

# Self and counterfeit consumption in emerging markets

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## Article History

Received on 30 November 2022

1<sup>st</sup> Revision on 8 May 2023

2<sup>nd</sup> Revision on 15 May 2023

3<sup>rd</sup> Revision on 27 May 2023

Accepted on 6 June 2023

## Abstract

**Purpose:** This research has focused on independent and interdependent self-concepts of fake self & pretentious consumption in counterfeit consumption. In this research role of self in the case of fake consumption in the emerging market of Bangladesh has been revealed

**Research methodology:** For this study, qualitative research has been undertaken. Ethnographic and netnographic approaches have been used. Twenty in-depth interviews were conducted with the participants. The participants were approximately equal as far as gender was concerned. The participants were between 20-35 years old; 80% were students, and 20% were employed. The snowball sampling technique was used for sample selection. Participants were selected for the final interview after the initial screening to know the pattern of their behavior, preferences, and experience with counterfeit & luxury brands. The Facebook profiles of these participants were studied to find photos, posts, shares, and preferences for counterfeit and luxury brands.

**Results:** The results reveal that consumers feel their missing self, which means they understand they don't have appropriate possessions, and the extended self means a self that is created by external objects, some particular possessions considered as a part of them. As a result, they try to show their imaginary self, which means they try to copy others, but when they fail, they start to show their fake self through counterfeit consumption.

**Limitations:** The research is conducted within Bangladesh only.

**Contribution:** This research has focused on the patrons of the emerging market of Bangladesh. Findings have been revealed through a projective technique using word and picture associations. The iterative hermeneutic method has been used for data analysis. The research results conclude that variation in self affects the inauthentic consumption behaviors of patrons in the emerging market of Bangladesh.

**Keywords:** *Counterfeit consumption, Extended self, Fake self, Imaginary self, Missing self, Pressure self*

**How to Cite:** Tanha, M., Mahumd, A., Sultana, M., Chakma, T., Hassan, E. M., Mabud, S. A., Razon, M. F. R., parvez, S. S., & Joy, A. H. (2022). Self and counterfeit consumption in emerging markets, *Annals of Management and Organization Research*, 4(1), 47-64.

## 1. Introduction

Turunen and Laaksonen (2011) said brand loyalty might be difficult when imitators cut corners and provide knockoffs at a fraction of the original products' cost. Imitators produce products that are

precise replicas of expensive brands to deceive or defraud consumers. The likelihood of counterfeiting expensive brand products seems to increase concerning increases in investment in those products. Khan, Fazili, and Bashir (2021) said it's a growing problem in the global corporate community. According to Elsantil & Hamza (2021), counterfeiting occurs often because the imitating company intends to spend little money on building its brand or researching and developing the product. Aslam (2021) mentioned that counterfeiting is illegal and is frequently linked to other criminal activities such as drug smuggling, human trafficking, weapons trafficking, and terrorism. Recently, fake or counterfeit products have become more acceptable in society. The counterfeit business is estimated to be worth more than \$600 billion, or 7 percent of global trade.

As it doesn't deceive consumers with the authentic brand, it may be regarded as a non-deceptive approach. Customers purchase these products despite being aware of their unauthenticity. For this research, counterfeiting is narrowed to purchasing behavior or customers who consciously buy fake or counterfeit products. Previous studies have mainly focused on identifying and analyzing the characteristics of people who purchase counterfeit goods and the circumstances behind their decisions. Bian and Veloutsou (2017) said the reasons for purchasing counterfeit goods include lower pricing (Bian & Veloutsou, 2017). So, this research will specifically discover the role of self behind counterfeit consumption. Existence distinct from others is a person's intrinsic being, mainly when seen introspectively or as the subject of reflexive responses, and counterfeit means the exact opposite of the real version. It is always defined by the social order (Eisend, Hartmann, & Apaolaza, 2017). This research mainly focuses on the interdependent self. A person's attitude toward negotiation or even dismissal of values in their daily actions reflects their interconnected self. In the interdependent self, all decisions become group-oriented. In a paper published by Turunen and Laaksonen (2011), it has been suggested that attention needs to be given to how family structures shape conceptions of self. Graeff (1996) argues that in the modern world, people's notions of the authentic self are increasingly anchored in impulses rather than institutions because institutions find their authentic selves "in the act of violation, in the pursuit of institutionalized goals," while finding their authentic selves becomes more requisite "In the satisfaction of impulses outside the institutional framework." The paper has also argued that some people have neither institutional nor impulsive selves; instead, they have a self shaped by social pressure (Higgins, 1987). This research will mainly focus on that socially pressured self because it has also been mentioned that a person's authentic self is expressed through social anxiety.

### ***1.2 Objective of the study***

This article's principal goal is to discover the function of one's self in circumstances of fake consumption. Its objective is also to find pretentious consumption behaviors in case of pressure on the self. Specifically, this report aims to discover how consumers purchase counterfeit products in the case of interdependent self.

