

# **COUNTERFEIT MUSIC CDs: SOCIAL AND PERSONALITY INFLUENCES, DEMOGRAPHICS, ATTITUDES AND PURCHASE INTENTION: SOME INSIGHTS FROM MALAYSIA**

Ramayah Thurasamy  
School of Management  
Universiti Sains Malaysia  
Minden, 11800 Penang  
Malaysia  
Tel No: 604-6577888 Ext: 3889  
E-mail: [ramayah@usm.my](mailto:ramayah@usm.my)

Associate Professor Osman Mohamad  
School of Management  
Universiti Sains Malaysia  
Minden, 11800 Penang  
Malaysia  
Tel No: 604-6577888 Ext: 2317  
E-mail: [osman@usm.my](mailto:osman@usm.my)

Professor Muhamad Jantan  
School of Management  
Universiti Sains Malaysia  
Minden, 11800 Penang  
Malaysia  
Tel No: 604-6577888 Ext: 3343  
E-mail: [mjantan@usm.my](mailto:mjantan@usm.my)

Jason Lee Wai Chow  
School of Management  
Universiti Sains Malaysia  
Minden, 11800 Penang  
Malaysia  
E-mail: [jaschow@hotmail.com](mailto:jaschow@hotmail.com)

Syed Nasirin  
Department of Computing  
Thames Valley University  
Slough SL1 1YG  
United Kingdom  
E-mail: [Syed.Nasirin@tvu.ac.uk](mailto:Syed.Nasirin@tvu.ac.uk)

## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the demand side of the piracy problem of music CDs in Malaysia. The findings demonstrate the applicability of the modified Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) in predicting buying attitude towards pirated CDs through social influences and consumers' personality characteristics. Results show that normative susceptibility, integrity, gender and personal income were significant predictors of attitude towards buying pirated CDs.

## 1. Introduction

Product counterfeiting has been around since 1970s when the only victims were manufacturers of over priced apparel and luggage. Nonetheless, the economic effects of such activities went relatively unnoticed. Recently, however, counterfeiting is undermining company and brand reputations, hitting profits, devaluing research and development costs and incurring enormous legal fees.

Product counterfeiting or piracy is generally used to describe the deliberate infringement of copyrighted works or trademarks on a commercial scale. In the music industry, piracy refers to unauthorised copying which could be classified into:

- **Simple piracy:** The activity pertains to the unauthorised duplication of an original recording for commercial gain without the consent of the owner. Casing of the pirated copies is different from the genuine. The pirated versions are often compilations, such as the "greatest hits" of a specific artist, or a collection of a specific genre or the "popular dangdut" of Malaysia.
- **Counterfeits:** These are products copied and packaged to resemble the original as closely as possible. The original producer's trademarks and logos were reproduced in order to mislead the consumer into believing that they are buying an original product.
- **Bootlegs:** These are the unauthorised recordings of live or broadcast performances. They were copied and sold often at a premium price without the permission of the singer, composer or recording company.

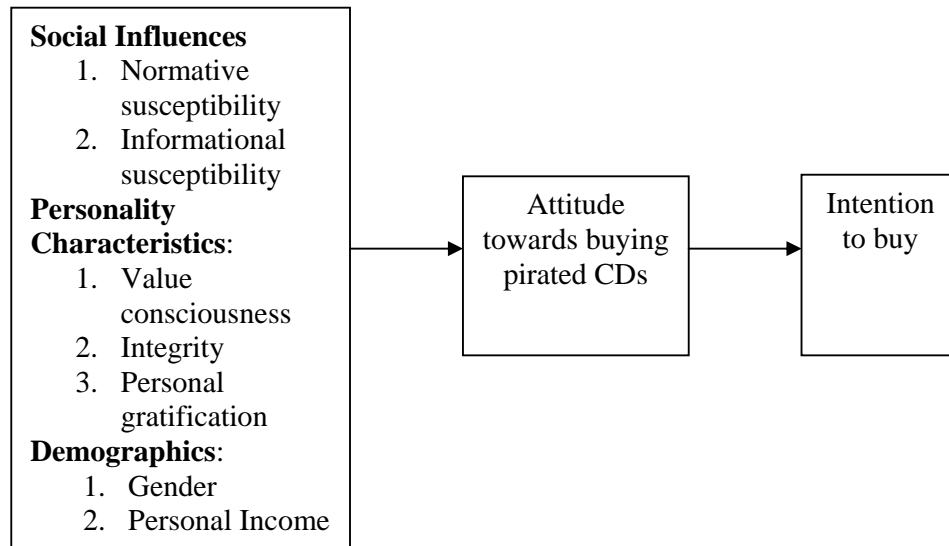
Malaysia's level of pirated music CDs have seen an increase from 40% in 1999 to 60% in 2000 (International Intellectual Property Alliance (IIPA), 2001). The estimated trade loss attributed to music piracy in Malaysia was about RM60.8 million (1USD=3.8RM) in 2000 as compared to RM19 million in 1999. A significant increase of 220%. Therefore, to gain an understanding of how this demand is derived, this study will examine the problem from a demand side perspective by examining the reasons behind their favourable attitude and intention towards piracy (i.e., concentrating on the first two categories of counterfeiting).

