

Toward a Theory of Consumer Wish to Buy a Non-deceptive Counterfeited Luxury Item When Subject to Group Pressure

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Trade in counterfeiting amounts for billions of dollars each year, and yet the buyers of these products are still a mystery. Focusing on the rather unexplored demand-side of the counterfeiting market, this paper presents research proposals explaining the overall process a consumer, subject to group pressure, will experience when facing an opportunity to buy a counterfeited luxury product. We argue that conformity seeking, mimetism and postmodern ethics will act as justifications for the consumers' misbehaviours. A postmodern qualitative method is presented as a potential tool to investigate the research proposition: deep interviews combined with the ZMET technique.

We also propose a conceptual model. We argue that conformity seeking will act as a mediator in between group pressure and intention to buy and give insights on potential moderators such as attribution processes, consumer's ethical background, group characteristics, and the role-relaxed & self-monitoring construct. We also provide the reader with suggestions about how to test the model in an exploratory way.

Counterfeiting is widely considered as one of the big issues firms from various industrial sectors have to deal with (Source: Global Anti-Counterfeit Summit, 2008). Counterfeited products account for a growing fraction of world trade. According to the OECD, counterfeiting would represent 5 to 7% of worldwide trade (200 to 300 billions of Euros) but also leads to a loss of 200 000 jobs across the world (Source: European Commission). 60 countries are known as counterfeiters, with 70% of counterfeited products being manufactured in Asia and 30% in the Mediterranean Area. Two types of counterfeiting do exist: deceptive vs. non-deceptive counterfeiting. When buying a counterfeited product, consumers may or may not be knowing participants in the illegal act of purchase. When the consumer does not know that he is buying a fake,

he stands for a victim of counterfeiting. He is engaging in 'deceptive counterfeiting'. This is especially the case for counterfeited medicines (80% of medicines in Africa are believed to be counterfeited products according the WHO). However, in some other cases, especially with luxury counterfeited products, consumers are willing accomplices: they know at the time of purchase that they are buying a fake. This illegal type of purchase has been labelled 'non-deceptive counterfeiting' and it will be the one we will be focusing on in this paper, for it is in this case that insights on why consumers turn to illegal purchases could be used to develop efficient anti-counterfeit campaigns.

A large panel of luxury products is being counterfeited: perfumes, jewellery, haute-couture,

leather goods, accessories, gastronomy, wines and liquors... Counterfeits range from strict copies to sole use of a feature of the brand (usually the logo), including classical imitations. As a French symbol, the luxury industry is characterized by a constant sought of perfection embedded at the same time in tradition and technological innovation. Brand name and value are key in the industry. Therefore, the spreading of counterfeiting in this field is undoubtedly a real threat to the long-lasting of industrial and craft employment in the sector. Besides, on top of the financial loss inherent to counterfeiting, the counterfeiter is using the notoriety of the counterfeited brand and can severely damage its equity (Source: INPI, 2008). Large luxury brands or conglomerates such as LVMH have set up special entities to tackle the issue of counterfeiting. Still, a lot has to be done to not only better understand the process and fight against it with legal tools, but also to capture the consumers' ways of seeing it and develop more efficient discourses towards them. Academic research can help achieving this.

Scholars in international business have dealt with counterfeiting by investigating anti-counterfeiting strategies (Chaudhry and Walsh, 1996), examining common counterfeiting methods (Harvey & Ronkainen, 1985) and evaluating the economic consequences of international product counterfeiting (Globerman, 1988). As one can notice, those studies deal with the supply side of the equation. As far as the demand side is concerned, some studies have been exploring the various factors leading people to buy counterfeited products. Some of them are consumers' personal characteristics such as age, or income level (Ang et al., 2001), while others deal directly with product attributes such as price or brand (Cordell et al., 1996). A review of the already done studies is provided in an additional paper.

However, few studies have been conducted on consumer misbehaviour in a social setting, at least when purchasing a counterfeited product (Albers-Miller, 1999). By social setting, we mean any kind of group an individual naturally (family) or artificially (friends) belongs or wants to belong to.

This paper aims at filling this gap in the literature, by providing a research proposition explaining the purchase of counterfeited goods, and a conceptual model on the process leading group pressure to impact on consumers' intention to purchase a counterfeited luxury product.

After a brief review of the existing literature addressing the various theories and constructs that the research proposition and the conceptual model include, we will present these very research proposition and model. Then, we will provide some guidelines on how we would expect the research proposition to be investigated, and the model to be tested. Some limits to our methods will be addressed. We will then conclude with some suggestions for further research, including a recently developed postmodern research method we believe relevant to our study. Insights on managerial implications drawn by the research will lastly be presented.

RESEARCH CONTEXT

Defining Counterfeits

Generally, the literature categorises counterfeits into counterfeiting, piracy, imitation brands, a grey area and custom-made copies (Phau & Prendergast, 1998).

A Counterfeiting is a one hundred percent copy to deceive consumers to believe that it is the genuine article.

A Piracy is an object the consumer is aware is a fake. It is usually sold at a fraction of the original's

price. It is more widely known as a 'non-deceptive counterfeit'. This is the type of counterfeits we will be dealing with in this research.

Imitation brands are also known as 'knock-offs' or imitators. They are not identical to the original product, but are somewhat similar (name, shape, logo...) (Lai & Zaichowsky, 1998).

Grey areas are sets of factories contracted by brand manufacturers. They produce more quantity than required and sell them as overruns illegally (Wada, 1996).

Lastly, custom-made copies are replicas of trademark designs of branded products made by legitimate craftsmen. Raw materials are usually of good quality. The only difference with the genuine product is that the logo or the name is not printed on the product (Phau & Prendergast, 1998).

