



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***EXPLICATING MEANINGS OF COUNTERFEIT BRANDED FASHION  
GOODS CONSUMPTION THROUGH PHENOMENOLOGICAL LENS  
AMONG YOUNG ADULT CONSUMERS***

**NURHIDAYAH BINTI ROSELY**

**SPE 2021 5**



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By

**NURHIDAYAH BINTI ROSELY**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,  
In Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**February 2021**

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## **DEDICATION**

*This thesis is dedicated to*

*My beloved husband, sons, mother and father:*

*With love, respect and a bunch of memories  
Indeed, we belong to Allah and indeed to Him we will return.*



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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**February 2021**

**Chairman : Associate Professor Raja Nerina binti Raja Yusof, PhD**  
**School : Business and Economics**

This thesis explored the meaning of counterfeit consumption activity, as well as how this consumption practice fulfilled the psychological needs and life goals pursuits of young adult consumers from the interpretive point of view. Consumption experiences of 12 consumers gathered through in-depth interviews were analysed. Essentially, this study focused on the purchase of counterfeit branded fashion goods, wherein the rising demand for counterfeit goods has led to a new phenomenon in consumer behaviour. The phenomenology approach was adapted to uncover rich and contextualised account of consumer consumption experiences, which elucidated a range of meanings on consumers' involvement in counterfeit consumption, namely price worth, comparable quality, seems identical, unavailability, compensating original brand, prized collection, and special occasion. These various meanings of counterfeit consumption reflect both self-image and identity held by each consumer in relation to their existential concerns and social contexts. The three categories that emerged from the themes; branded value buy, satisficing wants, and sacred consumption, highlighted the significance of branded fashion goods to the consumers.

The outcomes drawn from research objectives (ROs) and research questions (RQs) two and three unravelled the role of counterfeit consumption in fulfilling psychological needs and pursuing life goals of the consumers. The following emerging themes; sharing information, trusted sources, social learning, society norms, fear of being exposed, adept, deceiving, discernment, dedicated, and satisfaction, were classified into four categories of psychological needs fulfilment, namely: social capital, social acceptance, competent consumer, and self-interest. The consumers' experiences in counterfeit consumption yielded the following themes; need to be different, showing off, inadequacy, and keeping up with the trends, which were further classified into two categories, namely conspicuous and materialism. This classification sheds light on the contribution of extrinsic life goals to hedonic well-being and life happiness.

The findings derived from all RQs and ROs were illustrated through the lens of Cognitive Dissonance Theory (CDT) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which guided the construction of themes and categories in the thematic analysis process, thus deciphering the meaning of counterfeit consumption and its role in satisfying consumers' psychological needs and well-being through extrinsic life goals.

As the phenomenology approach only probed into the living experience of consumers involved in counterfeit branded fashion goods consumption, in which the consumers were selected via purposive and snowball sampling, this study dismissed age diversity of the consumers. Besides, the issue at hand was rather sensitive and required the consumers to reveal their unethical and illegal consumption practice. This study selected consumers of Generation Z (Gen Z) and Millennials with similar background and operationalised as young adult consumers. Hence, this study does not claim to have developed an exhaustive account of counterfeit consumers.

Essentially, this study contributes knowledge in the areas of counterfeit branded fashion goods and consumer behaviour with the discovery of the following new emergent categories; branded value buy, sacred consumption, social capital, and social acceptance. They describe the actual experiences captured from the consumers, who were continuously involved in counterfeit consumption practice. This thesis contributes to scholarly and managerial knowledge from the hedonic and experiential dimensions in the Malaysian context, which sheds light on the underlying causes of counterfeit consumption phenomena.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**MENGHURAIKAN MAKNA DI SEBALIK FENOMENA PENGGUNAAN BARANGAN FESYEN PALSU MELALUI LENSE FENOMENOLOGI DI KALANGAN PENGGUNA DEWASA MUDA**

