

# The Internalisation of Counterfeit Consumption Behaviour from the Lens of Self-Determination Theory

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## ABSTRACT

Phenomenology study on counterfeit goods purchase presents unique challenges due to the sensitive issue that requires consumers to disclose their consumption practices. To better understand consumers' psychological motivation in this counterfeit phenomenon, capturing insight from consumers' daily consumption experiences delivers further exploration in explaining the tremendous consumer demand. Based on a hermeneutic phenomenology study, this research attempted to examine an exhaustive and contextualised account of 12 consumers' consumption experiences on purchasing counterfeit branded fashion goods through in-depth interviews. Utilising Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the data were analysed using thematic analysis, and six themes emerged from this study: materialism, conspicuous, social norms, competent consumers, social learning, and self-interest. It validated that the pursuit of extrinsic goals enables consumers to internalise counterfeit consumption, which contributes to consumers' life happiness and hedonic well-being. The conclusions confirmed that the experiences involved in counterfeit consumption by the consumers were viewed as pleasure maximisation that fulfilled psychological needs and life goals pursuit. This paper contributes wisdom to scholarly, industry, and managerial research as the emerging themes depict the experiences captured by consumers continuously involved in counterfeit consumption practices.

**Keywords:** Counterfeit goods, Phenomenology, Psychological needs, Self-Determination Theory

## INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have incorporated responsible consumption and production by emphasising efficient resource management and enhanced consumption patterns. Considering the extensive reach of consumers in the counterfeits market and the fact that fashion and trends have become paramount for social existence, this illicit market significantly threatens the profit and income generation of the country and fashion industry and leaves harmful effects on environmental conservation. Counterfeiting in the fashion industry has detrimental environmental and ethical implications due to using low-quality materials, hazardous chemicals, and unethical labour practices. Nonetheless, the existence of a counterfeit market not only causes environmental degradation but also involves human exploitation issues such as forced labour and unsafe working conditions, which are still untapped by society.

The digital marketplace and e-commerce revolution pose the dark market, contribute towards the development of counterfeiting activity, and are responsible for unethical and illegal consumption practices (Chaudhry, 2022; Antonopoulos et al., 2020). Unfortunately, counterfeiters have misused and exploited technological advancement to invent sophisticated marketing techniques (Shepherd et al., 2023), causing a considerable threat to global economic sustainability. Furthermore, consumers utilising the existence of a digital illicit marketplace to satiate their material needs bypass the conventional shopping method with minimal psychosocial risks of being caught by others (Amaral and Loken, 2016). Hence, the rise of digital technology has challenged fashion manufacturers to invest in advanced technology to cope with IPR infringement and for enforcement bodies to monitor counterfeiting activities. Despite a substantial collaboration from various stakeholders to address the counterfeit issues, consumers' ignorance of the weight of intellectual property

rights exerts a significant challenge to combat counterfeiters. Moreover, society's normalisation and legitimisation of counterfeit consumption practices are motivated by price, availability, social influence, and utilitarian needs (Kononova et al., 2024; Song et al., 2024; Ting et al., 2016).

Many analyses concerning counterfeit goods purchase focused on the perspective of consumers' demand demonstrated that personal and social factors motivate consumers to purchase counterfeit goods (Kim et al., 2024; Kasber et al., 2023; Mayasari et al., 2022; Bian & Moutinho, 2011; Perez et al., 2010; Phau & Teah, 2009; Teah et al., 2015). Additionally, many premises of the research domain directed to consumers' attitudes and purchase intention toward counterfeit goods are strongly determined by positive or negative attitudes (Alam et al., 2024; Orth et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2016; Ting et al., 2016). Hence, consumers perceive themselves as 'smart shoppers' when purchasing counterfeit goods, which is influenced by eclectic factors such as social power, perceived benefits, and ease of passing off counterfeits as genuine (Katyal et al., 2022). In a different vein, a few scholars investigate the role counterfeit goods purchase on consumers' psychological benefits (Rosely et al., 2021; Bian et al., 2016; Pueschel, 2016; Key, 2016), though prior findings indicated negative consequences and psychosocial risks disengage consumers from purchasing counterfeit goods (Kim et al., 2024; Filieri et al., 2017; Pueschel et al., 2016; Rod et al., 2015; Veloutsou and Bian, 2008). The ability to alter their cognitive state enables consumers to rationalise the purchase of counterfeit goods, legitimising the practice, and consumers are no longer concerned with any psychosocial risks (Ahuvia et al., 2012; Thaichon and Quach, 2016). These conclusions allude to the importance of exploring how consumers alter their cognitive state and rationalising their counterfeit purchase behaviour. This is a matter of concern for authority bodies and non-government organisations to measure society's awareness of the implications of practising counterfeit fashion goods consumption towards society, the country's economy, and the environment.

