



Social Behavior of Displaying Status through Branded Goods and Brand Prominence

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Abstract

This research aims to explore the relationship between consumer motives mediated by brand prominence selection in the purchasing behavior of counterfeit products among three consumer groups/classes (patricians, parvenus, and poseurs) in the luxury fashion brand context. The data were obtained from a sample consisting of 230 respondents who were considered eligible. There are three findings. First, for the poseur class, consumer motives in purchasing products are positively related to counterfeit products and prominent brand prominence. Second, for the parvenus class, consumer motives are not related to counterfeit products, but they are related to prominent brand prominence. Third, for the patrician class, consumer motives for purchasing products are not related to counterfeit products and subtle brand prominence.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi hubungan antara motif konsumen yang dimediasi oleh pemilihan brand prominence pada perilaku beli produk palsu pada tiga kelompok/kelas konsumen (patrician, parvenus dan poseur) dalam fesyen brand mewah. Data diperoleh dari sampel yang terdiri dari 230 responden yang sudah dianggap memenuhi syarat. Ada tiga temuan, pertama, untuk kelas poseur, motif konsumen dalam membeli produk berhubungan positif terhadap produk palsu dan brand prominence yang mencolok. Kedua, kelas parvenus motif konsumen tidak berhubungan terhadap produk palsu, tetapi berhubungan terhadap brand prominence yang mencolok. Ketiga, kelas patrician, motif konsumen membeli produk tidak berhubungan terhadap produk palsu dan brand prominence yang lembut.

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INTRODUCTION

The global losses due to luxury brand counterfeiting have reached US \$600 billion annually (Lieber, 2014). The trade of illicit goods (such as bags, eyewear, shoes, clothing, or accessories) is expected to continue growing in the coming years. Particularly in Indonesia, based on the results of the Indonesian Anti-Counterfeiting Society (MIAP) survey in 2016, counterfeit products had already caused an economic impact of US \$612 million on the national economy during that year, with the government losing approximately US \$30 million in indirect tax revenue annually. Specifically, the prevalence of fake luxury goods and counterfeit products is closely tied to consumer motives for purchasing luxury products to establish their own identity. The acquisition of identity can be achieved through the use of luxury items. The urge of an individual or social groups to showcase themselves to appear attractive is often done by displaying a glamorous lifestyle through the use of luxury brands. Such motives appear to be prevalent across various social strata. Motive is an individual's driving force for behavior (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2011). These motives can be both negative and positive. It's the negative motives that drive consumers to knowingly engage in using counterfeit products in markets that intentionally sell counterfeit or non-deceptive products (Thaichon & Quah, 2016; Bian et al., 2015).

The consumer motives across all classes/strata in using luxury products are aimed at signaling social status (Han et al., 2010; Han & Kim, 2020; Loureiro et al., 2020) as symbols of materialism (Workman & Lee, 2011; Nelissen & Meijers, 2012), without considering the authenticity of the original products (D'Amato & Thanos, 2013), wherein the true satisfaction comes from. Satisfaction in obtaining status through the consumption of luxury products stems from audience reaction (Han et al., 2010). Status represents one's position in the social hierarchy, determined by honor and social influence (Ridgeway & Walker, 1995). Historically, this position could be obtained through lineage or recognition, but today, it's not solely applicable, as an individual's status is viewed through achievements that generate wealth, such as possession of money, high income, and prestigious positions (Han et al., 2010).

