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COUNTERFEIT PRODUCTS: A SERIOUS PROBLEM OF RURAL MARKET

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ABSTRACT

Buying of counterfeits is growing very fast. Product counterfeiting is emerging as threat though, counterfeiting has been with us for very long time. Recently companies attention is being focused on fighting the problem. It would seem the first logical step would be to determine the size of the counterfeit market. Product counterfeiting is growing in scope, scale, and threat. This includes awareness of deceptive and non-deceptive counterfeiting types. India has large part of world population. Generally, people are less educated and poor in rural India. They can't afford sky-scraping cost branded products and services. Some local agencies take advantage of this condition. They provide counterfeit product in rural market. Counterfeit products cover large market share of world trade. According to (BASCAP) report 2012 to counterfeit market estimated to be as large as \$600 billion a year. This problem is not new in a developing country like India but presently it has invaded every aspect of our lives. From products such as radios, geysers, computer software & phones to food items, beverages, cosmetics and medicines all have been illegally duplicated, copied and counterfeited. The major victims of these products are customers and companies. The paper is an attempt to understand the business of fake products and The goal of this research is to help brand owners and agencies efficiently select appropriate countermeasures including overt, covert and forensic packaging features, as well as functions of market, monitoring, modifying supply chains, enforcement, prosecution and legislation.

KEYWORDS

counterfeit products, rural market, rural consumer.

INTRODUCTION

Counterfeit products are those which unauthorised imitate, copy or duplicate a product or use registered trademarks without permission of brand owner. They are the look-a likes or spell a likes of genuine products. Counterfeiting is a kind of duplication where even the original manufacturer would not be able to distinguish off headedly between genuine and fake product. Nearly all products can be counterfeited. Buying counterfeits product has become a world-wide economic and social problem (Furham et al 2007). The key reason of counterfeit products in rural market that the cost of counterfeit products are very low than authentic ones (Gentry et al., 2001; Furham et al 2007)

Counterfeited goods industry has expanded considerably in recent years because of globalization and changes in consumer's preference (Wall, D. S et al 2010). Counterfeit Products are not new phenomenon and it has been affecting business for at least 2,000 years. Pliny the elder described counterfeit coins as popular collector's items for Romans (P. Chaudhary et al 2013). Online shopping portals accounting for more than 25 per cent of the counterfeit luxury goods market in India (DNA 2014). According to International trademarks association worldwide reach of the Internet means that sellers of counterfeits can reach consumers all over the world and they are not limited to 'brick and mortar' establishments. Likewise, consumers who have access to the Internet are more exposed to and have more opportunities to knowingly or unknowingly purchase counterfeits from sellers within or outside their respective countries (ITA 2009). Bands and trademarks are intellectual properties of corporation. For example, the Coca-Cola brand name is far more valuable than the ingredients that go into a can of Coca-Cola (Hopkins, 2003). Companies expend high amount of time, energy, and resources to protect their ideas, brands, and identities from counterfeiters and intellectual property infringers. Firms do this not only to preserve their reputations and profitability, but also to prevent the consumer from unknowingly purchasing unsafe, low-quality goods from unscrupulous dealer (Kavin Lewis, 2008).

The products are often sub-standard and carry health and safety risks that range from mild to life-threatening (OECD 2007). In 2008, the US government estimated the global market value of the counterfeit industry at \$500 billion with growth rate of 1,700% over the past 10 years (U.S. Customs and Border Protection 2008). Counterfeiting is victimless crime representing up to 10% of the Global trade (Shubha Verma et al 2014).

OVERVIEW OF INDUSTRIES, WHICH ARE AFFECTED BY COUNTERFEITS PRODUCTS

Counterfeit products are well known problems. Counterfeit and pirated goods can be found in almost every country of the world and in virtually all sectors of the global economy. Nearly all products can be counterfeited (Reichelt, K.M. 2007). These products affect every field of business. Some common effected industries given below.