This paper aimed to contribute to the literature on counterfeit goods purchase from the perspective of Southeast Asia, country, specifically by exploring satisfaction of psychological needs through counterfeit goods purchase. To that end, this study employed qualitative data from in-depth interviews conducted on consumers in Malaysia. Using the self-determination theory (SDT) as its theoretical framework, the data verified that Malaysian consumers are extrinsically motivated to be involved in counterfeit consumption practices, driven by their relatedness, autonomy, and competence needs.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Counterfeiting is the unauthorised manufacturing of goods whose unique characteristics, such as names, contents, or signs, are registered to another party and protected by intellectual property rights (Bian and Veloutsou, 2007). Imitating logos, trademarks, colours, symbols, or any aesthetic aspect is illegal in any country. Studies on counterfeit goods have deviated from the consumers' stance of general counterfeiting and piracy activities, supply chain investigations, as well as legality and lawfulness in describing consumers' voluntary involvement in counterfeit consumption (Eisend and Schuchert-güler, 2006; Large, 2015).

Preliminary deconstructions on counterfeit goods purchase have identified status, esteem, self-image enhancement, and affiliations among the psychological needs that consumers wish to fulfil through the consumption of counterfeit goods (Amaral and Loken, 2016; Bian et al., 2016; Peng et al., 2013; Perez et al., 2010; Teah et al., 2015). Consumers believe that the characteristics of counterfeit goods with high duplication of genuine products deliver similar values and, therefore, can boost consumers' self-esteem and image during socialisation (Shan et al., 2022; Jiang and Shan, 2016; Peng et al., 2013).

### Counterfeit Consumption and Consumers' Psychological Needs

Consumers' involvement in counterfeit consumption requires high knowledge and skills to discern various grades of counterfeit goods, which, to some extent, can be more challenging than purchasing original branded fashion goods. Although prior literature posits that product knowledge will deter consumers from purchasing counterfeit goods (Bian and Moutinho, 2011), some consumers leverage their knowledge to "camouflage" aspired lifestyle, social status and self-worth (Cesareo and Stöttinger, 2015; Pueschel et al., 2016; Teah et al., 2015), innovative in 'blending' the use of original and counterfeit versions (Amaral and Loken, 2016; Pueschel et al., 2016). Previously, counterfeits have been recognised as illegal, unauthorised, and unethical consumption

behaviour, motivating consumers to disengage with this purchase behaviour to bolster their social status, image, self-esteem, and social position (Jiang et al., 2023; Shan et al., 2022; Cesareo and Stöttinger, 2015; Loi et al., 2015; Wilcox et al., 2009). Nonetheless, extensive knowledge about luxury fashion brands (Bian & Haque, 2020), enables consumers to be an ‘expert’ and more capable of differentiating original from counterfeit versions, producing a high sense of self-mastery, which leads to the satisfaction of competence needs. To some extent, expansive involvement in counterfeit goods contributes to autonomy needs as consumers become empowered and intrinsically motivated to learn the technical details and ‘know-how’ of counterfeit versions, describing consumers’ autonomous behaviour (Key et al., 2013). Moreover, the accumulation of knowledge grants freedom in consumers’ purchase decisions, driven by “genuine interest” and passion instead of external pressure (Bian et al., 2016; Key et al., 2013), describes consumer involvement as autonomous and self-initiated. Literature discovered that consumers’ autonomous behaviour is produced by positive emotional experiences such as excitement, the thrill of hunting, and enjoyment (Bian et al., 2016; Pueschel et al., 2016; Quintanilla et al., 2010; Thaichon and Quach, 2016), deliver a meaningful experience to the counterfeit consumers (Alba and Williams, 2012; Barbopoulos and Johansson, 2016; El Hedhli et al., 2016). Hence, consumers voluntarily involve and make their own choices in seeking information, enhance their ‘forensic’ knowledge of counterfeit goods, and become a point of reference to other social group members (Bian et al., 2016; Key et al., 2013; Pueschel et al., 2016). These findings align with a study performed by Rosely et al. (2022), which discovered a social group that provides knowledge accumulation and is a valuable resource for counterfeit consumers to enhance their knowledge of branded fashion goods. According to Kasser et al. (2014), competence needs are related to the effectiveness of individuals in challenging themselves to demonstrate skills and knowledge of performing an activity.