The social status hierarchy in ancient Rome included the patricians, parvenus, poseurs, and plebs, which were associated with brand prominence (Dubois & Duquesne, 1992). Brand prominence is a branding concept involving soft (quiet) and loud logo designs on a product (Cheng-Xi Aw et al., 2020; Han et al., 2010). More specifically, strong (loud) brands are described as striking and prominent, with visible and observable brand signs that send out a "louder" signal to others, as opposed to subtle (quiet) brands. The phenomenon of signaling status within the patrician class when purchasing authentic luxury goods is not necessarily dependent on loud brand designs. However, newcomers or newly wealthy individuals (parvenus) opt for authentic luxury products with conspicuous brand designs. In contrast, the poseur class (pseudo-affluent) attempts to emulate parvenus by purchasing counterfeit products with prominent brand designs to showcase their status to the audience (Greenberg et al., 2019; Wilcox et al., 2008). However, this perspective has been contradicted by several recent studies (such as D'Amato & Thanos, 2013; Pino et al., 2019; Perez et al., 2010) introducing a new trend called "fake chic," where high-class consumers enjoy buying counterfeit products even though they can afford genuine luxury goods. The rationale behind this is that buying counterfeit products offers similar quality to genuine items, an easy and enjoyable process, and significantly lower prices. The objective of this research is to explore consumer motives across different classes using prominent or non-prominent logo products to signal status to others. The motives of each class among consumers differ significantly from one another in psychological and behavioral aspects (Keaveney & Parthasarathy, 2001). Prior research has not been specific about which classes or strata and how consumer behavior affects logo choice (subtle vs. prominent) to convey their status to others (Hernandez & Handan, 2014). Previous literature also suggests that signaling status is a human behavior motivated by the desire to display products worn to gain recognition from others as symbols of wealth and identity without explicitly specifying the target audience (Han et al., 2010). Recent studies indicate that individual status signaling is not only motivated by utilitarian purposes but also by symbolic meanings underlying products or brands within the power strata (Cheng-Xi Aw et al., 2020). To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the methods through which each class or strata employs its power to send status signals to others have not been deeply explored. Therefore, this research aims to bridge this gap by developing a framework that explains motives

regarding product legitimacy and brand prominence, along with purchasing behavior, across three consumer classes/strata simultaneously.

The researcher proposes a hypothesis that consumer perceptions in the patrician, parvenus, and poseur classes towards product legitimacy and brand prominence are factors influencing the intention to purchase a product and the brand's strength for signaling status. Additionally, we test this model across three consumer class groups. The following section reviews prior research on motives, counterfeit products, and buying behavior. The research methodology explains the measurements used to test the hypotheses, followed by a discussion and concluding remarks.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumer Motives towards Counterfeit Products

Based on the literature, two prominent consumption motives stand out, especially in the study of luxury goods consumption today. The first is the wealth accumulation motivation, which portrays the image of individuals as belonging to the highest social circle, being successful and prosperous (Phau & Prendergast, 2000; Nelissen & Meijers, 2012). The second motive is the unpleasant comparison, where individuals strive to differentiate or distance themselves from others they perceive as being below them (Veblen, 1899). Ustuner and Thompson (2012) and Truong and McColl (2011) also add that self-expression and vanity (showing off) are considered primary motivations, reflecting success and pleasure. The use of counterfeit luxury products aims to stay within the circle of peers and be perceived as part of a group, trend, fashion, or social class that is equivalent or even more prominent than their community (Tang et al., 2014; Bian et al., 2015). The motivation to use fake luxury brand items reflects a desire to be a change agent in fashion, aspiring to be an innovator and influencer (Lee & Workman 2011). Consumers perceive no difference in quality and appearance between counterfeit and genuine products, which can reduce any shame for users (Bian & Moutinho, 2011; Tang et al., 2014). Moreover, law enforcement agencies, police, and local governments show less seriousness, and ethical standards are low (Chiu & Leng, 2016).

Negative consumer motives become important predictors of the intention to purchase counterfeit goods (Nwankwo et al., 2014; Wilcox et al., 2008), and they represent a consensus within the community of users. Motives for purchasing counterfeit products include social and cultural factors, consumer ethnocentrism, especially when the counterfeit is of foreign brands (Tang et al., 2014). Another motive is purchasing counterfeit products to obtain a sense of glamour, admiration, and hedonistic pleasure (Sharma & Chan, 2011; Chen et al., 2015). Another category involves those who buy counterfeit products due to previous experience with such brands (Bian & Moutinho, 2011a; Stöttinger & Penz, 2015). Lastly, some purchase counterfeit products to acquire unique experiences during their visits to certain places (Thaichon & Quach, 2016). These motives drive consumers who continuously seek counterfeit luxury products to attain the desired social status. Therefore, we propose the following research hypothesis:

H1: The higher the consumer class/stratum, the less positively consumer motives are related to counterfeit products.