Context of the Study

Our research issue is to get knowledge and understandings about the impact of the social context, as described above, on the process of engaging/not engaging in non-deceptive counterfeiting. We will conduct our research in a Western Country, for usually in these countries counterfeiting is culturally and legally forbidden. This is not the case in Asian countries for example. Besides, figures provided by the European Union show that for instance France is a heavy consumer of counterfeited product. Another feature of Western Countries, and especially France, is that usually counterfeited goods are sold in open-settings rather than in shops. This strengthens the illegality of the act of purchase and therefore some kind of social pressure.

Since our research issue is really to understand the mental/emotional process involved, we do need to focus on a physically existing research context. Therefore, we will not consider non-deceptive counterfeiting conducted through the use of 'virtual

tools' such as the Internet -although we do admit that it is a very important channel of distribution for counterfeited goods-.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Counterfeiting and the Luxury Industry

Before introducing relevant theories related to this research proposal, prior knowledge about the rather scarce already done research dealing with the broad topic this research would fall unto is of great importance.

Quality Value of Counterfeits and the Theory of Cognitive Dissonance

Kocher et al. (2007) have been conducting research to enhance knowledge related to evaluations of original products, counterfeits and imitations for luxury products. Their main finding is that, in general, consumers do not have a more positive attitude toward original products than counterfeits. This is a particularly threatening feature of the consumption of counterfeited luxury goods for the luxury industry, for it could imply that the emotional explanation for the purchase of counterfeits (the desire to be part of a group due to a logo) could be enhanced by the rationale explanation (good value for the money). Therefore, social pressure to engage in misbehaviour would be rationalised by economic reasons. Actually, buyers of counterfeits try to legitimate their behaviours and experience reasons for justification, as a proof of applicability of the theory of cognitive dissonance (Eisend & Schubert-Güler, 2006). According to the theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957), dissonance can occur after a decision is made or because intended behaviour contradicts attitudes. In the case of counterfeits, consumers experience it in the form "I bought/will buy a faked product" and

“Faked products are of minor quality, illegal, and they do harm consumers, companies and economies as a whole” (Eisend & Schubert-Güler, 2006). In the case of non-deceptive counterfeited products, the awareness of the negative consequences can differ from person to person, and decision to decision. More awareness will lead to higher dissonance and more efforts in applying coping strategies, or it leads to a decreased willingness to purchase counterfeits. In the case of Kocher et al.’s respondents, they displayed the coping strategy through the re-interpretation of dissonant elements by devaluating the non-chosen alternative (“The original luxury brand is almost identical to the fake, but costs a lot more...”).

Consumers’ willingness to buy a counterfeit is usually increasing if they can rate the quality of the product before purchase. If, as this is the case in Kocher et al.’s study, consumers do not value more real luxury goods vs. fakes (especially in terms of quality), they can find pretty easily a rationale to submit to the double social pressure of possessing a luxury-looking good (thanks usually to a logo) and of misbehaving as the others members of the group already did/do.

Towards a Typology of Non-deceptive Counterfeiters

In a more classical, but still highly valuable, way of exploring the counterfeit world of luxuries, research has been conducted, trying to profile consumers of pirated products within the Chinese market (Phau et al., 2001; Teah & Phau, 2007). While Phau et al. focused on pirated brands of clothing, Teah and Phau have tried to examine the influence of social factors on attitude towards counterfeiting in luxury brands and purchase intention within the Chinese market. Attitude towards ethically debatable consumption behaviour has been proved as a primary factor explaining the act of engaging in

such behaviour (Penz & Stöttinger, 2005). Besides, ethical concern can be a factor refraining a consumer from engaging in illicit consumption of counterfeits, especially owing to the culpability feeling which might result (Viot et al., 2006). However, these studies were conducted on a personal basis, without taking into consideration the social pressure our research is investigating. Similarly to past research findings (Eisend & Schuchert-Güller, 2006), Teah and Phau demonstrated that attitudes towards counterfeiting is the driving force that influences purchase intention. “Perceptions of counterfeits” is found to have a positive influence on purchase intentions. This explains why consumers are attracted by luxury counterfeits when counterfeits are of good quality. And admittedly, counterfeits of luxury brands in China are of unbelievable good quality... There are even Grade systems attached to them to segregate the better quality counterfeits from the less superior ones (Gentry et al., 2006).

Both studies’ findings provide useful insights on the topic, although very culturally specific. However, China is of particular interest both for the luxury industry and the study of counterfeiting in general. China has built a reputation as the source of counterfeits. More than 60 per cent of counterfeited products seized by US authorities in 2003 were produced in China (International Chamber of Commerce, 2004) and foreign multinationals estimate that they lose at least 20 per cent of the value of their potential sales to counterfeiters there (Porteous, 2001). For instance, Ralph Lauren has been fighting counterfeited goods since the creation of its Tokyo branch in Asia (1988). They have continually issued warnings to many stores selling fake ‘Polos’ in Asia and demanded repressive actions to be conducted. In spite of all these actions, the growth of fakes has not stopped (Wada, 1996). Therefore both studies

have to be considered as useful tools to better understand this “grey area” of the world.

Quite surprisingly, one issue of Teah & Phau’s study is that collectivism does not play a role in affecting consumer attitudes and purchase intention towards counterfeiting of luxury brands. They advance the hypothesis that this is due to their sample’s geographical origin (Shanghai), which is advancing into western-style cosmopolitan areas that would have contributed to increased individualism (Li & Su, 2007). In this sense, Chinese consumers of counterfeits could be considered as individualistic as their western counterparts. However, in the frame of our study, which is focusing on social influence, this dimension of collectivism could be further investigated...