Additionally, consumers purchase counterfeit goods because they want to be connected with their desired social group (Stoner and Wang, 2014; Taormina and Chong, 2010; Viet et al., 2018), affectionate with the aspired social group (Amaral and Loken, 2016; Bekir et al., 2013). Surprisingly, affiliation with a “secret group” (Bian et al., 2016) enables counterfeit consumers to be protected by the other group members in keeping their “face” (Jiang and Shan, 2016), illustrating counterfeit consumption contributes to the satisfaction of psychological needs (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Kasser & Ryan, 2001). Although the means are unacceptable (Amaral and Loken, 2016; Khandeparkar and Motiani, 2018; Nia and Zaichkowsky, 2000), consumers rationalise the existence of counterfeit goods empowers them to sustain their social position (Amaral and Loken, 2016; Pueschel et al., 2016). Additionally, the emergence of the digital marketplace, which promotes flaunting behaviour and produces ‘deviant social media influencers’ (Chaudhry, 2022; Shepherd et al., 2023), creates a strong belief that counterfeit goods purchases satisfy consumers’ relatedness needs with their aspired social group.

Given the augmenting prevalence of psychological benefits for consumers, it is integral to explore the components of psychological needs fulfilment to comprehend the phenomenon of counterfeit consumption. As depicted in the counterfeit goods purchase literature, consumers are extrinsically motivated to involve in counterfeit consumption as it is a cost-saving alternative that helps them to preserve favourable image and popularity (Amaral and Loken, 2016; Bian et al., 2015; Khandeparkar and Motiani, 2018; Priporas et al., 2015; Pueschel et al., 2016; Quintanilla et al., 2010; Thaichon and Quach, 2016). The literature reckons the role of psychological motivation that portrays how consumers experience a high sense of self-autonomous due to genuine interest and passion for learning and enhancing knowledge about counterfeit products, thus enhancing self-competency (Bian et al., 2016; Key et al., 2013).

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Given the study’s exploratory nature, phenomenology was applied to understand the meaning behind consumer involvement in counterfeit consumption behaviour. Phenomenology provides more wisdom from the actual consumers’ real-life experiences (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016), thus explaining the increasing demand for counterfeit goods from the consumers’ continuous involvement. In-depth interviews are “directed towards understanding informants’ perspectives on their lives, experiences as expressed in their words” and statements that infuse meaning (Seale and Silverman, 1997). A semi-structured interview was conducted to allow the informants to talk freely about their consumption experience with counterfeit goods.

A purposive and snowballing sampling strategy was used, and twelve in-depth interviews were conducted with six male and six female participants who were classified as young adult consumers between the ages of 20 and 33. The informants should have at least two years of experience purchasing and using counterfeit fashion goods, i.e., actively purchasing, owning, and using counterfeit goods for the past six months. This criterion is essential in defining consumer involvement as it describes consumers' concern about, interest in, or commitment to a particular position on counterfeit consumption.

Thematic analysis was performed as it offers a way of identifying and uncovering the underlying themes in a given dataset, flexible enough to be modified for the needs of many studies, and non-intricate, besides providing rich and detailed data (Braun and Clarke, 2019; Vaismoradi et al., 2016). Throughout the analysis, member checks were used by inviting the informant to revisit the initial data analysis through transcription to ensure the rigour of the findings. Hence, to allow for a holistic perspective, all three researchers discussed all emerging themes to reconfirm the emergence of subthemes and main themes. The interchange and discussion of interpretations helped us define and redefine the direction of analysis, which represents the verification strategy recommended by Morse et al. (2002). Table 2 summarises the list of interview guide questions.

