

**FASHION INDUSTRY UNITED STATES ONLINE RETAILER'S ROLE IN  
PREVENTING THE SALE OF COUNTERFEIT PRODUCTS TO INCREASE  
REVENUE**

by

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## **Abstract**

This qualitative research project examined how managers in the U.S. online retail fashion industry implement and evaluate anti-counterfeiting strategies to protect and enhance revenue streams. The rationale for the project stemmed from the increasing threat counterfeit products pose to digital retailers' profitability, brand reputation, and customer trust. The capstone addressed a critical gap in understanding managerial approaches to counterfeit prevention in the context of revenue protection. The study employed a qualitative methodology guided by the technology acceptance model (TAM), which informed the structure of interview questions, to gain in-depth insights into managerial experiences, decision-making processes, and strategic responses related to anti-counterfeiting practices. The target population consisted of managers in the U.S. online fashion retail sector with at least 3 years of industry experience and direct involvement in implementing anti-counterfeiting measures. Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework. The analysis revealed five themes: (a) technological challenges, (b) the financial and reputational impact of counterfeits on revenue, (c) regulatory and legal gaps, (d) collaborative strategies, and (e) consumer behavior and communication. The findings offer practical and theoretical implications that extend beyond the immediate study context, enabling businesses, policymakers, and industry stakeholders to strengthen their anti-counterfeiting strategies and enhance operational resilience. By identifying interconnected themes such as technological innovation, revenue impact, and regulatory collaboration, the research advances understanding in a previously underexplored area.

## **Dedication**

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## **SECTION 1. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

### **Overview of the Project**

Fashion businesses have been facing a serious problem due to product counterfeiting that impacts business performance and profitability. The process of creating a counterfeit product is defined as making a counterfeit product that has features that are similar to that of the original product in terms of trademarks and labels (Adeola et al., 2021). Products counterfeiting is now a real business that negatively affects the brand image. Counterfeiting in the fashion industry has been enabled by various factors, such as difference in price and attitude of customers (Hanif et al., 2020). The cost differences between genuine and counterfeit products encourage clients to purchase fake products (Wu & Zhao, 2021). The counterfeit products demand creates an issue of production that impacts the brand image and reputation (Adeola et al., 2021). The fashion industry also contributes to the gross domestic product of the world by 2 percent equating to about 3,000 billion dollars (Adeola et al., 2021). Ineffective policies by the leaders of the fashion industry to eradicate counterfeit goods adversely affect the profitability because they decrease the sales of authentic goods (Wilson and Grammich, 2020).

Consumers in the fashion sector are encouraged to buy products because of the visual representation of products (Mo et al., 2020). One of the major players in the purchasing decision is the brand name (Ihzaturrahma & Kusumawati, 2021). But low and middle-income buyers cannot purchase the products of the brand due to its high prices (Khurana and Muthu, 2021). The desire of buying branded products also causes the customers to purchase imitated products, which in the end affects the profitability of the brand (Kassim et al., 2020; Wu and Zhao, 2021). The willingness of a customer to purchase a branded product may shift the attitude of the customer to shopping and predispose them to the purchase of fake products (Wu and Zhao,

2021). The theory of planned behavior also offered some light to evaluate the behavior of customers in purchasing (Tang et al., 2021). The theory contributed to the ability of customers to buy the product based on their intended wish (Mason et al., 2022). The dominance by counterfeit entities causes customers to purchase replica goods so that they can serve their purpose, which is one of the expectations of the planned behavior theory (Mayasari et al., 2022).

The fashion industry online retailers boast of giving original products. Nonetheless, posting branded products on their websites boosts the creation of replicas or fake versions of these products, which is unfavorable in terms of the profitability of the brand (Sun et al., 2020). The image of the brand and the satisfaction levels of customers are damaged by an operation of selling fake products (N. A. Mishra & Siby, 2024). Fontana (2019) states that about 70% of the \$4.5 trillion is in the fake trade, which is a major threat to the fashion industry. A high level of sales of fake goods may decrease the level of customer satisfaction and change the buying behavior, which in turn may influence the profitability of the business (Song et al., 2021). According to Song et al. (2021), imitation of goods in the fashion sector distorts the consumer behavior of buyers.

The fashion industry faces the impact of the market success of fake products on the operations of their businesses (Singh et al., 2021). Counterfeit products are widely spreading in the United States, causing huge revenue losses of 50 billion dollars in the fashion industry annually (Morris, 2019). Loss of customer trust because of fake goods causes the drop in the sales of the products and harms the profitability of the business (Ledikwe, 2020).

It is essential to take the social factors into account within the framework of the consumer buying behavior of fake goods. The social factors that can affect the choice of people to buy fake products are the self-esteem, social identity, and reputation (Hanif et al., 2020). People who wear

branded clothes are more likely to have a high self-esteem and a more positive reputation on social media in the current world, affecting their buying habits with fake products (Khan et al., 2020). Intention to form social identity and reputation by the consumer also affects their buying behavior towards counterfeit goods, which lead to increased profitability in the fashion industry (Elsantil & Bedair, 2022). The topic of counterfeit domination in the U.S. fashion industry is very important to preserve the image of the brand and secure the sources of income (Rathi et al., 2022). Fake brands constitute 50 percent of the market share, which affects the consumer buying pattern as consumers hold various perceptions towards the original products (Song et al., 2021).

This qualitative research project is intended to analyze the contribution of managers within the U.S. online retail fashion sector in avoiding the exchange of replica products, which is intended to raise the revenue. The project will seek to understand the strategies and views of these managers to alleviate the problem of fake products, hence defending and improving revenue streams.

### **Problem of Practice**

The overall business issue was that online retailers in the U.S. online retail fashion business experienced difficulties in avoiding the distribution of fake products, which dropped the revenues significantly, and the profitability of the business (Chettri et al., 2024). Morris (2019) noted that half of the consumers disclosed dissatisfaction with their purchases in the United States since they received counterfeit products. The counterfeit products are also purchased by American consumers with a ratio of 60 to 80 percent and the main reason is a number of factors (Ennoventure, 2024). The use of online platforms leads to the high sales of fake products, because customers do not necessarily examine the products in real life (Butticè et al., 2020). As an example, one Amazon seller was accused by a client of selling fake products and this could

result in the loss of sales and revenue (Sun et al., 2020). The profitability and performance of online retailers are influenced by the sale of fake products that results in loss of customer loyalty to the brand (Tseng et al., 2020).

The problem with the business concerned was that due to the availability of imitation products in the online retail fashion business, the revenue loss was significant and lowering the profits (Chettri et al., 2024). The brand online platforms were showing images of the product in genuine sites, which further enhanced the chances of producing fake products (Butticò et al., 2020). Product image was exploited by competitors of the brand to create a copy that looked alike and sold the product at a low price (Sun et al., 2020). Differences in price between the original and the fake products also exacerbated the trade in the fake products (Liao, & Shen, 2023). The problem is predetermined by the failure of the fashion sector to efficiently apply the measures that can prevent the sale of fake goods, which leads to a drop in revenue flows and the overall business performance (Sularia, 2020). There were brands interested in solving the problem of selling counterfeit products (Sularia, 2020). As an example, Nike pulled out the products on Amazon to control the surge in the number of counterfeit goods sold (Sularia, 2020). The inability of the management to resolve these issues also indicates the serious gap in the practice when inefficient tactics still permit the penetration of fake products into the online retailing system, costing the market share and profitability even more (Wang et al., 2023). The project will examine and suggest effective methods of managing the counterfeit sales by concentrating on the role of managers and ways of counterfeit the sales before they reduce profits to unprofitable levels so as to bring the fashion industry to the level of generating profits.

## **Alignment with the Program**

The doctoral project corresponds with the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) which is a general management specialty. The purpose of the project was to determine the contributions of managers of U.S. online retailers in the fashion industry in avoiding selling them counterfeit products to maximize revenue. The immediate effects to online retailers would be loss of sales and profitability where the retail sector would be affected hugely in terms of finances. Within the framework of general management, the analysis of the role of online retailers in the fashion industry in ensuring that fake items are not sold on the market will be a significant contribution to the revenue optimization strategy. The subject of the project coincides with the DBA program which aims at curbing business misfortunes in a way that enhances financial performance. The choice of a topic within the business sphere, including the fashion industry, was directly supported by the program and will be linked to the concept of managing the problem of counterfeit products viewed through the revenue-centered approach.

## **Purpose Statement**

This qualitative inquiry project was aimed at investigating how the managers in the U.S. online retail fashion sector viewed that effective strategies could be used to prevent or reduce the sale of counterfeit products, to drive up revenue. Such measures were likely to result in increased brand authenticity, decrease consumer risk on buying fake products, and finally increase sale of authentic products and profitability. The use of efficient strategies was likely to assist leaders to increase sales of original goods and maximize revenue in the fashion industry (Chen et al., 2021). This project was supposed to deliver practical insights to online retailers to fight the sale of counterfeit products and achieve a better bottom line by relying exclusively on the views of managers (Chen et al., 2021).

## **Gap in Practice**

The practice gap was that online retailers do not use effective measures to avoid selling fake products as they will affect revenue and market share (Sularia, 2020). The information vacuum on anti-counterfeiting approaches does not allow online retailers in the fashion industry to use effective methods to fight the sale of counterfeit products in a timely way (Amaral, 2020). The unlawful imitation business does not only influence the profitability of the fashion segment but also eliminates authentic sales and market share (Brandão and Gadekar, 2019). Furthermore, the failure of the retailer to use effective methods worsens the lack of counterfeit goods in the market and increases the issues (Sularia, 2020). The objective of the project was to see how U.S online fashion retail managers can use effective strategies to curb sales of fake products and maximize protection of revenue. Counterfeit products are not sold due to the use of anti-counterfeit and respecting intellectual property (IP), which protects the sources of revenue (Rullani et al., 2021).

There is a gap in practice in the comprehension of the role that price differences between genuine and fake products have in precipitating consumer demand in counterfeit products since most consumers are driven by the need to find cheaper alternatives. The demand of fake products due to price makes a direct impact on the revenues of the retailers and needs efficient approaches (Wu and Zhao, 2021). Nevertheless, digital media have further promoted the sale of fake products and posed some difficulties to online stores in terms of avoiding sales and maintaining its market share (S. Gupta et al., 2023). The project is expected to help online retailers in the fashion industry adopt proper measures that will enable them to combat the sale of fake products and maximize revenue (Rullani et al., 2021). Following IP rights and establishing anti-piracy

algorithms, retailers will be able to prevent the sale of counterfeit products and get maximum sales of original products and thus keep their revenue untouched (Mostert & Lambert, 2019).

The shortcomings of the existing strategies also support the lack of practice related to the effective anti-counterfeiting strategies in online retail. Indicatively, a significant number of retailers lean more on reactive actions, including takedown notices with counterfeit listings discovered, which are ineffective in the context of rapidly changing counterfeiting strategies, not to mention protecting the revenue (Wang et al., 2023). The alternative method that appears to be widespread, yet not effective enough, is the basic image recognition software to recognize the fake product listing, and counterfeiters can easily bypass it by changing product images or descriptions, resulting in the further loss of revenue (Mavlanova and Benbunan, 2020). Also, the popularity of customer reviews as a major tool of detecting possible fake products has not been very reliable, with counterfeiters having developed advanced ways to manipulate review systems, making the task of retailers even more difficult to secure their market share and income (Sun et al., 2020). The examples explain why more active, more technologically developed, and more holistic services to counterfeit prevention should be employed in the U.S. online retail fashion industry to protect revenue and market positions successfully.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The proposed project was theoretically grounded in the theory of planned behavior (TPB), which is specifically useful in explaining and treating managerial decision-making within the context of preventing the rise in sales of counterfeit fashion products (Tang et al., 2021). Since its introduction, the TPB has been used in managerial settings with considerable development, especially when dealing with strategic decisions in adoption and implementation of technology. Early applications mostly dealt with individual consumer behavior, although

scholars like Tang et al. (2021) have shown the importance of the TPB in explaining the adoption of technology in organizations. The TPB has particularly been useful in the studies of examining the way in which managers perceive and adopt new technologies, particularly in the context of healthcare and retail. To illustrate, the research by Wilson and Grammich (2020) used the TPB to examine the choice of managers in terms of anti-counterfeiting technologies and discovered that perceived behavioral control played a decisive role in the effective adoption of these technologies by managers. The fact that the theory focuses on individual attitudes as well as social and organizational factors contributes to its excellent applicability in the examination of AI implementation in healthcare because the decisions in the area propose collusion of technological opportunities, organizational limitations, and the anticipations of stakeholders. Icek Ajzen introduced TPB (Ajzen, 2020). The theory suggests that the intention to do something in the form of behavior motivates a person to act, which in its turn, is conditioned by three major constructs (Ajzen, 2020). These constructs are attitude towards the subjective norms, behavior and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 2020). These constructs are essential to discuss the reasons why managers decided to adopt anti-counterfeiting strategies, as well as to work out the ways to gain more revenue (Rozenkowska, 2023). The TPB has become an especially relevant theory to apply to the managerial decision analysis within the anti-counterfeiting processes. The constructs of the theory assist in understanding the manner in which the intentions, attitudes, and perceived control of the managers determine their behavior on the implementation of revenue-protecting measures. The results of recent studies by Xu et al. (2021) have proven the effectiveness of using the TPB to analyze the choice of managers to follow certain anti-counterfeiting strategies despite the implementation difficulties.

Throughout the years, the TPB has been transformed into a sound framework of

predicting and explaining different behaviors especially in managerial decision making. The use of TPB has spread beyond the general consumer decision-making to particular spheres, e.g., ethical buying, sustainability, and, most recently, counterfeit consumption (Rozenkowska, 2023). The applicability of the constructs to the problem is that the project can justify the reason why consumers can know about the legal and ethic consequences but still can fail to apply effective anti-counterfeiting strategies. As an example, the price or perceived social status can be used to change the attitude towards counterfeit products. In the meantime, subjective norms could be the influence of the need to belong to social groups that appreciate branded commodities. Perceived behavioral control is a measure which indicates how easy or difficult it is to consume the counterfeit products online (Tang et al., 2021). The theorist of TPB, Icek Ajzen has contributed a lot to the theory by offering a systematic way of comprehending behavior. Within the project, the constructs presented by Ajzen will be used as the tool of exploration of the managerial motivations and creating the interview questions to comprehend the impact that these elements have on applying the revenue-protecting strategies (Ajzen, 2020).

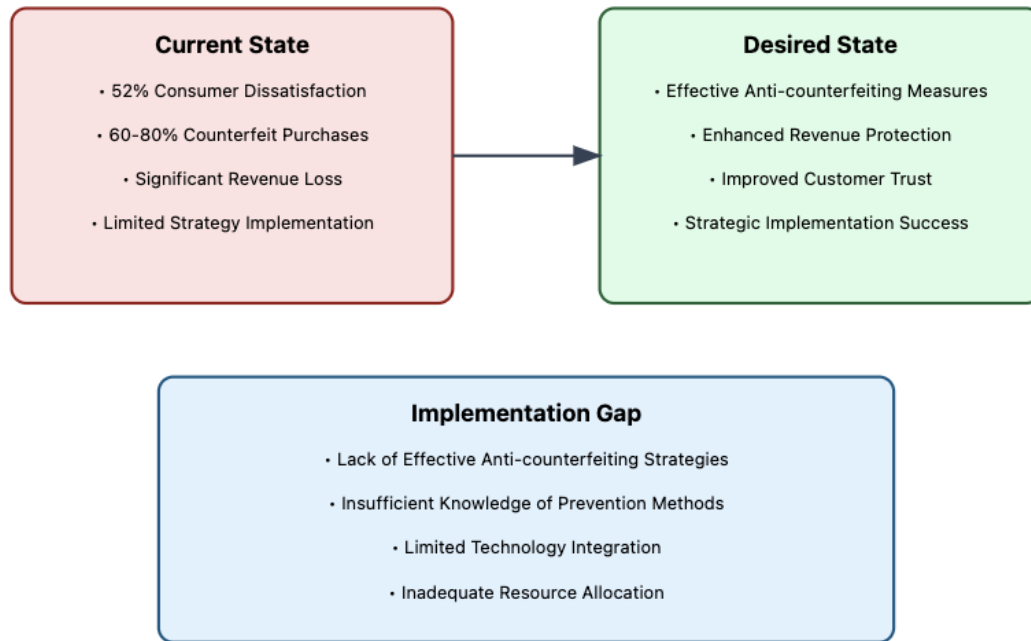
The qualitative project that will be carried out will involve the use of the TPB constructs in data collection and analysis. The interview questions will be developed to explore all three constructs in the context of decision-making of managers (Rozenkowska, 2023). The suggested strategy will give an in-depth insight into current drivers of anti-counterfeiting policies adoption, guiding the elaboration of strategies, which can be followed by online retailers to boost the revenues by offering real-life products. The gathered knowledge will be critical in developing interventions that resonate with the attitude and perception of managers, which will ultimately result in more efficient counterfeit prevention strategies and higher income (Wu and Zhao, 2021).

The TPB presents important information regarding the managerial decision-making in the context of the U.S. online retailers. Using the TPB constructs to figure out the attitude of the managers, their subjective views on the industry and the perceived ability to adopt the anti-counterfeiting strategies, the framework may be applied to understand the difference in strategy adoption and its performance across the online retail organization (Conner, 2020; Wang et al., 2023). The dualism of the TPB toward consumers and managers gives the possibility to consider a complex system of counterfeit prevention in the realm of online fashion retailing in a holistic perspective.

The figure 1 is the graphic demonstration of the distance between the present situation with the counterfeit issues in the online fashion retail and the expected results of the successful anti-counterfeiting practices. It brings light to the most important implementation barriers that should be considered to secure better revenue protection, to foster greater customer trust, and be strategically successful.

*Figure 1*

*Fashion Industry Online Retail: Counterfeiting Prevention Gap Analysis*



*Note.* Figure 1 illustrates the fashion industry’s online retail and counterfeiting gap analysis

### **Project Context**

The project was framed in the online retail sector of the U.S. fashion industry, which is a fast developing market that has been affected considerably by the digital transformation. Fashion industry, which is an industry worth more than 2.5 trillion worldwide, has gone through a paradigm shift with the emergence of e-commerce which has made it more accessible to consumers and more reachable to retailers (Kennedy, 2020). Nonetheless, there has been also a significant problem of growth of fake products due to this digital growth. Fashion counterfeiting is an old issue, and the transition to online sales has facilitated the task of counterfeiters, who can now distribute fake products to a worldwide audience (Wang et al., 2023). The research shows that international trade in fake products has an estimated cost of about 509 billion dollars with the most frequently counterfeited products being fashion and luxury goods (Kennedy, 2020).

Improved circulation of fake products over the internet has dire consequences to both the revenues and market share of retailers. Among retailers, fake products cost the fashion and

footwear manufacturers an annual loss of revenue totaling to 323 billion dollars (Rullani et al., 2021). In the case of retailers, brand value, consumer trust, and revenue loss are among the major impacts of counterfeit goods (Hanif et al., 2020). Furthermore, with the internet marketplaces being hard to police and offering anonymity, it has enabled counterfeiters to work comparatively without interference, and legitimate retailers have struggled to stay competitive and keep their market share (Adeola et al., 2021).

The proposed project sought to resolve this significant question by exploring the viewpoints of managers in regard to the development and execution of tactics to fight the sale of counterfeit products within the online fashion retail industry in the U.S. that the main aspect of it is to raise revenue (Rullani et al., 2021). The necessity of the practical change is conditioned by the growing popularity of counterfeits which is a direct threat to the integrity and profitability of the fashion industry (Barbera and Ajzen, 2020). This project was conducted to determine the successful strategies that managers can use to mitigate the presence of counterfeit products, shield their revenue streams, and remain a strong market leader (Wilson and Grammich, 2020).

### **Scope**

The project area of interest was the opinions of managers regarding the fight against counterfeiting within online retailing of fashion in the U.S. to generate more revenue (Chen et al., 2021). The primary methodology of the project consisted of in-depth interviews with online fashion retailer managers in order to collect the information on the effective counterfeiting strategies. Blockchain technology provides end-to-end security and impossibility of tampering of tracking of the supply chain of products, as well as verification of authenticity and safeguarding of revenues. When applied to the retail of fashion, blockchain may be applied to provide an unchangeable track of the path of a product in the supply chain, including the manufacturer and

the consumer. Such transparency increases the traceability and assists in the process of product verification. The technological aspect will involve the perception of the managers toward the use of blockchain technology in tracking the authenticity of the products between production and sale (Brandão and Gadekar, 2019). This included discussing the experience and impressions of the managers of developing and testing a blockchain-based platform that can be integrated with the already online retail systems so that only legitimate goods get to consumers and thus secure the revenue streams (Lee and Yeon, 2021). The consumer education part will entail the development and distribution of educational resources that will make consumers aware of the dangers of buying fake products and how to tell authentic products (Brandão and Gadekar, 2019). Such elements will be online tutorials, communication instruments, and awareness programs aimed at lowering the demand of fake products (Sularia, 2020). The educational activities are intended to lessen the consumer demand of counterfeit products by enhancing the awareness and confidence.

Another issue examined in the project was the views of managers on the success of different anti-counterfeiting strategies in boosting revenue. It will involve the opinions of the manager regarding technological solutions, strategies in supply chain management, and possible joint efforts by industry stakeholders (Mo et al., 2020). The project will discuss the experience of managers regarding the cooperation between the online retailer and brands and technology providers to exchange information and be able to come up with best practices to fight counterfeiting and secure the market share (Wang et al., 2023; Wilson and Grammich, 2020).

The project carried out was in the U.S. online fashion retail industry and the audience was the managers of the large online fashion retailing and fashion brands. The depth of the project will involve the comprehensive research and analysis of the views of managers on the

current trends of counterfeiting, the efficiency of current anti-counterfeiting strategies, and their recommendations on creating new strategies that will best suit the unique needs of the U.S. online fashion sector in terms of revenue growth (Adeola et al., 2021; Rullani et al., 2021).

### **Significance**

This project was important because it had the potential to solve a critical issue that mainly impacts the revenue of retailers within the online fashion industry (Rullani et al., 2021). Counterfeiting is a widespread problem causing not only financial losses but the estimated value of the counterfeit market in the world is estimated to be 4.2 trillion by 2023 (S. Gupta et al., 2023). In the case of the fashion industry, the emergence of counterfeits is a major issue that poses the likelihood of undermining the profitability and market share of the rightful businesses (Wu & Zhao, 2021).

This project can contribute to understanding various perspectives of managers on how to develop and implement efficient strategies to fight counterfeiting as one of the most burning topics in the online fashion sector today (Rullani et al., 2021). The results of the project may result in detection of new methods and best practices of using anti-counterfeiting measures to increase revenue. Indicatively, the project can be used to expose the experiences of managers with blockchain technology which can transform authenticity verification in the fashion industry, thus safeguarding revenue streams (Wu and Zhao, 2021).

The fact that the project focuses on managerial knowledge creates a great chance of being applied practically in the industry. The project will include the analysis of the views of the individuals who are directly engaged in the anti-counterfeiting strategy implementation and will offer practical recommendations based on the experiences and challenges faced in the real world (S. Gupta et al., 2023). In such a way, the findings can be deemed not only reasonable but also

useful to the online retailers who aim to safeguard their revenue and positions on the market (Wilson and Grammich, 2020).

Besides, prioritizing the perspectives of managers on the collaboration within the industry, the project can introduce new possibilities to organize joint actions against counterfeiting (Butticè et al., 2020). This knowledge may translate into more efficient methods to form a common front against counterfeiters, and it will be harder to conduct their actions and prosper in the e-commerce environment, which will eventually improve the bottom line of retailers (Wang et al., 2023; Wu and Zhao, 2021).

### **Historical Background**

Fashion industries have been fighting against counterfeit products ever since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the first counterfeiters started to make money on the popularity of high end brands (Schneider, 2020). When counterfeiting was confined to physical markets, it was easy to combat using conventional ways of enforcement. Nevertheless, with the fashion industry expanding to reach up to and over 2.5 trillion in value worldwide, the industry has been more susceptible to imitation because of the popularity of branded and luxury products (Schneider, 2020).

With the introduction of the internet and e-commerce, the nature of counterfeiting was completely changed (Cavaliere et al., 2021). The fashion industry has gained a larger market base and greater convenience to the consumer through online retail (Meraviglia, 2018). Nonetheless, the invention of new opportunities in counterfeit simultaneously provided a new opportunity to counterfeiters, who used the anonymity and global scope of the digital market (Butticè et al., 2020). According to the International Trademark Association, counterfeit products estimate more than half a trillion in international trade with a large share of illicit products being provided through the internet. The time was characterized by an increase in the sophistication of

counterfeiters, who created high quality fakes that were hard to tell the difference between a fake and an original product (Kennedy, 2020).

It has turned into a giant-sized issue on the international scale, with counterfeit products costing the industry almost 50 billion dollars in losses each year in the fashion sector alone (AlpVision, 2023). It is especially acute in the case of online retail since the inability to inspect the products prior to ordering is a contributing factor to the problem (Butticè et al., 2020). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2023) estimates that a 3.3 percent of the world trade is made up of counterfeit and pirated goods, and that the fashion and luxury goods industry is one of the most impacted industries. One of the management issues is to stay brand-loyal and profitable amid the spreading counterfeiting (Sularia, 2020).

