

# Intention to Purchase Counterfeit Products: The Impact of Unethical Beliefs, Social Status and Perceived Risk

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**Abstract:** Counterfeiting has become an economic problem as an increasing number of goods are being illegally produced. However, there is a dearth of studies investigating counterfeiting in the Arab World. This study uses a five-point Likert scale to examine the impact of moral beliefs, social status and perceived risk on the intention to purchase counterfeits of luxury brands in the Arab Gulf (n = 448). Structural equation modelling was employed for data analysis. Results show that consumers' unethical beliefs and perceived risk have a negative, while status consumption has a positive, impact on the intention to purchase counterfeit products. Additionally, users' demographic measures, such as religiosity, cultural background and socioeconomic status, do not have a significant impact on the intent to purchase counterfeit products. This study provides a new theoretical foundation for studying the purchase of counterfeit products in a non-Western culture, and also provides companies with a number of factors that might help in discouraging counterfeit product consumption.

**Keywords:** Unethical beliefs; Social status; Perceived risk; Counterfeit products.

## 1 Introduction

Counterfeiting dates back to AD 27, when some merchants sold fake Romanian drinks (1). Counterfeiting has been increasing exponentially over the years and is developing into a significant global economic problem. It damages the reputation of luxury brands, reduces demand for legitimate products, causes additional costs to protect against infringement, resulting in lower business revenues (2; 3). Consumers purchase counterfeits of luxury brands, as they represent value (4; 5). In other words, customers purchase counterfeit products to obtain value and status without paying for it (6; 7). Consumers purchase counterfeit products due to their low socioeconomic status (8), a desire to imitate others (9) or for social reasons (10; 11; 12). (13) show that regardless of their financial status, consumers purchase counterfeit products to portray an image of wealth and of belonging to a specific social class. Although customers are aware that some counterfeit products do not often have the same quality as the original products, they still decide to purchase them as they believe that this lower quality is balanced by the lower prices, and thus perceive them as having a "value for money" (14).

However, some consumers would not purchase counterfeit products due to the many types of risk involved, such as the potential shorter lifespan of the counterfeit product, health-related dangers related to the poor quality of the counterfeit product, and even friends and acquaintances knowing the product is counterfeit (8). In addition, a consumer is likely to purchase a counterfeit

product, if they believe this is unethical (15). Moreover, previous studies have reported that consumers' demographics, such as age, religiosity and socioeconomic status may impact purchasing counterfeit products (11; 16; 17; 6; 8).

Counterfeiting is an ever-growing problem in the Arab Gulf (18; 19). Consumers in the Arab Gulf area place great emphasis on social class and power, which can be conveyed by wearing a brand image (20). Although the majority of consumers in the Arab Gulf are able to spend a lot of money on luxury brands, they still purchase counterfeit products. In contrast to the majority of research that explores factors underlying counterfeit consumption in Western (21; 22) or Asian countries (23), more research is needed in countries with different cultural backgrounds. As a consequence of the concept that there is a negative correlation between counterfeit purchase and income (24), there has been little research carried out to examine counterfeit consumption in wealthy countries whose consumers can afford the prices of luxury brands (13).

The current study sheds light on less-explored cultures with respect to the intent of purchasing counterfeit products. Based on the theory of planned behaviour, consumers' internal mental states can influence their purchasing behaviour (25; 4; 26; 27). The present study investigates how unethical beliefs, social status, perceived risk (performance, psychological, legal, and social risk), as well as demographical measures, impact intention to purchase counterfeit products of luxury brands in the Arab

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Gulf. This study identifies social status or social risks affect counterfeit consumption in wealthy consumers. This will contribute towards enabling brand owners and policy makers to develop a suitable strategy for reducing counterfeiting in the wealthy Arab Gulf.