- Indian Copyright Industry, including the Business Software Alliance (BSA) (including: CDs, videos, computer games, software, music recordings)
- FMCG Industries
- Sporting goods
- Watches
- Perfume
- Toys
- Medicine
- Spare parts industry (Automotive, Aircraft).
- Cloth industries
- Tobacco and alcohol Industries

The researcher did an exploratory study among twenty-five from the rural shops these counterfeits found in the shops on listed in table 1 (some of these have brought retained by researcher).

TABLE 1: NAMES OF ORIGINAL AND COUNTERFEIT PRODUCTS

Sr. No	Original Products	Counterfeit Products
1	Ponds	Polonds
2	Rin	Run
3	501 bar	509 bar
4	Cadbury's éclairs	Chaudhary's eclairs
5	Brooke Bond paisa pack tea	Benson Brand paisa pack tea
6	Nirma	Nilima, or Narima
7	Lifebouy	Lifejoy or Liteboy
8	Colgate toothpaste	College toothpaste
9	Kit-kat	Kir-kat
10	Fair & Lovely Fairness cream	Friends & Lovely Fairness cream
11	Dew	bew

Sources: Compiled from Primary Data.

While fashion brands are worried about fakes, consumer electronics and gadgets makers are concerned about parallel imports and refurbished products sold as new. Not every online shopping site is involved in such activities even though some of the bigger ones have been sent notices in recent past (The Economic Time 2013).

Due to counterfeit products, Indian economy bears a huge loss every year. These product create various issues in rural market i.e. health, poor quality, poor taste and inappropriate volume of products. Smaller firms face displacement of management time from growing the business to fighting the counterfeiters. Legitimate wholesalers and retailers are also harmed by counterfeit goods. First they lose revenue to the fakes. But these channel members may also be put in a difficult position when consumers ask for repairs or replacement of counterfeit products. The end result may be loss of confidence in these middlemen and ultimately in the brand (Chaudhry, PE 2013)

Counterfeiting and piracy are longstanding problems which are growing in scope and magnitude. They are concern to governments because of (i) the negative impact that they can have on innovation, (ii) the threat they pose to the welfare of consumers and (iii) the substantial resources that they channel to criminal networks, organized crime and other groups that disrupt and corrupt society. (iv) Sales and licensing, (v) brand value and firm reputation, and (vi) the ability of firms to benefit from the breakthroughs they make in developing new products. They are of concern to consumers because of the significant health and safety risks that substandard counterfeit and pirated products could pose to those who consume the items (OECD 2007).

THEORETICAL BACK GROUND

Counterfeiting has a long history. For most products, it is simply the theft of brand owners' intellectual property, a trade mark crime. But counterfeit medicines can also kill. Political dispute over language, and confusion over how to deal with the public health and private property aspects of counterfeiting, is hampering international action (Clift, C. 2010). Counterfeit products and counterfeiting both are well-known and serious problem. But estimating the extent of this illicit trade is difficult task (Chaudhary et al 2013). According to the International Anti-Counterfeit Coalition (IACC 2010) the world's market for counterfeits exceeds 600 billion USD annually, accounting for approximately 5-7 % of world trade every year. Counterfeiting is criminal activity that poses threat to global health, safety, and legal business (Nairn 2005; Midler 2009). However counterfeit products does not kick producer of original goods and can in certain cases, actually be leveraged to firm's advantage (Romani, S. et al 2012). This excludes domestically produced and consumed counterfeit products and the large volume of pirated digital products that are distributed via the internet. According to the (OECD 2005), lack of consumer awareness is boosting counterfeiting in India. Counterfeiting is hurdle for growth for almost every sector in India (Economic Time 2016). There has been significant amount of research into why consumers purchase counterfeit products and the types of consumers who may be more willing to purchase them. Unsurprisingly consumers who have relatively negative perception (or little regard) for the law will be more likely to purchase counterfeit products. Also people who have negative attitudes towards famous brands are more likely to buy counterfeit products. This may be because they feel that genuine brands charge unfair prices, those people who see themselves as being shrewd shoppers willing and able to beat the system may also be more likely to buy counterfeits (Haider Ali, 2008). But this concept is not applicable of rural costumer. Because rural consumers face six major challenges which affect rural prosperity. These challenges arise out of infrastructural and information needs which are aggravated by remoteness. Rural consumers identify lack of transportation and Distribution difficulties in managing their commercial transactions, lack of healthcare services, being uninformed of governance policies, lacking effective education and shortage of opportunities in infotainment as prime deterrents to their living an improved lifestyle. (The Mobile Development Report, 2006 and Mitra, SS et al 2008). Due to these challenges rural consumers cannot purchase genuine products and other key reason to purchase counterfeit products, consumers who believe they are getting good value for money when purchasing counterfeit products are more likely to be willing to buy them. Those who believe counterfeit products are dangerous and laws against commerce with them should be risky are less likely than others to buy counterfeit goods (Furham et al 2007).

