# **Unpacking Brand Imperialism in Bangladesh: Emerging Market Perspective**

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#### Abstract

**Purpose:** The main purpose of this article is to understand the meaning of counterfeit consumption from less affluent consumers' perspectives.

**Methodology** A qualitative research process was taken as a means to conduct this study, and the data is collected using an ethnographic and ethnographic approach. An iterative hermeneutic process is followed to analyze the data collected.

**Results:** The study revealed that less affluent people use counterfeit products mainly to reflect abhorrent sentiments toward foreign brands. This abhorrence leads to building resistance and resilience, which is primarily the production of counterfeit products.

**Limitations:** The significance of this research paper can be limited by the respondent sample size, which was not so large for concluding. Moreover, the data were only collected from the respondents of Dhaka City because of its time limitation, which results in making our study narrow.

**Contribution:** This study will help scholars and academicians as well as market researchers to get depth understanding of why counterfeit consumption is acceptable to less affluent consumers. And, this empirical study will also have detailed the perceptions of less affluent customers regarding the consumption of foreign brands. As no prior papers have discussed the different aspects of counterfeit consumption by less affluent consumers, this paper will add new insight into the topic to academia.

**Keywords:** Brand Imperialism, Counterfeit, Colonialism, Oppression, Exploitation, Resistance, Resilience

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# 1. Introduction

# 1.1 Background

Barack Obama once stated that the worst effect of colonialism is that it blurred the way we look at the past. The welfare of the people must be the priority for any government, whereas colonist rulers often intend to gain profit at the cost of the blood of the common people. Thus, when a nation's residents have the bitter experience of being under a colony in the past, it exerts a long-lasting impact on their lifestyle, consumption pattern, and overall choices. The situation has become more intricate in those countries in which the removal of colonial rules has not guided to independence, but rather only to the substitution by another authoritative power. These experiences have left a union of impressions that causes immature behavior, distrust, and confusion. From ancient times, we are being dominated by the power of imperialism, and now this pattern of domination has just changed its form to brand imperialism.

During the last few decades, researchers have noted that Bangladesh has become the leading garment manufacturer globally. But the working conditions of the people have not changed. It is not just a problem in the garment sector but also an essential concern in the whole industrial sector of our country. Many International companies choose Bangladesh to produce their product. They select our country because of the cheap labor cost. A large portion of products is being produced for the European and US market. This situation may seem to 'The Indigo revolt (or Nil Vidroha) arose in Bengal in 1859 when the residence of this origin are forced to cultivate 'Nil'. Instead of their willingness. Our laborers were oppressed by British colonialism two hundred years ago, and now they are being dominated by different foreign countries.

## 1.2 Defining Research Problem

In 21 first century, the fate of the people of this origin has not changed. At this time, we are also the victim of imperialism through foreign brands. Our laborers are working hard to raise the revenue for the foreign brand, but they have failed to change their condition of life. MNCs used us just like a warehouse. Our laborers are putting their best effort to produce the product for the foreign brand just at a minimum wage. But how much was contributed by the brand owner that a question creates in our mind? It seems that they used our labor force to produce their products. In the time of colonialism, they deprived us of all types of privileges, and at present times, we are also deprived of our proper wages. These current conditions can be explained as brand imperialism.

For instance, a garment worker in Bangladesh typically works from 8 am to 8 pm. Most of them lead a very miserable life. The wages they get are very insufficient to fulfill their daily needs. They don't have their own house to live in, and most of them live in a slum. Their children are not getting a minimum education. So, it can be realized that they live in inhumane conditions.

The tragedy of Rana Plaza shows us the inhuman condition of our labor (Siddiqi, 2015). It is just not an accident but a reflection of the worse condition of the employee (Westerman, 2017). The current situation depicts the hidden global laissez-faire economy structure, showing that capital-labor relation has taken the form of southern labor and northern capital. While the production process is being set in low-wage countries, the main leash remains at the hands of imperialists while the poor can't raise their voices against injustice. Few educated observers would argue that Primark (JC. Penney within the United States), M&S, Walmart, U.S. retailers, and alternative major GBs profit by exploiting Bangladeshi garment staff. The industrial capitalist Health Organization owns the establishments hired by myriad corporations and retailers, providing them with security, advertising, and various services. At the same time, governments exhort tax from their profits as well as their employees' salaries and take the VAT on each sale. Yet the monitory and trade knowledge don't recognize the staff's valiant effort who create the products in the Japanese, European, Us firms profit or government's tax revenue. On the contrary, the owner of the factory lives a very luxurious life.

The less affluent cannot raise their voice for the injustice that they have to tolerate. Most of the time, the factory owner typically does not listen to the voice of the laborer. This deprivation creates a negative impression in the mind of this origin people. They want to come out of all types of oppression, but it is mostly impossible to happen.

For a developing country like ours, a direct revolution is nothing but a self-killing approach, so we choose to protest more indirectly. Therefore, boycotting foreign brands is a way of expressing negative sentiments toward them. The search for a product that will be an alternative to foreign brands leads people to use counterfeit goods. So, the use of counterfeit goods is mainly the reflection of abhorrent sentiment toward the foreign brand.

#### 1.3 The objective of the Study

The main purpose of this article is

- 1. To understand the meaning of counterfeit consumption from less affluent consumers' perspectives.
- 2. To know the reason for buying counterfeit products
- 3. To know their understanding of foreign brands

#### 1.4 Research question

In this article, the researcher strived to cover the given research question:

Can less affluent people build resistance and resilience against foreign brands through the use of counterfeit products?