## 2. Research Model

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) has been employed extensively in the consumer behaviour literature. Its strong predictive power for Western consumers has been demonstrated with a variety of consumer products such as beer, dog food, dress, toothpaste, and facial tissue (Chung & Pysarchik, 2000). Schiffman and Kanuk (1997) further noted that, consistent with the TRA, an attitude was not linked to behaviour as strongly or as directly as intention is linked to behaviour. In this respect, why study attitudes at all if TRA postulated that intention is ultimately a better predictor of behaviour? Again, Schiffman and Kanuk (1997) argued that intention may be a better predictor, but it does not provide an adequate explanation of behaviour. When marketers wanted to understand why consumers act as they do, they required something more than a mechanical measure of what was consumer attitude.

Marketers usually wanted to know the underlying beliefs that manifest attitude towards a particular behaviour.

Based upon the discussion above, a theoretical framework of the study was constructed (Figure 1). This framework was based upon a model by Ang, *et al*, (2001) and an adaptation of the modified TRA (Assael, 1995), which includes social influences (consumer susceptibility) as predictors of attitude towards buying pirated CDs.



**Figure 1: The Theoretical Framework**

### **3. Research Hypotheses**

The relevant literature posits 2 sets of factors that may influence attitude towards piracy. Firstly, there are social influences and secondly, personality characteristics (Ang, *et al*, 2001). The study by Ang, *et al*, (2001) has identified five predictors of consumer attitude towards buying of pirated CDs: two representing social influences, are: (1) Normative Susceptibility, and (2) Informative Susceptibility, while 3 others are: (1) Value Consciousness, (2) Personal Gratification, and (3) Integrity represent the personality characteristics of the respondents. For the demographic variables, gender and personal income were used to encapsulate the phenomena.

Susceptibility to social pressure could exert an influence on an individual's consumer behaviour. Bearden, *et al*, (1989) defined consumer susceptibility as an enhancement one's image in the opinion of significant others (e.g., family and close friends) through the acquisition and use of products and brands, the willingness to conform to the expectations of others regarding buying decisions, and the tendency to learn about products by observing others or seeking information from others. Consequently, Bearden, *et al*, (1989) proposed 2 forms of susceptibility, namely normative susceptibility and information susceptibility.

### **3.1 Normative susceptibility**

Normative susceptibility has to do with purchase decisions that are based not upon the opinions of others but upon the expectations of what would impress others. In short, “keeping up with the Joneses” is a good example of normative susceptibility whereby a consumer by purchasing a particular product expects to impress others. In this study, normative susceptibility is predicted to have a negative relationship with attitude towards counterfeits purchase. This is based upon the premise that if buying fakes does not make a good impression on others whilst projecting a good image is important, and attitude toward buying pirated goods will be less favourable. Thus, hypothesis 1 can be stated as:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Normative susceptibility has a negative influence on consumer attitude towards purchase of pirated CDs.*

