

Innovations

Counterfeit Brands and Consumer Purchase Intention for Smartwatches in Warrimetropolis Delta State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined the effect of counterfeit brands on consumer purchase intentions for smartwatches in Warri Metropolis, Delta State. This study engaged cross sectional survey research design method. Purposive sampling technique was used for the study. A total of 217 customers of smartwatch brands in Warri Metropolis, Delta State were selected for the study. The instrument used for the study was a structured questionnaire. To establish the reliability of the instrument, a test-retest method was employed. The data collected from the field survey were analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation and multiple regression analyses. Findings showed that the dimensions of counterfeit brands explained 78% of the variability of consumer purchase intention. Findings showed that value consciousness exhibited a higher positive effect on consumer purchase intention for smartwatches ($\beta = .578, p < 0.05$). The study concluded that product attributes, value consciousness, and group social influence have positive effect on consumer purchase intention. The study recommended amongst others that smartwatch manufacturers need to undertake the responsibility of enlightening their customers regarding the inherent worth and benefits that their product provides and how to avoid buying counterfeit smartwatches.

Keywords: Counterfeit Brands, Consumer Purchase Intention, Smartwatch Brands

Introduction

The consumer electronics sector on a global scale has experienced a significant increase in the demand for smartwatches, mostly due to the quick progress in technology. These multifunctional devices have seen significant advancements, surpassing their original purpose of timekeeping, and now contain a wide range of capabilities like as fitness monitoring, communication, and various productivity-enhancing functionalities. Consequently, customers are more dependent on smartwatches, rendering them a profitable market niche for both well-established and rising firms. Nevertheless, concealed inside this prosperous business exists an ongoing and covert obstacle: the issue of counterfeit smartwatches. Counterfeit products, such as counterfeit smartwatches, are fabricated by counterfeiters with the intention of imitating the visual attributes,

operational capabilities, and brand identity of authentic products. The counterfeit products are frequently available at significantly reduced rates compared to their authentic counterparts, attracting budget-conscious customers who desire to utilise the functionalities of these devices without incurring the corresponding high cost.

Counterfeit brands refer to illicit products that are manufactured and marketed in contravention of established trademark, copyright, patent, or other forms of intellectual property rights (IPRs) (Qian, 2014b). The trade in counterfeit brands has the potential to inflict harm upon enterprises, impede economic growth, and disrupt global competition. Additionally, it presents possible risks to the well-being of individuals through the circulation of products that evade safety protocols and standards, hence facilitating criminal endeavours (Li & Yi, 2017). The challenge of quantifying and analysing the prevalence and patterns of counterfeit brands in the economy is a challenging endeavour from a strategic standpoint. However, the existing evidence consistently suggests a significant and increasing trend in the global trade of counterfeit products (OECD-EUIPO, 2016). Norum and Cuno (2011) have identified a global phenomenon characterised by the proliferation of counterfeit luxury products in the realms of manufacturing, distribution, and consumption. Counterfeiting refers to the act of manufacturing goods that closely resemble the original product, encompassing elements such as trademarks, labelling, and packaging, with the intention of deceiving consumers into seeing them as authentic (Patiro&Sihombing, 2016). Counterfeiting poses a significant challenge for manufacturers, as no product or brand is impervious to its effects (Lee & Workman, 2011). The repercussions of counterfeiting are widely recognised as a grave concern, causing considerable difficulties for the original producers.

Counterfeiting has a significant impact on both the products that are directly associated with the counterfeit goods in terms of their reputation for quality or taste, as well as the activities related to the research, development, and marketing of these products (Hieke, 2010). The presence of counterfeit luxury goods in countries with stringent regulations prohibiting such items presents significant risks to both public health and the environment (World Trademark Review, 2010). The proliferation of counterfeit goods in the market has led to a corresponding rise in consumer demand for these fraudulent products (Bhatia, 2018). Counterfeit luxury items are prominently observed within product categories that exhibit significant demand, owing to the cost-effective and easily accessible manufacturing processes associated with such products (Chiu & Leng, 2016). The market for counterfeit goods is substantial. Counterfeit products, encompassing a wide range of things varying from small commodities to high-value goods, have been documented across many product categories on a global scale (Chiu & Leng, 2016). The demand for counterfeit items is experiencing a steady increase as a result of various contributing causes (Quoquab, et al., 2017). In general, individuals have a strong inclination to allocate a disproportionate share of their financial resources towards the acquisition of luxury goods (Wiedmann, et al., 2007). Individuals with limited financial resources often exhibit a strong inclination to purchase counterfeit luxury goods within jurisdictions characterised by inadequate intellectual property legislation (Chiu & Leng, 2016).