Oleh

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Tesis ini meneroka makna aktiviti penggunaan barangan fesyen berjenama palsu dan mengkaji bagaimana amalan penggunaan ini memenuhi keperluan psikologi di kalangan pengguna dewasa muda di dalam mengejar matlamat hidup dari sudut pandangan interpretif. Pengalaman 12 pengguna dewasa muda yang terlibat di dalam aktiviti penggunaan barangan fesyen berjenama palsu dikumpul melalui temu ramah mendalam. Khususnya, kajian ini memberi fokus terhadap pembelian barangan fesyen berjenama palsu di mana permintaan yang meningkat telah menyebabkan fenomena baru dalam tingkah laku pengguna. Pendekatan fenomenologi yang diambil dalam menjalankan penyelidikan ini telah mengungkap pengalaman hidup pengguna dengan menjelaskan pelbagai makna di sebalik penglibatan mereka dalam aktiviti penggunaan barangan fesyen berjenama palsu. Di antara makna-makna tersebut adalah harga yang berbaloi, kualiti yang setanding, nampak serupa, ketiadaan, pengganti jenama asli, koleksi berharga, dan waktu istimewa. Makna-makna yang wujud daripada penggunaan barangan fesyen berjenama palsu ini mencerminkan kepentingan imej diri dan identiti pengguna di dalam konteks kehidupan sosial mereka. Selain itu, tiga kategori yang wujud dari tema-tema ini iaitu; nilai beli berjenama, memuaskan keinginan, dan penggunaan suci, menggambarkan kepentingan barangan fesyen berjenama dalam kehidupan pengguna.

Penemuan dari objektif penyelidikan dan persoalan kajian dua dan tiga menunjukkan peranan penggunaan barangan berjenama palsu dalam memenuhi keperluan psikologi pengguna dan mengejar matlamat hidup. Tema-tema yang muncul dari kajian ini, termasuk perkongsian maklumat, sumber yang dipercayai, pembelajaran sosial, norma masyarakat, takut diketahui, mahir, memperdaya, arif, berdedikasi, dan kepuasan, dikelaskan kepada empat kategori keperluan psikologi yang berikut: modal sosial, penerimaan sosial, pengguna yang kompeten, dan minat sendiri. Di samping itu, penerokaan pengalaman pengguna dalam penggunaan barangan fesyen berjenama

palsu telah menemui tema-tema yang berikut: keinginan untuk berbeza dari yang lain, menunjuk-nunjuk, tidak mencukupi, dan mengikuti tren. Daripada tema-tema ini telah wujud dua kategori; yang menyerlah dan materialisme, seterusnya memperlihatkan sumbangan matlamat hidup ekstrinsik kepada kesejahteraan hedonik dan kebahagiaan hidup.

Penemuan dari kesemua persoalan dan objektif kajian ini telah digambarkan melalui Teori Disonansi Kognitif dan Teori Determinasi Diri bagi memandu ke arah kewujudan tema-tema dan kategori-kategori melalui proses analisis tematik. Hasil penemuan menjelaskan bagaimana penggunaan barangan fesyen berjenama palsu membolehkan pengguna memenuhi keperluan psikologi dan kesejahteraan mereka melalui matlamat hidup ekstrinsik.

Oleh kerana pendekatan fenomenologi mensasarkan penelitian dan penerokaan pengalaman hidup pengguna yang terlibat di dalam penggunaan barangan fesyen palsu, di mana sampel dipilih melalui pensampelan bertujuan dan bola salji, kajian ini telah mengendahkan kepelbagaian umur pengguna. Di samping itu, isu penggunaan barangan fesyen palsu adalah agak sensitif di kalangan masyarakat kerana pengguna perlu bersedia untuk mendedahkan penglibatan mereka di dalam amalan penggunaan haram dan tidak beretika. Sample pengguna bagi kajian ini adalah terdiri daripada Generasi Z dan Milenium yang mempunyai latar belakang yang sama dan diberi definisi sebagai pengguna dewasa muda. Oleh itu, kajian ini tidak dapat digeneralisasi secara menyeluruh dan mewakili semua pengguna barangan fesyen palsu.

Secara keseluruhannya, kajian ini menyumbang pengetahuan kepada bidang barangan fesyen berjenama palsu dan tingkah laku pengguna, dengan terhasilnya kategori-kategori baru yang berikut; nilai beli berjenama, penggunaan suci, modal social, dan penerimaan sosial. Hasil kajian ini mendedahkan pengalaman hidup sebenar pengguna-pengguna yang secara terus-menerus terlibat dalam amalan penggunaan barangan fesyen berjenama palsu. Tesis ini menyumbang pengetahuan ilmiah dan pengurusan dari dimensi hedonik dan pengalaman penggunaan dalam konteks Malaysia untuk merungkai punca di sebalik fenomena aktiviti penggunaan barangan fesyen berjenama palsu.