Table 1. Demographic data of informants

| Informants                     | The most frequent purchase of counterfeit fashion goods                                                          | Years of consumption experiences |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Informant 1, 22 years, Male    | Shoes, jersey and watch                                                                                          | 7 years                          |
| Informant 2, 28 years, Female  | Handbag, Telekung (female Muslims prayer attire mostly worn in Asian countries), hijab (female Muslim headscarf) | 8 years                          |
| Informant 3, 20 years, Male    | Apparel, bag, shoes                                                                                              | 3 years                          |
| Informant 4, 33 years, Female  | Handbag, purse, belt, sunglass                                                                                   | 10 years                         |
| Informant 5, 22 years, Female  | Handbag, shoes                                                                                                   | 4 years                          |
| Informant 6, 33 years, Female  | Handbag, hijab (female Muslims headscarf)                                                                        | 2 years                          |
| Informant 7, 22 years, Female  | Handbag, watch and hijab(female Muslims headscarf)                                                               | 2 years                          |
| Informant 8, 33 years, Male    | Wallet, watch, slippers, apparels                                                                                | 15 years                         |
| Informant 9, 20 years, Male    | Shoes, watch, tracksuits                                                                                         | 5 years                          |
| Informant 10, 22 years, Male   | Shoes and jersey                                                                                                 | 5 years                          |
| Informant 11, 22 years, Female | Handbag, purse, hijab (female Muslims headscarf)                                                                 | 2 years                          |
| Informant 12, 22 years, Male   | Shoes, wallet                                                                                                    | 5 years                          |

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Table 2: Semi structured interview questions

| Questions                                                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. How do you define high-grade/copy-ori goods?                                                       |
| 2. Could you tell me your ideal shopping day out?                                                     |
| 3. Does shopping/using high-grade/copy-ori goods is an enjoyable activity?                            |
| 4. So that's a reason you keep repeating/buying high-grade/copy-ori goods. Could you elaborate on it? |
| 5. Does the process of shopping for high-grade/copy-ori enhance your shopping experience?             |



|                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6. Tell me about your current shopping high-grade/copy-ori experience.                                   |
| 7. Tell me about your first time shopping high-grade/copy-ori goods.                                     |
| 8. What motivated you to shop/use copy-ori goods?                                                        |
| 9. Where do you find information on high-grade/copy-ori?                                                 |
| 10. Do shopping/using high-grade/copy-ori goods make you an expert in selecting the best copy-ori goods? |
| 11. Have you share/inform/tell others about your shopping/using high- grade/copy ori goods?              |

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Six central themes emerged related to the consumer's involvement in counterfeit fashion goods: society norms, materialism, conspicuous consumption, self-interest, competent consumers, and social learning. These themes described how counterfeit consumption activity contributes to consumers' psychological needs satisfaction through the internalisation process of extrinsic motivation.

### Theme 1: Society norms

The theme of society norms described how the informants viewed the involvement of other society members in this consumption behaviour and concluded that "everybody does it." By doing so, the informants justified that there was nothing wrong with their participation in counterfeit consumption. The informants believed that involvement in counterfeit consumption was acceptable and a common practice among the society members; thus, they did not feel anxious to reveal the status of their branded fashion goods to others as they believed that being transparent and honest was the best thing to do. The informants pointed out that nothing was wrong with their consumption activity, and wearing counterfeit branded fashion goods was acceptable since everyone in their social circle was also involved in this counterfeit consumption activity.

"... because we are living with the Malay's mentality, whereby they still perceive that we are wearing the first copy version even if we have spent so much on original goods." (Informant 3)

"... So far, my colleague had never asked if it is original, but they just told me that it was lovely. Usually, they did not ask about it and just asked where I bought it from..." (Informant 5)

### Theme 2: Materialism

The normalisation of counterfeit consumption activity enhances the internalisation of extrinsic goals, mainly because consumers assimilate society's values and ultimately accept them, which describes the degree of identification of self-regulation. The findings exemplified how internalisation and integration of values that differ across cultural contexts enabled the consumers to internalise society's values and consider counterfeit consumption an acceptable practice in Malaysia. "... It was just a trend among the youngsters. It helps in saving money, and we can be fashionable. So far, it was just for the feeling of fulfilment." (Informant 3)

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"Everybody wore Vans ... It appeared lovely, and many people used it. At that time, it was a trend if I am not mistaken ... I saw them wearing it, and it was nice, charming ..." (Informant 9)

### Theme 3: Conspicuous

This conspicuous lifestyle, as portrayed by the consumers, was driven by the pursuit of extrinsic life goals. The conspicuous theme revealed that the informants were attracted to purchasing and wearing counterfeit "loud" brands, emphasising the "logofication" lifestyle. They described their sense of pride and satisfaction in their ability to show off the most popular brands to the public.