A brand typically serves as a manifestation of culture, beliefs, values, personality, and nationality. Consequently, individuals with varying levels of affluence are strongly pushed to use high-end luxury goods from renowned brands as a means of showcasing their social standing (Aaker, 2009). Conversely, individuals with limited financial resources perceive counterfeit luxury goods as commodities that transform into new objects, as shown by Sharma and Chan (2011). Several scholarly research have examined the influential elements that impact consumers' propensity to purchase counterfeit things, specifically focusing on variables such as place of origin, generational differences, and perceptions of value (Bhatia, 2018; Fastoso et al., 2018; Jiang & Shan, 2018). Moreover, a number of scholarly investigations have identified various factors that contribute to the intention to purchase counterfeit products. These factors include product attributes (Yao, 2014), brand image (Mir, Rizwan, & Saboor, 2012), income level (Rizwan et al., 2014), gender (Chen & Tang, 2006), perceived risks (Huang et al., 2004), integrity (Chiu & Leng, 2016), gratification (Ang et al., 2001),

smart shopper behaviour (Penz&Stottinger, 2005), perceived behavioural control (Chiu &Leng, 2016), subjective norms (Chiu et al., 2014), and materialism (Yoo& Lee, 2009), among others.

According to recent reports, counterfeiting is experiencing a notable expansion beyond its historically targeted sectors, which include cigarettes, watches, and apparel. This trend is particularly evident in the realm of high-tech products, such as memory sticks, solid state drives, sound apparatus, video games (OECD, 2017), and other related goods (BSA, 2016). The ramifications of counterfeiting on the operational outcomes of corporations, particularly those with a greater dependence on innovation, are subject to much debate and pose challenges in empirical estimation. Over time, the apprehension regarding imitation may serve as a deterrent for companies to allocate resources towards the advancement of novel technology and the formation of potentially beneficial collaborations for the manufacturing of technology-driven products. Consequently, this could have a detrimental impact on competitiveness and economic expansion (Hu &Png, 2013), as well as diminish the value of a brand (Gabrielli, et al., 2012).

Simultaneously, the theoretical literature has also emphasised the presence of potentially beneficial externalities. The potential mitigating impact of a positive externality on the adverse consequences of imitation is a matter that warrants empirical investigation (Vincenzo, et al., 2020). Moreover, previous research has documented empirical support for the beneficial outcomes of imitation when examined within the broader context of fostering innovation across extended temporal durations. Luxury products encompass non-essential items that are characterised by their high cost, superior quality, exceptional craftsmanship, and distinctive design, hence providing buyers with a sense of pleasure and social status (Keller, 2009). However, the expansion of luxury goods consumption also gives rise to the counterfeit luxury product business (Yoo& Lee, 2012), which poses significant challenges to the achievement of sustainable economic, social, and environmental progress. The aforementioned variables have contributed to a significant increase in the prevalence of counterfeit luxury goods within the Nigerian market, exhibiting a notable pattern of exponential expansion. Counterfeit luxury products refer to imitations of high-end brands that closely resemble authentic luxury items in terms of their packaging, labelling, and trademarks, albeit typically being priced lower than genuine products (Stravinskiene, et al., 2013). The purchasing behaviour of consumers in relation to counterfeit luxury products can be categorised into two distinct groups. The initial category pertains to instances where buyers inadvertently acquire counterfeit luxury items due to the challenge of discerning between authentic luxury products and their counterfeit counterparts. The subsequent classification pertains to consumers who possess prior knowledge that they are acquiring counterfeit merchandise. Bian et al. (2016) asserted that despite being a counterfeit item, the luxury product is nevertheless purchased due to variables such as price and cost performance considerations. The primary focus of this study centres on the second category of customer behaviour. Currently, scientists primarily investigate the determinants of customers' inclination to buy counterfeit luxury goods by examining personal and social aspects, in addition to product-related factors (Tang, et al., 2014).

The current body of empirical information on the implications of counterfeits is limited in both its reach and breadth, and the results are inconclusive (Qian, 2014a; Qian et al., 2015). Undoubtedly, the absence of data resulting from the illicit nature of counterfeiting has hindered the ability to conduct comprehensive, long-term, and cross-sector analyses. The limited numbers of empirical studies available have sought to examine the ramifications of counterfeit goods solely at the macroeconomic or industry-wide level, as opposed to analysing individual firms. This is mostly owing to the scarcity of micro-level data pertaining to counterfeit products. Digital technology companies can be characterised as entities that engage in the production and/or commercialization of at least one tangible product that integrates digital technology. It is important to note that this definition excludes any marketing activities associated with the company's brands. The objective of this work is to solve the aforementioned deficiency. The study constructs a unique dataset comprising of digital technology firms that have been impacted by counterfeiting, as well as a control group of similar digital technology firms that have not been harmed by counterfeiting. By conducting a comprehensive

examination of customer behaviour and attitudes, our objective is to provide insight into the impact of counterfeit smartwatches on purchase intentions and subsequently, the wider consumer electronics industry. In undertaking this endeavour, our aim is to offer significant perspectives that can assist manufacturers, retailers, and legislators in formulating approaches to protect customers and maintain the authenticity of the smartwatch industry amidst the growing prevalence of counterfeit products.