## 2 Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

### 2.1 Unethical beliefs

Consumers' ethics refers to the judgments, intentions and perceptions of individuals as they relate to consumption. Although ethical beliefs play a large role in the purchase of counterfeit products (4; 28), ethical values can either decrease or increase the purchase of counterfeit products. For example, many individuals do not consider the purchase of counterfeit products as unethical (19) and, indeed, some purchase counterfeit products due to their anti-big businesses beliefs (29). Individuals often attempt to decouple their moral values from the act of purchasing counterfeit products (30). (23) show evidence that people often justify their desire to purchase counterfeit products using ethical reasoning strategies, such as moral rationalization and moral decoupling. In contrast, some consumers will not purchase counterfeit products, arguing that it is unethical (15). Although the purchase of a counterfeit is sometimes not considered to be a criminal act, individuals who buy counterfeit products feel that they are indirectly supporting an illegal activity. This is corroborated by several studies, showing that buying fake items is negatively correlated with ethical values (31; 32). Accordingly, the current study hypothesizes that:

*H1: Consumers' unethical beliefs will negatively impact the intention to purchase counterfeit products.*

### 2.2 Social Status

Consumers engage in consumption to construct and express their self-identities, and differentiate themselves from others (33). Based on self-discrepancy theory by (34), individuals consume products in order to minimise the gap between their actual (how they are) and ideal (how they would like to be) self. While a product provides functional benefit, a brand offers symbolic value. It has been argued that many individuals focus on the hedonic features (feelings of the products) of luxury brands, and wear them to signal social status (35; 36; 37; 38). Along these same lines, people purchase counterfeit products to signal social status, but with cheaper prices (39). (37) argue that the desire to portray belonging to a particular social class makes people purchase counterfeit products. In a study conducted in Pakistan, (40) found that individuals purchase counterfeit products in order to appear unique.

Several social factors play a role in the purchase of counterfeit products including social approval, peer influence and a sense of belonging (4; 41). (42) found that consumers who have a high price consciousness tend to

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purchase counterfeit products to increase their social status. In developing countries in particular, many people purchase counterfeit products to signal social status (43). Accordingly, the current study hypothesizes that:

*H2: Consumers' social status will positively impact the intention to purchase counterfeit products.*

### 2.3 Perceived risk

Risk perceptions play a critical role in consumers' decision making. According to the perceived risk theory, most people focus on reducing the likelihood of making mistakes instead of maximizing utility when engaging in a risky behavior (44). There are a few studies on the relationship between perceived risk and the purchase of counterfeit products (45; 46; 47; 48; 49; 38). Purchasing and wearing counterfeit products is risky (50). (51) found that the purchase of counterfeit products is related to general uncertainty about consequences, such as the possibility of being caught (13; 4; 52) or not knowing the counterfeit product's useful lifespan, which is defined as the duration of time for which the product can be used after purchasing it.

(8) discussed different kinds of risk: social, legal, physical, performance and psychological. Social risk is related to feeling embarrassed if others find out that the products are counterfeit, such as counterfeit clothes (13; 39; 24; 52). (53) refer to this as risk of embarrassment. They have found that the risk of embarrassment mediates the relationship between being materialistic and the intention to purchase counterfeit items, especially when the counterfeit item can be easily detected. Legal risk is related to facing legal consequences if caught having fake products (54). There are laws in several countries against the purchase and use of counterfeit products (55), with the possibility of both consumers and sellers facing legal action. Physical (health) risk is related to physical and bodily problems caused by wearing fake products (56). Performance risk is related to the lifespan and durability of the counterfeit product (19). While consumers may know that counterfeit products may have a lower quality than original products, some minimum requirements are needed (50). Psychological risk is related to the feeling of guilt due to the purchase of counterfeit items (57; 47; 48). Risk averseness has been found to be negatively related to the purchase of counterfeit sports products (58). Based on studies discussed above, this study hypothesizes that:

*H3: Performance risk will negatively impact the intention to purchase counterfeit products.*

*H4: Psychological risk will negatively impact the intention to purchase counterfeit products.*

*H5: Legal risk will negatively impact the intention to purchase counterfeit products.*

*H6: Social risk will negatively impact the intention to purchase counterfeit products.*

## 2.4 Demographics (religiosity, cultural background and socioeconomic status)

Demographical variables may also impact consumers' intention to purchase counterfeit products. Few studies have investigated the relationship between religiosity and the intention to purchase counterfeit products (59; 60). Religiosity has been found to be related to the purchase of counterfeit products, such that more religious individuals are less likely to purchase counterfeit products (61; 17). Fear of God's punishment in life and in the hereafter causes religious consumers to maintain morality and virtue, and avoid purchasing counterfeit products. (16) found that in Malaysia there was a negative relationship between consumers' religiosity and the purchase of counterfeit products, while (62) found no relationship between religiosity and ethical judgments in business. Additionally, culture has a significant impact on consumers' beliefs and attitudes (29), on how consumers perceive the risks of purchasing counterfeit products (22), and also influences personal identification with ethical issues, how to make decisions and perception of the results (63).