Consumer Motives towards Brand Prominence of Fake Luxury Products

Brand prominence explains a brand being marked prominently or vaguely, like the "G" of Gucci or the bold red and green striped signature on a bag to ensure that observers recognize it as a Gucci brand (McFerran et al., 2014). Brand designs on a product serve as symbols or signals. Previous literature states that the benefits of branding as signals for consumers can reduce product search costs, making the brand highly familiar (Han et al., 2010). Brands are also used to communicate a company's image (McFerran et al., 2014). Erdem & Swait (1998) suggest that a brand can convey a variety of brand associations and brand equity, making it easier for consumers to identify its product characteristics. The choice of a luxury product brand can send social signals to consumers, indicating the status of the user (Loureiro et al., 2020; Piff, 2014; Wang & Griskevicius, 2013). Consumer motives for purchasing counterfeit luxury products also consider the form of the brand, whether it's prominent or subtle (Bagheri, 2014). A prominent logo can be easily seen and recognized by others, especially those who are less familiar with well-known luxury brands (Han et al., 2010; Cheng-Xi Aw et al., 2020). Therefore, consumer motives for using genuine or counterfeit luxury

goods can influence the choice of prominent or subtle brand designs, with the aim of signaling status to equivalent or lower classes. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2: Consumer motives for purchasing counterfeit luxury products are related to brand prominence in all classes: patricians, parvenus, and poseurs.

Perceptions of Fake Products regarding Brand Prominence

Consumers' reasons for purchasing counterfeit luxury goods stem from aspiring to possess luxury items without being able or willing to pay the high prices. Counterfeit luxury goods become the target for fashion enthusiasts to signal their status to others (Jiang & Cova, 2012), as good counterfeit items serve as substitutes for genuine products, carrying social and personal significance. Brand prominence, largely noticeable, becomes a significant consideration for consumers in the poseur class when buying counterfeit luxury goods. The tendency towards significantly lower prices and more conspicuous brand logos is observed (Bagheri, 2014). They desire status by purchasing counterfeit items with prominent brands and lower prices, sending signals to others. Specifically, parvenus have the need to prominently display the brand, as they are often not accustomed to recognizing and evaluating genuine luxury items, hoping others will quickly identify them (Erdem & Swait, 1998; Han et al., 2010). On the other hand, the patrician class seeks to distance themselves from motives to purchase counterfeit products and prominent brands (Han et al., 2010). Consequently, the consideration of brand prominence is significant when purchasing counterfeit luxury goods. Therefore, the proposed hypothesis is:

H3: Perceptions of counterfeit luxury products are related to brand prominence with a conspicuous brand design.

Brand Prominence and the Purchase Behavior of Fake Luxury Goods

According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, attitude is the most influential factor in predicting intentional behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). This relationship has been supported by numerous studies across various disciplines. Specifically referencing counterfeit luxury goods, Eisend & Schuchert-Guler (2006) and evidence from Schlegelmilch & Stottinger (1999) suggest that attitudes towards counterfeiting arise when the price disparity between counterfeit and genuine products is too high, which will positively correlate with purchasing behavior. Various previous studies have indicated that higher prices are positively associated with counterfeiting and buying behavior (see Ang et al., 2001; Kim & Karpova, 2010; Wang et al., 2005). Attitudes towards using counterfeit luxury goods are the most influential factor in intentional behavior (Riquelme & Sayed-Abbas, 2012). Thus, the characteristics of counterfeit products have a positive influence on consumer buying behavior. Attribute considerations such as benefits, brand design, product appearance, durability, and perceived quality significantly affect purchasing behavior (Kim & Karpova, 2010; Tang et al., 2014). Additionally, previous research indicates that brand prominence also creates specific brand images (conspicuous or subtle) for counterfeit products, which influence buying behavior (Bian & Moutinho, 2011a). Therefore, the hypothesis that can be proposed is:

H4: Consumers who prefer brand prominence (conspicuous design) have a stronger tendency for buying counterfeit products.

