Does Copyright Imitation Impact Purchase Behaviour in the Entertainment Industry: A PLS-SEM Analysis of Gen Z's Brand Recognition in Africa?

Tajudeen Alaburo Abdulsalam [1]
Rofiat Bolanle Tajudeen [2]

Abstract

The entertainment industry has experienced remarkable growth, driven by technological advancements and changing consumer preferences, with revenue soaring to $31.23 billion in 2023 and anticipated growth at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 10.64% through 2027. However, the industry's significant sustainability issue is the widespread practice of copyright imitation, with Africa's accommodated 2.5 billion unauthorised image imitations daily representing 1.48% global imitation index, causing substantial damages, notably affecting Gen Z with estimated losses of €532.5 billion, with Egypt experiencing the highest incidence of cases in Africa. This research delves into how copyright infringement impacts brand recognition, as a construct of purchase behaviour, among Gen Z in the African entertainment industry. By relying on post-positivism paradigm and planned

1   Department of Marketing, Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria. alaburotajudeenabdulsalam@gmail.com
http://orcid.org/0009-0008-1481-1265
2   Department of Marketing, Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria. bolanlemuhammed1@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0009-0005-2265-7390

behaviour theory, the research used questionnaire and collected 352 responses (92% sample rate) from tech-savvy Gen Z respondents, derived using Borden sampling model. The PLS-SEM (Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling) model reveals that copyright infringement substantially affects brand recognition, explaining 64.7% of the variance in consumer behaviour. Specifically, imitated corporate names, product ideas, and promotional tactics impact brand recognition by 11.1%, 9%, and 6.2% respectively, which refutes the initial assumption. Research recommendations include implementing stricter management protocols within the industry, fostering deeper community engagement, and differentiating products by using unique, high-quality materials. The study acknowledges potential biases in data collection due to unequal online access among Gen Z music enthusiasts in Africa, by possibly not fully reflecting the broader diversity of Gen Z behaviour across the continent in the world, considering the varying cultural, economic, and social dynamics that influence purchasing behaviours.

Keywords: Brand recognition, Copyright imitation, Generation Z, Purchase behaviour, Sustainability.

Introduction

The entertainment industry has seen remarkable growth over the past decade, largely fuelled by technological advancements and shifts in consumer behaviour, with 2023 revenue reaching $31.23 billion, with a projected compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 10.64% through 2027 (Guttmann, 2023). Advertising segment, which amounted to $17.22 billion in 2023, drive the sector to an estimated market size of $40.36 billion by 2028, with in-app purchases (IAP) contributing $13.95 billion in 2023, reflecting the increasing trend of monetisation in digital platforms, although paid app revenue remained niche at $0.05 billion (Mordor Intelligence, 2024). China emerged as a key revenue generator, contributing $12.14 billion with a noteworthy 23% growth rate in 2023, highlighting the growing importance of Asian markets in the

global entertainment landscape (MarketSplash, 2023). Gen Z's influence has also been critical, with 12.21 billion downloads recorded, which is worth an average revenue per download of $2.56. This showcases a 15% growth rate in 2023 (Mordor Intelligence, 2024), signalling significant consumer engagement and monetisation potential. This growth highlights the effectiveness of industry agile strategies in capitalising on emerging opportunities. However, the widespread industry practice of copying and copyright imitation is seen as unsustainable. It is estimated that 2.5 billion images are unlawfully imitated daily, resulting in damages of up to €532.5 billion for Gen Z alone, with an average daily cost of €320 per copyright infringement. This impact is significant across different regions: North America accounts for 33.90%, Europe for 31.4%, Asia for 29.8%, South America for 2.57%, Australia for 1.27%, and Africa for 1.48% (Peacock, 2019). Specifically, Egypt experiences the highest number of cases (30.61%), followed by South Africa (20.71%), Morocco (10.31%), Nigeria (5.92%) and Uganda (4.18%). This challenge is global and is exacerbated by digitalisation, which has fundamentally altered consumer behaviour and industry business models.

The film sector has grappled with declining revenue from record sales since the early 2000s due to digitalisation, particularly unauthorised copying and peer-to-peer distribution (Carter, 2024). This trend, underscored by reports from the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry, has resulted in a "criminalisation of sharing" with legal actions taken against individuals downloading music illegally (Laing, 2010; Peechapat & Puttanapong, 2024) and organised entities like Kim Dotcom for profiting from unauthorised music circulation (Zhang *et. al.*, 2024). However, academic research challenges industry claims that illegal downloads significantly impact sales, suggesting they reflect evolving preferences in music engagement, especially among Gen Z (Gamble & Gilmore, 2013; Chalmers *et. al.*, 2021). Spotify's founders noted that peer-to-peer sharing anticipated a shift towards music streaming services, reflecting a preference for access over ownership (Sinha & Mandel, 2008). Moreover, studies in media and cultural studies highlight positive aspects of free copying, empowering Gen Z consumers as creators and active citizens (Kozyreva, Lewandowsky, & Hertwig, 2020; Edmond, 2023; Walsh, 2020). This

nuanced view suggests that shifts in music consumption are influenced by broader cultural and technological changes rather than solely by piracy concerns.

Although the widespread sale of counterfeit music is illegal in developing countries, and in the US and UK (Drott, 2020; You, 2020; Wilcox & Zaichkowsky, 2020), with emerging countries, including the African market, being left out. However, empirical literature indicates that approximately one-third of Gen Z's consumers are willing to knowingly purchase imitated goods (Mehraj *et. al.*, 2023; Islam *et. al.*, 2021) despite the associated risks. This consumer demand is believed to be a primary driver behind the proliferation of imitation. While there has been extensive study on the supply side of copyright imitation, research on the demand side— specifically why consumers knowingly opt for imitated music— is notably lacking (Bural *et. al.*, 2023). Previous investigations have explored market factors including perceived cost savings (Samaddar & Menon, 2021; Dieudonne *et. al.*, 2022), psychographic traits (Baumert & Cabrillo, 2023), product attributes (Carroll *et. al.*, 2023; Miller, Menard, & Bourrie, 2024), demographics (Mariani & Wamba, 2020), and social influences (Samaddar & Gandhi, 2022). However, conventional approaches centred on psychographics have been deemed insufficient in explaining the Gen Z's purchase behaviour, by often neglecting crucial brand-related aspects despite counterfeit purchases being both product and brand decisions. Therefore, there is a need for consumer research that delves into the symbolic dimensions of imitated branded products to advance theoretical and empirical understanding within the Gen Z context. The research explores how entertainment brands adopt copyright imitation for leveraging Gen Z's brand recognition for better business performance in the African entertainment industry. The specific objective intends to:

i.   Investigate the relationship between copyright imitation and brand recognition among Gen Z consumers in the African entertainment industry using PLS-SEM;

ii.   Evaluate how copyright imitation practices contribute to or challenge existing theories of brand recognition and consumer behaviour in African entertainment industry;

iii.   Propose actionable steps to mitigate challenges related to copyright infringement and complex purchasing behaviours among Gen Z consumers.