### ***1.3 Scope of the Study***

The research project was conducted in Bangladesh, and specifically, it focused on Dhaka city. It's estimated that students made up about 80% of the participants in this study. Several of them held positions in the armed services. The median participant age ranges from 20 to 35 years old. Participants were selected through an initial screening of their Facebook posts. Firstly, it was considered whether they were using counterfeit products or not. Participants' social media were also observed to notice the pattern of their use of counterfeit products.

### ***1.4 Research questions***

These questions were constructed for this research purpose based on an objective and literature review, and the respondents had to answer these questions during the interviews.

1. Do consumers purchase counterfeit products to show their fake selves?
2. Do consumers purchase counterfeit because of possession and extended self?
3. Do they purchase counterfeit to show their imaginary self?

### ***1.5 Context of the Study***

This study has been conducted in the Bangladeshi context. Bangladeshi people are interdependent due to their embedded social relationships and like to be intimate with others because they lack unique traits. This interdependent nature leads to pressure on the self to achieve stretched studies that have been undertaken on counterfeit and self separately (Fahim, Al Mamun, Hossain, Chakma, & Hassan, 2022). For example, *Selves, Cultures, and Nations* by Gjerde and Onishi (2000) mainly focused on Japanese culture. Commuri (2009) has concentrated primarily on the effects of imitation on genuine goods purchasers' brand relationships. Dissolving the line between luxury and imitation.

It has written on luxury and replica as the two sides of Japanese identity and society. Self is an essential factor that can change a person's buying behavior. It can predict whether a person will purchase an authentic or counterfeit product. So, this research has focused on this topic. As the people of East Asia exhibit independent self (Derné, 1992), Bangladeshi people have interdependent self. Two or more entities are said to have an "interdependent self" when dependent on one another (Jamal, Islam, & Barua, 2016). An interdependent relationship may have a mutual dependency concerning emotional, financial, environmental, or moral dimensions. Besides, others influence consumers' planned and impulse purchases (Jain, Gautam, & Pasricha, 2018). One study has revealed that 75% of Bangladeshi people prioritize purchases that provide for family needs before purchasing for themselves (Shawon, Hasan, Nayeem, & Uddin, 2018). That means if they need a refrigerator and a mobile phone, they always prefer to buy the fridge first and then move on to other conditions. Bangladesh is one of the fastest-growing consumer markets around the globe. The annual income of 2 million Bangladeshi people will reach \$5000 or more, which means they will earn enough to afford luxury goods (Kabir & Islam, 2022). Previous discussions indicate that Bangladesh is becoming affluent enough to purchase luxury products; on the other hand, consumers often don't prefer procuring luxury products because of their interdependence (Haque, Anwar, & Sarwar, 2015). Therefore, this article will reveal whether Bangladeshi consumers prefer counterfeit products because of themselves or not (Shanjabin & Oyshi, 2021).

The conceptualization for the study reported in this article is based on literature related to self and counterfeit consumption of products. Existing literature discusses these concepts separately, but this study will focus on both concepts combined. Another goal of this article is to find out the counterfeit purchase behavior of varying selves, based on their stories and what kind of meaning they perceive to possess. The research starts by defining the ideas of individuality and fake consumption.

### ***1.6 Delimitations***

This study sampled the younger generation as those between 18 and 35. Since this research focused on young consumers, the researcher selected 20–35 participants. Because youngsters are the primary and significant consumers of the branded product market, they are also consumers of fake products, as counterfeit products are mainly manufactured as alternatives to branded products. Today's young generation is primarily active on the Internet, and they feel free to share everything on social media like Facebook, Twitter, Messenger, Viber, WhatsApp, etc. In this case, to get more natural responses, these social media sites were used as a source of data on participant selection.

## **2. Literature Review**

### ***2.1 Self-concept***

The term 'self-concept' refers to the attitude of people to consider themselves based on their self-esteem. This can be defined as the perception of an individual on one's capability, limitations, characteristics, personality, and appearance that can influence their purchase decision (Graeff, 1996). Sparby, Edelhäuser, and Weger (2019) discussed the self as one of the most critically examined concepts central to psychology and philosophy. Many people suppose they possess a true inner self, but most social scientists have skeptical opinions. In Egyptian culture, the Pharaoh was believed to include a divine immortal soul alive, while the other Egyptians could gain such a soul upon death. In ancient Greek culture, Socrates was famous for hearing the inner voice that helped him decide what to do and what he should not. The divine soul of Pharaoh and the conscience of Socrates have evolved as the true self of an individual over the period.