In addition, prior studies have confirmed that socioeconomic status has an impact on the intention to purchase counterfeit products (48). These studies found that

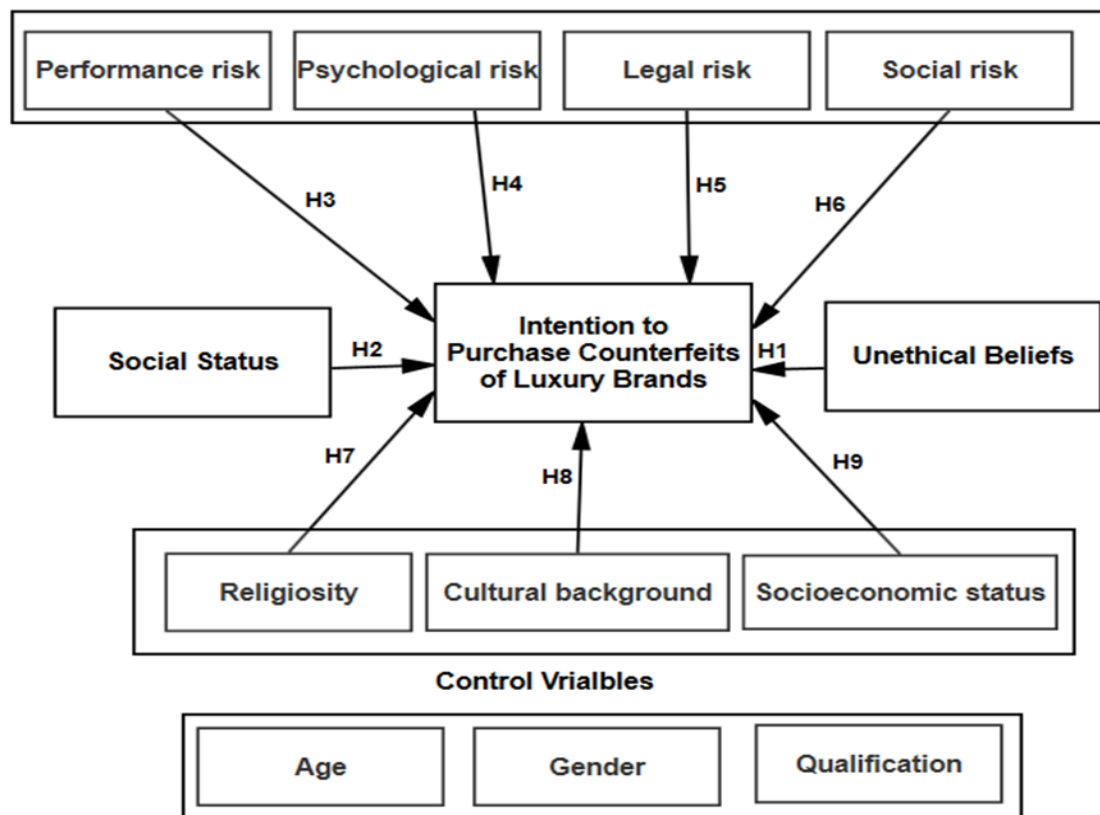
consumers with low socioeconomic status are more likely to purchase counterfeit products. (6) highlighted that individuals with low socioeconomic status focus more on the hedonic features of products, which possibly explains purchasing counterfeit products (64). While it is possible that individuals with low socioeconomic status may be more likely to purchase counterfeit products, other studies have reported different results. Consumers with high socioeconomic status do also purchase counterfeit products (65; 8; 19). For example, (8) found that around 39% of Emiratis purchase counterfeit products. This is quite surprising as Emirati citizens are wealthy, and in the past it was thought that the purchase of counterfeit products is mostly by low socioeconomic status individuals. Accordingly, the purchase of counterfeit products is possibly not limited to individuals with low socioeconomic background. Based on prior studies, the current study hypothesizes:

*H7: Religiosity will negatively impact the intention to purchase counterfeit products.*

*H8: Cultural background will negatively impact the intention to purchase counterfeit products.*

*H9: Socioeconomic status will negatively impact the intention to purchase counterfeit products.*

All hypotheses discussed above are presented in Figure 1.