Clustering the consumers in a dual typology, Phau et al. (2001) identified low-spenders and high-spenders differing on a number of socio-demographic factors. Low-spenders appeared to be 19 to 24 years old with blue-collar occupation, relatively low monthly income, secondary education level, and no children. On the opposite, high-spenders are 25 to 34 years old with a white-collar occupation, a monthly income of HKD 10,000 - HKD 19,000, tertiary or university education, and children. For both clusters, consumers pay less attention to ethical and legal issues when buying pirated products. This is consistent with the social norm in China which accepts and encourages the purchase of counterfeits (Teah & Phau, 2007). Displaying a counterfeited product is even a “source of face” for some Chinese consumers (Gentry et al., 2006). Therefore, normative influence has positive effects on consumers (Teah & Phau, 2007). On the opposite, information susceptibility has negative effects on consumers. Information susceptibility is the basis of purchase decision on the expert opinion of others to

make informed choices (Ang et al., 2001). If peers or reference group has some knowledge on the differences between originals and counterfeits (such as product quality), and the negative consequences of counterfeiting, consumer attitudes will be unfavourable towards counterfeiting of luxury brands.

Search Process and Non-deceptive Counterfeiting

In discourses on search in marketing and consumer behaviour, consumers are usually assumed to search for brands within a product. Gentry et al. (2001) have investigated this search process within the field of counterfeited luxury goods, and have come to the conclusion that in a counterfeit culture, brands and products are considered as different entities serving different purposes. Actually, counterfeits are said by the respondents to be opportunities to try a low-grade version of the luxury item, with the potential intent to by the real good in the future. They are seen as acceptable compromises (less value for less cost, at a good trade-off) for products highly susceptible to fads and trends (low life expectancy). But Gentry et al.’s most important contribution to the literature is the finding that consumers do often purchase counterfeits out of conscious choice: they are reaching for a specific brand while looking for a price compromise and that’s it. Counterfeits are only good as long as they are counterfeiting a specific brand. Thus, the reason why people buy a counterfeit is because it represents the brand it is supposed to be copying. “A counterfeit appears to offer consumers a chance to separate the brand from the product. While the purchase of a counterfeit represents the consumption of the brand (brand decision), it does not appear to represent a “product” decision” (Gentry et al., 2001). What remains is the choice of the product within the brand offering, taking into consideration the various

offered prices. Therefore, compared to the classical view of search in consumer behaviour, the processed appears reversed in the case of luxury counterfeits.

Group Pressure and Reference Group Influence

Situational elements may affect illicit behaviour. When considering the act of purchasing a counterfeited product, there are three potential situations: the individual is alone and is free from direct social pressure, the individual is not alone and is subjected to direct social pressure, and the individual is alone and is subjected to indirect social pressure. Indirect social pressure can come from the individual's belonging or wish to belong to a social group, as well as from socially accepted norms such as laws or codes of behaviour. Direct and indirect social pressure can lead to conform to join others who are/have already been engaging in the illicit behaviour. Albers-Miller (1999) found out that people are most likely to engage in illicit behaviour if there is a peer pressure to do so.

Mimetic Consumption of Non-Deceptive Counterfeits

This group pressure is likely to lead to conformity seeking. This phenomenon of mimetism has been widely researched. According to René Girard, imitation is at the origin of everything, including human condition: the Homo Erectus is a far better imitator than the monkey and this capacity of imitation is what enables him to escape from tribal instincts and lets him progress. "If our desires were not mimetic, they would be forever targeted on predetermined objects, they would be a sort of instinct. [...]. Without mimetic desires, there would not be any freedom or mankind" (*Je Vois Satan Tomber Comme l'Eclair*, p.35). Desire comes from imitation, whereas need is inborn. If one wants an object, it's because one has seen somebody else

desiring or having it. Desire is "mediatised", especially in the luxury industry for which consumption is desire. Therefore the logical process for somebody who desires a similar product than a peer, assuming that this product is a counterfeited one, is that the direct/indirect pressure should inevitably engage the consumer in the illegal purchase of a counterfeited good.

This concept of mimetic desire is explained by what Girard labelled the "Romantic Truth". "Romantic truth" tells us that any individual does not know what he desires. He cannot handle his preferences, which are fluctuating and indeterminate. The Girardian individual is always looking after his identity, his being, and to achieve this goal tries to find in his counterpart the references he does not manage to give himself through a simple act of internal sovereignty.

"What he desires his "being", a being he feels deprived from and he can see in somebody else. The subject is waiting for this other to tell him what has to be desired, in order to acquire this "being"". (*La Violence et le Sacré*)

Luxury products have been proven to be considered as status goods (Chang, 2005) and therefore should be part of this identity building.

Mimetic desire can take the form of two models: "external mediation" and "internal mediation". When the existing distance between the subject and his model is so large that any interaction is forbidden, except unilateral obedience, mimetic desire takes the form of "external mediation". Here the situation is pretty similar to the one described by consumer theory, since the subject's preferences appear as exogenous and fix. This type of interaction can be found in the relationship between

social norms and the consumer considering engaging in misbehaviour.

On the opposite, in the case of “internal mediation”, the subject and the model do actually share a common world and interact. This is particularly true in the case of mimetic doubles: each one is a model for the other one. The mutual desires for an object are increasing in intensity as long as each of the subject finds in the stronger and stronger other’s desire a supplementary reason to acquire the object. This can be easily found in the relationship between the direct reference-group and the consumer.

Neo-classical economic theory has also dealt with the mimetic behaviour of consumption, while maintaining the hypothesis of individual sovereignty. If, after having observed individual A, actor B is prone to imitate his behaviour, this is because individual A’s action brings some new information to actor B. There is no change in individual B’s preferences. Put in another way, actor B keeps the same representation of his final wishes, but he has to take into account, when considering which action is the most appropriate, the new information he got from individual A’s action. André Orléan (to be published) labelled this specific type of mimesis as “informational mimesis”. In this case, when two mimetic doubles I and J fight to acquire the same object, one may argue that I sees in J’s relentlessness to possess the object a piece of information which makes him positively reevaluate his estimation of the quality of the desired object.