"... simply put, we want to show off, 'I have it, and you don't.' So that's all. I am more for it. It feels like I got left behind. All my friends have it; I do not. It feels wrong. I feel like, 'I'm outdated.' It is a trend to show off everything we buy ..." (Informant 8)

“... Then, I captured the photo. Someone asked me, “Is it original?” “It looks like original.” So, it might look original, but for us, we know that it is not.” (Informant 5)

#### **Theme 4: Self-interest**

The theme of self-interest described how the consumers were willing to commit and put more effort into looking for the most identical and excellent quality duplication of counterfeit branded fashion goods. Hence, the informants pointed out that a feeling of pleasure, excitement, enjoyment, fun, and happiness accompanied their involvement in counterfeit consumption. Without a doubt, all the consumers did not seek fulfilment of functional and utilitarian needs but searched for pleasure maximisation in keeping up with the trends and fashion.

“... I had to explore what I wanted carefully. I compared the price and the design. It took a few weeks. I was following a lot of Instagram (pages), I looked into the price, and what they offered ... it was okay to spend some time.” (Informant 10)

“I read the review. Then, I searched the hashtag for a personal shopper or AAA grade. After finding the hashtags, I assessed the followers and their feedback about the items. It took time to search and survey; around one to two weeks...” (Informant 5)

#### **Theme 5: Competent Consumers**

The theme of competent consumers describes the consumers’ involvement in counterfeit consumption activity, which ‘produced’ competent consumers as they experienced self-enhancement by acquiring extensive knowledge about both versions of branded fashion goods. The consumers in this category explained how they used the counterfeit market to spend their money wisely by preventing wasteful and splurge consumption. The consumers in this study represented the society’s belief, which remarked that spending money on original branded fashion goods was unworthy.

“... I bought the premium grade for RM230. The low-grade first copy was about RM60-RM70, but it used different materials, glue, soles, and stitches, although the Adidas logo was similar to the original one. Others will think I’m wearing the original when I wear it. “It’s original,” they said.” (Informant 3)

“... usually for the first copy products, one has to look into the zip ... The original uses the YKK. But now, the first copy of the goods does not use YKK. So, one of the ways to differentiate the original and first copy products is by looking at the YKK.” (Informant 8)

#### **Theme 6: Social Learning**

The theme of social learning describes how the informants observed the actions of others as part of the learning process. The informants believed that counterfeit consumption had become a platform for them to pursue their interests with others who share similar hobbies and activities. Indeed, by having such interests and social groups, the informants described the crucial role of the other social group members in other people’s purchase decision-making.

“I would ask my friends because they often buy such goods (first copy). So, I would ask their opinion if it was “okay” since they knew about those types of material. If they say “okay”, I am also okay with it...” (Informant 1)

“Usually, when we hang out together, we discuss streetwear fashion, including buying the goods, the price, the latest brand, the current and previous price rates, and all sorts of products. It is similar to discussing the knowledge on these types of goods, regardless of bundle, premium first copy of the original version; I gained much knowledge. I wanted to know about these goods.” (Informant 3)

Table 3 presents the emerging themes from the informants' lived experience.

