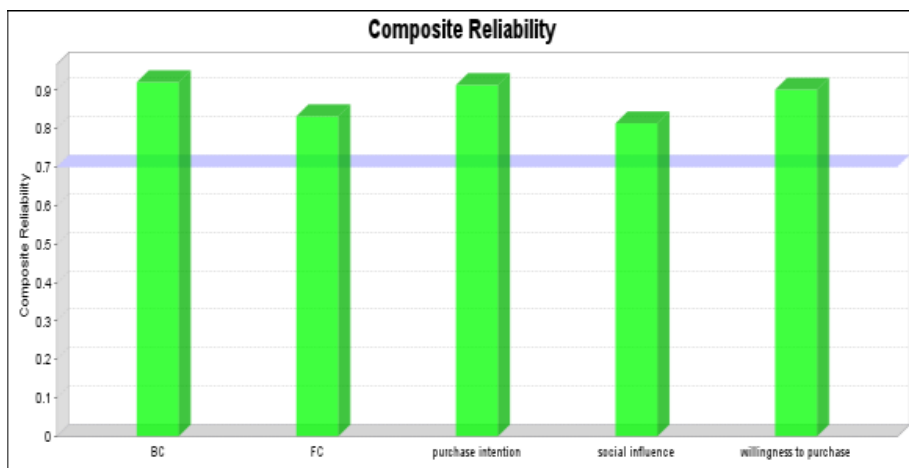
	BC	FC	purchase intention	social influence	willingness to purchase
Bc1	0.897				
Bc2	0.916				
Bc3	0.894				
Bc4	0.732				
Fc 3		0.844			
PI1			0.923		
PI3			0.910		
SI 1				0.734	
SI 4				0.916	
WP1					0.918
Wp3					0.893
fc6		0.844			

First, we assessed the measurement model by calculating PLS (Partial Least Squares) loadings to examine convergent validity and discriminant validity. Table 1 presents the loading values, followed by discriminant validity analysis where cross-loading values are lower in other sections. The p-value should be less than zero, as shown in Table 2.

Brand consciousness (BC) has a negative impact on purchase intention, indicating that brand-conscious individuals are less inclined towards purchasing counterfeits. Similarly, brand-conscious individuals also have a negative impact on the willingness to purchase counterfeit lawn wear. Fashion consciousness (FC) also has a negative effect on purchase intention, indicating that fashion-conscious women show less interest in buying counterfeit lawn wear. Both purchase intention and willingness to purchase counterfeits exhibit a positive impact on each other. The moderator, social influence, has a positive moderating effect on purchase intention and willingness to purchase counterfeits.

Table 2: Path Coefficients (Mean, STDEV, T-Values, P-Values)

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	t-statistics (O/STDEV)	p- value
BC -> Purchase intention	-0.400	-0.406	0.052	7.684	0.000
BC -> willingness to purchase	-0.147	-0.147	0.039	3.780	0.000
FC -> purchase	-0.032	0.037	0.058	0.543	0.587
FC -> willingness to purchase	-0.007	-0.007	0.034	0.220	0.826
purchase intention -> willingness	0.727	0.728	0.041	17.759	0.000
social influence - >willingness to purchase	0.090	0.090	0.045	2.017	0.044

**Graph 1: Composite Reliability**

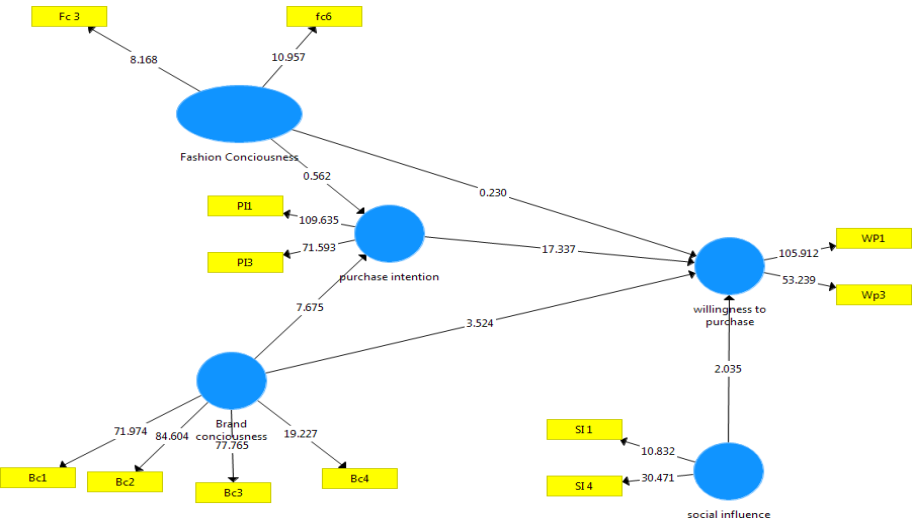


Figure 1: Path Model

This figure shows the representation of path model with all the loading values blue ovals are variables yellow rectangles are indicators of those variables along with their values.