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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CDT	Cognitive Dissonance Theory
KPDNKK	Kementerian Perdagangan Dalam Negeri, Koperasi dan Kepenggunaan
RO	Research Objective
RQ	Research Question
RM	Ringgit Malaysia
SDT	Self-Determination Theory
US	United States
VIP	Very important person
VVIP	Very very important person
XXL	Extra large
XXXL	Double extra large

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

There are numerous reasons behind the specific consumption behaviour practised by consumers. As a material object represents one's personality and social position (Piacentini & Mailer, 2004; Zampetakis, 2014), consumers not only seek the functional values in goods but also their symbolic values for consumption. Consumers believe that emotions, including pleasure, happiness, and fun – which are linked with hedonic values – motivate them to be involved in certain consumption behaviour (Alba & Williams, 2012; El Hedhli et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2016). Hence, consumption serves as a tool for consumers to pursue their life goals, symbolic meanings, and social status.

Consumers tend to rely on the “magical power” of the brand to represent self-image and identity, as well as to gain social approval from the society, thus leading to symbolic consumption (Grotts & Johnson, 2013; Piacentini & Mailer, 2004; Schembri et al., 2010). The phenomenon of showcasing material possession within society leads to conspicuousness and materialist behaviour (Eastman & Eastman, 2015; Patsiaouras & Fitchett, 2012). Although such consumption behaviour promotes a lucrative market in the luxury brand industries, it presents an opportunity to counterfeiters that leads to illicit market. Consequently, counterfeiters would start taking advantage of the aspirational effect generated by the luxury brand markets to satisfy the material desire of the incapable market segment (Bekir et al., 2013).

### 1.2 Background of the Study

Counterfeit goods have turned into an unsolved global issue with discussion prolonging for over a decade, while luxury brand manufacturers continue seeking a solution to paralyse the progressing counterfeit market. The International Trademark Association reported that approximately US\$1.3 trillion counterfeited goods are traded globally every year, and this is estimated to reach US\$2.81 trillion worth in 2022 (The Edge Markets, 2018). Billions of dollars in losses have been borne by manufacturers of luxury goods (Bekir et al., 2013; Bian & Moutinho, 2011a; Bian et al., 2016; Eisend & Schuchert-güler, 2006) due to the substitution effect created by the counterfeit market that devalues the brand images of original goods. Manufacturers of original goods have extensively invested in research and development, technology, and brand equity management to reap lucrative return on investment. Nevertheless, this scenario has turned into a liability to the manufacturers as irresponsible counterfeiters have seized the opportunities by creating demands for counterfeit goods (Cesareo & Stöttinger, 2015; Large, 2014; Staake et al., 2009).

Despite the various strategies devised and executed by brand owners and manufacturers (Cesareo & Stöttinger, 2015; Hoecht & Trott, 2014), scholars have identified creating a message that stresses on the negative implications of purchasing counterfeit goods is more effective, apart from improving the quality of original goods to distinguish them from the counterfeit version (Chaudhary & Zimmerman, 2013; Ting et al., 2016). Unfortunately, this effort is unfruitful due to the emergence of sophisticated information communication technology that has established a virtual retail market (dark market). This market functions as a platform that connects counterfeiters to consumers, which offers less risk and better convenience (Cesareo & Stöttinger, 2015; Guarnieri & Przynska, 2013; Radon, 2012).

Consumer demand has been a leading cause for the mushrooming counterfeit markets (Bian et al., 2016; Eisend et al., 2017; Eisend & Schuchert-güler, 2006; Gistri et al., 2009). These dark markets pose the greatest challenge for luxury brand manufacturers in preventing consumers from participating in counterfeiting activities. The literature depicts the role of consumer demand, apart from supply, ethical, and lawful issues, as well as the key to the survival of the counterfeit market (Bloch et al., 1993; Chaudhry & Cesareo, 2017; Large, 2014; Meraviglia, 2015; Staake et al., 2009). Counterfeit goods are usually associated with images of knock-off brands (Grossman & Shapiro, 1998; Staake et al., 2009; Zaichkowsky, 2000). The original goods are replicated, duplicated, and imitated to carry a similar brand image for a fraction of the cost of the authentic goods.

