

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL ASPECTS, HEDONISM, AND ETHICS ON ONLINE PURCHASE INTENTION OF COUNTERFEIT MSMES PRODUCTS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF CONSUMER ATTITUDE

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Abstract

The rapid expansion of e-commerce in Indonesia has reshaped consumer behavior, particularly in the growing demand for counterfeit products imitating MSME brands. While these products are attractive due to affordability and social acceptance, they raise serious concerns about consumer ethics, legal protection, and the long-term sustainability of authentic local businesses. This study aims to investigate the role of social influence, hedonic motivation, and ethical awareness in shaping consumers' online purchase intention of counterfeit MSME products, with consumer attitude as a mediating factor. A quantitative explanatory design was applied by distributing structured online questionnaires to 400 respondents who had online shopping experience in the past six months. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that social influence and hedonism significantly and positively affect consumer attitudes toward counterfeit products, while ethical awareness negatively influences attitudes. Furthermore, consumer attitude partially mediates the relationship between social and hedonic factors and purchase intention, while fully mediating the impact of ethics. These findings highlight the psychological mechanisms behind counterfeit purchasing behavior and confirm the applicability of the Theory of Planned Behavior in the digital context. In conclusion, effective interventions should not only increase ethical awareness but also address social validation and hedonic drivers to protect MSME sustainability in Indonesia's digital marketplace.

Keyword: Social Aspects, Hedonism, Ethics, Purchase Intention, Consumer Attitude of Counterfeit

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of digital marketplaces has dramatically reshaped consumer behavior in Southeast Asia, with Indonesia leading one of the highest e-commerce growth rates in the region. Alongside this growth, the prevalence of counterfeit products, especially those mimicking UMKM (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) brands, has raised serious concerns regarding consumer ethics, legal enforcement, and the sustainability of authentic local enterprises (U.S. Trade Representative, 2023; Fajri et al., 2024).

UMKM products are often vulnerable to imitation due to limited brand protection, weak enforcement mechanisms, and lack of public awareness. These conditions create a fertile environment for counterfeiters to thrive, particularly through online channels. Previous studies have noted the affordability, ease of access, and social acceptance of counterfeit goods as key enablers of this behavior in Indonesia's digital economy (Portman, 2022; Türkdemir, 2022).

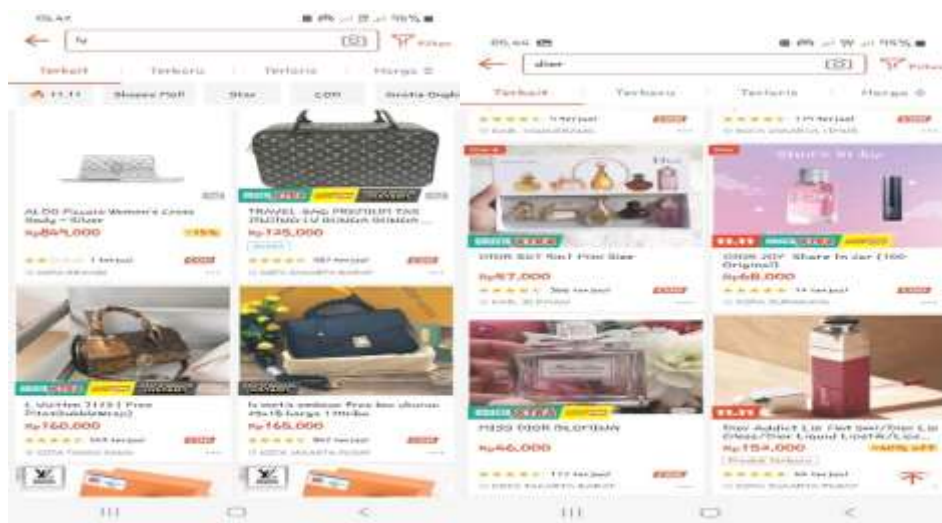


Fig 1 Examples of Counterfeiting in Online Shopping

Social influence, defined as the impact of peer opinions, social media content, and community norms, plays a powerful role in shaping consumer attitudes. Consumers who see others friends, influencers, or online reviewers—engaging with counterfeit goods may be more inclined to emulate this behavior, perceiving it as normative or risk-free (ZhiYu, 2024; Rokhman & Omar, 2020). This is particularly salient in collectivist societies where group approval is a key factor in decision-making. Hedonistic motivations also drive counterfeit consumption, especially among younger consumers. The allure of trendy, luxurious-looking products at lower costs can override concerns about legality or quality. Digital shopping environments gamified, visual, and interactive amplify the emotional appeal of consumption, encouraging impulsive or pleasure-driven purchases (Dusupova, 2024; Song, 2020).