Due to the increase in the problem, a large disparity has arisen in the establishment of effective anti-counterfeiting strategies (Sularia, 2020). This loophole is manifested in the absence of standard practices in the industry (Amaral, 2020), the inability to educate customers about the risks of counterfeits (Sularia, 2020), and the lag toward the adoption of new advanced technologies, including blockchain (Brandão and Gadekar, 2019). The situation has also been exacerbated by resource constraints (especially small-scale retailers) (Khan et al., 2020). It has become more of a gap with increased speed in technological development (S. Gupta et al., 2023). This is because counterfeiters can easily embrace AI and machine learning (ML), but most retailers are lagging behind (Elsantil and Bedair, 2022).

The modern problem is not confined to legal and ethical issues but also to crucial business outcomes related to operation and business strategies, specifically in regard to revenue security and increase (Wu & Zhao, 2021). The intricacy demands the investigations into the interactions between consumer behavior, brand management, and the efficacy of online retail

strategies in the fight against counterfeit sales and revenue growth (Cavaliere et al., 2021). This chronological development highlights the urgency of a strong anti-counterfeit policy in the fashion industry, specifically in the field of online retailing (AlpVision, 2023). This implementation lag is also still a major limitation towards solving the problem of fake products and enhancing profitability, and it requires wide-range solutions that can keep abreast of the fast-changing technological environment and be affordable to both large and small retailers (Elsantil & Bedair, 2022).

### **Current Trends**

The present tendencies in fighting counterfeit products in the online fashion sector are based on technological innovation, revenue protection, and collaboration with the industry (Cavaliere et al., 2021). The use of blockchain technology is among the most promising trends as it offers a secure and transparent approach to tackling the provenance of fashion products throughout the production and sale (Cavaliere et al., 2021). The latest trends in the online fashion industry regarding counterfeit goods also socialization are highly associated with the key constructs of TPB. The attitudes towards implementation are being influenced by new technological solutions, including blockchain and AI, where managers should consider the perceived advantages against the cost of implementation (Cavaliere et al., 2021). Other than technology, the consumer attitude and behaviors are vital issues to understand because they directly influence the counterfeit demand, and thus, the revenues of the retailers. Subjective norms are demonstrated through the fact that the use of collaborative anti-counterfeiting campaigns by the industry becomes more widespread, with large brands defining the new path of protection measures (Wilson and Grammich, 2020). The perceived behavioral control is observed in the way organizations handle implementation obstacles especially with regard to the

allocation of resources and the skills needed (Rullani et al., 2021). The interactions of the theories of planned behavior (TPB) constructs can be observed in the recent changes in the industry, i. e. Nike making a strategic choice to withdraw the products of certain platforms (Sularia, 2020), which shows that the attitude, norms, and control beliefs determine the decision to adopt anti-counterfeiting measures. Blockchain would assist in making sure that only genuine products get to consumers, hence securing revenue streams (Wilson and Grammich, 2020). Nevertheless, although blockchain has received so much focus, it is not widely adopted because its implementation is very expensive and complicated, especially among small retailers (Rullani et al., 2021).

The proliferation of fake goods on the internet has brought on fresh problems to the overall management. According to Sun et al. (2020), the sale of fake product becomes one of the main channels through the online platforms, where the anonymity and the magnitude of e-commerce provide the brands with a challenge to track and regulate the sale of counterfeit products, which leads to significant revenue loss. This fact has prompted a change in managerial approaches, with such companies as Nike going to the extent of deactivating certain online platforms to defend the brand against counterfeiters and protect their income (Sularia, 2020). Such a radical action demonstrated the gravity of the issue and the necessity of more extreme management measures to avoid cases of counterfeiting sales and safeguard profitability (Sularia, 2020).

In general management terms, the lack of success in fighting against counterfeiting is a significant issue in strategic management practices that have a direct effect on revenue (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2023). It is the role of the brands and online retailers to guard against intellectual property and to make sure that their revenue

streams are not jeopardized by selling fake products. To sustain sales and market share, brands should make sure that they offer genuine products to their customers (Cavaliere et al., 2021). The literature has demonstrated that the revenue of any business is severely affected by the counterfeit products, and analyses indicated that 52 percent of customers in the United States have lost confidence in a brand after buying a duplicate product (Morris, 2019). This lack of trust has not only short-term consequences on sales but also long-term destruction of the image and sales forecast of the brand, which is an important intangible asset in the fashion sector (Morris, 2019).

The historical background of fake clothing in the fashion industry is closely interconnected with the development of the industry and its globalization (Singh et al., 2021). With fashion brands reaching wider markets around the world, there arose a massive demand of the luxury goods, and this presented a profitable market to the counterfeiters. Another factor that has led to the spread of counterfeit products is the emergence of the so-called fast fashion, which is low-cost, high-turnover clothing (Hanif et al., 2020). There has been frequent criticism that fast fashion brands replicate high-end designs, disregard the distinction between original and counterfeit products, and help to create an atmosphere in which imitations are more easily accepted (Elsantil & Bedair, 2022). The demand has also been driven by socio-economic reasons including the gap in income distribution and the aspirational quality of luxury fashion (Rosendo & Shukla, 2023). The consumers who are not able to afford the real luxury products are likely to resort to buying cheaper imitations hence the cycle of counterfeiting continues. In addition, the economic recessions in the world have caused higher price sensitivity among customers and thereby, the demand to counterfeits has also been added to it (Wang et al., 2023).

The fight of the fashion industry with fake products, especially online shopping, is not only a long-term, but also a multifaceted one (Schneider, 2020). Although the evolution of technologies, educating consumers, and involving the industry in the fight against counterfeiting can be seen as a well-promising option, major gaps still exist in practice (Meraviglia, 2018). It is necessary to conduct a concerted effort of all stakeholders (retailers, brands, technology providers, and consumers) to address the gaps (Wilson and Grammich, 2020). The development of counterfeiting within the digital environment supports the necessity of constant attention and adaptation to preserve the integrity of the fashion industry (Adeola et al., 2021).

### **Synthesis of the Scholarly Literature**

The problem of fake sales within the fashion industry is highly represented in the academic literature, which emphasizes the worldwide effect of the issue and the difficulties involved in losing money and building a brand (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2023). There is information in the academic literature, including that of Hanif et al. (2020) about factors that drive the growth of counterfeit products, including price disparities between original and counterfeit products and changes in consumer behaviours. Another issue that the authors emphasize is the contribution of digital platforms to the development of the problem. Buttice et al. (2020) state that anonymity and the global nature of e-commerce encourage counterfeiters to connect with their target audience all over the world, contributing to the abundance of counterfeit products. This change poses new challenges to online retailers who now have to go through the intricacies of the digital marketplace whilst holding on to brand integrity and customer satisfaction (Wang et al., 2023). The researchers reveal a significant agreement on the nature of the underlying effects of counterfeiting. Chettri et al. (2024), Morris (2019) and Wu and Zhao (2021) concur that fake sales seriously reduce market share and

damage brand value. Nevertheless, these are different in terms of their focus on solutions.

The issue that lies on the heart of the project is the inability of the online retailer to manage the effectiveness of the counterfeit products sales prevention, which consequently results in the substantial losses of revenues and the lower profitability (N. A. Mishra and Siby, 2024). Chettri et al. (2024) reported the absence of efficient anti-counterfeiting measures, which has led to the loss of substantial amounts of money and a considerable influence on the market share of the online platforms. According to Morris (2019), 52 percent of consumers in the U.S. have lost confidence in a brand because they bought a fake product, which describes the severe influence of the counterfeiting process on the income and interpersonal relations.

The practice gap outlined in the project is that most online retailers in the fashion industry have not found effective anti-counterfeiting methods, and it resulted in an expansion of the number of sales of counterfeit goods and a corresponding decrease in income (Wang et al., 2023). As an illustration, Sularia (2020) observed that not all online retailers have the required tools and expertise to detect and eliminate fake products in their stores, which means that the counterfeit market might still exist, and several retailers will suffer income loss. Amaral (2020) explored how the ignorance and misuse of intellectual property (IP) rights by online retailers can help increase the use of counterfeit products. Such a practice gap impacts the profitability of the fashion industry not only but also fewer competitive brands in the online marketplace, as they lose their market position (Wilson and Grammich, 2020).

A number of critical research papers have played a pioneering role in investigating the problem of fake products in the online shopping fashion sector and how it affects the flow of income and profitability. It is important to mention, as studies by Sun et al. (2020) pointed out, online markets, despite the claims of their zero-tolerance policies, still offer the presence of fake

products, leading to the loss of the revenue and share (p. 200). It is a key to the problem of persistence of fake products in online sales and the difficulties of platforms to effectively counter this behavior to preserve their economic benefits (Sun et al., 2020).

On the same note, Mavlanova and Benbunan (2020) also pointed out the complexity of the issue, of which counterfeiters have advanced strategies to avoid detection, which continues to undermine the confidence of the consumer. Chettri et al. (2024) have also made another important contribution because the authors spoke about more general results of counterfeit goods on customer satisfaction and profitability in the fashion industry. The article highlighted the direct relationship between the percentage of fake products and the decreasing levels of customer satisfaction, which offered quantitative data that depicts the economic consequences of the retailers (Chettri et al., 2024). The sources used are strong in terms of evidence. Sun et al. (2020) provided statistical data of the widespread of counterfeit and its effects on consumer behavior and Chettri et al. (2024) gave a more detailed review of the financial consequences on fashion retailers.

Several articles, such as those of Sun et al. (2020) and the investigation of fraudulent activities within the Chinese online retail, have shown that the presence of fake products persists, despite the strict regulation and development of the technology, which suggests that there are still loopholes between policy and practice. One of the similarities is that the effects of fake products on customer satisfaction and trust are considerable. The other similarity is that the revenue streams and profitability significantly suffer due to counterfeit products. A study conducted by Amaral (2020) still shows that when there are counterfeit products, it will affect the sales of original goods, leading to a reduction in revenue and market share. The trend is reflected in the works by Chettri et al. (2024) and the research that Sularia (2020) has published,

both of which suggested that an ineffective approach to counterfeit sales could cause a brand harm to its financial performance and market status in the long term. The theme is very relevant to the topic of the current research as it aims to investigate how managers can be involved in the strategies to avoid the occurrence of counterfeit sales and earn more.

The researchers tackle the problem of counterfeit products in the online fashion business through different prisms, with technological, regulatory and consumer behaviors being the main points of consideration. The technological framework is one of the most common that studies the efficiency of digital solutions and platforms in preventing and identifying counterfeit sales (Wang et al., 2023). Sun et al. (2020) emphasized that online markets are fully aware of their policy measures against counterfeiting, yet still, the products are still easily accessible, as fraudsters have advanced technology to avoid detection. The other approach is the regulatory one, which considers the importance of laws and regulations in countering counterfeit sales (Staaque et al., 2019). The researchers have indicated that in many cases, the current regulations are insufficient because of the lack of enforcement power and the dynamism with which the online sales tactics are developed (Rosendo and Shukla, 2023). The opinion highlighted the importance of more powerful and flexible approaches to management that would adjust to the dynamism of online counterfeiting and related revenue effects. The third view was centered on consumer buying habits and its impact on sales (Eisend, 2019). Research like Chettri et al. (2024) and Sularia (2020) has also highlighted the adverse effect of imitated products on customer satisfaction and loyalty. The authors posited that the consumer buying behavior is also changed when they come across the counterfeit goods, hence making the retailers less profitable.

It can be noted that scholars have significant areas of convergence and divergence in their approaches to the understanding and treatment of counterfeit products in online fashion retail.

When analyzing technological solutions, Song et al. (2021) and Wang et al. (2023) also are strong supporters of advanced technologies, including blockchain and AI, and offer to recover up to 50 percent of the market share. Nevertheless, the study by Sun et al. (2020) has contradictory results and shows that even the advanced detection systems fail against the sophisticated counterfeiters. Similar academic discussion can be found in the regulatory perspective, where Staake et al. (2019) suggest a stronger legal system and Rosendo and Shukla (2023) believe that restrictions on enforcement make such strategies inefficient against constantly changing strategies.

However, in other places, a definite agreement comes out in spite of these divergences. Research conducted by Chettri et al. (2024), Sularia (2020), and Rullani et al. (2021) all conclude that there is a major influence of counterfeits on the customer behavior and loyalty. This is also applied to the financial impacts, as both scholarly academics and industry accounts agree on the magnitude of the issue, both Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2023) estimation of counterfeit trade at 3.3% of world trade itself and Adeola et al. (2021) analysis of the \$3,000 billion impact of the fashion industry being undercut by counterfeits.

There are a number of gaps and unsolved problems even after a lot of research. The efficacy of the existing technological solutions in curbing counterfeit sales and revenue protection is one of the main gaps (Rosendo and Shukla, 2023). As much as the discussion touches on the improvement of technology, there is no available empirical evidence on the actual success rates in practice in the context of revenue protection (N.A. Mishra and Siby, 2024). Also, it is stated in the literature that regulatory frameworks tend to be outdated and inadequate to deal with the fast-changing tactics used by counterfeiters, which have been continuing to undermine

legitimate sales (Staake et al., 2019). The problems that remained unaddressed were that it should have adopted a more integrated approach that incorporates both technological, regulatory, and revenue protection measures. Also, there are no detailed investigations of the effects of anti-counterfeiting in the long term on increasing revenue and business results (N.A. Mishra & Siby, 2024).

The project would meet the gaps by examining how integrated anti-counterfeiting strategies are effective and evaluate the effect of the strategies on revenue and profitability (N.A. Mishra & Siby, 2024). Integrating the findings based on technological progress, the regulatory behavior, and managerial approaches, the study will help to develop a clear picture of the issue and suggest effective solutions to the problem, which will help the online fashion retailers to increase their earnings (Wilson and Grammich, 2020). The strengths of the methodologies include the possibility to give a complete picture of the issue in many different aspects (Meraviglia, 2018). In their study, Sun et al. (2020) used a survey method to conduct research on the trend of fake products in online markets, which offered a very important statistical data on the levels of the issue and its economic consequences. Nevertheless, weaknesses are quite significant. Lots of research works rely on self-reporting data provided by online retailers and managers which may cause biasness and impact the truthfulness of the results (Meraviglia, 2018). As an example, Sularia (2020) emphasized that surveys could bring to light views on counterfeit products, but they might not necessarily correspond to the actual situation and effectiveness of anti-counterfeiting actions in the field in terms of revenue protection.

The available literature has shown different degrees of strength in dealing with the problem of loss of revenues as a result of fake products. An example of such research is that of Chettri et al. (2024), which was a good indicator of reduced sales and reduced profitability in the

case of counterfeited products, which is caused by the observations of the industry and provides a good basis to comprehend the influence of counterfeits. Nevertheless, the strength of results is not always commensurate with the size of the research, which might not be sufficient to explain the intricacies of online counterfeiting, including the role of developing technologies and global norms in income protection (Meraviglia, 2018).

The weaknesses of the existing research are the unavailability of longitudinal data and the inadequate investigation of combined anti-counterfeiting measures aimed at revenue increase (Mavlanova and Benbunan, 2020). Numerous works have examined the problem separately, including technology solutions, or consumer behavior without examining the interaction of these aspects with one another to affect revenue (Meraviglia, 2018; Schneider, 2020). The disjointed strategy could restrict the relevance of results to real-life contexts in which a variety of variables are simultaneously in action in the safeguarding and expansion of revenues (Schneider, 2020). The limitations led to the idea that research with a combination of technological, regulatory, and managerial perspectives should be conducted to demonstrate a more unified picture of the strategies of revenue protection (Cárdenas et al., 2021). Such tools as structured questionnaires to conduct surveys and interview guides to conduct qualitative research are widely used (Schneider, 2020). The tools are also useful to obtain detailed information, but are restricted by design which can be inappropriate to reflect the intricacies of counterfeiting concerns and issues to do with revenue (N.A. Mishra and Siby, 2024).

Fashion industry counterfeit sales was a burning problem that impacts a brand image and profitability. Adeola et al. (2021) state that the fashion industry has brought much money to the global economy (3,000 billion), and counterfeits have damaged this prospect and have brought about massive losses in revenue. As N.A. Mishra and Siby (2024) pointed, this issue was

intensified by the emergence of online retailing because the spread of fake products online poses serious problems with keeping the revenue flows and market share. The subject matter took the center stage in the realization of the overall implications of counterfeit products to the economic welfare of the fashion industry.

The issue was that online retailers cannot successfully avoid the sale of fake products so that the sales and profitability decrease (Kassim et al., 2020). The inability to deploy effective anti-counterfeiting strategies has cost the companies a great deal of revenue as Chettri et al. (2024) pointed out. This issue is also complicated by the fact that Sun et al. (2020) revealed that fake products tend to be identical to original ones in online ads, and it is hard to keep the market share and revenue of retailers protected.

Fashion industry Fake products have always been a major problem, yet e-commerce has made it even more problematic (Schneider, 2020). Efficiency in online shopping has given counterfeiters an enormous platform to sell fake products, which directly affects the actual sales (N.A. Mishra and Siby, 2024). A report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2023) reported that counterfeit and pirated goods constituted 3.3 percent of world trade which amounted to over 500 billion (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2023). The fashion sector is especially a sensitive area where imitated clothes, shoes, and accessories have a significant impact on reducing the possible earnings (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2023). It is also worsened by the fact that most of the fake products come at a comparable price to the original products and retailers will find it difficult to compete and still make profits.

The sales and profitability are directly influenced by the availability of counterfeit products in online retail fashion market. Rullani et al. (2021) have shown that in case consumers

make unintended purchases of fake products, the chances of future purchase are lower and in the long run, retailers will lose a lot of revenue. Indicatively, a study by Wu and Zhao (2021) discovered that consumers that mistakenly buy fake products are less likely to repeat purchases to a retailer even when the retailer did not directly sell the fake product. Such a loss of recurrent business translates to a decreased profitability of the retailer since it is usually more expensive to attract new customers than retain the old ones.

Song et al. (2021) were of the opinion that online retailers ought to allocate resources to new technologies, including blockchain and artificial intelligence (AI) to increase the levels of product traceability and authentication, which serves as a safeguard against revenue streams. In particular, blockchain technology is a decentralized and tamper-proof registry capable of tracing the path of a product over the manufacturer to the final consumer, thus decreasing the chances of fake products being introduced to the supply chain and profit losses. Song et al. discovered that the application of these technologies has potential to decrease the market share of fake products, which now represents about 50 percent of the market of the fashion business and reclaim a substantial amount of money lost. Song et al. (2021) are a solid proponent of blockchain and AI technologies. As noted by Rullani et al. (2021), small-scale retailers are among the essential implementation issues because of high-installation costs, complexities in operations, which might affect the short-term profitability. This is a clash in the wider argument regarding the availability of technology to various businesses of varying scales.

In addition, the literature highlights the need to co-operate among the online sellers, brand owners and the police to safeguard profitability of the market share. Project by Wilson and Grammich (2020) indicates that work together, including information sharing and coordinated enforcement efforts, can greatly inconvenience the operations of counterfeiters and protect up-to-

date sales. These partnerships play an important role in the creation of an holistic anti-counterfeiting strategy that involves the supply and demand component to maximize the revenue protection.

The other point that has been addressed in the literature is the aspect of strategic marketing in fighting counterfeit sales and boosting revenue of the authentic products. Wu and Zhao (2021) believed that the majority of consumers tend to buy counterfeits without any particular reason because of the absence of awareness or identification of genuine and fake products. Thus, online shops are advised to focus on strategic marketing campaigns when the anti-counterfeiting strategy is involved. That strategy would have been implemented through transparent communication of the value proposition of authentic products and tools or resources to assist consumers in checking the authenticity of their products to make sales of the genuine items (Wilson and Grammich, 2020). Wu and Zhao (2021) also indicated that the retailer can promote the sale of authentic goods by guaranteeing, like money-back guarantee, or authenticity certificate, which will reassure customers about the authenticity of the product and support a higher price.

The literature also deals with the fact that online retailers are still confronted with the challenge of using anti-counterfeiting strategies to ensure that income is not lost. The high cost of implementing advanced technologies and keeping a tight rein on supply chains is one of the major challenges that may have an effect on short-term profitability (Sun et al., 2020). Moreover, online retailers face a challenge in protecting their revenues since the internet is global and fakers can easily move their operations to any jurisdiction that does not enforce them with strict laws, and as a result, online retailers may struggle to take legal action or reclaim their losses, which complicates the process of protecting the revenues (Rullani et al., 2021). The literature highlights

that it is of essence to be proactive to counterfeit prevention in order to achieve long-term profitability despite the difficulties. As an example, Nike pulled its products off Amazon due to the spread of fake products, considering the integrity of its brand and long-term revenue opportunities over the short-term sales (Sularia, 2020).

The given gap in practice is that online retailers within the fashion industry have no effective anti-counterfeiting strategies that can protect and increase revenues (Wang et al., 2023). Amaral (2020) mentions that this loophole has been contributing to the thriving of counterfeit items that have caused a lot of financial losses and brand damage, which affect the bottom line of key companies directly. According to Rullani et al. (2021), certain strategies can be used, but they are not employed or imposed enough to leave the market exposed to fake products and further loss of revenue. The general consensus amongst scholars is that there is no one-fit solution to solving the problem of counterfeiting. Rullani et al. (2021), Song et al. (2021) and Wilson and Grammich (2020) all highlighted the necessity to adopt a combinatorial solution involving technological automation, cross-industry collaboration, and enhanced legal frameworks. Nevertheless, the particular implementation plans and the prioritization of these factors is a matter of controversy.

### ***Key Topics and Patterns in Previously Studied Literature***

The presence of fake products in the online fashion retail sector will be discussed as mainly explained by the development of digital technologies, which will also suggest possible solutions to the issue of loss of income. One of the obvious trends in the literature is that technology may be employed not only by counterfeiters in order to make their efforts easier but also by legitimate organizations to secure their market share and income (Wang et al., 2023). According to Buttice et al. (2020), the anonymity and the accessibility of e-commerce sites on a

global scale has allowed counterfeiters to sell fake products with greater ease, which directly affects the legitimate sales. E-commerce companies have been faced with new challenges in the technological environment that require them to operate in a complex digital environment and still manage to retain their brand name and profitability. To overcome such threats, researchers and professionals have suggested various technological approaches that would protect the revenue streams (Wang et al., 2023). The other digital technology, which will be discussed as a potential solution to counterfeiting, is blockchain technology, which facilitates the efficient tracing of the provenience of the fashion product through the manufacturer and the consumer, to ensure authentic sales (Wilson and Grammich, 2020).

Among the most popular problems discussed in the literature that I will investigate is the adverse impact of counterfeit products on the online fashion retail market in terms of revenue. A large portion of the previous studies has also emphasized the role of counterfeit products in their sales performance and brand value (Morris, 2019). The study by Morris (2019) has also revealed that half of U.S. consumers would cease purchases of a given brand in case they found it to be selling fake goods, indicating that the effect of counterfeiting on the revenue generation is enormous. What is harmful to the short-term financial performance is also fatal to the market position of the brand, which is a key driver of long-term profitability in the fashion industry (Morris, 2019). Counterfeiting has not only financial performance but also value of the brand and the performance on the market (Harun et al., 2020). Chettri et al. (2024) explored the correlation between imitate goods and loss of income, and the study of the authors in the chosen field is in detail, the authors emphasize the cost of counterfeit on the world of fashion and have the numbers to prove their point.

The review of the literature shows that, various measures are required in in-fighting the

issue of counterfeiting that involves a legal framework and the cooperation of the industry to protect the revenue streams. Staake et al. (2019) also discussed how effective the laws and regulations are with combating the counterfeit sales and protecting the legitimate profits. The authors made a conclusion that the current laws and regulations are not sufficient, as the enforcement possibilities and the dynamics of online sales context are limited. The idea is that the issue of online counterfeiting and the need to reinforce legal frameworks to address the constantly changing challenge should be strengthened and developed (Rullani et al., 2021). The international aspect of e-commerce poses great difficulties when fighting against fake products because manufacturers of counterfeit products can act within a jurisdiction that has weak and less strict regulations. It makes it more difficult to use the law and recover money when there is a loss of revenue through counterfeit in online stores (Rullani et al., 2021).

The three main strategies of fighting counterfeiting are quite consistent with the main theoretical elements of the TPB. The challenge and solution issues are associated with perceived behavioral control since it affects the perceived possibility of managers to successfully apply and enforce anti-counterfeiting practices (Wang et al., 2023). The influence on revenue and market share relates to the perceptions about the behavior, where the attitudes on anti-counterfeiting measures by managers are conditioned by their perceived success in terms of safeguarding the financial performance (Morris, 2019). Subjective norms are regulatory and collaborative strategies, which are the industry standards, the legal requirements, and the practices of peers that have an impact on the strategy adoption (Rullani et al., 2021). To illustrate, the perceived control (technical capability), attitudes (cost-benefit evaluation), and subjective norms (industry adoption rates) influence the decisions made when implementing blockchain, and that proves how the TPB constructs interact in practice (Wilson and Grammich, 2020).

### ***Alignment of Chosen Framework with Topic and Problem***

According to Ajzen (2020), anti-counterfeiting research in the online fashion retail sphere will be based on the TPB. According to TPB, behavioral intentions are the main causes of managerial behavior, and such intentions are formed by three important constructs: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Tang et al., 2021). In the framework of the anti-counterfeiting practice, the constructs serve to explain the selection of the strategies to protect revenues by the managers because they are perfectly aware of the difficulties and expenses involved (Tang et al., 2021). The TPB states that personal attitude, subjective norms, and perceived control are all relevant to the intention of managers to pursue certain anti-counterfeiting practices, which is consistent with the decision-making process of pursuing revenue protection in the field of online retail (Tang et al., 2021).

