

The Effect of Social Media Influencers on Fashion Counterfeit Purchase Intention among Young Generation

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the effect of social media influencers on fashion counterfeit purchase intention among the young generation. Social Media Influencer (SMI) has been a dominant marketing trend and businesses heavily invest in SMIs to carry out promotional activities. However, the dimensions of SMI have not been examined widely on fashion counterfeit purchase intention among the young generation. A total of six dimensions of SMI namely, inspiring, technical skills, enjoyability, similarity, informativeness and credibility were used for this study. Data was collected from 389 young generations via online techniques. The findings show that technical skills and informativeness significantly influence counterfeit purchase intention among the young generation. The findings of the study are useful for policymakers to control social media influencers.

Keywords: *Social Media Influencer (SMI), inspiring, technical skills, enjoyability, similarity, informativeness, credibility, counterfeit purchase intention*

1. Introduction and Background

The counterfeit has been a prolonged problem for many businesses all around the world (Bian et al., 2016). The production and trafficking of counterfeit goods pose a significant risk to many major industries like electric and electronics (Huang et al., 2018; Liao & Hsieh, 2013), cosmetics (Mohammed et al., 2021; Morse & Repsha, 2021), and fashion and clothing (Bhatia, 2018; Song et al., 2021). Studies indicated that specifically footwear, clothing and leather goods scored top rankings in counterfeit production and trafficking (Chui & Yusuf, 2017). For instance, in Malaysia, fashion products like clothing, watches, handbags, accessories and footwear are the biggest target for counterfeit goods (Ong Lai Teik et al., 2015). Moreover, it is believed that counterfeit production has reached an alarming level, causing huge loss of revenue to governments across Southeast Asia including Malaysia (Lin et al., 2018). Countries like Malaysia have been losing a substantial amount of tax revenue, close to an estimated RM8 billion a year (Bernama, 2018) The prolonged counterfeit activities could have a negative effect on the growth of the world's economy and other related problems towards the government and the social environment. The International Trademark Association highlighted the need for more research on the illicit activities of counterfeit goods in Malaysia to aid policymakers and enforcement on the issue (Hashim et al., 2018).

Although studies on counterfeiting have occurred for a long period, the studies of counterfeit buying behavior still attract the attention of many (Bupalan et al., 2019; Jiang et al., 2018). Most studies in the field of counterfeiting heavily utilized two main theories (Gilal et al., 2019). The theories are mainly the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Arli et al., 2015; Eisend & Schuchert-Güler, 2006; Marcketti & Shelley, 2009; Penz et al., 2009) and Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Chiu & Leng, 2016; Eisend & Schuchert-Güler, 2006; Koklic, 2011; Phau, Teah, et al., 2009). These theories have been adopted to predict the purchase intention with the impact of subjective norms or attitudes (Gilal, et al., 2019). The emergence of the attitude-intention gap has been explored intensively without many new findings (Chui & Mohd Yusof, 2017; Cheng San & Yee, 2012; Hashim et al., 2018; Teik et al., 2013). Therefore, new antecedents of purchase intention need to be explored.

Recently, a show in which a few social media influencers are discovered to have been wearing fake goods in a Netflix reality show has attracted a lot of attention (Jacob, 2022). Over 15% of posts with trademarked hashtags on Instagram have resulted in counterfeit products (Stroppa et al., 2019). At par with the popularity of SMIs, researchers have aggressively examined the role of SMIs in the marketing fields. However, there is still a blurred line on the depth of SMIs' influence, particularly on the young generation's counterfeiting (Grigsby, 2020). Most past literature has focused on the demand factors of counterfeit products (Lund, 2019; Samaddar & Menon, 2020).

The existing counterfeit studies examined individual-related factors such as attitude (Y. Jiang et al., 2019; Moon et al., 2018; Sondhi, 2017; Tom et al., 1998), perceived value (Alsaid et al., 2019; Chen et al., 2018a; Poddar et al., 2012), materialism (Alsaid et al., 2019; Bakhshian et al., 2019; Furnham & Valgeirsson, 2007; Nagar & Singh, 2019; Saeed & Paracha, 2019; Ting et al., 2016), demographics (Bakhshian et al., 2019; Furnham & Valgeirsson, 2007), psychographics (Alsaid et al., 2019; Bakhshian et al., 2019; Ngo et al., 2020), integrity (Bakhshian et al., 2019; Jiang et al., 2019; Mir, 2013; Quoquab et al., 2017; Ting et al., 2016) and personality (Furnham & Valgeirsson, 2007; Kei et al., 2017). Due to the development of social media, Social Media Influencers (SMI) are playing a very significant role as news providers to the young generation (Cho et al., 2019). Research by Rakuten Insight depicted that Malaysians would buy at least one product endorsed by SMIs and most importantly 56% of the young generation buy products endorsed by SMIs (Joschka, 2021). Reports are stating that SMIs icons such as artists serve as major role models to the young generation and lead to the purchase of counterfeit products (Zain et al., 2021). SMIs as one external factor should be examined in detail. Academicians focus less on the contribution of social media influencers to counterfeit purchases (Priporas et al., 2015). A study by Islam et al., (2021) confirmed the fact that the role of social media and influencers in counterfeit consumption is under-researched. More specifically, how SMIs influence the young generation in purchasing counterfeit products is even more scant (Tamara et al., 2021). To confirm the role of SMIs among the young generation, this study aims to examine in detail the dimensions of SMIs toward fashion counterfeit intention purchase among the young generation.

