

Brands: Fake value of real money (An initiation towards awareness)

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Abstract: Brands, when heard, bring a royal feeling in a human. A person is highly conscious for its looks and image in the society. To show self as branded has become a need in the business as well as in private profession but the major obstacle comes in the way is financial paucity. Everyone is not able to afford the same status so there emerges a word called "Counterfeit". Right from currency to medicine, software, journals, FMCG, eatables, beverages, auto parts and many more sectors are vulnerable to this word. People are crazy from tip to toe for wearing branded items that they even forget their moral values and ethics as well. In fact, nobody bothers about the cost of harms that happens to them, society as well to the industry. Statistics says counterfeit goods accounts for 5 to 7% of the world trade. The global estimation of knock offs is US 1200\$ billion. Many people come under deceptive counterfeiting and non deceptive counterfeiting. Those who come under deceptive counterfeiting consider themselves responsible for the running of this illegal business but those who gets cheated unknowingly and non-deceptively become the victims of such crime game.

Keywords: Counterfeit, brand, status, society, Knock-off

In the current scenario, People inadvertently feel the pleasure of brand by idiotically spending their strenuously earned money. Many threats and hazards have been seen with the use of counterfeiting, Moreover it creates billion and trillion dollar loss to branded industry, devaluing of brand equity, moral trauma, social fun of people and over exaggerated cost borne by the brand loyal consumers as well. Nonetheless, sometimes extreme disrepute is also faced by the endorsers and on the other hand, brain and time consumption by the creators and inventors. All these associated contributors become the victims of such distressing condition without any fault.

As per 2018 reports, counterfeiting is going to reach around 1.82 trillion till 2020. The loss that has been incurred by the various sectors and organizations is USD 98 billion by various online and offline vehicles. The first issue which drew attention on this term is technology driven area which introduced the word piracy. Later various sectors over looked with the same disease without ailment. Although government did and still doing a lot of efforts to identify the areas from where the main supply cross the threshold and being pierced into the consumer houses. The main supplier countries have recognized to be the Thailand, china, Hong Kong, Turkey, Morocco, UAE and India as well. These countries criminals have targeting those economies which have high purchasing power UK, USA, Japan, Germany, France. Major brands that have been counterfeited most are the American brands like North face jackets in clothing, Cartier in jewellery and bags, Hermes leather products, levi's jeans, Tiffany jewellery, Coach footwear, Tamiflu and Lipitor medicines, ugg sheep skin boots, Polo Ralph Lauren shirts, Samsun cigarettes', Walt Disney toys, Louis Vuitton and Chanel, Michel Cors, Mac come among the category of luxury and hand bags.

These above discussed items become the prey of each and every country's counterfeiters. Anti counterfeiting agencies are taking a rigorous action against many countries where they seize the items on the receiving ports and closing down the various warehouses where these are kept for further delivery. Despite all such efforts, the lack what has been seen is the awareness and attention of general public which creates hindrance in bringing this legal practice to a halt. People themselves are not alert and become responsive to these offenders that support them to run their off beam game.

In this paper, the basic focus is on how people can protect themselves by differentiating the original and fake products. The effort has been done by giving some of the clues that are noticeable and can be checked before spending money on extravagancy. This essence of the paper is to put emphasis on the abovementioned objectives:

1. To forbid the non deceptive counterfeiting where innocence of the deserving populace is amused by the counterfeiters.
2. To make people aware about the noticeable differences of the original and fake products.
3. To provide solutions for curbing the practice of counterfeiting by self understanding.

Definition:

Brand: a brand is defined as a "name, term, sign symbol (or a combination of these) that identifies the maker or seller of the product". (Philip Kotler/Gary Armstrong).

Counterfeit: "Unauthorized representation of a registered trademark carried on goods identical or similar to goods for which the trademark is registered, with a view to deceiving the purchaser into believing that he/she buying the original good. (WTO, 2011).

Fake: an object that is made to look real or valuable in order to deceive people. (Cambridge dictionary)

Noticeable differences to identify the original and counterfeit products:

In jeans, normally the tags and serial numbers are spotted for checking originality. Buttons, pins and studs and other accessories are either made up of copper or a specific metal. Spellings with upper and lower case are also considered. In case of zips, Heavy and matte hardware in originals and polish in fake product. In case of Buttons, logo on button is original and without logo, fake product.

In clothing, a separate label is made up with thread and attached separately on the shirts. Locations of the buttons are also decided which normally fakers forget. In case of fabric, same softness and smooth lining in original and scabrous in counterfeit products .