The TPB used on the issue of addressing counterfeit products in online fashion retail industry because it offers a useful model of analyzing managerial decision making. In her opinion, Rozenkowska (2023) believed that the theory is applicable to general business decision-making activities and has even been used to extend its services to other topics of interest such as ethical business and anti-counterfeiting measures and that is why it is applicable in this project. The framework assists in describing the adoption of anti-counterfeiting strategies by exploring the psychological and social dimensions of the managers and their attitude on revenue protection. Due to the example, within the framework of TPB, the attitude may assist in understanding how managers will evaluate the advantages (such as increased revenue) and expenses (such as the introduction of advanced technologies) (Wilson and Grammich, 2020).

The TPB has its weaknesses even though it has widely been applied in researchworks concerning the fight against counterfeit products. According to Wu and Zhao (2021), the actual

behavior of implementation is not enough to explain the situation in anti-counterfeiting. The authors concluded that additional extension of the TPB with other theories of behavioral economics might be more effective to describe the non-linear influences of the determinants of anti-counterfeiting strategy adoption. Nevertheless, Barbera and Ajzen (2020) also concurred that the theory is not necessarily very prescriptive in the situation where managers lack sufficient information or are under time constraints, as in the dynamic online retail setting.

### ***Alignment with Research Problem and Question***

The TPB has its weaknesses even though it has widely been applied in researchworks concerning the fight against counterfeit products. According to Wu and Zhao (2021), the actual behavior of implementation is not enough to explain the situation in anti-counterfeiting. The authors concluded that additional extension of the TPB with other theories of behavioral economics might be more effective to describe the non-linear influences of the determinants of anti-counterfeiting strategy adoption. Nevertheless, Barbera and Ajzen (2020) also concurred that the theory is not necessarily very prescriptive in the situation where managers lack sufficient information or are under time constraints, as in the dynamic online retail setting.

### ***Historical Context and Evolution***

Icek Ajzen introduced a development of the Theory of Reasoned Action that was called the TPB (Suominen, 2023). The TPB has been used in business decision-making and strategic implementation as a result of its initial development to predict health-related behaviors. Scholars started to use the TPB in the context of organizations in the 20 th century, and their contributions were enormous and showed that it can be applied to the management of decision making. The development of the theory resulted in its use in digital commerce and brand protection, as researchers like Tang et al. (2021) adapted the model to learn more about the online retailing

management decision-making, especially in the solution of the counterfeiting issue and developing some method of revenue protection. The TPB adapting itself to the current business problems with the shift of the concept of health behaviors to business decision-making is a sign of its flexibility and ability to adapt to the modern business problems. This implies that the project will use the TPB set principles on the prevailing problems of anti-counterfeiting in online fashion stores.

### ***Role of Key Theorists***

There are a number of theorists who have made significant contributions to the creation and implementation of the TPB in business. The latest publication by Ajzen (2020) has enhanced the perception of the effects of the perceived behavioral control on managerial decision-making in complicated business settings. Conner (2020) extended the area of application of the theory to strategic implementation, especially when it comes to anti-counterfeiting measures. Moreover, Wu and Zhao (2021) have contributed to the research by showing the possibility of the TPB to be combined with other models to gain deeper insights into management choices in the online retail process. The contributions of these theories in the study of the implementation of the anti-counterfeiting strategies by managers give the study a strong background on which to rely. The role played by various theorists in the evolution of the TPB suggests that the project has a great theoretical basis. It means that the study may develop already developed frameworks and investigate new implementations peculiar to the use of anti-counterfeiting strategies.

### ***Guiding Data Collection and Analysis***

The TPB framework organizes the data collection and analysis in this study. The interview questions will be based on the three main constructs: attitudes (e.g., What are your perception of the effectiveness of current anti-counterfeiting measures?), subjective norms (e.g.,

How industry standards affect the choice of strategies that you use?), and perceived behavioral control (e.g., What can you do or cannot do to implement these strategies?). These constructs will comprise the primary categories of coding in the data analysis process, as they will be used to arrange and explain information regarding how the beliefs of managers, pressures in the industry, and the ability to implement anti-counterfeit measures affect their anti-counterfeit strategies and the further revenue protection activities (Jamieson et al., 2023). Such an organized method will make sure that the analysis is based on already existing theoretical concepts but that new insights that are particular to the online fashion retail setting can emerge. The systematic method of data collection and analysis in accordance with the TPB presupposes the systematic and replicated research methods. This indicates that the project will produce credible, theory-based results, which can be used both in the academic knowledge and practice.

### ***Critical Analysis and Evaluation***

The past research on fake products of online fashion retail sector has both merits and demerits. In this connect, Sun et al. (2020) went into detail explaining counterfeit products offered by online marketers, giving a statistical perspective on the problem. The methodology of the project will assume the use of both consumer and retailer surveys, which will offer a full picture of the problem of counterfeit products (Suominen, 2023). However, the project does not exclude possible constraints because the data utilized are self-reported and might have response bias, which, in its turn, might affect the findings (Suominen, 2023). In part, this limitation is picked up by Chettri et al. (2024), who utilized both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. The strategy shows the real effects of counterfeiting on the profitability of a company.

Wu and Zhao (2021) were also able to make contributions to the body of knowledge in

the field because they used TPB to examine the intentions of managers to adopt anti-counterfeiting efforts to guard revenue. The project by Wu and Zhao (2021) is among the rare ones to use both the scenario-based measures and structural equation modeling to explore the interdependence of the factors that contribute to the adoption of the strategy of anti-counterfeiting. Nevertheless, the experiments they used might not necessarily be true to the real-life situation in the online retail setting (Clark et al., 2020). Mavlanova and Benbunan (2020) used a different method, web scraping and data mining, to examine the listings and online activities of sellers of products and offered the data on the scale of the counterfeit issue and the effect it has on the valid sales.

An article by Wilson and Grammich (2020) about collaborated efforts to fight counterfeiting was helpful information about the efforts done at the industry level to secure revenue. Nevertheless, the project might not reflect the challenges that might arise when this kind of initiative is implemented in various organizations with diverse and, perhaps, conflicting financial interests (Clark et al., 2020). There is also some research that presupposes that all the technologies can work with retailers, yet retailers have varying resources and different abilities to invest in anti-counterfeiting activities (Butticè et al., 2020). The outlined limitations and advantages of prior research indicate that the approach to the methodology must be balanced, which would mean that the project in question would include a combination of various data collection techniques without much concern of the biases that could occur when self-reported data is used.

### ***Implications for Current Project***

The transfer of previous studies to the present work improves the in-depth analysis of the situation and strengthens the idea that counterfeiting in the online fashion retail business is a

complex issue with multiple effects on income (Tang et al., 2021). The articles of Sun et al. (2020) and Chettri et al. (2024) have justified the utilization of quantitative data on the frequency of the counterfeits currently, as well as qualitative data on the perceptions of the managers, in the present project. Wu and Zhao (2021) leveraged the TPB to justify the motivations of managers to adopt anti-counterfeiting measures, which will be useful in the present study to comprehend the most attractive revenue protection strategies. Also, the technological solutions, offered by Mavlanova and Benbunan (2020) and the collaborative approaches, discussed by Wilson and Grammich (2020), show that, though innovative technological solutions are essential to reverse the impacts of counterfeiting and revenue protection, the cooperation of the whole industry is a victor, as well. The choice of the approach to the current project will be made according to the gaps and recommendations found in the literature (Tang et al., 2021). The project will take a holistic approach to work and hence will address the needs of N.A. Mishra and Siby (2024) call to conduct research that entails exploration of the technological, regulatory, and managerial features of adopting anti-counterfeiting strategies to boost revenues.

### **Synthesis of the Practitioner Literature**

The synthesis of practitioner literature indicated much about the problem and remedies to the problem of counterfeit prevention in the fashion sector. The magnitude of the issue is startling, and Fontana (2019) writes that the counterfeit business is estimated to be about 4.5 trillion, and AlpVision (2023) explicitly mentions the losses of the fashion industry that amount to 50 billion annually. These numbers will be further put into perspective by the results of Morris (2019) who discovered that 52 percent of U.S. consumers have ceased buying the brands after receiving fake products, which illustrates the direct effect on the revenue streams.

The project will focus on investigating how different methods have been adopted by the practitioners to fight counterfeiting with technology solutions being identified as a major approach of combating the issue. Gayialis et al. (2022) propose digital watermarks and blockchain technology to enable transparency in the supply chain, whereas K. Mishra et al. (2024) insist that AI-powered authentication tools should be used. Nevertheless, there is a huge gap in the implementation feasibility formed by these approaches. Although large institutions have effectively implemented innovative technologies, Kennedy (2020), Samaddar and Gandhi (2022) note that small retailers face the challenge of the resource-intensive aspect of solutions.

The practitioner literature showed differing platforms of managing platform and brand protection. Sularia (2020) focuses on the example of Nike strategically quitting Amazon to emphasize brand integrity instead of selling products within a short period of time, whereas Sun et al. (2020) believe that making the platforms more controlled is the solution instead of abandoning the market. Such conflicting actions represent a bigger discussion of which is more effective in protecting brands and securing income isolation or engagement. The different methods of addressing counterfeits have been evident in real-life examples in the fashion industry in the recent past. The bold move by Nike to pull out of Amazon is a good representation of a platform-exit strategy. Simultaneously, the activity of Louis Vuitton to invest in the blockchain technology is a technological answer that allows customers to access authenticity of the product by using a mobile application (Zimmerman, 2024). The partnership that Gucci had with the Anti-Counterfeiting Alliance (AACAA) of Alibaba is an illustration of a partnership strategy, which has led to numerous counterfeit entries being removed and illegal vendor profiles being shut (Jyani & Bansal, 2022). Such opposite approaches underscore the

different strategies that luxury brands are using to safeguard their revenue streams and stay relevant in the market.

The case studies were examined to discover the different levels of success in the anti-counterfeiting campaigns. Varela et al. (2021) explain how a luxury brand successfully used AI and machine learning to track counterfeit posts. On the contrary, Wilson and Grammich (2020) report the failed use of manual inspection procedures by a retailer. The comparison of these results, which are reviewed by S. Gupta et al. (2023), highlights the need to make use of automated and scalable solutions in the contemporary e-commerce contexts.

The literature indicates that there is a serious debate on matters of regulation. Mostert and Lambert (2019) suggest the tougher punishments and stricter enforcement of intellectual property legislation whereas Rullani et al. (2021) believe that the measures of strategic marketing campaigns and shopping experience improvement can be potentially more effective to protect revenue in the long term. Such a deviation is a certain contradiction between the punitive and market-based solutions.

The concept of collaborative approaches becomes a main theme, even though the practitioners are varied in their recommendations on how it should be implemented. Wu and Zhao (2021) stress the relevance of the blockchain technology in terms of supply chain transparency, whereas Brandao and Gadekar (2019) pay attention to inter-organizational cooperation. Amaral (2020) fills the gaps between these viewpoints by proposing a combination of both, integration of technological solutions and strategic partnerships.

New technological advancements have brought a new option of counterfeit prevention, but the effectiveness of these methods is disputed among the practitioners. The successful AI-based detection systems are captured by Mo et al. (2020), and Mavlanova and Benbunan (2020)

warn that counterfeiters are constantly developing new methods that may go around such systems.

The practitioner literature also indicates opposite perspectives on the consumer education and engagement. Rosendo and Shukla (2023) supported the idea of more effective consumer awareness campaigns, whereas Sun et al. (2020) shared the necessity of technological solutions that do not depend on consumer awareness. A combination of these measures, as it is proposed by K. Mishra et al. (2024), can provide the most holistic solution to safeguarding revenue streams.

The practitioner literature synthesis indicates that there is an imminent agreement that effective anti-counterfeiting strategies should integrate various strategies. But there are heated controversies on the best balance between technological, regulatory as well as market-based solutions. As it is recorded by Samaddar and Gandhi (2022), these are the discussions that prove the problem of counterfeiting in the contemporary e-commerce settings as rather complex and dynamic.

### ***Alignment of the Project with the Literature and Discipline***

The doctoral project, which is in concert with the DBA program, will be based on the available scholarship and professional literature to fill a gap in knowledge on a major problem facing the fashion industry, namely the development of fake products in online stores and the effect it has on its revenue. Based on the comprehensive study of Hanif et al. (2020), Wang et al. (2023), and Wilson and Grammich (2020), the project will draw attention to the negative impact of counterfeits on sales, market share, and profitability in general. The identification of the gap in the current business practices, specifically the absence of proper anti-counterfeiting measures used by the online selling companies, the project aims to develop and deploy the effective

actions to address the problem and earn a greater income. This compatibility makes the research relevant and based on known facts that can be applied with respect to the need to enhance financial performance in fashion industry.

The use of the TPB in the project made it more fitting in the literature that is already available since it provided a framework of understanding the managerial decision-making with respect to adopting strategies to counter the use of counterfeits. The TPB constructs associated with behavioral attitudes, subjective norms, and the perceived behavioral control are introduced into the study in accordance with the results of Ajzen (2020). Using the TPB framework to examine the intentions and behaviors of managers in the environment of introducing the revenue-protecting measures, the project can help to understand the psychological and social factors affecting the adoption of the anti-counterfeiting strategies better. This strategy is one that guaranteed that the study does not only cover an urgent business issue, but also contributes to the academic literature on the managerial decision-making process and methods of revenue protection (Ajzen, 2020).

### ***Synthesis of Practitioner Literature on Counterfeit Products***

The incorporation of the literature on practitioners played a key role in comprehending the challenges and methods to surmount them associated with product counterfeiting in online fashion retailing, especially in the context of revenue loss (Entrupy, 2024). Although some of the theoretical concepts and empirical findings are found in the academic literature, the practitioner literature is helpful in discussing practical applications, recent trends, and the usefulness of different actions in protecting profits against counterfeiting (FitzHugh and Annable, 2023). The International Trademark Association (2022) agrees with the point that the opinion of practitioners can bridge the gap between theory and practical application of revenue-protecting

strategies. The Global Brand Counterfeiting Report (2020) concludes that counterfeiting is a dynamic process that needs industry-specific knowledge to develop effective countermeasures to new tendencies in digital counterfeiting and defend the market share. Besides, the Office of the United States Trade Representative (2022) indicates that the information provided by the practitioner literature will be treated as one of the most recent ones. It can be applied to detect emerging technologies and even current partnerships that are being utilized to fight fake sales and generate more profits.

### ***Current Practitioner Perspectives on Counterfeit Products***

There were widespread counterfeits in the online fashion retail market, and recent reports in the industry reveal that the counterfeits affect the revenue in a big way. The report published by the Coresearch in 2024 indicates that the total volume of the global counterfeiting market is expected to grow to over 1.79 trillion, with luxury fashion brands as the most hit in terms of financial implications. To back up the 2024 results of Gevers Editor, the worth of counterfeited and pirated goods is approximated to be worth as much as 4.2 trillion, which is a serious potential loss in fair sales. According to the Office of the United States Trade Representative (2022), the COVID-19 pandemic had made the problem even more significant, with the number of counterfeit goods that are sold online having increased by 38 percent compared to the situation before the pandemic, which weakened the potential revenues of the legitimate business.

The views by the practitioners concerning the impact of counterfeit products on businesses will be reviewed on the basis of financial losses. According to FitzHugh and Annable (2023), counterfeit products were reported to have affected 47 percent of fashion brands, and this adversely affected their sales and profitability. Focusing outside of the short-term financial impact, industry analysts are questioning the brand value influence and long-term revenues

(Khan et al., 2020). The effects of fake products on the consumer are both economic and health related which also influence the purchasing behavior and market dynamics. Barbieri (2018) asserts that European consumers lose about 60 billion euros in a year in different sectors, the fashion sector being just one of them, through counterfeit products, leading to the loss of substantial income by the legitimate businesses.

Entrupy (2023) found out that a third of all consumers, who purchased fake fashion products unknowingly, faced negative consequences or risky experiences, which may cause a decline in online shopping habits and a decline in sales. According to Goldstein, 2024, 52 per cent of customers whose perceptions towards online shopping platforms were negatively influenced by buying fake products unintentionally stated that they would not buy high-end fashion products via the Internet in the future. These results will be employed to reveal the systematic effects of the way in which fake goods not only influence consumer purchasing patterns but also affect the health and income opportunities in general of the e-commerce platform within the fashion sector (Goldstein, 2024).

### ***Technological Solutions in Combating Counterfeit Fashion Products***

The technology as a widespread trend was examined, especially among the participants of the fashion industry, retail stores, and brands, they are trying to fight the proliferation of counterfeits in the online shops and protect their income. Blockchain is now a creative approach to guarantee the authenticity of products and improve their visibility in the supply chain, therefore securing the sale of authentic products (Badhwar et al., 2023). One of the particular applications of blockchain is the project by the luxury fashion brand Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton SE (LVMH) and its partners, ConsenSys and Microsoft (NeoNomad, 2024). One of the applications of LVMH is called AURA (NeoNomad, 2024). The application will help consumers

trace the origin of the products of Louis Vuitton and other LVMH brands, which may boost consumer confidence and sales (NeoNomad, 2024). Similarly, the Italian luxury brand Salvatore Ferragamo has also implemented NFC chip in their products by using a smartphone app to check authenticity (WorldFootwear, 2019). Conlon (2020) points to the fact that within the first year of the program, Ferragamo witnessed the decrease in the number of counterfeit seizures, as well as the improvement of communication between customers and the brand in relation to the products sold, which led to higher sales.

It is also mentioned that AI and ML have been used to detect and remove counterfeit postings on online selling platforms, which contributes to securing the honest sales. Project Zero was another application of machine learning that Amazon used to monitor listings and eliminate possible fakes. The project has been termed as having prevented more than 1.7 million supposed counterfeit listings prior to even a single item being purchased and this could lead to millions of dollars in lost income to genuine sellers. This report found out that on all alleged counters that the proactive tools denied the listing, an average of 800 new listings was attempted by the fraudsters, and this demonstrates the scale of the issue and the revenue that might have been lost (Amazon Brand Protection Report, 2023). The use of computer vision is also another innovative solution. Entrupy is a start-up company based in New York that has created an artificial intelligence (AI) based system that can identify authentic luxury handbags with accuracy of 99.1. By 2024, with the machine's assistance of smartphone photos alone, companies like Entrupy were estimated to be able to detect fake goods with a 95 percent accuracy that may potentially save revenue losses caused by fake products sales ( Amazon Brand Protection Report, 2023).

However, there are certain issues associated with the implementation of anti-counterfeiting technologies, specifically, the cost and the payback period. A survey has pointed

that the biggest issue which influenced the small and medium size fashion retailers was the high expenses of integrating advanced technology of anti-counterfeiting, which might have influenced the ability of the retailers to guard against revenue. As an example, in spite of the high levels of traceability generated by blockchain, the implementation of blockchain solutions in most cases requires a substantial redesign of the supply chain. As reported by McKinsey and Company (2023), the number of fashion companies that successfully implemented end-to-end blockchain solutions is only 23 percent, and the implementation process of this solution will require over 18 months, an important investment of time and resources.

### ***Collaborative Efforts in Combating Counterfeit Products***

The cooperation in the fashion industry has brought to the fore the necessity to fight counterfeiting by forming collaborations with other concerned parties. This has seen a number of strategic partnerships between brands, retailers, and technology solution providers (Rossi et al., 2020). One such effort is the Aura Blockchain Consortium where LVMH, the Prada Group, and Cartier of Richemont joined forces (McDowell, 2024). The project will focus on the creation of a network of luxury blockchain all over the world to fight against counterfeit products, authenticate the source of products, and protect the sale of original goods (Rossi et al., 2020; McDowell, 2024). As it is mentioned in the report by McDowell (2024), the consortium has onboarded more than 20 luxury brands and already verified in excess of 17 million products and this is an indication of the consortium in terms of safeguarding revenues. One more partnership that concerns the current topic is the Alliance to Counter Counterfeit Advertising (ACCA) that consists of such global brands as Adidas, Amazon, and Meta, collaborating to fight against counterfeit sales (LinkedIn, 2024).

Especially, information sharing has contributed to the industry as it has led to an increase

in its capacity to fight counterfeits and protect market share (Jing et al., 2022). Its collaboration with the RogueBlock program of the IACC that allows the brand and the payment providers to exchange information easily has been efficient to cut off financial backers of counterfeiters and ensure the legitimacy of revenue sources (IACC, 2022). Otherwise, the Alibaba Anti-Counterfeiting Alliance (AACA) has grown to include over 200 brands in 17 different industries, which all fight against selling counterfeits (Staff, 2019). The examples, thus, show that the joint industry action and information exchange can play a crucial role in combating the fraudulent products and securing the authentic sales (Jing et al., 2022).

### ***Consumer Education Strategies***

Fashion brands have examined counterfeit products as a major issue and strategic marketing campaigns have been identified as one of the means of dealing with counterfeit products and ensuring that genuine products are sold, which has resulted in the creation of elaborate awareness campaigns (Peinkofer and Jin, 2022). The chime for change campaign by Gucci does not only solve social problems, but it also facilitates consumer understanding of the value proposition of the authentic products (Equilibrium, 2022). The campaign has exposed the brand to over 100 million consumers across the globe, as Aithor (2024) has observed. It helped the company to expand the usage of the official authentication app that could have resulted in the rise of the sales of genuine products. Similarly, Nike has been able to achieve the same effect with its Behind the Swoosh campaign that informs the consumer about the company and the production and supply chain, which has also been effective in generating consumer awareness regarding the value of buying authentic merchandise (Robertson, 2023).

In order to spur the consumption of genuine products, brands and retailers have provided consumers with different ways and instruments to determine product authenticity (Richemont,

2024). One of them is Certilogo platform, which is utilized by more than 100 brands. According to Certilogo (2024), the Authentication Report identified that the platform has already executed millions of authentication requests and identified an 99.67% general accuracy level in identifying the counterfeit products and an 8% accuracy level in identifying the counterfeit products, thus protecting millions of dollars of authentic sales. Another unique approach found in the guess of authenticity of luxury watches and sneakers at eBay is also similar. These will be analyzed as indicators of the attempts of the fashion industry to involve consumers in combating fake items by giving them a tool to check the validity of the items they buy therefore safeguarding and possibly growing the sales of original items.

### ***Regulatory and Legal Approaches***

To discuss the issue of counterfeits in the fashion industry and its dynamics that are peculiar to the protection of revenues, this research evaluated the existing policies and actions designed to take care of the problem (Staff, 2019). Another fear that American Apparel and Footwear Association (AAFA) (2022) has raised over the ineffectiveness of existing legal frameworks, in particular concerning e-commerce and their capacity to defend the legitimate sales, is the weakness of the current legal frameworks. The policy brief has also observed that the current legislations cannot be applied to force internet based marketplaces to own up to the sale of imitates on the sites, and this may continue to cause losses in revenue by genuine brands. The AAFA asserts that, being the supposed protector of e-commerce conglomerates, the so-called safe harbor is misused by certain internet service providers to avoid being held responsible in the sale of fake products to customers, only complicating the revenue protection further (Suominen, 2023).

To follow the development of the industry, new changes within the legal system will be

taken into account, and more efficient and flexible laws are required to safeguard genuine sales (Xu et al., 2021). Several major brands in conjunction with the Fashion Law Institute have come up with the Digital Fashion Protection Act. This model is a law to revamp trademark legislation in digital age to more effectively defend the revenue streams (Fashion Law Institute, 2023). The proposed act covers the improved actions to eliminate the counterfeited listings, require seller validation in case of high-risk accounts, and harsher repercussions to serial offenders, to secure legitimate sales. Similarly, the International Trademark Association (INTA) (2022) has been highlighting the parallels between the legislation on anti-counterfeiting products across various nations to establish a single operational stance in defending world revenues. These proposed changes are based on the consideration that the counterfeit struggle cannot work in isolation, and it should be carried out in a global context at an equal level of technological progress and consumerism transformation, to ensure a sustainable market share and profitability to be secured (Aplin, 2020).

### ***Emerging Trends and Future Directions***

As specialists say, the action to fight against the fake fashion goods is slowly turning out to be more interdependent and networked with the most recent technologies to secure and generate higher revenue (Aithor, 2024). They expect the products to change to what they call a Unified Digital Identity. The idea is that all clothes will come with a digital signature of blockchain, Internet of Things (IoT) sensors, and AI recognition, which will help in the procedure of checking the authenticity of the product and could, possibly, sell more real ones. As an example, Burberry has been experimenting with the capacity to use scannable and authenticated materials in a smartphone, therefore, there is no definite differentiation between the real and digital, as in Rowe (2023). This physical-digital convergence shift would likely lead into

even more issues with counterfeiting products by criminals, and brands may save millions in lost revenue (Rowe, 2023).

### ***Comparison of Practitioner and Scholarly Perspectives***

This paper examined the ways in which the practitioner and scholarly viewpoints overlap in examining counterfeit fashion products and their effect on revenue, which is best explained by the realization that the issue is complicated (Hoglund et al., 2021). Following the previous point, both industries realize that the counterfeit war should not be a solitary operation aiming at the technological, legal, and revenue safety levels (Hoglund et al., 2021). As an example, the theme of blockchain as a tool to secure legitimate sales is nearly replicated in practice (e.g., the LVMH Group implements AURA), in the scientific community (e.g., Xu et al. (2021)) is concerned with the ethicality of blockchain in the field of supply chain transparency. Also, the aspect of strategic marketing initiatives can be regarded as one of the factors that apply in both fields (Peinkofer and Jin, 2022). Some of the initiatives made by the practitioners include the campaign of chime for change at Gucci. Among research works, one can refer to the project conducted by Khan et al. (2020) that investigated how knowledge of consumers influences the choice to purchase a product, which directly affects revenue.