2. Literature Review

Counterfeiting and Counterfeit: A lot of studies have focused on the purchase of counterfeit products in different countries, namely China (Yao, 2006), Kuwait (Riquelme et al., 2012), India (Bikoff et al., 2015), Australia (Phau & Teah, 2009a & b), Mexico (Perez et al., 2010), Brazil (De Matos et al., 2007), Indonesia (Triandewi & Tjiptono, 2013; Purwanto et al., 2019), Pakistan (Husanian & Akhtar, 2015), Bosnia and Herzegovina (Tatić, 2011), and the European Union (Penz & Stottinger, 2008). However, culture has been widely examined when it comes to counterfeit product purchases in Asia (Xiao et al., 2018). Due to the fact that a significant portion of the production of counterfeit products is from China (Sonmez et al., 2013; Yao & Lee, 2009), then increase the number of counterfeit product studies related to culture. The counterfeiting studies also gain popularity because many companies and governments see counterfeiting as a problem to the industry and market dynamics simply because they pose a significant threat to luxury brands, taint their reputation, lessen the demand for original products, incur additional costs for infringement protection, and further result in lower business revenues (Kapferer & Michaut-Denizeau, 2014; Chaudhry et al., 2005). However, Amar et al. (2018) found that exposure to counterfeit products can lead to moral disgust, which, in turn, leads individuals to avoid buying the original of these products. Romani et al. (2012) also argued that the widespread prevalence of counterfeit products can benefit original luxury brands. Nia & Zaichkowsky (2000) found that approximately 70% of their participants had the experience of looking for and purchasing counterfeit products.

Studies on counterfeiting have been increasing since the early 1970s and there is no indication of a decrease due to the widespread market acceptance, regardless of counterfeit-related wrongdoings and impairments (Bian & Haque, 2020b). In past literature, authors defined counterfeit in different ways. A few synonyms have been used to refer to counterfeit, such as 'replicas', 'fakes', 'imitations', 'knock-offs', 'me-too', 'copycat', 'palmed-off', 'pirated', and 'look-alike' products (Kaikati & LaGarce, 1980). Upon reviewing the definitions from past literature, authors used the terms *illegal*, *unauthorized*, *copy*, *imitation* and *replicate* to define counterfeit. Counterfeit is an illegal activity and it is a white-collar crime as it involves the reproduction of established or original brands (Green & Smith, 2002; Heimonen et al., 2017). For this study, counterfeit is defined as the activity of copying or faking the trademarks of established brands (Grossman & Shapiro, 1988).

Social Media Influencers (SMIs): SMIs do not necessarily need to be opinion leaders; as long as their personality is preferred, their thoughts and what they share and what they raise as issues will be accepted by consumers. Due to the popularity of SMIs and the emergence of influencer marketing, scholars extensively examined the role of SMIs. Many paradigms of SMI have been investigated and focused on the effect of SMIs on purchase intention (Nafees et al., 2021). SMI not only directly affects the behavior of individuals, but also acts as a stimulus to influence the cognitive, emotional and effectiveness of consumers (Awang et al., 2019;

Lee & Chen, 2021). Social Media Influencers as the stimulus has been used in a few studies (Aw & Chuah, 2021; Ki et al., 2020; Nafees et al., 2021; Pittman & Abell, 2021; Zhou et al., 2021). Due to the growth of social media, the role of the Social Media Influencer (SMI) in this young generation has widely been investigated (Han & Chen, 2021; Hassan et al., 2021; Pornsrimate & Khamwon, 2021). However, Kay et al., (2020) still urged researchers to investigate in depth the role of SMIs. The study on the impact of SMIs is still new and a lot of inconsistent findings found in past studies (Coco & Eckert, 2020; Jin et al., 2019; Rohde & Mau, 2021; Saima & Khan, 2020; Vrontis et al., 2021).

Reviewing the literature on the impact of SMI, there are a few discoveries made, (a) the brand contents endorsed by SMIs (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Freberg et al., 2011) and, (b) the characteristics of SMIs towards that pulling factor for the followers from the SMIs perspectives (Casaló et al., 2020; Cooley & Parks-Yancy, 2019). Scholars focused on identifying the role of SMIs who influence followers' choices and determine their decisions (Ki & Kim, 2019; Lin et al., 2018). Very limited studies focused on the followers' perspectives, especially on what followers desire to fulfill by attaching to SMIs (Ki et al., 2020). Thus, to fill the gap, this study would investigate the attachment between SMIs and followers, especially the younger generation and their needs fulfillment perspective. Thus, the multidimensional scaling used by Ki et al., (2020) will be adopted in this study, namely, inspiration, technical skills, enjoyability, similarity, informativeness and expertise.