Reference Group Influence on Non-deceptive Counterfeiters

Actually, mimetic consumption behaviour, as a result of mimetic desire as described above, is often witnessed when consumers seek to belong to what researchers have called their reference group(s). Hyman (1942) was the first one to introduce this

concept in a study of social status. He asked respondents with which individuals or groups they compared themselves. Defined more largely, we can define a reference group as a person or group of people that significantly influences an individual behaviour. Within this framework, several types of influences have been identified: information, utilitarian and value-expressive influences. When considering the act of purchasing a counterfeit product of a luxury good, the consumer is actually influenced by utilitarian and value-expressive reference groups. Utilitarian reference group influence can be reflected in attempts to comply with the wishes of others to achieve rewards or avoid punishment (Bearden & Etzel, 1982). When buying a counterfeit, the social norms and codes do act as utilitarian reference group’s features to be respected. Value-expressive reference group influence can be reflected in the acceptance of positions expressed by others due to the need for psychological association with a person or group. This association can take two forms: an attempt to resemble or be like the reference group or a way to express an attachment or liking for the group. When looking for purchasing a counterfeited luxury product, the consumer may want to acquire the apparent status of one reference group (those who actually afford buying the real product) and/or wish to show his feelings for the group gathering those who have already engaged in the more or less regular buying process of purchasing counterfeits. These two associations can actually be widely explained by the new postmodern ethics of the postmodern consumer, as presented in another part of this paper. However, we can already say, without any reference to the postmodern assumption, that there is strong reference group influence for public-luxury product and brand decisions and negligible influence on private-necessity product and brand decisions (Bourne, 1957; Bearden & Etzel, 1982).

Consumer Misbehaviour in the Social Environment

Not considering the topic of counterfeiting per se, but looking at previous research conducted on consumer misbehaviour in general can provide useful insight to this paper.

Sought for Conformity and Ethical Dilemmas

Research has been conducted to investigate up to which point the sought for conformity impacts the potential misbehaving of an individual, not only in the consumption field, but also in terms of which behaviours are considered as ethically correct or not.

Bernheim (1994) developed a model of social interaction in which individuals care about status as well as “intrinsic utility”. He proposed an original theory of conformity, based on microeconomics. His theory suits perfectly the field of our research, since luxury goods are perceived as status goods (Chang, 2005) and therefore one may assume that some people chose to engage in the purchase of counterfeited luxury items to get some status as well. Bernheim’s model shows that when popularity is sufficiently important to intrinsic utility (utility directly derived from consumption), most individuals conform to a single, homogeneous standard of behaviour, even if they have heterogeneous underlying preferences. “They are willing to suppress their individuality and conform to the social norm because they recognize that even small departures from the norm will seriously impair their popularity”. When subject to group pressure, personals’ popularity is at stake (or perceived as being so). According to Bernheim’s theory, this pressure will undoubtedly lead to sought for conformity. Besides, the model supports the postmodern theory of customs and fads in consumption tribes (Maffesoli, 1988), resulting in

the development of multiple subcultures, each with its distinct norm.

Sought for conformity can occur in two opposite directions at the same time, leading to what is usually called an “ethical dilemma” (Marks & Mayo, 1991). Actually, when being offered to purchase a counterfeited luxury good, the consumer is tied apart between the wish to conform to the socially accepted norm (usually defined by a legal framework) and the wish to conform to what closer groups expect from him in terms of consumption. The consumer finds itself in a complete moral dilemma situation: one of his potential actions may enter in conflict with the actions, interests, values of others (or himself), and “the negative consequences of one action are logically implied in positive consequences of the other action and vice versa” (Villeneuve-Cremer and Eckensberger, 1985, P.180). This ethical dilemma will be solved thanks to the new postmodern ethics, or at least can be partially explained by them, as presented in the next part of the paper.

Attribution Processes of Non-deceptive Counterfeiters

However, group influence from a cognitive perspective comes not so much from a passive submission to group norms/rules but often from complex attribution processes conducted by the consumer trying to understand the causes of the illegal behaviours of group peers. An attribution is any inferential belief that an individual draws from reasoning based on evidence or assumptions about him or herself (i.e. self-attribution) or the behaviour, thoughts, feelings, or dispositions of a peer group (Rose et al., 1992). In other words, attributions can be considered as answers to “Why” questions (e.g. “Why did the product fail?”), based on what is known or assumed.

Rose et al. (1996) have shown that attributing a group's behaviour to external causes (~ normative attribution process) provides an important mechanism for reducing perceived conformity pressures. When no ready external explanations are available to the individual, he is left with the more speculative option of attributing the group's behaviour to internal causes (~ dispositional attribution process).

As far as misbehaving is concerned, some research has been done on attribution processes within a group pressure environment on the subject of illicit drug consumption (Rose et al., 1992, Rose et al., 1996, Rose et al., 2001). The most noteworthy implication of their research concerns the association of attribution processing with resistance to group pressure. They suggest that attributions about a peer group's deviant behaviour may play an important role in the decision-making of a potential dissenter in several different ways: conformity is lower among individuals who are able to explain salient group's behaviour through a normative attribution process (Rose et al., 1992); prior attitudes toward illicit consumption and susceptibility to social influence are moderating the attribution process in which individuals engage (Rose et al., 1996); and group attractiveness mediates the effects of attributions regarding peer-group illicit consumption on intention to conform (Rose et al., 2001).

Even though those studies focus on illicit drug consumption, they could be relevant in the purchase of counterfeited product misbehaviour. In many ways, product counterfeiting presents a problem similar to that of illicit drug (Bloch et al., 1993). In both cases, the problems rest on an exchange between buyer and seller and both parties share in responsibility for the practice. Besides, as with illegal drugs, reducing the supply of counterfeited products requires international cooperation. From

the consumer's perspective, as with drugs, consumers who knowingly buy counterfeited products must exist to let these two demand-driven markets sustain and even develop. Bloch et al. (1993) have shown that counterfeit-prone buyers differ in a number of ways from other consumers, in the same pattern as illegal drugs-prone buyers: they usually see themselves as less well-off financially, less successful and less confident than do other consumers.