In precise, the involvement of consumers in counterfeit consumption is classified into deceptive and non-deceptive counterfeit purchase (Grossman & Shapiro, 1998). Deceptive counterfeit purchase occurs when consumers lack knowledge and information to distinguish counterfeit from original goods (Gino et al., 2010; Zhou et al., 2018). On the contrary, non-deceptive counterfeit purchase reflects consumers equipped with sufficient knowledge and the ability to detect cues that indicate the counterfeit nature of the goods (Bian & Veloutsou, 2007; Sharma & Chan, 2011; Zampetakis, 2014).

The issue of counterfeit purchase has become a severe matter, as consumers feel that the purchase and consumption of such goods do not create any harmful effect on the society, the economy, and the authentic fashion goods industry (Cesareo & Stöttinger, 2015; Kim & Johnson, 2014b; Teo & Mohd Yusof, 2017). The Executive Director of the Asian Trade Centre, Deborah Elms, asserted that education and consumer awareness are the effective weapons to combat counterfeiting activities as consumers need to be aware that they are responsible for the development and survival of counterfeit market (The Edge Financial Daily, 2018). Similarly, Teo and Mohd Yusof (2017) highlighted on the importance of education and awareness programme from the emotional closeness dimension to expose the real fact to Malaysian consumers on how serious their purchase and consumption activities can affect our society and economic growth.

### 1.3 Problem Statement

At present, Malaysia is one of the Southeast Asian countries, alongside Vietnam and Thailand, to become a popular destination for counterfeiting activities (Sloan, 2012). Instead of struggling to combat the supplies, escalating consumer demands have led the Malaysian counterfeit market to hit a whopping RM464 million business value (Nik Hashim et al., 2018). From July to November 2020, the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs (KPDNHEP) had conducted raid operations that seized various categories of branded fashion goods, including clothes, bags, wristwatches, and shoes worth approximately RM1.6 million in Batu Caves, Selangor, RM38,795 in Johor, and RM67,750 in Balakong, Selangor (Malay Mail, 2020; The Star, 2020; The Sun Daily, 2020). All the raid operations were conducted with the cooperation of registered trademark owner representatives.

According to Karen Abraham, co-head of the Intellectual Property practice group at Shearn Delamore & Co, the Malaysian Government had taken plenty of initiatives in organising anti-counterfeiting programs. Despite those initiatives, Malaysia is recognised as a shopping heaven for “bargain hunters” who seek affordable branded luxury goods that can be easily accessed from unregulated outlets, registered stores, and online platforms (The Malaysian Reserve, 2020). The rationale for buying counterfeit goods from legal and registered stores as an acceptable practice should be corrected, as consumers are completely aware that such practice is indeed illegal and unethical (Teo & Mohd Yusof, 2017). Similarly, Ting et al., (2016) pointed out that Malaysian consumers lacked self-honesty in their consumption activity which explains they do not care about the origin of products in pursuing their desired lifestyle status represented by counterfeit brand. Therefore, the anti-counterfeiting programmes implemented in Malaysia are more concerned about removing counterfeit goods from the shelf and the market.

Studies concerning counterfeit goods purchase have mostly focused on the perspective of consumers' demand, particularly regarding “why” consumers purchase counterfeit goods and display misbehaviour (Bian et al., 2016; Chaudhry & Cesareo, 2017; Eisend et al., 2017; Eisend & Schuchert-güler, 2006; Zampetakis, 2014). Those investigations revealed that personal and social factors had motivated consumers to purchase counterfeit goods (Bian & Moutinho, 2011b; Perez et al., 2010; Phau & Teah, 2009; Teah et al., 2015), thus establishing a new premise of research domain that is mostly directed to the attitudes and purchase intention of consumers towards counterfeit goods (Bian et al., 2016; Eisend & Schuchert-güler, 2006). These studies shed light on the luxury brand industries to enhance their product strategies, particularly to distinguish their original from the counterfeit version, as well as branding and positioning strategies to enhance consumer awareness on purchasing original brands (Large, 2014; Meraviglia, 2015; Teo & Mohd Yusof, 2017). Nonetheless, several issues have emerged as gaps upon investigating the escalating consumer demand for counterfeit goods.