Inspiration: Due to the current trend of SMIs, more academicians and practitioners want to investigate this phenomenon (Nafees et al., 2020). Looking into the literature that investigated this inspiration, a few scholars have been found to have examined it in their studies (Jin et al., 2019; Ki et al., 2020; Noonan, 2018; Smorthit & Cooper, 2020). Thrash & Elliot (2004) stated that consumers will get motivated to take action and even incorporate into themselves the sources gained from inspiring individuals and well-known brands. Moreover, findings by Janavi et al. (2021) showed that consumers get inspired by the live presentation of the influencers and more often than not, they will end up committing to online purchases. This is especially applicable during the lockdown when more consumers are glued to social media or the mainstream media to get inspired by the influencers' live streaming and the way they demonstrate their product knowledge (Addo et al., 2020). Jin et al. (2019) asserted that followers that perceived SMIs as inspiring in terms of their personality and achievement would end up imitating them.

Technical skills: Harmonious with other similar studies, Ki et al. (2020) study portrayed similar descriptions to Hassan et al. (2021) but they used the visual aesthetics dimension. This visual aesthetics is described as the skills of presenting by SMIs that can grab the attention of individuals. Creative videos, interesting graphics, appealing stories and photography skills and filtered images are part of interesting, engaging content. These descriptions are what respondents of Ki et al. (2020) had given. The literature also reviewed technical skills that refer to the usage of filtered images to present content (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Thus, technical skills are defined as a technical way of presenting content by using filtered images, creative videos, graphics, appealing stories and photography skills that individuals perceive as appealing and attractive.

Enjoyability: Enjoyability as a dimension was adopted in past studies (Balaban et al., 2020; Balaban & Mustătea, 2019; Ki et al., 2020). Reviewing how enjoyability was executed in all the studies, the words sense of humor, funny and enjoyable was used. Nicolaou & McKnight (2006) suggested that only when followers enjoy the content produced by SMIs, that they would form a favorable attitude. Zytka et al. (2018) examined online users' acceptance of online platforms such as dating apps and they listed the features of the online platform, such as enjoyable rewards, and leading more online users to utilize the online platform.

Similarity: The extant literature showed that the majority of the studies examined similarity as the formative measurement (Abdullah et al., 2020a; Ki et al., 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Although past studies had not examined it as a single variable, they found that similarity is an important dimension of SMI. This study further fills the gap to understand in detail how similarity plays the role of the stimulus. Past studies were also reviewed to see whether or not the dimension similarity had been examined towards the young generation. Yun et al. (2019) investigated the personality of a brand's Twitter account and the personality of its followers. The findings revealed that the young generation tends to display some similar characteristics just like the brand personality they follow on Twitter accounts. Schewe et al. (2013) in their study asserted

that the young generation with the same age categories such as the young generation displays a similar pattern of behavior and preference.

Informativeness: Due to the popularity of SMIs, scholars investigated the aspect of informativeness as one of the dimensions in their studies (Ferreira et al., 2021; Lokithasan et al., 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Tan et al., 2021). Amongst these, only Tan et al. (2021) used informativeness as an independent and the rest of the studies used informativeness as one of the dimensions. Other studies that investigated SMIs were reviewed and different attributes were examined. For example, Awang et al. (2021) did not examine informativeness. Although the study adopted the S-O-R model, different attributes of SMIs such as credibility and attractiveness had been examined. Similarly, AlFarraj et al. (2021) have investigated a different attribute which is the credibility of SMIs.

Expertise: Some scholars have examined the concept of expertise in their studies (Chetioui et al., 2020; Lee & Theokary, 2021; Nafees et al., 2021). While all these scholars examined expertise as uni-dimension, Chetioui et al., (2020) have examined expertise as multidimensional. The scholars argued that the subject matter expert needs to be examined from different perspectives. An SMI may be an expert in copywriting, filtering images, also in the usage of technical aspects like video editing and animation that can attract followers. Following this, (Al-Qatami, 2019) studied expertise as multi-dimensional. The scholars examined the attractiveness, and endorsement of content quality or in other words copywriting. Other scholars also studied expertise as multidimensional and they examined expertise in copywriting and technology (Aviles & Eastman, 2012; Gonzales-Chávez & Vila-Lopez, 2020). However, in this study, the researcher was only interested in examining expertise as a uni-dimension.

Counterfeit Purchase Intention: The purchase intention of counterfeit is defined as consumers' readiness and the possibility to obtain counterfeit or original products (Eisend & Tarrahi, 2019). In the marketing field, a majority of past literature measures purchase intention (Geng et al., 2017; Noor & Muhammad, 2017). Purchase intention refers to the possibility to purchase or the consideration to purchase the items (Zeithaml, 1988). However, Bogozzi (1978) explained that a purchase intention is an individual act related to preferences. For this study, the purchase intention of counterfeit is defined as consumers' readiness and the possibility to obtain counterfeit products (Eisend & Tarrahi, 2019). Although there are arguments on the use of intentional behavior rather than actual behavior. Few studies have examined counterfeit fashion and adopted purchase intention (Fernandes, 2013; Sharma & Chan, 2017). In the study to examine counterfeit fashion purchase intention in the UAE, purchase intention functions as the measurement (Fernandes, 2013). Moreover, studies that intended to examine the actual purchase behavior also used purchase intention as the major indication of the actual purchase behavior (Sadiq et al., 2021). This is in spite of the fact that debates are circulating that purchase intention does not equal actual purchase behavior (Goh et al., 2016). However, a majority showed that purchase intention is the indication to purchase behavior, or more accurately the actual purchase behavior (Chen et al., 2021; Kanchanapibul et al., 2014; Nguyen et al., 2021). Since most of the buyers of counterfeit products do not voluntarily agree or admit that they purchase counterfeit products, the purchase intention will be used as the dependent variable of this study.