## 1.5 Bangladesh Context

In 1971, after the liberation war, Bangladesh broke the chain of colonialism, achieved independence from the Pakistani, and came out as an independent country. In the past, it was a part of the Indian subcontinent. The British rulers also dominated this area for two hundred years. To understand the concept of brand imperialism, it is vital to know about the history of Bangladesh. This history helps us to know how the British emperors oppressed the people of this origin.

**Battle of Palashi (1757. June 23):** The English rulers started their empire in India by defeating Nawab Siraj-ud-Daula through provocation, betrayal, and deceit in the Battle of palashi. In the Indian subcontinent, about two hundred years of subdivision history and the history of struggle against British rule.

(1769-70) (Bengali: 1176) Chhiattorer monitor: One-third of the people of Bangla and Bengali adjacent states die in a famine. But in that year (1771), the realization of the net revenue of the English exceeds the income of the previous sixteen months of growing crops.

**British opposition struggle of Tipu Sultan** (1799): Haider Ali and his son Tipu were the main obstacles in spreading the English legacy in southern India. Tipu tried to build modern economics and an army with the help of the English enemy French. So, without delay, Barlotte Wellesley attacked Tipu State with a large army. In the betrayal of one of the commanders, the capital took control of Srirangapatna and fought on the battlefield, and killed Tipu.

**Santhal rebellion** (1855): Under the leadership of Sidhu, Kanu, Bhairab, thousands of Santal marched to Calcutta to resolve the rule of British rule and establish independent Santhal rule. The English killed 23 thousand Santal in the clash.

**1842 Faraizi Movement:** The Faraji Movement was akin to the Wahhabi movement. "Allah is the owner of all the land of the earth. His eyes are all equal to, therefore, if you obey him, then do not pay tribute to zamindars, do not indulge in the indigo blue beans, do not respect the foreign fiefs' rule." In 1842, the leader of the Faraazi Movement, Dudu Mia, announced this. The fury movement spread from Madaripur to Bakerganj. Then on one side, it spread to Dhaka, Comilla, Mymensingh, Jessore, and 24 Parganas districts. Indigenous zamindars and English magistrates became indecisive. Many fugitives were arrested, and imprisoned, Dudu Mia was imprisoned. He died in jail in 1862.

**Sipahi Mutiny** (1857): In May 1857, in the camp of Mirat, the mutiny of the sipahis came up in large numbers. On March 29 of that year, the young sipahi Mangal Paan blew up the rebellion in Barrackpore camp. The rebellion spread from the south to Bihar. From Uttar Pradesh to Central India. The whole of India became disturbed, and the foundation of the British Empire was crumbling.

**Blue Revolt (1859-60):** Public outcry against the oppression of the Nilkars, which is known throughout the country as the 'Blue Revolt'. In the context of the barbaric torture of Nilkars, *Deenbandhu Mitra* wrote - the 'Nil Darpan' play.

**Birth of Pakistan:** In 1947, despite the increase of communal violence across the country, the partition was still in Delhi. Pakistan was established as a Muslim state on August 14, 1947, due to the end of British colonial rule from Pakistan, South Asia. Under the leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Muslims in India began to think about the necessity of a separate state due to the socio-economic and political situation of the whole colonial rule.

The decisions of new provincial and central legislation were adopted, and a 3-member team (Cabinet Mission) came to India from Britain to discuss the plans for autonomy. Crippler proposed a cabinet mission plan as the last effort to transfer power to the undivided Indian Union. The goal offers a three-level federal system of government, where the power of the central government will be limited in communication, currency, foreign relations, and defense, and all other powers will be transferred to the provinces. The areas which were compiled in the plan were mentioned: North-East Bengal and Assam with a small Muslim majority, the remaining regions of India, including the remaining Muslim majority, include Punjab, Sindhu, North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan and the entire Hindu minority, with the rest of India. From this regional description, the border between New Pakistan became fairly clear. The most important of these was the role of Islam in the nation. Pakistan is a secular homeland of the Muslims of the subcontinent or is an Islamic state controlled by Sharia, where non-Muslims would be minority citizens.

#### 1.6 Research context

Bangladesh is a developing country. About 80% of the people live in the village. The economy of our country mainly depends on agriculture. At present, this situation has been changing. The Ready-Made Garments (RMG) has contributed a lot to our economy. RMG sector has placed the largest export earnings in Bangladesh. Now, Bangladesh is the second-largest among the exporters of the ready-garments industry worldwide. This RMG sector started its journey in 1976, and very soon, it created a reputation in the world market. To achieve this position in the world market, the labors have contributed a lot. The foreigner owns most of the garment factories.

This implies that the pool of foreign investors is getting the lion's share of the revenue from the industrial sectors. In contrast, the main driving force of this sector, laborers have not seen better days in centuries. Most of the garment workers lead impoverished lives. They do not get the facility of proper education, good food, transportation, accommodation, etc. Behind this problem, sometimes the workers lose their lives in the various accidents in the factories. The deadliest disaster of the Rana Plaza and Tazreen Plaza is the best example of it. The labor is working hard to earn revenue for the company owner, but the owner fails to provide the minimum security of their lives. The important thing is that most of the workers did not know for whom they were producing and where the products reached to sell.

Bangladeshi workers are not getting proper convenience. It's not a new problem for our country, but this problem comes from the period of British imperialism. The difference is that in the time of British colonialism, we are dominated by the rulers of the British Emperor and this time, foreign brands are oppressing us. And this situation can be explained as the imperialism of brand. But the question is why the adverse situation of the poor people is lingering day by day. The reason behind it is that foreign dictators are oppressing cheap labor for their interests. Though the situation looks like our development is being accelerated, the implicit effect is faced by the sectors' blue-collar employees.