### **3.2 Informational susceptibility**

Informational susceptibility concerns buying decisions, which were based on the opinion of others. The question of what constitutes a wise purchase decision is dependent on the views of others regarding quality. This often happens when a consumer was not knowledgeable of the product in question. People who were knowledgeable about the differential advantages that genuine products have over fakes and the disadvantages of buying fakes can influence consumers on the drawbacks of pirated products. As such informational susceptibility in this study was expected to have a negative effect on consumer attitude towards purchase of pirated CDs. Thus hypothesis 2 can be stated as:

*H<sub>2</sub>: Informational susceptibility has a negative influence on consumer attitude towards piracy.*

### **3.3 Value Consciousness**

Values are enduring beliefs that a particular mode of behaviour or end-state of existence is preferable to opposite modes of behaviour or end-state (Rokeach, 1973). It has been shown to shape consumer attitudes and behaviours in a variety of situations, including purchases of natural foods, gift giving, selection of fashion items and consumption of sports activities (Kropp, *et al*, 1999). Lichtenstein, *et al*, (1990) defined value consciousness as a concern for paying lower prices and was subjected to some constraints on quality. It has been observed that buyers tolerate questionable purchase behaviours when economic consequences warrant it (Dodge, *et al*, 1996). Since counterfeits have provided large cost savings to consumers with some acceptable compromise in quality, nevertheless it was perceived value has been high. In this respect, the study would expect consumers who are more value conscious to have a more favourable attitude towards buying pirated CDs relative to those who are less value conscious. Thus hypothesis 3 can be stated as:

*H<sub>3</sub>: Individuals who are more value conscious have a more favourable attitude towards buying of pirated CDs.*

### **3.4 Integrity**

Integrity in this study concerned with how law-abiding a consumer is. Research has shown that consumers who are more mindful of the law were less willing to buy counterfeits (Cordell, *et al*, 1996). However Ng's (1999) study shows that this may not be the case. Where consumer ethical standards were low, they were less likely to feel accountable for purchasing a counterfeit. In most instances, they were more likely to rationalise their behaviour as not unethical. Therefore it was expected that those who value integrity would have a less favourable attitude towards pirated CDs. Thus hypothesis 4 can be stated as:

*H<sub>4</sub>: Individuals with higher integrity will have a less favourable attitude towards purchase of pirated CDs.*

### **3.5 Personal Gratification**

A sense of accomplishment, social recognition and the pursuit of the finer things in life best summarized by the concept of personal gratification in this study. Bloch, *et al*, (1993) observed that non-buyers of counterfeits relative to buyers were more confident, more successful and had higher perceived status. Characteristics often associated with individuals who seek accomplishment, comfortable life style and social recognition. Hence based upon these premises, we expect a negative relationship between consumers who value personal gratification and attitude toward pirated CDs. Thus hypothesis 5 can be stated as:

*H<sub>5</sub>: Consumers seeking less personal gratification will have a more favourable attitude towards buying of pirated CDs.*

### **3.6 Demographic variables**

The literature also indicated that demographic variables such as gender and personal income have also been influencing on consumer attitude towards piracy. Ang, *et al*, (2001) found that males were inclined to have a more favourable attitude towards piracy than females. This is because of the fact that males were inclined to consider functionality over aesthetics in their buying decisions. They also seem to be a negative influence of personal income on attitude towards piracy because affordability was an important factor in purchase decisions. Thus, hypothesis 6 and hypothesis 7 can be stated as:

*H<sub>6</sub>: Personal income has a negative relationship with attitude towards buying of counterfeit CDs.*

*H<sub>7</sub>: Male consumers have a more favourable attitude towards buying of counterfeit CDs than females.*

### **3.7 Personality and Social Factors, Gender, Personal Income, Attitude and Behavioural Intention**

Attitudes were often believed to be important to marketing because of an assumed causal link between attitudes, intentions and behaviour (Hini, *et al*, 1995). Similar studies by Hawkins, *et al*, (1989) also claimed that “because of their importance, attitudes are the focal point for a substantial amount of marketing strategy” (p.433). Ang, *et al*, (2001) further noted that a positive attitude would lead to a higher intention to perform the behaviour. Consequently, one could expect that attitude towards buying pirated CDs to be a predictor of intention to purchase pirated CDs. Thus hypotheses 8 and 9 can be stated as:

*H<sub>8</sub>: Attitude will be positively related to intention to buy.*

*H<sub>9</sub>: Attitude will mediate the impact of personality, social factors, gender and income on purchase intention.*

## **4. Methodology**

### **4.1 Variables, Measurement, Sampling and Data collection**

Most of the data primary data were collected through a questionnaire designed based upon Ang, *et al*, (2001) studies. References were also made to several other studies by Ng (1993), Cordell, *et al*, (1996), Wee, *et al*, (1995), Bloch, *et al*, (1993), Bearden, *et al*, (1989), Rokeach, *et al*, (1973) and Vinson, *et al*, (1977). The questionnaire consists of six parts (using a five-point Likert-scale anchored in 1 (strongly disagreed) to 5 (strongly agreed) the participants indicated to what degree they observed the reasons as important). In the first part, the participants were asked about their purchase history of music CDs.

Part 2 and 3 consist of questions related to information on respondents' views toward buying pirated music CDs and their intention of purchase (3 dependent variables of the study). Part 4 consist of questions related to information on respondents' view about themselves in terms of their normative susceptibility, information susceptibility, value consciousness, self-gratification and integrity scales. Finally, Part 5 measured their demographics. All reliability coefficients were above 0.7 level and can be considered as acceptable. Convenient sampling approach was employed because of the fact that it was not possible to generate a sampling frame for this study.

## **5. Results**

### **5.1 Profile of the respondents**

148 questionnaires were returned for analysis (Out of 200 sent). 6 of them were incomplete and were dropped from the study, leaving only 142 questionnaires, representing a return rate of 71%. There was almost equal number of male and female respondents with more than 62% was above the age of 30. 58.9% of the respondents were Chinese, and 86% was holding at least a diploma. More than 75% of the respondents were holding managerial or technical positions, earning more than RM2, 000/month.

## 5.1 Differences between Buyers and Non-Buyers in Attitude towards Piracy

From the sample, 113 respondents were identified as buyers of pirated product representing 80% of the qualified respondents. The results of an independent samples t-test on the 12-item to compare the attitudes of buyers and non-buyers have shown that there were significant differences in 11 out of the 12 items. There is no significant difference between buyers and non-buyers for only 1 item (without piracy, many cannot enjoy music). Consumers whom have bought pirated CDs before generally had more favourable views about purchase of counterfeits than those who have never bought such products.

## 5.2 Relationship between Personality and Social Factors, Gender and Personal Income and Attitude towards Piracy

This section examines the variables influencing attitude towards piracy. The analyses examine the significance of the relationship and to explain the predictive power of the model.

Table 1: Relationship between Independent Variables and Attitude towards Piracy

Independent Variables	Standardised Coefficients
	Beta
Informative susceptibility	0.066
Normative susceptibility	-0.269**
Value conscious	0.104
Integrity	-0.172*
Personal gratification	0.129
Gender	0.177**
Personal income	-0.193**
R <sup>2</sup>	0.125
Adj R <sup>2</sup>	0.080
F value	2.741

Table 1 indicates the relationship between informative susceptibility, normative susceptibility, value consciousness, integrity, personal gratification, gender and personal income of the respondents and the dependent variable, attitude toward purchase of pirated CDs. There is a significant association between the independent variables and attitude towards purchase of pirated CDs. The F value of 2.741 is significant at  $< 0.05$ , indicating that there is at least one significant predictor. R<sup>2</sup> of 0.125 indicates that the model can only explain 12.5% of the variance in attitude (explained by the independent variables).

Out of the 7 variables, only 4 were found to have a significant relationship with the dependent variable. Three of these independent variables have recorded significant association at 5% level and the fourth variable at 10% level. Three variables normative susceptibility, integrity and personal income have shown significant negative relationship with attitude towards buying of pirated CDs.

H1 which has argued that consumer with higher normative susceptibility has a less favourable attitude towards piracy is supported. Those who scored high on integrity were also demonstrating less favourable attitude towards pirated CDs, thus confirming s H4. Male respondents were found to be more favourable towards purchase of counterfeit CDs as compared to female respondents, supporting H7. H6 is also supported when the findings have

revealed that those with higher incomes possessed a negative attitude towards pirated CDs. The results for H2, H3 and H4 are not significant and therefore, not supported. Normative susceptibility seems to be the key significant variable influencing attitude towards purchase of pirated CDs ( $\beta = -0.269$ ). This is followed by personal income ( $\beta = -0.193$ ) and gender ( $\beta = 0.177$ ).