Recognizing the contribution of SMIs towards genuine brands, lately international channels have started to reveal some shocking articles involving SMIs and counterfeit. This had switched scholars' attention. They started to heavily examine the role of SMIs in contributing to counterfeit purchases (Grigsby, 2020). For example, Lou & Kim (2019) mentioned that there is a scarcity of studies examining the role of SMIs in influencing purchase intention. To fill the gap, Lou & Kim (2019) initiated the study and the findings showed that there is a positive relationship between SMIs and purchase intention. Evans et al. (2017) even went one step further to examine Instagram influencers' advertising capability's role towards students' purchase intention and the finding yielded a positive outcome whereby Instagram showed a positive outcome towards forming students' positive purchase intention.

The specific attributes of SMIs that lead to purchase intention were also investigated. The outcome of the investigation led to some interesting findings. Extant literature postulated a positive relationship between SMIs and purchase intention. The study further clarified that specific SMIs characteristics like being inspiring can well lead to the purchase intention (Jin et al., 2019). A similar study by Glucksman (2017) showed a

positive relationship between the inspiring personality of SMIs and purchase intention. Chopra et al. (2021) also jumped on the bandwagon when they probed into SMIs' attributes in influencing the millennials' purchase intention. The findings were also in favor of others, whereby amongst the other attributes inspiring was shown to lead to positive purchase intention. Thus, the following hypothesis is created for this study

H1: *Inspiration positively affects the fashion counterfeit purchase intention among the young generation.*

Due to the growing importance of SMI marketing, there were more studies carried out to determine the attributes of SMIs that can lead to purchase intention (Fernando et al., 2021). Among the few attributes of SMIs, technical skills were studied by Jin et al., (2019). The study highlighted that those technical skills are described as the capability of SMIs in displaying content using creative video editing, graphics animation, creative photo editing, and many others. The findings of the study pointed to a positive relationship between technical skills and purchase intention. A study by Batra et al., (2022) also examined the capability of SMIs in terms of their technical skills, especially their creativity in displaying cosmetics advertisements. The creativity in using lighting to show the before and after effects of using cosmetics would be able to influence consumers. The findings showed that technical skills do have a positive effect on purchase intention. Therefore, the following hypothesis is created.

H2: *Technical skills positively affect the fashion counterfeit purchase intention among the young generation.*

The medium of advertisement no longer depends on traditional media alone. Influencers play the role of a sender between the consumer and a brand. Whether consumers are accepting an advertisement and a product in it depends on the attributes of the influencers (Pop et al., 2022; Wu et al., 2022). One of those specific attributes is the likeability attributes of SMIs (Ki et al., 2020; Lee & Theokary, 2021; Wella Yanti et al., 2019). Likeability refers to the ability of SMIs to be funny, hilarious, cheerful, pleasant and playful (Benito et al., 2020; Ki et al., 2020; Pop et al., 2022). Academicians have been actively studying the effectiveness of these attributes. One of the studies by Benito et al., (2020) analyzed the effectiveness of SMIs on YouTube platforms. They were particularly interested in finding out what made followers form their purchase intention. The findings showed that there is a positive relationship between enjoyability and purchase intention. Specifically, followers prefer SMIs who are cheerful and pleasant.

Another study by Taillon et al., (2020) recognized that SMIs played a significant role in being a human brand that connects consumers and products being endorsed or sponsored. SMIs would generate a huge stream of revenue for a company. However, the study also acknowledged that being SMIs is not an easy task. There are specific attributes that make a particular SMI outstanding compared to the rest. The findings of the study reveal that there is a positive relationship between enjoyability and purchase intention. Consumers will be attracted to products that SMIs endorse or promote if they have injected a sense of humor into their content. Therefore, the following hypothesis is created

H3: *Enjoyability positively affects the fashion counterfeit purchase intention among the young generation.*

The way that individuals communicate, connect, and engage with one another has radically changed because of social media. The most significant aspect is that this platform is crucial in enabling increased influence (Abdullah et al., 2020b). However, to increase their influence, followers of SMIs are very selective. Followers only trust SMIs that have similar cultures, ages, tastes and preferences (Liu, 2022). A study by Taillon et al., (2020) was set to comprehend the importance of intimacy in the relationships that social media influencers have with their followers, and more especially, how the social media influencers may manage their human brands successfully. The findings showed that there is a similarity between the two and the SMIs do have a positive relationship with purchase intention. Besides, studies by Lou & Yuan, (2019) also asserted that similarity attributes did have a positive relationship with purchase intention. Therefore, the following hypothesis is created.

