



College students' purchase intention for luxury brand fashion counterfeit goods: A cross-cultural comparison

Xiao Huang, Hyejeong Kim, Auburn University, USA

Keywords: fashion counterfeits, face-saving, subjective norm, group conformity

*Background.* The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (2012) reported that fashion counterfeiting keeps growing. Among the 25,000 counterfeits seized in 2011, fashion counterfeits were the largest category, representing 32%. China is one of the largest suppliers of counterfeits (Facts and Details, 2012). However, little is known about Chinese consumers' fashion counterfeit purchase behaviors and no cross-cultural studies have examined the differences between U.S. and Chinese consumers in terms of factors influencing their behavioral intention related to fashion counterfeit consumption.

*Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses.* This study is based on the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and modified TRA (Lee, 1990). Lee (1990) argued that while TRA has demonstrated strong predictive power for Western consumers, the theory has not effectively captured social pressures influencing Asian consumers' behavior. Lee incorporated face-saving and group conformity into the original TRA and found that the modified TRA performed better in explaining Asian consumers' behavior. Jin and Kang (2010) also found that face-saving significantly affected attitude toward and intent to buy foreign brand jeans among Chinese college students, while subjective norm was not related to intent to buy those goods. Chinese consumers have become more westernized in recent years (Bian, 2010). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to test the influence of subjective norm, face-saving, and group conformity on consumers' attitudes toward buying (H1a~c) and intent to buy luxury brand fashion counterfeit goods (H2a~c), and influence of attitude on intent (H3) using U.S. and Chinese college students. This study also compared the differences between these two groups.

*Method.* Online surveys and a convenience sample were used to collect data. A total of 318 U.S. and 313 Chinese college students participated in this study. The average age of the participants was 21 years old in both data sets and 84.4% of the participants were female. All measurements were borrowed from previous literature. Demographic questions were also asked. The questionnaire was developed in English and a translation and back-translation technique was used to develop the Chinese version of the questionnaire.

*Results.* The results of factor analysis confirmed the uni-dimensionality (single factor) of each construct in our model. Cronbach's *alpha* coefficients of measures ranged from .74 to .94. The hypothesized model was tested using structural equation modeling. The overall fit statistics of the latent models using both U.S. data ( $\chi^2 = 193.37$ ,  $df = 109$ ,  $p < .001$ , RMSEA = .05, CFI = .98, NFI = 0.96) and Chinese data ( $\chi^2 = 161.14$ ,  $df = 109$ ,  $p < .001$ , RMSEA = .04, CFI = .98, NFI = 0.93) indicated a close fit of the model. The result of multi-group analysis revealed that there was no significant difference between U.S. and Chinese consumers ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 12.88$ ,  $df = \Delta 7$ ) in terms of the path coefficients proposed in the model. In the U.S. sample, all hypotheses were

supported: the relationship between subjective norm and attitude (.31\*\*\*); subjective norm and intent to buy (.20\*\*); face-saving and attitude (-.23\*\*\*); face-saving and intent to buy (-.17\*\*); group conformity and attitude (.41\*\*\*); group conformity and intent to buy (.37\*\*\*); and attitude and intent to buy (.37\*\*\*) were significant. On the other hand, in the Chinese sample, all except H1b and H2a were supported: the relationship between subjective norm and attitude (.20\*\*); face-saving and intent to buy (-.10\*); group conformity and attitude (.24\*\*); group conformity and intent to buy (.42\*\*\*); and attitude and intent to buy (.33\*\*\*) were significant, whereas the relationships between face-saving and attitude and between subjective norm and intent to buy were insignificant. In addition, the original TRA was compared with the modified model with the addition of face-saving and group conformity in two data sets. In the Chinese data, the path between social norm and intent to buy was significant in the original TRA. However, the path became insignificant with the addition of face-saving and group conformity. On the other hand, in the U.S. data, when face-saving and group conformity were added, the path between social norm and attitude and intent to buy weakened but was still significant. These findings show that the modified TRA with face-saving and group conformity better explains Chinese consumers' behavior intention in fashion counterfeit consumption.

*Discussions and Conclusions.* Overall, this study found that similarities outweighed differences between U.S. and Chinese consumer groups in terms of the hypothesized relationships. However, Chinese consumers' behavioral intentions were better predicted by the modified TRA, including face-saving and group conformity, thus supporting Lee (1990). This study also filled a gap in the literature by finding the significant influences of face-saving and group conformity on U.S. consumers' intent to buy fashion counterfeit goods, factors which has not been examined in U.S. consumers' fashion counterfeit consumption.

#### *References*

- Bian, Q. (2010). *Examining U.S. and Chinese Students' Purchase Intention for Luxury Brands* (Unpublished master's thesis). Auburn University, Auburn, AL.
- Facts and Details. (2012). *Luxury goods and brands in China: Luxury goods in China*. Retrieved from <http://factsanddetails.com/china.php?itemid=1889>
- Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention and behavior: An introduction to theory and research*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Jin, B., & Kang, J. H. (2010). Face or subjective norm? Chinese college students' purchase behaviors toward foreign brand jeans. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 28(3), 218-233.
- Lee, C. (1990). Modifying an American consumer behavior model for consumers in Confucian culture: The case of Fishbein behavioral intention model. *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 3, 27-50.
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection. (2012). *Intellectual property rights*. Retrieved from [http://www.cbp.gov/linkhandler/cgov/newsroom/fact\\_sheets/trade/ipr\\_fact\\_sheet.ctt/ipr\\_fact\\_sheet.pdf](http://www.cbp.gov/linkhandler/cgov/newsroom/fact_sheets/trade/ipr_fact_sheet.ctt/ipr_fact_sheet.pdf)