The comparison showed convergence and divergence of the practitioner and scholarly views on counterfeit prevention. These two sectors acknowledge the multifaceted nature of the problem and can say that individual initiatives aimed at technological or legal factors are not enough (Hoglund et al., 2021). Such alignment will be depicted in the similarity of focus on blockchain technology with the example of AURA application by LVMH Group and the scholarly discussion by Xu et al. (2021). Nevertheless, the fact that they differ considerably in terms of their attitude to the concept of anti-counterfeiting measures is apparent. Although

practitioner literature, according to Peinkofer and Jin (2022), is concerned with practical prevention techniques and immediate income security, the studies by Tang et al. (2021) and Rathi et al. (2023) are more psychological and sociological: the authors investigated the issue of underlying psychological and sociological reasons that precondition managerial decision-making. As Jing et al. (2022) note, this gap indicated that the field of academic knowledge and the practice of industry workers should be more closely intertwined to create more efficient methods of counterfeit detection.

Among the major dissimilarities in the practitioner and the scholarly models relate to the description of the factors affecting the implementation of anti-counterfeiting measures to defend income (Peinkofer and Jin, 2022). Although the industry reports (like in the Luxury Institute) concentrate on the concrete actions and methods to stop the sales decrease, the academic literature explains the psychological and sociological motivations of the managerial decision-making in the use of these actions (Rathi et al., 2023). Illustratively, the TPB, which is used in the scholarly articles, including Tang et al. (2021) in Behavioral Neurology, is a more subtle way of describing how managers intend to adopt the anti-counterfeiting strategies compared to the industry-based methods. There are numerous significant implications by the divergence to the design of anti-counterfeiting campaigns to boost revenue (Jing et al., 2022). Even though practitioners can pay attention to technological tools and legal measures, the academic literature can propose that the attention to the managerial behavior and organizational values might be needed to implement the effective method of revenue protection strategies. The identified gap underscored the importance of increasing academic-industry involvement and coming up with more efficient strategies to deal with imitation fashion items and ensure the continued existence of revenue streams (Hoglund et al., 2021).

## **Alignment of the Project with Literature and Discipline**

The project involved the exploration of the ways in which managers in the online retailing sector adopted effective measures that curb the counterfeit products and boost income in the U.S. online fashion market. The project was consistent with the existing research and solves critical problems in the industry. The project was constructed based on the already known information, especially TPB. This theory has been applied by other researchers to describe the managerial decision-making in the application of anti-counterfeiting measures. Using the TPB to address the problem of fake fashion products, this project was to offer fresh knowledge about fighting the vice and safeguard the revenue channels. In that way, applying this theoretical background to the case of fake fashion items, the project will help advance the knowledge of managerial behavior regarding the use of effective revenue-defending approaches in online retail (Lavoye et al., 2021).

Also, the consideration of technological solutions, including blockchain and AI-based authentication features, is consistent with the modern practice in the industry, as it was the case with AURA by the LVMH Group (Richemont, 2024). This consistency was aimed at making sure that the findings of the research will be applicable to the existing environment of technology applications usage in combating counterfeiting and facilitating the genuine sales (Yu et al., 2021). The integration of the scholarly and practitioner perspectives showed that there are several important concepts that the framework of this project incorporates. Both areas have placed much focus on the importance of technological solutions, and academic research conducted by Yu et al. (2021) was in line with the industry applications, including the AURA platform in the LVMH Group (Richemont, 2024). Anti-counterfeiting TPB framework gave a theoretical basis to the managerial decision-making process when it comes to implementing the

anti-counterfeiting measures as seen by Lavoye et al. (2021). One more key topic was the significance of joint work, and the academic sources advocated for industry programs, including Alibaba Anti-Counterfeiting Alliance (AACA) (Bonato, 2021). The framework used in this project incorporated these aspects by looking at how managers are effective in carrying out revenue protecting strategies but still taking into consideration both the theoretical foundation and practical application. This coordinated strategy made sure that the research offers valuable information to the academic knowledge and business practice on fighting fake fashion products.

New academic studies espoused qualitative inquiry in the discovery of the intricacies of managerial decisions in the dynamic business context. Wang et al. (2023) also noted that the qualitative approach can show more subtle insights into the financial risk reduction approaches, whereas Nyirenda et al. (2020) found it to be appropriate when it comes to addressing complex organizational behavior. Terry and Hayfield (2020) suggest that thematic analysis is an efficient method that helped the researchers to determine meaningful trends within the experiences of participants. More so, Rullani et al. (2021) confirmed the usefulness of semi-structured interviews in fast-changing industries, including e-commerce, because it provides flexibility to communicate new findings and better comprehend operational reactions to counterfeit threats. This theoretical framework enabled a profound insight into the overlap of strategic decisions, technological intervention and financial performance.

The themes of collaboration, expressed in scholarly sources and industry practices such as Alibaba Anti-Counterfeiting Alliance (AACA), were also taken into account in the project to analyze how the managers working in online retail can establish improved partnership with brands and technology firms to further protect revenue protection activities (Bonato, 2021).

### ***Contribution to the Field and Potential Industry Impact***

The project was intended to cover the perceived gaps in the current literature and especially focused on the combination of managerial decision-making and technical anti-counterfeiting to maximize revenue (Hoglund et al., 2021). Although Kouhizadeh et al. (2021) have investigated the ethical dimension of blockchain in supply chain visibility, technology implementation and perceived effectiveness of these technologies have been discussed in reports by industry participants, the current project is expected to fill these gaps by studying how these technologies are implemented and how the managers view their effectiveness in online fashion retail revenue insurance. The gap is part of the necessity of more integrated research solutions, which Shankar et al. (2021) identify in their systematic review of business strategies in digital marketplaces. It will be expected that the implications will be considerable since the project can contribute to creating more revenue-oriented and efficient countermeasures against counterfeited goods (Peinkofer and Jin, 2022). To illustrate, the findings of the project can be used by the online retailers to introduce authentication systems powered by innovative technologies whilst achieving profitability objectives and, consequently, enhancing the usage and efficiency of anti-counterfeiting methods (T. Gupta et al., 2020).

## **SECTION 2. PROCESS**

### **Project Question**

How do managers in the U.S. online retail fashion industry implement and evaluate anti-counterfeiting strategies to protect and enhance revenue streams?

### **Project Design/Method**

In the capstone project, the generic qualitative inquiry will be used to investigate how managers in the U.S. online retail fashion industry apply and assess anti-counterfeiting measures to safeguard and boost revenue streams. This methodological decision can be explained by the fact that the current project is concerned with the processes of making managerial decisions and the complicated connection between the anti-counterfeiting strategies and the revenue protection. Recent studies by Wang et al. (2023) revealed that qualitative methods were effective in eliciting the finer managerial insights into revenue protection approaches. In addition, Nyirenda et al. (2020) demonstrated that qualitative inquiry allows to better understand the decision-making in complex business conditions.

The generic qualitative approach will specifically be ideal in the research purpose of enhancing profitability and market share using the effective anti-counterfeiting strategy. An in-depth discussion of the experience and perceptions of managers in the field will identify subtle anti-counterfeiting policies that directly affect revenue generation, which is the major contributor towards long-term profitability in online retail (Masyhuri, 2022). The approach will allow conducting an in-depth analysis of how the anti-counterfeiting strategies are implemented and evaluated by the managers with the view of safeguarding and boosting the revenue streams. Generic qualitative inquiry is particularly useful in the case of multifaceted business processes (Massaro et al., 2020).

The data will be collected using one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with industry managers to allow a deep look into the intricacies of the application of anti-counterfeiting strategies and the revenue effects of the same. The semi-structured format will give it flexibility to address emergent themes, which is important considering that e-commerce is dynamic (Rullani et al., 2021). The method will enable managers to present in-depth descriptions of their experiences, which will be rich sources of information on the practical challenges and successes in revenue protection (Olatunde & Olenik, 2021).

I am qualified to have formal training in the area of qualitative methods that I acquired during doctoral work at Capella University and professional experience in the field of fashion retail marketing. This history also implies intentional actions to put aside personal prejudices, which are warranting impartial analysis of the research. The combination is very useful to gain insight into anti-counterfeiting issues and revenue protection measures. My experience of conducting interviews in the training of research methods will be utilized by means of active listening, probing and thematic analysis, which will make the participants stay engaged and at the same time the methodological rigor will be preserved.

Although qualitative inquiry is more contextual and informative, it has inherent constraints in the sphere of biasness, generalizability, and personal impact (Dado et al., 2023). This research paper provides an appreciation of various limitations that will be dealt with. The possibility of bias in the data collection and analysis is a major challenge, which is mitigated by reflexive journaling, mentor debriefing, and member checking (Dado et al., 2023). To answer this, the descriptions of the context and characteristics of the participants will be described in detail so that the readers could evaluate the transferability of the findings. The focus on data

saturation will be guaranteed by the recurrence of interviews until the absence of new themes, and the desired minimum is 10 participants (Cavagnero, 2021).

To achieve this, the methodology will use triangulation in the form of member checking and course mentor debriefing sessions with an audit trail to record all the methodological choices. The generic qualitative inquiry method will be systematically employed during the project, whereby the interview questions will be based on the research objectives and the themes that will be identified in the literature review. According to Terry and Hayfield (2020), the data obtained will be subjected to a thematic analysis to determine the patterns of revenue protection strategies. This holistic method will provide strong, believable results and consider and meet the inherent limitations of qualitative research (Pratt et al., 2020).

### **Stakeholders, Participants, and Target Audience**

#### **Stakeholders**

The main stakeholders in this capstone project will be the U.S. online fashion retail managers with direct responsibility on anti-counterfeiting and revenue protection (Cavagnero, 2021). Although the overall context involves various stakeholder groups, the project will be interested in the worldview and experiences of these managers. The secondary stakeholders include customer of fake products who experience the effects of such products, so their satisfaction and the level of trust determine the result (Lamprey et al., 2024), and technology suppliers who can offer anti-counterfeiting solutions. Another group of stakeholders that is essential in a thorough approach to counterfeit prevention includes the American Apparel and Footwear Association (AAFA, 2022) and the government, including the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2023).

## **Participants**

The sample of participants will include online fashion industry managers of the U.S. that have the first-hand experience with anti-counterfeiting. With the aid of the purposive sampling strategy, one will identify at least 10 managers who already have at least 3 years of experience in e-commerce and direct anti-counterfeiting tasks (Adeoye, 2023). The participants will be required to satisfy the eligibility criteria (Adeoye, 2023). The research will focus on hiring a wide range of managers who will represent different geographical areas and cross-market units to give in-depth information about counterfeiting measures in the industry (Shen et al., 2023). The real diversity of participants will, though, depend on the eligibility and will of respondents.

## **Target Audience**

The main target audience will be online fashion retail managers in the U.S. who organize the anti-counterfeiting practice and revenue protection (Trpchevska et al., 2022). The secondary audience is brand owners and manufacturers that are interested in securing intellectual property rights (Seip, 2021), technology providers that create anti-counterfeiting systems (), and legal experts that are concerned with regulating e-commerce, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (). These findings can be used by industry associations, including the American Apparel and Footwear Association (AAFA) to create best practices (The research has practical applications across multiple sectors: executives can create more specific anti-counterfeiting strategies, technology providers can design product development to meet industry demands, and legal experts can unify more efficient intellectual property protection frameworks (W). Whereas consumers are not the main target, they might reap indirectly by having better authenticity of the products and higher market efficiency which might make them trust more the process of online shopping.

## **Role of Researcher**

The role of data collector and data analyst will be held by me in this generic qualitative one since my role can play a great role in the research process and findings. My background of the business administration with an emphasis on e-commerce and supply chain management, and professional experience as the Marketing Manager in online fashion shops, offer healthy background information with a need to pay special care to the possibility of biases. To counteract them, I am going to introduce several bias reduction techniques, such as keeping a reflective journal to record thoughts and decision-making procedures and employing the quadri-hermeneutic methodology of the Jamieson et al. (2023) to conduct a systematic interpretation. Cultural experiences as a first-generation American in the business profession have influenced my views on intellectual property protection and business ethics, which offers benefits in learning various business strategies and recognizing the presence of possible bias (Maxwell et al., 2020). To ensure impartiality, I will take a systematic analytical method of data, I will implement systematic coding procedures defined by Olatunde and Olenik (2021). My analysis will be designed jointly with my instructor at Capella University to make sure that the codebook is consistent and that the bias of a person is minimized (Kyngas et al., 2019).

To validate the results of the research, I will use several strategies, such as the frequent debriefing of the course mentor and member checking of the interpretations with the respondents (Trpchevska et al., 2022). In understanding that my experience in online retail can be seen as a source of power in relation to those I interact with, I will apply the bracketing technique to reflect on my personal experience and consciously look aside my experience in the interview process (Masyhuri, 2022). This background is reflected in the research design in the form of the semi-structured interview and the sampling strategies that focus on diversity in the terms of

company size and geographic location (Chen et al., 2021). I will also uphold empathic neutrality in terms of Maxwell et al. (2020), where I would be entirely engaged but still not judgmental of the views that differ my experience. Such a holistic view of my positioning and bias reduction will assist in making sure that the credibility and reliability of the research results are high and that the impact of my influence in qualitative research is inevitable.

### **Project Study Protocol**

The project protocol indicates a methodological way of exploring the problem of managerial involvement in the use and assessment of anti-counterfeiting measures to safeguard revenue streams in the online retail fashion business in the U.S., based on qualitative research strategy and use of semi-structured interviews. The design will focus on collecting rich information on anti-counterfeiting strategies and their effect on revenue by managers and provide an opportunity to explore views and experiences in this highly dynamic digital marketplace (Adeoye, 2023). The protocol shall utilize purposive sampling in selecting the people who will fit into the set inclusion criteria such as a minimum of three years experience in e-commerce and direct contact with anti-counterfeiting initiatives. The process of data collection will be based on the individual interviews that will examine strategic decision-making, technological interventions, and financial implications and the resulting responses will be thematically analysed with identification of key patterns. The proposed thematic analysis will adhere to the accepted qualitative procedures to facilitate a strict exploration of the emerging themes that apply to the anti-counterfeiting and revenue protection. The application will guarantee both theoretical and functional relevance, which can be used practically to enhance revenue protection and competitive edge in the market (Cavagnero, 2021). The protocol concentrates on two very vital elements of sample strategy and data collection procedures and assures direct

correspondence to the research goals. The protocol design is highly consistent with the purpose of the study to create actionable results that could shape the managerial practice in counterfeit prevention and revenue protection.

### **Sampling Strategy**

This project will use purposive sampling whereby 10-12 managers in the U.S. online fashion retailing business will be used, who have first-hand experience in anti-counterfeiting efforts. As Adeoye (2023) indicates, this approach allows selecting the cases that contain information of interest and are essential in learning anti-counterfeiting strategies and their effects on revenue. The research sample will mainly be based on the doctoral research criteria of the university regarding qualitative research based on interviews, and further be confirmed through the studies of Hennink and Kaiser (2022), Almomani et al. (2022), and Rullani et al. (2021), who aver that saturation can be achieved in 6-12 participants. This range is also supported by other studies developed in the sphere of retail strategy and business analysis, which proves that when the sample size is 8-12 participants, they provide consistent theoretical insight when they have specialized expertise (Lamprey et al., 2024).

The purposive sampling will be explained by the necessity to take participants who have special expertise in the fight against fake products and the preservation of revenue (Rullani et al., 2021). To address the potential limitations and multiplicity risk, the clear inclusion criteria will be formulated, the variety of views will be actively solicited, and the member checking will be used to justify the interpretations (Kyngäs et al., 2019). This will make the findings have an accurate representation of the way the managers think of effective anti-counterfeiting strategies.

The selection criteria will involve participating in anti-counterfeiting practices with at least 3 years of experience, which was determined based on the findings of Almomani et al.

(2022) who stated that managers require 2-3 years to achieve a full picture of anti-counterfeiting measures and Wilson and Grammich (2020) who reported that managers that are 3 years old or more successful in implementing effective anti-counterfeiting measures. The purposive sampling method will be in line with the qualitative methodological framework, which will enable the selection of participants who will be able to offer in-depth and detailed information on their experience in implementing anti-counterfeit strategies and its effect on revenue streams. Such a comprehensive sampling methodology will guarantee that the data captured will be rich and relevant and directly respond to the research objectives without compromising on the methodological rigor by following the set academic guidelines and best practices of conducting qualitative research. The inclusion criteria (participation in the project) were specific to make sure that the selected managers possess the relevant experience and that they can make valuable contributions (Nyirenda et al., 2020).

- The respondents should be in the position of managers of online fashion business based in the US.
- The requirement is that the employees should have 3 years of experience in the US based online fashion industry.
- The employees have experience of putting in place anti-counterfeit measures in the online fashion industry of the US.

The exclusion criteria will involve:

- The non-managerial employees like the administrative staff of the fashion industry in the U.S. The subjects do not want to take part in the research. The online fashion industry was previously associated with unethical practices among the employees.
- Employees who are aware that the researcher will not receive any conflict of interest.

- Friends, relatives, or peers, with whom I have been working or have worked in the past.

The sampling methodology considers the difference in organizational settings in order to be able to get all-inclusive views on anti-counterfeiting measures. Almomani and others (2022) assert the significance of multiple viewpoints in a holistic analysis, which is performed in this project by means of the purposive selection of the respondents who represent various categories of the online fashion retail sector in the United States due to their professional affiliations. In order to control the possible loss of employees, a number of measures will be taken, as suggested by Rullani et al. (2021). Such tactics will involve over-recruiting through bringing additional participants than the targeted number, developing effective communication on the significance of the research, and giving flexibility on the time of conducting the interviews. The participants will be recruited with purpose sampling with the aim of coverage of diverse under-and over-representation of size-specific issues and solutions, and, therefore, representing the entire range of the experiences of anti-counterfeiting in the context of various organizations (Almomani et al., 2022).

To ensure that the participants remain involved and reduce the risk of attrition during the research, a number of plans will be applied.:

- Preliminary confirmation of commitment by way of formal agreement letters.
- Interviews to be arranged in 2-week blocks to keep the momentum.
- Constructing 2 alternative participants as backup participants.
- Creating clear time and expectation lines in the start of the project, these engagement strategies have been proven effective in other research situations on keeping the subjects committed to the research with the qualitative studies.

A comprehensive de-identification protocol will be implemented to ensure participant confidentiality. This includes:

- Replacement of the names of participants with alpha numeric code (e.g., P 1 in the case of Participant 1)
- Elimination of particular name of companies and information.
- Extending the use of the special anti-counterfeit programs that might identify specific organizations.
- By keeping a distinct master list with encryption of decoding between the identity of the participant and the code, it is possible to have the participants talk freely on the sensitive strategies against counterfeiting without the fear of being identified.

The pertinent demographics of the selected population will involve the designations of the managers in the online fashion retail sector, experience in dealing with anti-counterfeiting practices and the nature of the firms they represent. The restricted inclusion criteria and a well thought sample size will make this research have a strong methodological framework. The application of this strategy aligns with the recent researches in the same contexts including Lamprey et al. (2024) who discovered that adequately chosen samples of 8-12 participants were always enough to generate adequate data to saturate theoretical studies on strategic business initiatives. The methodological decisions are also justified by the work by Wilson and Gramlich (2020), who show that small, carefully chosen samples can be extremely helpful in business research in the field and yield more information than large and less specialised samples.

## **Data Collection**

The study will seek to learn how managers in the U.S online shopping business in the retail fashion industry apply and measure the effectiveness of anti-counterfeiting practices to defend and improve on revenue streams. To accomplish the goal of the study, the method will use a generic qualitative inquiry, which involves the use of semi-structured interviews to get in-depth information about the participants (Chen et al., 2021). The study is conducted in a thorough manner and it involves recruiting, screening, consenting the participants, interviewing them and guaranteeing the quality of data collection. The interviews will be done according to the ethical considerations accepted by the Capella University institutional review board (IRB). To facilitate proper transcription and analysis, the interview will be audio-taped with the permission of the participants. All the data will be safely stored in an encrypted and password-accessible external drive that is not stored in the cloud or shared devices. The security precautions related to the interviews are end-to-end encrypted Zoom meetings with unique meeting IDs, waiting rooms, and separate areas of participants and myself. This is a holistic approach that guarantees privacy to the participants and transparency of communication regarding the research process, use of the data, and rights to the participants through the study.

## ***Participant Recruitment Process***

The recruitment of the participants will be a multi-stage process that will identify and involve pertinent individuals in the field of managerial roles in the U.S. online division of retail fashion industry. The industry associations, professional networks including Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and online retail, as well as fashion-related professional networks will be used to reach the potential participants. The invitations will be dispatched through email, which will explain the objective of the project, eligibility criteria, and estimated time commitment to

participate in the project. The email will contain a reference to a pre-screening questionnaire (evaluating the experience of the candidate with the counterfeit prevention strategies and his/her involvement in the decision-making procedures). Non-responders will receive follow-up emails after a period of one week and managers in the companies that have known anti-counterfeiting efforts will also be called. The recruitment will be done in a multi-channel systematic process to select and recruit qualified participants. As a tool of search, LinkedIn will be used with certain filters, which are: anti-counterfeiting manager and brand protection director. An organized follow-up plan will be adopted, which will commence with the first email invitation followed by LinkedIn connection request with personalized message after 3 days, a follow-up email after 1 week and a follow-up call to their business line after 10 days in case of no response.

The recruiting campaign will be further augmented with industry-specific recruitment, such as posting on applicable American Apparel and Footwear Association (AAFA) member message boards, announcements in the Brand Protection Professional Network, as well as recruitment via International AntiCounterfeiting Coalition networks. In order to make the recruitment as effective as possible, the recruitment will employ a strategy of outreach in the form of tiers of major professional organizations. The main collaborations will be built with the American Apparel and Footwear Association (AAFA) and the International AntiCounterfeiting Coalition (IACC) as these organizations have the advantage since they have specialized networks of brand protection experts. I will also be present at virtual IACC working group meetings where I will present the research opportunity and widen my network with potential participants. Furthermore, the advertisements of the recruitment will be placed in the monthly newsletter of the Brand Protection Professional Network and the member portal of American Apparel and Footwear Association (AAFA) (Jemstedt and Mugisha, 2023).

The secondary recruitment methods will involve targeted recruitment via industry-specific social media, including Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn, to contacts, such as, anti-counterfeiting professionals in the fashion industry, and the leaders of the retail brand protection. I will also collaborate with the Asset Protection Committee of Retail Industry Leaders Association (RILA) to distribute the recruitment materials to their member organizations. In every recruitment channel, the specific message that will be used will be tailored to emphasize the relevance of the research to the specific professional network. The next places that will be used to recruit participants will be industry conferences and webinars dedicated to brand protection and anti-counterfeiting, as the events will provide an opportunity to interact with potential participants directly. The screening will be done through an online questionnaire that will be on a secure site. The systematic approach will be employed to hire qualified managers with the U.S. online retail fashion industry. The first associations to be judged in terms of their applicability to anticounterfeiting activity include the American Apparel and footwear association and the international anti-counterfeiting coalition. The organizations were chosen because of their participation in anti-counterfeiting activities and contact with members (at the managerial level) (Adeoye, 2023). The primary involved in initial outreach to the leadership of the association will make sure that the protocols of access are satisfied and the right channels of communication are established to access the potential participants.

After the recruitment, a screening procedure will be introduced to dismiss the participants that do not meet the inclusion criteria. After identifying potential participants, an extensive consent procedure will then be undertaken. The consent forms will be provided electronically through safe mail, explaining the purpose of the project, voluntary participation, the right to quit and data management techniques. The participants will be requested to sign the forms online

with a secure e- signature system (e.g., DocuSign) and submit them prior to the interview. To provide a stronger ethical adherence and comprehension of the participants, verbal approval will be documented at the start of every interview. All the interviews will be taped and verbatim transcribed. Following the transcription, the participants will be given a copy of their transcript to go through member checking to ascertain its accuracy and to give a chance of clarifying or correcting it. The process of validation helps to increase the credibility of the results.

### ***Screening Process***

As soon as the potential participants are interested in the project, the screening process will be initiated to make sure that the potential participants meet the inclusion criteria. This will be done through a quick online survey where questions pertaining their experience in counterfeit product prevention, their organizing role, and the involvement in the U.S. online fashion retailing business, will be asked. The screening will also assist in the initiative of ensuring that the participants are able to offer relevant insights on the research questions that will consequently give strength to the data gathered. The screening will be created to verify the eligibility of the participants according to the inclusion criteria of the study. First, there will be the online survey to confirm the working experience, managerial duties, the number of years of experience in the sphere of online fashion selling, and the direct participation in anti-counterfeiting campaigns. Feedbacks will be screened to make sure that they conform to the study needs. In case of some doubt, short follow up communication will be used to clarify responses or confirm interest. Available information, such as LinkedIn profiles and websites of the companies, will be also surveyed to confirm the up-to-date position and applicability of each participant in the research. This will be a multi-stage screening process that will guarantee that the participants recruited are endowed with the relevant expertise and experience that will make a difference to the study.

### ***Consent Process***

The consent process will provide adequate security to safeguard the information of the participants and keep information confidential during the study in line with ethical determinations of qualitative research with human subjects (Bhandari, 2021; Kaiser, 2019). The DocuSign will be used in the formal consent process to obtain a secure electronic signature based on two-factor authentication. It is a verifiable and convenient way of obtaining informed consent remotely, which is particularly relevant because the respondents in the U.S. online fashion retail sector are geographically dispersed (Jemstedt and Mugisha, 2023).