First, comprehensive studies, in particular, to identify the “why” of the purchase (Bian & Moutinho, 2009; Carpenter & Lear, 2011; Kim et al., 2016; Manchiraju & Sadachar, 2014; Norum & Cuno, 2011a; Phau & Teah, 2009; Ting et al., 2016) revealed that the likelihood of consumers to purchase counterfeit goods was strongly determined by the positive or negative attitudes towards counterfeit goods, which later had an impact on their purchase intention. Scholars have identified brand consciousness, social status, norms, cost and price, as well as personal integrity, as some of the main reasons for consumers to acquire counterfeit goods (Bian & Moutinho, 2011b, 2011a; Bian et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2014; Jiang & Shan, 2016; Phau et al., 2015; Randhawa et al., 2015; Teah et al., 2015), which contribute to the list of antecedents and influential factors that motivate consumers to purchase counterfeit goods. However, only a handful of studies have specifically looked into the social and psychological meanings behind counterfeit goods, which are inseparable from luxury brand (Turunen & Laaksonen, 2011). As prescribed by scholars, the meaning is the bases of motivation for any consumption activity, while identifying the motivation factors alone is not too comprehensive in determining the underlying reasons for consumers to behave as they do (Menzel & Hill, 2013; Turunen & Leipämaa-leskinen, 2015). Clearly, investigations on the meaning of counterfeit consumption within the context of Malaysia are in scarcity. Indeed, several in-depth studies had identified factors that caused consumers to sustain their involvement by embedding the meaning of consumption as displayed by consumers’ activities, actions, beliefs, and attitudes (see Flood, 2010; Lindseth & Norberg, 2004; Sadala & Adorno, 2001), while neglecting the crucial influential factors.

Second, in order to uncover the meaning of counterfeit consumption, the consumers' lived experience on this phenomenon should be explored by deploying the phenomenological approach. According to Fleming et al., (2003), the phenomenological approach looks beyond initial appearances, while Jones (2001) described this approach as allowing a researcher ‘to go beyond factual accounts to look at common life experiences’ (Pringle et al., 2011). Numerous studies in Malaysia had adopted the quantitative approach to predict consumers’ attitudes and purchase intention towards counterfeit goods (see Bupalan et al., 2019; Farzana et al., 2017; Harun et al., 2012b, 2020; Mohd Noor et al., 2017; Mohd Nordin et al., 2013; Nordin, 2009; Thurasamy et al., 2003; Ting et al., 2016). These studies revealed that Malaysian consumers weighed in their self-integrity before deciding to involve in counterfeit consumption activity. Certainly, integrity that is linked to ethical aspects (e.g., religiosity, moral concern, and perception towards lawfulness), would deter one from purchasing counterfeit goods (Farzana et al., 2017). However, Teo and Mohd Yusof (2017) revealed that consumers violated their personal integrity by justifying that purchasing counterfeit goods from legal and registered stores is acceptable, but lacked self-honesty in their consumption activity (Ting et al., 2016). These instances indicate the pressing need to conduct a study based on consumers' experience as it demands self-revealing behaviour; unlike survey or experimental method that disregards those insights (Crane, 1999), of which counterfeit consumption is an example. A deeper inquiry of a more interpretive nature is more suitable in revealing consumers’ consumption activity, particularly when exploring a sensitive issue that touches the legality and ethicality of consumption practice. Since phenomenology studies are lacking to uncover consumer-lived experience in counterfeit consumption, this present study sheds light on this particular phenomenon. Essentially, phenomenology focuses

on the construction of meaning encompassed by horizons of understanding (Wilson, 2012).

Third, previous studies discovered that consumers were extrinsically motivated to purchase counterfeit luxury brand in pursuing their desired popular brand at minimal cost, preserving favourable social image and status, as well as reconstructing self-image and identity (Amaral & Loken, 2016; Bian & Moutinho, 2011b; Bian et al., 2015; Bian & Veloutsou, 2007; Gistri et al., 2009; Phau et al., 2009b; Staake et al., 2009; Teah et al., 2015; Wilcox et al., 2009). Nonetheless, comprehensive studies from the socio-psychological stance of motivation unravelled positive consumption experience, self-image enhancement (Bian et al., 2016; Perez et al., 2010; Thaichon & Quach, 2016), and satisfaction of intrinsic needs (Bian et al., 2016; Key et al., 2013) as the benefits reaped by consumers through their involvement in counterfeit consumption. These studies have advanced the comprehension of how counterfeit consumption activity contributes to fulfilment of consumers' intrinsic needs, which reflect the components of life goals and psychological needs by going beyond extrinsic values. However, only a handful of studies have probed into the dimension of consumers' psychological motivation, particularly in psychological needs fulfilment and life goal pursuit within the context of counterfeit consumption.