### 5.3 Attitude towards Buying Pirated CDs as Predictor of Intention to Buy

Table 2 shows that the  $R^2 = 0.426$ , indicating that attitude of consumer towards piracy can explain about 42.6% of the variance in the dependent variable, i.e., intention to purchase pirated CDs. This implies that there attitude can lead to purchase intention. Hence H8 is supported and the results confirm the association between attitudes and intention in Fishbein's TRA.

Table 2: Regression of Attitude and Intention to Buy

Independent Variable	Beta
Attitude	0.653***
$R^2$	0.426
Adjusted $R^2$	0.422
F Value	103.8***

\*  $p < .10$ , \*\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

### 5.4 Mediating effects of Attitude on the influence of Independent Variables on Intention to Buy

A hierarchical regression was used to ascertain whether there are any mediator effects of the intervening variable (Attitude) on the independent variables, informative susceptibility, normative susceptibility, value consciousness, integrity, personal gratification, gender and personal income. A variable may be considered a mediator to the extent in which it carries the influence of a given independent variable (IV) to a given dependent variable (DV). According to McKinnon, *et al*, (1995), mediation is generally present when:

- 1) the IV significantly affects the mediator (Attitude),
  - 2) the IV significantly affects the DV in the absence of the mediator,
  - 3) the mediator has a significant unique effects on the DV, and
  - 4) the effect of the IV on the DV shrinks upon the addition of the mediator to the model.
- Baron & Kenny (1986) has formulated the steps and conditions to ascertain whether full or partial mediating effects are present in a model.

Table 3: Coefficients of Hierarchical Regression of IVs, Attitude and Purchase Intention

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
<i>Variable</i>	Beta	Beta
Information susceptibility	.128	.085
Normative susceptibility	-.040	.134*
Value consciousness	.041	-.026
Integrity	-.233**	-.122*
Personal gratification	.160*	.076
Gender	.199**	.085
Personal income	-.231**	-.105
Attitude		.647**
R <sup>2</sup>	0.133	0.499
Adj R <sup>2</sup>	0.088	0.469
F value	2.942***	16.579***
R <sup>2</sup> Change	0.133	0.366
F Change	2.94***	97.24***

\* p< 0.10, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.01

Table 3 indicates that attitude towards buying of pirated CDs has full mediator effect on gender and personal income in the model. It means that the impact of gender and personal income on purchase intention was fully mediated by attitude towards buying pirated CDs. Integrity on the other hand was partially mediated by attitude in the model. In other words, a part of the influence of this variable was generated by attitude to purchase intention. However, attitude did not carry at all the influence of personal gratification to purchase intention. Therefore, H9 is only partially supported (the results show that attitude towards buying counterfeit CDs mediates the impact of only 3 independent variables, namely, integrity, gender and personal income on the dependent variable, purchase intention).

## 6. Discussion

### 6.1 Relationship between Social Influences, Personality and Attitude

The findings of this study indicate that consumers who were normatively susceptible were less likely to have a favourable attitude towards piracy<sup>1</sup>. Since the majority of the respondents were Chinese from Penang, one could therefore assume that Confucianistic beliefs prevail amongst them. Pride saving is an important facet of Confucian culture (Lee, 1990), and anti-piracy organisations and music industry marketers should capitalise on this aspect by encouraging word-of-mouth communication amongst friends and family members through soft advertising approaches. The potential loss of pride resulting from being known as someone whom was not willing to pay the full price for an genuine CDs but resorted in buying a counterfeit may discourage such purchases. The use of celebrities and singers to change perception of consumers towards piracy may not be effective given their lucrative earnings from concerts and advertisements. Instead, the influence of friends and family members are likely to be more effective.

<sup>1</sup> Hofstede (1980) believed that Asians follow a collectivistic culture and hence group norms seem to be a predominant influence in shaping attitudes.