Reference Group's Characteristics & Consumer's Misbehaviour

Research has been conducted to investigate the role of some specific characteristics of the reference group on Sought for Conformity in response to Group Pressure (Witt, 1969; Witt & Bruce, 1970; Rose et al., 2001).

One line of research suggests that individuals obtain information by observing each others' actions and are therefore inclined to imitate those who are believed to be better informed (see e.g. Conlisk, 1980; Bikhchandani et al., 1992). Witt's study supports this theory: the relationship between group brand choice knowledge and similarity of brand choice was observed.

Another characteristic which is influencing the level of influence of the reference group is group cohesiveness, also defined as the attractiveness of a group to its members. Group attractiveness is defined as an overall evaluation of, or attitude towards the group (Good & Nelson, 1973). Witt (1969) showed that similarity of brand choice within a group is directly related to the cohesiveness of the group, the degree of its impact depending on the type of product involved. Rose et al. went further in the research process, proposing the construct as a mediator in between the attribution processes used to understand the

misbehaviour of the group and sought for conformity.

Self-monitoring, Role-relaxed Consumer & Consumer Behaviour

Self-monitoring

We have seen that individuals do adapt their consuming behaviour when they are facing a group pressure. This is particularly the case when considering the intention to purchase illegally a product or an illegal product, including counterfeited products. Some researchers have tried to assess the impact of a personal construct, self-monitoring, which may moderate/orientate this behaviour (Snyder, 1987; Ratner & Kahn, 2002). Self-monitoring theory is a contribution to the psychology of personality, referring to the process through which people regulate their own behaviour in order to "look good" so that they will be perceived by others in a favourable manner. For instance, it has been shown that whereas high self-monitors are willing to adapt their behaviours to enact clearly defined roles appropriate to different situations, low self-monitors are less willing to put on a show to please those around them, preferring instead to be true in their own attitudes and values across situation. To get a better pragmatic idea, consider the following situation: Have you ever been to a club and seen some people dancing with wild abandon whilst other shuffle nonchalantly? The wild dancers are low self-monitors, whilst the shufflers are probably high self-monitors.

Snyder has argued that low self-monitors are mostly concerned about maintaining a public image as principled people. Therefore, when facing an illegal purchase, they should behave differently than the high self-monitors. Ratner & Kahn's (2002) study about the impact of private vs. public consumption on variety-seeking behaviour, supports the idea that "a desire to appear rational

may be the type of concern that will lead low self-monitors to adjust their behaviour in public" (p. 252). Therefore, in terms of impact of the group pressure on the wish to engage in the purchase of a counterfeited product, we may expect different behaviours depending on the level of self-monitoring consumers do possess.

Role-relaxed Consumers

Kahle (1995) paid some interest to "consumers who decide how to act and what to buy while remaining intentionally oblivious to social demands". He called them role-relaxed consumers. Highly role-relaxed consumers are not likely to be susceptible to interpersonal influence. Therefore this personal characteristic of an individual has some relevance to be taken into account in our research context of socially embedded consideration of purchasing counterfeited luxury goods. This is strengthened by the fact that about 20 per cent consumers have at least some role-relaxed tendencies. Kahle (1995) found out that the more role-relaxed the consumer, the more important the substantive product attributes and the less important the style attributes. Given that counterfeits of luxury goods are by definition lower in quality than their originals (and therefore display often low substantive attributes) plus are conspicuous goods bought for their brand name/brand style/logo, we can suppose that highly role-relaxed consumers should be less inclined to engage in the purchase of such illicit product.

Consumer Ethical Background

Subsequent research has been conducted to investigate the impact of consumers' ethical beliefs on their engagement in misbehaviour or not (Wilkes, 1978; Vitell & Muncy, 1992; Fullerton et al., 1996). Although there is a high overall level of ethical concern among consumers, and individuals have a strong opinion about what constitutes an

ethical behaviour, it appears that unethical behaviour is more situational than attitudinal (Fullerton et al., 1996). This is particularly true in the case when there is potential enhancement of utility. Since the purchase of a counterfeited luxury good is a way to get some kind of status, or to get closer from one's reference group, it can be seen as a way to get more utility from the consumption than the simple purchase of a non-branded (and therefore non counterfeited) product. It is interesting to note that the typical profile of a highly-concerned consumer is somebody quite old, with less education and income than his less ethically concerned counterparts. These characteristics, except the age one, match the characteristics of low-spenders in counterfeits, at least on the Chinese Market (Phau et al., 2001). Taxonomy of the consumers, depending on how high they ranked on the 'consumer ethics index' developed by Fullerton et al. (1996), proposed a clustering in four categories: the permissives, the situationalists, the conformists and the puritans. Studying the key dimensions explaining attitude towards counterfeits, Viot et al. (2006) have found that among the factors explaining a negative attitude towards counterfeits, ethical ones had the most important weight, leading to negative feelings for the consumer. Therefore, we do expect these ethical concerns to have a direct impact on the intention to purchase counterfeited luxury products.

The Consumer in Postmodernity

XXIst century consumers live in a social environment qualified by researchers as postmodern (Firat, 1991; Holt, 1997; Thompson & Holt, 1996) or even as hypermodern (Lipovetsky, 2004). The concept of Postmodernity was used for the very first time at the end of the 70's, with the intent to capture the new face of developed societies' cultural state. The postmodern era is

characterized by the enlargement of the subjective area of autonomy, the multiplication of individual differences, the ending of classical social principles and the fading of the unity of ways of living and opinions. Conjointly, the postmodern individual is facing a never-ending process of consumption, with various degrees of ethical matters and of what could be considered as ethically acceptable (Baudrillard, 1970; Baudrillard, 2004).

Who is the Postmodern Consumer?