RESEARCH METHODS

Procedure and Sample

This survey was conducted with consumers encountered at various locations, such as well-known boutiques selling genuine branded fashion products, prominent malls in metropolitan cities, and several retailers accustomed to selling counterfeit goods in Jakarta and Surabaya. The sample used was purposive sampling. The sampling procedure was carried out meticulously, as the classification of classes/strata (whether patrician, parvenus, or poseur) was intentionally not disclosed to respondents. Instead, it was based solely on the signaling behaviors they exhibited, as well as their expertise and status needs. While we believe that wealth serves as an indicator for each class they occupy, we did not explicitly test this.

Questionnaires were distributed by involving 30 students, adopting techniques from previous research on product or service marketing (e.g., Bitner et al., 1990; Chiu & Leng, 2016). Each student

distributed 10 questionnaires to anyone shopping at predetermined locations. In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to mention one product they purchased during a specific period and circle their perceptions of that product.

Sample Characteristics

A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed to respondents, with 230 deemed eligible, resulting in a response rate of 76.6% that could be accurately identified. The majority of respondents were female, totaling 190 individuals (82.60%), while the remaining 40 (17.39%) were male. Their ages ranged from 25 to 60 years (mean=35.1 and median=32). Respondents' income distribution revealed that approximately 39.13% (n=90) fell into the low-income category, 38.268% (n=88) into the middle-income category, and 26% were classified as high-income. The sample sizes for each class/stratum were determined subjectively by the researcher, based on screening questionnaire responses regarding respondents' income and knowledge of branded luxury goods criteria. The researcher honestly acknowledges the inability to extensively validate this information. However, through in-depth interviews with 10 individuals outside the closed questionnaire, the researcher believes that the information provided can depict the actual situation. The key points in the interviews were organized based on respondents' perceptions of branded luxury goods, understanding of such goods, prevalence and impact of using counterfeit luxury items, and their affiliation with social circles. The response data were analyzed to formulate classifications based on classes/strata for this study. The results of the classification are as follows: 52 respondents (22.60%) were classified as patricians, having experience purchasing genuine luxury items as well as counterfeit ones; 87 respondents (37.82%) were categorized as parvenus, with experience buying counterfeit luxury items but recently purchasing genuine ones; and 91 respondents (39.56%) were labeled as poseurs, having no experience buying genuine luxury items.

Measurement

Based on previous studies, we developed questionnaire items to measure consumers' motives for purchasing counterfeit luxury goods and brand prominence. Examples of these items include using counterfeit luxury brands to appear successful, the significant price difference between counterfeit and genuine luxury goods, the desire to experience wearing counterfeit luxury items without spending much money, and the satisfaction of accurately distinguishing between counterfeit and genuine luxury products (Stöttinger & Penz, 2015; Chiu & Leng, 2016). To measure the choice of brand prominence and counterfeit products, we developed questionnaire items based on three studies (Wilcox et al., 2008; Han et al., 2010). For instance, buying luxury products with a prominent brand design is very satisfying, prominent brand designs are widely available in the black market, and inconspicuous brand designs aim to camouflage counterfeit luxury products. To measure buying behavior, we assessed consumer attitudes towards counterfeit luxury products. Consumers exhibit a positive attitude towards purchasing counterfeit products when the price is significantly lower, the quality is comparable, and they are willing to buy counterfeit products or vice versa (Eisend & Schuchert-Guler, 2006; Hoppe et al., 2013). Loureiro et al. (2014) also added that behavior to buy counterfeit products is measured by the willingness to continue using counterfeit items and recommending them to others. For all items, a seven-point Likert scale was employed (1 – strongly disagree, 5 – strongly agree).