Kant has defined the self as the provider of the transcendental unity of our perceptions, thoughts, and experiences. The true self can be viewed as a manifestation of a specific moral self formed from people's experiences. Sparby et al. (2019) outline that the self is a kind of soul or essence that may or may not survive, a voice of conscience, and the source of moral action. Some regard it as a divine element created by God related to individuals' ancestry and outward identity. It is believed that the self can provide unity to experience and cognition as it is an autonomous agent connected to other human beings and cultures. Charles Taylor has addressed the notion of the true self in the context of negative and positive freedom. One can realize one's true self through negative space as there are no external restrictions and respectively, internal restrictions such as fear (Zahavi, 2017). Understanding the true self comes from totalitarian states, which determine people's actions with their true selves. The true self of a person is influenced by how they act according to their self and self is multifaceted and contradictory in different aspects of people. For instance, human beings can act according to their desires or established principles of society.

Acts according to desire can fail to meet another desire, whereas moral actions based on principles often fail to fulfill people's desires (Liviani & Rachman, 2021). The study of psychology has proven that external forces like bias, unconscious desire, and social conditioning control people. In psychology, the true self is defined as I-self or self-as-process rather than me-self or self-as-object. Strohming, Knobe, and Newman (2017) discussed that the psychoanalyst Winnicott explained that the true self could be alive, spontaneous, and creative, unlike the false self, which lacks those characteristics of persona. The true self is also termed the ideal self, the real self, the intrinsic self, the authentic self, the deep self, and the essential self. Consumers of the present world want to express their social and personal attributes through the acquisition of material possessions for their own benefit and to influence others (Eisend et al., 2017).

## ***2.2 Counterfeit consumption***

Malik, Merunka, Akram, Barnes, and Chen (2020) state that counterfeit refers to the unauthorized production of products protected by patents and trademarks. Deceptive and non-deceptive counterfeiting are two types of counterfeiting concerned with producing identical copies of a product to meet consumers' demands in an unethical way (Eisend et al., 2017). The current market of consumers has been growing exponentially, which has become a severe concern for the producers of genuine brands (Davidson, Nepomuceno, & Laroche, 2019). According to Elsantil and Hamza (2021), the consumption of counterfeit products has been increasing over the years, comprising markets worth billions of dollars. Fake product purchases have threatened the global economy, brand reputation, and social aspects. Customers consume luxury brands for psychological value and buy brands signified by logos, physical attributes, and status (Qin, Shi, Song, Stöttinger, & Tan, 2018). Customers concerned with a brand's aesthetic features are more prone to purchase counterfeit versions of that product. Counterfeiting produces fake products identical in labeling, trademarks, logos, and packaging. Consumers like to buy counterfeit products as they gain status and value despite paying less than the original brand may cost (D. Chen, Qu, Xiang, Zhao, & Shen, 2019). Counterfeiting has increased over the years and has become a crucial economic problem globally (Akter, 2021). Counterfeiting has become a widespread practice as its production is less risky and more profitable than drug trafficking (Wong, Chang, & Yeh, 2019). Companies and governments regard counterfeiting as problematic to the market dynamics and industry as a threat to luxury brands. Counterfeiting damages the reputation of luxury brands and reduces the demand for authentic products, leading to lower business revenues. Exposure to counterfeit products can lead customers to avoid the original brand and thus damage the original (Amar, Ariely, Carmon, & Yang, 2018). The Indian and Chinese markets sell more than 20% counterfeit products, as customers feel that the brand is overcharging for their products (Bhatia, 2018).

The study of Varela, Lopes, and Mendes (2021) on the Portuguese market shows that bags, watches, and clothes are the three most popular counterfeit products from Nike, Ray-Ban, and Louis Vuitton. According to Varela et al. (2021), street vendors (28%) and online retailers (26%) sell these products the most. University students are more interested in counterfeit products as they try to maintain social

status within the university by purchasing fake versions of products due to their insufficient income (Junejo, Sohu, Ali, Qureshi, & Shaikh, 2020). According to Bian and Haque (2020), to protect original brands, marketers are trying to develop an emotional attachment with consumers in the marketing endeavors of luxury brands. Tunçel (2022) has found that idealism harms the legality of counterfeiting; however, there is a positive attitude toward the willingness to purchase counterfeit brands. Purwanto, Margiati, Kuswandi, and Prasetyo (2019) found that the buying motives of different consumer groups, such as patrician, poseur, and parvenus, have other effects on counterfeit products and brand prominence. Wu and Zhao (2021) have found that value consciousness has a positive impact and that perceived social risk harms the purchase intention of counterfeit luxury products.