Besides signed consent, verbal consent will be noted at the start of every interview to refresh the understanding and intent to continue participation by the participants, which will justify further adherence to ethical standards (Dykema et al., 2022). This dual-consent strategy will improve transparency and autonomy of the participants, in such a way that consent will be informed, voluntary, and signed at several stages. The participants will be provided with comprehensive information regarding the purpose of the study, the methods, the protection of confidentiality, their right to leave the study at any moment without any punishment and use and storage of information (Bhandari, 2021).

### ***Data Collection Method: Semi-Structured Interviews***

The main source of data will be the semi-structured interviews, which will be done through Zoom. The durability of each interview will be about 45 to 60 minutes and will be audio-taped with the full consent of the interviewee. The interviews will be semi-structured, which will give an opportunity to have open-ended answers, where participants will be encouraged to describe their experiences and opinions in detail (Secules et al., 2021). The interviews shall be done mainly through a zoom professional account using end to end

encryption with backup being Microsoft teams. Secure phone conference line will be used as an alternative to participants with technical limitations. To achieve the reliability of data capture, a dual recording system will be introduced with automatic supplement through real-time transcription using Zoom software. Transcription verification will be done by hand within 48 hours of every interview, and field notes will be taken during the conversation (Dado et al., 2023). To assure the technical quality and privacy, every interview will be preceded by the pre-interview technical check, the check of the backup recording equipment preparation, and the confirmation that both the interviewer and the participant are in safe and confidential places. The interview questions are contained in the interview guide.

In order to guarantee the data security and confidentiality, all audio recording will be saved on an external encrypted hard drive with a password that will be available only to me. The transcripts will be anonymized, and all identifying information will be taken out and will be stored separately as well as the consent forms and information about the participants. The destroyed raw data will be 5 years after completion of the project as per the institutional guidelines.

Rigor in the data collection process was supported through repeatedly conducted interviews and taking of detailed notes. The transcribed responses of the participants were given after every interview and they were asked to go through them to ensure that they included all the information. The process of this member checking enabled the participants to clarify or elaborate on their contribution, which gave the data high credibility and reliability.

### ***Ensuring Credibility and Trustworthiness***

In order to mitigate the problem of trustworthiness concerning data gathering and analysis in this generic qualitative inquiry project, various procedures will be adopted to have

reliant, credible, confirmable and trustworthy data and findings. An all-inclusive credibility system will be adopted during the study. This qualitative study will be conducted on a structured framework, which will include the credibility, dependability, and confirmability. Member checking will be used to support credibility at two important levels: by having the participants review the interview transcripts and by validating the ultimate interpretations of the themes (Dykema et al., 2022).

The dependability shall be ensured by developing an effective audit trail with the help of the Excel software in which coding decisions and the steps of creating the themes will be recorded in a systematic manner. The interview protocol will be used uniformly to the participants. A methodological consistency internal review will be followed, to make sure that there is a regular documentation and input on my part as well as that of my instructor at Capella University.

The reflexive journal will also ensure that confirmability is increased by noting down the bias, emerging insights, and decision making processes of the interview after every interview. My interpretations will be periodically checked by my Capella University instructor in order to minimize the subjectivity and align them with the views of participants.

It will improve the transferability by giving detailed, rich descriptions of the situation of the U.S. online retail fashion industry, and thorough descriptions of member roles, experience with anti-counterfeiting efforts and organizational features. The scope and boundaries of the study will be defined clearly and will enable the readers to evaluate the applicability of the findings to a similar environment. This is a demanding, multi-level method of trustworthiness that helps in the credibility and reliability of the research results (Kynge et al., 2019; Nyirenda et al., 2020).

## **Ethical Considerations**

This research project will be of significant importance to ethical considerations especially because human participants will be involved. In this section, the main ethical issues that will be identified to be addressed in the project include researcher participants, privacy, confidentiality, data protection, and my positionality. The project will comply with the requirements of the School of Business, Technology, and Health Care Administration and deal with the concepts of The Belmont Report. Participant harm is not expected in this project, but it will still be closely avoided through the application of an extensive risk management plan. Although it will not expose the participants to physical harm, as they belong to the group of online retail fashion industry managers, they can experience emotional stress or professional risks, when discussing some sensitive topics, including counterfeit prevention strategies (Dykema et al., 2022). These risks are going to be mitigated through a risk management plan that encompasses measures that will protect the welfare and confidentiality of the study participants.

### ***Expert Review of Interview Questions***

In order to handle the prospective biases in data collection methodically, a structured interview protocol will be subjected to review by external experts before being used in order to eliminate the presence of leading questions or assumptions. This methodology will make sure that the presence of personal bias is detected and prevented at various levels of the research process. An expert review process will be done before the interviews are conducted to ascertain the integrity and suitability of the semi-structured interview questions. This will entail three specialists, who will be professional specialists and one methodological specialist. The content of the interview questions will be evaluated by two professional experts who are outside the Capella University community to determine suitability to the research topic and the target population.

These professionals will be competent members whose qualifications will include one who shows proficiency in research design on the doctoral level and in the field of the project.

The methodological expert will be able to check the correspondence of the questions in the interview with the selected methodology and to evaluate the general viability of the project design. The permission to review the documents approved will be carried out through the reviewed documents consisting of the cover letter and Expert Review Results form, which will be mailed to every potential reviewer. The review will be done with the aim of ensuring that the questions are comprehensible, pertinent, and can lead to the establishment of the information needed to address the research question. According to the feedback provided by the experts, I made amendments to the content, wording or language used in the interview questions. All the changes were recorded. All the interview questions approved by the IRB will be contained within. The Interview Guide, that will include interview questions, justification and possible probing questions, will also be included in this appendix in a detailed manner.

### ***IRB Approval***

The Capella University approved this study as an Institutional Review Board (IRB) on March 26, 2025. IRB approval helped to make sure that the project satisfies the ethics standards and safeguards the rights of the participants (Bhalla and Bahar, 2023). The IRB was able to look at the design of the project, specifically discussing the way of getting consent, minimizing the harm, or keeping the privacy and confidentiality of the methods. The project was carried out in an approved structured process because by acquiring IRB approval, the research ethics complied from the beginning to the end. The procedure of the IRB approval was exercised in a rigorous order to cover all the ethical aspects. To begin with, a full IRB application package has been prepared and it contains research protocol, informed consent form, recruitment materials, and

data collection instruments. Protections and security of participants, protection of data, and risk reduction were specifically outlined in the application. All materials were also examined by my instructor and expert of methodology before submitting them to make them comply with ethical requirements of Capella University. All necessary changes were done and formally submitted to the IRB (Bhalla & Bahar, 2023). Close contact with the IRB during the process of review was ensured and any question or concern that arose was promptly addressed. No recruitment or data collection process was initiated before official IRB approval was obtained and recorded.

The project was conducted based on the principles of the Belmont Report with concentration on the ethical principles of respect to persons, beneficence and justice. Respect of person was realized through the informed consent and the provision of all the information to the participant about the project goals, risks, and benefits (Bhalla & Bahar, 2023). The beneficence principle was upheld through the reduction of risks to participants and their well-being during the project and maximized potential benefits to participants and the industry (Dror, 2020). Finally, justice was achieved by considering all the participants equally and distributing the benefits of the research fairly and equally.

The compatibility of the research with the principles of The Belmont Report was properly applied during the study process. The method of respect of person was seen in how all participants were informed about the project thoroughly, and the vulnerable participants were looked into, such as providing comprehensive project information in an understandable language, ensuring voluntary involvement, and participant privacy (Dror, 2020). This involved safe data processing practices and dissemination of research results that might be useful to the organizations of the respondents. Justice was also provided by the way the participants were selected and the balanced distribution of research benefits wherein particular care was given not

to exploit any groups of participants based on their professional status / positions in their organizations as sanctioned by IRB.

### ***Informed Consent***

All the participants were informed about the project and gave their informed consent before being engaged in the project. The consent form made it very clear that the research was meant to achieve a certain purpose, that the participation was voluntary, and that there were possible risks and benefits of participating in the research. The informed consent was designed in such a way that it was detailed, and voluntary. The first step involved a thorough information package of the potential participants consisting of (1) the full picture of the project with non-technical language, (2) a sample of questions and issues to be discussed during the interviews, (3) an explanation of how their data will be utilized and secured, and (4) a description of their rights as the participants of the research. All participants were given the choice of one-on-one consultation meeting before the formal consent was given to answer any question or questions that the participant might have. Such critical aspects as confidentiality measures, data security measures, the right to withdraw, and possible professional risks were confirmed in the course of this session (Peinkofer and Jin, 2022). The consent document has been in a format with clear section indentifications and bullet points so as to understand easily and certain acknowledgements were necessary regarding each of the key elements of participation. The participants were told of the right to withdraw at any point in the project and elaborate withdrawal procedures were explained. Verbal confirmation was also acquired at the beginning of every interview to guarantee that the participants are aware of their rights. Although there were no major conflicts of interest expected during the project, a detailed plan was developed to identify and deal with the conflicts that may emerge. There was full openness with participants

and any form of conflict of interest was disclosed in advance and I kept track of any arising conflicts during the project.

Furthermore, the participants were advised to express any issues concerning the possible conflicts of interest that they may have noticed, and this allowed the research to be conducted in an open and ethical setting. This was a multi-dimensional strategy to ensure the highest level of research integrity in the course of the project (Peinkofer and Jin, 2022). The last research work will involve a specific section on my positionality where my background on my involvement in the fashion industry, my possible biases, and steps taken to curb these biases will be explicitly written. It will provide the readers with an opportunity to assess the credibility of the findings and will show that the bias management process is rigorous (Peinkofer and Jin, 2022).

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis in the project will be done using a qualitative approach, a relaxed and open-ended approach that is appropriate in probing in-depth and subjective data. The analysis will be focused on the perspectives of the stakeholders on the effectiveness of anti-counterfeiting strategies in safeguarding the revenues in the fashion industry. To do so, a thematic analysis as an empirically tested interpretation tool will be used to seek common patterns and themes in the data, such as technological difficulties, the effects that counterfeit products have on the revenue, and strategies. The research will particularly adopt the six step process of thematic analysis as introduced by Braun and Clarke (2006) which is a rigorous and systematic approach to the identification process of patterns within qualitative data. This is the methodology that has been extensively proven in business studies, specifically in the study of the managerial decision-making process and strategy implementation (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The chosen method will be especially appropriate in the research of the attitudes of managers towards anti-counterfeiting

practices since it will allow both the semantic and latent analysis of their experiences and perceptions. Manual data analysis that will be done in Microsoft Excel will be used; this option is suitable because the sample size is not very large, and it will be possible to interact with the data a bit more closely. Manual coding on excel assumes subtle, researcher-oriented interaction with data. It encourages a deeper knowledge than an automated coding software which might lose the subtleties of the context (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The analysis will be developed on the basis of the Excel sheet, where several worksheets will be used to trace the development of the codes and themes, and separate tabs will be used in initial coding, theme development, and thematic mapping. All the transcripts and coded information will be safely kept on the encrypted and password-protected computers, and identifiers will be removed to preserve the anonymity of participants during the analysis process (in line with ethical requirements) (Kaiser, 2019). The data analysis will proceed as parallel to the data collection and will continue until there is a thematic saturation, which means that no additional themes and insights are gained, and it is assumed that it will likely be achieved after 10-12 interviews on the same qualitative questions (Hennink and Kaiser, 2022)

The development of the codebook will be iterative according to Braun and Clarke (2006) the process will take a number of important steps:

1. Data Familiarization: I will engage in engulfing the data by reading and re-reading interview transcripts.
2. Initial Coding: I will input the codes on a sheet of the excel spreadsheet against text segments where they apply. The codes will be descriptive labels that will bring the essence of the data. The open coding will be the starting point of the coding process during which I will identify and label ideas and phenomena in the data with no specific

categories. In the open coding, I will initially come up with the basic concepts in the raw data.

3. Theme Development: Categories of codes will be identified in general categories and possible themes. The use of coding based on Excel workbooks will be used to determine relationships among codes as well as come up with more abstract conceptual themes. The thematic map will be developed, and it will visualize the relationships between codes and emerging themes with specific emphasis on the relationship of the emerging themes to the research questions regarding the anti-counterfeiting strategies and revenue protection.
4. Theme Review: Themes will be analyzed about both coded extracts and entire dataset to make sure that they are an accurate reflection of the data. The developments that take place between codes and themes will be recorded following the thematic mapping techniques provided by Braun and Clarke (2006) which highlighted the need to ensure that there are clean audit trails in the qualitative analysis between preliminary observation and ultimate placement of the theme, such that transparency of the qualitative analysis process is maintained. This will assist in ensuring the themes are a true representation of the experiences of the participants and will minimize other chances of biasness. The member checking will be done at two crucial stages.
5. Theme Definition: All the themes will be defined and named clearly and analyzed thoroughly. All themes will have a clear connection with the research questions, how they will help to answer the question and the contribution that they will provide to the real picture of the implementation and perceived effectiveness of anti-counterfeiting strategies in terms of protecting and improving streams of revenue.

6. Production of a Report: Final analysis will be prepared and with clear and attractive extract examples will be chosen. The report will entail a discussion of the relationship between the themes and their help in bringing a holistic perspective of the research problem.

### **SECTION 3: FINDINGS AND APPLICATION**

Being a student of the Doctor of Business Administration degree with the emphasis of organizational leadership and development, my research problem was about the way managers in the online fashion retail business in the U.S. adopt and provide an evaluation of anti-counterfeiting strategies to secure and increase revenue streams. It involved a qualitative inquiry that was generic as it involved semi-structured interviews on 11 industry managers in order to obtain rich information relating to the operational and strategic issues related to prevention of counterfeit products. Purposive sampling was adopted to select those involved in the anti-counterfeiting efforts and the following were the inclusion criteria: managerial position, 3 years of experience and direct participation in the anti-counterfeiting exercises.

Thematic analysis revealed five overarching themes which include technological issues, revenue influence, regulatory and legal loopholes, collaborative approach, and consumer behavior and communication. The present study is a research project done within the Doctor of Business Administration degree program with an emphasis on organizational leadership and development with the core project question being the following: How managers in the U.S. online retail fashion industry adopt and assess the level of anti-counterfeiting measures to protect and support revenue stream? Section 4 presents a general summary of the outcomes and analysis of the study, the main findings of data gathering, conclusions obtained in the process of thematic analysis, practical and theoretical conclusions, and suggestions on future research in the framework of online retail and reduction of financial risks.

#### **Data Collection Process**

Since I was working in the fashion retail sector professionally, systematic bias management strategy was utilized in order to make the research credible and objective. An

extensive, reflexive journal was kept in three column format with the first column containing the day to day research activities, the second one my instant responses and assumptions and the third one examining how these could affect data interpretation. This was systematic journaling prior to and following every interview, with the coding sessions as well as the theme formulation process. Moreover, an external audit trail was developed by holding regular meetings with my Capella University instructor, who individually reviewed sample data of the codified data to ensure the consistency of interpretation and also to determine whether there were possible patterns of bias influencing the analysis.

The member-checking process was carried out in three separate stages during a span of 6 weeks in order to guarantee the accuracy of data and validity of interpretation. To begin with, participants were completely informed about the purpose of the project, possible risks, and their rights prior to involvement, and thus had an in-depth perception of the involvement as it was. Second, the participants were told that they could leave the project without being penalized or having adverse effects on it, thus highlighting that they were engaged in it voluntarily. Third, participants were given their interview transcripts in weeks 1-2 after the interview in order to confirm the accuracy of their statements and give any necessary clarifications, hence creating a base of the accurate raw data. Besides, the subjects were given an option of not answering any questions that made them feel uncomfortable without explanations, which gave them a sense of control over the information they would provide.

Among the 11 interviews we have carried out, we excluded two interviews (P1 and P2) which were not included in the thematic coding as they lacked in-depth information and were not relevant to the main research question. Although these interviews were obtained ethically, they contained little information, they were not detailed, actionable or relevant, and, as such, were

stored within the audit trail to ensure transparency. The rest of the interviews (P3-P11) fit the criteria of the depth and relevance to the research question. The data overflow had become saturated as explained by Hennink and Kaiser (2022) when nine qualifying interviews were reached (P3-P11), and no new themes or codes were introduced by the participant P11.

To facilitate research neutrality, I kept a reflective journal during data collection, which increased self-awareness and reduced interpretive bias, particularly in the context of interview interactions and formulating themes at the beginning of my study. After every interview, the participants were offered to become members of a debriefing session, where they could have the chance to clarify their statements, consider all the remaining questions, and get a sense that they were supported and appreciated in the research.

To secure the professional concerns of the participants, any potentially sensitive business data exchanged in the course of the interviews was anonymized in the final report. This was necessary in ensuring confidentiality and avert any possible professional consequences on the participants. Finally, any data was processed with the highest level of security to avoid unauthorized access or breach which additionally protected the privacy of the participants and confidentiality of research. In this project, especially strong safeguards were necessary to protect the professional and organizational reputational risks of the participants, as the work on anti-counterfeiting measures is quite sensitive, and it may affect the functioning of the enterprise (Bhandari, 2021). As a way of dealing with these increased reputational risks, I adapted a three-tier anonymization policy. On the first level, all identifiers of the participants were changed to alpha-numeric numbers, which do not have any mention of an organization or a level of position. The second level entailed a close scrubbing of any contextual information that could accidentally identify who the participant was like individual market share figures, individual anti-

counterfeiting technology, and individual organizational practices ( The third tier focused on aggregate-level reporting, in which results were reported in such a manner that they did not identify individuals but preserved the research conclusions.

The privacy and confidentiality are necessary to protect the sensitive information of the participants. All identities of the participants were coded, and no identifiable information was provided anywhere in the findings. There was confidentiality through the process of ensuring that all the records were stored safely in encrypted digital files that were solely accessed by the research team (). Based on the principles of confidentiality, all identifying information including the name of companies or particular positions was not included in the final report to avoid any possible breach of trust. The participants were notified of the privacy and confidentiality measures that will be undertaken to ensure the safety of their data, which are mentioned in the consent form.

All the interview tapes and transcripts were locked up in encrypted devices, and none could access them. Back-up files were placed in safe cloud services, and because of the encryption protocols and data protection measures as per the industry standards. The following measures help in assuring that the data of the participants did not face illegal access or leakage (Dykema et al., 2022). Multi-layered data security protocol was adopted in the research process. The industry standard 256-bit AES encryption enabled all the digital data, and files used a special, password-protected external hard drive that was not connected to networks unless it had to be used. Systematic data handling process was applied as below:

1. The recordings of interviews were automatically copied off the recording tools into the safe hard drive and deleted the original recording tool.

2. The transcription was done on a computer which was not connected to the internet.
3. All information that could be used to identify the participants was kept in another encrypted database with a system that has its own unique identifier.
4. Cloud backups were based on the use of zero-knowledge encryption using a secure and university-approved platform.
5. All research data was kept in the form of access logs.
6. Frequent security checks were made in order to check compliance on protocols.

Besides, the communication of all data among members of the research team was done in coded channels and physical documents were held in a locked cabinet in my safe office. These measures are outside the normal institutional requirement and are in tandem with the best practices in securing sensitive business information. There were no direct financial or personal conflict of interest, thus making the research objective. I was able to stay within the boundaries of my profession and made sure all participants did not ignore the voluntary character of the participation. The participants had a right to withdraw themselves at any point with no consequences.

The participants were not provided with too much incentives to participate in the research to avoid undue influence. Rather, they paid off participants with a token of their gratitude. The mode of participation compensation of the study was well-planned without any coercion and undue influence. In a move that was done in consultation with the IRB, the token of appreciation was restricted to a \$25 gift cards, which would be considered as befitting enough to professional participants but not too great as to affect their participation because of it. This was a fixed amount and was offered to the participants irrespective of the duration and intensity of their contribution. This was not mentioned in the initial recruitment to prevent it being a major

motivation to participate in the compensation. The token of gratitude was brought up after the subjects had indicated their interest in the study. Table 11 presents the demographic profiles of the participants of the study in general, covering their roles, the industries they work in and the number of years they have worked in order to put into perspective the qualitative results.

*Table 1*

*Participant Demographics*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Industry</b>	<b>Retail experience (years)</b>	<b>Leadership experience (years)</b>
P1	Manager	Online fashion	3+	3+
P2	Manager	Online fashion/retail	3+	3+
P3	Manager (unnamed)	Online fashion	3+	3+
P4	Manager (unnamed)	Online fashion	3+	3+
P5	Mid-level manager	Online fashion/retail	3+	3+
P6	Quality Assurance Manager	Online retail (health, beauty, electronics)	3+	3+
P7	Manager (Compliance & Anti-Counterfeit)	Online retail (fashion, consumer goods)	3+	3+
P8	Founder	E-commerce (electronics, lifestyle)	3+	3+
P9	Manager	Online retail (fashion, consumer goods)	3+	3+
P10	Operations Manager	Online retail (electronics, health, fashion)	3+	3+

P11	Founder/Manager	Online retail (multiple industries)	3+	3+
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*Note.* Table 1 demonstrates that the demographics of all participants of the interview involve such aspects as role, industry sector, and experience in the retail and leadership field.

The thematic analysis process commenced by familiarizing myself with the data in which I read the transcripts of the interviews collected. Each interview was urged and re-read in order to understand experience and opinion of the participants thoroughly. At this stage, I took preliminary notes on the margins and analytical notes, the first impressions, notable quotes, and possible areas of interest. This served to make me start to identify the common trends connected with anti-counterfeiting tactics, usage of technologies, and revenue security within the online retail sector of fashion in the U.S. The process enabled the reasoned insight into the manner in which managers tell their stories on how to counter the counterfeit activity and guard profitability.

After being conversant with the data, I commenced inductive coding, which entailed a mixture of manual coding and qualitative data analysis programs (NVivo). This included a systematic review of each line of the transcript and coding important statements/ ideas. These first codes were descriptive and were closely related to the language of the participants. This step was aimed at remaining close to the data and not forcing a preset category and letting trends to form naturally. Phase 3: At this stage, I started organizing similar codes under larger conceptual themes. The step included grouping codes that had conceptual similarities, including blockchain tracking, AI detection, and digital traceability, into a broader group called technology implementation. On the same note, other codes including revenue fall, brand devaluation and loss of customers were classified under the financial impact. These clusters assisted in

determining the initial thematic trends that showed how the managers practise and understand the use of anti-counterfeiting strategies.

After identifying the first themes, I tested them on the complete data in order to find internal consistency and external differentiation. In this stage, there was a merging, splitting or elimination of some overlapping or weak themes. I also made sure that every theme was backed up by appropriate data and represented meaningful information to the research question. Three overall themes were conceptually relevant and well named according to the language that was used by the participants. All of the discussed themes represent important aspects of the way managers comprehend and react to counterfeiting threats in terms of profitability safeguarding. At the last stage, I created a final report which linked each of the themes to the overall research question: How do managers in the U.S. online retail fashion industry use and view the effectiveness of anti-counterfeiting strategies in safeguarding and strengthening revenue streams? The report combined quotes of participants, thematic commentary, and theoretical alignment in order to offer a subtle insight on the subject.

The most critical project question that has led to this study is as follows: What are the anti-counterfeiting strategies that the leaders of the U.S. fashion retail companies adopt to secure revenue? In order to answer this question, six-stage thematic analysis methodology suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) was utilized which allowed to conduct a methodical, rigorous analysis of the qualitative interview data. This has started with familiarization and data preliminary open coding, after which there was iterative coding and categorizing data and formulating themes. The first descriptive codes were obtained based on line-by-line transcript analysis and identified repeating patterns connected to the use of technology, financial risks, and involvement in policies (Olatunde and Olenik, 2021). Such codes were further grouped into some wider

categories like technological interventions, revenue vulnerabilities, and collaborative regulatory practices. By further refining, these categories were summarised into three themes that are related to each other: technological challenges and solutions, effects of counterfeit products on the revenue, and regulatory and collaborative strategies to counterfeit prevention. Combined, the themes provide an overall picture of how fashion retail managers put and measure anti-counterfeiting measures into place to protect income and customer confidence (Nyirenda et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2023). The thematic results can be traced to the existing research paradigms in the field of organizational leadership and strategic management, which allows them to be applied in practice and investigated further (Massaro et al., 2020; Montali et al., 2021).

Data collection was initiated by recruiting the participants using LinkedIn, professional groups as well as appropriate networks in the industry. Eleven participants were identified to have met these criterion and interviewed. Participants were all qualified with regards to three main criteria: (a) being in a managerial role within the U.S. fashion retail sector, (b) having at least 3 years of professional experience, and (c) being directly involved in the implementation of anti-counterfeiting strategies. The interviews took place via Zoom and took 25 to 40 minutes. All of these were audio recorded with the permission of the participants and verbal informed consent was obtained and written at the beginning of every interview. Otter.ai was used to generate transcripts and the transcripts were then verified manually to prevent errors. Reflective journaling and peer debriefing were used in the data collection and analysis process to reduce the chances of researcher bias. To be objective and credible, the researcher used reflective journaling to identify possible bias and peer debriefing during the data collection and data analysis processes. Such a qualitative methodology, which was organized and based on ethics, proved to be effective in gathering qualitative, credible, and rigorously verified data, which were further

used as the basis for further thematic analysis, in accordance with Braun and Clarke (2006) framework.

This research interviewed 11 subjects (P1-P11). Each group member was filtered to be eligible according to certain set criteria such as the managerial position in the online fashion retail market based in the U.S., work experience of at least three years, and participation in anti-counterfeiting efforts. The interviews were held based on the ethical standards that had been approved by the institutional review board. To ensure the transcription and analysis, the interview was tape-recorded with the consent of the participants.