**Fig. 1:** A theoretical model of factors underlying the purchase of counterfeit products.

### 3 Research Methodologies

A total of 448 individuals residing in different Arab Gulf countries completed a questionnaire, which has 44 statements measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Five statements measured moral beliefs, five social status, and thirteen perceived risk (performance, psychological, legal, and social risk).

The questionnaire, distributed using Google forms via messages sent to the participants, comprised two sections: the first included participants' demographic information, such as gender, age, qualifications, income, religiosity, cultural background and socioeconomic status. The second section included statements about each construct. The scales used to measure these constructs were sourced and adapted as follows: consumers' unethical beliefs were adopted from prior studies (24; 19; 31). Status consumption was adopted from prior studies (19; 66; 67). Additionally, perceived risk was adopted from the following studies: (21), (19), and (57), while intention to purchase counterfeit products was adopted from (68), and (19).

### 4 Statistical Analysis and Results

#### 4.1 Sample Description

As shown in Table 1, the number of females was 115 (25.7%), while the number of males was 333 (74.3%). the group of individuals aged 45 years and over was 34 respondents. Additionally, the largest group was those aged 25 years and under, comprising 236 respondents. The majority (288) indicated that they were financially stable, 112 were financially challenged, and 48 financially comfortable. Regarding the highest level of education completed, the majority had completed a diploma (232), 125 secondary school, and 91 a bachelor's degree or higher. The main occupation was classified as not employed (313), and 135 were employed. Furthermore, 10.7% of the sample had a monthly family income of more than \$5,000 USD, and 34.8% of the sample received less than \$1000 USD. With respect to cultural background, the majority (388) indicated that they were native to the Arab Gulf, and 60 considered themselves as non-native. The main nationality (258) was Qatari, and 190 were non-Qatari. Religiosity was stated as moderately religious by 309 respondents and as somewhat religious by 139 respondents.

#### 4.2 Measurement Model

The statistical package SPSS, version 25.0 (IBM Corporation, Armonk, NY, USA) and AMOS statistical software (69) were utilized to analyze the developed model in Figure 1. The two-stage analytical procedures by (70) were conducted. In particular, the study first examined the measurement model, followed by the structural model for hypotheses testing. Missing data (less than 1 percent for

each item) were replaced by using the mean replacement technique (71).

According to the most often used goodness of fit indices in Table 2, the results show a good model fit. Recommended thresholds are  $> 0.9$  for goodness of fit index (GFI), comparative fit index (CFI), and normal fit index (NFI),  $> 0.80$  for adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), and  $< 0.08$  for the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). For the fitted measurement model, GFI (0.903), AGFI (0.822), CFI (0.926), NFI (0.907), and RMSEA (0.061) are satisfactory and close to the acceptable cutoff values. The p-value calculated for the chi-square distribution is significant, indicating a poor fit of the overall confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) model, although it is unreliable for a large sample size. All major indicators indicated that the measurement model has an adequate fit to the data.

#### 4.3 Validity and Reliability

Because some of the measurement constructs had been modified according to the study context, Cronbach's alpha values were evaluated. The values of all six constructs were close to or above the threshold level of 0.7 (72); thus, the measurement construct reliability was deemed acceptable. The CFA results in Table 3 show that all items were loaded on their assumed constructs and factor loadings ranged from 0.65 to 0.948, averaging to greater than 0.70 for each construct. All constructs exceeded the recommended composite reliability (CR) threshold of 0.5 as well as the average variance extracted (AVE) of 0.7, as suggested by (73). Convergent validity was, therefore, established for the measurements in this study.

Factor scores were calculated from the fitted CFA model. All important dimensions show significant correlations between each other ( $p < 0.05$ ). Furthermore, Table 4 shows the square root of average variances extracted in the main diagonal, and discriminant validity statistics in the lower triangle. It can be seen that the square root of average variances extracted for each construct exceeds the correlation coefficients. Therefore, the measures in this study demonstrated good discriminant validity.