In watches label and serial numbers are cut in and written on the metal. A small sign of company is engraved in concealed location in the product which is normally absent and unnoticeable by counterfeiters. Chronograph dials are either non working or not at a proper place in the fakes and that is not in the case of originals. Some of the products miss the necessary symbols and secret codes as the branded one have at hidden places.

In eye glasses, all the information related to the company, color, logo, model name, shade and level of dimming is always carved on the arms of the glasses. Look and feel of the material makes a difference. E.g. original rayban is made up of heavy metal. One single piece of metal is used and there are no joints or ridges in manufacturing of original eye glass. Etching and embossing of logo on top part, identification number on right or left arm, brand name is also written on the hidden side or underside the nose bar. Etching in form of number which is brand name and size of lens is missing in this product so it is fake.

In shoes, layout and styling play an important role. Back sole designing is done very consciously. Tags are normally stitched with the clothes but in fakes it is a piece of paper which is glued with the shoes. Leathers are same at the heels and fronts and stamps are marked in form of signature on the product.

In cosmetic items, color, size, shape, font, boldness and space in labeling and information, everything makes difference between real and fake. Additionally, In makeup items, normally the brands are misspelled in fake items and the fonts are either light or extra dark which is reversible to the original. Bristles of the real make up brushes are dense and cannot be pulled or come out easily. Texture of the face powder of original is smooth and blush is odorless. In counterfeits, it is rough and uneven and the fragrance is also hard and heavy. Try to check the shades if it spreads on your skin evenly show its purity.

In fragrance items, color of the cents normally gets changed in the same type of bottle. And if smelt it's hard than the normal. He original perfume manufacturers use less chemical and the color of the perfume water is always lighter or pale as opposite to the fake, fake perfume has darker color. A lot of imperfections are itself noticed from the cap, surface and shape of the bottle. It is not firm and even like in originals. On the contrary, rough and stiff. Color is always light in case of original items. No ingredients are added up for ostentatious look.

In electronics, Most of the products are need to be taken from authorized dealer and not from an open exhibition or parking lot because many things are inside the product which makes it branded but some can be known from outside differences. Like, Samsung charger, for making it durable and assurance, there is always an extra layer of plastic on the lower end of the charger which keeps it safe. In original data cables, connector and body of the chargers is nearer to each other for easy connectivity with electricity and it is always shorter in size whereas in copied devices it is larger.

Dimensions also play an important role in perilous and death-defying items, the dimensions are always clearly specified on company website info or online sites. Compare it before dwelling a heavy chunk of money on such delicate items.

In mobiles, device identifier means IMEI (International Mobile Station Equipment Identity) and MEID (Mobile Equipment Identifier) this unique number is always somewhere located on the device. Counterfeit phones will not have a legitimate device identifier. Apart from it, smart phone is sleek and light and fake is made up of heavy material. Logo is somewhere big or small. Hard ware of original smart phones is more due to more features; if one of the parts is missing then it might be a fake. Always compare the dimensions online. Software version mentioned by the manufacturer must be the same in which your Smartphone is running.

In undergarments, the sizes are varied from very small to extra large whereas in fake products it comes in only three sizes small, medium and large.

In journals, along with many fast moving consumer goods, counterfeiting has also ensnared the services sector. In journals many have cultivated their business with the launch of predatory journals where it has no address or contact information, no presence of editorial board, no listing of famous researchers, there is no publishers proof only hefty images as well as early acceptance notification.

In Currency, during the days of monetization, the goons or ruffians have mixed up the fake currency in the original ones so many steps taken by the government for the security of the currency like, vivid mixture of colors used when put under lamp produced the star images, light green ink used which does not leave color in water, ie added the identification mark of braille and triangle with various geometrical shapes. All was done for developing the trust of the citizens.

In jewellery case, most of the branded jewellery is replaced with Chinese jewellery. Stamping is the most important aspect of recognizing good jewellery. In many case, S925 mark is located on both Chinese and Scandinavian jewellery but Chinese have silver coating on it which turns its color in bark copper with a shade of orange and green but in case of original hallmark jewellery items, it is soft while wearing and a big and observable mark and can be easily polished whereas it is not in the case of fake jewellery.