All the 11 interviews were undertaken ethically and put down in audit trail documentations, all the interviews P3 to P11 only were coded thematically and finally analysed. The interviews were rich in narratives and they were detailed and thematically harmonized, which is adequate in depth to be given meaning in the research question of the study. Conversely, interviews P1 and P2 were not coded because of the lack of depth and content that would be relevant in the major enquiry of the study. P1 and P2 as the two interviews lacked enough experiential information and knowledge on how anti-counterfeiting strategies are implemented; hence, reducing their analytical worth. The presence of the participation is however recognized and the data are still included in the audit trail to facilitate transparency, credibility and adherence to IRB.

All 11 subjects were interviewed and the story of P1 and P2 were not included in thematic coding because they were rather shallow and the story did not have any significant connection to the research question. The ethics of conducting the interviews were also upheld and are present in the audit trail documentation. The strategy guarantees rigor to the analysis process in addition to maintaining the ethical and procedural integrity in qualitative research. The

ninth interview (P9) resulted in data saturation. Participant transcripts P3 to P11 were used to conduct full thematic coding and the interviews with P1 and P2 were only used as procedural and audit documentation.

All the qualified participants were given an informed consent form through a secure email that contained the purpose of the study, procedures, and confidentiality of information, and rights of the participants. Prior to any kind of interviewing, participants gave electronic signatures of their consent. The process of scheduling was organized via a safe internet tool with participants having the chance to choose comfortable working hours within six weeks.

### **Data Analysis**

The process of data analysis was structured and systematic in revealing, analyzing, and interpreting trends in the data of the interview. The study used the six-phase framework of thematic analysis developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) to identify the knowledge that the participants had on the implementation of the anti-counterfeiting strategies and how the strategies helped in protecting revenues. This method had the benefit of providing analytical rigor and the establishment of meaningful themes of the narratives of the participants. To start with, the analysis was initiated by thoroughly familiarizing the transcripts and preliminarily coding important data excerpts. These codes were then grouped into larger categories and narrowed down into general themes that encapsulated the very essence of the good antitrust counterfeiting measures, and how it helped to protect the institution of organizational income. The synthesis of the results was also significant and provided a vivid picture of the common experiences and perceptions of the participants. The results of each step of the analysis along with representative codes, categorized patterns, and the end themes are described in the following subsections of Section 3 and provide an overall picture of the perception and

implementation of anti-counterfeiting efforts by managers in the online fashion retail sector of the U.S. market.

### ***Phase 1: Familiarization***

In the Phase 1 stage of my data analysis, I have started to transcribe the data I had gathered personally by hiring professional transcribing services, as well as by hand checking. I needed to transcribe each interview meticulously first to be accurate but also to be able to put myself into the language and atmosphere of the participants. I have made a complete transcription of 11 semi-structured interviews, the durations of which varied between about 10 to 16 minutes, and then converted into a text format to analyze it. When I was listening to both audio records I read the transcripts line by line, cross-referencing them to make sure they were accurate, tonal, and emphasized.

All this time, I kept observations in the form of detailed notes and analytic memos, in which I wrote down the first impressions, common thoughts, and interesting observations. I also read the transcripts repeatedly to gain a better insight into the experiences of the participants and start discerning the areas of significance. Among the 11 interviews done (P1–P11), only 9 transcripts (P3–P11) were subjected to complete thematic coding as they were rich and relevant to the research question. Interviews P1 and P2 were held in an ethical manner and were kept as audit documentation but were not coded as they were not profound and relevant enough to undergo any meaningful analysis.

In the familiarization stage, my attention was paid to the description of the roles of every participant, anti-counterfeiting behaviours, and how the participants viewed the concept of revenue protection. I followed the methodology of Braun and Clarke (2006) and engaged myself in the transcripts, highlighting important phrases, adding notes to the appearing patterns, thinking

over the contextual details. To have an in-depth view of the context of the narrative and the intent of the participants, I have thoroughly perused through each transcript several times. In this process, I ensured that I was systematic and reflective in handling the data prior to the coding process (Montali et al., 2021). This intensive familiarization stage formed a sound platform of rigorous and credible thematic analysis, but I left detailed pattern analysis to the following stage.

### ***Phase 2: Coding***

Within the framework of this analysis (Phase 2), I used systematic coding by doing a line-by-line study, examining all the interview transcripts, in accordance with the methodology of thematic analysis. I started by leaving myself in the crude data, making out the common ideas and putting descriptive terms on the appropriate parts of the text. In this process, I did the labelling of all the segments of data through open coding whereby the data would speak by itself without having to assign specific categories to the data. As an illustration, first-level codes like technology mention were formed when the participants talked about their problems in the use or integration of new technologies. They became more specific second-level codes, e.g. blockchain technology and finally, interpretive third-level codes, e.g. technology implementation barriers.

I carefully read each of the transcripts a number of times to make sure that I had captured all the pertinent ideas and coded them accordingly. This process of iteration enabled me to identify 43 different initial codes. I kept notes and memos during the coding process to record new knowledge, code definitions, and situational observations. To plan my first coding practice, I created a structured codebook in Excel which underwent a three stages development: firstly, my development, secondly, peer-reviewed development, and lastly, final development. I have read through them thoroughly and clustered similar codes among interviewees. To mention a few, when handling the technical issues, I gathered the appropriate quotes, including P3 saying:

It is likely to cost us approximately 25 percent of our conversions.... a few million, and P6 noting that: We also use AI-driven systems to identify and report suspicious inventory actions. These were related quotes, which were allocated to the final narrowed code, which was, Technological limitations in detection. This I did in each category, technological, revenue and regulatory and made sure that I had the correct coding. This strategy made sure that the emerging themes were entrenched in the data. During this process, I was making analytical memos and controlled the changing code by version control. After a thorough analysis of interviews with the participants, six final codes were obtained out of the initial 43 which gave the basis on which the subsequent phases developed the categories and themes.

*Table 2*

*Initial Code Development and Refinement*

<b>Section</b>	<b>Code category</b>	<b>Initial Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Supporting Quote</b>	<b>Final refined code</b>
Technological challenges	Detection limitations	Difficulty in identifying counterfeits	Challenges in detecting counterfeit goods using existing tech or manual means.	“Even though we have strong controls, it's impossible to check every single product and seller.” (P11)	Technological limitations in detection
Technological challenges	Integration issues	Difficulty integrating new tools	Complications arise from implementing or aligning new technology with existing systems.	“Sometimes, you know, it takes time to integrate these new tools and systems into our	System integration constraints

				operations fully.” (P11)	
Impact on revenue	Lost sales & conversions	Revenue loss due to counterfeits	Financial impact on sales and conversion rates caused by counterfeits.	“It probably costs us about 25% of our conversions a couple of million.” (P3)	Sales revenue loss
Impact on revenue	Customer churn	Losing repeat customers due to distrust	Counterfeit experiences reduce customer trust and repeat buying behavior.	“Customers who have encountered counterfeit issues are 72% less likely to return for additional purchases.” (P7)	Customer retention decline
Regulatory approaches	Legal compliance gaps	Weak or unclear regulations	Lack of sufficient legal frameworks or enforcement to support anti-counterfeit efforts.	“Clearer legal provisions and stronger enforcement of law are essential.” (P9)	Regulatory enforcement needs
Regulatory approaches	Collaborative frameworks	Need for shared industry standards	The Importance of Cross-Platform Regulatory Collaboration and Data Sharing.	“A shared database updated in real-time across major e-commerce platforms... would serve as an early warning	Industry-wide collaboration imperative

system.”  
(P10)

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*Note.* Table 2 shows the *initial code development and refinement of the project.*

### ***Phase 3: Searching for Theme***

By applying a systematic analysis of the refined Data codes of Phase 2, I was able to determine patterns and conceptual relationships that were significant in the data. I was able to analyze some relationships between codes, categories, and emerging themes as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) in their thematic analysis methodology. I grouped related codes into broad conceptual groups to identify structures behind responses of participants. As an illustration, I was able to classify codes that were associated with technological constraints on detection and system integration constraints under a potential group of technological challenges as both codes represent operational constraints to the establishment of effective anti-counterfeiting systems. Likewise, the codes concerning the loss of sales revenue and the loss of customer retention were classified under the category of impact on revenue since both codes pointed out the resulting financial and reputational losses as a result of the problem of counterfeit products.

In the six-phase process of Braun and Clarke (2006), initial codes (Phase 2) were pooled into an interpretive category (Phase 3), which included a quote by P3 on collaboration with customs was better at detection rate and was coded as a strategic partnership as perceived effective in detection and a theme of regulatory approaches was formed. In a similar way, the fact that P5 said, “If you acquire a reputation of selling fake products, it will be a huge hit, was coded as brand damage, which corresponds to the theme financial impact, and contributed to the revenue impact. The comment made by P8, We added automation... now our support team spends less time on counterfeit issues had to be coded as operating efficiency through automation

and categorized in the operational implementation of technology, which added to the theme of technological issues. Furthermore, the element of regulatory approaches was strengthened as P10 suggested the following insight that was coded as an industry-wide collaboration, A shared database updated in real time across the platforms would become an early warning system, which was aided by the same category regulatory coordination. This analytical procedure facilitated a logical integration of experiences of participants into a sensible theme that responded to the research question directly on how the managers adopt and feel the effectiveness of anti-counterfeiting measures in safeguarding and augmenting the revenue streams.

*Table 3*  
*Code, Category, and Theme Mapping*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Supporting Categories</b>	<b>Representative Quote(s)</b>
<b>Technological Challenges</b>	Technology	“We added automation... now our support team spends less time on counterfeit issues”- P8.
	Digital Tools & Automation	“We use AI-powered systems to detect and flag unusual inventory behaviors.” – P6.
	Integration Barriers	“Initially, it slowed things down... onboarding took longer.” – P10.
<b>Impact on Revenue</b>	Financial Impact	“When counterfeit complaints go up, it’s not just returns—we lose potential customers and spend more on resolving disputes.” – P6.
	Customer Trust & Brand Image	“If you get a reputation for selling fake products... It’s a major blow.” – P5.

	Market Share Loss	“Customers who encountered counterfeit issues are 72% less likely to return.” – P7.
<b>Regulatory Approaches</b>	Partnership	“Collaboration with customs improved detection rates.” – P3
	Development	
	Legal Frameworks & Compliance	“Clearer legal provisions and stronger enforcement of law... are essential.” – P9.
	Industry-wide Collaboration	“A shared database updated in real time... would serve as an early warning system.” – P10.

*Note.* This table illustrates how participant responses were grouped into categories that support the findings.

*Table 4*  
*Categories and Aligned Codes*

<b>Section</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Contributing refined code</b>	<b>Supporting Pattern Evidence</b>
Technological challenges	Detection limitations	Limitations in accurately identifying counterfeit goods using current systems.	- Technological limitations in detection	Participants reported difficulty verifying authenticity due to sophisticated counterfeit packaging (P6, P8, P11).
Technological challenges	Integration issues	Barriers to the effective implementation of new technological systems.	- System integration constraints	Mention of delays and operational disruptions during tool adoption or system syncing (P6, P10, P11).
Impact on revenue	Lost sales & conversions	Revenue loss due to customers unknowingly buying	- Sales revenue loss	Direct losses are estimated in millions due to lost

Impact on revenue	Customer churn	counterfeit goods or leaving the platform. Customers stop buying after encountering a counterfeit due to broken trust.	- Customer retention decline	conversions (P3, P10). Patterns of decreased repeat purchases and lower post-purchase engagement (P7, P9, P11).
Regulatory approaches	Legal compliance gaps	Inadequate laws or enforcement to deter counterfeit distribution.	- Regulatory enforcement needs	Calls for more explicit rules and more support from legal frameworks (P9, P10).
Regulatory approaches	Collaborative frameworks	The necessity for shared standards and cooperation across companies and platforms.	- Industry-wide collaboration is imperative	Emphasis on shared databases and joint enforcement practices (P10, P6).

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*Note.* Table 4 illustrates the alignment of categories with the corresponding codes.

#### ***Phase 4: Theme Review***

The fourth thematic analysis phase was the development of themes, reviewing themes and refining which were the themes generated by clustering the related codes into emerging themes. The first level was the study of how grouped codes demonstrated common experiences or notions among the participants. This analysis was done through comparison of quotes, finding common ground, and justification in the contribution of various codes towards a bigger conceptual story. With the help of this systematic analysis, there were three separate yet interrelated themes that respond to one of the core dimensions of the central research question of the study.

Table 5

Themes from Analysis

Theme	Participant quote	Definition
Technological challenges and solutions in combating counterfeit products to protect revenue	“Fake electronics are so good now that just looking at them isn’t enough. We had to add automation and better detection tools.” - P8.	This theme refers to the limitations of traditional methods in identifying counterfeit goods and the transition toward advanced technologies to safeguard authenticity and operational efficiency.
	“We use AI-powered systems to detect and flag unusual inventory behaviors that may indicate counterfeit activities.” - P6.	Companies implement multi-layered tech solutions, such as AI, QR codes, and digital verification tools, to overcome the sophistication of counterfeit products and protect brand integrity.
Impact of counterfeit products on revenue and market share	“It probably costs us about 25% of our conversions... a couple million.” - P3	This theme reflects the direct financial consequences of counterfeit goods, including loss of revenue, market share, and erosion of customer trust and loyalty.
	“Customers who have encountered counterfeit issues are 72% less likely to return for additional purchases.” - P7.	Counterfeit incidents lead to customer churn, lower repeat business, and damage to brand equity, impacting long-term revenue streams.
Regulatory and collaborative approaches to counterfeiting prevention and revenue protection	“Clearer legal provisions and stronger enforcement of law... are essential.” - P9.	This theme underscores the necessity for government intervention, robust legal frameworks, and standardized regulations to combat counterfeit activities effectively.
	“A shared database updated in real-time across major e-commerce platforms would serve as an early warning system.” - P10.	Collaborative efforts among companies, platforms, and regulators are considered essential in preventing counterfeit entry and supporting sustained revenue protection.

Note. Table 5 shows all the themes with their definitions from the analysis.

## **Thematic Narrative Alignment**

The main research question that informed this study was as follows: What are the anti-counterfeiting measures that leaders of fashion retailing companies based in the United States use to safeguard revenue? The thematic findings that are to follow respond directly to this question. All of the themes have captured one of the important dimensions of organizational strategy, and it shows both tactical implementation and strategic orientation in the fight against counterfeit threats. The first theme that can be identified is the issues of technology and technologic solutions to the fight against counterfeits to ensure revenue is not lost, as it shows how managers use such tools like AI, blockchain, and digital serialization to improve detection and operational efficiency. The second theme, effect of counterfeit products on revenue and market share, demonstrates the financial and reputation cost of counterfeits, and how such threats affect the managerial urgency and expenditure on anti-counterfeit strategies. The third theme, regulatory and collaborative strategies to prevent counterfeiting and recover revenue highlights the significance of cross-sector relationship and alignment of policy to a sustainable and industry wide protection. Collectively these themes portray a concerted effort, in which the leaders consider technology, determine financial risk, and construct regulatory structures to defend profitability. Thus, the results provide a holistic response to the research question as they describe anti-counterfeiting as a multi-layered approach to the research question, rather than a single answer.

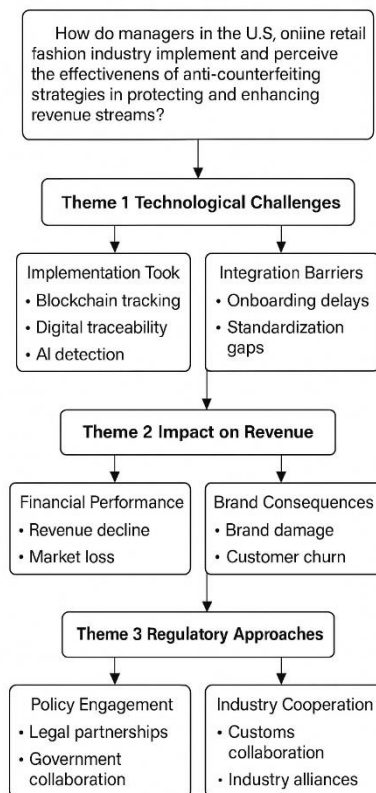
The initial theme, which is technological challenges and solutions in counterfeit products fighting to protect revenue, was resulted because of the constant repetition of the participants in relation to the limitations of manual detection and the transition to technological interventions. The theme is a direct response to the project question since it shows how managers are

embracing and assessing digital solutions, including blockchain and AI, in an effort to reduce counterfeit threats and protect their revenue. Also outlines the strategic importance of technology in enhancing anti-counterfeiting of online fashion retail. This theme constitutes the working problem of staying up to speed with the maturity of fake products and the importance of digital solutions in improving brand protection. This pattern was also mirrored throughout the interviews, with one example of this being P8 observation: “The counterfeits have become so good that all you need to do is look at them once they are so good, then you need to add automation and sophisticated detection devices. Furthermore, in a post by P6, the author stresses that they operate AI-based systems to identify and report suspicious inventory patterns which can be signs of counterfeit operations, demonstrating how companies can use layers of technology to defend their revenue flows.

The second theme, which is Impact of counterfeit products on revenue and market share, was formed due to the constant mentions of monetary loss, lowered conversion, and loss of customer loyalty. The theme directly responds to the project question by showing how the infiltration of counterfeits harms core measures of the business, which makes the managers have specific anti-counterfeiting plans in place. Also shows how threatened by counterfeits is directly linked to the necessity to secure and stabilize revenue flows. This thematic trend highlights the financial consequences of infiltration by counterfeits. Participant accounts were heavily able to support the coherence of this theme, with the participant explanation being that of P3: “It must be about 25 percent of our conversions, a few million. This theme embodies the quantifiable cost in finances and damaged reputation fake goods cause. Further, the fact that P7 found that the likelihood of returning to make another purchase by customers who have experienced counterfeit problems was 72% lower supported the long-term effect revenue of churn.

The third theme, which was identified based on the data, is that of regulatory and collaborative solutions to counterfeiting rate and revenue protection, showing that the structural weaknesses in the legislation and the necessity of the concerted efforts of the industry. This theme is a direct answer to the project question as it shows how managers enlist the assistance of regulatory frameworks and inter-organizational partnerships to strengthen their anti-counterfeiting campaigns. It also indicates that external collaborations and legal adherence are also aspects that are important in long term revenue safeguarding strategies.

*Figure 2*  
*Thematic Analysis Map*



*Note.* Figure 2 illustrates how categories emerging from codes converge into themes that directly respond to the central research question.

The thematic map shows distinctive themes, such as the AI-verification and blockchain integration, the revenue protection and brand erosion, and the policy alignment and collaboration in cross-sector. These themes are based on the codes generated by participants such as blockchain tracking, revenue decline and customs collaboration, which were grouped into categories such as Technology implementation, financial impact and partnership development. The information layout of the map supports the connections among internal strategies (including tech adoption), perceived implications (including lost revenue), and external enablers (including legal frameworks) that underline the complexity of the issue of anti-counterfeiting practices in digital fashion retail.

This theme implies that participants consider sustainable solutions to need more powerful legal frameworks and multi-stakeholder involvement. The regulatory concern pattern was quite clear and an occurrence is described by the observation of P9: “Strict regulatory provisions and increase in enforcing the law are necessary. This theme reflects a wider appeal to change the system. Coherence of this theme was also confirmed by the fact that P10 is quoted saying: A shared database real time updated on all major e-commerce platforms would act as an early warning system and this shows what is perceived to be the value of collaboration across platforms.

On the second level of analysis, I examined these themes in terms of internal logicity, external specificity, and consistency with the guiding question of the study concerning the perception and implementation of anti-counterfeiting strategies by managers as a way of safeguarding revenue. This review in a nutshell ensured that the themes were accurate reflections of the experiences of the participants and that they were based on individual descriptions as well as general patterns. The combinations of themes demonstrate a stratified interpretation of the

operational, financial and institutional aspects of counterfeit prevention. It was in this in-depth review procedure that I narrowed down and perfected the themes and owed to this process that I was able to reflect the complexity and richness of the lived experiences of the participants.

### ***Phase 5: Defining and Naming***

Heavy analysis guided by the thematic analysis approach advocated by Braun and Clarke (2006) have enabled me to come up with well-developed themes that represent patterns of meaning regarding how the managers of U.S. online fashion retail business view and enforce anti-counterfeiting measures to defend their revenues and market share. The themes of each are a reflection of a different aspect of the lived experiences of the participants, such as the technological side of the barriers and innovations, the financial aspect, and the necessity of regulatory and collaborative frameworks. These themes were not individual observations but, instead, interrelated stories that added competence to understand the complexity of fighting fake products in a dynamic digital market. The emergent themes provide a subtle view of strategic leadership, operational issues, and institutional voids and have practical implications to the industry practitioners, policymakers, and scholars.

#### **Theme 1: Technological Challenges and Solutions in Combating Counterfeit**

**Products to Protect Revenue:** This theme emphasizes the operational and strategic dilemmas that managers in the online fashion retail business in the United States have to overcome in their bid to fight some of the more advanced counterfeit threats. The first conceptual pattern, the constraints of the traditional approaches were formed based on the accounts of the participants that the manual inspections and traditional quality checks are no longer enough. To illustrate, P8 has observed that fake electronics are so excellent that one does not need to look at them just to

know their quality. Meanwhile, P6 highlighted that they recreate packaging with high precision, thus, determining the ineffective nature of visual recognition on its own.

To overcome these weaknesses, a large number of participants talked of incorporating modern technologies. This shift was manifested in core codes e.g. AI-driven detection platforms and authentication technologies e.g. QR codes. P6 shared, we use AI-driven systems to identify and indicate suspicious inventory behavior whereas P10 described the application of serialization and authentication technology. Such technologies do not only improve the accuracy of detection, but also improve the process of operations. In line with the Phases 4 and 5 by Braun and Clarke (2006), these codes were evaluated on coherence, broken down meaningfully, and narrowed down into a theme that represents the actual use of the technological interventions as well as the perceived success of the interventions.

Consequently, a third trend, operational efficiency by automation, was always noticed. P8 reported that automation enabled support teams to spend less time on counterfeit complaints, and P6 said that almost 50 percent of the time spent on QA inspection was reduced. Another theme was also an indication of an incremental pattern in the tech intervention, as the participants reported about multi-point verification systems that were integrated through the supply chain, such as warehouse inspections to digital listing validation. As an illustration, P6 and P8 talked of verifying product packaging at the warehouse level and digital verification before listing, respectively. Nevertheless, regardless of these developments, the problems with the tech integration were reported. P10 admitted that the first delays were because of the onboarding new systems, saying, “In the beginning, it slowed down. This subtheme demonstrated the transition pressure that businesses go through when embracing new tools.

*Table 6*

*Theme 1: Technological Challenges and Solutions in Combating Counterfeit Products to Protect Revenue*

<b>Conceptual pattern</b>	<b>Core codes</b>	<b>Pattern evidence</b>	<b>TPB Domain</b>
Limitations of traditional methods	- Technological limitations in detection	“Fake electronics are so good now that just looking at them isn’t enough. ” - P8. “They replicate packaging with high accuracy.” - P6.	Attitude toward behavior
Adoption of advanced technologies	- AI-powered detection systems - authentication tags & QR codes	“We use AI-powered systems to detect and flag unusual inventory behaviors. ” - P6 “Serialization and authentication technology is used. ” - P10	Perceived behavioral control
Operational efficiency through automation	- System integration constraints - improved verification speed	“We added automation... now our support team spends less time on counterfeit issues.” - P8 “QA inspection time cut by nearly 50%.” - P6	Perceived behavioral control
Stage-wise tech intervention	- Multi-stage anti-counterfeit checks	“We validate product QR codes and packaging inconsistencies at the warehouse stage.” - P6 “Digital verification before listing.” - P8.	Attitude toward behavior
Challenges in tech integration	- Integration and onboarding delays	“Initially, it slowed things down; onboarding took longer.” - P10	Perceived behavioral control

*Note.* Table 6 presents Theme One and its alignment with the TBP framework, along with the corresponding codes.

Theme 1 deals with the technological approach and the organizational adaptations that the organizations make to fight counterfeit products which is directly related to the domain of attitudinal of TPB. The manifested discontent with the old-fashioned detection techniques (i.e. visual inspections or manual review of the packaging) indicates an unfavorable attitude towards the after-outdated techniques. The perceived element of behavioral control is consistent with the introduction and use of AI-powered detection systems, the use of QR codes, and automation. It

helps to strengthen the perception of the ability to initiate change in companies when companies report a decrease in the time of inspections and faster detection of counterfeiters, which, according to the TPB, supports intention to continue or further increase the behaviors. The issue of the conflict between the potential of the technologies and the issues of the integration is also considered in the theme, and it brings to the practical picture of the behavioral control more sophisticated. Despite the effectiveness of the systems, integration delay and complexity of onboarding imply the extent of control limits and can influence the behavior of implementation.

**Theme 2: The Impact of Counterfeit Products on Revenue and Market Share:** The second theme is the discussion of direct and indirect effects of the fake products on the financial performance and competitiveness of the brands. There was the concern of loss of sales and conversions. This was evidently depicted in P3 as he wrote It will be about 25% of our conversions, a couple million. This is a pointer to the sucking of potential revenues and discouragement of the possible customers who purchase the fake products. Almost similar customer distrust and churn was the second challenge. Customers that consume counterfeit products unknowingly will lead to negative reputation in terms of trust hence will have an effect of loss in a repeat business. This was confirmed by the P7 that said, 72% of the customers who had experienced some counterfeits will never revisit it. These sentiments highlight the aspects of future outlook of customer retention and loyalty.