The significance of research into ethical issues in marketing has become increasingly vital as global attention shifts towards prioritising environmental and consumer well-being concerns. Busch *et. al.* (2024) highlight a critical oversight within marketing organisations, including academic research, where unsustainable practices often prioritise profit maximisation at the expense of consumer welfare and environmental impact. This underscores the urgent need for a paradigm shift towards comprehensive and sustainable development that centres on meeting people's needs. Additionally, existing literature has predominantly focused on legal frameworks of copyright imitation in specific areas of cosmetic and organic/sustainable food consumption in marketing (Mughal, Faisal, & Khokhar, 2021; Cavagnero, 2021), neglecting the entertainment industry— a sector estimated to be worth $2.32 trillion, with a projected growth rate exceeding 10% and contributing significantly to global GDP (2.54% in 2016 and 2.39% in 2021) (Watson, 2019). Given its substantial economic impact, the entertainment industry's sustainability issues deserve greater scholarly attention to align with broader global sustainability objectives.

The research landscape has predominantly focused on studying developing countries (You, 2020; Wilcox & Zaichkowsky, 2020), with notable oversight of key African contexts such as Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria and South Africa, despite the significant prevalence of imitation practices in these regions in 2023, exceeding 45% (Peacock, 2019). This presents a critical concern not only from a governmental standpoint but also within the realms of empirical and theoretical reasoning. Consequently, there is a risk that findings derived from developing countries' context research may lack generalisability to these specific geographical areas. Moreover, existing behavioural research has predominantly leaned on law, information and market theory as highlighted by Boyle (2020) and Kholiq *et. al.* (2020). However, this approach may fall short as it primarily emphasises behaviour with profit and legal motives, neglecting the essential considerations of both planets and people which are pivotal in contemporary business practices.

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Therefore, adopting the Fraud Triangle Theory, Fraud Diamond Theory, and Theory of Planned Behaviour can offer a more comprehensive theoretical framework, providing a distinct lens (objective theme, firm impact theme and consumer effect theme) of exploring the relationship between copyright violation and purchase intention within the entertainment industry.

Furthermore, a considerable portion of global and national studies—more than 48%— rely on an interpretivist paradigm for methodological grounding (Bonache & Festing, 2020). While this paradigm is fundamental for understanding sustainable behavioural practices, it is equally crucial to integrate positivist and post-positivist paradigms for comprehensive reasoning and to facilitate a robust PLS-SEM statistical analysis of research constructs backed-up with variable gap. For example, research in Nigeria predominantly adopts a descriptive approach, accounting for over 65% of studies (Ikehi *et. al.*, 2019). However, this method may prove inadequate in capturing the nuanced consumer perspectives necessary for both national and global contexts, particularly overlooking the perspectives of Gen Z— a digitally adept generation dominating the entertainment sector due to their significant internet penetration and technological savviness. This synthesis underscores the need to broaden research horizons, particularly by encompassing African contexts like Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria and South Africa, and by adopting more inclusive theoretical frameworks such as the theory of planned behaviour and fraud diamond theory. By embracing diverse methodological approaches that integrate post-positivist paradigms, one will further enhance the empirical robustness of research findings, thereby ensuring a more holistic understanding of copyright imitation in consumer behaviours within the evolving landscape of Africa's entertainment industry.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Copyright, a key aspect of intellectual property rights, grants exclusive control to authors and creators over the reproduction, distribution, performance, translation, adaptation, and arrangement of their works (Chen, 2021). Mir-Artigues, (2022) coined copyright as a legal mechanism that empowers creators to regulate the usage of their artistic, literary, or informational works. By abiding with Mir-Artigues's (2022) legal foundation of copyright, unauthorised copying, imitation, or infringement of original works without

legal permission are synonymously viewed as unsustainable practices in marketing. Copying is intrinsic to music creation involving transcription, phonographic reproduction, and the emulation of existing compositions to draw inspiration and situate stylistic expression within established traditions (Dabija *et. al.*, 2014; Rana & Chauhan, 2020). This copying process fosters the dissemination of musical concepts, exchange of ideas, and acquisition of musical abilities through circulated recordings and printed materials. This is done with profitability focus guarded by intellectual property regulations which has influenced the evolving perception of copying in creative industries. The field of media and cultural studies showcase the transformative value of unrestricted copying, by empowering consumers to embrace their roles as creators and engaging citizens across history (Fava, 2021; Porangaba, 2022). Giza and Wilk, (2021) and Ikehi *et. al.* (2019) themed it as "commons-based peer production" evidenced in remixes and mashups, criticising the corporate narrative demonising piracy. Consequently, Khan *et. al.* (2022), in support of Vrontis *et. al.* (2020) preposition, argue that copyright imitation is a value added activity by facilitating aesthetic innovation, fostering social connections, and nurturing individual creative expression, thereby enabling media users to transition into creators themselves. Kumar, (2023) and Sestino *et. al.* (2022) underscores how active audiences and citizens play pivotal roles in redefining media products and cultural norms. This emphasises not only the cultural significance of copying in music but also its broader implications for participatory culture and creative empowerment within society.

The economic impact of imitated music sharing and downloading remains a significant concern for Gen Z musicians who traditionally relied on regular income from online record sales rather than touring, session work, and live performances (Negus *et. al.*, 2017). This concern was famously epitomised when Metallica sued the peer-to-peer platform Napster, decrying digital music 'piracy' as equivalent to "trafficking in stolen goods". Over time, the focus of this frustration has shifted, with a growing recognition that substantial profits are now being reaped by phone and computer companies through the use of recorded music as a "customer engagement tool" (Paquette, 2021). This realisation has reignited claims of unfair revenue allocation, both to musicians and among the various industries involved in recorded

music. Zhang *et. al.*, (2020) positioned that the perceived villain is a common practice that involves downloading files of which the corporate entities withholds revenue, with musicians persisting in viewing recordings as artefacts worth being compensated for by consumers. This underscores the act of copying as a means of acquiring understanding and mastering skills which appear as a fundamental human instinct, showcasing copying as an adults' behaviour by making copies of objects that foster an unstable environment. Wibisono *et. al.* (2022) emphasis is anchored on copying significance as a means of learning through listening and imitation of both folk and traditional music throughout human history. This suggests imitation as a way to absorb and comprehend the behaviours and skills exhibited in their surroundings; this underscores a foundational aspect of human development and cultural transmission.