NEED OF THE STUDY

In India, the size rural Market is very large and it offered great opportunities to marketers. More than one fourth consumers live in rural area. Approximately 50 percent GDP Comes from Rural Area yet rural consumers don't get good product and services from marketer side. They pay high amount to purchase goods but they don't receive original good and services. Due to absence of genuine products, counterfeit manufacturers sell their products at high price and they earn super normal profit from rural area.

The counterfeit products raise various issues in rural market i.e., injurious to health, low Quality, financial loss, create negative brand image and other related issues. This study focuses on the counterfeit products in rural market.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To investigate key reason of counterfeits in rural market.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is based upon both primary and secondary data. The adoption of the Descriptive Research Design would be appropriate and effective in the present study because an attempt was made to know the extent of reason of counterfeits was found to be product in rural market by using secondary Data.

DATA COLLECTION

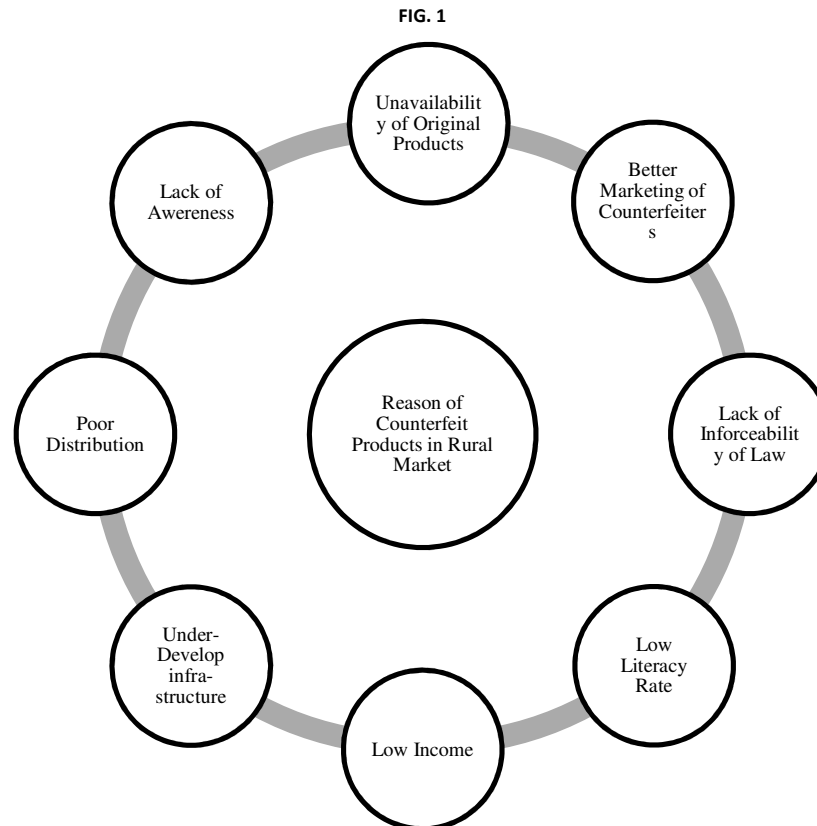
The primary data collected through semi structured interview write gross and rural people were undertaking the twenty-five shops and also hundred consumers were interviewed/ interacted.

SECONDARY DATA

Data is collected from various Published & unpublished Journals, Articles available in various websites, popular Journals, Text Books etc.

