The allure of fake luxury goods.

Examining the determinants of purchasing a counterfeit luxury product. Insights from the Greek market.

By

Kalliopi Tympanidou

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Abstract

This study focuses on the underlying motives towards the purchase of counterfeit luxury products in the Greek market. Counterfeiting is a growing phenomenon mainly due to the severity of the economic crisis. The purpose of this research is to explore consumers’ motives in the context of non-deceptive counterfeting. Furthermore, this thesis aims to discover the triggering motives that are connected with the satisfaction of Maslow’s needs. A qualitative research was chosen for the investigation of the phenomenon. In-depth interviews were conducted in a sample of 20 Greek participants, where their motives and their needs on purchasing counterfeit luxury goods were recorded. The results indicated that most of the reasons referred to a particular need already mentioned to Maslow’s pyramid. Both motives and deterrents for purchasing counterfeit products correspond to the needs of Maslow’s pyramid.

Keywords: Counterfeit, consumption, motivation, fake, qualitative research, interviews, Greece, consumer behavior, prestige, self-presentation, quality, authenticity, desire, luxury, designer brands, purchasing behavior.
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1. Introduction

1.1. Luxury Brands

Interest in the luxury sector has been growing over the last few years and the process of acquiring a luxury product is becoming an attractive and fashionable trend (Uzgoren & Guney, 2012; Coste-Manière et al., 2012, p.20). Market data have shown that the unprecedented growth of this sector, from a value of €20 billion in 1985 to €230 billion in 2014, is expected to continue rising especially at the fast growing markets, the so-called BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) (PwC, 2012). However, according to Bain & Company, in their most recent update concerning the global luxury sector, announced that the growth is expected to increase with a reduced pace due to the recession (Graph 1), (Bain & Co, 2012). These data prove the importance of this sector and why is interesting to be examined.

**WORLDWIDE PERSONAL LUXURY GOODS MARKET TREND (1995-2012E, CB)**

The remarkable rise of this sector, is not rational in terms of satisfying human needs as those goods are stated by the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language as “something inessential but conducive to pleasure and comfort” or “something expensive or hard to obtain” (A.H.D.E.L, 2013). Although there is a wide range of researches that has examined different perspectives of the purchasing motives of luxury goods; the theory that is the most commonly accepted is that desire for purchasing luxury goods is related to personal
desires, which go beyond basic functionality (Hilton, 2004; Mandel et al., 2006). This reveals a motivation strongly connected with hedonistic desires (Kemp, 1998). As the majority of consumers cannot afford such a purchase every day, is considered as a special treat out of the ordinary (Hansen & Wänke, 2011).

However, from a consumer behavior perceptive, nowadays, the motives of buying a luxury good are slightly different between cultures and countries (Hennigs et al., 2012). A cross-cultural research (Hennigs et al., 2012) reveals that in America purchasing a luxury is the access to pleasure, which comes in contrary with the motivations of eastern consumers whose main purpose is to be social accepted by confirming that they belong to a superior class. Nevertheless, what is commonly accepted is that the basic motivation of luxury consumption is the satisfaction of the “cravings” and desires rather than the basic, functional needs (Hennigs et al., 2012; Kapferer & Bastien, 2012).

Pursuant to Maslow categorization of needs the acquisition and consumption of luxury products reflect the needs of belongings and to be loved, self-esteem and last but not least the need of self-actualization (Kemp, 1998). However, the importance of this study focuses mainly on the underlying motives that drive consumers to buy non-deceptive, counterfeit products instead of the authentic. The study will present findings that explain this purchasing behavior with theories and interrelated variables. Apart from the same motives that drive a consumer to buy replicas or authentic products that applied to Maslow’s higher levels of pyramid, there are also the ones that define whether a consumer chooses one over another. Important element in the following analysis is the conscious act of purchasing an imitation product rather the incident of consumer deception. The contribution of the thesis will try to reveal the underlying motives of non-deceptive counterfeit purchases of luxury products that are already archived and stated from previous researches in terms of determinants, moderators or justifications rather than as needs.

1.2. Thesis Outline

In the next chapter (2) the key concepts such as the imitation phenomenon and everything connected with it are analyzed. Additionally, a detailed analysis of the Maslow’s hierarchy pyramid of needs (1954) follows in order to clarify which are the motives that eject consumers into purchasing a product of imitation of a luxury brand. In the methodology chapter 3 the research approach, strategy and rational are explained followed by the research
analysis and findings in chapters 4 and 5 respectively. Specifically, chapter 4 based on Maslow’s pyramid presents the key findings on the implications of imitation and their conjoint products instead of the authentic ones. The thesis concludes with the discussion of the secondary background research in relation to the key findings deriving from the exploratory research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The evolution of history of luxury and how it led to imitation phenomenon.

It has been stressed (Thomas, 2007, p.5-13) that in the history of fashion more than a century ago most luxury companies were carrying the name of the founder and were known for their handcrafted pieces. An example of such that still dominates the market includes the well-known Chanel brand founded in 1910 by Gabrielle Bonheur Chanel (inside.chanel.com, 2013). The Chanel brand mainly focuses on three areas; a) high-class quality, b) history of tradition and c) the buying experience. Moreover, the primary target consumers is well-educated women from the upper class society between their thirties to fifties that are enjoying this brand that projects intimacy and elegance and constitutes the shopping which could be characterized as a pleasurable affair only for the elite ones (Thomas, 2007, p.5-13). Usually, there is a private preview of the collection after the fashion shows. Saleswomen are also personal counselors and stylists (Thomas, 2007, p.5). They know customer’s personal preferences and according to that information they present their suggestions. These actions were reinforced by the production of small quantities- often made-by-order pieces (Thomas, 2007, p.5-13).