The academic studies in behavioural fields offer diverse perspectives on the relationship between copyright imitation and consumer behaviour and market dynamics, across different economies. Ha and Tam (2015), Mayasari *et. al.* (2024), and Abdullah and Yu (2019) have employed quantitative methodologies to demonstrate a positive relationship between consumer attitudes and purchase intentions towards counterfeit luxury products, indicating a persistent rise in counterfeiting since the 1970s. This growth is fuelled by globalisation, reduced trade barriers, rapid technological advancements, and an influx of counterfeit goods affecting economies worldwide. Conversely, Musnaini and Jacob (2015) highlight the adverse effects of counterfeiting on consumers in Jambi, Indonesia, echoing Abbott and Rothman (2023) and Budiman (2012), who estimate a significant economic loss of $4.82 billion due to counterfeit consumption in Indonesia, notably in clothing and leather product categories, where fake products constitute a substantial percentage. Previous studies have explored links between counterfeiting and consumer behaviour dimensions such as "Consumer orientation toward counterfeit fashion products" (Agarwal & Panwar, 2016), "Consumer's awareness of counterfeit luxury brand items" (Baghi *et. al.*, 2016), "Ethical decision-making in counterfeit purchases" (Martinez & Jaeger, 2016), the Malaysian market (Quoquab *et. al.*, 2017), and trend imitation (Vogel & Watchravesringkan, 2017).

Previous researches have explored the phenomenon of increased consumer interest in counterfeit products from various market angles, socialist theory, managerial viewpoint and legal framework. The socialist philosopher argues that consumers' purchase intentions of counterfeit brands are shaped by personal and social factors (Bhatia & Aggarwal, 2018; Cinelli *et. al.*, 2020; Junejo *et. al.*, 2020). This aligns with a conceptual model from previous studies by Ting *et. al.* (2016), Teah *et. al.* (2015), and Liao and Hsieh (2013). Ting *et. al.* (2016) showcases that information susceptibility, normative susceptibility, and personality factors impact consumer attitudes. Meanwhile, Liao and Hsieh (2013) and Teah *et. al.*, (2015) highlighted personality traits including integrity, personal gratification, and status consumption, as significant contributors to consumers' behaviour of counterfeit items. Mamat *et. al.* (2016) and Mayasari *et. al.* (2022) showcase a correlation between the trait of vanity and intentions to purchase luxury goods. However, research on counterfeit purchases spans various product categories (Dornis & Wein, 2016; Lei, 2019), revealing differences in consumer attitudes and behaviour toward counterfeits across different countries. Scholars argue for more cross-cultural impact in consumer behaviour to better comprehend the cultural disparities that influence consumers' decision-making processes (Raza & Zaman, 2021). Thus, cross-cultural studies offer insights into consumer behaviour in diverse economic and cultural contexts (Shehawy, 2023), with existing literature indicating that brand consciousness negatively impacts consumers' inclination to purchase counterfeit outdoor products (Tseng *et. al.*, 2021). This suggests that consumers with higher brand consciousness prefer branded items to reflect their ideal self-image and social status, a phenomenon especially prominent in the sports apparel sector (Christensen, 2020). However, brand names do not only reflect consumer preferences but also signal group affiliation and shared beliefs (Akaka *et. al.*, 2022). Counterfeit products often exploit authentic brand names and logos to deceive consumers, particularly those less familiar with the products (Jhaveri & Shah, 2021). This suggests that consumers with high brand consciousness are less likely to engage in counterfeit purchases. Consequently, the below framework is constructed and empirically tested for statistical findings.
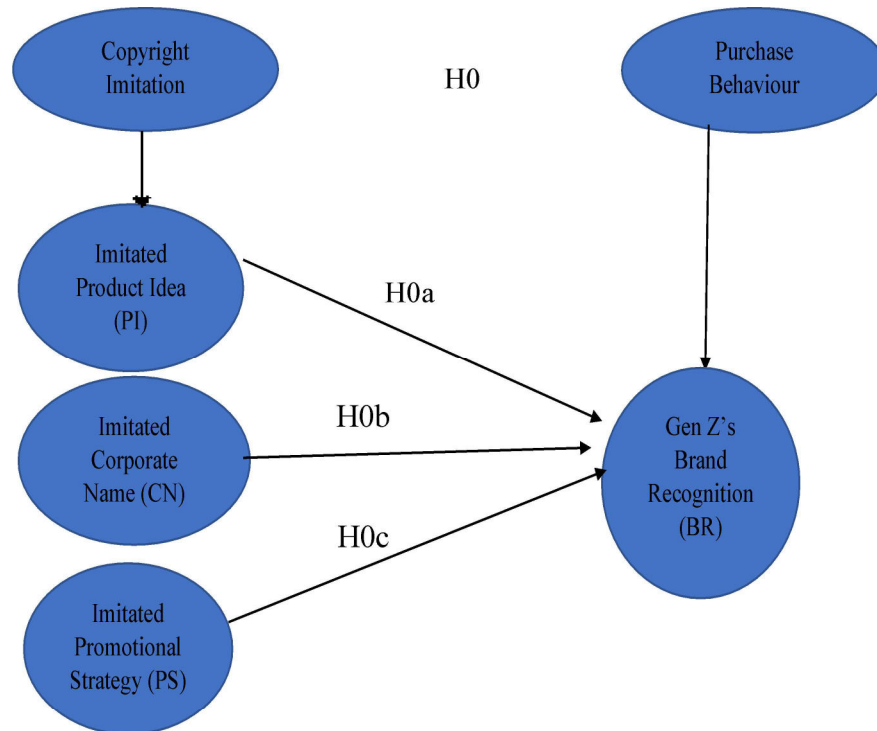
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (Author, 2024)

The below hypothesis is derived from the above framework:

H_0: Copyright imitation does not significantly affect Gen Z's purchase behaviour to entertainment brands,

The below sub-hypotheses can be deduced from the above main hypothesis:

H_{0a}: Imitated corporate name has no significant effect on the Gen Z's recognition of entertainment brands,

H_{0b}: Imitated product idea has no significant relationship with the Gen Z's recognition of entertainment brands,

H_{0c}: Imitated promotional strategy and Gen Z's recognition of entertainment brands has no significant relationship on Gen Z's purchase behaviour.