Statement of the Problem

Counterfeit brands have had a significant impact on the global marketplace for an extended period of time, resulting in the generation of substantial revenue amounting to billions of dollars (AP News, 2018). The presence of counterfeit products might result in significant financial losses for authentic firms. The decision of customers to purchase counterfeit goods has the potential to negatively impact the sales of legitimate products. Counterfeit merchandise frequently exhibits diminished quality and has the potential to result in subpar client experiences. The association of substandard quality with the authentic brand has the potential to negatively impact its reputation. A counterfeit refers to a product that is intentionally manufactured with the purpose of misleading or deceiving consumers. Counterfeit goods are illicitly produced and fraudulently presented as authentic brands. A counterfeit product can be distinguished from a knockoff by its characteristics, since a knockoff is essentially a replica of the original item that is produced using inferior materials and is typically marketed at a lower price point. A knockoff product is one that is either marketed or sold as the authentic brand, however it is lawfully labelled by the entity responsible for its distribution. The resolution of counterfeit-related issues sometimes entails intricate legal disputes, which can prove to be both arduous and financially burdensome for authentic brands. Infringements upon intellectual property rights have the potential to result in litigation and associated legal costs.

In response to the escalating prevalence of counterfeit goods, various policies have been enacted and enforced in different markets, alongside the implementation of measures aimed at safeguarding consumers (Barnier, 2017). Various distribution channels facilitate the accessibility of counterfeit items to end consumers, encompassing flea markets, liquidation sales, street sellers, criminal storefronts, legitimate enterprises, and online platforms (Wilson & Fenoff, 2014). In the realm of e-commerce, consumers face a certain level of uncertainty regarding the authenticity of the products they purchase. Vendors have the capability to develop websites that provide an appearance of authenticity by using the company's logo and marketing materials. In recent times, there has been a proliferation of counterfeit products being sold by distributors at prices that closely resemble those of the authentic products. This practise has the potential to deceive online shoppers into mistakenly seeing these counterfeit products as real (Timpone, 2017). Counterfeit goods have the potential to compromise customer safety due to their failure to adhere to safety regulations, hence posing health and safety hazards contingent upon the specific nature of the product. The aforementioned circumstances may lead to potential legal obligations and reputational harm to the brand.

The issue of counterfeit smartwatches presents a multifaceted challenge for consumers, producers, and the wider consumer electronics industry. The appeal of a cost-effective substitute is attractive to consumers, but, it gives rise to inquiries regarding the calibre and dependability of the product, as well as the possible legal and ethical ramifications associated with the purchase and use of counterfeit merchandise. Counterfeit products pose significant threats to legitimate manufacturers as they have the potential to undermine brand trust, diminish market share, and result in severe financial losses. The present study examines the complex association between counterfeit brands and customer purchase intentions within the smartwatch sector. The objective of this study is to investigate the determinants that impact customers' decision-making process when confronted with the option of purchasing either authentic or counterfeit smartwatches. Moreover, the objective of this study is to investigate the influence of customer awareness regarding counterfeit items on their views, attitudes, and trust towards genuine companies.

Objectives of the Study

The study examined the effect of counterfeit brands on consumer purchase intentions for smartwatches in WarriMetropolis, Delta State. The specific objectives are to:

1. evaluate the effect of product attributes on consumer purchase intention for smartwatches in WarriMetropolis, Delta State.
2. ascertain the effect of value consciousness on consumer purchase intention for smartwatches in WarriMetropolis, Delta State.
3. determine the effect of group social influence on consumer purchase intention for smartwatches in WarriMetropolis, Delta State.

Review of Related Literature

Counterfeit Brands

Counterfeiting is a prohibited commercial practise engaged in by certain companies, which exhibits a persistent growth and affects a wide range of product categories, including gaming, electrical equipment, pharmaceuticals, and fashion (Morra, et al., 2018). Counterfeiting can be described as the deliberate and calculated act of manufacturing or distributing a product that incorporates an intentional replica of an authentic trademark (McCarthy, 2004). According to Burnside (2018), the counterfeit sector comprises two distinct markets. The primary market comprises people who hold the belief that they are engaging in the purchase of authentic brands, but in actuality, they are acquiring a counterfeit brand. The secondary market comprises those who actively want to purchase counterfeit goods. Khaloud and Mahmoud (2019) provided more evidence to substantiate the notion that counterfeiting may be classified into two primary groups. The initial category is referred to as deceptive, wherein buyers lack awareness regarding the presence of counterfeit products. The second category is referred to as non-deceptive, wherein consumers have knowledge that they are purchasing counterfeit goods.

Several research have indicated that the purchase intention for counterfeit products varies across developed and developing nations as a result of customers' self-image perception and their desire to achieve an ideal self-image through such consumption (Kaufmann, et al., 2016; Jiang & Shan, 2018). Khaloud and Mahmoud (2019) asserted that individuals who choose to purchase authentic products are unlikely to exhibit interest in acquiring counterfeit alternatives, even when presented with a perceived cost benefit. Moreover, the presence of loyalty towards authentic luxury goods not only facilitates the repurchase behaviour but also serves as a safeguard for customers against the potential allure of counterfeit products that offer a price advantage (Yoo & Lee, 2012). On the other hand, it has been observed that consumers who possess previous experience of purchasing counterfeit luxury goods tend to exhibit a greater inclination towards consuming authentic products due to the perceived hazards connected with counterfeit brands (Yoo & Lee, 2009). Nevertheless, several existing research have provided evidence supporting a negative association between the perceived quality of counterfeit products and the intention to purchase real brands (Hashim, et al., 2018). Xiao et al. (2018) opined that it has been observed that individuals who engage in the purchasing of counterfeit luxury brands often do so in order to fulfil their self-expression needs. Bhatia (2017) discovered that the behaviours leading buyers to acquire counterfeit products are significantly influenced by social effect, value consciousness, and materialism.