Finally, unlike looking into the psychological benefits that have been outlined as a reason for consumers to involve in counterfeit consumption, there is a dearth of how this psychological benefit - as discussed in the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2000) - has been assessed within the context of purchasing counterfeit goods. Scholars have called for more studies to adopt the qualitative approach using SDT, which signifies a better way to describe consumers' motivation on specific activities, instead of "predicting consumers' behaviour based on intention, subjective norm, past behaviour, and perceived behavioural control" (Gilal et al., 2019). To date, studies concerning counterfeit goods in Malaysia have mostly assessed consumer attitude predictors that influence the intent of consumers to purchase (Bupalan et al., 2019; Y. Chen et al., 2014; Fernandes, 2013; Koay, 2018; Quoquab et al., 2017; Teo & Mohd Yusof, 2017). Intention to purchase denotes the likelihood of consumers to succumb to purchase due to certain influential factor(s) (Gilal, Zhang, Paul, et al., 2019), but such conceptualisation does not blanket in-depth psychological motivation, mainly because the focus on predicting consumers' behaviour does not reveal their involvement in counterfeit consumption. Therefore, exploratory evidence is in need to uncover to what extent counterfeit consumption fulfils consumers' psychological needs and life goal pursuit, thus providing better comprehension regarding consumers' continuous involvement in counterfeit consumption activity.



## **1.4 Research Questions**

This study explored the question of “why” consumers continuously involve in counterfeit consumption based on the following research questions (RQs).

1. What is the meaning of counterfeit consumption to consumers?
2. How does counterfeit consumption fulfil consumers’ psychological needs?
3. How does counterfeit consumption help consumers to pursue life goals?

## **1.5 Research Objectives**

The primary goal of this study is to explore the reasons for consumer involvement in counterfeit consumption by assessing the elements of consumer motivation. This study is sculpted based on the following objectives:

1. To discover the meaning of counterfeit consumption behaviour from the perspectives of consumers’ lived experience
2. To explore the role of counterfeit consumption in fulfilling consumers’ psychological needs
3. To explore the role of counterfeit consumption in pursuing consumer life goals

## **1.6 Scope of Study**

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to investigate the reasons for consumer involvement in counterfeit consumption by exploring the goals and psychological needs of the consumers. The general definition of counterfeit goods for the context of this study refers to any unauthorised manufacturing of the original product (Bian & Veloutsou, 2007) with remarkable brand values copied and sold at a lower price (Eisend & Schuchert-güler, 2006). In this present study, the term ‘counterfeit goods’ is interchangeably used with ‘copy-ori’, ‘first grade’, ‘high grade’ goods to elicit more responses from the informants.

The most common categories of counterfeit goods are fashion goods, where styles are more important, ranging from apparel, shoes, handbags, women’s scarves, and fashion accessories such as watches and glasses. These goods are referred to as counterfeit fashion goods in this study.

Consumer involvement was explored, instead of purchase, as the former describes consumers’ concern about, interest in or commitment to a particular position on an issue (Freedman, 1964), which reflects counterfeit consumption activities in this present study. Several reasons for involvement, apart from the goals and basic psychological needs, were identified via qualitative method by conducting in-depth

interview sessions with young adult consumers from 20 to 33 years old, comprising of students from higher learning institution, as well as working men and women. This particular group is sufficiently knowledgeable to make decisions and possesses purchasing power (Norzalita et al., 2009). The informants should know about counterfeit branded fashion goods, have at least 2 years of experience in purchasing counterfeit branded fashion goods, as well as actively purchase, own, and use such goods for the past six months from the interview session. Turning to this present study, the participants were comprised of Malaysian young adult consumers from two generations - Millennials (28-36 years old) and Generation Z (Gen Z) (18-27 years old).