The fact that fashion was referring only to the elite society was one of the strongest characteristics of luxury brands as it was making customers feel unique and special (Okonkwo, 2007; Coste-Manière et al., 2012). Traditional luxury, apart from being associated with high-status and exclusivity, was founded in unusual commodities during the 17th century, such as rare pearls and stones. Afterwards, during the 19th century, the interest turned into products of great craftsmanship and end up in today’s industrialized world where symbols go beyond the material by invoking emotions and creating dreams and desires (Grappi et al., 2013; Okonkwo, 2007, ch.2). Many would agree that the usage of scarce and rare raw materials processed under special craftsmanship is the key of maintaining a premium
image and unique selling proposition; however, brand elements such as logos, signage and packaging that are used to identify the brand can be easily copied and imitated (Keller, 2008). On this basis, it could be argued that the trademark and the design are the most commonly copied characteristics of a product, while the intangible ones, such as the brand associations and the aspirational image, cannot easily be imitated (Keller, 2008).

In today’s situation, fashion houses lack of the traditional characteristics and more focus is given on brand elements and the image that create (Kapferer, 2006; Coste-Manière et al., 2012, p.12). It has been also stressed (Rémaury, 2002; Kapferer, 2006; Coste-Manière et al., 2012, p.12) that the “democratization” of luxury constituted the goods accessible for everyone by erasing the characteristic of exclusivity and distorting the brand image to fit to wider range of consumers (Thomas, 2007; Coste-Manière et al., 2013, p.5). The narrow range of consumers and the eclectic distribution channels have been replaced by extending the range of consumers and by offering affordable products (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012, p. 20-21).

By different tactics, corporate tycoons turned fashion houses into brands; the shocking advertising campaigns, the sponsorships to high-profile events, the expansion to new markets and the lower-priced, accessible products that almost everyone can afford, led to the loss of house’s prestige (Thomas, 2007, p.5-13). Thomas (2007), in her book, supports the idea that the use of inferior materials, the replacement of individual craftsmanship and the lower-priced goods led to a huge growth of the luxury sector but also to the loss of what made this sector unique. Silverstein and Fiske (2003) claim that there is a separation among different types of accessible goods; a) the “accessible super-premium”; affordable by the middle class, b) the “old-luxury brand extensions”; brands created lower priced versions of their goods and c) the “mass prestige-masstige” which allows everyone to have access to luxury brands. Furthermore, flash deals from companies such as, Cocosa.com or Gilt Group, are making the consumption of luxury goods easier and less expensive (Bergman, 2011; Coste-Manière et al., 2013,p.12).

One of the most important side effects of the “democratization” of luxury brands is that the sector became the most copyrighted one (Doss & Robinson, 2013). However, counterfeiting, which is the production of identical replicas of an original branded product, is spreading across the world at an alarming rate (Penz & Stottinger, 2005). Most common product categories to be suffering of the counterfeiting activities vary in the sectors of
clothing industry, accessories and jewelry, electronics, media and toys (International AntiCounterfeiting Coalition, 2002; Eisend & Schuchert-Güler, 2006). According to the World Customs Organization (cited: Thomas, 2007) the fashion industry loses approximately €10 billion due to counterfeit products. The deterioration of this phenomenon has led manufactures to defend themselves against these developments and combat corporate damages that affect brand reputation and retail profits without any particular result (Green & Tasman, 2002; Kay, 1990; Nash, 1989; Wee, Tan, & Cheok, 1995).

Unfortunately, as far as the consequences are concerned, the direct extent of the problem and the global value of the counterfeit market cannot be defined with a precise number. By definition selling counterfeit products is considered by all means an illegal activity worldwide. However, many organizations attempted to estimate the value of this industry. Global numbers show that the problem is massive. In 2008, U.S. Customs and Border Protection estimated it at €500 billion (cited in: Chaudhry & Zimmerman, 2013) and according to Chaudhry and Zimmerman, in 2012, “counterfeiting was a €600 billion a year problem”. In February 2013, 1,500 fake Hermes handbags, 20,000 counterfeit Christian Louboutin shoes and more than 79,000 sunglasses with logos similar to Armani, Gucci, Dolce & Gabbana were seized at the Los Angeles port (Daily Mail Reporter, 2013).

At the same time in Greece, which will be the country of our research, in the category of the counterfeit, trademarked, luxury goods, was estimated at around 13%, while black market in general, was the 30% of the total market value, which corresponds to €2 billion to €5 billion (Antoniou et al., 2009). In 2010, took the first place into the smuggling of luxury goods according to the annual report of the European Commission (Skai.gr, 2010). The same year, authorities closed a Louis Vuitton store in Athens due to sales of counterfeit goods. Everything started when a regular customer visited brand’s boutique in Paris where they reassured her that her product was fake (Imerisia.gr, 2013). Sometimes, it happens that even regular customers cannot easily identify differences between an authentic product and a replica (Antoniou et al., 2009).

Organizations like IACC, International AntiCounterfeiting Coalition, try to protect intellectual property and to minimize the effects of the phenomenon (icca.org). The Greek equivalent organization (SYKAP), established almost a year ago, has managed to repossession 10,793,372 items while they recommended consumers to avoid purchases that seem to be counterfeits (mindev.gov.gr, 2013). The uncontrolled growth of the black market,
despite all the attempts to eradicate it, is driven by consumers demand and motives. “Since demand is always the key driver of a market, various researchers have argued that consumer demand for counterfeits is one of the leading causes of the existence and upsurge in growth of the counterfeiting phenomenon” (Bamossy & Scammon 1985).

The importance of this study lays on the underlying motivations on why consumers buy replicas instead of authentic. Important for our analysis is the conscious act of purchasing an imitation product. Deceptive counterfeiting occurs when a consumer believes that purchases a specific brand while in fact it turns out that it is not. In the case of non-deceptive counterfeiting, the buyer recognizes that his purchase is an imitation according to specific information such as, price, design and materials (Chakraborty et al., 1997; Gentry et al., 2006).