The above hypothesis guided the below model equation which is designed for the research PLS-SEM construct:

$$Y = f(x) \dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots \quad (1)$$

By application, the model turns out to the following, based on the research variable:

$$PB(Y) = f(CI)\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots \quad (2)$$

$$PB(Y) = \alpha + \beta_1 ICN + \beta_2 IPI + \beta_3 IPS + e\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots \quad (3)$$

Where:
X = Dependent Variable,
Y = Independent Variable,
PB (Y) = Purchase Behaviour,
CI (X) = Copyright Imitation,
ICN (X_1) = Imitated Corporate Name
IPI (X_2) = Imitated Product Idea
IPS (X_3) = Imitated Promotional Strategy
α = Regression Constant,
e = Error term
$\beta_1 - \beta_3$ = Regression Coefficients

Given the widespread issue of counterfeit products worldwide, coupled with the distinct socio-cultural aspects of African consumer behaviour, there exists an opportunity to statistically explore how entertainment brands in Africa utilise imitation of copyrighted material to benefit from Gen Z's brand recognition. By testing the above construct through the PLS-SEM model, the policymaker, manufacturer, and future empirical and theoretical researcher could benefit from the offered valuable insights by motioning how the Gen Z's attitudes and preferences shape towards entertainment brands amidst the challenge of copyright infringement.

Theoretical Framework
The evolving copyright atmosphere has observed an increase in unethical behaviours, including the neglect of standards and regulations. This trend underscores the growing importance of forensic practices not solely within

marketing organisations but also across managerial domains like branding, supply chain management, and advertising. Today, sophisticated approaches are essential in forensic marketing, by prioritising transparency and accurate reporting for purchase decision-making (Kasuma *et. al.*, 2020). Policymakers increasingly rely on copyright law and regulation to scrutinise copyright dimension, identify discrepancies, and furnish evidence for legal purposes. Their role is pivotal in upholding market integrity, ensuring regulatory adherence, and mitigating market risks (Kennedy, 2020). Through identifying and rectifying market irregularities, copyright regulations play a crucial preventive role, safeguarding authors' interests and fostering trust in market information systems. Concurrently, academia has actively developed theoretical frameworks to deepen comprehension of copyright anomalies within business environments through empirical and theoretical models. Cressey (1953), as cited in Firdaus *et. al.* (2022) first introduced the fraud triangle theory, which posits that copyright misconduct— such as counterfeiting, imitation, and infringement— is typically driven by three factors: perceived pressure, opportunity, and rationalisation. This theory aligns with the Fraud Diamond Theory, developed by Wolf and Hermanson (2004), which adds "capabilities" as a motivator, reflecting the desire of entertainment companies to achieve greater market success than their operational capacity allows, often resulting in copyright fines and allegations. According to this model, entertainment companies with strong industrial capabilities are more likely to engage in copying behaviour due to insufficient regulatory systems that enable imitation and manipulation, positioning them as dominant industry players (Sorunke, 2016). Despite their comprehensive grasp of ethics in marketing, these companies believe they can evade detection while managing the pressure associated with copying activities. Consequently, Ruankaew (2016) stresses the importance of educating experienced consumers and policymakers, such as Gen Z listeners and forensic marketers, to recognise copying irregularities and manipulation, underscoring the critical role of regulatory frameworks in identifying and addressing fraudulent activities within African regulatory systems.

The research is anchored on consumer behaviour theory, particularly the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) developed by Icek Ajzen in 1985, which suggests that Gen Z's purchasing behaviour is influenced by their

intention to buy, determined by their attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Panas & Ninni, 2011). Academic studies across different product categories have consistently showcased that purchase intentions strongly predict actual behaviour. Thus, attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control are positively associated with both Gen Z's purchase intention and behaviour (Hinduja & Ingram, 2008), because they explore both voluntary and involuntary copying in decision-making processes among consumers. However, their significance can vary considerably depending on the product type and categories. Similarly, favourable attitudes toward purchasing counterfeits, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control, are positively correlated with the intention to buy counterfeit products (Quoquab, *et. al.*, 2017).

Subjective norms influence consumers' inclination to buy counterfeit products (Frosio, 2018), as the acceptance or disapproval of purchasing counterfeits by friends and family greatly impacts behaviour to buy. Reflectively, if social circles approve to buy, consumers are more inclined to make such purchases and vice versa. This motioning that the illegal nature of counterfeit products limits its open availability in many emerging markets, thereby reducing consumer control over their purchase decisions, which depends on information about where these items can be obtained (Jiang, *et. al.*, 2019). Consequently, increased accessibility to counterfeit goods heightens consumers' perceived behavioural control, leading to stronger intentions to purchase such items. By integrating these concepts into Gen Z's purchasing choices, it involves recognising the blend of conventional socio-psychological elements and contemporary technology-driven influences on consumer behaviour. This emphasises the complex interaction among consumer perceptions, social factors, and technological environments in forming buying intentions, particularly within the backdrop of copyright disputes within Africa's entertainment sector (Bonadio *et. al.*, 2021; Sari, 2022). This offers a valuable direction for developing brand management tactics and regulatory structures within the Africa entertainment industry.

Research Methodology
Research Method, Population and Sample Frame

The research is guided by the positivist paradigm, which favours quantitative approaches for data interpretation, emphasising statistical techniques to derive empirical insights. The study is anchored on electronic surveys, which were utilised to collect quantitative responses from technologically savvy individuals belonging to Generation Z with birth range between 1991 and 2010. This methodological approach aligned with empirical analysis conducted by Jansson-Boyd (2018) and Dumitrescu, Orzan, and Fuciu (2015), who examined behavioural intentions within the entertainment sector. Specifically, the research targets African Gen Z music enthusiasts who have purchased and listened to copying products either online or in-person over the past decade. The choice of Africa as the focus stems from prevalent reports of copyright imitation of which Egypt experiences the highest number of cases (30.61%), followed by South Africa (20.71%), Morocco (10.31%), Nigeria (5.92%) and Uganda (4.18%), as highlighted in Peacock (2019) documentation of copyright imitation across the continent. Given that there are no or scanty statistical registry of internet-using Gen Z music enthusiasts, the sampling method employed was non-standardised and adopted an Infinite Borden Sampling model. This decision was influenced by considerations of security, financial limitations, and time constraints limiting researcher's ability to cover the overall Gen Z's music populace in Africa, amidst the need for efficient data management. Consequently, a sample size of 384 individuals from the ethnic African Gen Z demographic, aged 18 or older and born between 1991 and 2010, was randomly chosen for the study:

$$S = Z^2 \text{x (p) x } (1 - p)/C^2 \dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots \text{ (4)}$$