RESULT AND FINDINGS

Analyzing secondary data, the study found 6th key variable which are key cause of counterfeit products in Indian rural market. These variables discussed as under:



Source: Compiled from Primary Data

UNAVAILABILITY OF ORIGINAL PRODUCTS

In rural area, there is extreme shortage of branded and original products. Manufacturers cover on some part of rural area. At present time, they don't reach in interior part market. There are no basic facility such as road, rail, and medical etc. exits in interior part of rural India. This result, famous brand cannot reach to rural areas. This situation provides opportunities to counterfeits manufacturer to sale counterfeit products and earned extremely high gain.

BETTER MARKETING OF COUNTERFEITERS

In India, rural population comprises nucleus of Indian society or rural population is heart of India. Religion, caste and language are considered the most important determinants of social and political organization in India. The norms values and life style of rural consumer is significant reason of success of counterfeit product in rural market. The chief occupations of the rural consumers are agriculture and its allied activities so, rural consumers are unaware unfair trade practice of marketers. The consumers don't have proper facility like mode of transportation, organized market. Counterfeit's manufacturers takes gain of this situation. They sale their item for consumption at affordable cost at high margin and get supernormal profit. Due to traditional life style, rural Consumers don't except change in their living style. They follow ancient tradition and customs. Due to the attitudes, they cannot adopt new product in entirety easily for example rural consumers look for quantity rather than quality in many instances. The counterfeit producer is better tuned to rural people. They offered appropriate product and service to rural people. This is a key reason of counterfeits products in rural market.

DEMONSTRATION EFFECT

The rural people want to show gentle good nature so they copy to a positive personality not negative personality. They copy celebrity like film stars, political leaders, spiritual leaders and domestic famous persons. They purchase products to see others popular person and inspirable person. The young generation influenced by others like friends, neighbor and celebrity etc. they want to show like their ideals. In rural market, the popular brands such as Ponds, dew, Rin are not recognised in rural area. Counterfeit producer take advantages of this situation. They produce counterfeits and increase their market share, and revenue. The counterfeit product are generally low quality and substandard. This result, original product producers are lost their good will, trust in rural market

LACK OF ENFORCEABILITY OF LAW

There is not well-built enforceability of laws. A lack of enforcement results in Rs 15,000-cr of imitations sold annually (business-standard 2010).of existing laws by the concerned authorities has contributed to the widespread imitation of these kinds of products. The manufacturers of such drugs and medicines are quite confident that since the offence is difficult to prove they would not face any serious charges. So far the offence being available one, illegal drug makers could only be booked for minor charges (Shrivastava 2008). Various government agencies in cases of counterfeit products have taken action both on their own accord as well as upon receipt of a complaint, either from the private sector, the right producer or the consumers themselves. The producers are being more aware of their rights. Now they have become more prudent and are ready in taking action. (APAA, 2011).

LOW LITERACY RATE

Literacy is the most important foundation for social and economic development. According to census 2011 over all literacy rate of India was found 74.04 percent. When, literacy rate of rural area was found 71 percent (census 2011). In rural area, nearly 4.5 percent of male and 202 percent female complete education level of graduation and above. Due to lack of literacy "Most people in rural India can recognize alphabets but not complete words. They cannot different between kit-kat and kic-kar.(figure 2). This problem generates huge opportunity of counterfeit produces (Census 2011).

TABLE 2: LITERACY LEVEL

Sr. No	Gender	Literacy Levels in Percentage							
		1981		1991		2001		2011	
		Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
	Male	41	66	58	81	71	87	78.6	89.7
	Female	18	48	31	64	47	73	58.8	79.9

Source: Compiled From Census of India.

Table two indicates the literacy rate of rural and urban areas for males and females respectively. The key reason of low literacy rate is lack of educational institutions, low level of income, poverty, under developed infrastructure, and unemployment.