It is impressive that luxury brands become affordable from a wider-range of consumers (Coste-Manière et al., 2012) but still some prefer to buy counterfeit instead of authentic products. What are really the motives behind this decision? This thesis is about to explore the underlying motives of non-deceptive counterfeit purchases of luxury products.

2.2. The desire for luxury goods becomes motive for purchasing counterfeits

2.2.1. Counterfeit

For the purpose of this research a clear definition of the term “counterfeit” and “replica” is required. The act of producing counterfeit products is commonly misconceived with kindred types of activities that are often perceived as similar to each other. For instance, a counterfeit good can be described as the attempt to produce a precise copy of an authentic item while imitation occurs whenever someone attempts to reproduce well-known and successful products that have slight differences (Phau, Prendergast & Chuen, 2002). Many different terms are used to describe the fact that luxury products are pirated: intellectual property, brand piracy, counterfeiting, copies, look-alikes and unconvincing imitations (Jacobs et al., 2001; McDonald & Roberts 1994). However, a further in-depth and thorough investigation, throughout literature, reveals more distinct categories of these interrelated phenomena of brand imitation. According to Paradise (1999) only copyrights and patents can be pirated while symbols and logos can only be counterfeited. Generally, the term “counterfeit” is used to describe the piracy of both (Bosworth 2006). McDonald and Roberts (1994) offer a variety of terms that cover different aspects of the phenomenon such as piracy,
look-alikes, sound-alikes, counterfeiting, ‘knock-off’ brands and ‘grey market’ while Phau et al. (2002) provide the most updated categorization. Specifically five main types are identified and refer to:

• Deceptive Counterfeiting (Replica) describes the act of deliberately producing identical copies of an original that aims to trick consumers in their purchasing decision. The consumer is not aware of being deceived and cannot be considered as an accountable of this behavior. Deceptive counterfeiting occurs when a consumer believes that purchases a specific brand while in fact it turns out that it is not.

• Non-Deceptive Counterfeiting (Piracy): Contrary to deceptive counterfeiting in this case consumer is aware of the origin of the product and consciously decides to purchase it. Under these circumstances, the buyer is not perceived as a victim of deception but rather as a collaborator of the counterfeiters (Grossman & Shapiro, 1988; McDonald and Roberts, 1994; Cordell et al., 1996). In the case of non-deceptive counterfeiting, the buyer recognizes that his purchase is an imitation according to specific information such as, low price, design and low quality materials (Chakraborty et al., 1997; Gentry et al., 2006).

• Imitations or Copycats are considered as brand imitation that refer to the production of indirect copies of a product that aims to look alike the original one but differ in sub-elements (Wilke & Zaichkowsky, 1999). Imitation of product characteristics and features can occur as well in less apparent ways such as general copy of design elements, trends, materials, know-how and last but not least, the imitation of the manufacturing process (Miceli & Pieters, 2010).

• Grey Market or Parallel Markets appears as a type of unauthorized production from legitimate garment manufacturers that sale overruns in retail outlets (Mcdonald & Roberts, 1994). The distribution channels in this case are legal but non-authorized by the original manufacturer.

• Custom-made copies: The reverse philosophy of counterfeiting is described as the act of copying product specifications rather brand image elements such as logos and trademarks. The high quality of design and materials used are replicated from legitimate craftsmen where the emblem of the original brand is missing (Phau et al., 2002).
For clarity and convenience in this study, the terms “counterfeit” and “imitations” describe specifically the company that replicates a product line in terms of appearance, symbols, patterns, trademarks and logos in order to make the product look like the original design.

2.2.2. Theories of Motivation

It has been stressed that the market of imitation brands relies on the desire that consumer’s have for the authentic ones (Hoe et al., 2003; Penz & Stottinger, 2005). Therefore, it could be assumed that the motives for purchasing a product of imitation are particularly relevant to the motives of purchasing a trademarked good (Wilcox et al., 2009). The motivations of acquiring a luxury product are strongly linked to psychological motives; every person who desires luxury goods wants to experience the feeling of uniqueness (Wilcox et al., 2009). When it comes to luxury, belonging to a club of elites, is considered as prestigious not only by motivating the buyer to purchase it for its exclusivity, but also because it indicates something about the brand’s consumer segmentation (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012, p. 103-106). On the other hand, Phau & Teah (2009) claim that consumers who are conscious, may see imitation products as a better deal; less investment in a product that in six months will be out of fashion and its quality is satisfactory for a certain period of time. Therefore, low cost counterfeits satisfy also the need for experimentation without the high risk of investment on something expensive (Wee et al., 1995). It has also been attested (Tryong et al., 2008) that consumers’ actions are influenced mainly by motivation while at the same time motivation is influenced by the aspiration to obtain a product in general in order to cover the basic functionality need.

The definition of motivation describes the interrelationship between needs and the behavior for their fulfillment. However, various motivational theorists have developed different theories to explain motivation. When psychologists tried to explain motives they turned to instincts, to the inborn patterns of behavior (Feldman, 2011). One early psychologist, McDougall (1926), suggested that Instinct Theory of motivation explores 18 human instincts that included laughter, sex, curiosity and comfort. According to this theory, all behaviors are driven by instincts; however, according to psychologist A. Maslow (1954) instincts no longer exist as humans have the ability to reject and overlook them in certain situations. The main disadvantage of this theory is that does not provide an answer to Why’s,
instead there is just a description of the different behaviors. However, as this study is focused on revealing the underlying motives for the purchase of counterfeit luxury goods the instinct theory cannot be applied.

By the 1920s, this theory was replaced by different approaches of motivational theories. A similar theory that is based on human’s biological needs is the Drive Theory of motivation. This theory developed by the behaviorist Clark Hull and became popular during the 40s-50s. Hull suggested that all motivations arise from our biological needs (Sahakian, 1976). In his theory, the term “drive” is used to explain the internal tension that is caused by our needs. For instance, someone might be motivated to eat in order to reduce the internal state of hunger (Sahakian, 1976). The drawback of this theory is that the behaviors described are not motivated only by physiological needs; people eat even if they are not hungry. In this particular study main focus is given on the motives arise from consumers’ needs in general, thus this theory is not considered as applicable to this case.