Consumer Purchase Intention

The concept of purchase intention refers to an individual's inclination or willingness to acquire a specific brand subsequent to a thorough evaluation process (Mochammad, et al., 2020). The concept of buy intention for counterfeit luxury products pertains to the subjective inclination of consumers to acquire such things that are inauthentic in nature (Wu & Zhao, 2021). Numerous academic investigations have yielded noteworthy findings regarding the buying intentions associated with counterfeit products. The existing body of literature

has identified several positive or favourable aspects that influence consumers' decision to purchase counterfeit products. According to the study conducted by Hidayat and Diwasasri (2013), a range of social and psychological characteristics were identified as influential in shaping users' intents to purchase counterfeit products. The authors posited that those who held a favourable disposition towards counterfeit products exhibited greater intents to engage in purchasing such items. According to the study conducted by Koay (2018), individuals who exhibited a diminished feeling of responsibility demonstrated a greater inclination to engage in buying behaviours pertaining to counterfeit products. Bupalan et al. (2019) posited that there was a proliferation of counterfeit products in the market. Due to the presence of a substantial number of consumers with purchase intentions, a willingness to acquire counterfeit products was seen. The researchers provided an explanation of the theory of planned behaviour framework in order to illustrate consumers' intents to acquire counterfeit products. Bhatia (2018) posited that several factors were identified as predictors of customers' purchase intentions towards counterfeit fashion products. These factors include value consciousness, materialism, and social influence. Hence, it can be contended with confidence that favourable variables and assessments contribute to customers' inclination to purchase counterfeit items, whereas unfavourable elements and assessments diminish consumers' inclination to purchase counterfeit products.

Product Attributes

Product attributes encompass the distinct traits or aspects of a product that delineate its tangible and operational properties. These attributes serve the purpose of communicating information regarding the product to consumers, facilitating their comprehension of the product's characteristics. Sharma and Chan (2016) posited that it has been observed that product features can exert a greater influence on counterfeit purchasing compared to other aspects. Park-Poaps and Kang (2018) posited that the functional qualities of items have the potential to influence individuals' intents to acquire counterfeit goods. As per the research conducted by Phau et al. (2009), there is evidence to suggest that the quality and performance of counterfeit items have been advancing. Consequently, consumers are experiencing a similar level of satisfaction when using counterfeit products as they would with genuine branded products, albeit at a somewhat lesser degree. Moon et al. (2018) opined that the perceptions of customers about counterfeit luxury items and their subsequent purchase decisions are influenced by several product features, encompassing both functional and emotional attributes. Customers consider several product features such as quality, durability, affordability, availability, and beautiful packaging as significant factors in their decision-making process. Numerous experts have observed a significant correlation between product features and the propensity to acquire counterfeit luxury goods since the 2000s (Sharma & Chan, 2016). Counterfeit smartwatches exemplify an obscure aspect of the flourishing consumer electronics industry. These counterfeit replicas replicate the external appearance, characteristics, and branding of authentic merchandise, frequently appealing to cost-conscious customers who desire the appeal of cutting-edge technology at a more affordable cost. Nevertheless, despite their apparent similarity to genuine smartwatches, counterfeit products possess a unique array of characteristics that distinguish them from their true counterparts. This study examines the unique characteristics of counterfeit smartwatches, with the objective of elucidating the nuanced and overt disparities that set these replicas apart from authentic ones. Comprehending these characteristics is of utmost importance not only for customers who aim to make well-informed purchasing choices but also for producers, policymakers, and stakeholders involved in combating counterfeit activities. Consequently, the study posits that:

H₁: Product attributes have significant relationship with consumer purchase intention for smartwatches in WarriMetropolis, Delta State.

Value Consciousness

Value consciousness refers to the level of awareness and emphasis that consumers place on achieving optimal value for their monetary expenditures when engaging in the process of making purchase decisions. This statement encapsulates the notion that consumers exhibit a broader perspective beyond the price of a product, prioritising the value they can obtain in proportion to its cost. Value-conscious consumers aim to optimise the advantages they obtain while minimising their financial outlay. Personal variables encompass the impact of individuals' personality characteristics on the process of making consuming decisions. These characteristics include but are not limited to value consciousness, moral awareness, engagement in status consumption, and the inclination towards novelty (Wu & Zhao, 2021). Value consciousness is a term used to describe the inclination of consumers to seek products at reduced prices while still assuring the quality of the product (Lichtenstein, et al. 1993). Value consciousness encompasses two key dimensions of consumer behaviour: the first being the consumers' endeavour to obtain products of superior quality, and the second being their deliberation regarding the monetary component of the purchase (Parasuraman&Grewal, 2000). The buying intention of counterfeit luxury products is significantly influenced by this particular feature. Currently, there exist variations in scholarly investigations concerning the correlation between value consciousness and the buy intention of counterfeit luxury goods (Wu & Zhao, 2021). According to scholarly research, it has been suggested that individuals who possess a heightened sense of value consciousness are more likely to opt for counterfeit luxury goods. This inclination is attributed to their perception that counterfeit luxury products offer a greater cost advantage compared to authentic ones (Pueschel, et al., 2016; Kian, 2018).