Zygmunt Bauman (1993) used an interesting metaphor to describe the postmodern individual/consumer, introducing this individual as a tourist. Like the vagabond, the tourist knows that he will not stay long where he just arrived. He is ready to pay to fill his aesthetic needs: curiosity, need of amusement, wish and will to experience new experiences (assumed to be pleasurable and pleurably novel, as well as exciting). He pays to get the freedom to disregard native concerns and feelings. He wants to redefine the world, or rather his world and his system of values. The tourist likes discovering new and unusual settings: he is looking for encountering foreign populations (without paying any interest to their preoccupations and needs). In the postmodern world, life is supposed to be continuously holiday time. This portrait of the postmodern individual/consumer looks like being far away from any ethical or moral concerns. It allows therefore counterfeiting to be part of consumption habits, sometimes without any feeling of guilt and/or knowledge of or consideration for its negative aspects regarding either people or economics (and brands). The postmodern consumer is living in a world of appearance, strengthened by the individualistic social context and hedonic sought of consumption. Actually, even if people are to be taken within their social environment in the postmodern times (Holt, 1997), which is the interest

of this study, postmodern tribalism is more a state of mind (Sitz & Amine, 2004) and a deeply egoistic one: it is a way to find or express one's identity (Lipovetsky, 2004). This identity forging will be addressed later in this paper.

Postmodern Ethics or the Legitimizing of Counterfeits

Fragmentation of the consumer's life

Fragmentation is a major property of postmodern culture (Baudrillard, 1981; Jameson, 1983; Firat, 1991, 1992). By fragmentation, we mean the fact that all things are disconnected and disjointed in their representation from each other, their origins and history, and contexts. Firat (1992) identified 5 kinds of fragmentations present in contemporary life: fragmentation of the thoughts, desires and behaviours; fragmentation of the signifier from the signified; fragmentation of the product from its function; fragmentation of consumers' life experiences; fragmentation of the self into self-images. This last kind of fragmentation is particularly relevant for our research: it could provide an explanation for the process previously described of ethical dilemmas coping in the case of the purchase of counterfeited products. Besides, emphasis has been put on the consumer's need to belong to a group of reference and on his fate of being mimetic. We have conjointly mentioned the fact that the non-deceptive counterfeiting consumer can find himself experience a double-pressure: pressure of engaging in the misbehaviour and pressure coming from the social norms. Any outcome decision will result in the belonging to one group of pressure while being rejected by the other one. We believe that the postmodern fragmentation of identity can provide a good explanation of this acceptability of circumstances by the consumer. Actually, consumption may represent different images when used in different instances and

contexts, in each instance producing the consumer's desired image (Firat, 1991). This schizophrenia of consumption is perfectly coherent with the occasional purchase of counterfeited luxury goods.

In this case, fragmentation and its medium, the market of counterfeited goods, constitute a new metanarrative we might be able to capture thanks to appropriate poststructuralist methods (Holt, 1997).

Juxtaposition of opposites

There is a wide ranging consensus among postmodernist theoreticians that one of the major characteristics is its paradoxical nature (Firat, 1991; Bauman, 1997; Lipovetsky, 2004). This is the direct consequence of the juxtaposition of contradictory emotions and cognitions regarding perspectives, commitments, ideas and things in general. Therefore, anything is at once acceptable: the postmodern era is the Times of "Polytheism of Values" (Lipovetsky, 2004). With the withdrawal of traditions, it's up to each individual to determine, invent his own moral. There are no more hard-and-fast principles which one can learn, memorize and deploy in order to escape situations without a good outcome and to spare oneself the bitter after-taste (scruples, guilty conscience, sin...). Moral decisions are ambivalent. Therefore, it is by designing his own system of value that the individual, or the reference group, can justify his misbehaviour and persuade him that he is in his own right. "It is the personal morality that makes ethical negotiations and consensus possible, not the other way round" (Bauman, 1997). The final moral is that if a product is in the market and it is being paid for, it must be all right... Here again, counterfeiting luxury goods does not appear as an illegal action but more as a logical one.

Decentring of the subject

In Postmodernity, there is, what is generally called, the “death of the subject” (Jameson, 1983). “The subject is decentred from its position of control, and the subject-object distinctions are confused” (Firat, 1991). This is highly relevant when it comes to the consumption of counterfeited luxury goods: the product purchased sets the new parameters and the rules of the consumption process. We have already mentioned the separation process of the brand and of the product in the counterfeit market. In the case of luxuries, consumers are not buying the counterfeit for its functional properties but for its aesthetic properties (the logo) and the symbolism which goes along with it (Kocher et al., 2007). Now, uniqueness of the individual is attached to signifiers (brand names imitations) separated from their original referents. However, uniqueness itself, as a signifier, is detached from its original meaning and serves only as a communication tool towards peers from the reference group or the social group. This uniqueness is of high importance to set up one’s identity within an apparently homogeneous group: the identity belonging is not instantaneous, set for ever. Actually this expression of uniqueness, through the manipulation of the individual by the image of the consumed product itself, is a concern, a true demand and an appropriation tool for individuals. It is away to affirm oneself and get recognition from peers: the community belonging goes along with self-definition and self-interrogation processes (Lipovetsky, 2004). Postmodern Tribes in the counterfeit world are just new communitarian ways to give sense to one’s life (Maffesoli, 1988). It is the field where individualism, postmodern ethics, collectivism and self-definition are gathered, building new moral values allowing misbehaviours, relative and specific to this Tribe.

RESEARCH PROPOSITION & CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Research Proposition

Sociological and postmodern literature reviews appear to be able to better understand counterfeiting per se, at least theoretically. We propose that research can be conducted in this direction, in order to empirically test these theoretical insights.

RP: The purchase of counterfeited luxury goods in a social context is an acceptable or even logical behaviour for the postmodern consumer. He is doomed to behave like his peers (mimetic consumption) and this behaviour can be easily justified by appropriate moral norms defined by the reference group. Besides, he finds himself decentred and manipulated by the counterfeits per se. New postmodern ethics do justify counterfeiting.