Another theory is the Incentive Theory of Motivation, which supports the idea of the external reward (Bernstein, 2011). In this theory, according to Bernstein (2011), people are motivated by positive incentives and in the same time the judgment about which incentives are positive or negative depends on the value a person gives on those. People are motivated to accomplish things because they know that will get rewarded (Hockenbury & Hockenbury, 2003). Similarly, the Arousal theory of motivation seeks to explain behaviors that their goal is to increase or maintain excitement (Feldman, 2011). According to this theory, we are trying to maintain a balanced level of arousal which differs from one person to another (Feldman, 2011). A usual phenomenon is that when we are stressed we find a way to relax and keep calm. Cognitive approach to motivation is another theory that is based on people’s thoughts about their cognitions; thoughts, expectations and goals (Feldman, 2011). In this theory there is an obvious distinction between the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The term intrinsic motivation explains the motives that inspire people to participate into an activity for their enjoyment. On the other hand, an extrinsic motivation encourages to do something only for the reward whether they like it or not (Lepper et al., 2005; Shaikholeslami & Khayyer, 2006; Finkelstein, 2009). According to the theory people who have intrinsic motivation work harder and produce higher quality work instead of someone who is motivated but extrinsic motives. All the above theories explore different aspects of motivation which are not consistent with our research objectives.
The last theory that combined both motives and needs is the humanistic theory of motivation. The humanistic theories in general are based on the idea that people have different reasons to perform in different situations (Maslow, 1954). The most famous one is Maslow’s hierarchy of needs pyramid that presents different motivations at different levels (Figure 2). In order to identify and archive all the underlying motives of the purchasing behavior of counterfeit products in terms of needs we will use this pyramid of the Maslow hierarchy as a tenet guide. Specifically, previous findings explain that the reasons that led to counterfeit purchase decision apart from intrinsic and extrinsic motives were found also in theories of commodity (Brock & Becker, 1965; Lynn, 1991), typology of goods (Nelson, 1970), mood-based, social and cultural situational context (Belk, 1975; Gentry et al., 2001). Particularly, those studies identified and suggested as determinants and moderating factors that affect the consumer’s intention to purchase counterfeit products and variables; the product features and price, the vendor characteristics, the social and cultural context variables, the demographics, and psychographic variables. However, consumers frequently use excuses to justify their purchasing behavior according to the theory of cognitive
dissonance (Festinger, 1957). For this reason this study collects all these findings that refer to motives, reasons or justifications and conduct in depth interviews by employing set of questions that will particularly study those inquires in order to undercover the needs behind all determinants and drivers of this behavior (Table 1).

Table 1 Theories of Motivation in counterfeit purchasing decision.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Determinants</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theory of Commodity</td>
<td>Suggest that people are affected by the degree of the scarcity of the products and act in favor of the unique ones</td>
<td>Product accessibility and affluence in market.</td>
<td>“the more difficult is to find an item, the more desirable seems to be”</td>
<td>Brock &amp; Becker, 1965; Lynn, 1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typology of Goods</td>
<td>Indicates how consumer is influenced by the degree of multisensory experience he has with the product before purchase.</td>
<td>The degree of the product quality, features and characteristics that can be determined before purchase</td>
<td>“If I am able to touch feel and rate the merchandise, I am able to decide whether I wanted or not, and not the other way around”</td>
<td>Nelson, 1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situational Context Mood-based</td>
<td>The situational state that influences purchase decisions: e.g. the holiday situation mood that refers to heighten positive feelings</td>
<td>Mood determines whether consumer inclines towards or not to counterfeit purchase</td>
<td>“I feel great, I am more willing to succumb to a counterfeit purchase”</td>
<td>Belk, 1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social &amp; Cultural</td>
<td>It is related to tourist experience to countries that operate highly with counterfeit products</td>
<td>Market and geographical determinants</td>
<td>“I was vacation in Bangkok and I run in to a fake LV bag”</td>
<td>Gentry et al., 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory of Cognitive Dissonance</td>
<td>The excuses and justifications consumers resort to in order to cover their true motives.</td>
<td>Guilt, embarrassment, Avoid social judgment,</td>
<td>“I have to think about an expensive original product all the time and I don't feel free by having it on me”</td>
<td>Festinger, 1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motives</td>
<td>People declare also buying counterfeit products because they like to demonstrate financial power, to elicit social approval, and to increase self-esteem.</td>
<td>Needs of Belonging and beloved, self-esteem, and self-actualization</td>
<td>“I bought my fake Dior watch so I can impress my peers at work”</td>
<td>Maslow, 1954</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2.3. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

First of all, for the purpose of the research a humanistic approach to the theory of motivation, Maslow’s theory of needs (1954), will be explored and analyzed in depth. Maslow proposed a hierarchy of needs that range from the basic physiological to the self-actualization. The five-stage model consists of 5 motivational categories that are strongly connected together, while at the same time lower-level needs should be satisfied first before proceeding into the next ones. For instance, a person who is hungry is not interested in fulfilling the need for social acceptance. In the case of luxury products, the 3 top levels of the pyramid influence consumers on their purchasing decision although lower levels are equally important (Ward & Chiari, 2008). Further explanation for each need will be conducted in combination with hypothetical motives for purchasing counterfeit luxury products. However, more attention will be given on the top 3 strata.

![Maslow's Pyramid of Needs](image)

According to Maslow, the first needs that should be fulfilled are the biological and physiological (Maslow, 1954). However, it has been stressed (Pooler, 2003) that when it comes to shopping, our biological and physiological needs have already been met in order to proceed to the fulfillment of our higher needs. Pooler (2003) indicates that modern consumers buy things in order to satisfy their psychological needs and not their physiological
needs; they reward themselves to feel good or even they decide to purchase a good only because it is expensive. For modern consumers buying is an act to make a statement, to present your personality and to boost your self-esteem (Pooler, 2003). Especially when it comes to luxury branded goods much attention is given to the aura that it accompanies rather than its functional use (Dubois & Paternault, 1995; Nia & Zaichkowsky, 2000; Penz & Stöttinger, 2005).