## **1.7 Significance of the Study**

This study investigated consumer involvement in counterfeit consumption within the context of Malaysia from the perspectives of meaning, psychological needs, and consumer life goals. The underlying motives that were studied may be applied for future implementation of any education and awareness programme, for effective marketing campaigns designed by Malaysian authority bodies, such as the Ministry of Trade, Co-operatives, and Consumerism, as well as for genuine fashion goods manufacturers to put a halt to the aggressive counterfeiting activities in Malaysia.

The following subsections describe in detail the significance of this study.

### **1.7.1 Literature and Body of Knowledge**

Eisend and Schuchert-güler (2006) asserted that investigations on the factors and reasons for consumer behaviour explain the escalating consumer demand for counterfeit goods, aside from contributing to appropriate countermeasures in addressing counterfeiting issues. As such, this present study explored the meaning of counterfeit consumption from the perspective of consumers' lived experiences.

On top of that, this study assessed the role of consumers' psychological needs fulfilment and life goals pursuit through the lens of SDT (1985, 2000) and Cognitive Dissonance Theory (CDT) (Festinger, 1957) to describe consumers' motivation in counterfeit consumption. The literature depicts that involvement in counterfeit consumption not only enables the consumers to satisfy their material needs, but also to fulfil their intrinsic needs via cognitive rationalisation strategy (Xuemei Bian et al., 2016; Pueschel et al., 2016). Hence, it is crucial to explore the roles of psychological needs and cognitive dissonance process that arise in the experience of consumers within the Malaysian context. Instead of revisiting both SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and CDT (Festinger, 1957), this present study probed into the meaning of consumers' lived experiences in counterfeit consumption phenomenon that leads to the contribution of new themes. The exploration of how counterfeit consumption fulfils consumers'

psychological needs and life goals explains how this unethical and illegal consumption activity plays a crucial role in the lives of the consumers.

The study outcomes add to the present body of knowledge and shed light on the present behaviour of Malaysians. In this sense, this study contributes to new body of knowledge in the context of Malaysia. Besides, it was rather difficult to compile prior phenomenological studies within the Malaysian context regarding the topic at hand. Hence, this present study pioneers in exploring counterfeit branded fashion goods from the perspective of consumers' lived experience to determine the underlying causes of consumers' involvement in counterfeit goods purchase.

### **1.7.2 Practical and Industry**

The study findings offer some implications for the consumer market research, while simultaneously delivering crucial information to the manufacturers of genuine fashion goods. It is imminent for marketers and manufacturers to comprehend the nature of consumer behaviour and the reasons for consumers to engage in certain consumption behaviour. The reported outcomes function as the starting point in helping manufacturers of branded fashion goods to enhance their knowledge of how Malaysian consumers normalise and accept counterfeit consumption activity.

To date, fashion goods manufacturers rely on the creation of branding strategies with a message that emphasises on the symbolic values of possessing luxury goods. Unfortunately, this has generated aspirational effects that lead to product substitution (Amaral & Loken, 2016; Bekir et al., 2013), hence the misconception of the meaning by consumers of counterfeit products. Apparently, consumers involved in counterfeit consumption not only seek extrinsic values as reported in past studies (Phau et al., 2009a; Phau & Teah, 2009; Staake et al., 2009; Ting et al., 2016), but also look for hedonic and intrinsic values, such as self-competency and pleasure (Bian et al., 2016; Key et al., 2013; Pueschel et al., 2016). Therefore, it is integral to inform consumers that the values sought from counterfeit consumption exert adverse implications to the society and the country. This message is more effective to hinder the escalating demand from Malaysian consumers for counterfeit goods and to prevent any adverse effect on the national economy.

### **1.7.3 Authoritative Bodies**

Both Copyright Act 1987 and Trade Descriptions Act 2011 enforced by the Ministry of Trade, Co-operatives, and Consumerism are applicable to only counterfeiters and sellers who sell counterfeit and pirated goods. Unlike in the European countries, such as France and Italy, where consumers are penalised for purchasing counterfeit goods (Meraviglia, 2015); Malaysian consumers escape any sort of penalty under the two mentioned acts (Hashim et al., 2020). This is a crucial factor that promotes the

sustenance of counterfeit market, as consumers feel invulnerable and comfortably keep placing their demands for counterfeit goods.