Conversely, ethical awareness introduces cognitive dissonance. Consumers who are aware of the negative impact of counterfeit consumption such as undermining local producers or promoting illegal trade may experience guilt or moral conflict. Yet, the strength of this ethical stance can be diminished when outweighed by social pressure or personal gratification (Tarka et al., 2022; Fajri et al., 2024).

Attitude acts as a psychological mediator in this tension. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, attitudes shape behavioral intention by integrating affective, cognitive, and normative beliefs (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of counterfeit consumption, attitude can either reinforce ethical abstention or legitimize hedonic indulgence, depending on how the consumer resolves the interplay of social and moral cues. This study explores the interconnected roles of social influence, hedonism, and ethical awareness in shaping online purchase intentions of counterfeit UMKM products, with attitude as a mediating variable. By examining this relationship in a culturally contextualized model, the research aims to enrich existing literature on consumer ethics and provide practical insights for protecting authentic UMKM brands in digital ecosystems.

This study integrates three theoretical constructs social influence, hedonism, and ethics and examines their effects on online counterfeit product purchase intention, with consumer attitude as a mediating variable. It provides empirical evidence within the context of UMKM-branded products, thereby contributing to literature on consumer ethics, digital marketing, and behavioral economics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Influence

Social influence plays a substantial role in shaping consumers' attitudes and intentions, particularly in online environments. In the context of counterfeit product consumption, peer recommendations, online reviews, and social media exposure can legitimize or normalize the act of purchasing imitations (ZhiYu, 2024). In collectivist cultures like Indonesia, consumers are often influenced by group norms and the opinions of significant others, making them more susceptible to purchasing decisions aligned with perceived social acceptance (Türkdemir, 2022). Research by Patel et al. (2023) further confirms that online peer validation increases risk tolerance in counterfeit purchases.

Hedonism and Online Shopping

Hedonic motivation refers to the pursuit of pleasure, excitement, and experiential enjoyment in consumption (Dusupova, 2024). In online retail, these motivations are amplified through attractive product visuals, gamified interfaces, and

impulsive shopping features. Consumers who are driven by hedonistic goals may prioritize the sensory or emotional benefits of a product rather than its authenticity. Studies by Liu and Lee (2021) and Al-Kahtani et al. (2023) reveal that pleasure-driven shopping increases vulnerability to counterfeit marketing, especially among digitally active youth.

Consumer Ethics and Moral Awareness

Ethical awareness refers to an individual's recognition of the social and legal consequences of their consumption behavior. While some consumers actively avoid counterfeit goods due to concerns about intellectual property violations or fairness to original producers, others disregard these ethical cues if the counterfeit product is perceived as low-risk or normalized within society (Tarka et al., 2022). Ethical considerations can act as a deterrent to counterfeit purchases, but their influence may be moderated by contextual or motivational factors (Fajri et al., 2024). A recent meta-analysis by Bian and Veloutsou (2022) shows that ethics exert a stronger influence in societies with active enforcement, while peer normalization weakens ethical resolve.

Attitude as Mediator

Attitude is a critical psychological construct that mediates the relationship between beliefs (e.g., ethics), motivations (e.g., hedonism), and behavior. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), favorable attitudes toward a behavior increase the likelihood of intention and actual engagement. In counterfeit consumption, attitudes can neutralize ethical conflicts or enhance motivations derived from social or hedonic reinforcement. Prior studies demonstrate that attitude partially mediates the effects of social and ethical variables on online shopping intention (Rokhman & Omar, 2020). More recent findings by Sharma and Gupta (2023) support the idea that attitude transformation is key to reducing counterfeit demand.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior and incorporates elements from ethical decision-making and consumer culture theory. It posits that social aspects and hedonism positively influence attitudes toward counterfeit products, while ethics has a negative influence. Attitude, in turn, mediates the relationship between these antecedents and online purchase intention. This integrated model contributes to the growing literature on counterfeit product consumption and offers culturally relevant insights for the Indonesian digital market. It aligns with the expanded view of consumer deviance outlined by Kim and Johnson (2020) and the moral intensity construct introduced in recent works by Nasir and Othman (2023).