However, as it has been attested (Pooler, 2003) that consumer’s behavior has changed we come to wonder if our primary goal is to satisfy our biological needs before we purchase a luxury product. “When I first moved to New York and I was totally broke, sometimes I would buy Vogue instead of dinner. I felt it fed me more.” Carrie Bradshaw’s quote comes into contrary to Pooler’s (2003) statement. Is consumers’ choice rational when it comes to the purchase of a luxury branded goods? Do consumers really have to satisfy first their biological needs? Could be motivated by their biological needs to purchase an imitation trademarked product?

The physiological needs are satisfied and the second level of needs is now a person’s first priority. Maslow (1954) suggests that people need to be in a safe environment in order to function effectively. This means that having a job security, a place to stay and financial stability allows you to move to higher needs (Maslow, 1954). But in what way this need is connected with the motivation of acquiring counterfeit branded goods? An estimated guess could be that instead of purchasing an authentic product a respectable number of consumers prefer a product of imitation which is considered as an illegal action and as a result could lead into the failure of achieving the satisfaction of the “safety need”. Why consumers take such a risk? Which motivations are so strong that forces them into the purchase?

The third level of Maslow’s pyramid concerns the need of belonging to a group and be loved. Humans need to feel that are accepted by others whether it comes from a large social group like professional organizations, religious groups or by small social groups such as family and friends (Maslow, 1954). It has been attested (Goffman, 1959) that the groups people choose to belong define who they are. Therefore, a logical assumption is that before developing any relationship humans concern about what others will think of and thus self-presentation becomes a vital process of control others impressions. “It seems an inescapable fact of modern life that we learn, define, and remind ourselves of who we are by our possessions” (Belk, 1988, p. 160) and through our possessions try to impress significant- for
us-others (Grossman & Sharpiro, 1988). Again, according to West and Broniarczyk (1998), others opinions shape consumers’ purchasing behavior. To conclude, self-presentation could be considered as a way to present ourselves in a different way in order to avoid negative critics and be accepted.

Luxury goods, as already mentioned, are defined as goods, mostly used for display and less for functional reasons and provide with prestige the buyer (Okonkwo, 2007). Consequently, the purchase of luxury products either authentic or fake could create impressions to social groups (Cademan et al., 2012). Furthermore, it has been proved that luxury branded goods are acquired by consumers who want to demonstrate social status that they belong to (Cademan et al., 2012). However, in the case of purchasing imitation products there is the possibility to be revealed that the product is not authentic and this will have as a result social embarrassment. The question that arises is why consumers take the risk to be embarrassed by purchasing imitation products; which is the motive behind this action?

Maslow (1954) indicated that after the satisfaction of the first three layers of needs, humans desire to be accepted and respected in order to obtain self-respect and self-esteem. In his theory, there are presented two versions of esteem needs; a lower and a higher one. The lower represents the need for respect, for status, recognition and prestige while the higher one focuses on the need for competence, self-confidence and self-esteem (Maslow, 1954). Luxury goods are preferred due to the fact that they create positive impression and thus someone could be admired and accepted by others (Cademan et al., 2012). However, a study has shown that consumers purchase high-status goods not only to demonstrate but also because of low self-esteem; not only to create an impressive exterior in order to be accepted by other but also to boost their esteem (Sivanathan & Pettit, 2010). Can the purchase of a counterfeit product successfully replace the one of an authentic? Could imitation products boost self-esteem in the same way as authentic? Is this the underlying motivation that will satisfy the need to be respected and recognized?

In the top of Maslow’s pyramid of needs is placed the need of self-actualization. This need refers to the satisfaction of the desire for self-fulfillment. According to Maslow (1954) a self-actualizer is a person who feels safe, not anxious for anything, feels that is being loved and generally is living a fulfilling life. Could purchase of counterfeit products bring a consumer in this situation?
3. Methodology

3.1. Research approach

The main goal of the study is to collect all the parameters that affect consumer in his decision to buy counterfeit products. For this reason, a qualitative research is considered the most appropriate method of approach of this subject. The main goal is to explore and investigate a consumer’s first reactions and comments on the motives of buying counterfeit designers products (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This study is focused on Greek consumers and their motivations. As a result, for the following qualitative approach, data is collected in Greece and gathered through the method of “in-depth interviews” (Donoghue, 2000) that could be characterized as the most suitable way to explore consumer’s motivations and to uncover feelings, perceptions in terms of needs and give answers to Why’s of situations that cannot be revealed through different techniques.

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), the process of the investigation of the phenomenon begins with the observation of an event and then the researcher attempts to find out why this is happening, under what conditions is fueled and with what consequences is accompanied. The most crucial part is the analysis of the findings; the part after the end of the interviews where data related to the specific research question are categorized in terms of needs according to key themes and patterns of Maslow’s pyramid and used to justify relationships between the data and the literature (Berg, 2004; Patton, 1990; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996).
3.2 Research Objectives

The main purpose of this thesis is to outline purchasing motives of counterfeit luxury products that drive to the purchase of such items in terms of needs as presented in Maslow’s pyramid. The research focuses mainly on the imitation phenomenon that occurs when a company replicates products of another company in terms of appearance; design, image and trademark. The main aim of the research is to explore the motives that drive Greek consumers to purchase a product of piracy. Based on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs literature review has pointed out that the main factor is not other than the financial one, however, this study’s objective is to answer the following research question;

-Which are the motives that drive Greek consumers to buy counterfeit trademarked products instead of authentic ones in terms of needs?