The realization leads us to play a zero-sum game. The ultimate beneficiary is neither the oppressors nor the oppressed. So, we start boycotting their products, but soon we realize that decision is not practical because we cannot live without any relationship with the developed world. So, we produced counterfeit products to protect our interest as consumers and our relationship with the developing world.

There is little research that has been conducted in this field. The probable reasons for the inconsistency and oppressions stated above need to be justified and scrutinized. This shows the rationale for researching this uncovered field from a new lens of brand imperialism.

#### 2. Literature review

A literature review means a thorough analysis of prevalent research works in the chosen field. The author has provided a literature review on consumer perception of counterfeit consumption. The concepts of less affluent consumers regarding the use of counterfeit products are explained in this literature.

## 2.1 Politically motivated brand rejection (PMBR)

Consumers' desire for a product or brand creates a reflection that may restrain them from purchasing the product or brand. When a consumer boycotts a brand is not necessary that the test of the products is not good or they can get its alternative brand at a low price, but they reject the brand for some politically oriented reasons. Three different political ideologies underline this rejection behavior. Some consumers refuge the products because they think that they represent the other country's brands and as a representer of cultural imperialism. The rise of caste emancipation movements and the deepening of capitalism, in the form of neoliberal marketization in the 20th century, challenged the privileged position/status accrued by the high caste groups (Jagadale, Kadirov, & Chakraborty, 2018). The researchers also show that many consumers prefer to buy the local brands as they know that it is high price and low quality rather than the foreign brands. Religions may have also created a direct effect on consumers the of minds to buy a product, as, in Islam, the consumption of pork is banned. Religious fundamentalism also leads consumers to reject the products. Previous research shows that privileged groups, facing the pressures of marketization, become vicious in hindering exchange and re-configuring value systems to recast their superiority (Vikas, Varman, & Belk, 2015).

# 2.2 Culture and consumption

The meaning of culture in consumer society varies from location to location worldwide. The definition of culture comes from the culturally constructed world, then is transferred to the consumer products and then to an individual customer. The movement of culture is analyzed through a theoretical framework. It shows that Western citizens hold cultural meaning and how frequently this meaning is transferred from other locations of the world, especially in the eastern world. Several instruments are used to shift this cultural meaning from one place to another. These instruments are the four consumption rituals, fashion systems, and advertising (Bhatia, 2018). Advertising is an essential way to transfer this meaning among other cultures through advertisement. Fashion is a more complicated instrument than advertising to transfer the meaning of culture. Advertising and the fashion system transfer this definition from the world constituted by culture to consumer goods (Cho & Fiore, 2015). And consumer rituals are used to move this definition from consumer products to consumers' minds. And this situation can be explained as the trajectory shift of cultural meaning in the current developed society.

# 2.3 Illusive status signaling within the fewer affluents in developing countries

In developing countries, less affluent people are using several types of status signaling devices to make the observers fool. A most applied strategy of consumption followed by the consumers is using counterfeit goods instead of original status-intensive goods (Bonsu & Polsa, 2011). Consumers use cheap copies of that products to show their status. People who prefer fake self have the following habits-The Jot 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 where 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, they accept compliments instead of deflecting them (S, 2010). The choice of various deceptive modes of consumption is analyzed through the two models of consumption.

Status-seeking model: Through this model, consumers allocate their budget mainly to two types of products, a pure status product and a non-status product (Ovi, 2018).

The Lancaster framework: The Lancaster approach is seen to be the neoclassical consumer theory. The main difference between the two models is that one analysis the product characteristic and the other

around products. Products characteristics theory is used to analyze the consumers' situation that motivated them to choose counterfeit or original products.

Analysis of this model may find out that the less affluent people care about their status, which is why they prefer to buy counterfeit products (Brux, 2015). It may seem that a counterfeit product is a union of status and function of original goods. The counterfeit and the genuine are visibly identical – like a mask, one cannot read the presence of authentic external value merely from its perceptible form, but everyone must act as though one can likewise, corporations attempt to link their products with people (Newell, 2013).

#### 2.4 Consumer ethics across cultures

Market exchanges are seen to be embedded in encompassing non-market domains of relationships-symbolism, gifting, sharing, communing, and mutual support (Weinberger & Wallendorf, 2012). Consumers boycott many companies' goods that are involved in unethical activities. (Vikas et al., 2015) showed that people who are forced to forgo their privileged status tried their best to retain their positions by hindering free exchange, monopolizing markets, or re-configuring value systems to recast their superiority. In this article, eight countries are chosen from Europe, North America, and Australasia, including both wealthy and poor nations, and used qualitative method and video ethnography to know the belief and behavior about ethical considerations in purchasing products. An eighteen-item scale of ethical dimension is used to know the consideration that influences consumers in the decision-making process. First, consumers purchase those products which are acceptable socially (White, MacDonnell, & Ellard, 2012). Secondly, the price and quality of the products may be affected the consumer's ethical behavior. It is worth emphasizing that mimesis always has been our history (Smith, 2015).