The respondents also emphasized the fact that poor brand image which is brought about by the counterfeiting activities. The P5 explained that when you achieve a record of selling counterfeit goods, it is a giant setback and this is one of the reasons why counterfeit incidents always damage the brand loyalty that has been established. This damage can be equated to pressure on working resource as companies have to engage in complaints, returns, and loss-

reduction procedures. This was advocated by the P9 who contended that the returns on false suspicions have been reduced because it was time and money consuming. Finally, the market share decline was also stated as one of the areas of concern. Other respondents (e.g., P3, P6, P10) mentioned all the competitive drawbacks of the infiltration of counterfeits. When the realness guarantee is missing, the customers are able to shift to the competition who may be deemed more reliable. This shows the economic and strategic desperation of effective anti counterfeit actions. Such trends were simplified and condensed into a coherent account in Phases 4 and 5 of the Braun and Clarke model to establish a connection between risk perception about financial risk and managerial approach.

*Table 7*

*Theme 2: Impact of Counterfeit Products on Revenue and Market Share*

<b>Conceptual pattern</b>	<b>Core codes</b>	<b>Pattern evidence</b>	<b>TPB Domain</b>
Loss of sales and conversions	- Sales revenue loss	“It probably costs us about 25% of our conversions a couple of million.” - P3.	Attitude toward behavior
Customer distrust and churn	- Customer retention decline	“Customers who have encountered counterfeit issues are 72% less likely to return for additional purchases.” - P7.	Subjective norm
Negative brand perception	- Damaged brand image	“If you get a reputation for selling fake products, it’s a major blow.” - P5.	Subjective norm
Operational resource strain	- Increased complaints and returns	“The number of returns due to fake suspicions has reduced, which used to consume time and cash.” - P9.	Attitude toward behavior
Decline in market share	- Competitive disadvantage	“These fakes hurt not just sales but also how people see our brand compared to others.” - Implied in multiple accounts (P3, P6, P10)	Subjective norm

*Note.* Table 7 illustrates theme two and its alignment with the TBP framework, along with the corresponding codes.

The second theme is the dramatic change in attitude among the managers who get direct financial losses caused by the use of counterfeit products. According to the TPB, the negative outcomes lead to the enforcement of the negative attitudes toward passivity or minimum interventions, which in turn triggers more violent anti-counterfeit measures, which are consistent with the revenue protection objectives. Subjective norms include customer mistrust and negative brand perceptions and the expectations of others have an impact on the intention of an individual. Social pressure among stakeholders, consumers, and partners is high when the customers no longer come back after experiencing fake products or when the brand equity is destroyed in the eyes of the people. The pressure of operation, which is clear in the cases of resource-intensive processing of complaints, supports the necessity to work on preventive measures. This reinforces the behavioral intention to act which the TPB affirms is strongest when all three domains of attitude, norms, and control are activated.

**Theme 3: Regulatory and Collaborative Approaches to Counterfeiting Prevention and Revenue Protection:** The third theme deals with structural and systemic measures that are needed to help in successful counterfeit counteractions at the industry level. Several interviewees complained that there is a deficiency in effective legal frameworks, and the absence of proper regulations and effective enforcement systems. P9 had taken this feeling: “There is a need to have clearer legal provisions and enhanced enforcement of law. This fundamental code discloses disjuncture between the policy and practice, which exposes the retailers to exploitation.

Also, the absence of standardized industry standards was apparent. Some interviewees, including P6, P7, and P9 observed that the inconsistent compliance requirements among platforms enable counterfeiters to bring forth regulatory loopholes. The disjointed aspect of the existing enforcement measures presents serious problems to retailers who are trying to ensure

quality assurance practices remain consistent. In the realization of this, the participants were firm in supporting cross-sector cooperation. P10 suggested that an inter-platform real time database be developed across key e-commerce platforms... [as] an early-warning mechanism], and this is indicative of a need to have industry-wide solutions. Equally, transparency and information sharing were regarded as important elements. P11 was an explanation of how the consistent communication with the brand partners assisted in determining any emerging counterfeit trends faster and more efficiently.

Finally, participants recognized the importance of consumer education in preventing counterfeits although many emphasized that consumer education needs to be supported by systemic assistance on a larger scale. P3 and P4 also mentioned that although it is necessary to educate customers, it cannot be done without institutional and policy-level support. The last pattern of thought is that a holistic strategy of regulation, cooperation and engagement with the population is desired to protect both the revenue and the brand. All these thematic interpretations jointly show how the issue of technological innovation, financial implications and structural regulation intersect in the fight against counterfeiting of the online fashion retail industry. All themes are deeply rooted in the stories of the participants and have different yet related aspects of the strategic leadership and revenue protection. These insights were narrowed down into a theme, through the Phases 4 and 5 of Braun and Clarke, which explains that alignment of strategy with regulatory systems will improve the effectiveness of the implementation.

Table 8

*Theme 3: Regulatory and Collaborative Approaches to Counterfeiting Prevention and Revenue Protection*

<b>Conceptual pattern</b>	<b>Core codes</b>	<b>Pattern evidence</b>	<b>TPB Domain</b>
Need for stronger legal frameworks	- Regulatory enforcement needs	“Clearer legal provisions and stronger enforcement of law are essential.” - P9.	Subjective norm
Lack of uniform industry standards	- Inconsistent compliance practices	“Different sellers follow different rules, and it creates gaps that counterfeiters exploit.” - Implied across participants (P6, P7, P9)	Subjective norm
Importance of cross-sector collaboration	- Industry-wide collaboration is imperative	“A shared database updated in real-time across major e-commerce platforms would serve as an early warning system.” - P10.	Perceived behavioral control
Information sharing and transparency	- Platform integration for authentication	“We stay in touch with the brands and update each other on how to spot fake products.” - P11.	Perceived behavioral control
Consumer education support from policy	- Public awareness initiatives	“Educating customers on spotting fakes is essential, but it needs broader backing.” - P3, P4 (customer education tied to broader systemic support)	Attitude toward behavior

*Note.* Table 8 illustrates theme three and its alignment with the TBP framework, along with the corresponding codes.

Theme 3 explains the impact of subjective norms on managerial behavior by industry-wide expectations and regulation pressures. The respondents are showing a perceived need in tighter legal regulations and unified regulations among sellers. The TPB states that when managers believe that the norms (legal or social) support a more restrictive compliance, they will be more willing to behave in a similar way, not only because they want to defend their revenue but also because they do not want to lose their reputation in the ecosystem of the industry.

Intersectional cooperation and integrating platforms are viable initiatives on which organizations can strengthen their perceived behavioral control.

### ***Phase 6: Defining and Naming***

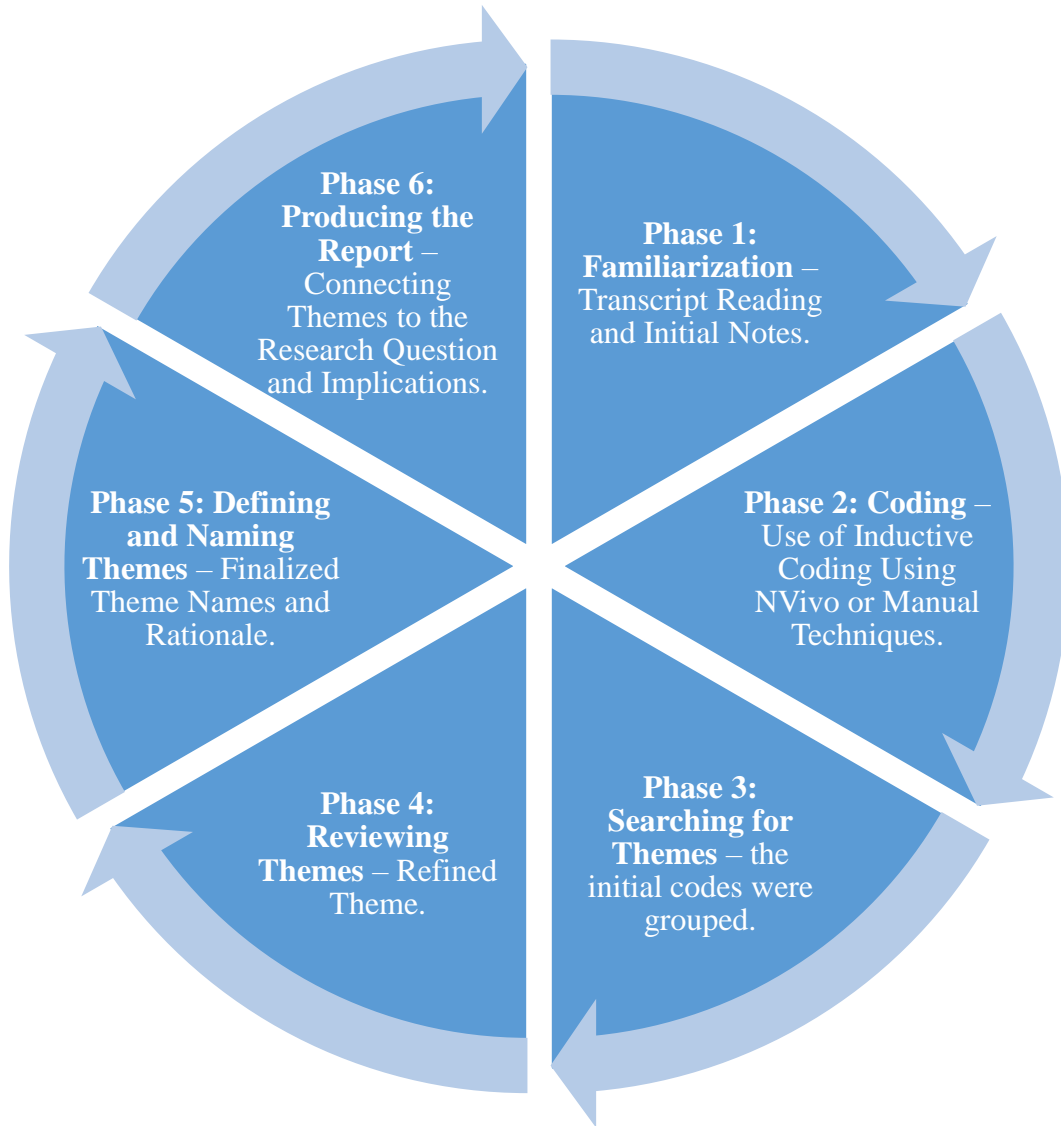
The systematic thematic reporting process eventually developed the analysis by including bright quotations of the participants to illustrate the key findings and ensure conciseness, thoroughness, and interest. I used a similar approach as Braun and Clarke (2006) when building themes, and the patterned meaning is conveyed across the entire set of data, the interesting snippets of the data were selected to convey the key message of the corresponding theme. The three themes identified in this report (1) the technological challenges and remedies in combating counterfeit products, (2) impact of counterfeit products on revenues and market share and (3) regulatory and collaborative initiatives to curb counterfeit and gain protection of revenues are interrelated. The combination of all these themes results in a nuanced and in-depth understanding of how the managers of the online fashion retail sector in the U.S address the issues of anti-counterfeiting processes.

The connection of the themes is one of the signs of the complexity of the research problem. Technological issues and solutions have a direct effect on revenue outcomes. The counterfeits are likely to be infiltrated without proper detection mechanisms, and this negatively affects brand trust and sales are less likely (Wang et al., 2023). The financial cost of counterfeiting, in its turn, results into alarming calls of the broader regulatory support and the cross-cutting industry-wide implementation (P9, P10), which indicates the interdependency between the internal processes and the systemic factor. This triangulated knowledge can be improved through member checking, peer debriefing, and maintaining a transparent audit trail (Dado et al., 2023).

Use of voices of participants in the report is in a strategic manner to support analytics as shown in the statement of P8 who said, Fake electronics are so good now that one can no longer look at them and P3 who said that counterfeit issues cost them 25 percent of the conversions. These graphic illustrations bring about the abstract ideas to life and give real-life scenarios of the findings. This report would render the research credible, confirmable, and replicable and eventually would be not only academic but also practical, having brief and dense descriptions and evidence-based information ( Montali et al., 2021; Nyirenda et al., 2020).

***Figure 3***

*Braun & Clarke Six-Phase Analysis Framework*



*Note.* Figure 3 illustrates Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase thematic analysis process, which guides coding, theme development, and reporting.

### **Application and Benefits**

Forgery still remains a major issue in terms of mitigating financial risks, brand loyalty, and customer confidence in the entire online retailing field in the world. The current study provides useful information on the manner in which organizations, specifically in the online fashion retailing industry in the U.S., respond to these challenges in a strategic manner, and at

that level, using technological, managerial, and regulatory strategies. When answering the project question, which is: How managers in the U.S. online retail fashion business adopt and review the use of anti-counterfeiting tactics to safeguard and develop the revenue streams? the findings show how decision-makers utilize and assess the use of anti-counterfeit measures in their actual business activities.

### ***Practical Benefits for Organizations and the Industry***

The findings of this paper have substantial implications to the online fashion retail companies in the United States to enhance financial risk reduction measures by incorporating anti-counterfeiting efforts. As it was stressed by Wang et al. (2023), AI-driven detection and serialization solutions are needed to improve the fight against counterfeits, safeguard income, and create operational resilience in the digital retail world. Since fake products are becoming more threatening to customer confidence, company reputation, and bottom-line, the study identifies the particular technologies and management strategies that may be implemented to address such risks (Terry and Hayfield, 2020). As an example, the research highlights the importance of artificial intelligence, serialization, and multi-layered verification systems as effective solutions to counterfeit goods identifying and stopping their availability in digital markets (Wang et al., 2023). These findings equip organizations with the evidence-based practices to boost the operational security and simplify authentication procedures. Results also indicate potentials of coming up with specific managerial training programs and educating policy efforts with the view of tightening the anti-counterfeiting actions and revenue safeguards.

In addition to internal activities, the research also provides strategic recommendations on the ways fashion retailers can combine the efforts of their anti-counterfeiting initiatives with more general objectives of financial risk management. As noted by Nyirenda et al. (2020), the

intricate connections between economic performance and managerial decision-making were only uncovered in the context of the qualitative inquiry. To illustrate, the theme of the effects of counterfeit products on revenue and market share has shown that customer churn and sales losses are directly connected to the infiltration of counterfeit products, which can be used to plan resources and invest in preventive measures (Masyhuri, 2022; Olatunde and Olenik, 2021). These findings confirm that the implementation of technological solutions does not only safeguard intellectual property but also helps to preserve customers and brand competitiveness.

### ***Broader Applicability Across Sectors***

Although the study is based within the context of the U.S. online fashion retail sector, the study results are more applicable to other industries that are prone to counterfeit products which includes electronics, pharmaceutical, health supplement, and luxury products. Nyirenda and colleagues (2020) discovered that traceability-based anti-counterfeiting systems based on stakeholder collaboration could be applied to other industries, such as pharmaceuticals, luxury items, and electronics, thereby supporting the notion of the applicability of the strategies described in this project. The project question calls out a further insight into the strategic, technological, and collaborative reactions to counterfeit dangers, which are becoming more extensive in cross-industrial. Those organizations operating in these related fields can use the knowledge gained in the study to review and enhance their anti-counterfeiting systems, especially in the fields of digital authentication, AI-based detection, and product traceability systems. Rullani et al. (2021) also discussed the need to have adaptive and scalable anti-counterfeit structures to industries that are involved in complex and fast-moving supply chains. This has been strengthened by the present research that demonstrates how the fashion retail managers can utilize technology to not only avoid making losses but also to increase consumer

confidence and insure future revenues. In addition, the focus on regulatory collaboration and contact-level integration presents a template that can be copied by industries that are equally vulnerable to the threat of digital counterfeit. The findings can also be used by government agencies like U.S. Customs and Border Protection, international trade enforcement agencies. The information help develop industry-wide data-sharing practices and coordinated enforcement criteria that are in line with the intellectual property protection recommendations. This study offers an example of how managers of the private sector can work along with the support of customs, legal teams, and partners in the industry to determine authenticity and block entry-points of counterfeits, which can be used to justify the idea of public-private collaboration to reduce the points of counterfeit penetration. These alliances are necessary in homogenizing protection activities across borders and platforms so as to elicit the security of the commercial and consumer interest in the online market.

### ***Contribution to Theory and Literature***

The theoretical perspective of this study directly proves the project question because it relocates managerial responses within predefined frameworks of organizational leadership, strategic management and operational resilience. Technology application in anti-counterfeiting cases will add to the overall body of literature in the digital strategy by proving the role of user perceptions in determining the success of an implementation, which is one of the fundamental concepts that the current project can implement the TAM framework to achieve. The research contributes to existing knowledge by studying how technological innovation is operationalized by mid- and senior-level managers to deal with the threats of counterfeiting and achieve profitability objectives. The perspective seals a considerable gap in existing literature since the implementation of anti-counterfeiting and financial risk mitigation strategies are largely

unexplored when it comes to e-commerce and retail (Almomani et al., 2022; Massaro et al., 2020). Also, the study adds to the accumulated knowledge on adaptive decision-making in complex environments as stressed by Montali et al. (2021). As it is evident in the study, the perceptions and actions of managers can help in understanding how managers process the uncertainty and combine regulatory, technological, and operational strategies to protect revenue. The central themes of technological integration, financial vulnerability, and regulatory collaboration, in general, provide a conceptual framework to be able to answer the project question, as well as inform future research and business practices. The study is an improvement of theoretical models of digital transformation and strategic adaptation in reaction to outside market threats, especially in the context of online retail fraud, by capturing real-world situations of implementation difficulties and strategic solutions.

#### ***Addressing Gaps and Offering New Approaches***

The research covers a huge gap in the literature literature since it addresses the intersection of counterfeiting, financial risk mitigation, and strategic leadership as it applies in the U.S online fashion industry. As Masyhuri (2022) pointed out, there is no supporting qualitative understanding of how managers are responding to counterfeit threats, and this project will fill this gap by interviewing online retail leaders about their experience and how they make strategic decisions. Although the available literature has been researching on counterfeit detection by technological or legal approach, not many studies have approached the subject based on the managerial experience and organizational response. This study can be considered a new methodological and conceptual input because it brings the lived approaches of managers through the counterfeit risks as they are experienced in the real-time. This way, the results provide novel methods of problem-solving and decision-making processes inside and outside the

fashion retail sector. The study enhances the operational integrity of operational markets not only by aligning anti-counterfeiting with revenue increment and customer confidence, which strengthens the competitive landscape of the digital arena, but also increases the sustainability of operations in the long term.

This synthesis captures the extension of the research findings to the U.S. online fashion retail industry and provides a practical benefit to the various stakeholders including; retailers, policy makers, regulators, and cross-sector industries. In the case of retailers, the introduction of new technologies and strategic decision-making has a direct positive effect on the operational safety and consumer confidence. To the policymakers, the results are used in the development of uniform enforcement mechanisms and facilitation of the establishment of partnership between the private and the public. The regulators get practical information on upgrading the cross-border and platform-based enforcement mechanisms. Lastly, transferability of the technological tools and collaborative frameworks can be evidenced by the fact that these strategies are applicable to other high-risk industries. This multi-stakeholder view emphasizes more on the generalizability and applicability of study findings across a wider range of stakeholders, which further supports the study in its contribution to the academic and practical worlds.

### ***Theoretical Framework Alignment***

All of the five themes are related to the theoretical framework guiding the study considering that each of them demonstrates the managerial attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control as the factors that affect the application of anti-counterfeiting measures. The first theme Technological Challenges in mitigating Counterfeit Products to Protect Revenue is very similar to the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), specifically, the Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use constructs (Suominen, 2023). Respondents

referred to the use of AI, blockchain, and serialization technologies as a means of improving operational efficiency as well as enhancing the accuracy and speed of detecting a counterfeit. The fact that they are ready to introduce these systems shows that they are convinced that these tools are useful in securing the sources of revenues, which supports the claim of TAM that the interpretation of the usefulness of technology is one of the key factors that influence its adoption (Suominen, 2023).

This study results are consistent with the TAM since they explained how the perceptions of usefulness, ease of use and willingness to act influence the managerial decisions in respect to anti-counterfeiting strategies. All the themes aid or elaborate the constructs of TAM in significant ways. The perceived usefulness is represented by the participants focusing on the direct impact of technologies (AI, blockchain, serialization) on the better detection of counterfeits and protection of revenue, which proves the assumption that they benefit organizational performance (Suominen, 2023). An example is when P6 said that they utilize AI-powered tools to identify and report on suspicious suppliers of inventory, and P1 said that they used blockchain to track their products. Perceived ease of use is experienced in remarks concerning the integration and feasibility to operate such technologies, although it may be difficult to board at first. Managers recognized that automation had helped cut down on support workloads, streamline processes thus supporting the value. In this respect, P8 commented, we automated... our support team does not have to work so much on the counterfeit matter now, and P6 commented, QA inspection time was decreased approximately by half. Behavioral intention is associated with active involvement and commitment of the participants to anti-counterfeiting measures such as developing legal partnerships with the regulatory standards and using technology regardless of the resource requirements. Moreover, as indicated by P3, and stressing

by P10, P3 stated, “Working with customs enhanced detection rates, and P10 stated that a common database updated in real time across platforms would become an early warning system. There was a strong desire of the managers to take action due to the perceived strategic value of these tools to enhance brand protection and increase profitability (Wang et al., 2023).

Theme Two, Counterfeit Products on Revenue Impact, supports the principle of Perceived Usefulness that can be found in TAM, because, in all the cases, the participants mentions that counterfeit activity has a devastating impact on revenue, retention of customers and the brand credibility. The level at which anti-counterfeiting measures and technologies are regarded as successful in reducing these financial risks have a significant impact on the decision-making of managers. It has been noted that the more a system is perceived to be helpful in improving the performance, the more it is likely to be adopted (Tang et al., 2021). Here, the study participants interpreted anti-counterfeit efforts as the necessary steps to preserve profitability and trust, which justifies them as strategic investments in such technologies (Wang et al., 2023). Regulatory and Legal Gaps to Counterfeit Prevention is the third theme, which builds upon the TAM framework by highlighting the presence of external variables, such as legal requirements, cross-platform information sharing, and enforcement of legal regulations, in shaping the adoption of technologies (Suominen, 2023). Although TAM is more a concept at the individual level, acknowledgement, the participants in this research indicated that the systemic issues, including the maintenance of consistent legislation and collaboration with the entire industry are also important in influencing the enactment of anti-counterfeiting strategies. These results indicate that the incorporation of institutional and environmental factors into TAM facilitates its usability to organizational and inter-organizational environment (Rullani et al., 2021).

Combining with the fourth theme of communication strategies, the construct of perceived ease of use in TAM is supported by the presence of the fourth theme of operational transparency and stakeholder engagement, which promotes technology adoption. The respondents highlighted the significance of effective interdepartmental and international communication that would help install anti-counterfeit technologies efficiently. Easy guidelines to follow in using systems, interdepartmental harmonization, and frequent training programs minimized resistance and instilled confidence in online tools. In an illustrative case, P8 wrote, We added automation... our support team now has to spend less time on counterfeit issues, which can highlight how efficient communication can be used to help internal comprehension and regular usage of new platforms. These lessons indicate that well-integrated communication systems can contribute to the increase in the perception of ease-of-use and decreasing the levels of friction during the implementation process (Wang et al., 2023).

The fifth theme is consumer behavior and communication that correlates with the TAM attitude towards the use and behavioral intention constructs mainly in the way that managers perceived customer trust and engagement to be the keys to successful technology integration. The respondents cited consumer education and open communication, including QR codes to check the product, or real-time tracking of an order, as essential tools of impacting perceptions of buyers. These measures were perceived as the anti-counterfeit actions as well as the marketing practices that create the credibility of the brand and the repeat purchasing behavior as Tang et al. (2021) note. When a system is positively rated by its users, there are high chances of adoption. P9 mentioned, we have developed an email campaign that focuses on the education of customers about detecting authentic items and it is the inner motivation that affects the consumer awareness that directly affects the internal drive to develop verification efforts. At that, consumer

expectations and the feedback loop as subjective norms under the TPB further support the motivation to approach the process of technology integration in retail settings with the help of TAM as a prism (Tang et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2023).

Such a two-fold application of TAM and TPB provides a more detailed insight into the managerial decision-making in anti-counterfeiting situations. Although TAM explains the role of the perceptions of usefulness and ease of use in influencing adoption of detection and prevention technologies, TPB builds on this fact by adding the role of subjective norms (e.g., consumer expectations, industry standards) and perception of behavioral control (e.g., ability to integrate systems despite resource constraints). The alignment of the two models is that the study not only confirms the current technology adoption theory but also customizes it to a multi-stakeholder high-risk retail environment. This context-based extension of TAM directly responds to the literature demands of context-specific extensions of this model (Suominen, 2023; Tang et al., 2021), especially in domains where technological innovation is in the context of regulatory compliance, consumer trust, and financial risk reduction. The five themes together prove effective anti-counterfeiting measures depend on both the technological effectiveness as stated in TAM, and the behavioral motivation stated in TPB, which offers a solid theoretical framework of strategic decision-making in the online fashion retail business of the U.S.