3.2.1. The Sample

For the purpose of this study 20-semi-structured, in-depth interviews will be conducted. As Seidman (1998) noted that semi-structured interviews are guided by the conversation and allow the participants to provide information that is important to them but not necessarily reflected in the interview questions; “we can come to understand the details of people’s experience from their point of view” (p. 112). He further noted, “We can see how their individual experience interacts with powerful social and organizational forces that pervade the context in which they live and work, and we can discover the interconnections among people who live and work in a shared context” (p. 112).

As the subject of this thesis has to do with the purchasing behavior of luxury goods, counterfeit or authentic, it is vital to create a segment among the different kinds of consumers. Han, Nunes and Drèze (2010, p.15-30) offer the following segmentation according to their purchasing power (cited: Salmela, 2010). The top category, the “Patricians”, is consisted of the super-rich consumers who pay inconspicuously for luxury goods. They focus on elusiveness instead of trying to be socially accepted. The second segment, called “Parvenus”, is the noveau rich who have suddenly made their appearance and love signaling their social status. “Poseurs” is the last category that will be included in our sample. This type of consumers buys fake products as they are trying to show their affinity in
to the above groups. Han et al. (2010) mention also “Poletarians” which let out from this research, as they are not interested in purchasing luxury products. Deliberately interviewees will be consumers who both purchase counterfeit as well as authentic luxury branded goods. Particularly, the sample will be consisted of 20, Greek informants who have purchased counterfeits; those who have purchased both counterfeits and originals and those who purchase regularly only originals. Furthermore, in order to accomplish the diversity of the sample, interviewees will differ in their educational level, age and gender. Although, the majority of participants chosen will be women as it has been proved by previous researches that women tend to develop stronger interest for fashion than men; “Historical currents have created a strong association between feminity and the pursuit of fashionability” (Thompson & Haytko, 1997, p.39). Due to the absence of data about the Greek market it has been a rational choice to explore the phenomenon within the mentioned sample as it is considered a good base for the exploration of the subject.

The objective of the study is not to measure and compare the differences between socioeconomic levels but rather to explore the motives behind purchasing. Although, it is clear from the literature review that when it comes to luxury the financial factor is the most influential one especially in countries, like Greece, facing massive economic problems.

3.3. Research Ethics

In this section a brief summary of the ethical issues relevant to qualitative research is discussed. Research participants must be on the top of the priorities due to the direct interaction between the two (Saunders et al., 2009). Before the beginning of the interview, participants will be informed that the interviewer guarantees for anonymity in order to respect the ethical principles of qualitative research (Saunders et al., 2009). According to Saunders et al. (2009) in the first stage of the procedure, researchers should ask for the participant’s permission to participate in the study and guarantee for anonymity. A reminder, that there is no right or wrong answer to the questions, is pointed out also in the beginning to make participants feel comfortable. This is a really important and vital part as due to the immediacy of the situation, unconscious answers should come out as natural as possible (Saunders et al., 2009).

After, a brief description of the research topic will be explained followed by the record of the demographic characteristics of the informants. Through the collection of the
data the interviewer should respect participant’s belief, opinion and culture. Then, the names of three luxury brands that are mostly consumed by the informant are asked, where does she/he purchase them from and last whether she/he believes that counterfeiting harms society and why or why not. In the beginning, a lot of discussion will be given on the ethical side of the phenomenon to gain an understanding in consumer’s perception around this issue. As counterfeiting is a sensitive subject for some, discussions should be done without using labels or judging. Last but not least, the way that questions are asked should be made in a way that the participant will not feel uncomfortable or stressed.

3.3.1. Research methods

3.3.1.1. In-depth interviews

The in-depth interviews were based on a set of questions (Appendix 2) that were used to guide opportunities in order to navigate issues of counterfeiting and relevant purchasing behavior of the participants. Particularly, the questions impelled the respondents to recall their experiences of acquiring, or witnessing counterfeit purchase activities. Their perceptions as formulated around this phenomenon through their personal experiences, are elicited and recorded so as the researcher to be able to evaluate the motivational aspects behind their attitude towards counterfeiting either directly or indirectly (Saunders et al., 2009).

The first set of questions aims to provide information about the demographic details of the sample group. Age, sex, income and education are the direct questions the interviewer starts with after the introduction of ethics, terms and conditions of this research and a brief description of the interview as well. The next set of questions focuses in determining the type of consumer the participants belong to according to the four categories (Patricians, Parvenus, Poseurs, Poletarians) mentioned before in the previous chapters. The following set of questions, as the central focus of the study, attempts to penetrate the actual events of counterfeiting that the participants have experienced and tries to identify the motives behind their decisions. It is attested (Kalafatis et al., 1999, p.444) that people feel pressure and reinforcement in particular behaviors from significant others and peers that respect, love and evaluate their opinion and thus they try to act accordingly. This means that based on what people value and respect in other people they try to adopt it as well in their life (Kalafatis et al., 1999, p.444). Therefore, a set of questions requires participants to imagine how their
significant others would behave towards counterfeiting in order to elicit indirectly answers that actually reflect information about themselves.

The interviews conclude by analyzing in depth all the factors the participants mention as motivational with Why questions until the interview elicits the need that creates the motive or the drive to affect and cause such a purchase.

4. Research Analysis

The results of the study are presented based on Maslow’s Pyramid (Figure 3). However, in the different levels of the pyramid are now presented the particular motives of counterfeit purchase as derived from respondents’ answers. Moreover, those factors that drove the interviewees to buy imitation products are distributed and presented in the according layer of the need that is satisfied.