H4: *Similarity positively affects the fashion counterfeit purchase intention among the young generation.*

The role of SMIs becomes significant, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic (Femenia-Serra et al., 2022;

Green et al., 2022; Sudaryanto et al., 2022). Many business sectors rely heavily on SMIs during this pandemic. This is because the content created by popular SMIs would be able to provide good guidance, timely information, relevant information, as well as good sources of facts (al Khasawneh et al., 2021; Daud & Zulhuda, 2020; Jacobson & Harrison, 2022; Szymkowiak et al., 2021). Researchers summarized those descriptions as informativeness. This is the same variable used by other scholars (Green et al., 2022; Ki et al., 2020). For example, Sudaryanto et al., (2022) studied the role of SMIs in endorsing cosmetic products during the pandemic. The study depicted that SMIs become the connecting point as the followers trust their guidance. When consumers are confined to long periods of quarantine, to avoid boredom, females particularly, turn up to SMIs content to seek guidance on ways to apply cosmetic products. The findings showed that informativeness does have a positive relationship with purchase intention.

Other businesses, like tourism, which were heavily affected too by the COVID-19 pandemic also show reliance on SMIs (Femenia-Serra et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2021). Both these studies asserted that popular SMIs with a high number of followers are paid to create content on popular tourist spots. The factual content created serves as a good source of information to followers, subsequently leading to the high demand for virtual tours. SMIs also create content that provides guidance and helpful information on ways to navigate virtual tours. The findings of the study showed that informativeness does have a positive relationship with purchase intention. Therefore, the following hypothesis is created:

H5: *Informativeness positively affects the fashion counterfeit purchase intention among the young generation.*

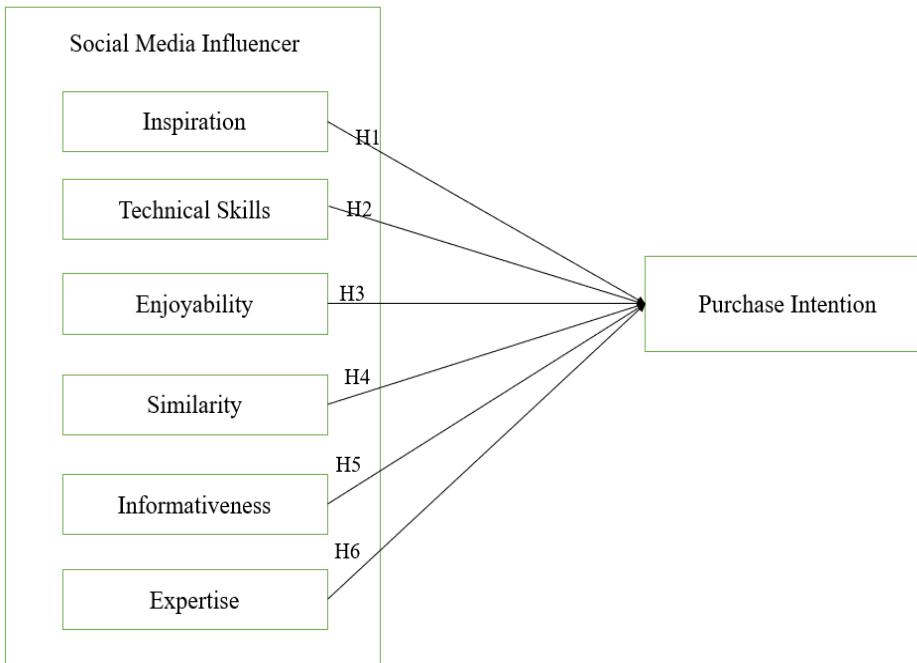
The influence exerted by social media influencers (SMIs) on consumer behavior and decision-making has grown significantly in recent years (Koay et al., 2022). This explains the accumulating academic interest in figuring out how SMIs translate their meaning to approved brands and influence customers' constructive behavioral intentions. Koay et al., (2022) had taken the initiative to bridge this knowledge gap. The study intended to investigate how followers' purchasing intentions are affected by SMI expertise. The findings showed that expertise does have a positive relationship with purchase intention. A study by Weismueller et al., (2020) offered some similar findings whereby expertise does have a positive relationship with purchase intention. The variable expertise is judged based on the content values by SMIs. This encompasses the content that delivers relevant knowledge, or one that shows SMIs claims and content that display the experiences gained by the SMIs (Munnukka et al., 2016).

However, Dean et al., (2021) who also studied the credibility of SMIs specifically in terms of their expertise in encouraging the young generation towards accepting Islamic banking, offered a different perspective. The findings revealed that expertise does not directly contribute to the behavioral intention of the Islamic bank among the young generation. It means that expertise does not have any positive relationship with purchase intention. The findings further claimed that the existence of the mediator or moderator might have positive findings. In line with this, Lin et al., (2021) studied the expertise of SMIs in promoting products. The findings showed that expertise does not directly contribute to purchase intention. In other words, expertise does not have any positive relationship with purchase intention. With these mixed findings, the following hypothesis is created:

H6: *Expertise positively affects the fashion counterfeit purchase intention among the young generation.*

Figure 1, illustrates the proposed framework. All the hypotheses stated to facilitate the understanding of the proposed framework.