Wu and Zhao (2021) posited that luxury products include intrinsic qualities that cannot be replicated by counterfeit luxury items. These qualities encompass elements such as skilled craftsmanship, historical lineage, and aesthetic ingenuity. The aforementioned intrinsic attributes are unattainable by counterfeit luxury goods, hence prompting certain discerning buyers to continue purchasing authentic luxury products instead of counterfeit alternatives (Kapferer&Michaut, 2014). The study conducted by Phau and Teah (2009) yielded results indicating that value consciousness does not exert a statistically significant impact on the purchase intention of counterfeit luxury products, hence aligning with this perspective. Value consciousness can be defined as a cognitive state characterised by a heightened awareness and consideration of price, while simultaneously taking into account the perceived quality of a product or service (Lichtenstein et al., 1993). Lichtenstein et al. (1993) posited that this particular experience engenders a sense of astute consumerism among individuals. The influence of value consciousness on consumers' intentions to acquire counterfeit luxury goods is seen as a significant factor within the domain of counterfeit luxury (Phau&Teah, 2009). Jiang et al. (2009) asserted that the availability of counterfeit luxury goods can cater to the needs of consumers who prioritise value sensitivity by offering products that possess a combination of moderate quality and a luxury emblem, all at a reduced cost. Hence, individuals who possess a heightened sense of value consciousness will exhibit greater levels of anxiety regarding counterfeit luxury goods, thereby demonstrating a heightened inclination to make purchases. One notable characteristic that significantly impacts consumer decision-making is the concept of "value consciousness," which holds great appeal for a considerable number of individuals purchasing smartwatches. This attribute signifies an elevated consciousness regarding the correlation between the price of a product and its perceived value. Value-conscious consumers aim to optimise the advantages obtained from their purchases while minimising the monetary expenditure. Consumers carefully examine products to determine whether the features and benefits are in congruence with the price they are willing to pay. Consequently, the study posits that:

H₂: Value consciousness has a significant relationship with consumer purchase intention for smartwatches in WarriMetropolis, Delta State.

Group Social Influence

Group social influence, commonly referred to as social influence or peer influence, encompasses the various mechanisms via which individuals' cognitive processes, actions, and attitudes are shaped by the collective entities to which they are affiliated or engage with. This concept pertains to the influence that others' presence, behaviours, beliefs, and views can exert on an individual's decision-making, preferences, and actions. Social variables encompass the impact exerted by individuals within a social group on customers, primarily encompassing consumers' perceptions of social risks, receptivity to information, susceptibility to norms, and collectivism (Ang, et al., 2001). Social risk perception has a significant role in influencing the purchasing behaviour of Nigerian consumers when it comes to counterfeit luxury products. Consumers exhibit a heightened focus on interpersonal interactions, a tendency that is shaped by the influence of traditional culture. Their primary focus tends to be on individuals and groups. Individuals exhibit a significant level of attentiveness towards the responses of individuals in their social circles with regards to their consumer behaviours. Additionally, they place importance on the acknowledgement of their own identity by other members of the community. Individuals exert considerable effort in preserving their social image, rendering them more vulnerable to the scrutiny and evaluation of fellow members of society on their patterns of consumption (Wu & Zhao, 2021).

When individuals make purchases of luxury goods, their motivations often extend beyond the inherent functionality of the thing itself. Instead, they seek to acquire the symbolic significance associated with the product, so enhancing their social standing and bolstering their perceived status and image among others. Liu and Murphy (2007) opined that there is an acknowledgment that customers place importance on the observation and assessment of the purchasing actions of others. When members of a certain social group become aware that the goods they have purchased are counterfeit, there is a potential risk of consumers facing exclusion or lack of recognition. The phenomenon under consideration is commonly referred to as social risk, as identified by Fraedrich and Ferrell (1992). In a study conducted by Pueschel et al. (2016), it was found that there exists a noteworthy adverse impact of social risk perception on customers' inclination to engage in the purchase of counterfeit luxury goods. In a study conducted by Wee and Tan (1995) regarding the purchasing behaviour of consumers in relation to pirated software, pirated books, counterfeit wallets, and counterfeit watches, it was determined that consumers' perception of risk does not exert a greater influence on their intention to purchase compared to other criteria. Contrary to the perspectives of Wee, a prevailing consensus among scholars suggests that the perception of social risk plays a substantial role in influencing the intention to purchase counterfeit luxury products (De Matos, et al., 2007; Chen, et al., 2014). However, it is worth noting that a minority of scholars' studies do not provide support or affirmation for this assertion.