![Figure 3, Results structured based on Maslow’s Pyramid Hierarchy of Needs.](image-url)
Starting from the biological needs that are located in the lowest level of the hierarchy, no respondent answered in favor of acquiring the counterfeit product. Buying a product that does not satisfy the biological needs is not a priority when there is the possibility of facing physiological needs. This observation applies also to the authentic and original products of the luxury sector. Apparently, people that struggle to survive have no intention to purchase products of the luxury sector either in their original or replicated form. In this level of need, findings come to confirm the theory (Pooler, 2003) as mentioned in the literature review. However, a very small percentage, 10% of all participants, declared that they have desired a particular hyper-luxury brand of sexual attires (Agent Provocateur) that could not afford and thus turned their interest in purchasing the counterfeited version. Specifically, they claimed that by buying the much cheaper alternative option they could satisfy their need of that otherwise they could not. This was based on their strong belief that the object of their desire, e.g. partner, would not succumb without being seduced properly. Nevertheless, the majority of the respondents present no further motivational deterrents of purchasing counterfeit luxury products that would satisfy the basic needs.

Continuing in the next category of needs, it has surprisingly been observed that this level in terms of needs actually contains the deterrents for purchasing counterfeit products. A 45% percent seemed to have also been discouraged to purchase them due to the product features such as the quality, as already explained in the theory of typology of goods (Table 1). Furthermore, a small percentage of the respondents (25%) who showed a negative attitude towards fake products, invoked reasons such as moral ethics and the feeling of fear by the violation of the law as the main factors to prevent them from purchasing a non-authentic item. On the contrast, another 27% of them implied that due to economic recession in Greece, buying an original product of extremely high price would be provoking and unethical to those that strive with hunger, and thus turning into counterfeits is a gesture of sympathy. These factors can all be translated as the need of belonging and beloved within the society rules, norms and unofficial legislation. However, a more in depth analysis of these statements revealed that a noticeable percentage (12,5%) is purchasing “secretly” products of imitation because they fear the possibility of experiencing social disapproval and embarrassment. Particularly claims of some respondents indicated fear of being bullied from their peers who do not approve the act of purchasing counterfeits. Similarly, due to the recession consumers are impelled to avoid purchasing luxury products under the fear of theft or criminal attack. The counterfeit purchase could equally provoke such an incident, therefore, the disincentive
of counterfeit consumption is expressed as a need of security. This psychological or physical abuse that calls for attention in the safety needs is located in the second level of the pyramid. The rest informants (62.5%) had no intentions to hide that they purchase, however they highlighted as the responsible factor of that the significant price difference. Making low cost purchases, when possible, is a way of retaining high levels of savings according to these specific informants. Deepening further the conversation, the financial motives derived from the need of longitudinal financial stability and security. In addition, the 35% of the interviewees express the perception that if buying something expensive is not considered as an investment but as a waste of money than purchasing an imitation that is twice bad.

The previous finding is directly related to the next levels of hierarchy of needs. Social disapproval and embarrassment are common situations that a person tries to avoid from experiencing throughout his life. Specifically, embarrassment refers to the feeling that one experiences when failing to perform to a significant other’s expectations. Following the fear of insecurity as mentioned above, the anxiety of future and quite possible social embarrassment works as an inhibitory agent of counterfeiting as well. Particularly quoting some of the most representative statements of the respondents it is suggested that many times the need of social approval interferes with counterfeiting.

“I can’t bear the feeling of someone realizing my sunglasses are fake.”

“I would never buy a counterfeit product as a gift, I would offend my friend.”

However, the needs of belonging and being loved also account at a 25% percent as motives for the respondents to buy counterfeit products. The need of social approval and acceptance dominated the reasons of why the respondents resorted into the counterfeit purchase while the most commonly used excuses indicated deeper motives also expressed as needs of public statement (Table 2).

“I bought my first fake Dior watch when I wanted to impress my co-workers in a social event.”

“I enjoy the feeling when I get the attention by wearing branded items even when they are fake.”

Most commonly the respondents that declared purchasing almost regularly fake products (65%) aimed at impressing and attending to their peers as a mean of gaining their approval and by extension satisfying their need of self-esteem. Furthermore, the need of belonging and being loved is direct related to the feelings of low confidence and insecurity of oneself. Uncertainty is commonly observed to low self-esteem people that are not confident with themselves and try constantly to demonstrate a more desirable image (Leary, 1995).
The final category of needs, the self-actualization, is defined as a more internally driven need rather than multi-factored situation. None of the respondents declared or implied indirectly that counterfeit products actually provided the feeling of self-fulfillment. The Hedonic Effect corroborates with the finding that, in the highest level of needs, the counterfeit products fail to motivate their purchase. The hedonic effect theory states that consumers purchase luxury products and they value them accordingly for purposes of self-fulfillment (e.g. inner direct consumers, Riesman, et al., 1950, or role relaxed consumers, Kahle, 1995). Consumers, knowing that the item they own fails to meet the specifications of the original, either in quality issues or general other features, refuse to obtain it. Even in cases they make counterfeit purchases that are almost inseparable of the original ones, they realize later that the fact of knowing the true provenance of the product, actually prevents them of feeling self-actualization emotions. In contrast with the counterfeits, the supreme original products can sometimes satisfy the feelings of vanity and hence self-fulfillment.

“I made a lot sacrifices for my Hermes bag, and the reward is the internal joy I feel each time I hold her.”

“I adore to smell my accomplishments so I spoil myself after hard working periods with hyper-expensive unique perfumes”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maslow’s Needs</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Motivations for counterfeiting</th>
<th>Disincentives of counterfeiting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic Needs</td>
<td>Hunger, Thirst Warmth, Sex</td>
<td>Buy counterfeits of supreme sex-attires to seduce for Sex</td>
<td>No motives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belongingness and love needs</td>
<td>Family, Relationships, Work group,</td>
<td>Gain respect, attention, acceptance, social approval</td>
<td>Fear or social embarrassment and social disapproval due to counterfeiting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esteem</td>
<td>Achievement, Status, Reputation</td>
<td>Built high social status reputation, vanity, demonstrate financial power, show-off</td>
<td>Lose high social status in case of counterfeiting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-actualization</td>
<td>Personal growth and fulfillment</td>
<td>No motives</td>
<td>Value for the original</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To conclude, the table above presents the findings as motives and deterrents allocated in accordance to the need they deeply express. Interesting enough is the observation that the motivations for purchasing counterfeit products lay down to the first 4 categories of the hierarchy of Maslow’s needs. Moreover, the counterfeit products fail to satisfy the highest level of needs, contrary to the authentic. However, as far as the hyper-luxury original products are considered, it is highly unlikely consumers to make tradeoffs with products that satisfy the basic needs in order to acquire them. This is only observed in rare cases with counterfeits products, that the sacrifices do not reach the same extreme levels and the motivation is to please basic needs such as sex.