### ***2.3 Influence of Self on counterfeit consumption***

Manolica, Cluci, and Roman (2021) discussed that the concept of self has become prevalent due to digital possessions and social media. Wang (2019) has found that self-concept is a key factor that can help understand consumers' counterfeit purchase intentions. Self-concept is the center of an individual's behavior, evaluation, and perception of an individual, and people try to present their desired image by using products relevant to their self-image. Some consumers tend to focus on their own self-related goals, which is an independent self-concept, while others are concerned with the opinions of others, which is regarded as an interdependent self-concept (Wang, 2019). The purchase intention of counterfeit brands originates from subjective inclinations to satisfy self-desire until customers can afford to possess genuine products (Alsaid & Saleh, 2019). The demand for counterfeits to fulfill desires has been a leading cause of mushrooming counterfeit markets worldwide (Rosely, Yusof, & Hashim, 2022). Consumers purchase non-deceptive counterfeit luxury products to demonstrate their desirable social status, to attain thrill and pleasure from the shopping experience, to express their taste in fashion, to project their smart shopper image, and to attain their positive self-perception (Shan, Jiang, Peng Cui, Wang, & Ivzhenko, 2022). Young consumers who want to maintain their social recognition but cannot afford to have authentic luxury products (Ozgen & Esiyok, 2020). Consumers who want to enhance their identity in society usually adopt the means of counterfeiting to project a successful social image. Counterfeit luxury products help them to demonstrate their ideal self-image and desirable identity at a meager cost. Self-discrepancy theory describes that the actual self is the perception of the person one possesses, and the ideal self is the ideal attributes one would like to possess (Higgins, 1987). The research on consumer behavior indicates that consumers often engage in certain consumption behaviors when they try to resolve their self-discrepancy. They can use the symbolic meaning of products to match their actual selves to their ideal selves. As luxury brands convey power, success, and uniqueness, consumers use counterfeit luxury brands to build their ideal selves and express their identities to others (Eastman, Shin, & Ruhland, 2020). Consumers with low self-esteem tend to purchase more counterfeit brands because they may evaluate themselves as inferior to others (Stuppy, Mead, & Van Osselaer, 2020). Malik et al. (2020) have found that independent and interdependent self-traits affect individual characteristics significantly to have counterfeit purchase intention based on willingness to take the social risk, acquisition of status, and susceptibility to normative influence (Chigora, Kapesa, & Svongoro, 2021). They have discovered that these characteristics play a mediating role in the self-concept that positively affects the purchase intention of the consumer. Subjective norms, self-congruity, and attitudes are fundamental in predicting consumers' intentions. As consumers in emerging economies have to face fewer moral and ethical issues, counterfeit products are more prevalent (Eisend, 2019). The production and distribution of counterfeit goods are widespread in emerging economies, and the price difference between counterfeit and original brands is higher than in Western countries (Ali, 2021). The experiential value of luxury brands leads to counterfeit production as these products have huge consumer demand (Le Roux, Bobrie, & Thébault, 2016). Studies have found that there are also non-prime determinant factors such as attitude, social motives, desire to create certain identities, impress others, and fit with society behind the consumption of counterfeit products. Consumers who want to express themselves to society regard themselves as accomplices rather than the victim of deception as they willingly purchase non-deceptive counterfeit products (Amegayibor, 2021). The consumer of counterfeit products tends to conform to the expectations of others when making their purchase decision. The subjective norms can reflect the beliefs of a person to find the influence of

social pressure on the purchase decisions of individuals. People's self-image can affect the counterfeit purchase decision of these individuals, as they want to maintain an image in their social status (J. Chen, Teng, & Liao, 2018). If friends and family emphasize the negative consequences of buying counterfeits, consumers will consider their opinion as they regard the opinion of such people. But consumers prefer to fit into their social group, often leading to counterfeit consumption to maintain their societal self-image (Malik et al., 2020). People with interdependent selves tend to merge with groups based on family or nationality, deciding their purchase of counterfeit products. As emerging economies' social groups promote counterfeit consumption, consumers establish their self-image by increasing it (Perez, Castaño, & Quintanilla, 2010). On the contrary, consumers who value the opinions of their peer groups find it embarrassing if they get caught using counterfeit goods (Tang, Tian, & Zaichkowsky, 2014). People with interdependent self-orientation are concerned regarding the approval of others for counterfeit consumption as they are more aware of social risk. Thus, the decision to make a counterfeit purchase varies depending on the orientation of the independent or interdependent self of the consumers. Malik et al. (2020) have found that counterfeit consumption in emerging economies is increasing due to consumers achieving their desired social image and creating identity. They have discussed that the interdependence of consumers is positively associated with their purchase intention for counterfeit products. On the contrary, the independent self demotivates this type of consumption. Finally, counterfeit consumption in emerging economies happens when customers seek symbolic benefits to achieve their desired identity and social image.

### **3. Research Methodology**

Research methodology represents the procedure for conducting the research work. In this part, an explicit route is shown to complete this study. This part includes the subjects titled research type, reasons for using the qualitative technique, data collection method, selected product category, brand, procedure and sample, research instrument, and ethical issue.

#### **3.1 Research types**

There are broadly two types of research which are Qualitative research and Quantitative research. This study required in-depth, rich data, so the researcher applied qualitative research. Exploratory research is a strategy to provide insights into and understand the concepts the researcher identifies. In descriptive research, the main goal is to describe something, generally market traits or functions, which is why it is a sort of conclusive research. It's also possible to conduct a decisive investigation known as causal research, in which the primary goal is to gather evidence of cause-and-effect linkages.