Respondents were also asked to state which luxury fashion brands they have purchased and whether they prefer inconspicuous or prominent brand designs. If a respondent indicated a preference for inconspicuous brand designs, they were asked whether their class/strata peers would recognize the type of item they were using. On the other hand, respondents who preferred prominent brand designs were asked this question to assert that the item they were using was indeed luxurious. Additionally, questions were posed regarding experiences with counterfeit luxury products, and finally, to understand the poseur class/group, our sampling was conducted in locations where counterfeit products were freely available.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

The research results are presented in Table 1, which displays the means, standard deviations, construct reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and bivariate correlations between latent factors. The measurement model exhibits a good fit with the data ($\chi^2 = 2505.16$, $p < .01$, degrees of freedom [df] = 1.402; comparative fit index [CFI]= 0.87; Tucker Lewis index [TLI] = 0.88; root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = 0.06; standardized root mean square residual [SRMR] = 0.07). The items included in the measurement model have estimated construct reliabilities ranging from 0.76 to 0.81, demonstrating strong convergent validity and high reliability of the measurement instrument. The latent constructs included in the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) show strong evidence, as all items have strong significance levels. This indicates that the items have strong explanatory power on error variance (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Furthermore, the AVE values for each latent variable exceed 0.50, indicating that the variance explained by measurement error is smaller than the variance explained by the construct. Collectively, convergent validity provides robust evidence supporting the scales for consumer motives, counterfeit luxury products, brand prominence, and purchase intentions. Lastly, the AVE for all constructs surpasses the shared variance among constructs and all other variables, thus demonstrating strong discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 1. CFA

	Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>CR</i>	<i>AVE</i>	Consumer Motives	Counterfeit Products	<i>Brand Prominence</i>		Purchase Behavior
1.	Consumer Motives	5.30	0.85	.78	.75	.71	.76				
2.	Counterfeit Products	5.15	1.18	.93	.91	.74	-.22 **	.77			
3.	Brand Prominence	5.11	1.07	.96	.95	.83	-.23 **	.79 **	.81		
4.	Purchase Behavior	5.74	0.93	.92	.90	.75	-.22 **	.67 **	.75**	72**	.76
Model fit: $\chi^2 = 2505.16$, $p < .01$, $df = 1,303$; CFI = 0.88; TLI = 0.87; RMSEA = 0.08; SRMR = 0.07											
Note. N =230 .† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.											

Source: Data processed by author (2023)

Hypothesis Testing

To analyze whether H1 - H4 are supported in the patrician, parvenus, and poseur classes, the data were categorized into three groups and parameter estimates (γ and β) were freely estimated for each group using LISREL 9.1. Subsequently, all parameter estimates in a specific class group (e.g., patrician) were constrained to be equal to the other class groups (e.g., parvenus). To evaluate the difference in fit between the unconstrained model and the constrained model, a χ^2 difference test was conducted. Differences between the two χ^2 values ranged from 22 to 136 (df = 7, $p = 0.05$) across the three class groups, indicating that the constrained and unconstrained groups significantly differed in the estimated parameters.

The unconstrained model for the poseur class (n = 123) demonstrated generally moderate fit ($\chi^2 = 451.0$; df = 142, $p < 0.05$; CFI = 0.94; GFI = 0.89; TLI = 0.86; RMSEA = 0.07; SRMR = 0.05). While this model had a strong foundation, potential model specifications should be considered to assess the extent to which the conceptualization encompassing the data can enhance validity (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Chiu et al., 2016). In the poseur class model, we identified an additional path from counterfeit products to brand prominence. As poseurs lack experience with various genuine luxury brands and even actively seek counterfeit items (Han et al., 2010), their expectations for signaling status are lower compared to the parvenus class. If poseurs encounter counterfeit luxury goods with prominent branding, they are more likely to engage in purchasing behavior compared to the parvenus class (the class above them). Consequently, this class feels proud and confident in their ability to select the best counterfeit luxury items, feeling accomplished compared to the two classes above them. Such feelings become stimuli for consumer motives and confidence in purchasing counterfeit luxury products (see, Bian & Moutinho, 2011a; Stöttinger & Penz, 2015; Poddar et al., 2012). Thus, the path between consumer motives and purchase behavior through brand prominence and counterfeit products can be substantiated for the poseur class, as depicted in Figure 1.