Where;
SS = Sample Size,
Z = Z-value (1.96 for 95% confidence interval),
P = Population percentage (expressed as 0.5),
C = Confidence interval (expressed as 0.05 = +/- 5 percentage points)

$SS = 1.96^2 \times 0.5\ (1 - 0.5)/0.05^2$ ……………………..……….... (5)
$SS = 3.8416 \times 0.5 \times 0.5/.0025$…………...................................(6)

SS= 384 Gen Z music enthusiast……………………………… (7)

However, the research employed a snowball approach, initially engaging known participants and then asking them to refer others. This method was designed to achieve proportional representation from regions with reported cases, ensuring coverage across Africa's key countries relevant to Gen Z music enthusiasts. Participants from this Gen Z demographic were chosen based on their industry experience with respect to copying entertainment product output (e.g., scripts, song-writing, film remakes and adaptations, literary works and fan fiction, bootlegged movies, knockoff video games, lyrics, and copycat films) in onsite viewing. Recruitment took place at various public locations such as entertainment malls, movie shows, and street dancing shows. From January, 2023 to January, 2024, a total of 352 valid responses were collected through Google Forms. This sample size adheres to recommended guidelines for PLS-SEM, surpassing the required number according to the "ten-time rule." Despite falling slightly short of the target of 384 responses, 352 responses (88% of the target) were deemed more than sufficient for this study's objectives. To ensure consistency, all participants completed a questionnaire on their movies experience and entertainment brand preferences, particularly concerning copyright imitation practices in Africa.

Methodology Instrument and Model Measurement

To overcome language and distance barriers, regional representatives were assigned to assist participants with interpreting and completing the questionnaire. The questionnaire was then sent digitally to respondents. Online surveys were chosen for their efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and ability to build on previous research (Vehovar & Manfreda, 2017). The questionnaire consisted of two parts: demographic questions to capture socio-demographic information and questions related to copyright imitation in consumer behaviour, adapted from Quoquab, *et. al.* (2017) and tailored to the specific research objectives. Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale. To ensure understanding among native African speakers,

the questionnaire was translated into local languages and then back-translated for linguistic equivalence. The aim was to assess ethically questionable copyright practices using predefined response options such as "Active (A)," "Passive (P)," "Imitated (I)," "No Harm (NH)," and "Harm (H)," each assigned a numerical value from 1 for A, NH for 4 and H for 5 (Abdulsalam *et. al.*, 2024). Constructs concerning copyright imitation and Generation Z's brand recognition were also assessed using Likert-type scales, with response levels adjusted for each construct. This methodology is ideal, endorsed by Johns (2010), Leung (2011), and Wu and Leung (2017), by facilitated inclusive data collection across diverse African participants, albeit requiring significant time, financial, and implementation investments during the design and implementation phase.

PLS-SEM Analysis and Ethical Consideration
Smart PLS software was used to estimate a theoretical model using a modelling approach that involved bootstrapping with 10,000 re-samples. Unlike traditional regression methods that neglect loadings, SEM was employed to assess loadings of observed items on latent variables (measurement model) and to study hypothesised relationships among various constructs (structural model) (Hair *et. al.*, 2014). SEM allows for analysis of measurement errors linked with observable variables during computation, minimising biases in parameter estimation common in regression analysis. PLS methodology is suitable for exploring potential causal relationships and accommodating reflective and formative measurement frameworks (Manley *et. al.*, 2021). PLS has minimal requirements on measurement scales, sample sizes, and residual distributions, making it effective for analysing complex models and conducting predictive-oriented investigations involving endogeneity (Memon *et. al.*, 2021). PLS was considered the most appropriate analytical approach for establishing cause-effect relationships. The data analysis was performed using Smart PLS-3 software, incorporating bootstrapping with 10,000 re-samples, as recommended by Hair *et. al.* (2019).

To foster ethical practices in academic research, the study strictly adhered to ethical principles that distinguish wrongful acts from rightful acts (Muncy & Iyer, 2021), with a focus on protecting respondents' identities,

interests, and the confidentiality of their information. Special attention was given to ensuring linguistic and cultural appropriateness of survey instruments, particularly when translated into local languages, to address inclusivity, privacy, and informed consent, especially when exploring sensitive topics like copyright practices and consumer behaviour. Informed consent was obtained from respondents through clear communication of the study's purpose in the questionnaire's introduction. The research strictly followed established ethical standards in academic research by safeguarding respondents' identities and interests, and by ensuring the confidentiality of the information provided. Respondents were informed about the research and consented voluntarily, as outlined in the questionnaire's introductory section, demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of the research's objectives.

Result Presentation, Discussion and Implication
The research results are based on descriptive and inferential analysis of 352 electronic responses, which represent 92% of the total sample size of 384, aligning with Guenther *et. al.* (2023) suggestion that a 70% sample can effectively represent PLS-SEM results for hypothesis testing. The demographic breakdown in Table 5 illustrates the varied national representation of Gen Z respondents, with a notable Gen Z's majority coming from Egypt (25%), followed by Uganda (19.8%), South Africa (19.2%), Nigeria (11.5%), Ethiopia (14%), and Morocco (10.5%), crucial for obtaining regional insights across African countries. Furthermore, the data reveals a balanced gender distribution (50.6% male, 49.4% female) and a predominant age group of 18-22 years (53.1%), reflecting young music enthusiasts, predominantly unmarried population (71.6%) with a notable level of educational attainment (undergraduate 21.6%, postgraduate 44.9%). However, the majority of the Gen Z's respondents earn 37,000-112,000 Naira monthly, with few reporting lower incomes (<18,000 naira), motioning a positive impact on purchasing power in the entertainment industry. The Gen Z's respondents also show significant experience in the entertainment industry, with a diverse range of exposure durations (38.6% with 3-6 years, 17.6% with 11-14 years, and 31.3% with over 14 years), showcasing a diverse mix of knowledge and relationship levels in the industry. This suggests

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an equal representation of educated, and experienced Gen Z's sample capable of providing critical insights on how entertainment brand recognition impacts the Gen Z's purchase behaviour of counterfeit products in the Africa entertainment industry.