In the contemporary age of digital interconnectivity and the prevalence of wearable technology, smartwatches have arisen as multifaceted objects that serve not only practical purposes but also function as expressions of fashion, indicators of social standing, and lifestyle accoutrements. As the market for smartwatches continues to expand, consumers are faced with a wide array of options. In making their purchasing decisions, individuals not only take into account their own personal tastes, but also examine the opinions, preferences, and behaviours of their social circles. The concept of group social influence is a significant factor in influencing consumer intentions to purchase smartwatches. Group social influence is a significant determinant in consumer behaviour, exemplifying the influence of social networks, peers, family members, and cultural trends on individual decision-making. This phenomenon comprises the influence of recommendations, peer pressure, social standards, and the aspiration to conform to a specific social group. In the realm of wristwatch acquisitions, the phenomenon of group social influence can show itself through diverse channels, encompassing the sway exerted by acquaintances and relatives, as well as the repercussions stemming from online evaluations and prevailing trends on social media platforms. Consequently, the study posits that:

H₃: Group social influence has significant relationship with consumer purchase intention for smartwatches in WarriMetropolis, Delta State.

Theoretical Framework

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

The relationship between attitude and purchase intention has been extensively explored in the consumer behaviour literature (Erkan& Evans, 2016; Lee, 2016). Ajzen (1991) asserted that the Theory of Planned conduct (TPB) posits that an individual's intention to engage in a specific conduct is a determining factor. Ajzen (1991) posited that intentions serve as a means to encompass the motivational elements that impact behaviour. Various factors contribute to the formation of individuals' attitudes, ultimately influencing their inclination to engage in the purchasing of counterfeit luxury brands (Chiu &Leng, 2016). Furthermore, the process of making purchasing decisions regarding counterfeit things is highly intricate and presents significant challenges. Despite the allure of substantial cost benefits and aesthetic appeal, individuals are often unable to resist the allure of counterfeit products (Penz&Stottinger, 2005). Previous research has indicated that several beneficial circumstances influence consumers' purchase of counterfeit goods, as explained by the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Penz&Stottinger, 2005), irrespective of the specific product category or brand name (Chiu &Leng, 2016).

There is a substantial body of research that provides evidence for the Theory of Planned Behaviour within the field of achievements (Yadav&Pathak, 2017). The aforementioned research provide empirical data suggesting that intentions serve as predictors of actual behaviour (Rahimah et al., 2018). The objective of this study is to integrate many determinants of behaviour within the framework of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). Additionally, this study has centred its attention on the identification of a positive attitude and subjective norm towards purchasing behaviour. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) has gained significant acceptance among scholars studying consumer behaviour (Cheng et al., 2011).

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) can be considered as an expansion of Fishbein's Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Abraham &Sheeran, 2003). According to Abraham and Sheeran (2003), the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) posits several key points. Firstly, it suggests that the most effective method for predicting individual behaviour is to comprehend their intentions. Secondly, these intentions are influenced by individuals' personal evaluations of engaging in the behaviour as well as their subjective norms, which encompass social factors. Lastly, the external determinants of behaviour are found to have only an indirect influence. Lastly, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) expands upon the theory of reasoned action by incorporating an additional significant element known as perceived behavioural control (PBC). PBC pertains to individuals' evaluation of their own capability to engage in a particular behaviour.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) proposes that an individual's attitudes towards a certain behaviour, such as the act of purchasing counterfeit products, have a substantial role in shaping their intention to partake in said behaviour. Within the domain of counterfeit brands, customers exhibit a spectrum of attitudes that span from favourable, characterised by perceived financial advantages, to unfavourable, driven by ethical considerations. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) places significant emphasis on subjective norms, which pertain to the perceived social pressure or acceptability associated with a specific behaviour. When deliberating the purchase of counterfeit brands, individuals may take into account the viewpoints and anticipations of their social circles, including acquaintances and relatives. The impact of peer influence and social norms on customer behaviour is noteworthy within this particular environment.

Methodology

The study employed a cross-sectional survey research approach to collect data pertaining to respondents' perspectives on the effects of counterfeit brands on consumer purchase intention. The rationale behind selecting this particular approach stems from the fact that surveys are highly suitable for scientific

investigations. The standardised stimulus is provided to all participants. The population for this study comprised of customers who often buy smartwatch brands from smartwatch dealers in WarriMetropolis, Delta State. The focus was on customers of Apple Watch Series 9, Samsung Galaxy Watch 6, Google Pixel Watch and Apple Watch SE (2022) in Warri metropolis of Delta State. The study employed the purposive sampling technique to select a sample of 217 customers who shop luxury smartwatches in Warri Metropolis, Delta State.

The data gathering approach employed in this study involved the use of a self-administered structured questionnaire. The survey instrument used a structured questionnaire format, employing a five-point Likert scale to elicit responses from participants. The scale encompassed a range of options, from strongly disagree to strongly agree, prompting respondents to indicate their level of agreement with the provided statements. The present study aimed to evaluate the questionnaire's validity with the involvement of a panel of experts in the marketing industry. This panel meticulously examined and assessed the instrument, rating each item's relevance and representativeness using a Likert-type scale style. In order to ascertain the instrument's reliability, a test-retest technique was applied. The reliability of the questionnaire was estimated using the Cronbach's alpha index.

According to Hair et al. (2006), the acceptable range for the lower limit in quantitative research is within the range of 0.60 to 0.70. Based on the data presented in Table 1, it is evident that all the items yielded favourable and reliable ratings, as indicated by values over 0.6. This surpasses the commonly recommended threshold for Cronbach's alpha value, as suggested by Malhotra (2004), hence establishing the acceptability of the model's reliability measurement.