Qualitative research analysis represents the data descriptively. When the researchers need to read the responded subconscious mind, belief, behavior, and attitude, it is impossible to use a structured method. The qualitative research technique helps to find insight into the problem and read the consumer's midfield (Mannay & Morgan, 2015).

#### **3.2 Data collection method**

The methods of collecting data indicate how the required data and information will be collected. Questionnaires, surveys, interviews, focused group discussions, observations, documentation, journals, and archive records are the most prevalent data sources (Harwood, 2009). These sources are classified into two sectors, primary and secondary authorities. This research collects secondary data from articles, journals, and the Internet about self and counterfeit. Preliminary data has been collected through Ethnographic and netnographic approaches. Twenty in-depth interviews have been conducted for this research project. Personal information and pictures have also been collected from respondents' social media sites. Five observations have also been made to determine whether there is a similarity between in-depth interview data and actual buying behaviors.

#### **3.3 Selected product categories and Brands**

This research has mainly investigated procurement preferences for bags, shoes, watches, sunglasses, mobile phones, and dresses. Cosmetics items have been avoided because people prefer authentic

cosmetics products because they are related to their skin, and therefore, safety and health concerns would primarily influence procurement behavior. Among these product categories, the main focus was on luxury brands. For example, in the case of the bag, the research has focused on LV, Gucci, Zara, Dior, etc. In the case of shoes, it has focused on Jimmy Choo, Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Miu Miu, and Brian Atwood.

Regarding watches, it has concentrated on Rolex, Titan, Gucci, etc., because both Gucci and Rolex are on the list containing the names of the most frequently counterfeited brands (Alsaid & Saleh, 2019). In the case of glasses, it focused on Prada eyewear, Gucci, Tom Ford, Persol, etc. In the case of mobile phones, it has focused on the iPhone and Samsung because they are well-known in the market. And in the case of dresses, the research has concentrated on Bangladeshi and Indian luxury branded products. Because Western luxury dresses are not so popular in Bangladesh, for that reason, the study has selected Aarong, Yellow, Cats Eye, Raymond, Richman, Ecstasy, Rang, Key Kraft, Dorjibari, Anjans, and Bibiana. All of these are luxury brands. These brands have been selected because luxury brands lose billions of money only because of counterfeiting activities (Perez et al., 2010).

### ***3.4 Procedure and sample***

Twenty respondents were selected according to snowball sampling from Dhaka city. The main challenge was respondent selection. Because most people were unwilling to express themselves as counterfeit users, they were selected through snowball sampling, and sometimes they were also chosen from Facebook groups. The main target was to select them based on their experience with fake luxury brands. There are some Facebook groups like Sparrow, Fimel Fiesta, etc. In these groups, girls share their preferences and personal photos and experiences. On those pages, some statuses were updated to get insight into counterfeit and luxury brands. After that, according to the responses in the comment box, some respondents were selected from these groups. As the research is qualitative, in-depth interviews were conducted with participants. Two observations have also been added to it. Interviews lasted for 50 to 60 minutes. To avoid biases, participants that the researcher did not know were selected. Sometimes the photo ethnographic method and netnographic method were also followed.

### ***3.5 Participants demographics***

The total number of participants in this study was 20, of whom 8 were female, 12 were male, and the age range was 20–35. The content of family income of these participants is 10,000 to 15 lacks BDT as the study interviewed people who use cheap counterfeit and expensive brands. Most of the participants are students doing part-time work beside their studies, and some have full-time jobs. They have all completed their research or studied at different educational institutions in Dhaka, such as the University of Dhaka, private universities, and English medium schools. They have been selected based on two criteria, and whether they use counterfeit or luxury has been noticed. For this study, 10 interviews were collected on luxury brands and another 10 on fake brands. In this research, 20 in-depth interviews have been taken. Two of them have been shown in Appendix C as a sample.

### ***3.6 Research instrument***

An in-depth interview was used as the research instrument. In the interview, respondents were not confined to specific questions and answers. However, some directions were followed for talking with respondents (see Appendix B). They were asked about their preferences and different impertinent things. And their responses were recorded, and transcription was made from their response. The primary response was detected from their expressions and implicit response. Sometimes respondents were shown a photo and asked to identify branded items from that photo. And sometimes, products were shown on Facebook and asked who used these brands.

### ***3.7 Ethical issues***

All information gathered from respondents was handled confidentially, and their identities were never revealed. Furthermore, no data was altered or changed. Thus, the results were presented as acquired, with credit given to all sources consulted. Appendix A contains a consent form the researcher used to get participants' permission to conduct the interviews.

## 4. Results and Discussions

This part of this study represents the findings and analysis of the collected data throughout the research. The research outcomes have been discussed more specifically in this chapter, which has tried to build a logical relationship between objectives and findings. In this chapter, results have been discussed under three themes and analyzed in the iterative hermeneutic method.