Figure 1: Propose framework



3. Research Methodology

A self-administered online survey questionnaire was used to collect the research data. (Hair et al., 2014) recommended sufficient samples of more than 250 to conduct Structural Equation Model (SEM) with a good alternative for managing missing data of less than 10 percent. University students are used as the sample group to draw young consumers. University students fall into the Millennial or Generation Y age groups respectively. The questionnaire was made available online and students from various universities were invited to participate and a total of 389 samples were collected. In designing the valid and reliable measurement, verified measures from past literature were adapted and rephrased to meet the counterfeit context. Inspiration was measured using a 7-item scale adapted from Bottger et al., (2017). Technical skills were measured using a 6-item scale adapted from Ki et al., (2020). Enjoyability was measured using a 7-item scale adapted from Voss et al., (2003). Similarity was measured using a 5-item scale adapted from Ki et al., (2020) and Munnukka et al., (2016). Informativeness was measured using a 6-item scale adapted from Blanco et al., (2010) and Tsang et al., (2014). Expertise was measured using a 5-item scale adapted from Munnukka et al., (2016). Purchase intentions were measured using a 5-item scale adapted from Ha & Janda, (2017) and Jiang et al., (2019).

4. Results

Table 1 summarizes the profiles of the samples selected for this study. The outliers and missing data were checked and a total of 389 were validated and used for this analysis. In 2019, there were 41 percent of male and 59 percent of female students enrolled in public higher education in Malaysia (Hirschmann, 2020). The sample consisted of 43.4 percent of males and 56.6 percent of females, which is consistent with the data reported. All the respondents purchased at least one type of counterfeit goods endorsed by SMIs. Fashion is the highest (76.9%) counterfeit goods purchased by the respondents.

Table 1: Respondents' Profile

Variable	Classification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	169	43.4
	Female	220	56.6
Education	High school or below	65	16.7
	Bachelor's degree	237	60.9
	Certificate or Diploma	69	17.7
	Postgraduate education	12	3.1
	Professional certificate	5	1.6
	others		
Status	full-time Student	297	76.3
	Part-time student	40	10.3
	working for	25	6.4
	unemployment	19	4.9
Experience purchasing counterfeit products endorsed or wearing SMI	Self-employed	8	2.1
	Yes	389	100
Types of counterfeits purchased	Household	122	31.4
	Fashion	299	76.9
	Sports	289	74.3
	Entertainment	262	67.4
	IT	271	69.7
	Medical	126	32.4
Frequency of purchase	Rare	69	17.7
	Sometimes	109	28.0
	Always	211	54.2

To determine the validity of the construct used for each variable, factor loading is used. Based on Hair, (2015) a loading value of at least 0.50 and ideally greater than 0.70 indicates that the items' standardized factor loading is highly related to the latent construct. In some cases, the cut-off for the factor loading above 0.60 is still considered to be a reasonable loading, nevertheless. Additionally, it is suggested that the variable item with a loading of less than 0.60 is removed from the statistical analysis to increase the scale's content validity. The outcome of the factor loading presented for each variable is presented in Table 2.

Apart from validity, the reliability of the variables in this study is also examined. The reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and composite reliability (CR). Both these CA and CR are components of the internal consistency measurement. How closely the items are related to the variables being examined is indicated by the internal consistency metric. If a variable's composite reliability value and Cronbach's alpha both meet or exceed the suggested level of 0.7 as suggested by Hair, (2015), it is deemed reliable. Even though Cronbach's alpha index is frequently used to evaluate reliability, some academics contend that it undervalues this factor. In light of this, using composite reliability had been recommended as a superior Cronbach's Alpha substitute (Hair, 2015; Joreskog & Yang, 1996). As a result, the researcher used the composite reliability as well as Cronbach's alpha values as the criterion for explaining the reliability in this study. All of the variables in this study are reliable and have fulfilled the requirement of convergent validity.

Average Variance Extracted (AVE), is regarded as a more conservative test in addressing convergent validity, is another sign of convergent validity in this study. The error-free variance from a collection of construct-related items is measured using the AVE (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In other words, AVE is used to calculate how much variance is attributed to measurement error. Additionally, it has been asserted that convergent validity is only considered adequate when the value of AVE is equal to or greater than 0.50 (Hair, 2015). The results demonstrated that all AVE values are above the prescribed value of 0.50 set by Hair et al (2010).