Consistent with the findings of Cordell, *et al*, (1996), our findings indicate that the more integrity one holds, the less favourable is one's attitude towards piracy.

The results also show that personal gratification was not a significant predictor of attitude. Those who sought a comfortable life, a sense of accomplishment and social recognition did not differ from those who valued these less in their attitude towards piracy. Therefore, pirated CD is not a product for personal gratification (i.e., consumers do not associate them with an exciting life style or personal accomplishment). This may explain why, despite the inferior quality in sound and packaging, there is still a healthy demand for pirated CDs.

The results also illustrate that information susceptibility was not a significant predictor of attitude towards purchase of pirated CDs. Buyers do not rely on expert sources on whether buying counterfeits is good or bad. This could be due to the fact that the risk of a wrong purchase is minimal since pirated CDs are much cheaper than the original. Furthermore, music CDs are now ubiquitous and it does not require expert knowledge to distinguish them. Hence, information is not sought from experts as the functional and financial risks are low. In this context, perhaps the law enforcement authorities should increase the financial risks involved by imposing fines on those caught for selling and buying pirated CDs.

As expected, personal income was found to be a good predictor of attitude. Asians are generally value conscious and the relevant literature has established price as a determinant of consumer behaviour towards pirated goods. The results also indicate that gender is a good predictor of attitude towards counterfeits purchase with males having a more favourable attitude towards piracy of CDs therefore confirming earlier findings by Ang, *et al*, (2001). CDs are functional products unlike clothing and handbags that have more fashion related functions. Presumably, males are more inclined to be influenced by the functional qualities of products in their purchase than females who are more influenced by their perceived fashion content of a purchase. Hence, coupled with the price advantage that pirated CDs have over originals, males have a more favourable attitude towards counterfeits purchase.

## **6.2 Relationship between Attitude and Purchase intention**

Attitude towards purchase of pirated CDs is a significant predictor of purchase intention. This finding is consistent with other findings of past research on counterfeiting, for instance, studies by Ang, *et al*, (2001) and Wee, *et al*, (1995). Given the fact that marketers work were to change consumer's behaviour through shaping attitudes and beliefs (Kotler & Armstrong, 1993), the findings from this study have important implications for policy makers and music CD producers in their effort to curb counterfeiting.

## **6.3 Mediating effect of attitude**

Lastly, three independent variables: integrity, gender and personal income were found to be significant predictors of both attitude toward purchase of pirated CDs and purchase intention. Attitude has also had a mediating effect on these variables. Therefore, attitude towards purchase of pirated CDs was influenced by integrity, gender and personal income.

Another implication is that anti-counterfeiting strategies should be multi-faceted. Fighting counterfeiting needs consumer education. The music industry is perhaps the most vocal in their attacks on countries that turn a blind eye to infringement of intellectual property rights. Yet campaigns against piracy of music CDs seldom focus on the ethics of the consumer. Most consumers refuse to see the purchase of stolen property rights as a crime. Therefore, it is vital that the unethical consumer was criticised since reducing demand will also reduce the occurrence of counterfeiting.

## **7. Limitations and Future Research**

This study is correlational in nature and the use of sophisticated statistical techniques found in most of the confirmatory types of research are lacking. For instance, convenience sampling was used because of the fact that it was not possible to generate a probabilistic sampling frame. Therefore, generalising the findings to the whole population may be limited.

Also, the sample is predominantly Chinese as opposed to the actual population structure of the country. Since a Confucianist culture was assumed to be prevalent amongst the respondents, the findings will be biased towards this category of ethnic group. This study was confined solely on information gathered from consumers who have purchased music CDs. Hence findings are confined to this product only. Perhaps future study could focus on a wider spectrum of product categories that may yield more comprehensive findings on the problem of counterfeiting.

## **8. Conclusion**

This study has demonstrated the applicability of modified TRA in explaining personality and social effects on attitude of consumers towards buying pirated CDs. The study also detailed the significant influence of normative susceptibility, integrity, gender and personal income on attitude towards buying of pirated CDs. Despite the limitations of the study, it is expected that the preliminary findings presented will generate greater interests in counterfeiting specifically from a demand-side perspective. It is also expected that future research can contribute substantially to our understanding of this type of consumer behaviour.

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