### 4.1 Missing Self

The self of a person is the total of everything that may contain his name, including his physical and psychological faculties as well as his clothing and home, his spouse and kids, his predecessors as well as acquaintances, his fame and activity, his properties, and his money (Eisend et al., 2017). Control and mastery, as well as invention, knowledge, and habituation to objects, are ways a person extends their self-representation. But some people feel a lack in their earthly lives that can be termed missing self. Sometimes they consider themselves incomplete and unsuccessful. In the following picture, the girl is being presented; suppose Mrs. ABC. She is 25 years old and was a student at Dhaka University. Her husband, Mr. ABC, is from Dhaka University, and both are service holders. They are enjoying their possession self and the extended self. They are using iPhone and MacBook in the second photo; they are trying to show their possession self through furniture and outfits. And in the third photo, Iftekhar Iftee is trying to show his possessions by showing his car. One's sense of self-possession extends to possessions, money, pets, and even the bodily parts of others. The collection includes makeup, clothes, accessories, and other household goods. In photos 1, 2 & 3, the possession self is shown.

Furthermore, one's extensive self eventually integrates into one's overall well-being, being bound up with feelings and sentiments and becoming an integral part of one's individuality. An essential distinction in the current paradigm is that the expanded self-comprises not only external things and personal belongings but also people, locations, and group belongings. The extended self is masculine and synonymous with the Western self. When talking with one of our respondents, suppose Mr. ABC, it was noticed that he focused on individualism in most cases. At the time of talking with Mr. ABC, he mentioned that:

**Interviewer:** I know you have so much money to enjoy your life. In this case, may I know about your hobby?

**Mr. ABC:** Yes, traveling is my passion, and I try to enjoy that time on a tour when I get the time.

**Interviewer:** Do you prefer to travel individually or with your family?

**Mr. ABC:** Most of the time, I travel individually. But sometimes Shawlin (his wife) goes with me.

**Interviewer:** Do you insist on bringing her with you?

**Mr. ABC:** I never insist. This is her willingness and freedom to decide whether she will go.

Hofstede's individualism theory has proved that people in an individualistic society are self-oriented, assertive, focused on immediate family, hold an "I" mentality, focus on individual achievement, etc. (Derné, 1992). Photos 4, 5, and 6 extended selves of Mr. ABC have been shown. These photos show his extroversion, openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and neuroticism. And these show his personality.





Figure 1. She represents the possession self through her iPhone, MacBook and background



Figure 2. In this photo, Mr. & Mrs. ABC are showing their possession self again through their outfit and furniture.



Figure 3. Here, Mr. ABC is trying to show his possessions by showing his car.

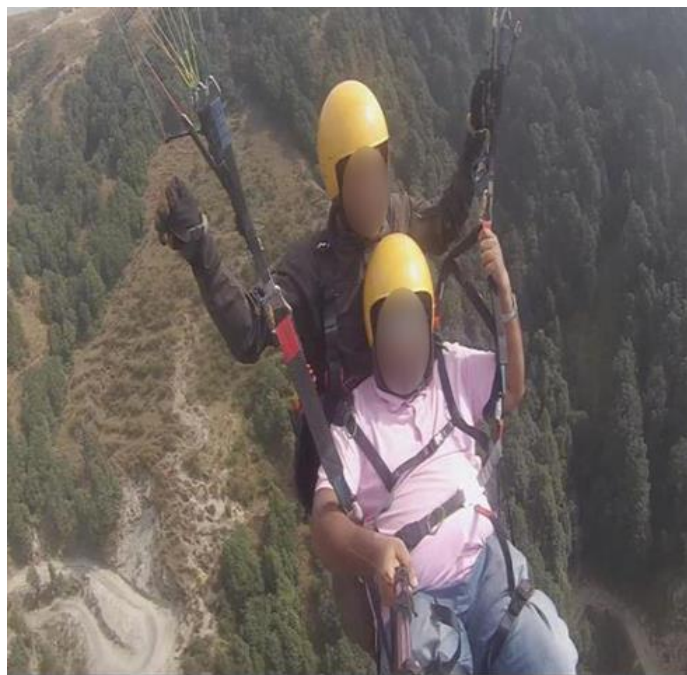


Figure 4. Here, Mr. ABC is trying to show his extended self by showing his



Figure 5. Again, he is trying to show his extended self through his expression



Figure 6. Representation of extended self

A whole ensemble of consuming items, rather than a single product or brand, may symbolize the different and sometimes inconsistent parts of the entire self. From the self of Mr. and Mrs. ABC, it has been proven that they represent themselves not only through a single object but by expressing their total self through their possessions and the extended self. In this case, some people who don't possess a luxury brand become motivated to purchase that product and feel like they're missing themselves. When they fail to fulfill this demand, they search for counterfeit products and try to show the brand name and logo. But possessing only one brand can't prove they are used to authentic products. From the previous photos, it has been confirmed that people who use branded products



have both possessions and extended selves. On the other hand, those who consume counterfeit don't show their living and extended self everywhere.