#### 4.4 Structural model and testing hypotheses

Prior to assessing the significance of path coefficients, multicollinearity was assessed by examining the variance inflation factor VIF values, which were lower than the recommended value of 3.3 (71). All goodness of fit criteria in Table 2 showed that the structural model has a good fit to the data. Results of the structural model are reported in Table 5. The results show that the consumers' unethical beliefs ( $b = -.291$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), social status ( $b = .220$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), performance risk ( $b = -.141$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ), psychological risk ( $b = -.146$ ,  $p < 0.032$ ), prosecution risk ( $b = 0.150$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and social risk ( $b = -.302$ ,  $p = 0.009$ ) were significantly related to the intention to purchase counterfeit



Table 1: Sample demographic characteristics

Variable description	Category	N	Percent
<b>Age (in years)</b>	Under 25	236	52.7%
	25–34	115	25.7%
	35–44	63	14.1%
	45–54	34	7.6%
<b>Gender</b>	Male	115	25.7%
	Female	333	74.3%
<b>Qualification</b>	Secondary	125	27.9%
	Diploma	232	51.8%
	Bachelor's and higher	91	20.3%
<b>Occupation</b>	Employed	135	30.1%
	Not employed	313	69.9%
<b>Monthly income (in USD)</b>	Less than 1000	156	34.8%
	1000–1999	80	17.9%
	2000–2999	95	21.2%
	3000–4999	69	15.4%
	More than 5000	48	10.7%
<b>Socioeconomic</b>	Financially challenged	112	25.0%
	Financially stable	288	64.3%
	Financially comfortable	48	10.7%
<b>Cultural background</b>	Khaleeji	388	86.6%
	Non-Khaleeji	60	13.4%
<b>Nationality</b>	Non-Qatari	190	42.4%
	Qatari	258	57.6%
<b>Religiosity</b>	Somewhat religious	139	31.0%
	Moderately religious	309	69.0%
	Total	448	100.0%

Table 2: Goodness of fit criteria for the measurement and structural models

Statistics	Suggested	Measurement model	Structural model
Chi-square significance	>0.05	0.00	0.00
Goodness of fit index (GFI)	>0.90	0.903	0.958
Adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI)	>0.80	0.822	0.885
Comparative fit index (CFI)	>0.90	0.926	0.934
Normal fit index (NFI)	>0.90	0.907	0.986
Root mean square residuals (RMSEA)	<0.08	0.061	0.052

Table 3: Measurement model

Item	Constructs (abbreviation)	Factor loading	R-square	Cronbach's alpha	AVE	CR
UB1	Consumers' unethical beliefs (UB)	0.811	0.683	0.907	0.908	0.666
UB2		0.878	0.522			
UB3		0.886	0.546			
UB4		0.753	0.524			
UB5		0.741	0.411			
SO1	Social status (SO)	0.748	0.383	0.844	0.845	0.525
SO2		0.772	0.43			
SO3		0.818	0.729			
SO4		0.709	0.778			
SO5		0.547	0.488			
PE1	Performance risk (PE)	0.735	0.62	0.757	0.761	0.515
PE2		0.764	0.445			
PE3		0.65	0.676			
PS1	Psychological risk (PS)	0.89	0.521	0.915	0.919	0.791
PS2		0.926	0.767			
PS3		0.85	0.898			
PR1	Prosecution risk (PR)	0.912	0.833	0.936	0.937	0.833
PR2		0.948	0.722			
PR3		0.876	0.857			
SR1	Social risk (SR)	0.722	0.792	0.813	0.810	0.518
SR2		0.822	0.422			
SR3		0.667	0.583			
SR4		0.656	0.596			
IP1	Intention to purchase counterfeits of luxury brands (IP)	0.788	0.541	0.882	0.882	0.654
IP2		0.699	0.3			
IP3		0.882	0.503			
IP4		0.854	0.67			

Table 4: Convergent and discriminant validities and correlation coefficients

Construct	CR	AVE	IP	UB	SO	PE	PS	PR	SR
IP	0.882	0.654	0.809						
UB	0.908	0.666	<b>-0.636</b>	0.816					
SO	0.845	0.525	<b>-0.149</b>	<b>0.285</b>	0.725				
PE	0.761	0.515	<b>-0.448</b>	<b>0.525</b>	<b>0.385</b>	0.718			
PS	0.919	0.791	<b>-0.609</b>	<b>0.708</b>	<b>0.450</b>	<b>0.611</b>	0.889		
PR	0.937	0.833	<b>-0.341</b>	<b>0.552</b>	<b>0.122</b>	<b>0.324</b>	<b>0.448</b>	0.912	
SR	0.810	0.518	<b>-0.592</b>	<b>0.785</b>	<b>0.449</b>	<b>0.539</b>	<b>0.718</b>	<b>0.663</b>	0.720