Conceptual Model

Building upon the theoretical background previously stated, we came up with a conceptual model (Fig. 1) concerning the wish to purchase counterfeited products within a group setting environment.

Our main assumption is that when belonging or aspiring to belong to a given group, whose members have already engaged into the act of purchasing counterfeits (a condition which should be met), an individual will be influenced by a range of external and internal factors. This process can lead to two basic outcomes: either conform to the group behaviour or act as an outlier.

H1: Group pressure can lead to a positive intention to buy a counterfeited product, through the mediating effect of Conformity Seeking.

The non-deceptive act of purchasing a counterfeited product is undoubtedly misbehaving, and can be compared with the purchase of illegal products. Therefore, we would expect the same attribution process to occur, when the individual tries to capture the very reasons of the already existing misbehaviour within the group setting he faces. As in the illicit drug consumption, we predict that different attribution processes will impact differently on the wish of the individual to conform to the group behaviour.

H2a. Individuals do engage in spontaneous attribution processes to account for peer group's purchases of counterfeited luxury products, which moderate the strength of the impact of Group pressure on the Conformity Seeking construct.

H2b. The influence of Group pressure on Conformity Seeking will be lower for people using normative attribution processes than for people using dispositional attribution processes.

There are individual differences in the extent to which people are willing to adapt their behaviour in group settings (Ratner & Kahn, 2002). We can make a distinction between people ranking high on the self-monitoring construct and those ranking low. These different orientations lead low and high self-monitors to exhibit different behaviours in consumer contexts. We propose that level of self-monitoring will act as a moderator on either the impact of Group Pressure on Conformity Seeking, or directly on the impact of Conformity Seeking on the Intention to buy counterfeited luxury goods. The influence is particularly relevant in the

consumption of counterfeits, for seeking for social or principle reconnaissance is of great importance in illicit contexts of purchase.

H3a. Self-monitoring moderates the impact of Group pressure on Conformity Seeking, with high-monitors being more seeking for conformity than low-monitors, when subject to the same level of group pressure.

H3b. Self-monitoring moderates the impact of Conformity Seeking on the Intention to purchase a counterfeited luxury product, with low-monitors being less willing to buy a counterfeited luxury product than high-monitors, when subject to the same level of Conformity Seeking.

Some consumers are more likely than others to seek for conformity, depending on their personal characteristics, background... Kahle (1995) introduced the construct of "Role-relaxed consumer", who will experience less obsession with rigidly adhering to social norms and who will decide what to buy in which occasion. We advocate that such consumers may display less sought for conformity than their counterparts.

H4: Role-relaxed consumers will negatively influence Conformity seeking, with high role-relaxed consumers less seeking for conformity than low role-relaxed consumers.

When subject to group pressure, an individual may consider some characteristics of the group that may influence his sought for conformity. Illicit consumption has been proven to be characterized by an eventual sought for conformity (Rose et al.), influenced by two specific group attributes: Group Attractiveness and Group Knowledge. Given that the counterfeiting context we are interested in is

highly similar to illicit consumption contexts, we formulate the following hypotheses:

H5a: Group Attractiveness positively influences Conformity Seeking.

H5b: Group Knowledge positively influences Conformity Seeking.

Intention to buy counterfeited luxury goods is sometimes an ethical dilemma for consumers. This means that ethics are at stake when considering engaging in this illegal behaviour (Wang, 2005). In many instances consumers' ethical background has been proven as influencing their misbehaviour (Vitell & Muncy, 1992).

H6: An individual's Ethics Index will impact his intention to buy a counterfeited luxury item. Specifically, a high Ethics Index will decrease the intention to purchase a counterfeited luxury product.