Table 1 Reliability test for all items in the Questionnaire

SN	Variables	Number of items	Alpha (α) Value
1	Product attributes (PA)	4	0.744
2	Value consciousness (VC)	4	0.745
3	Group social influence (GSI)	4	0.747
4	Consumer purchase intention (CPI)	4	0.743

Source: Output of pilot survey, 2023.

The data obtained from the field survey were subjected to analysis applying descriptive and inferential statistical methods in order to derive a generalisation and draw a conclusion. The background profile of the respondents was analysed using simple percentage in the descriptive statistics. The inferential statistical techniques employed in this study include correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis. Correlation was employed to assess the magnitude of the relationship between variables, while multiple regressions was used to ascertain the degree to which the independent variable explained variation in the dependent variable, as well as to evaluate the statistical significance of the relationships between variables. The analysis was conducted using the SPSS for Windows software, namely version 25.

The researcher's formulated statistical equation to predict $CPI = \beta_0 + \beta_1PA + \beta_2VC + \beta_3GSI + \epsilon$

Results and Discussions

Among the total of 217 copies of questionnaire distributed, 214 were successfully collected, while 3 were deemed incomplete. Consequently, 212 copies of questionnaire were deemed suitable for analysis. Hence, the analysis conducted in this study relied on a response rate of 98%.

Table 2 Correlation Analyses Result for Study Variables

S/N	Variables	1	2	3
1	Product attributes	1		
2	Value consciousness	.515**	1	
3	Group social influence	.462**	.839**	1
4	Consumer purchase intention	.580**	.863**	.797**

Source: Analysis of field survey, 2023

According to the findings presented in Table 2, there is a notable and statistically significant positive correlation ($r = 0.580^{**}$, $p < 0.01$) between attributes of a product and consumer purchase intention. The findings of the study indicate a significant and positive relationship between value consciousness and consumer purchase intention ($r = 0.863^{**}$, $p < 0.01$). In a similar vein, there was a significant positive correlation seen between group social influence and consumer purchase intention ($r = 0.797^{**}$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 3 Counterfeit brands and consumer purchase intention Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-1.301	.763		-1.706	.090
	Product attributes	.190	.040	.176	4.694	.000
	Value consciousness	.635	.067	.578	9.432	.000
	Group social influence	.239	.061	.231	3.897	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer purchase intention

Source: Analysis of field survey, 2023

The Unstandardized coefficients indicated how much the response variable varies with a control variable when all other control variables are held constant.

$$CPI = -1.301 + (0.190 \times PA) + (0.635 \times VC) + (0.239 \times GSI)$$

Table 3 showed that product attributes had positive effect on consumer purchase intention ($\beta = 0.176$, $p < 0.05$). Value consciousness showed a higher positive effect on consumer purchase intention ($\beta = 0.578$, $p < 0.05$). Group social influence had a positive effect on consumer purchase intention ($\beta = 0.231$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 4 Fitness of the Models

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	268.904	3	89.635	253.182	.000 ^b
	Residual	73.639	208	.354		
	Total	342.542	211			

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer purchase intention

b. Predictors: (Constant), Product attributes, Value consciousness, Group social influence

Source: Analysis of field survey, 2023

The statistical analysis presented in Table 4 indicates that each of the independent variables, namely product attributes, value consciousness, and group social influence, have a significant predictive effect on the dependent variable, Consumer purchase intention. This is evidenced by the F-ratio of 253.182, which is statistically significant at a significance level of $p < 0.05$. This suggests that the regression model adequately captures the patterns and relationships present in the data.

**Table 5 Variance in Consumer Purchase Intention
Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.886 ^a	.785	.782	.5950

a. Predictors: (Constant), Product attributes, Value consciousness, Group social influence

Source: Analysis of field survey, 2023

According to the findings shown in Table 5, it was observed that the dimensions of counterfeit brands accounted for a significant 78% (0.782) shift in consumer purchase intention, as evidenced by the adjusted R2 value. The explanatory power of the dimensions of counterfeit brands was shown to account for 78% of the variance in consumer purchase intention.

Summary of Findings

Data was collected from a sample of 220 participants who completed an online survey using a self-administered questionnaire. The participants' gender was categorised into two groups: male and female. The sample consisted of 69% male respondents and 31% female respondents. The largest percentage of respondents belonged to the age group below 50 years, comprising 71% of the total. This was followed by the age group of 51-70 years, which accounted for 25% of the respondents. The remaining 4% of respondents were aged 71 years and beyond. A significant proportion of the participants possessed a bachelor's degree (62%), while a smaller percentage held a Master's or PhD degree (20%). A minority of respondents reported having an Ordinary National Diploma (OND) or Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) (11%), and an even smaller fraction indicated having a Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) qualification (7%).