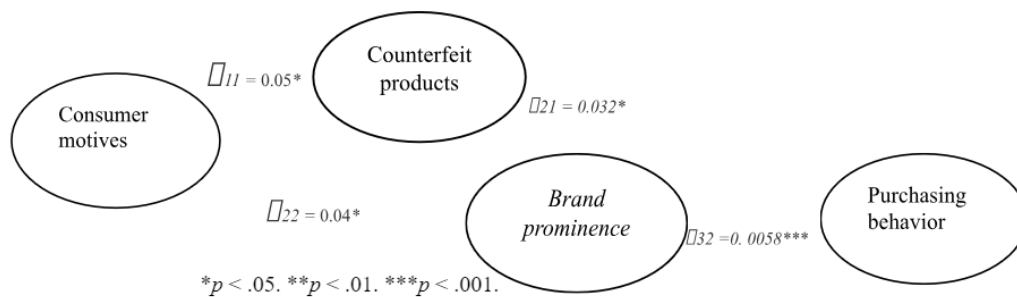


Figure 1: Poseur Class

Source: Data processed by author (2023)

The results of the study show that all parameter estimates are significant, supporting H1 – H4. The χ^2 value is 447.7 (df = 141), which is lower than the initial model ($\chi^2 = 451.0$, df = 142), and the CFI = 0.94; GFI = 0.89; TLI = 0.86; RMSEA = 0.07; SRMR = 0.05. The difference between the two χ^2 values is 3.3, which is greater than the significance level of 2.51 ($\chi_{0.05,12}$). Additionally, the coefficient γ_{22} is 0.04, which is also significant at $p < 0.05$. These results indicate that the model fit is acceptable and improved significantly compared to the initial model, which did not include the path from Fake Luxury Product to Brand Prominence.

For the unconstrained Patrician model (n = 98) (Figure 2), the χ^2 is 236.5 (df = 143, $p < 0.05$), CFI is 0.91; GFI is 0.85; TLI = 0.88; RMSEA = 0.06; SRMR = 0.07, indicating an overall acceptable model fit. However, one path is not significant in Figure 2. The path from Consumer Motive to Fake Luxury Product and Brand Prominence ($\gamma_{23} = 0.73$, $p > 0.05$) is not significant because the Patrician class has a sense of prestige and negative emotions towards fake luxury brand products.

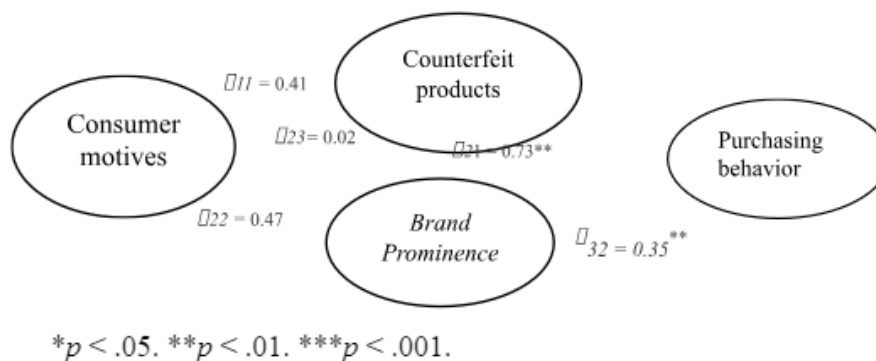


Figure 2. Patrician Class

Source: Data processed by author (2023)