Table 3: Themes generated from in-depth interviews

| Themes              | Descriptions                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Society norms       | Involvement in counterfeit consumption was acceptable and a common practice amidst the society members                                                                                       |
| Materialism         | The feeling of enjoyment and having fun showing off their material belongings, carefree spending on new collection and design of counterfeit goods                                           |
| Conspicuous         | The behaviour of flaunting material possession among the societies complements one's life, thus leading to strong affiliation and connectedness with the society members                     |
| Self-interest       | Consumers' satisfaction arising from hedonic values, which are characterised by positive emotions including fun, excitement, and pleasure while purchasing counterfeit branded fashion goods |
| Competent Consumers | Consumers experienced self-mastery on both versions of branded fashion goods; original and counterfeit, in which they experienced self-enhancement through this consumption activity         |
| Social Learning     | A platform for consumers to pursue their interest with others who share similar hobbies and activities and play a crucial role on other's purchase decision making                           |

### Self-Determination and Counterfeit Consumption

This study advanced the theoretical understanding of consumer involvement in counterfeit consumption from the perspective of Self-Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan, 2000), which emphasises the components of psychological needs and fulfilment of life goals. Building on previous research which identified counterfeit consumption had contributed some inherent psychological benefits such as self-image enhancement (Bian et al., 2016), reconstruction of self-identity (Quintanilla et al., 2010), intrinsic hedonic outputs and knowledge enhancement (Bian et al., 2016; Key et al., 2013). This analysis too, explored how consumers' involvement in counterfeit consumption led to satisfaction with their psychological needs by pursuing extrinsic life goals. The theme of conspicuousness and materialism revealed that consumers prioritise extrinsic goal pursuit to stay ahead of the desired social group and preserve the social position and self-identity construction through counterfeit goods purchase. Scholars put forth that the pursuit of extrinsic goals through material purchases, which external and introjected regulation processes have controlled, emphasises social comparison, leads to negative ill-being, and is detrimental to consumers' psychological health (Ingrid, 2009; Pugno, 2008; Truong et al., 2010; Truong and McColl, 2011).

SDT contended that to satisfy all three components of basic psychological needs, consumers' life goals should be intrinsically motivated instead of extrinsically oriented. As discovered in the findings, consumers were driven to gain recognition from other social group members through attractive images and appearance, motivating them to purchase and wear counterfeit branded fashion goods. This indicates that specific external contingencies control consumers' behaviour as they anticipate recognition from others, undermining their intrinsic needs. Deci and Ryan (2000) asserted that when extrinsic rewards are introduced for doing an intrinsically exciting activity, people tend to feel controlled by the rewards, prompting a shift in the perceived locus causality for the behaviour from internal to external. In this sense, consumers' behaviour is controlled by external regulation and introjection regulation. Thus, their decision to consume counterfeit was not initially driven by the self-autonomous.

In SDT, too, this illustrates that external regulation and introjected regulation had internalised the extrinsic goal by which consumers' involvement in counterfeit consumption was non-autonomous as they need to comply with society's norms. Surprisingly, the consumers revealed that due to their continuous participation in counterfeit consumption, they became interested and got involved extensively as they found this consumption activity provides enjoyment and excitement to them, which is associated with autonomous behaviour. In this sense, consumers can assimilate society's values and fully accept them as their own, which describes the degree of identification of self-regulation. The findings advance the understanding of how the internalisation and integration of values that differ across cultural contexts enable consumers to experience autonomy as they have fully internalised the collectivist values of their culture.

The theme of social learning illustrates how consumers rely on others' experiences and knowledge of counterfeits, thus influencing their involvement in counterfeit consumption. SDT posits that humans need to experience a sense of belonging and attachment to others, and the counterfeit community helps satisfy these needs. In fact, following SDT, counterfeit consumption serves as a tool for consumers to be part of the fashion society with minimal investment. Nevertheless, through extensive involvement, consumers gain a sense of belongingness while "doing" this consumption activity with other social group members, satisfying relatedness needs. With this, the extrinsic goals have been thoroughly internalised, and consumers become self-regulated, which leads to self-determined behaviour. Prior studies discovered that consumers observed the actions of others as part of the learning process (Kononova et al., 2024; Lorenzo, Kawalek & Ramdani, 2012), and in this study, consumers described the vital role of the other social group members in other's purchase decision-making. Consistent with prior studies discovered that online counterfeit communities were a good platform for consumers to learn and gain new knowledge on the technical details of counterfeit Key (2016), feeling proud to retain their position as an expert consumer in the "secret group" (Bian et al., 2016).