## 2.5 Governmentality at the base-of-the-pyramid

A market-based model is suggested by (Bonsu & Polsa, 2011) to remove the problem of global poverty. This model suggests that people who live at the bottom of the pyramid market may be changed their position through the intervention of business. Neoliberalism led to the systematic erosion of public welfare and provisioning institutions (Varman, Skålén, & Belk, 2012). The BoP strategy motivates multinational companies to extend their business in poor countries to develop the social-economic conditions of those countries. According to Foucault's notion of "governmentality", if a company adopts a BoP strategy, the mimics of a neo-colonial incursion can be prevented before it enters the market (Bonsu & Polsa, 2011) by forming the poor people as free and self-restrained. The BOP strategy is helpful to remove poverty and increase profit and decrease the historical and contemporary dynamic power.

#### 3. Research Methodology

The research approach is the synchronous procedure in what manner a research work is carried out. The focus of this specific portion is to clarify the approach used for doing the experimentation. Through which practice the research was depicted and how many procedures are followed to do this research. In this chapter research proposition, experimentation blueprint, analysis system and research scheme are present. The section also bestows the questionnaire composition which illustrates the data assemblage procedure.

## 3.1 Research approach

Research is a systematic way to find out something new to investigate a specific objective. The work of research involves studying some things more precisely and finding out the facts about them. Researchers follow a scientific method from start to finish to collect information. So, research is a specific way to gather information. Research is conducted to find new things for the willingness of the researcher. Research is conducted in two ways -quantitative and qualitative. Which method is followed to conduct the research depends on the types of data that are needed for the research.

# 3.2 Nature of the research

This research is mainly focused on the drivers of respondents' interpersonal and personal motivation for counterfeit goods. The experimental part of this article is to analyze the reasons that influence consumers to purchase counterfeit products. To make this happen this study choose a qualitative research technique. Qualitative research is helpful to observe the consumer's mind and find out the authentic information for this problem (Silverman, 2013). Qualitative research is an unstructured and semi-structured research technique (Silverman, 2013). Some common methods of this research are focus group (group discussion), depth interviews, participation, and observation.

# 3.2.1 Justification for using a qualitative technique

Qualitative research analysis the data in a descriptive way. It produces a descriptive data analysis of "Individuals personal drafted or uttered expressions and conduct that is apparent.". When the researcher is little knowledge about a subject and phenomenon its needs an exploratory study to know the things precisely it needs a qualitative study. When the researcher needs to read the responded subconscious mind, belief, behavior and attitude t is not possible to go in a structured way. The qualitative research technique helps to find out insight into the problem and read the consumer's mind (Hedlund-de Witt, 2013).

#### 3.3 Research Location

Bangladesh was under British colonialism two hundred years ago. The British ruler comes to our country as a name for doing business but their main intention was to increase their provinces and impose their domination power over us. We were also dominated by the governor of Pakistan for 23 years. The ruler of Pakistan does all kinds of injustice to our people. Now we are not under colonialism and many development activities occur in our country. In the industry of ready-to-wear clothing, Bangladesh stands second in the world. But the fact is that a large portion of these products is sold under the name of foreign brands. The worker of Bangladesh has got a very small portion of the share of the revenue generates from these products. Few Bangladeshi entrepreneurs have tried to change their position in the international market such as Beximco owned yellow which has four outlets in Pakistan but the percentage is very low. Most Bangladesh brands sell their products in the foreign market as an exporter. They have not been able to sell these products under the name of a multinational company (Tribune, 2017). As many development activities are happening in our country but the fact is that the condition of workers has not changed. In our methodology, we may try to find out the reason behind it.

The in-depth survey is a qualitative investigation strategy that incorporates testing of comprehensive or robust personal discussions with smaller groups of interviewees to find individual viewpoints on specific subjects such as current events, initiatives, or ideas (Berg & Lune, 2018). "Open-ended, revelation qualitative investigations are good tools for developing and assessing the outreach activities since they enable the investigator to extensively examine the participant's thoughts and ideas on a topic."

## 3.3.1 The Justification for In-Depth Interviews

Because of the methodical identity of the strategy in addressing queries to "what" and "why" study concerns, in-depth discussions are the greatest relevant qualitative study strategy when comprehensive data about personal opinions and behaviors or comprehensive examination into unique problems is required.

## 3.3.1.1 Merits of In-Depth Interview

When opposed to other record collection methods, it provides appropriate and exact facts. It allows for a tense environment in which data may be collected. In-depth discussion displays are flexible, allowing them to be delivered in a variety of methods without relying on a definite structure as a reference (Wisdom & Creswell, 2013).

## 3.3.1.2 Demerits of In-Depth Interview

As an outcome of informants' wagers on the topic of the research, there is a chance of prejudice in the reactions provided by the attendees. It takes time because of the moment required to conduct discussions, write down the details obtained, and evaluate the statistics to produce sufficient findings.

In-depth interviews necessitated the use of well-trained interviewers who were well-versed in discussion procedures. Because arbitrary selection is not used in the procedure, the results from in-depth surveys cannot be generalized. Instead, smaller samples (such as focus groups) are chosen for examination.

# 3.4 Process of Conducting In-Depth Interviews

The stages of performing in-depth discussions are: planning, creating equipment, coaching investigators, information collecting, data interpretation, and presenting study outcomes, according to the processes of performing in-depth surveys. Thematising, developing, interrogating, summarising, evaluating, confirming, and presenting are the seven stages Strauss recommends for performing indepth investigations (Corbin & Strauss, 2014).

#### 3.5 Semi-Structured Interviews

A semi-structured session is a method of data compilation in which the questioner is not required to ask exact official concerns. Instead of a straightforward inquiry and reaction formation, the questioner is anticipated to consult open-ended concerns that allow for discussion with the participants (i.e. interviewees). "The semi-structured survey includes a combination of concise and clear inquiries, frequently supported by proper why or how inquiries and is performed communicatively with single responder at once" (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014).