#### 4.3 Imaginary self

In imagery self, people try to follow others, which means they always try to copy others. Sometimes imitations come from the imagination. As defined by psychology, replication occurs when a person or animal imitates another's behavior after seeing that person's or animal's behavior is imitated. A lack of self-confidence or an ego problem might be to blame. Sometimes people want someone to represent them just like a model, like their friends, or like others. In this case, they think they will be extended if they purchase the brands or products they use. And they start to use the brand as a mask. There's no way to tell whether anything is legitimate just by looking at it, but everyone must behave as if they can. Corporations try to connect their goods with people, even if they can't tell if something is authentic just by looking at it (Huang, 2021).

Nowadays, people often try to follow a fashion icon. But this is an important question, why do they try to follow a fashion icon? A press release published by Oxford University on September 10, 2010, has revealed that:

*Greetings, my name is Rebecca, and I am a fashion historian residing in London. In my research and writing, I've found that the motivations of those who dress in specific ways reflect a complex web of desires and emotions. Anxiety and longing are at the core of this story. We're attracted to new and exciting things that give us a sense of development and change. We all want to feel like we belong, so there is no better way to show this than by wearing the right outfit. It may be fun to acquire and wear a new wardrobe that aligns with what publications and commercials are pushing. It may provide you with other personas if only for a single night.*

In short, it can be said that people try to show their imaginary selves to get recognition in society, which may also be true for Bangladesh as a piece of evidence following the photos can be seen.



In this photo, the girl is 20–25 years old and a student at North South University. Suppose she is Ms. X. She is a follower of Bangladeshi actress Mehjabin. After seeing the drama "**Boro Chele**," she decided that she would have to purchase a dress just like this one. And then she visited Basundhara to buy this dress but didn't get it. After that, she visited Jamuna Future Park and purchased her desired dress. She became so excited that she uploaded a photo of this dress on Facebook just after reaching home. After knowing that the interviewer asked her:

**Interviewer:** Why have you bought this dress after this long despite having this problematic situation?

**Ms. X**, at that time, this dress was a trend. People of every stage, young, child, and old, everyone knew about the drama "Boro Chele" And most of my friends noticed the dress. So, I have picked this one.

**Interviewer:** Do you pick this type of product most of the time, which is more mooted?

**Ms. X:** Not like that; it will have to be mooted. When I see anything catchy to me in any video or new fashion, I want to collect it.

**Interviewer:** If I say about the dress of Mehjabin, Was it a unique fashion?

**Ms. X:** This was not new, but this one was a mooted dress.

That means people prefer to copy others; this is true for Ms. X and others. For more proof, look at the following images:



In this picture, the girl is a follower of Sonam Kapoor. Suppose she is Ms. Y. Sonam Kapoor is a famous fashion icon, especially in dress design and hairstyle. In this photo, Ms. Y is following her hairstyle to represent her imagery self, which means she dreams of herself like Sonam Kapoor.



In this photo, the girl is a follower of Katrina Kapoor. Suppose, her name is Ms. M. She always tries to copy her dresses and styles. To get this dress, she first searched online. And when she explored it, she visited the store physically. After that, she collected this dress, which represents her imagery self.

In conclusion, it can be said that people always prefer to copy others. And for this reason, when they fail to meet up with their possessions and extended self in the case of copying, they move towards counterfeit products.

#### **4.4 Fake Self**

When people fail to get the desired product of missing self and imagery self, they rush towards fake self. It's pretty impossible to identify a fake self. Because the perception of being fake is closely related to authenticity, some information about the phony self was revealed in the interview. One of the respondents, Suppose Ms. Z has expressed that:

**Ms. Z:** I have an iPhone. But I can't carry it everywhere because my other sides can't match me as an iPhone user.

**Interviewer:** What do you mean by saying another side?

**Ms. Z:** As I'm from a middle-class family. So, I think it doesn't match me. So, I guess my Oppo phone fits me. And I'm feeling comfortable with this phone.

**Interviewer:** Why do you feel uncomfortable with your iPhone?

**Ms. Z:** Look at my family, friends, and society. My friends are also from my class. So, they usually make fun of me, saying, "Sheema, may I touch your iPhone? ". Their expressions prove to me how I'm being treated in my circle. When I go to tuition, I don't normally wear any gorgeous or branded dresses, and at that time, I think the phone doesn't match me.

**Interviewer:** When you go to a party and you wear a gorgeous dress, obviously, do you feel ashamed at that place as well?

**Ms. Z:** Yes, because it is possible to change my dress, but it is impossible to change my identity. As people know me, so I feel ashamed.

**Interviewer:** Think, you have attended a party where no one knows you. How do you feel with your iPhone in that place?