Table 2: Measurement Model for Inspiration

No	Inspiration	F.L	CA	C.R	AVE
1.	My favorite social media influencer's personality stimulates my imagination about counterfeit products.	0.88	0.90	0.90	0.65
2.	My favorite social media influencer's personality influences me with new ideas about counterfeit products.	deleted			
3.	My favorite social media influencer's personality makes me explore counterfeit products.	0.75			
4.	My favorite social media influencer's post inspires me to buy counterfeit products.	0.78			
5.	My favorite social media influencer's post sparks my desire to buy counterfeit products.	0.81			
6.	My favorite social media influencer's post increases my desire to buy counterfeit products.	0.82			
7.	My favorite social media influencer's post motivates me to buy counterfeit products.	deleted			
Technical Skills					
1.	My favorite social media influencer's content is artistically pleasing.	0.77	0.94	0.94	0.71
2.	My favorite social media influencer's content is attractive.	0.76			
3.	My favorite social media influencer's content is visually appealing.	0.82			
4.	My favorite social media influencer's angle of pictures impresses me.	0.90			
5.	My favorite social media influencer's creativity in presenting beautiful videos impresses me.	0.91			
6.	My favorite social media influencer's photography skills are appealing.	0.88			
Enjoyability					
1.	I find my favorite social media influencers are funny.	0.74	0.93	0.93	0.69
2.	I find my favorite social media influencers are hilarious.	0.92			
3.	I find my favorite social media influencers do have a sense of humor.	0.72			
4.	I find my favorite social media influencers are cheerful.	0.92			
5.	I find my favorite social media influencers are pleasant.	0.75			
6.	I find my favorite social media influencer's posts enjoyable.	0.90			
7.	I find my favorite social media influencers are playful.	0.74			
Similarity					
1.	I find my favorite social media influencer's culture is similar to me	0.97	0.96	0.96	0.88
2.	I find my favorite social media influencer's content matches my interest	Deleted			
3.	I find my favorite social media influencer's personality similar to mine.	0.93			
4.	I find my favorite social media influencer's age group to be the same as mine.	0.90			
5.	I find my favorite social media influencers to have similar tastes and preferences as mine.	0.94			
Informativeness					
1.	I feel the content made by my favorite social media influencers offers timely information.	Deleted	0.95	0.95	0.82
2.	I feel the content made by my favorite social media influencers is more informative than other advertising sources.	Deleted			
3.	I feel the content made by my favorite social media influencers	0.85			

	is helpful.				
4.	I feel the content made by my favorite social media influencers is a good source of product/service information.	0.95			
5.	I feel the content made by my favorite social media influencers does not offer me irrelevant information.	0.84			
6.	I feel the contents made by my favorite social media influencers offer me guidance to make purchase decisions.	0.97			
Expertise					
1.	When looking at my favorite social media influencer's content, I feel he/she knows a lot about the counterfeit product	Deleted	0.94	0.94	0.84
2.	When looking at my favorite social media influencer's content, I feel he/she is competent to make assertions about the counterfeit product	Deleted			
3.	When looking at my favorite social media influencer's content, I consider he/she to be an expert in promoting the counterfeit product	0.92			
4.	When looking at my favorite social media influencer's content, I consider he/she to be an expert in using fashion counterfeit products.	0.89			
5.	When looking at my favorite social media influencer's content, I consider he/she sufficiently experienced to claim the counterfeit product.	0.94			
Purchase Intention					
1.	I consider purchasing fashion counterfeit product(s)	0.76	0.93	0.93	0.69
2.	I intend to buy fashion counterfeit product (s) after being exposed to social media influencer personality	0.82			
3.	I might possibly buy fashion counterfeit product(s) from content provided by the social media influencer	0.91			
4.	I would consider to buy fashion counterfeit product(s) after seeing social media influencer information about it	0.83			
5.	I am willing to buy a fashionable counterfeit product if it is promoted by my favorite social media influencers.	0.82			

The results of the mean and standard deviation for overall variables are presented in Table 3. The discriminant validity of all measures is supported by the fact that the square roots of the AVE for each variable are larger than its correlation.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Inspiration	4.04	0.59	0.81							
2. Technical Skills	3.62	1.03	.20	0.84						
3. Enjoyability	3.75	0.85	.13	-0.03	0.83					
4. Similarity	3.44	1.17	.17	.68	-0.12	0.94				
5. Informativeness	3.47	1.04	.19	.59	-0.06	.69	0.90			
6. Expertise	3.37	1.04	.19	.64	-0.05	.72	.74	0.92		
7. Purchase Intention	3.43	1.07	.19	.72	-0.04	.70	.73	0.71		0.83

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was performed using AMOS software. SEM is capable of estimating the direct effects of all the dimensions of SMIs on counterfeit purchase intention. The findings for each hypothesis are displayed in Table 4. The regression weight for inspiration, enjoyability, similarity, and expertise in the prediction of purchase intention is not significantly different from zero at the 0.05 level. For this reason, H1, H3, H4, and H6 are not supported. For technical skills and informativeness, the regression weight for technical skills in the prediction of purchase intention is significantly different from zero at the 0.001 level. Hence, H2 and H5 are supported.

Table 4: Path analysis

Paths	Estimate	S.E	C.R	P Value	Result
H1: Inspiration → Purchase intention	0.04	0.05	0.81	0.42	NS
H2: Technical skills → Purchase intention	0.27	0.05	5.52	0.001**	Support
H3: Enjoyability → Purchase intention	0.01	0.04	0.18	0.86	NS
H4: Similarity → Purchase Intention	0.04	0.05	0.77	0.44	NS
H5: Informativeness → Purchase intention	0.21	0.04	5.08	0.001**	Support
H6: Expertise → Purchase intention	0.05	0.06	0.84	0.40	NS

Note:**p<0.01,NS=Not Support

Discussion

The results of this study provide the first empirical proof that not all the dimensions of SMIs directly affect counterfeit purchase intention. The results of this study add to the body of knowledge regarding how the dimensions of SMIs affect counterfeit purchase intention among the younger generation. This is a significant result because it prevents the younger generation from buying fashion counterfeit products. This study also provides accurate dimensions that need to be focused on by policymakers and marketers. Since SMIs have a significant impact on the behavior of younger generations, this study shows that SMIs also have an impact on their behavior of counterfeit products. This study aims to make several contributions to the area of counterfeit products.