# 3.5.1 The Justification for Semi-Structured Interviews

In semi-structured discussions, the investigator and respondents engage in coordinated conversations that allow the questioner to stick to the discussion protocol while also deviating if necessary.

They're ideal for a variety of research projects, particularly while open-ended topics require more investigation. They can be used in mixed analysis processes because of one's compatible essence, which allows for the addition of detail to other information-gathering processes.

## 3.5.2 Merits of Semi-Structured Interviews

They're ideal for a variety of research projects, particularly while open-ended topics require more investigation. They can be used in mixed analysis processes because of one's compatible essence, which allows for the addition of detail to other information-gathering processes.

## 3.5.3 Demerits of Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured discussions take a long timeframe. Semi-structured examinations are time-consuming and necessitate the use of seasoned investigators. Semi-structured conversations need the investigators' intelligence, empathy, and calmness, as well as a thorough understanding of the topic. Semi-structured discussions frequently need time-consuming data processing, which results in a huge amount of notes being transcribed.

#### 3.6 Observation

Considering the intricacy of human nature, the interpretive method of social research entails seeing and explaining individuals' actions. This form of qualitative inquiry approach includes anthropological and fieldwork studies in addition to covering the participant's perception. Analysts use varying supervision over the setting in which interpretive activities take place in inferential inquiry, which leads to a junction point between the tightly regulated technique of research layout and the less organized manner of performing surveys.

# 3.7 Procedure and sample

Two types of data are collected in our study. Firstly, we collected data from those who are using luxury and counterfeit brands. Twenty informants were selected according to snowball sampling from Dhaka city. The main challenge in our study was the respondent's selection. Because most of the people were not willing to express themselves as counterfeit users. So, they were selected through snowball sampling and sometimes they have also been selected from Facebook groups. The main target was to select them based on experience with fake luxury brands. There are some Facebook groups like Sparrow, Finally

fiesta etc. In those groups, girls share their preferences and personal photos and experiences. On that page, some status was updated forgetting insight into the counterfeit and luxury brand. After that, according to the response in the comment box some respondents were selected from these groups. As the research is qualitative so in-depth interviews were taken. Two observations shave have also been added to it. Interviews were last for 50 to 60 minutes. For avoiding bias unknown respondents were preferred. Sometimes photo ethnographic method was followed. Besides the survey findings, we performed the Net no graphic approach by using the photos of different counterfeit brand users. These Further statistics enabled us to investigate how brand imperial motivated consumers for counterfeit use. Embellishing our findings, counterfeit users are compared with the marque imperialism perspective with the existing evidence and the interview evidence. Ultimately, we arrived at three outcomes of brand imperialism and in our findings, these outcomes are explained with the photos. And these photos will help us to understand the total brand imperialism effects that influence consumers to choose counterfeit products.

Secondly, we collected data from the worker who work the different garments factory. Five informants are selected to collect the information. They are selected randomly. The main challenge faced by us in data collection is the appointment of the worker. Because the laborer is working full of a day. To overcome the problem, we choose a holiday for data collection. We talk to the workers for 5 to 10 minutes. Take some photos of and observe their lifestyle.

# 3.8 Demographic Characteristics

Table-1

SL	Name	Gender	Age	Family/Inco meMonthly (BDT)	Education	occupation	Location
1	Rokon Ahmed	Male	20- 25	10-15,000	MBA (studying) at the University of Dhaka	Student	Mirpur, Dhaka
2	Antor Sheikh	Male	20-25	10-15lac(F)	BBA from North- south university, EMBA (studying) at the University of Dhaka.	Students and the part time job holder	Panthapat h, Dhaka
3	Mollika Bishaws	Female	20- 25	2-2.5lac(F)	Undergraduate	Student	Indira Road, Farmgate, Dhaka
4	Md: Abdullah Islam	Male	25- 30	12-14000	MBA(govt. Titumir college)	Students and the part-time job holder	Tejgao n, Dhaka

	Cyrracte			T	T		
5	Sweety Khatun	Female	20- 25	18000		Student	Bangladesh Kuwait mattress hall, new market, Dhaka
6	Athahar Islam	Male	15- 20	5-10lac(F)	Level	Student	Banasre e, Rampur a
7	MonirUzz aman	Male	25- 30	10-15000	Class8	Driver	Kafrul, Dhaka.
8	Moriom Khatun	Female	20- 25	10,000- 15,000	MBA (studying) at the University of Dhaka.	Student	Azimp ur, Dhaka
9	Najom Usama	Female	20- 25	8-10lac(F)	MBA (studying) at the University of Dhaka.	Student	Newmark et, Dhaka
10	Firoz Ahmad	Male	20- 25	Below10000	BBA, University of Dhaka	Student	WestRajarbag
11	Jannatu 1 Ferdous	Female	20- 25	3 to 5 lac(F)	Honours in English (5th semester), North-South university	Student	West Agargaon
12	Smart Ali	Male	20- 25	10-12000	undergraduate	Student works as m2m corporation as junior executive	Ghazipur
13	Liza Ferdous i	Female	20- 25	1-2 lack (F)	Graduate Brac university	student	Arambagh,Palla bi Mirpur