5. Research Limitations

This study examined the perceptions of 20 Greek consumers that are motivated and driven by their needs to purchase counterfeit trademarked products. While the number of in-depth interviews provide plentiful data on the phenomenon does not give the opportunity to explore and investigate it in a larger population. Furthermore, in order for the results to be significant enough for the description of the entire population, the size of the sample and the number of total responders must exceed at least 100 respondents, preferably 1000, and run over time in repeated sessions. The presence of the researcher during the in-depth interview might have significant effect on the attitude of the respondents or may have elicited biased results; however, the construction of the questions was carefully posited to avoid such implications.

6. Research Implications for further research

Luxury brands, such as Burberry, Chanel and Louis Vuitton (Ledbury, 2006), have suffered strong imitational attempts resulting in the loss of revenues but most importantly the deterioration of their brand image due to the cannibalization of its products. However, the noteworthiness of the imitation phenomenon, from a consumer’s behavior aspect, little attention is paid to the motives of the purchase of counterfeits. The current study has focused on collecting all the motives identified from the respondents and expressed as needs in the same categorization that is found in the Maslow’s pyramid. This way, future researches can
utilize these findings by studying whether it is actually to the advantage of the designers to be imitated or not. Some respondents declared reluctant to purchase original products that are overexposed and used either in their original or replica form, while others insisted that this is a successful marketing technique to increase brand awareness. What is actually happening is interesting to investigate.

7. Conclusion & Discussion

This study captured in detail the motivations behind why consumers choose to buy replica or imitations instead of authentic brands. It is critically important for marketers and researchers to understand what is behind this purchasing action and the underlying factors that will lead to the creation of possible strategies for the elimination of the problem. Furthermore, the findings of this study enhance our knowledge on the counterfeit phenomenon and answered the overall research question;

*What are the motives that drive Greek consumers to buy counterfeit products instead of authentic ones in terms of needs?*

An approach to the research question has been conducted by employing a qualitative research. More specifically, semi-structured in-depth interviews to a sample of 20 Greek consumers discovered in better accuracy the key influential factors that motivate consumers to purchase counterfeits. To achieve the research objective the qualitative research approach was based on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Our findings revealed different motivations associated with the purchase of imitation trademarked goods that until now were not associated with internal and personal needs.
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## Appendix

### Appendix 1

**Table 3: Demographic information and analysis of the sample**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant No.</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Type of consumer</th>
<th>Under which circumstances consumers purchase fake</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Maria</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>English Teacher</td>
<td>Poseurs</td>
<td>With friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Vasileios</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Salesman Medical Equipment</td>
<td>Patricians</td>
<td>Secretly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Xara</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Accounting Assistant</td>
<td>Parvenus</td>
<td>Secretly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Aggelos</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Marketing Student</td>
<td>Parvenus</td>
<td>Dont buy imitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Emy</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Patricians</td>
<td>Secretly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Liza</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Biology Student</td>
<td>Poseurs</td>
<td>With friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Laura</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Business Student</td>
<td>Patricians</td>
<td>Dont buy imitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Stella</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Strategic Poduct Design</td>
<td>Poseurs</td>
<td>Dont buy imitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
</tr>
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<td>-----</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Gogo</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Community Administrator</td>
<td>Parvenus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Giannis</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Medical Salesman</td>
<td>Parvenus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Ioanna</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Medical Student</td>
<td>Poseurs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Eirini</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Strategic Product Design</td>
<td>Poseurs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Marianthi</td>
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<td>BA</td>
<td>Biology Student</td>
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<td>Enterpreneur</td>
<td>Poseurs</td>
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<td>MA</td>
<td>Sustainable Development student</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Sonia</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Economic Student</td>
<td>Poseurs</td>
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<td>Architecture</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Popi</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>Parvenus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2

Semi-Structured Sample of Questions

Demographic Questions

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Female/Male:
4. Education
5. Occupation:

Category type questions

6. How would you describe your relationship with luxury fashion?
7. What is your relationship with luxury products?
8. How would you describe your relationship with counterfeit branded goods?

Core Questions

9. Would you buy an imitation product?
10. Why? Explain the reasons?
11. How often do you buy?
12. Would significant others purchase counterfeit products?
13. Why questions

14. What do you think would be the opinion of the people you admire or respect towards counterfeiting?

15. What would they think about you in case they learn that you purchase counterfeit products?

16. Why Questions

17. Carrie Bradshaw in an episode said: “When I first moved to New York and I was totally broke, sometimes I would buy Vogue instead of dinner. I felt it fed me more.” Would you buy a luxury product counterfeit/authentic instead of something vital such as, food?

18. What drives you to this decision?

19. Some people think of this activity as being illegal or as you collaborating with black market. What is your opinion?
20. How do you consider this action impacts the designer company? (feelings of guilt, the need to feel calm)

21. Where and in what occasions would you purchase a fake product?

22. Would you purchase counterfeit products with significant others?

23. When someone asks you, would you reveal that you purchased a fake product?

24. Why? What drives you to this behavior?

25. Would you be reluctant to buy a present to a significant other that is counterfeit?

26. Would you be reluctant to buy a counterfeit product due to the fear of not being able to return it?

27. What about the tax system and the society?

28. What do you think about the purchase place? Open market, or closed shops?

29. Have you ever regret buying? Why?