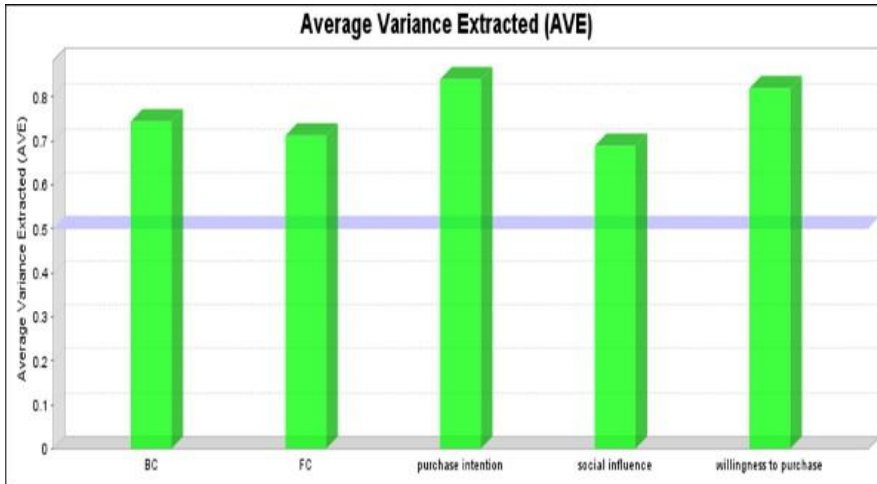
Table 3: Inner Model Residual Correlation

	BC	FC	purchase intention	social influence	willingness to purchase
BC					
FC					
purchase intention			1.000		0.000
social influence					
willingness to purchase			0.000		1.000

Now the testing path model in this we calculated bootstrapping and blind folding too.

Table 4: R Square

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
purchase intention	0.170	0.164
willingness to purchase	0.698	0.693

**Graph 3: Average Variance Extracted (AVE)****Table 5: Construct Reliability and Validity**

	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
BC	0.745
FC	0.712
purchase intention	0.840
social influence	0.689
willingness to purchase	0.820

Every variable has an average variance extracted more than 0.5 this shows significance.

Table 6: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	BC	FC	purchase intention	social influence	willingness to purchase
BC	0.863				
FC	0.351	0.844			
purchase intention	-0.411	-0.172	0.917		
social influence	-0.014	0.102	0.364	0.830	
willingness to purchase	-0.450	-0.175	0.822	0.356	0.906
Cross Loadings					
Bc1	0.897	0.329	-0.404	-0.042	-0.428
Bc2	0.916	0.315	-0.403	-0.004	-0.427
Bc3	0.894	0.332	-0.369	-0.039	-0.414
Bc4	0.732	0.205	-0.170	0.088	-0.225
Fc 3	0.370	0.844	-0.120	0.104	-0.173
PI1	-0.407	-0.185	0.923	0.309	0.772
PI3	-0.344	-0.129	0.910	0.360	0.734
SI 1	0.066	0.147	0.184	0.734	0.211
SI 4	-0.057	0.050	0.383	0.916	0.356
WP1	-0.428	-0.131	0.789	0.347	0.918
Wp3	-0.385	-0.190	0.694	0.295	0.893
fc6	0.223	0.844	-0.170	0.068	-0.123

In Fornell Larker check the diagonal values should be more with own and less with another variable.

Table 7: Blindfolding

	SSO	SSE	Q² (=1-SSE/SSO)
BC	1,200.000	1,200.000	
FC	600.000	600.000	
Purchase intention	600.000	522.781	0.129
social influence	600.000	600.000	
willingness to purchase	600.000	279.440	0.534

In the above table to see the model fitness it is observed that all the values are above 0 so it's all up to the mark.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study explores the role of counterfeit products among fashion-conscious and brand-conscious females. Counterfeit items often serve as substitutes for authentic products, particularly in cases where assessing product quality is challenging. These items may appeal to individuals who seek to showcase their status and fashion sense but lack the means to do so with genuine products. Brand-conscious consumers are more likely to wear branded items to express their ideal self-image and associate themselves with a higher social class. Additionally, the study suggests that the purchase intention of counterfeit goods may be negatively influenced by both fashion consciousness and brand consciousness. However, it is important to note that consumer attitudes may vary across different product categories.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

In Pakistan, there is limited research on counterfeit items, and specifically, the emerging trend towards counterfeit designer Lawn Wear appears to be a promising area for further investigation. Conducting research in this area can pave the way for upcoming researchers and assist organizations currently grappling with counterfeiting issues, which are leading to a decline in the value of original brands.

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ANNEXURE 1

Questionnaire

Sr. No.	Measures	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	An important part of my life is to dress smartly.					
2	While choosing between fashion and comfort, I usually dress for fashion as compared to comfort.					
3	It is important to me that my clothes represent the latest trends.					
4	I usually have more than one outfit of the latest fashion style.					
5	It is important for people to dress in the latest styles					
6	I am concerned about the manner I present myself to others.					
7	I am usually anxious about creating a good impression to the public					
8	Other people's views about me are important.					
9	I am usually aware of how I look.					
10	I usually choose more expensive brands.					
11	Well Known brands are best for me					
12	I prefer buying the best-selling brands.					
13	The most advertised brands are usually better choices.					
14	I will purchase counterfeit goods.					
15	I will never consider					

	buying counterfeit goods.					
16	The probability that I will consider buying counterfeit goods is high.					
17	I will purchase counterfeit Lawn Wear					
18	I will never consider buying counterfeit Lawn Wear					
19	The probability that I will consider buying counterfeit Lawn Wear is					
20	My friends' evaluation and preference will influence my choice					
21	Other people's recommendation may influence my final decision.					
22	The preferences of family members can influence my choice of running shoes.					
23	To satisfy the expectations of classmates or fellow work associates, my Willingness to purchase lawn counterfeits is influenced by their preferences.					