Therefore, it is essential to educate and create awareness regarding the importance of intellectual property rights, as well as the consequences of supporting counterfeiting activities to the Malaysian economy and society. As attitudes and beliefs can strongly influence consumer behaviour, effective messages and approaches must be devised to inform the Malaysian society about their shared responsibilities in preventing counterfeiting activities. The study results provide information to the authoritative bodies in discouraging counterfeit consumption behaviour, while concurrently enhancing the awareness of intellectual property rights amongst Malaysian consumers.

### **1.8 Assumptions of the Study**

This research had identified the consumers' motivation in the consumption of counterfeit goods from the stance of Malaysian consumer life goals pursuits and psychological needs fulfilment. A qualitative study assumes that the informants are highly qualified as the nature of the study seeks self-evident truth. Hence, it can be assumed that the informants in this study had responded truthfully to the interview questions based on their personal experiences.

### **1.9 Definition of Terms**

This section lists the definitions of key terms and concepts applied throughout this thesis. The definitions are provided to position the author's assumptions regarding the terms and concepts used in this study. This list of definitions is crucial, mainly because other scholars have adopted different interpretations of these concepts and terms. Table 1.1 presents the definitions and assumptions of the key terms and concepts within the context of this study.

**Table 1.1 : Definitions of key concepts and terms**

<b>Terms</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Counterfeit goods	Any unauthorised manufacturing of the original product (Bian & Veloutsou, 2007) with remarkable brand values that have been copied and sold at a lower price (Eisend & Schuchert-güler, 2006)
Fashion goods	Consumer goods in which the mere use or display of a particular branded product brings prestige to owners, apart from any functional utility (Zhang & Kim, 2013) Categories of such goods are apparel, shoes, handbags, women's scarves, and fashion accessories such as watches and glasses
Non-deceptive counterfeit	A situation whereby consumers are well aware of the difference between original and counterfeit goods (Grossman & Shapiro, 1998)
Consumer life goals	Long-term goals that consumers wish to accomplish in their life (Kasser & Ryan, 2001)
Psychological needs	Innate psychological nutriments that are essential for ongoing psychological growth, integrity, and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000)
Motivation	An activation, an incentive or a reason to start or maintain behaviour (Antonides & van Raaij, 1998, p. 164)
Consumer involvement	Concern about, interest in or commitment to a particular position on an issue (Freedman, 1964)
Phenomenological study	Describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 2013)
Young adult consumers	Millennial and Gen Z consumers aged 18-36 years

## **1.10 Organisation of the Thesis**

**Chapter 1: Introduction.** This chapter briefly explains the rationale of investigating counterfeit consumption behaviour among Malaysian consumers, besides describing the significance and the purpose of this study.

**Chapter 2: Literature Review.** This chapter explores the literature pertaining to the meaning of consumption behaviour, as well as an overview of counterfeit goods and brands, fashion goods, motivation process, psychological needs, and consumer life goals. Two primary theories, namely Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000) and Cognitive Dissonance Theory (CDT) (Festinger, 1957) are discussed in detail. The research framework is presented in this chapter to delineate the research activities and research outputs.

**Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Design.** This chapter describes the research paradigm, the methodology, the data collection techniques, and the data analysis method used in this study.

**Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion of Research Question 1.** This chapter presents the findings of RQ1, which were retrieved from in-depth interviews, as well as analysis of significant statements, themes, and categories. This chapter discusses each theme that emerged from the data analysis in light of the literature.

**Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion of Research Question 2.** This chapter presents the findings of RQ2, which were obtained from in-depth interviews, as well as analysis of significant statements, themes, and categories. This chapter discusses each theme that derived from the data analysis in light of the literature.

**Chapter 6: Findings and Discussion of Research Question 3.** This chapter presents the findings of RQ3, which were captured from in-depth interviews, as well as analysis of significant statements, themes, and categories. This chapter discusses each theme that emerged from the data analysis in light of the literature.

**Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations.** This chapter ends the thesis by providing an overall view of the findings, as well as practical recommendations and implications for future research.

## **1.11 Conclusion**

This study enhances one's understanding regarding the purchase and consumption of counterfeit goods by exploring the meaning behind the consumers' involvement in counterfeit consumption. Additionally, this study assessed the roles of psychological needs and life goals as the core components in the motivation process. The phenomenological exploration into the meaning of consumer involvement in counterfeit consumption sheds new light to manufacturers of genuine fashion goods in devising effective marketing campaigns, as well as education and awareness programs, to discourage the consumption of counterfeit goods.

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