#### ***Alignment with Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)***

The five themes as identified in the research fit well with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and when considered with TPB provide a multi-dimensional perspective on managerial decision-making as it applies to the anti-counterfeiting environment. The TAM mapping is as follows:

*Perceived Usefulness:* Themes 1 (Technological Challenges), 2 (Revenue Impact) reflect the perspectives of AI-based detection systems, blockchain authentication and serialization tools as being strategically useful in counterfeit detection and revenue stream protection. As an example, P6 said, We apply AI-powered mechanisms to identify and alert about unusual inventory procedures, and various participants mentioned these mechanisms as invaluable in ensuring operational and financial integrity.

*Perceived Ease of Use:* Themes 1 and 4 (Communication Strategies) emphasize that automation, standardized protocol, and effective stakeholder communication make integration easier, decrease the amount of work done manually and accelerate the detection process. As noted by P8, it added automation, and as a result, the support team now spends less time on counterfeit issues, which is a positive example of efficiency improvement after adoption.

*Attitude Toward Using:* The theme 5 (Consumer Behavior and Communication) indicates that there is a positive attitude by the managers toward the use of customer-facing verification tools and education programs that build brand trust and credibility.

*Behavioral Intention:* Themes 4 and 5 show that internal alignment or buy-in of stakeholders and customer trust have direct implication of continuous use of anti-counterfeiting tools and processes.

*External Variables:* Theme 3 (Regulatory and Legal Gaps) brings the light on the state of affairs over the frequency of adoption and the perceived necessity of the legal requirements and the standards and collaborative models of the industry enforcement.

These results confirm the relevance of TAM to digital retail settings that the adoption behaviour is influenced, in addition to the attitude of usefulness and convenience, by the institutional preparedness, consumer confidence, and systemic regulatory factors. This broadened

definition is a reaction to the criticism to adapt TAM to high-risk, multi-stakeholder settings (Suominen, 2023; Tang et al., 2021). The combination of TPB constructs, exceptionally subjective norm (e.g., consumer expectations, industry collaboration), and perceived behavioral control (e.g., ability to integrate systems despite constraints), additionally increases the explanatory capacity of the model in this context.

Theme 1, Technological Challenges, is linked to Perceived Usefulness because the participants emphasized the role of AI-based tools of verification, blockchain tracking, and serialization systems to increase supply chain visibility and counterfeit detection. As an example, P6 observed, we have AI-powered systems which identify and report suspicious inventory actions, and such systems are appreciated because of their performance-saving features (Suominen, 2023).

The theme 2, Revenue Impact, supports the same construct of TAM by demonstrating that anti-counterfeit technologies are considered to be essential to preserve revenue and brand trust. The respondents observed that fake behavior diminishes profitability and customer retention as a factor and invest in technology protection (Tang et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2023).

Theme 3, Regulatory and Legal Gaps, is consistent with the idea of the external variables in TAM: outside forces, in this case, the legal requirements, collaboration in the industry, and sharing data across platforms, influence the technology adoption significantly. These pressures tend to establish the circumstances within which managers are forced to do something (Rullani et al., 2021).

Theme 4, Communication Strategies, relates to Perceived Ease of Use, where participants provided how coherent interdepartmental communication and alignment with stakeholders provided the successful implementation of anti-counterfeit tools. Smooth procedures and

common sense between teams were mentioned as the key facilitators of operational effectiveness and minimized resistance to new systems (Wang et al., 2023).

Theme 5, Consumer Behavior and Communication, represents Attitude Towards Using and Behavioral Intention constructs of TAM. Consumer education and trust strategies, and transparency systems, including QR code tracking, were reported (by the participants) as essential to shaping the customer behavior and prompts motivation among the managers to embrace verification technologies. The perceived capability of these systems to enhance consumer satisfaction and brand loyalty was also cultivated as favorable toward them (Tang et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2023).

Taken together, the five themes affirm relevance of TAM to digital retail settings, which are characterized by perceived performance benefits, easy integration, external requirements, and social norms are all brought together to affect adoption behaviour. Another finding of the research is further development of TAM, which includes an institutional readiness, external organizational factors, and consumer trust as key factors in technology acceptance.

The analysis of the themes also demonstrates how individual themes were justified by definite analysis categories and were based on the quotations of the participants. Such correspondence supports the validity of the results. It also gives a picture of the finalized themes developed at the stage of the thematic analysis process, phase 5 by Braun and Clarke (2006), which was made transparent about how thematic conclusions were reached by using the qualitative data. This stage entailed the refining, reviewing and defining of the concept behind each theme to make sure of conceptual coherence and suitability to the research question. The analysis demonstrated how the categorisation of groups based on the iterative coding process was consistent with the themes. Every row relates certain categories to the quotes of the participants that reflect the general pattern of meaning, which proves the validity and richness of the thematic structure.

## **Implications**

### ***Recommendations for Policy***

The findings of this research are directly relevant to the project question as it exposes the policy level issues that influence managerial decision-making. With fakes and counterfeit products constantly threatening the revenue and consumer confidence in the online fashion retail industry in the U.S. the research demonstrates the critical necessity of the online retail business managers to have organized, enforceable, and collective measures to combat fakes and counterfeit goods. The trends that the online fashion industry uses to counterfeit goods are largely consistent with the constructs of the TPB that were initially suggested by Ajzen (2020). Emerging technological solutions, including blockchain and AI, are shaping attitudes to implementation, in which managers have to balance the perceived benefit with the cost of implementation (Cavaliere et al., 2021). Subjective norms are supported by the fact that industry-

wide the use of collaborative anti-counterfeiting efforts is gaining momentum, with large brands establishing new standards in terms of protection strategies (Wilson and Grammich, 2020). The perception of behavioural control is manifested in the way the organizations manage the implementation barriers specifically the resource allocation and the requirement of technical expertise (Rullani et al., 2021). The interaction of these theories of planned behavior (TPB) constructs can be seen in the recent changes in the industry, including the strategic choice of Nike to pull off products of certain platforms (Sularia, 2020), which shows how the combination of attitudes, norms, and control beliefs have a joint impact on decisions about the strategy to anti-counterfeit. The information obtained during the participants of this study highlights the role of the policy enforcement gaps and disjointed regulations of the platforms in the hindrance of the anti-counterfeiting measures. Thus, in order to empower implementation to the fullest extent and increase perceived effectiveness, the policies should be improved to enhance cross-sector integration, impose responsibility on third-party sellers, and provide a clear guideline to the use of technology (Adeola et al., 2021; Wu and Zhao, 2021). Changes affect the manner in which managers operationalize the anti-counterfeiting practices and their ability to safeguard the revenue streams which is the center of the project inquiry.

In addition to the firm level implications, the findings have substantial implication on the level of policy designing in the industry association and trade policy. This evidence can be utilized by national retailer associations like the National Retail Federation (NRF) to pressure their members to adopt consistent anti-counterfeiting measures so that the minimum compliance standards are elevated and that the costs of verification technologies are jointly borne. At the governmental level, harmonization of anti-counterfeiting priorities in the framework of trade policies may have a diplomatic and economic impact on those jurisdictions with weak

enforcement, which will create a more level playing field of compliant U.S. retailers. By incorporating these priorities into the terms of free trade, anti-counterfeiting measures would be directly entrenched in the international commerce regulations such that the digital marketplace accountability and supply chain transparency would become a binding matter and not a voluntary commitment.

***Direct Policy Implications: Regulatory Enforcement and Platform Accountability***

Among the most prompt policy-related implications of the research, a stronger enforcement of the regulations should be mentioned (Staake et al., 2019). Contributors had continued to point out that the current legal mechanisms were inappropriate to deal with counterfeit sales. To a greater extent, as P9 has observed, there has to be more legal provisions and enforcement of the law. This is consistent with the recommendations provided by Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2023) which urges the standardization of international laws and enforcement tools to discourage the presence of counterfeit in international e-commerce. As a way of resolving these weaknesses, policies in this regard should aim at defining the roles of digital platforms, enhancing inter-agency coordination, and simplifying the process of complaint and enforcement on the affected retailers (Eisend, 2019). Moreover, the introduction of anti-counterfeiting requirements into federal purchasing policies may form a market-driven incentive to make platforms and retailers prove their compliance since only shops meeting the verified authenticity criteria would be able to get government contracts. This method serves to increase compliance rates, but also to leverage the federal purchasing power to be able to create a systemic change in the adoption of anti-counterfeiting protections into the private sector.

The research is also useful in developing platform-level compliance standards, which may be achieved by regulatory requirements that the online marketplace must use consistent verification practices. There is a common database that would be updated in real-time on all major e-commerce platforms, as described by P10, an efficient early warning system would decrease the time needed to detect and eliminate counterfeit offers. Tax credits or funding of technology development or a preference when procuring vendors that adhere to such collaboration systems can incentivize such systems (Song et al., 2021). Such policies would assist in sealing the current regulatory loopholes as well as pioneering in anti-counterfeit technology.

***Indirect Policy Implications: Consumer Protection and Public Awareness***

Along with the industry regulation, this work also shows some indirect policy implications with the concern of consumer protection and public education (Rosendo and Shukla, 2023). The participants pointed out the significance of the customer awareness in detecting counterfeit products but their attempts are inadequate unless more institutional reinforcements are in place. Indicatively, P3 and P4 emphasized that there was a need to educate consumers through policy. The policymakers can react by incorporating anti-counterfeiting education as a part of digital literacy, product labeling, and the safety of people (Rosendo and Shukla, 2023). These not only empower the consumers, they also relieve the consumer care operations by way of lessening the dissemination of incorrect information and misunderstanding about the authenticity of the products. The retailer associations may collaborate with the government consumer protection departments to collaboratively create nationwide campaigns, with the credibility of the industry coupled with the perceived credibility of the government, and make the anti-counterfeiting messages more effective. Such collaborations may be

institutionalized in terms of memoranda of understanding (MOUs) between the associations like the NRF or the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) and the federal agencies such as the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) so that the message is maintained and the impact is measured consistently.

Moreover, there is evidence that the requirements of supply chain transparency might be used as an indirect yet significant preventive of counterfeit entry. As an example, it is possible to make third-party sellers and manufacturers provide their information about the origin of the product, batch numbers, or authentication certificates, and place the items on large platforms (Rullani et al., 2021). Such policy measures are applicable to different industries and can be up-scaled based on the kind of the product and the threat of counterfeiting.

*This paper can also be included in the list of evidenced-based policymaking by providing an empirical insight into how online retailers address the threat of counterfeit now and what current mechanisms fail to address current challenges. Combination of thematic knowledge, including technological constraints, revenue exposure, and unreliable compliance, gives policy makers basis data that is grounded and actionable to make decisions going forward (Meraviglia, 2018). Based on the findings of the research proposed by Montali et al. (2021), policy frameworks based on empirical studies have a higher chance of success and acceptance over time. Reformulation or enacting of policies according to these recommendations would result in a more secure digital commerce environment, a higher degree of consumer confidence, and a more profitable business in the long term, as the compliant businesses (Meraviglia, 2018). Lastly, when anti-counterfeiting provisions are incorporated into bilateral or multilateral trade agreements, it may transform the regulatory environment in the world. Policymakers can protect domestic borders by enforcing minimum standards of verification and reporting and extending these safeguards by enforcing such standards as a part of the trade agreements with partner nations. This implementation would seal dangerous enforcement loopholes through which counterfeiters take advantage of the cross-border e-commerce to finalize trade policy goals and domestic retail protection interests.*

#### ***Recommendations for Practice***

These results support the possibility of bringing significant change to practice by online fashion retailers and other interested parties who aim to eliminate the spread of fake goods. The combination of qualitative data presented by the professionals in the industry provides an insight in the case of practical strategies, which can be adopted to improve the integrity of the operations, to protect the revenues, and build consumer confidence (Meraviglia, 2018). Instead

of proposing the universal remedies, the study presents evidence-based practical advice that can be adapted to the organizational setting and changing market needs.

### ***Enhancing Technology Integration in Retail Operations***

The results of this capstone research project indicate that integrated digital verification systems and strict supplier vetting benefit the retail operations in general. The practices minimize operational bottlenecks and customer loyalty is increased. Some of the implications are high ROI on anti-counterfeiting investments and adoption of policy by the retailers to standardize tech-based verification protocols. Among the essential suggestions which appear to be the result of the research is the strategic implementation and integration of new technologies, such as AI-powered detectors, serialization, and electronic validation tools (Wang et al., 2023). To improve operational efficiency and reduce the loss of revenue, the companies can invest in multi-layered technologies of anti-counterfeit that cover the supply chain in several stages. An example is the use of serialization software with QR code checking to provide traceability of the products through their entire supply chain, allowing to identify the fake products much faster and reducing customer-related complaints (Terry and Hayfield, 2020). The retailers are also advised to enable internal protocols and training programs so that the staff members can be able to interpret and act on the data produced by these systems (Nyirenda et al., 2020). Although at the start of the project there might be a need to invest, in the long run, it is possible to save costs because the rate of returns, turnover, and reputation damages will be reduced to the minimum.

### ***Fostering Cross-Sector Collaboration and Compliance***

The other area of practice needed improvement is collaboration with retailers, brands, platforms and enforcement agencies. Strategic partnerships between practitioners can allow sharing counterfeit information and the pattern of suspicious sellers, which ensures that

redundant investigation activities are minimized and enforcement is accelerated. Positively, shared databases and compliance dashboards can be used to support such partnerships (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2023). Also, professionals are encouraged to promote a uniform adherence policy across the online markets (Rullani et al., 2021). Standardized product listing classification, centralized seller authentications, and frequent audits could be used to identify fake products at the earlier stages of a retail process (Chettri et al., 2024). Although this strategy might necessitate alignment at the organizational level in the short term, it will provide efficiency and brand protection in the long term.

### ***Consumer Engagement and Transparency***

Another actionable suggestion that can be informed by the findings is building the consumer trust based on transparency and education. To achieve better results, retailers may offer in-app verification information, visible authentication tags, and information about fake detection (Chettri et al., 2024). Such attempts do not only minimize the amount of after-sales complaints but also promote favorable brand image (Masyhuri, 2022). Although the present study has some useful information, the longitudinal impact of anti-counterfeiting measures on revenue patterns and customer loyalty needs to be further investigated by the researchers.

### ***Recommendations for Future Work***

This study was a good source of information in understanding how managers in the American online retail fashion sector use and measure anti-counterfeiting measures to protect and grow revenue streams, but these findings are never exhaustive since there are more areas that can be explored to affirm or develop the research further. The comparative study across industries including luxury goods, electronics, or pharmaceuticals where the risk of counterfeiting and countermeasures against counterfeiting might vary because of product type, consumer

expectations, and different regulatory involvement tense may be considered one of the possible directions of further research (Rullani et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2023). The longitudinal study may focus on the impact of the implementation of technologies, including AI-based verification systems, on the revenue changes, customer retention, and the rate of counterfeited cases after a specific period (Nyirenda et al., 2020). One of the major shortcomings of the project is in its scope and sample size which, though suitable to carry out a qualitative investigation, prevents the generalization of the results.

The purposive sampling meant that the sampled had the appropriate expertise in the field, which also has the potential of creating selection bias since more active participants in anti-counterfeiting may be more inclined to take part in such studies. In the future, it would be possible to implement a mixed methods design, which would combine both qualitative and quantitative indicators of performance to determine the true financial and operational implications of a given strategy (Montali et al., 2021). In addition, although various practices were implemented to achieve reflexivity and reduce bias with the help of audit trails, member checking, and research course mentor debriefing, the interpretation of qualitative data always includes some levels of subjectivity (Dado et al., 2023). Future research can be improved in terms of confirmability by including external auditors or by triangulating the results with independent industry data.

The study has to a large extent addressed the main project question, which is how managers can execute and conceptualise anti-counterfeiting measures pertaining to financial risk mitigation. Nevertheless, the subtle connection between the consumer perception, investment into operations, and the profitability in the long-term ought to be further explored. The study is a good starting point but what is being found must be considered as a continuation of a discussion.

The project question is a question that will prompt further investigation, particularly as the technologies of e-commerce and fake schemes are becoming more advanced and more comprehensive.

### **Research Reflection**

As the process of implementing this research project was conducted, adaptability, critical thought, and high sense of methodological rigour were needed. The initial recruitment plan focused on the professionals in the online fashion retailing industry in the United States via websites like LinkedIn and professional networks. The sample that was obtained under this approach was very relevant and comprised of 11 qualified participants who fulfilled all the inclusion criteria; they have been in the industry at least 3 years and have been directly involved in the implementation of anti-counterfeiting strategies. The last sample presented the variety of companies and business models providing insightful understanding of how technology is used, financial risk is averted, and how to interact with the regulatory environment.

This last participant modification was significant in augmenting the wealth of the data. Although the large participant pool was initially expected, the emphasis on depth instead of breadth enabled more learnings in regards to the strategic implementation and leadership perceptions. Also, although the initial strategy focused on the use of interviews as the main tool, the introduction of such tools as Zoom to conduct remote interviews and Otter.ai to transcribe it were highly beneficial in terms of accessibility and efficiency. The use of manual verification of transcripts further ensured that there was accuracy of data entered and the prevention of bias created by research courses through reflective journaling and research course mentor debriefing added more layers of credibility to the research process. These modifications made to the

research protocols enhanced the overall research design and helped in coming up with more comprehensive research findings than earlier expected.

This doctoral program and research project has been a challenging intellectual and career changing experience. The advanced knowledge of qualitative investigation and a better sense of critical assessment of complex organizational processes were gained within the realms of digital commerce. The whole experience of carrying out this research, including the recruitment of participants and data analysis as well as the development of themes has enhanced my ability to make strategic decisions, interpret data, and make evidence-based decisions. In addition, my interaction with fashion retail managers and their various strategies of reducing counterfeiting has broadened my understanding of the intersection between technology, policy, and management. This educational experience has not only enhanced my academic skills but also has set me in a better place to contribute towards valuable contributions in the realm of leadership practice and digital commerce strategy in the changing online retail business environment.

### **Conclusion**

This research is based on the guidelines of the Participatory Action Research (PAR) because it is acknowledged that the sustainable development of the counterfeiting mitigation process requires not only analysis but also the active interaction of the practitioners, policymakers, and researchers (Nyirenda et al., 2020; Secules et al., 2021). The focus on collaboration, reflection, and a high level of action of PAR predetermined the co-constructed, high-level information of managers directly involved in the introduction of anti-counterfeiting practices in the online fashion retail market of the U.S. This project has been able to do this through their views establishing actionable, context pathways which can be operationalized at the organizational level.

The results indicate that mitigation of anti-counterfeit efforts requires a combination of the use of modern technology, internal policy, and education of consumers. Regular use of these strategies boosts an operation, builds customer trust, and maintains the brand equity, which corresponds to the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) constructs of Perceived Usefulness and Ease of Use (Ibrahim and Shiring, 2022; Lee and Yeon, 2021). Simultaneously, the TPB enlarges this knowledge by considering subjective norms and perceived behavioral control in influencing the managerial behavior (Ajzen, 2020; Rozenkowska, 2023).

With a generic qualitative inquiry, 5 interconnected themes were created: Technological Challenges, Revenue Impact, Regulatory and Legal Gaps, Collaborative Strategies, and Consumer Behavior and Communication that are all indicative of a strategic change required in high-risk retail environments. These results indicate how managers respond to the changing threats by incorporating AI-driven authentication, serialization, and blockchain-based verification into business, curbing money loss, and promoting homogenization of industry policies (Amaral, 2020; Xu et al., 2021). It is clear that the fragmented nature of regulation, insufficient consumer awareness, and disconnected corporate actions undermine the effectiveness of anti-counterfeiting, and experts should implement innovative approaches to detecting fake products, enhance regulatory action, and establish open communication with consumers to ensure trust and profitability (Wilson and Grammich, 2020). As the current realities of the online fashion retailing industry have been shifting, leaders need to integrate new technologies in detecting fake products, increase regulatory enforcement, and establish clear communication with the consumer to guarantee trust and profitability (FitzHugh and Annable). Although the paper offers valuable qualitative data, a small sample used limits the generalizability of the results and it should be considered in an additional research in different

retail industries and methods. Finally, there will be a need to have a concerted effort by an industry to maintain transparency, accountability and consumer faith in digital markets, which will be facilitated by technological capability and behavioral alignment.

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## APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide: Fashion industry U.S. online retailer's role in preventing the sales of counterfeit products to increase revenue interview guide.

<b>Demographic Information and Introduction: Describe the demographic information you will collect from participants, the value of this information, and the method for collecting the information.</b>			
<p><b>Project Questions (what you seek to understand):</b> List each of the Project Questions separately:</p>	<p><b>Interview Questions* (what you will ask to gain the understanding you seek):</b> Map and detail each of the primary interviews back to the project question:</p>	<p><b>Justification:</b> Explain how the literature informed the creation of the interview question. Identify the concept from your Applied Framework that guided the development of the interview question.</p>	<p><b>Probing Questions**:</b> For each interview question, what follow-up questions might you ask to generate additional information?</p>
<p><b>PQ: How managers in the U.S. online retail fashion industry implement and evaluate anti-counterfeiting strategies to protect and enhance revenue streams?</b></p>	<p>IQ.1.1. What challenges have you faced in preventing the sale of counterfeit products in your U.S. online retail operation? <b>Probing:</b> "Could you walk me through a specific situation where you overcame a significant challenge? What resources or controls enabled that success?"</p>	<p>Related to the framework concept of ability. Understanding how different challenges can prevent sales. <b>Subjective Norms (SN):</b> Investigates the role of industry expectations and peer influence</p>	<p>Could you elaborate on which factors were within your organization's control and which were external influences? Could you please share a specific example of how you addressed these challenges?</p>
	<p>IQ.2.2. What strategies does your company currently use to prevent counterfeit products from entering your supply chain in your U.S. online retail operation?</p>	<p>Related to the ability and motivation part of the framework. Understand the strategies implemented. <b>Perceived Behavioral Control</b></p>	<p>Which of these strategies do you find most effective, and to what extent are they considered standard practice in your industry? Could you describe a situation</p>

	<b>(PBC):</b> Examines managers' perceived ability to control and implement strategies effectively	where these strategies proved particularly successful?
IQ.3 How effective do you believe these strategies are in improving operational efficiency in your U.S. online retail operation?	Related to the ability and motivation part of the framework. Understanding the strategies improves operational efficiency. <b>Attitude (A):</b> Explores managers' evaluation process and beliefs about strategy effectiveness	What specific operational metrics or key performance indicators have you used to measure this effectiveness? Could you share some concrete examples of improvements you've observed?
IQ.4 4. How effective do you believe these strategies are in improving customer satisfaction in your U.S. online retail operation?	Related to the ability and motivation part of the framework, understanding the strategies to improve customer satisfaction involves examining Subjective Norms (SN), which investigate the role of industry expectations and peer influence.	How does customer feedback inform your assessment of the effectiveness of these strategies? Could you describe specific instances where customer feedback led to adjustments in strategy?
IQ.5. What is the main contributing factor contributing to the sale of counterfeit products in your U.S. online retail operation?	The question follows the project question and framework <b>PBC + A:</b> Combines control beliefs with strategy evaluation	To what extent do you feel your company has control over these factors? Could you describe your most successful intervention against these factors?
IQ.6 Can you describe any collaborations your company has with external organizations, such as technology providers, to combat counterfeit products in	Related to the ability and motivation part of the framework. <b>PBC + A:</b> Combines control beliefs with strategy evaluation	How have these collaborations contributed to achieving your anti-counterfeiting goals? Could you please share a specific example of a

	your U.S. online retail operation?		successful partnership outcome?
IQ.7	What role do you believe technology plays in preventing counterfeit products in your U.S. online retail operation?	Related to the ability and motivation part of the framework. <b>Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC):</b> Examines managers' perceived ability to control and implement strategies effectively	Which specific technologies have had the most significant impact, and how do you measure this impact? Could you describe a particular technology implementation that transformed your approach?
IQ.8	How does your company educate consumers about counterfeit products in your U.S. online retail operation?	Related to the ability and motivation part of the framework. <b>Attitude (A):</b> Explores managers' evaluation process and beliefs about strategy effectiveness	How has this education affected consumer purchasing behavior? Could you share specific examples of successful educational initiatives?
IQ.9	What impact have counterfeit products had on your company's profitability in your U.S. online retail operation?	Related to the ability and motivation part of the framework. <b>Subjective Norms (SN):</b> Investigates the role of industry expectations and peer influence	Could you provide specific examples of how this impact has manifested in your financial metrics? What measures have been most effective in protecting revenue?
IQ.10	What impact have counterfeit products had on your company's brand reputation in your U.S. online retail operation?	Related to the ability and motivation part of the framework. <b>Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC):</b> Examines managers' perceived ability to control and implement strategies effectively	How has your company responded to protect or restore its brand reputation? Could you describe a specific instance where your response was particularly effective?
IQ 11	What improvements would you recommend to better address the	Related to the ability and motivation part of the framework. <b>Attitude (A):</b>	Which of these improvements do you believe are most feasible, given your

issue of counterfeit product sales in your U.S. online retail operation?	Explores managers' evaluation process and beliefs about strategy effectiveness	current resources and industry constraints? Could you elaborate on the potential implementation challenges associated with each?
IQ. 12 How does your company ensure that your anti-counterfeiting practices align with legal standards in your U.S. online retail operation?	Related to the ability and motivation part of the framework. <b>Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC):</b> Examines managers' perceived ability to control and implement strategies effectively	What challenges have you encountered in maintaining this alignment, and how have you addressed them? Could you describe a specific situation that required you to adapt your practices?
<b>Closing out the Interview:</b> Enter your script here to close out the interview, inclusive of asking the participant if there is additional information to share, questions and comments about the interview, follow-up for transcript review (if applicable), and how the participant may get a final copy of the project (if applicable), along with a thank you for their efforts and contributions.		