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative explanatory research design aimed at testing causal relationships between social influence, hedonism, ethics, attitude, and online purchase intention of counterfeit UMKM products. A structured online questionnaire was developed and distributed to 400 Indonesian consumers who had experience purchasing online in the past six months. All measurement items were adapted from previously validated scales: social influence (Türkdemir, 2022), hedonism (Dusupova, 2024), ethics (Tarka et al., 2022), attitude (Song, 2020), and purchase intention (ZhiYu, 2024). A 5-point Likert scale was used ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

A purposive sampling technique was employed to reach respondents who had encountered counterfeit products online, particularly imitations of UMKM-branded items. Data reliability was ensured through pre-testing and Cronbach's alpha analysis. All constructs showed internal consistency above 0.7. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using SmartPLS 4.0 was used to analyze the data, evaluating both measurement and structural models. Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was conducted to test the significance of path coefficients and mediating effects.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the PLS-SEM analysis indicate that social influence and hedonism have a significant positive effect on consumer attitudes toward counterfeit products ($\beta = 0.36$ and $\beta = 0.41$, respectively; $p < 0.001$). Ethics had a negative and significant effect on attitude ($\beta = -0.33$, $p < 0.001$). Attitude, in turn, had a strong positive effect on online purchase intention ($\beta = 0.72$, $p < 0.001$). Mediation analysis showed that attitude partially mediated the relationship between social influence and purchase intention (indirect effect $\beta = 0.19$), and fully mediated the effect of ethics on purchase intention (indirect effect $\beta = -0.17$). Hedonism's effect on intention was also partially mediated through attitude (indirect $\beta = 0.21$). Model fit indicators (SRMR = 0.056) and R^2 values demonstrated strong explanatory power: $R^2 = 0.62$ for attitude and $R^2 = 0.58$ for online purchase intention.

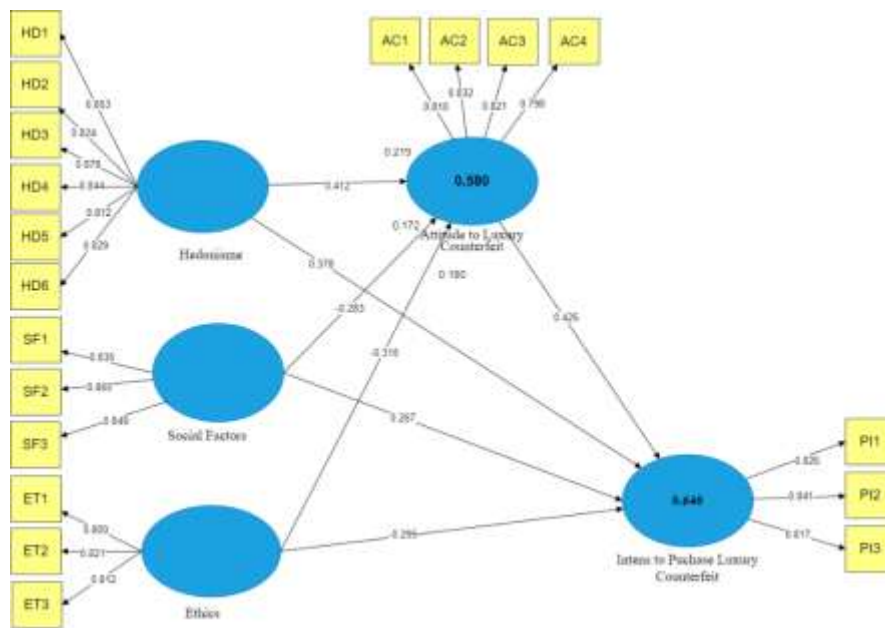


Fig 3 PLS Result

The findings reveal that social influence and hedonistic motivation strongly shape favorable consumer attitudes toward counterfeit products. In line with prior studies (ZhiYu, 2024; Dusupova, 2024), consumers are swayed by peer opinions and the emotional gratification from obtaining trendy products at low cost, even if counterfeit. These attitudes then significantly predict purchase intention, emphasizing the psychological bridge between external/social stimuli and behavioral outcomes (Song, 2020).