luxury goods, supporting H1 to H6. On the other hand, religiosity ( $b=0.030$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), socioeconomic status ( $b=0.017$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) and cultural background ( $b=-.063$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) were not significant predictors of purchase intention towards counterfeit products. Thus, hypotheses H7 through to H9 were not supported by our results. The estimated value of squared multiple correlations ( $R^2=0.655$ ) reveals that the predictors in the developed model explained 65.5 percent of variance in the intention to purchase counterfeit products.

## 5 Discussions

The current study investigated factors impacting consumers' intention to purchase counterfeit products in the Arab Gulf. Importantly, the current study found that consumers' unethical beliefs and perceived risk have a negative impact on the intention to purchase counterfeit products; therefore, hypotheses H1, H3, H4, H5 and H6 were corroborated. Results of the current study are in agreement with prior results on the negative impact of consumers' unethical beliefs on intention to purchase counterfeit products (31; 32). Ethical consciousness is likely to reduce consumers' unethical decisions including the intention to purchase counterfeit products (16). Since Islam is the major religion in the Arab Gulf, it is expected that those following and respecting Islamic principles are likely to oppose deceiving others, and will emphasize the fairness of any commercial dealing. These results concur with those of (19) who asserted that, in Kuwait, ethical consciousness negatively impacted consumers' attitudes towards buying counterfeit products. Ethical consumers are more motivated to show positive and ethical behaviour, especially ethical decision making, and avoid purchasing counterfeit products.

With respect to the four risk components, this study is one of the few studies that have investigated the relationship between different kinds of risk and the intention to purchase counterfeit products. In agreement with (19), this study highlighted that consumers are less likely to purchase counterfeit products if they perceive their associated performance risk. Although counterfeit products may not have the same functionality as the original products and do not have any warranties (50), the current study highlighted that consumers will not purchase them unless they have a minimum level of quality. Counterfeit products have poor quality, which discourages some consumers from purchasing them.

The current study also confirmed that there is a negative relationship between both psychological risk and social risk and intention to purchase counterfeit products (57; 8; 33). Consumers feel embarrassed, uncomfortable and concerned with purchasing, owning and being seen in public with a counterfeit product (57; 48). This is of concern to Arab consumers, who score high on collectivism and avoiding uncertainty (74). They feel worried about the probability of being identified by other people as having purchased counterfeit products. Consumers are not likely to

purchase counterfeit products if they believe it is shameful to be discovered by others (75). This would damage their self-image and their desired social image. In addition, the study also found that legal risk has a negative relationship with consumers' intention to purchase counterfeit products. In the Arab Gulf, selling and buying counterfeit luxury goods is common but illegally carried out through unauthorized channels, such as online vendors. Sellers usually do not announce their real identities as this would be illegal and they might be arrested for infringement of copyright law if they sell counterfeit products. In the United Arab Emirates, for example, police have fined the buyers and the sellers of counterfeit products (76).

On the other hand, the study confirmed a positive impact of consumers' social status on the intention to purchase counterfeit products. This confirms prior studies that consumers purchase counterfeit items to signal social status and identity to others in their social circle (33; 77; 39; 37). Additionally, collectivism has been discussed as one of the factors that positively influence consumers' attitudes towards counterfeit products to create a social self-image (13). Consumers in a collectivist culture prefer to purchase branded products that convey affluence, wealth and social class to associate themselves with the social class above them. This is especially prevalent among consumers in Arabic cultures where there is a great emphasis on social class and power, as social status is very important in these cultures.

Contrary to our prediction, the current study did not find any relationship between demographical measures, including religiosity, cultural background and socioeconomic status, and the intention to purchase counterfeit products. This is in contrast to prior studies that showed a relationship between each of these demographical measures and the intention to purchase counterfeit products. This could be due to the homogeneity of our data, as most of our participants were financially stable and moderately religious, which is reflective of the characteristics of Arab Gulf states. Such demographics are different from Western countries, which have large variations in religiosity and other demographical measures.