Besides, the theme of competent consumers described how they are passionate about learning and enhancing their knowledge of counterfeit branded fashion goods, enabling them to experience self-competency. Although their initial motivation was driven by extrinsic goal pursuit, incidentally, their involvement in counterfeit consumption led to intrinsic needs' pursuits through the satisfaction of autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs. From the lens of SDT, the integration and regulation of the social values had been voluntarily endorsed into their inner self, which enhances consumers' self-interest and passion for learning the 'anatomy' of both versions of branded fashion goods, counterfeit and original for the benefits of the social group members in facilitating sharing and learning process. Consumers become more savvy while being more cautious and detailed in searching for minimal flaws of the counterfeits. As a result, consumers become knowledgeable and wiser in utilising the counterfeit market (Perez et al., 2010; Thaichon and Quach, 2016), feel competent to camouflage self-identity by 'blending' the use of original and counterfeit versions (Amaral & Loken, 2016c; Pueschel et al., 2016; Teah et al., 2015). Hence, consumers become acquainted and more competent in utilising the counterfeit market (Perez et al., 2010; Thaichon and Quach, 2016). They become very confident and feel confident to camouflage their self-identity by 'blending' the use of original and counterfeit versions before others (Amaral and Loken, 2016c; Pueschel et al., 2016; Teah et al., 2015). Bian et al. (2016) denoted that consumers tend to exert their expertise on counterfeit goods purposely to others as they believe that demonstrating their expertise in counterfeit goods enhances their competent needs.

Accordingly, the theme of self-interest was discovered, and consumers in this study gained hedonic emotional experience through enjoyment, fun, and excitement, as well as by participating in society's trends. Consumers describe the positive emotional experiences that enhance their interest in being involved more extensively in counterfeit consumption activity, which illustrates their dedication and commitment to learning both versions of branded fashion goods: original and counterfeits. This finding aligns with the prior study found that counterfeit consumers experience various positive emotional experiences, such as the thrill of hunting, excitement, enjoyment, adventure, and happiness (Bian et al., 2016; Francis et al., 2015; Khandeparkar and Motiani, 2018; Marticotte and Arcand, 2017; Moon et al., 2018; Perez et al., 2010; Thaichon and Quach, 2016), ultimately activating their self-determined behaviour and fulfilment of autonomous needs. Hedonic values hold the essence of consumers' autonomous behaviour and produce a sense of excitement while "doing" this consumption activity with other social group members, though initially, consumers were drawn by the lower price. A prior examination established that hedonic purchase serves as a coping strategy in concrete stressful situations within consumers' financial means (Zulauf and Wagner, 2022) and contribute to consumers' lives of pleasure and happiness (Gilovich et al., 2015; Kumar et al., 2021).

Experience consumption, which refers to engaging in enjoyable and fulfilling activities, is crucial in fulfilling psychological needs, specifically relatedness, autonomy, and competence (Brakus et al., 2022). Moreover, consumers rationalisation that legalised counterfeit practice, leading to happiness to materialist consumers (Tuncel, 2022). Life happiness and pleasure, which are delivered by pursuing extrinsic goals, enable consumers to enhance hedonic well-being through counterfeit consumption activity. This explains the findings in this study on how counterfeit consumption activity, which has been recognised as unethical and illegal consumption practice, helps consumers to improve their well-being instead of becoming detrimental to



consumers. Interestingly, consumers place a high degree of importance on leisure, leading to the path consumers' happiness and pleasure of life contribute to consumers' hedonic well-being and life satisfaction.