According to the findings shown in Table 2, there exists a robust and statistically significant positive correlation between product attributes and consumer purchase intention ($r = 0.580^{**}$, $p < 0.01$). The results presented in Table 3 indicated that product attributes had a significant positive effect on consumer purchase intention ($\beta = 0.176$, $p < 0.05$). The results of the H1 test indicated a significant positive relationship between product attributes and consumer purchase intention ($p < 0.05$). The findings of this study align with the claim made by Moon et al. (2018) that product features, including both functional and emotional attributes, have an impact on consumers' perception of counterfeit luxury items and subsequently influence their ultimate purchasing choices. This suggests that customers place importance on product attributes such as quality, durability, affordability, availability, and beautiful packaging.

Nevertheless, the findings of the study indicate a robust and statistically significant positive relationship between value consciousness and consumer purchase intention ($r = 0.863^{**}$, $p < 0.01$). Additionally, it was shown that value consciousness exhibited a significant positive effect on consumer purchase intention ($\beta = 0.578$, $p < 0.05$). The results of the H2 test revealed a significant positive link between value consciousness and consumer purchase intention ($p < 0.05$). Pueschel et al. (2016) and Kian (2018) suggested that individuals with a heightened sense of value consciousness are more likely to opt for counterfeit luxury items, as they perceive such products to offer greater cost-effectiveness compared to authentic alternatives. This suggests that those who possess a strong sense of value consciousness are likely to exhibit greater anxiety regarding counterfeit luxury goods, hence displaying a heightened inclination to make purchases.

In a similar vein, there was a significant positive correlation between group social influence and consumer purchase intention ($r = 0.797^{**}$, $p < 0.01$). The study found that group social influence had a significant positive effect on consumer purchase intention ($\beta = 0.231$, $p < 0.05$). The results of Hypothesis 3 (H3) testing revealed a significant relationship between group social influence and consumer purchase intention ($p < 0.05$). This findings provides support for the claim made by Liu and Murphy (2007) that consumers place

importance on the contemplation and assessment of others' buying habits. This suggests that when individuals purchase luxury goods, their motivation is frequently not just based on the commodity's inherent functionality, but rather on the desire to acquire the symbolic significance associated with the thing. In doing so, they aim to enhance their social standing and bolster their reputation and perception in the eyes of others.

Implications of the Findings

Examining the effect of counterfeit brands on consumer purchase intentions for smartwatches in relation to product attributes, value consciousness, and group social influence entails significant consequences within these interrelated domains. The investigation of product attributes has the potential to enhance customer understanding of the distinctions between counterfeit and authentic smartwatches, hence facilitating the ability to make well-informed selections. Furthermore, it aids in safeguarding consumers against inadvertent acquisition of counterfeit goods, which could potentially exhibit inferior quality or provide safety hazards. The comprehension of how counterfeit qualities impact customer decision-making might incentivize legitimate firms to engage in innovation and product differentiation, hence enhancing their competitiveness within the marketplace.

Understanding how price and product qualities are evaluated by value-conscious consumers can provide valuable insights for the development of pricing strategies. Companies have the ability to customise their products or services in order to align with the preferences and demands of consumer segments that prioritise value. Manufacturers have the potential to adapt their pricing strategies by leveraging insights on consumer value consciousness. This may involve the implementation of diverse pricing tiers or the provision of bundled offerings to accommodate distinct consumer preferences.

The comprehension of the influence exerted by group dynamics on individuals' purchasing intentions might provide valuable insights for the development of effective marketing strategies. Brands have the ability to utilise social proof, influencer marketing, and peer recommendations as strategic tools to effectively shape customer decision-making. Understanding the impact of group social influence on customer preferences can provide valuable insights for brands, enabling them to effectively monitor market trends and adjust their products and messaging accordingly.

Conclusion

The research findings indicated that there was a positive relationship between product attributes, value consciousness, and group social influence, and the intention of consumers to acquire smartwatches in Warri Metropolis, Delta State. The presence of counterfeit brands has a positive effect on consumer purchase intention for smartwatches in Warri Metropolis, Delta State. The purchasing intention for counterfeit products varies between rural and urban locations as a result of consumers' self-image assessment and their aspiration to achieve an ideal self-image through such consumption. Consumers who opt for authentic products are unlikely to demonstrate interest in purchasing counterfeit alternatives, even when they perceive a potential cost benefit. Moreover, the presence of loyalty towards authentic luxury brands not only reinforces the repurchase process but also serves as a safeguard against the potential allure of counterfeit products due to their perceived price advantage. This study provided customers with comprehensive knowledge regarding the potential hazards associated with counterfeit items, as well as equips them with the necessary skills to discern and authenticate real merchandise.

Recommendations

The study suggested that companies should take into account product attributes, value consciousness, and group social influence as significant variables while developing and promoting their products or services. Smartwatch manufacturers should give precedence to the enhancement of product quality. The provision of high-quality brands not only serves to meet the needs and desires of consumers, but also contributes to the generation of favourable word-of-mouth marketing.

Smartwatch manufacturers need to undertake the responsibility of enlightening their customers regarding the inherent worth and benefits that their product provides and how to avoid buying counterfeit smartwatches.

To ensure the verification of authenticity, it is imperative to furnish customers with unambiguous information on both the website and packaging.

Smartwatch companies are encouraged to actively promote user reviews, testimonials, and case studies that highlight favourable experiences with their product. These factors possess significant influence over prospective purchasers.

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