14	Simon Uddin	Male	20- 25	5-10 lac(F)	Finished A level	Work in a car showroom.	Gulshan 1, Dhaka.
15	Plash Ahmed	Male	20- 25	10-15 lac(F)	Finished A level	Work in the IT sector	Badda, Dhaka
16	Ayshi Farina	female	20- 25	70-80 thousand(F)	Chartered accountant	student	Rupnagar, Mirpur, Dhaka.
17	Durjoy khan	Male	25- 30	10-15 lac(F)	Postgraduate	student	Uttara
18	Prionti Banik,	female	20- 25	1-1.5 lakh(F)	Graduate, North-south university	Student	Lalbag, Dhaka
19	Yashm ak Ahmed	Male	20- 25	1-1.5 lac (F)	North-South University (EEE)	student	Bashundhara residential area
20	Nair Hossain	Male	20- 25	50000-1 lakh(F)	Graduate	student	Dhanmondi

Figure 1:Demographic information of the respondents (Source: Authors)

For this research, 20 respondents were selected. Twelve of them were male and 8were female. Respondents were selected between the ages of 20 and 35. Most of the respondents were students and some of them are service holders. They have been selected based on two criteria. It has been noticed whether they are using counterfeit or luxury. For this study 10 interviews have been collected on luxury brandandanother 10 have been collected on counterfeit brands. The participants had an average age of 20-35. They were from the middle and upper-middle classes. In the case of the interview, respondents were not confined to specific questions and answers. They were asked about their liking preference and different impertinent things. And their responses were recorded and transcription was made from their response. The main response was detected from their expressions and implicit response. Sometimes respondents were shown a photo and asked to identify the brand. Items from that photo. And sometimes products were shown on Facebook and asked who have used these brands. Table 1 presents the sample characteristics.

# 3.9 Sample of data collection

Data is collected in two ways. For the respondent so counterfeit and luxury uses, we use the ethnographic method. And transcriptions of these two depth interviews have been added as a sample. Between these two interviews, the first interview has been taken from a counterfeit brand user and the second from a luxury brand user.

For the second data collection, we take a short interview and transcript their information in a paragraph format. This information is also added as a sample. The research approach that was followed for this

research was the inductive one. According to this approach, researchers begin with specific observations, which are used to produce generalized theories and conclusions drawn from the research. The reason for occupying the inductive approach was that it takes into account the context where the research effort is active, while it is also most appropriate for small samples that produce qualitative data. However, the main weakness of the inductive approach is that it produces generalized theories and conclusions based only on a small number of observations, thereby the reliability of research results being under question.

For this research, in-depth interviews were used. In-depth interviews are personal and unstructured interviews, whose aim is to identify participants' emotions, feelings, and opinions regarding a particular research subject. The main advantage of personal interviews is that they involve personal and direct contact between interviewers and interviewees, as well as eliminate non-response rates, but interviewers need to have developed the necessary skills to successfully carry out an interview. What is more, unstructured interviews offer flexibility in terms of the flow of the interview, thereby leaving room for the generation of conclusions that were not initially meant to be derived regarding a research subject. However, there is the risk that the interview may deviate from the prespecified research aims and objectives.

As far as data collection tools were concerned, the conduction of the research involved the use of a semi-structured questionnaire, which was used as an interview guide for the researcher. Some certain questions were prepared, so as for the researcher to guide the interview towards the satisfaction of research objectives, but additional questions were made encountered during the interviews.

## 4. Results and discussions

This paper investigates the idea of counterfeit consumption in the context of brand imperialism. Our focus on was the colonialism effects that exist on the life, culture and consumption pattern of the people of Bangladesh. In our findings, we analyzed the data that we collect from the informants of Dhaka city. Data are mainly analyzed under three themes through which the overall impact of brand imperialism in our society can be explained.

# 4.1 Western Hegemony

The term hegemony is an economic, political, cultural and civilian predominance power used by one nation to control other nations. When the dominant country is used its culture as a weapon to dominate other cultures it can be explained as cultural hegemony (Van Maanen, 2011). Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci explained culture hegemony as a sociological and philosophic concept. Here, a social class dominated the other social class people who belong to a different culture. One social group wants to explore its authority over another group. This concept demand that the ruling class tries to impose their norms, and ideologies on others for their benefit (Collaboration, 2015). And the time when this hegemony comes from the western culture and is established in one society permanently it can say that the culture is affected by the western hegemony (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

It can be seen that our society is also dominated by the hegemony western. Especially the young generation is the main victims of it. In analyze, the information given by the informants indicated that their consumption pattern like the selection of dresses depends on the society where he/she belongs and the people who stay with him/them. One of our respondents says that she can not use foreign branded products since her childhood but when she comes to Dhaka city she changes her consumption pattern to the influence of a western culture that comes out in the interview with Srity Parvin(female, aged 24, from Dhaka city).

"I came from an upper-middle-class family. I saw prosperity in my family but did not see any brand and this is true that I cannot use the branded products from my childhood but always buy the dress which is the costliest in our area. Because I come from a rural area, it is hard to find any branded showroom in our location. But when I come to Dhaka and I see many people who are using luxury products and leading a luxurious life. Whom they are living luxurious life people give them extra

concentration and this thing influence me much. Especially when I involve vein politics from that time I use brand more."

Here, she wants to say that she used the branded items to show up herself in front of people who belong with her. She thinks that that's the way she can gain extra priority from the people. We can explain her psychology as a framework of the "status-game" model that consumers use those products that increase their status no matter whether the product is fake or original.

Developed countries are always finding ways how to suppress the talents of other countries. They have spread some products and cultures that are creating hindrances to our development whereas they are getting the patent-free at a high rate and they are maintaining their domination rate on us. One of the examples is Facebook, hanging with friends in the coffee shops, celebrating a birthday party, and taking a selfie. To describe the effects of western hegemony we have used some pictures.