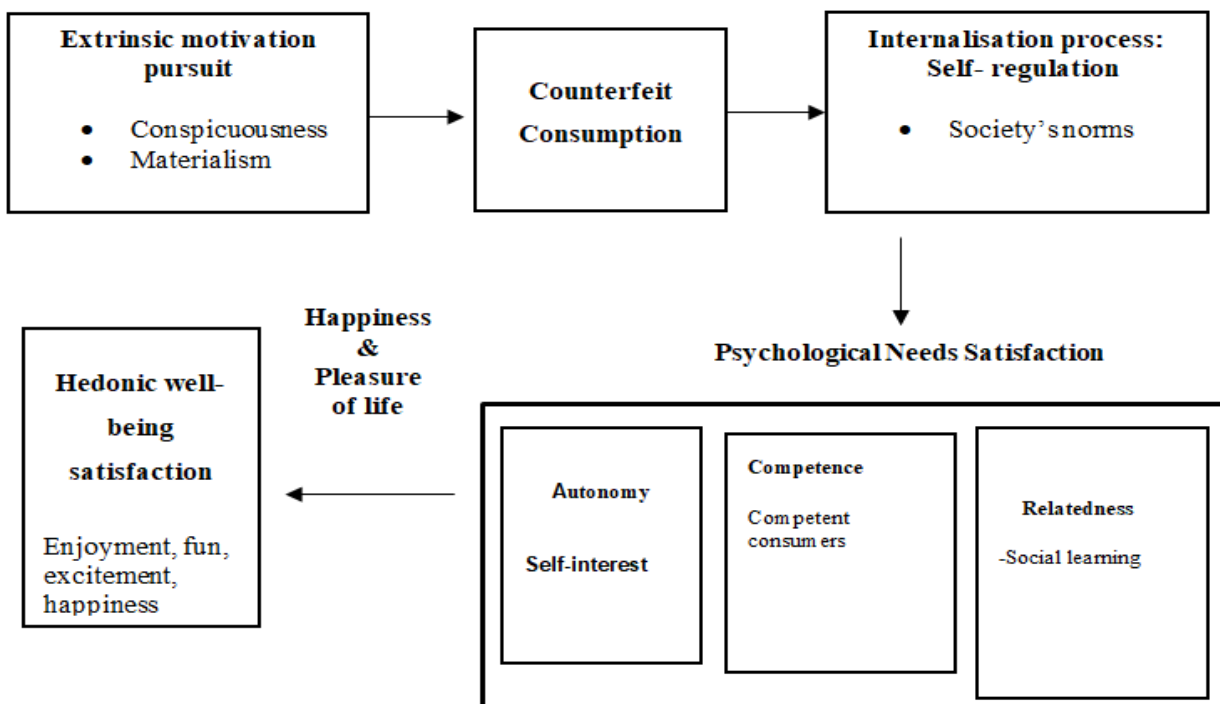


Figure 1. The Internalisation Process of Counterfeit Consumption

## CONCLUSION

Ergo, this study dissected the nature of extrinsic goals from the dimensions of self-regulation and locus of control, which describe the degree of self-determination. As mentioned in the results, consumers can experience hedonic well-being due to experiential purchases, which becomes the consumer's motive for counterfeit consumption. The internalisation of social values that describe consumers in this study who love to "seek a bargain" has promoted counterfeit consumption activity. The study outcomes confirmed that society's cultural orientation, which stresses self-indulgence and life pleasure via consumption activity, normalises counterfeit consumption behaviour. The internalisation process seems successful, and consumers become determined to sustain their involvement in counterfeit consumption. Although the consumers were extrinsically motivated in pursuing their desired brand, these positive emotional experiences signify a high sense of autonomy, which leads to integrated regulation and enables consumers to enhance hedonic well-being, life happiness, and satisfaction.

It is also worthwhile for the fashion goods industry to highlight the consequences of psychological benefits in their marketing messages and campaigns. The significance of hedonic values (enjoyment) should be substituted with negative emotions, such as guilt, fear, and sadness, to reveal the effects of consumers' involvement. The role of emotional appeal in the message should create and enhance consumers' awareness of the normalisation of counterfeit consumption that contributes to hedonic well-being, which can harm society and economies. Thus, counterfeit consumption may be positioned as damaging and detrimental instead of benefitting psychologically, as well as social acceptance on the part of keeping up with others.

The present work is intended to uncover the lived experiences of counterfeit consumers from the nuance of psychological needs satisfaction, specifically in the context of fashion goods, potentially limiting other counterfeit goods categories, such as cosmetic and electronic devices, which suffer more severe issues than fashion goods. Hence, the sample of the study is related to the similar background of the informants that was limited to two categories of consumers, Gen Z and Millennials, unable to claim to develop an exhaustive account of counterfeit consumers. Prospective deconstructions may consider performing a comparative survey of Generation X or Millennials deriving from M40 and T20 consumers since past studies found the involvement of some high social status and income level consumers in counterfeit consumption (Ahuvia et al.,

2012; Amaral and Loken, 2016; Pueschel et al., 2016), therefore corroborate the findings in the Malaysian context.

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