Firstly, this study found that inspiration is not significantly related to counterfeit purchase intentions, and this result is not in line with the existing literature (Chopra et al., 2021; Glucksman, 2017). They prefer credibility while making purchase decisions instead of getting inspired by SMIs. This shows that the inspiration, as the attribute of SMIs does not influence the fashion counterfeit purchase intention of the individuals. Previous research has focused on a famous brand, which explains this study's result. This shows that the young generation does not get inspired by SMIs while purchasing.

Secondly, the findings revealed that technical skills positively correlate to counterfeit purchase intentions among the young generation. This result is supported and aligned with one of the previous studies (Jin et al., 2019). Like other attributes of SMIs, their technical skills are also considered to give them an upper hand over other marketing media. Most SMIs possess and develop the required technical skills to carry out video editing, graphic designing and other operations. This helps them provide a better version of the product they are sponsoring. The creativity of SMIs helps attract more users, encouraging them to spread positive word of mouth to develop brand value. However, the younger generation is highly influenced by the innovative ideas of SMIs, which are represented in their promoted images and videos. Such discussions help in encouraging the results of the present study, showing that technical skills positively affect fashion counterfeit purchase intention among the young generation.

Thirdly, enjoyability is not a significant predictor of counterfeit purchase intentions among the young generation. The current findings do not align with past studies (Monge-Benito et al., 2020; Taillon et al., 2020). The role of SMIs as the sender between the brand and the customers is mainly being promoted these days. The attributes of SMIs contribute to making a brand popular as they help attract younger users. However, the SMIs' likeability attribute is highly focused as funny and playful influencers are likely to engage a larger audience of younger people. Therefore, the enjoyability of SMIs merely helps individuals pass their time, and their decision-making processes are not influenced by it.

Fourthly, based on the statistical results, it is depicted that similarity did not have a significant association with counterfeit purchase intentions. This current outcome is not in line with a few past studies (Lou & Kim, 2019; Taillon et al., 2020). Similarities between the SMIs and the people help them connect emotionally, but when it comes to practicality, the people consider their consciousness instead of being driven by emotions. Conscious consumers are shoppers who make the conscious decision to buy local, ethical and environmentally-friendly products. Their choice of companies to shop in is often based on how environmentally or socially conscious they are.

Fifthly, the present findings show that informativeness is significantly and positively related to counterfeit

purchase intentions among the young generation, and this outcome is in line with the previous literature (Femenia-Serra et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2021). SMIs eventually became the source of information for many followers. The young generation is even brought up in the digital world, which explains their dependency on social media for obtaining the necessary information. Thus, the SMIs' informativeness impacts the users' purchase intention as they had no other effective source of information during the covid-19 pandemic. This has eventually become the routine of many users.

Finally, the results highlighted that the expertise of SMIs is not significantly related to purchase intentions. The current study's findings showed that the outcome is not in line with previous studies (Koay et al., 2021; Weismueller et al., 2020). However, it supports the findings of Lin et al. (2021), which stated the negative impact of expertise on the purchase intention of individuals. The experts provide the young generation with various perspectives to guide them toward a better future. Despite this, the young generation often likes to make their own decisions, and they enjoy their autonomy in this case.

5. Managerial Implications and Recommendations

One of the main limitations of this current study was related to the choice of product. This is because the product selected to represent this study is a fashion counterfeit. During the early stage of research design, screening questions were prepared to identify the most frequently purchased counterfeit products. In the screening questions, six types of counterfeit products were given which are households, fashion, sports, entertainment, IT and medical. Out of these six options, fashion counterfeit appears to be most frequently purchased by the younger generation. The idea that the brands are exclusive is appealing to many people, especially young people. It is tempting to possess something that is not widely available but unaffordable. This is the justification as to why consumers, especially the young ones turn to fake goods and Reddit, for instance, has opened a channel of a huge fashion replica community. The limitation of this is that the findings of this are restricted only to fashion counterfeit products. It cannot be generalized to all counterfeit products in general. This is because the young generation may not only purchase fashion counterfeit products but also purchase entertainment and IT-related counterfeit products. Therefore, future studies can also focus on common counterfeits to get further insights.

Finally, this study has not included the mediating effects of any variable on the relationship between SMIs and counterfeit purchase intention. Based on the stimulus-organism-response model that has been used widely in consumer behavior, mediating should be added to the model. Future studies could investigate the mediating role of motivation factors. For example, self-determination can be used as the mediating variable in the study of counterfeit purchase intention.

Conclusion

The findings could offer marketing practitioners new approaches, how to stop the young generation from purchasing counterfeit products. Technical skills and informativeness are found as important skills of SMIs in influencing the younger generation in purchase intention. Therefore, marketers should support or sponsor individuals or SMIs who are well-versed in technical skills and information. Additionally, marketers might give SMI more information to promote pattern products. Accurate information is important that allows the younger generation to understand the difference between counterfeit and original products.

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