LOW INCOME

Around the world 70 percent poor people live in rural area and agriculture is most important source of income and employment (World Bank report 2013-14). In India, 58 percent rural population is not homogenous group. There are divided in to two groups. First group, whose affiliated agriculture activities and second group, whose affiliated agriculture allied activities, due to the scare land resources and high population in rural area, large number of people have not land and they are unemployed or engaged in agriculture allied activities. This result, they earn less income. In rural area, the main source of income comes from agriculture so, the income pattern of rural consumers is seasonal and there is very low purchasing power. Rural consumer cannot afford costly branded products. Rural consumers purchase only low cost products. They don't buy fashionable or popular branded goods if they seem expensive.

UNDER-DEVELOPED INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure is the icon of economic development of an economy. Adequate infrastructural support plays significant role in economic development (M.S. Bhatia, 1999). Poor infrastructure not only makes a country unattractive for investment, it also promotes inefficiency. In a developing economy like India, and infrastructural facilities are usually poor and inadequate. Many people, especially the rural poor people, and areas do not have access to even Minimum infrastructure services (Wanmali, S. et al 1997). The Indian infrastructure comprising roads, railways, seaports and airports is considered very poor as compared with other developed and developing countries (N. Viswanadham et al 2004). India is home to quite a large rural population. Development of rural areas is slow due to improper and inadequate provision of infrastructure with comparing to urban areas. According to international monetary fund's world economic outlook reports 2014. Due to lack of infra-structure in rural market there are many problems such as poor roads, lack of transportation, distribution, housing, water supply, electrification, telecommunication connectivity and limited number of shops in rural area. So, popular brand's owners cannot access in this market segment. These problems are opportunities of counterfeit product producers.

DISTRIBUTION AND LOGISTICS

Rural market of India is scatter market. Nearly fifty percent villages do not have pukka road they have only seasonal roads. Therefore, reaching these villages is extremely challenging. Even now days, many village eastern part of India, are inaccessible during the monsoons. Most of the FMCG companies have not been able to setup a proper distribution network in such areas. The local manufacturer are well known of these problems. Hence they take advantages by producing cheap substitute of well-known brands. Transportation is a key element in a logistics infrastructure (Kashyap, 1997)

LACK OF AWARENESS

Rural consumers are not aware from popular brands. People have very little knowledge about the original brands. They don't know. How many brands present market? The main source of advertisement is television. But lack or absent of electricity TV cannot work. There are find some local new paper. The rural consumers are aware of the brand owing to ads broadcasted on radio & television channels. But on time of purchase, the consumers tend to pick counterfeit products due to unavailability of original product (Mathur, 2008).

FINDINGS AND SUGGESTION

Rural market of India offers huge opportunities to marketers and marketers are coming in this area. They are also receiving high revenue yet counterfeit producers are big challenge to original manufacturers. Original manufacturers are facing two type competitions in rural area first from substitute products and second from sub standard products. The main findings of this research are under:

- I. Popular brands producers don't understand rural consumer properly but counterfeiters are understand the rural consumer and they made counterfeit product to focus consumer need, wants and demand.
- II. Low literacy rate is big reason of counterfeit in rural area.
- III. Counterfeit producers offer product at affordable cost and high margin in rural area. Due to low per capita income, rural consumer purchases them.
- IV. Due under-develop market and in-sufficient distribution and logistics, brand manufacturers cannot deliver their product at time and all area.
- V. The unavailability of planning and focus on rural market is raising counterfeits products in rural area which may harm brand equity of MNC's brands in long run.

These are main finding of this research. The aim of this research is aware to marketers from counterfeit producers and provides some suggestion for entering in rural market. Without understanding consumers and market, marketers can't survive in this market.

CONCLUSION

Although, the rural market of India is full of counterfeit products. There are seven main reason of counterfeit product in rural market. These reasons are Unavailability of original products, Better Marketing of counterfeiters, Demonstration effect Lack of Enforceability of Law, low Literacy Rate, Low Income, under-develop Infrastructure, and lack of awareness. Counterfeiting (counterfeit products) poses significant threats to Indians and the nation's economy, there are several steps that businesses, consumers, and governmental entities can take to make counterfeiting more difficult, more risky, and less profitable. If these entities cooperate, then it is quite possible that their efforts will reduce the global incidence of counterfeiting, make consumers safer, eliminate disincentives to innovation and growth, and remove opportunities

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