### 5.1 Limitations and Future Research

Our study has some limitations that could be taken into account when considering future studies on counterfeiting. The findings of this study were generated from different cultural backgrounds within the Arab Gulf. However, cultures of the Arab Gulf countries are considered to be homogenous, and it would be important if the same model was replicated in each country separately, as well as including different cultures (collectivist versus individualist cultures, or East versus West, for example), to determine the potential moderating impact of consumers' characteristics on intention to purchase counterfeit products. This is concurrent with (78) who highlighted that Koreans and Germans show different perceptions of

Table 5: Estimated path coefficients for the structural model

ypo esis	Predictor variable	Dependent variable	Estimate	SE	CR	P	Decision	R <sup>2</sup>
1	Consumers' unethical beliefs	Consumers' intention to purchase counterfeits of luxury brands	-.291	.048	-6.016	0.001	Supported	65.5%
2	Social status		.220	.038	5.818	0.001	Supported	
3	Performance risk		-.141	.051	-2.783	.005	Supported	
4	Psychological risk		-.146	.068	-2.150	.032	Supported	
5	Prosecution risk		.150	.044	3.410	0.001	Supported	
6	Social risk		-.302	.116	-2.595	.009	Supported	
7	Religiosity		.030	.062	.474	.635	Not supported	
8	Socioeconomic status		.017	.051	.343	.732	Not supported	
9	Cultural background		-.063	.095	-.670	.503	Not supported	

counterfeit luxury goods. Korean consumers place more emphasis on social status while German consumers are more concerned with utility. Given the fact that Arab consumers are collectivist consumers, it would be interesting to test the model of the current study on samples of individualist consumers.

In addition, the current study considered factors underlying the purchase of counterfeit products in general. Further studies could investigate the impact of unethical beliefs, social status, perceived risk and consumer characteristics on the intention to purchase counterfeit products in different product categories (such as cameras, handbags, cell phones and eyeglasses). Bags, clothes, and watches are among the top counterfeit products in the market (79), and thus more research should be conducted on each category separately. This would help in determining the effect of product category on consumers' intention to purchase counterfeit products.

## 6 Conclusion and Implications

The current study contributes to both academic research and managerial practice, extending the current concepts of counterfeiting. This research extends previous literature in explaining consumers' intention to purchase counterfeit products in the Arab Gulf, as it investigates counterfeit consumption in different contexts (80; 13). Focusing

investigation upon the impact of these antecedents in the Arab Gulf context has not been previously undertaken. Successful understanding of counterfeiting in the Arab Gulf may help to inspire better marketing strategies that encourage consumers to minimize counterfeiting consumption.

The results reveal a number of areas for future research. Most governments attempt to minimize the production and purchase of counterfeit products, due to their impact on the economy (81). Based on the current findings, a number of suggestions for managerial implications are proposed. For example, the current study highlighted that Arab and other consumers prefer to use counterfeit products instead of originals as although both provide them with a higher social status, counterfeit products are cheaper. Consumers seek to associate themselves with the image created by the counterfeit luxury brands, thus benefiting from the impression of prestige without paying the high prices for the originals. Therefore, it is suggested that lowering the price of original products may encourage people to purchase them, as having a small price difference between counterfeit and original products will discourage potential consumers from taking a risk in purchasing counterfeit products.

In addition, given that counterfeiting was found to be related to ethical behaviours and different kinds of risk behaviour, managers should stress the importance of these variables in promoting original brands. For example, future anti-counterfeiting campaigns should stress not only the aesthetic features of luxury products, but also their healthy



and legal use, long-term durability, and other related features. Furthermore, as indicated by the research findings, marketing managers should continue to highlight the psychological risks that consumers would face if they purchase counterfeit products, such as the likelihood of feeling embarrassed if they are discovered by their friends and relatives. Emphasizing social and psychological risks might be more pertinent for consumers in collectivist cultures, such as the in Arab Gulf, who tend to be more concerned about how others perceive them. Our results also show that Arab consumers feel it is unethical when purchasing counterfeit products. Anti-counterfeiting campaigns should also stress the idea that consuming counterfeit products is morally wrong. By doing so, it is possible that consumers would be less likely to purchase counterfeit products and would purchase original brands instead. This is especially important as the research findings highlighted that consumers' demographics did not have any significant impact on consumers' purchase intention of counterfeit products.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict regarding the publication of this paper.

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