**Ms. Z:** There is nothing to worry about in that place. Because people don't know about my identity and I'm dressed well. So, I think I will be able to match the situation.



In this image, it is easily understandable that he is an infant and can't have a mustache. But by using a fake mustache, he is representing his phony self. That means a fake self can never be treated as authentic. An American website named through a catalog has shown some comparisons between the genuine and counterfeit selves. According to that website, what becomes our authentic self and fake self at the time of talking with our mother over the phone?

**Authentic Self:** *Okay. You ignored her last four calls; you must pick up this time. Please don't let her ask about the internship; I don't need that today. I can't tell her I got fired from an internship. How do you even get fired from an internship? You have to be seriously incompetent to get fired from an internship.*

**Fake self:** *Hey, Mom! Everything's going great! My internship is fantastic. I've been so busy with it; the CEO has me doing all this super important stuff. Are they considering me for a position? In the Craigslist ad, they said that the internship might lead to a job at the company. They hadn't noted that the training didn't lead to a job at the company. So yeah, I'm not getting paid or anything, I know, but the internship's supposed to end in a few months, and by then, I'll have a better picture of what they have in store for me.*

This is the reality of how a person wants to represent his fake self. Barnes (2016) has stated that people who prefer fake selves have the following habits:

They write down their most badass moments and keep them in a jar. They act like they are qualified, even if they don't think they are; they try to imitate the greats; they do the things they are good at; they write down positive affirmations; they strike these words from their vocabulary; they ask questions when they feel uncomfortable; they head to YouTube before they do something important; and they accept compliments instead of deflecting them. Among these habits, some are very intensive, which means they try to imitate the greats, get compliments, etc. This type of character tries to copy others. And try to represent themselves in front of people. But from the previous discussions, it has been proven that a person's self is expressed through their total self, which means it follows both possessions and extended self; in the second stage, it has been proven that to attain that possession and extended self-people try to show their imaginary self, but at last, the location is established that basically, they become able to represent a fake self through counterfeit consumption.

In this section, findings have been shown. This research has mainly found out that how consumers purchase counterfeit products is affected by themselves in the emerging market of Bangladesh. To show that the study has identified three selves. First, they feel they have a missing self by comparing their possessions and extended self with luxury users. When consumers become sure about their missing selves, they try to attain an imaginary self. But sometimes they fail to fulfill the demands of their imaginary self and try to purchase counterfeit products.

#### **4.5 Discussion**

This research investigates the role of self in the case of counterfeit consumption in emerging markets. For this investigation, consumers' emotional, practical, social, imaginary, missing, and fake selves have been focused on. The findings show that because of missing self, imaginary self, and fake self-people run towards counterfeit products. This research has combed through previous works in anthropology, marketing, sociology, psychology, and philosophy, among others, to acquire a better, more comprehensive knowledge of the use of counterfeit goods in developing markets. Previous theories have provided a concept of self or sometimes discussed the reason behind counterfeit consumption separately. But this research has focused on both of these concepts at the same time. This research has been conducted to get a broader view of counterfeit consumption in emerging markets because of self. Decisions are often based on the consumer's expressions, attitudes, smiles, incomplete sentences, outfits, outlooks, and behavior. Sometimes the respondent's personality has been imagined by visiting their Facebook profile. Previous research has focused much attention on how people use their material possessions to construct their characters. This research has proved that some people who don't have those possessions and extended-self try to show off their possessions by using counterfeit products. And sometimes, because of their missing self, they try to fulfill their demand through imaginary self, which means they try to copy other people. Most of the time, they try to imitate celebrities, friends, or themselves. These may be called mimetic desires. This is relatable to what the consumer wants, in that he accepts that certain consuming habits are founded on desires. These desires come from mimetic reactions to other people around one.

### **5. Conclusion**

#### **5.1 Conclusion**

This research has critically examined the role of self in the case of counterfeit consumption in emerging markets. Data has been collected through ethnography, storytelling, and sometimes through the photo-ethnographic method and iterative hermeneutic analysis; it has been proven that self-affects counterfeit consumption. Existing research has focused on reasons for purchasing counterfeit only in

that case; this research has focused on the role of self behind counterfeit consumption. As Bangladesh is a country of interdependent self and, most of the time, it follows pressure self, it is imperative to identify the role of self in counterfeit consumption in emerging markets.

### 5.2 Limitations of the Study

This study's main drawback is the respondent's avoidance. Respondents became bored as this qualitative research and in-depth interviews lasted 50-60 minutes. Probing was insufficient, so findings have been expressed through picture association. Though a picture can say thousands of words, it would become more glamorous if word association were adequate.

### 5.3 Directions for future research

Further investigation is required due to the topic's shortcomings and results. The subject of self and counterfeit consumption in an emerging market has mainly focused on a limited age group between 20-35. Further study can focus on a broader age group. In different studies, word associations can be added to show findings.

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