Figure 1. A girl accessing Facebook from both her cell phone and laptop (Source: Author)

This picture is evidence that the girl is using Facebook to sit at her study table. She is busy using Facebook instead of reading books.



Figure 2: The boy seems to be that he is more attentive to using Facebook (Source: Author)

In these two pictures, we see that they are busy using Facebook. Facebook is an online social media app and it is an American online social networking site. This website is invented by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004. It is not a part of our culture but the people of our country used it as a part of their life. Most people especially the young generation have an addiction to it. They spend most of their valuable time using Facebook. In the first picture, the girl is sitting at the table, and a lot of books are in front of her

but she wastes her time using Facebook instead of reading. This picture says that our students waste their time and talent for such a culture that is not our own culture. That comes from another country. So, we can say that western culture can dominate us through their culture. In the other picture, we saw a boy also using Facebook.



Figure 3: A group of girls taking a selfie (Source: Author)

In this picture, we see that some girls are going to a restaurant and the food they ordered is in front of them but they are not eating. They are busy taking a selfie.



Figure 4: Two girls clicking selfies in the middle of the road (Source: Author)

Two girls are taking selfies on the road. They are not concerned about their safety. Sometimes this unconsciousness causes an accident.



Figure 5: A group of friends clicking selfies on a tour (Source: Author)

Following the picture evident we see that some friends are going to visit a place but they are busy taking a group selfie. Their main focus point was to click a selfie not to enjoy the beauty of nature.



Figure 6: A guy taking a selfie in a restaurant (Source: Author)

In the following picture, we see that the boy is taking a selfie. He went to a restaurant with his family. We can see that there is no food on their table but they are not angry. On the other hand, they seem to be happy because they were taking a selfie.

In those pictures, we can notice that people are busy clicking a selfie. It is not important for them where they are going and what things are happening around them. Only one thing is important to them take a selfie. But if we try to know the history of the selfie it first appeared in Australian electronic media on 13 September 2002. But nowadays it's very difficult for us to separate ourselves from taking a selfie. Now it has become a cultural part of our society.

#### 4.2 Resistance or resilience

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the economic growth of our country has increased. Many development activities have happened and our country is progressed toward achieving prosperity. In our study, we find out that as many development works have happened in our country but the condition of the labor has not changed. As it is known that we are under British colonialism for 200 years and also dominated by the Pakistani rulers for23 years. Our people were dominated by these rulers differently. Now we are an independent nation and not ruled by any colonialists. It seems to be that we are not dominated by any imperialism but the real fact is now this time we are also under the control of their ruling system. They control us to impose their cultures and products on us. We know the truth but as a people of a developing country, we cannot raise our voice against this system and it's not possible for us to reject their products.

As we know we cannot directly protest this system, so we use an invisible weapon to express our voice against this injustice system through the use and production of the copy brand in the name of the original brand (Kampylis & Valtanen, 2010). This process we explain as the term resistance.

At the same time when the people of our country produced counterfeit brand their knowledge about the brand also increase. They learn the technological system and they can make themselves a specialist. And they produce the products at a low cost and the products are seen to be the original ones, and many times it is difficult to differentiate which is original and which is counterfeit. This process can be explained as resilience.

One of our informants says that she buys a counterfeit watch that seems to be an original one and anyone cannot be able to identify it at a first glance. The name of the informant s Tanha (age 24, female).

"(She takes time to answer) It was like this two or three month ago that I wanted to buy a gift for a close friend, in that case, I wanted to buy a good branded watch but I was not able to finance it, so I discovered the copy of that brand of this watch and I bought it. I brought a Titan watch, it was only 500tk from New Market, but the watch seemed to be the original brand product. And I was astonished that the watch was so good as its price. I get it at such a low price. And after buying the watch I felt

very happy. Because I want to buy a Titan watch but I am not able to buy a branded Titan watch but I want it. So the copy of the Titan watch fills up my demand. It makes me happy and I am also sure that anyone will not be able to identify that it was a counterfeit product"

# Here are some pictures of workers when they are working in the Factory



Figure 7: A woman working in a factory and a group of women inspecting the quality of products (Source: Author)

Here, workers are seen to be engaged in the packaging of ready-made garments which are to be exported to foreign countries later. Though the foreign owners will accumulate the ultimate benefit of their hard work, this process is making them technologically advanced and increasing their experience. This implies that technological knowledge is learned from them while we can produce our product based on that knowledge gained. Thus, as a positive side of being oppressed, we can use the knowledge learned from them as a weapon against foreign dictators.

Following, the picture is evidence that the workers are binding clothes following modern technology. Through these years of domination, we had the chance to learn their modern techniques and thus our population is getting a chance to turn into human resources.

## 4.3 Neoliberal Governmentality

Neo-liberalism is attributed as a paradigm of socioeconomic research wherein authority in the providence is transferred to the private industry through minimal public incentives, reduction in deficit spending, encouragement of open market trading, and so on (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014). Though this refers to less government intervention and assistance, there seems to be no reduction in the practice of setting rules in the market by the government and thus governance is well maintained without the direct presence of the government itself in the market (Kopecký, 2011).

This less intervention often leads to the suffering of the common people. Though the governance is maintained, the main control of the market is in the hands of the private sector. Thus, the market falls under the influence of capitalism and the price of the necessary goods goes beyond the reach of common people. So, people are forced to produce counterfeit products to reduce the cost of production as they have no other way to meet their demands and needs. The commoners are not concerned about whether they are using brands or not, rather their main concern is to satisfy their basic needs. So, in this way, neoliberal governmentality leads a country to use and produce copy brands to meet their needs and solve their problems on their own.