Sharma & Chan (2011), Tang et al. (2014), and Chen et al. (2015) state that using fake luxury items with eye-catching brand designs is indeed embarrassing, lowers prestige, and elicits negative emotions. Lastly, the relationship between fake luxury products and brand prominence (prominent design) towards purchasing behavior is also not significant ($\beta = 0.72$, 0.35 , $p > 0.05$), indicating that the perception of fake products and prominent brand designs does not trigger this class to make purchases and even leads to a negative response. However, there is also a hidden consumer motive behind the purchase of fake luxury goods with subtle branding to camouflage the fact that this class has never bought counterfeit products. Some respondents admit to being intrigued to experience the sensation of seeking counterfeit goods in the black market (for example, Perez et al., 2010; Sharma & Chan, 2011; Chen et al., 2015). This can also be explained through interviews with certain respondents considered part of the elite class (business families, high-ranking officials, celebrities). Therefore, we can add a direct path from consumer motive to purchasing behavior, which is significant ($\gamma = 0.02$, $p > 0.05$). This is what we refer to as the "dark motive" in the

Patrician class. This is supported by the prevailing perception that whatever is worn by entrepreneurs, high-ranking officials, celebrities, and famous lawyers is believed by society to be luxurious and expensive.

For the unconstrained model in the Parvenus class ($n = 87$) (Figure 3), the χ^2 is 282.5 ($df = 143$, $p < 0.05$), CFI is 0.92, GFI is 0.83, TLI = 0.86; RMSEA = 0.08; SRMR = 0.07, indicating overall acceptable model fit. In Figure 3, the significant paths are from consumer motive to eye-catching brand prominence ($\gamma = -0.02$, $p < 0.05$) and from brand prominence to purchasing behavior ($\beta = 0.03$, $p < 0.01$). The reason for this finding is that the Parvenus class tends to purchase genuine luxury products, but they desire a brand design that is eye-catching. This is because, apart from showcasing themselves to the class below, they also signal to the class above (Patrician) that they have achieved success and can be aligned with that class.

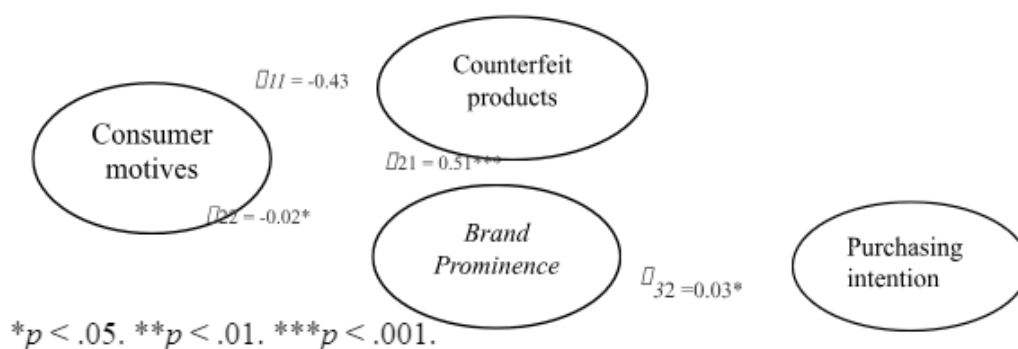


Figure 3. Parvenus Class
Source: Data processed by author (2023)

Consumer attitudes in this class towards fake products are negative. This is because they want to build a positive image that portrays them as newly affluent individuals who aspire to gain status within their own group and the class above them. As a result, the path from consumer motive to counterfeit products is not significant for this class. Even though this class deeply understands the characteristics of fake luxury products, they are extremely cautious when it comes to the legitimacy of luxury goods. This caution stems from their desire to ensure the success of the social status they have built.

Discussion

In this study, we applied the concept of consumer decision-making in aspiring for status with luxury branded products and brand prominence with either conspicuous or subtle designs in an empirical study. The research results indicate that consumer motives are significantly positively related to counterfeit luxury products and conspicuous brand prominence, as well as buying behavior within the poseur class. Conversely, in the patrician class, there is a negative relationship between consumer motives and the perception of counterfeit luxury products, conspicuous brand prominence, and buying behavior. The parvenus class only exhibits a positive relationship between consumer motives and conspicuous brand prominence as well as buying behavior.