In case of gem stones, the color, shine, temperature, feel and coolness play an important role to identify its originality. When a gem stones worn, it feels cool and slowly takes up body temperature. Gem stones are produced naturally and it is not very smooth and have imperfections. Diamonds are mostly tested from fog because real diamonds does not retain fog and imitators keep it for seconds. Lastly, the place from where it has come is more important as emerald comes from Cambodia, jade from Myanmar. Various home tests also prove the genuineness of the stones.

Other signs for noticing counterfeit products:

Price: price is the prime measure by which we come to know about the fake product. It is a lot cheaper as compared to the original one. A low price is a direct sign of bogus thing and it is always printed not stamped on designers. 100 % guarantee and full price return is an alarming sign that it is replica under the veil of real thing. In fake products, a product is exposed as Shoupie marker.

Packaging: Real or designer products have many accessories in it like a cardboard box has tissue paper, small clothing bag for putting the main product, properly placed inside in a foam made home inside for the protection from damage and some symbol, logo, information and brand name is always marked on every accessory. More accessories in high quality products and clothing packaging in low quality products.

Barcode and hologram: Always copy the barcode and send it to the company for the clarity of the original product. Hologram will change from black to white in and ugg will appear when rotated 90 degrees. Fake Rolex stickers are solid green and with repetitive Rolex logo but newer ones have crown logo.

Logo and trademark: same number of stitches on logo and opposite side whereas heavy and big stitches in fake. In Moncler emblem, M is on the top of right leg of N in fake item, on the other side, in original product, it is on the right corner of the left leg of the bird.

Online sites: An unauthorized dealer creates its own site and start selling the counterfeit products. Always beware of such ruffians and hooligans.

Guarantee card: External looks and designs are easy to copy but the internal signs and holograms are not easy to copy. Guarantee cards are sometimes not given with designers too but most of the brands provide it outside the official stores. When you get a luxury product, it gives a lifetime guarantee. To buy designer good, it is a lifetime investment. In knock off, you cannot resell it.

Coding and bar code: most of the products have their own coding inside or at a hidden place. For example Louis Vuitton is using letters and numbers. Letter for the country and numbers for the month and week. It makes counterfeiters task more complex but they start using the same code which insist a loyal consumer to persecute the other clues of original products.

Stitching: stitching would make a perfect difference between the real and fake. If the stitching on some product is not firm or consistent, it is slanting and stitched casually in a stiff form which makes it look shoddy and substandard.

Material: in jeans purses or other clothing items, zip hardware are of a matte material, in fake, it is of Golden color whereas in originals it's same of zip color and brand is engraved on it. Designer logo and brand name is inscribed on the buttons of original product.

Scope for future coverage:

The world is full of possessions and everyone is allured to get them to a great extent but he or she is not aware about the actual reality. The author has thrown light on some of the basic use items that cannot be covered in a few words or in a few pages. With the passage of time, new products are launched and many people due to unawareness, lack of education, language barrier, non proximity to market, and many other factors are not able to identify the dissimilarities of the real and counterfeit brands. In the upcoming papers, Effort can be done with the inclusion of varied and expensive luxury items to be identified which are under the ferret of the huntsman.

Future threat:

The most dangerous effect brand creators are going to face will be the 3D printing. It is called as second industrial revolution. A 3D printer is able to imitate any object virtually because the objects made from 3D printing will be of liquid plastic which can easily reproduce the counterfeit product like original one by copying the manufacturing methods. It will prove to be a serious threat to the fashion stylists, designers, graphic designers, art creators and famous brand creators more because 3D printing will make themselves omnipresent everywhere just like other electronic equipment. People will be able to produce their choice of branded product at home due to high availability of this printer and its less cost.

Even standard sizing clothing will also be vanished very soon because people will be able to make the product of their exact size and specification. Fashion will start to change very soon and be able to produce with the wave of see and print.

Conclusion:

The need of the hour is to keep on throwing light on such illegal activities from time to time so that people can be made aware about the authenticity of the novel products. In addition, a restraint can also be put on the counterfeiters by the consumers themselves. Till now, many research papers have been published on the factors behind the purchase of luxury counterfeit items, attitude and behavioral intention towards counterfeit purchase, ethics of counterfeiting on fashion industry, price as reflector of counterfeit purchase, demand and supply side of counterfeits, motivations behind counterfeit products etc. all these papers have mentioned the reason of counterfeit purchase. In this paper, the attempt has been made to acknowledge people about the realities of the counterfeit products so that they could also put their contribution in the curtailment of such illegitimate practice. Every effort is useless without the support of the citizens so an initiative has been taken to stir up the masses to discern the veracity of the brands as well as the innovators.

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