Figure 8: A rickshaw-puller using counterfeit products (Source: Author)

In this picture, we see a rickshaw-puller who is wearing a branded sandal named (Bay). But we know that a branded sandal is not affordable to such root-level people. So, it is evident that it is a counterfeit product. When he purchases this sandal his only motive is to fulfill its need. Whether the product is branded or not was his main concern.



Figure 9: A boy using the 'Apple' logo product (Source: Author)

The boy in this picture is wearing a t-shirt bearing the logo of Apple. His mother is a garment worker for whom that logo does not mean anything and she just brought it to fulfil her needs.



Figure 10: An elderly person wearing a counterfeit brand (Source: Self-creation)

A grocer wearing a t-shirt labeled 'Puma', an international brand which is quite expensive to acquire. This indicates the clear usage of counterfeit products.

This research investigates the idea of whether less affluent consumers such as laborers of the RMG sector of Bangladesh use counterfeit products as a way to protest against the oppression of foreign brands. Our focus was on the history of colonialism that creates a negative impression on the mind of these origin people. The history of British colonialism reminds us of how brutally we were dominated by the British colonialists.

When the people of our country know this history, they show abhor toward the colonialist. This abhorrent influence on the less affluent creates resistance against foreign brands and encourages to use of counterfeit products (Woodman, 2014). Mainly, the researcher has explained the issues of effects, poor conditions of labor, and consumers' abhorrence toward foreign brands that are not properly explained by the past research held on the issues of counterfeit consumption.

Past research on counterfeit consumption revealed that people prefer counterfeit goods because of their low prices. To support this argument, pointed out that perceived brand personality is another main factor that persuades people to buy falsified goods. Consumers mainly buy the copy of those products that have a good brand name value. Those who cannot get the genuine product they desire to purchase fraudulent products to meet their needs (Jiang & Cova, 2012). People willingly buy copy-branded products because they want to show their status. The most applicable strategy of consumption followed by the consumers is using counterfeit goods instead of original status-intensive goods, especially for those expensive branded products that come from developed countries. Consumers have used cheap copy of that products to show their status.

Behind these reasons some other factors that have motivated the less affluent people for counterfeit consumption. The early history of colonialism says that the people of this state are oppressed by the British governor and the less affluent people are the main victim of it. From (1905-to 1910) Gandhi's Swadeshi revolt against the boycott of British goods inspires us that if we want to raise our voice against brand imperialism we need to reject their products and find out an alternative way to fulfill our demand. So, it could be said that the impact of brand imperialism influence consumers to love for count purchase(Niederberger & Dreiack, 2020).

From our findings, it could be evident that less affluent people can change their economic conditions and create resistance through the use of counterfeit products (<u>Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010</u>). According to *Antonio Gramsci*, the people of developing and underdeveloped countries cannot help following the culture of developed countries. Thus, affluent countries are dominating the less affluent countries. In the case of Bangladesh, though there are many signs of domination and oppression, resilience can also be sensed. Though the main concept is being taken from the developed countries, we are developing our product using it and thus creating an opportunity to enter into the competitive market. This situation can be backed by the theory in which he proved that colonized people become more competent in the process of being dominated by the colonizers and resist the power of the dictators.

The same situation can be observed in the case of cricket. Bangladesh cricket team was once very weak and through learning the tricks from the developed countries, now they are competing with the teams of the developed world. This scenario is also applicable to the products and the competitive market of Bangladesh. Famous brands for example- Nike, McDonald's, etc, want to dominate the market with their products but counterfeit products are creating resilience to their purpose. This is posing a threat to their existence as there is a huge market demand for counterfeit products.

Ultimately, we all know the horrible effects and consequences of brand imperialism but resistance and resilience can be the way of turning this curse into a blessing where the counterfeit products act as major weapons because the colonized ones can build a better future only through fighting with what they have and can do. Every coin has its two sides and we should always focus on the enlightened one thus imperialism can be used for our advancement through counterfeit production.

## 5. Conclusion

In a busy street in Dhaka, while shopping for groceries at Gulistan, I stumbled upon a famous market full of counterfeit products. At this place, you can buy a Rolex watch for only two dollars and many more high-end brands' fake products for only a fraction of their actual price. Apex shoes can be found to cost only two hundred BDT. These counterfeit products are very popular among a specific class more prominently the lower and lower-middle-class people. Seeing those products' popularity, I was intrigued to know more about their popularity and why these products thrive while one can easily buy the cheaper products offered by low-end brands in contrast to high-end brands, or when some people can even afford the branded products. This study covers why people tend to buy counterfeit products, the factors associated with the mass use of these products, and how these products are faring in the hands of consumers. The study revealed that less affluent people use counterfeit products mainly to reflect abhorrent sentiments toward foreign brands. This abhorrence leads to building resistance and resilience, which is primarily the production of counterfeit products.

#### 5.1 Limitations and study forward

Similar to other studies, this research has also some limitations. The significance of this research paper can be limited by the respondent sample size, which was not so large for the conclusion. Moreover, the data were only collected from the respondents of Dhaka City because of its time limitation, which results in making our study narrow. Besides these limitations, the observational study with the qualitative method and the ethnographic and Ethnography data analysis approach helps us to find out the consumer's perception of counterfeit consumption through the lens of brand imperialism. Again, the author's skills and techniques applied to get insights by asking probing questions and finally the author's ability to critically analyze the gathered data may not be beyond any doubt. The authors hereby accepted their knowledge limitation in analyzing the situation.

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