These research findings partially support the findings of Han et al. (2010) and Wilcox et al. (2008), wherein consumers in the poseur class, when signaling their status, are only capable of purchasing counterfeit luxury products with conspicuous brands. This is because products with conspicuous brands effectively serve the social function of self-expression and self-presentation. Similarly, for brands with conspicuous designs, they can evoke consumer memories and strengthen their relationship with the company. Since poseurs feel incapable of aligning themselves with the two classes above them, they resort to buying counterfeit goods to signal their status within their group. Without hesitation, they purchase counterfeit luxury products in the black market to appear wealthy, fashionable, in line with trends, and as something commonly done by many (see Thaichon & Quach 2016; Tang et al., 2014; Chiu & Leng, 2016). Thus, imitating parvenus (the class one level above them) is a way for poseurs to establish their status within their group.

In the parvenus class, the motive is to use genuinely branded luxury products with conspicuous designs as signals to clarify that they are not part of the lower class (poseurs). For the parvenus class, the patrician class is aspirational, while the poseur class is dissociative (White & Dahl, 2006). The parvenus group is a newly elevated social class that hasn't acquired the skills associated with their new position, so they strive to align themselves with the patrician class. Since they are new to luxury goods, they aren't familiar with intricate details like ultra-luxury fashion brands. They prefer popular luxury products with conspicuous brand designs to signal their success. For them, the distinctive "LV" monogram of Louis Vuitton or the Chanel brand, favored by red carpet celebrities, serves as a way to showcase their status, even though the prices reach millions of dollars.

Lastly, the patrician class possesses expertise and experience with luxury goods, along with substantial wealth (Dubois & Duquesne, 1992; Cheng-Xi Aw et al., 2020; Cannon et al., 2018). Therefore, their purchase of products is not intended for display to lower classes, as they consider themselves exclusive/superior. This group carefully maintains its identity, choosing products that can be recognized by their in-group. They view buying luxury goods as a pleasure or a way of life. For instance, they might purchase a \$5 million Hublot Big Bang watch that appears quite ordinary. For the patrician class, the use of luxury products signifies elegance and refined taste (Han & Kim, 2020; Loureiro et al., 2020; Han et al., 2010). When signaling to their group, the patrician class employs abstract methods that are difficult for outsiders (especially lower classes) to understand.

Some individuals within the patrician class exploit their inherent self-image for their own benefit. They might buy counterfeit luxury items with subtle branding, rare products that are almost perfect. Although such behavior is risky for their group, as it could undermine their overall self-worth, they view their actions as mere indulgence, assuming that the lower classes are unaware. This validates previous research by D'Amato Thanos, 2013; Perez et al., 2010, indicating that consumers are indeed capable of purchasing genuine luxury items. However, for the thrill and experimentation, they enjoy purchasing counterfeit luxury products and consider what they wear as expensive, genuinely believing it's authentic.

In conclusion, patricians, parvenus, and poseurs vary in terms of expertise and status needs, which motivate them (positively or negatively) in how they intend to use luxury goods (authentic or counterfeit) as status signals (Nelissen & Meijers, 2012). Expertise in signaling status means that consumers need a strong understanding of prices, product knowledge, and other cues of quality (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987, Pino et al., 2019). The most elite class (patricians) do not rely on conspicuous branding as a signal, while newcomers (parvenus) require conspicuous branding to convey their message. Poseurs, trying to emulate parvenus, opt for more conspicuous counterfeit products.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

The findings of this research prove that products with conspicuous and lower-cost branding are targeted towards the poseur consumer class, while those that are more expensive and subtly branded are directed towards the patrician class, and conspicuous for the parvenus class.

The patrician, parvenus, and poseur classes exhibit distinct ways of showcasing their status, which are demonstrated by consumers' strong understanding of prices, product knowledge, and other cues of quality. The most elite class (patricians) do not rely on conspicuous branding as a signal and sometimes, to the untrained eye, their products might appear ordinary and less appealing, yet they are exceptionally elegant. On the other hand, newcomers (parvenus) require conspicuous branding to convey their message. Poseurs, attempting to emulate parvenus, resort to purchasing more conspicuous counterfeit products.

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