Table 5: Analysis of Demographic Characteristics

Factor	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Response Rate	Egypt	88	25%
	South Africa	68	19.2%
	Ethiopia	49	14%
	Morocco	37	10.5%
	Nigeria	40	11.5%
	Uganda	70	19.8%
	Total	**352**	**100%**
Gender	Male	178	50.6%
	Female	174	49.4%
	Total	**352**	**100%**
Age	<18 years	13	3.7%
	18-22 years	187	53.1%
	23-26 years	52	14.8%
	27-30 years	48	13.6%
	31 years and above	52	14.8%
	Total	**352**	**100.0%**
Marital Status	Bachelor	252	71.6%
	Married	88	25%
	Widow	12	3.4%
	Total	**352**	**100.0%**
	<High School	0	0%
	High School	8	2.3%
	Undergraduate	76	21.6%

	Postgraduate	158	44.9%
	PhD	82	23.3%
	Professional Qualification	24	6.8%
	Others	4	1.1%
	Total	**352**	**100.0%**
Monthly Income	< 18,000 naira	28	8%
	18,000-36,000 naira	54	15.3%
	37,000-55,000 naira	77	21.9%
	56,000-112,000 naira	96	27.3%
	113,000-226,000 naira	64	18.2%
	>226,000 naira	18	5.0%
	No monthly income	15	4.3%
	Total	**352**	**100%**
Entertainment Experience	< 2 years	24	6.8%
	3-6 years	136	38.6%
	7-10 years	20	5.7%
	11-14 years	62	17.6%
	> 14 years	110	31.3%
	No Experience	0	0%
	Total	**352**	**100.0%**

Source: STATA (Statistics and Data) Output (2024)

Measurement Model Assessment

The research model (Y = f (x) ->PB (Y) = f (CI) ->PB (Y) = α + $\beta 1$ICN + $\beta 2$IPI + $\beta 3$IPS + e) undergoes both descriptive and inferential analyses to comprehensively examine data trends, specifically focusing on music enthusiasts among Africa's Gen Z population. Descriptive analysis offers an overview of data trends, highlighting key patterns, however, it is insufficient for establishing causality or confirming hypotheses. Therefore, inferential analysis, particularly utilising PLS-SEM modelling, becomes crucial. PLS-SEM enables testing intricate relationships between variables,

facilitating researchers in drawing meaningful conclusions, exploring correlations, mediation effects, and moderation among variables (Shiau *et. al.*, 2019). Reflectively, it addresses whether copyright imitation significantly affects purchase behaviour and brand recognition among African Gen Z consumers, directly or indirectly. These are ideal as PLS-SEM models account for latent constructs and measurement error, thus enhancing the study's rigour and validity. This statistical approach is aligned with the research's objective of comprehending complex consumer behaviour relationships within a specific demographic and regional context, making it suitable for addressing the research questions posed in the research title.

Table 6: Descriptive and Validity Analysis

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation	Excess Kurtosis	Skewness	α	AVE	ρA
Brand Recognition					**0.895**	**0.935**	**0.828**
BR1	3.288	1.397	-1.130	-0.377			
BR2	3.754	1.248	-0.627	-0.714			
BR3	3.890	1.339	-0.441	-0.933			
Corporate Name					**0.862**	**0.935**	**0.879**
CN1	3.398	1.322	-0.909	-0.457			
CN2	3.610	1.222	-0.645	-0.599			
Product Idea					**0.705**	**0.871**	**0.771**
PI1	3.381	1.282	-0.958	-0.405			
PI2	3.229	1.285	-1.117	-0.146			
Promotional Strategy					**0.884**	**0.945**	**0.896**
PS1	3.356	1.211	-0.745	-0.397			
PS2	3.517	1.240	-0.701	-0.579			

The above calculations were determined through a bootstrapping procedure with 10,000 repetitions, with α abbreviated as Chronbach's alpha, ρA as Jöreskog's composite reliability, and AVE as average variance extracted, of which all loadings were significant at 0.005 level (Authors, 2024).

The data in Table 6 exhibit strong correlations among the variables, with mean values consistently above 3.636 and low standard deviations ranging from 1.211 to 1.338 (Aburumman *et. al.*, 2019), indicating limited variability in the latent variable. For example, BR2 (Brand Recognition 2) has a mean of 3.754 and a standard deviation of 1.248, suggesting moderately positive perceptions with less variability compared to BR1 and BR3, which is consistent with Lee *et. al.* (2015). The normality of the data is confirmed by acceptable thresholds for peakedness (±1.0) and kurtosis (±3.0), where negative values of excess kurtosis imply a flatter distribution with fewer outliers, and skewness values reveal asymmetry indicating a tendency towards lower perceptions among Gen Z respondents. Reliability of the indicators was assessed through loadings, surpassing the established Cronbach's alpha value of 0.7 (Afthanorhan, Awang, & Aimran, 2020). Notably, copyright imitation and brand recognition loadings are reliable, with á values ranging from 0.705 to 0.895, suggesting high reliability across the constructs. Jöreskog's composite reliability (ρA) also indicates good reliability across all constructs, exceeding 0.7. Convergent validity, measured by average variance extracted (AVE), confirms internal consistency of reflective scales, with values surpassing 0.5. These findings suggest that Brand Recognition (BR), Corporate Name (CN), Product Idea (PI), and Promotional Strategy (PS) are reliable measures within the study's entertainment context, offering insights into how brand perceptions influence consumer behaviour in this demographic.

Table 7: Discriminant Validity and Multicollinearity

|	Brand Recognition	Corporate Name	Product Idea	Promotional Strategy	VIF
Brand Recognition	**0.910**				
Corporate Name	0.752	**0.937**			**2.949**
Product Idea	0.736	0.747	**0.878**		**2.765**
Promotional Strategy	0.737	0.776	0.759	**0.946**	3.072

Source: Smart PLS-SEM (2024).

Table 7 demonstrates the discriminant validity of the constructs, assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion, ensuring that the correlations between each pair of constructs were below the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct variable. As per Table 7, all observed correlations met this criterion, ranging from 0.737 to 0.910. Higher correlations generally suggest stronger relationships between constructs. For instance, Brand Recognition shows a significant correlation with Corporate Name (0.910), indicating a close link between how a brand is recognised and its corporate identity. Additionally, the heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations was calculated, with all values found to be below the conservative threshold of 0.85 (Rasoolimanesh, 2022). These values (ranging from 0.878 to 0.937) confirm discriminant validity, as the diagonal values exceed the off-diagonal correlations, indicating good discriminant validity among the constructs. These findings affirm the adequate discriminant validity of all latent variables. This suggests that the constructs studied are distinct and measure unique aspects, thereby increasing confidence in the robustness of the research model and the credibility of the study's outcomes. Furthermore, the Variance Inflation

Factor (VIF) values, which indicate the extent of correlation between independent and dependent variables, demonstrate that the variables are not highly correlated with each other. With values ranging from 2.765 to 3.072, well below the threshold of 10 recommended by Hair *et. al.* (2020), there is no evidence of multicollinearity among these latent variables. This indicates a healthy relationship between the independent and dependent variables, further strengthening the validity of the study's results. The absence of substantial multicollinearity suggests that the predictor variables (constructs) are relatively independent, enhancing the reliability of the regression analysis.