The findings confirm that social influence plays a pivotal role in shaping favorable consumer attitudes toward counterfeit UMKM products. This aligns with Türkdemir (2022) and ZhiYu (2024), who emphasize the influence of digital peers and online networks in normalizing such behavior. Peer acceptance often overshadows legal risk, especially when social media influencers indirectly promote counterfeit consumption (Lee et al., 2023). The Indonesian context, characterized by a strong sense of community and group identity, further reinforces susceptibility to peer-driven behavior (Rokhman & Omar, 2020). Hedonistic motivation emerged as another strong predictor of favorable attitudes, consistent with the pleasure-oriented consumption literature. Online shopping environments are designed to maximize stimulation and gratification, from flash sales to product gamification (Song, 2020; Dusupova, 2024). As noted by Al-Kahtani et al. (2023), consumers driven by experiential and aesthetic value are less likely to scrutinize product authenticity. This has direct implications for e-commerce design and platform accountability. Interestingly, the ethical construct negatively influenced attitude, but its effect was fully mediated by attitude in the intention model. This suggests a moral rationalization process, where consumers acknowledge ethical concerns but justify their decisions through perceived normalcy or economic constraints (Tarka et al., 2022). This mirrors findings by Nasir and Othman (2023), who note the decline of ethical resistance in high-pressure or low-cost contexts.

Attitude itself was a powerful predictor of purchase intention, reinforcing the role of internal cognitive alignment in consumer behavior. When attitudes become normalized through social and emotional rewards, even morally questionable actions become justifiable (Ajzen, 1991; Sharma & Gupta, 2023). The study validates the Theory of Planned Behavior in a culturally specific setting and adds empirical weight to the use of attitude as a mediating variable in unethical digital consumption. It also aligns with emerging models that integrate moral intensity and digital stimuli in explaining deviant consumer choices (Kim & Johnson, 2020; Patel et al., 2023).

In practical terms, UMKM stakeholders must move beyond mere legal warnings and consider psychological interventions. Anti-counterfeit messaging should target the emotional and social gratifications that drive counterfeit purchases. E-commerce platforms also need to improve transparency cues, such as verified product indicators, to counteract hedonic misattributions. Conversely, ethical considerations reduce favorable attitudes toward counterfeit products, confirming the moral conflict theory in consumer ethics. However, the influence of ethics is mediated by attitude, suggesting that even ethically aware consumers may rationalize their behavior if attitudes are socially or emotionally reinforced (Tarka et al., 2022).

This research highlights the Theory of Planned Behavior's relevance in explaining online counterfeit purchasing among Indonesian consumers. The mediating role of attitude is pivotal, as it transforms beliefs and motivations into actual intention.

The model demonstrates that digital consumer behavior is less about legality and more about perception, community validation, and psychological benefit.

For UMKM stakeholders and regulators, the findings signal an urgent need for consumer education, ethical branding campaigns, and platform-based filtering strategies. Enhancing consumer ethical awareness alone may not suffice—interventions must target social influence and hedonic triggers to shift attitudes meaningfully.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that social aspects and hedonistic motivations significantly increase consumers' positive attitudes toward counterfeit UMKM products, which in turn elevate online purchase intentions. Ethical awareness negatively affects attitudes and indirectly suppresses purchase intention. The mediating role of attitude is crucial in translating these psychological and moral inputs into behavioral intention. The integration of social psychology, ethics, and consumer behavior theory presents a comprehensive model for understanding the drivers behind online counterfeit consumption. These findings are particularly relevant for emerging economies like Indonesia, where affordability, peer validation, and online accessibility drive consumer decision-making.

IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The study offers several implications. For UMKM owners, the findings underscore the importance of ethical branding and community advocacy to counteract social and hedonic pressures. Public awareness campaigns should not only highlight the illegality of counterfeit purchases but also promote pride in authentic local brands. E-commerce platforms should strengthen detection systems and consider collaborative filtering approaches to reduce exposure to counterfeit goods. Educational institutions and regulators can develop interventions targeting consumer attitudes, particularly among youth consumers who are more likely influenced by social trends and hedonistic appeals.

Limitations include the reliance on self-reported data and focus on Indonesian consumers, which may limit generalizability. Future research could explore comparative cross-cultural studies or assess behavioral data directly from e-commerce transactions. Longitudinal studies may also uncover how attitudes evolve over time in response to interventions or shifting social norms.

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