Hypothesis Testing

In the PLS-SEM model, a method used for predictive modelling, the R^2 value is highly important for evaluating the structural model as it represents the proportion of variance explained by the endogenous latent variable. Moradi *et. al.* (2024) suggest that R^2 values should be interpreted as follows: 0.67 indicates a strong level of explanation, 0.33 indicates a moderate level, and 0.19 indicates a small level of explanation.
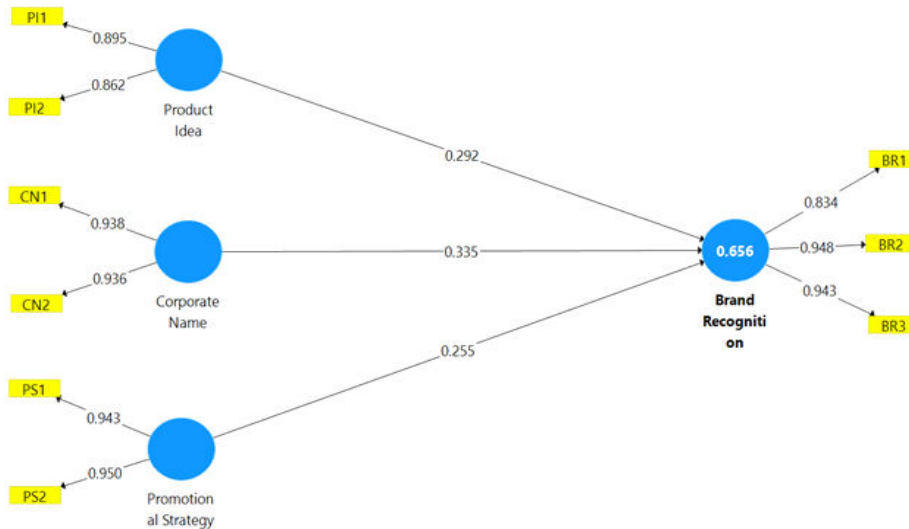
Note: p<0.05, p<0.01, p<0.001, **Figure 2**: Path Construct Measurement (Smart PLS-SEM, 2024)

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Ramayah *et. al.* (2018) motion that the evaluation of the impact of various independent variables on the R^2 values of a dependent variable can be done using F^2 statistics. This determined that values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 signify small, medium, and large effects, respectively. Figure 2 reveals that all dimensions of the independent variable exceed these thresholds, indicating a significant influence of copyright imitation practices on Gen Z's recognition of entertainment brands. This underscores the necessity for entertainment businesses to protect their copyright against imitation to enhance brand recognition. Specifically, the most influential factors on Gen Z's brand recognition are imitated copyright names (33.5%), stressing the need for memorable and unique corporate names that are unique to the firm identity and capable of impacting brand recognition positively. Similarly, imitated product idea (29.2%) has a medium-large effect, stressing the need for emphasising the importance for entertainment companies to prioritise distinct and innovative products to differentiate themselves from competitors.

Lastly, imitated promotional strategy (25.5%) concepts exhibit a relatively high effect on Gen Z's brand recognition, suggesting that entertainment firms should focus on developing recognisable and safeguarded promotional strategies to foster brand recognition in the industry. These findings align with the studies by Mayasari *et. al.* (2022) and Pope *et. al.* 2020), emphasising the critical role of protecting copyrights, including names, product ideas, strategies, and marketing mixes, within the entertainment industry to build and sustain customer trust and brand recognition. By prioritising innovation and uniqueness in their offerings and brand elements, companies can enhance brand recognition among Gen Z consumers. This protection of intellectual property is essential for cultivating and maintaining customer trust, ultimately contributing to sustained success and competitiveness in the entertainment industry.

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Table 8: Bootstrapping and Correlation Coefficient Results

	R²	Adjusted R²	F²	Sample	Mean	Standard Deviation	T-value	P-value	Result
BR	0.656	0.647							
CN->BR			0.111	0.336	0.338	0.098	3.406	0.001	Reject
PI->BR			0.090	0.293	0.291	0.094	3.102	0.002	Reject
PS->BR			0.062	0.255	0.255	0.097	2.642	0.008	Reject

Source: Smart PLS-SEM (2024).

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Table 8 shows a significant relationship, rejecting the null hypothesis, indicating a positive link between different aspects of copyright imitation (specifically corporate name, product idea, and promotional strategies) and purchase behaviour (Gen Z's brand recognition) with R^2 coefficients of 0.656 and Adjusted R^2 coefficients of 0.647 respectively. The R^2 values demonstrate a strong predictive model, explaining 65.6% of the variance in Gen Z's brand recognition, and 11.1%, 9%, and 6.2% for corporate name, product idea, and promotional strategy respectively. These values surpass the 5% significance level and above 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 threshold, representing small, medium, and large effect sizes, as established by Wang *et. al.* (2022). The T-values (3.406, 3.102, 2.642) and corresponding P-values (0.338, 0.291, 0.255) are provided for CN->BR (Copyright Imitation -> Brand Recognition), PI->BR (Performance Imitation -> Brand Recognition), and PS->BR (Social Imitation -> Brand Recognition) paths, respectively. A T-value greater than 1.96 (corresponding to a P-value less than 0.05) indicates a statistically significant relationship. Therefore, all three paths are statistically significant, as evidenced by the rejection of the null hypothesis ($P < 0.05$). Specifically, P-values of 0.01, 0.002, and 0.0008 are all below the conventional threshold of 0.05. These findings suggest a strong argument for research question that there is a significant impact of copyright imitation practices on purchase behaviour within the entertainment industry, aligning with Abdullah and Yu (2019) emphasis on the critical importance of ethical marketing strategies to maintain customer loyalty in the cosmetic market. The results imply that product idea imitation has the most significant effect on brand recognition. This suggests that behaviours related to copying or imitating copyrighted content, performances, and social interactions notably influence the perception and awareness of brands among this demographic group in the entertainment sector.

Discussion of Findings and Implication
In Africa's entertainment industry, the persistent challenge of copyright infringement hampers the profitability of creators and stifles innovation, affecting music and film productions due to unauthorised replication and distribution. This is true as the industry accommodated 1.48% of the global copyright imitation practices, exacerbated by the weak legal frameworks

and enforcement mechanisms, enabling imitation to thrive unchecked, particularly in light of complex cultural norms around ownership and sharing. Despite these hurdles, there is a growing acknowledgment of the vital role of intellectual property rights in cultivating a vibrant creative sector in Africa. Efforts are underway to bolster protections and foster respect for original works within the continent's diverse entertainment landscape. Moreover, recent research has explored the factors influencing consumer behaviour regarding counterfeit products, drawing on theories like the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), as advanced by Hinduja and Ingram (2008) and Quoquab, *et. al.* (2017). Their work elucidates how consumers' attitudes and purchasing decisions concerning counterfeit goods, particularly among tech-savvy Gen Z consumers, are influenced by subjective norms and behavioural control, notably brand recognition. This research aligns with findings showing a significant relationship between various aspects of copyright imitation (such as corporate name, product idea, and promotional strategies) and Gen Z's brand recognition, with R^2 coefficients of 0.656 and Adjusted R^2 coefficients of 0.647, demonstrate a strong predictive model, explaining 65.6% of the variance in Gen Z's brand recognition, and 11.1%, 9%, and 6.2% for corporate name, product idea, and promotional strategy respectively. These values surpass the 5% significance level and above 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 threshold, representing small, medium, and large effect sizes, as established by Moradi *et. al.* (2024), nullifying the research hypothesis by indicating a positive link with substantial explanatory power. Consequently, it was found that copyright imitation had a positive influence on the intention to purchase counterfeit entertainment brands. This is consistent with the findings from earlier studies on the purchase of counterfeits in other product categories (Bhatia, 2018; Ha & Tam, 2015; Junejo *et. al.*, 2020; Abdulsalam *et. al.*, 2024).

The research findings noted several theoretical, managerial and policy implications. First, the results suggest a significant challenge for creators and innovators within Africa's entertainment sector. This is true as copyright imitation not only undermines their ability to profit from their work but also disincentives further creative endeavours. When original works are easily imitated and distributed without authorisation, creators face diminished economic returns and reduced motivation to invest time and resources into

new projects. This could lead to a decline in the overall quality and diversity of content available to consumers. Furthermore, the research highlighted broader systemic issues as the lack of robust legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms is evidently contributing to the proliferation of copyright infringement. Without effective copyright protection and enforcement supported monitoring tactics, the industry struggles to flourish and attract investment that could foster innovation and growth in the future. Moreover, from a consumer behavioural theory perspective, the positive link between copyright imitation and purchasing behaviour among Gen Z, as indicated by R^2 (64.7%), raises questions about consumer awareness and values. If tech-savvy consumers are more inclined to purchase counterfeit entertainment brands due to factors like brand recognition influenced by copyright imitation, it suggests a need for greater education and awareness campaigns about the importance of supporting original content and respecting intellectual property rights. Consequently, policy implications are also significant, by motioning the need for policymakers to prioritise the development and implementation of stronger legal frameworks to protect intellectual property rights within the entertainment industry. This includes effective enforcement mechanisms and awareness campaigns to educate consumers about the negative impacts of copyright infringement on creativity and innovation. The research findings add descriptive value to the literature by statistically testing within the Gen Z and entertainment industry context, of which its studies are scarce within copyright imitation. This fosters collective efforts that the entertainment industry can thrive and fulfil its potential as a driver of economic growth and cultural enrichment in Africa.

Conclusion and Recommendation
The findings of the PLS-SEM analysis reveal a significant relationship between copyright imitation and Gen Z's brand recognition, which subsequently impacts purchase behaviour in Africa's entertainment industry. Specifically, the study indicates that unauthorised duplication and distribution of entertainment products, including music and films, play a crucial role in shaping consumers' attitudes towards brand recognition. Despite prevailing challenges such as weak legal frameworks and cultural norms around ownership, the study underscores the importance of intellectual property

rights in fostering a thriving creative sector, by demonstrating strong predictive power, explaining a substantial variance (65.6%) in Gen Z's brand recognition influenced by copyright imitation factors like corporate name, product idea, and promotional strategies. These findings, surpassing established significance levels and effect size thresholds, nullify the null hypothesis and confirm a positive influence of copyright imitation on the intention to purchase counterfeit entertainment brands among tech-savvy consumers in Africa.

The action-plan recommendations below are offered:

i.   Entertainment manufacturers and brand managers should enforce tighter management practices within the music chain to monitor service consumption among consumers. This includes providing clear agency information to consumers regarding product authenticity.

ii.   Government, in collaboration with manufacturers and policy makers, should advocate for legislative measures by proposing penalties for both suppliers and consumers involved in counterfeiting. This deterrence will help prevent counterfeit products from entering the market.

iii. Stakeholders, including brand managers and manufacturers, should enhance community engagement and awareness through consumer education and social responsibility programmes to attract more consumers. This involves the sharing of information about penalty cases related to counterfeiting to gain societal support against counterfeit products.

iv.   Entertainment manufacturers of origin-branded products should design corporate names and products using rare, high-quality materials associated with brand value. This will make counterfeiting more challenging and enhance product authenticity.

v.   Plaintiff firms should excellently adopt differentiation as a tactic by providing exclusive customer service benefits that other counterfeiters cannot replicate, such as lifetime guarantees, product exchanges, and premium membership perks.

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Despite the research value proposition, several limitations are noted. The utilisation of electronic surveys might have introduced response bias due to disparities in access or willingness among different segments of Generation Z in Africa to engage online, potentially affecting the demographic composition and representation of consumer viewpoints. Additionally, focusing solely on Gen Z consumers in Africa may not fully encapsulate the diversity and intricacy of Gen Z consumer behaviour across the entire continent, where various regions display distinct cultural, economic, and social dynamics influencing cosmetic preferences and purchasing behaviours. Furthermore, the reliance on a cross-sectional survey design restricts the ability to establish definitive causality between imitation practices and brand recognition; longitudinal studies or experimental designs would offer more robust evidence. Lastly, employing self-reported data could introduce common method bias, potentially inflating correlations due to shared respondent perceptions rather than genuine associations among constructs. Subsequent research endeavours could delve into how cosmetic brands can effectively implement ethical marketing strategies tailored for Generation Z consumers globally, taking into account cultural nuances, digital engagement preferences, perceptions of brand authenticity, and emerging technologies such as augmented reality and AI-driven customisation to refine marketing approaches.

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