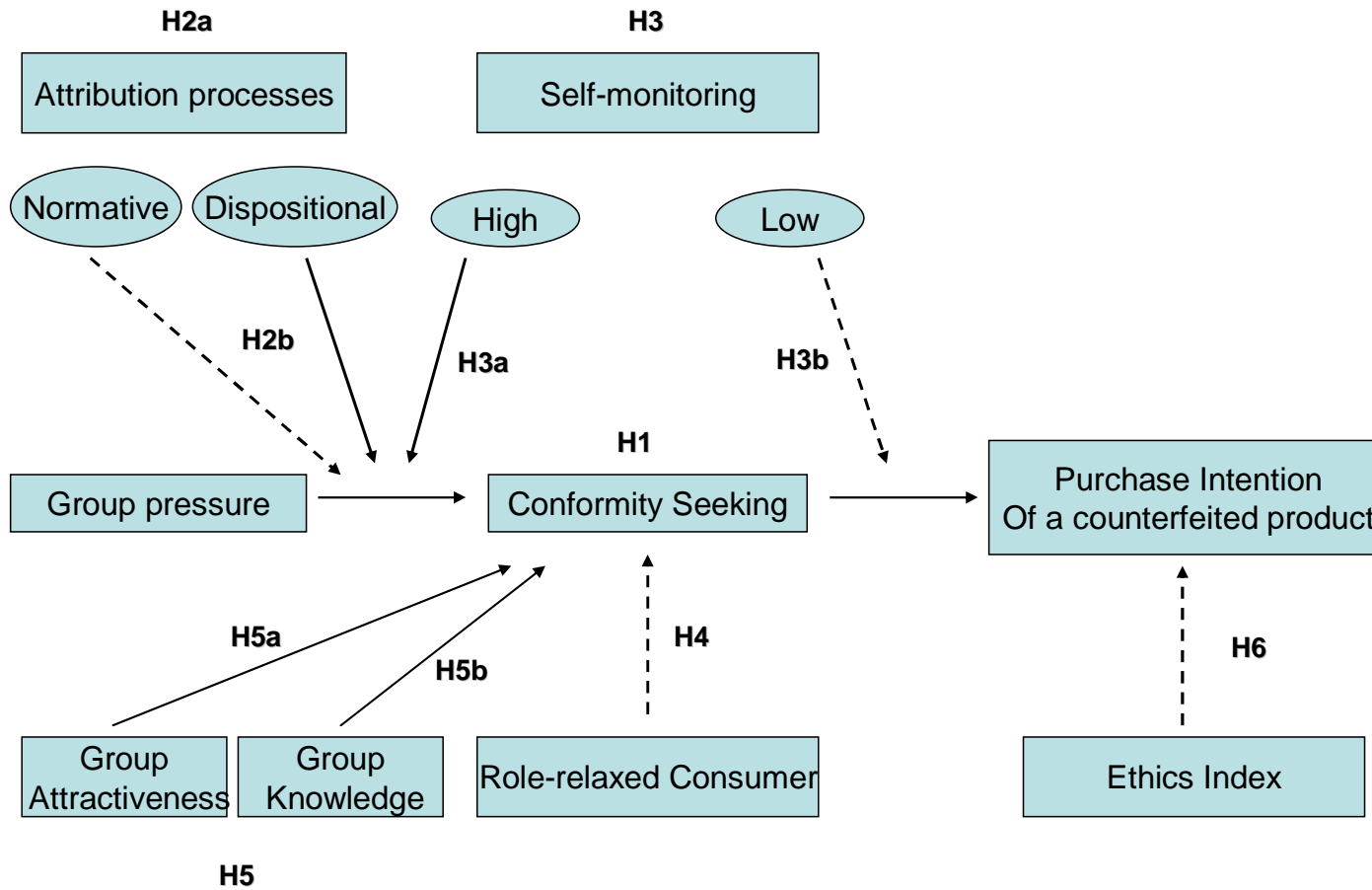


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

METHODOLOGY

PART 1: Qualitative Research to Investigate the Research Propositions

This first part in our investigation process will be focused on the real understanding of consumers' deep feelings and thoughts about counterfeiting. We also want to assess up to which point the way they consider counterfeits of luxury goods can be explained by the postmodern ethics we have presented in the literature review. To be able to capture the postmodern attitude of the consumer towards counterfeiting, we have to rely on very personal data and refer to a poststructuralist method of analysis (Holt, 1997). It is particularly relevant in the case of this research proposal, since we are investigating a real social patterning of consumption, patterning related to peers' influence on the intention to engage in the purchase of a counterfeited luxury good. To achieve this goal of understanding illegal consumption within a social context, we will use the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique or ZMET (Zaltman, 1996, 1997; Zaltman & Higie, 1993), combined with depth-interviews. This technique is particularly well-suited for labour-intensive use with small groups of 15 to 20 informants participating in lengthy and intensive depth interviews (Zaltman, 1996, p.16). Therefore, it is fully suited for our own research. Besides, "depth interviews are much the same as psychological, clinical interview" (Zikmund et al., 2003). Therefore, this research method suits our needs in understanding the rather mentally-driven impact of a non-physically present 3rd person on the behaviour process leading to the purchase or not-purchase of a counterfeited luxury good. It will enable us to uncover underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes and feelings. We need a detailed understanding of complicated

behaviour and this can be at least partially assessed by depth interviews.

Briefly, ZMET rests on a number of premises concerning the meanings of products, brands, or consumption experiences in the minds of consumers. These include the recognition that such meanings are stored and communicated as images in general. To capture the metaphoric content of such images, ZMET asks informants to take representative photographs or to collect other relevant pictorial materials that reflect their consumption experiences or that indicate what some concepts of interest means to them. Later, these pictures are combined by informants, with accompanying stories, in the form of evocative and expressive montages.

Applied to our study, we would choose to ask people to collect relevant pictorial material to illustrate the following phrase "*What counterfeiting means to me*". We would not focus on the luxury feature of our research, for we do think that consumers' attitude towards counterfeited luxury goods is a specificities of consumers' attitude towards counterfeiting in general. The specificities are related to the double peer-pressure, one related to the sought for conformity in displaying a luxury good and the other one related to the act of purchase of the counterfeit per se.

We would follow the following steps in our ZMET study, consistently with Coulter's recommendations (2006). Interviewer's probes are given in Appendix.

1. Storytelling. The informant will be asked to describe how each image represents his thoughts and feelings about the concept of counterfeiting.
2. Missed images. The informant will be asked if there are important ideas he wants to express but for which he could not find relevant image.

3. Metaphor probe / expand the frame. The informant will be asked to widen the frame of a selected picture and describe what else might enter the picture to better understand his thoughts and feelings.
4. Sensory metaphors. The informant will be asked to express his ideas using various sensory images: colour, taste, smell, touch, sound and emotion.
5. Vignette. The informant will be asked to create a story about counterfeiting.
6. Digital image. The informant, with the skilled assistance of a computer graphics imager, will create a summary collage using his images and supplemental images from a database, as needed.

Since a depth interview is conducted on a one to one basis, free exchange of information usually occurs: our subjects of study should feel no social pressure to conform to a group's response, such as it is the case in the focus group method. This absence of others is especially relevant in our research context, for non-deceptive counterfeiting is a sensitive/embarrassing topic to be discussed, especially in Western Countries where it is strictly forbidden by official laws.

Besides, the use of the ZMET technique offers a real mean to hear the voice of the consumer, see through the eyes of the consumer, and keep the consumer and his experiences as the focal point of our research (Coulter, 2006).

Limits

The biggest weakness of deep interviews is its lack of structure, counterbalanced in some way by the ZMET technique. Therefore, results will highly be susceptible to the interviewer's influence. Besides, the quality and completeness of the results depend heavily on the interviewer's skills. As novices in

the research area, we do not pretend displaying such advanced skills and this may be a problem.

Besides, data will present a lot of psychological content, and some help will be needed to interpret it.

Another issue we would have is the sample size, since as we have already mentioned, ZMET can be conducted only on a restricted sample of few people. However, validation studies of ZMET applications indicate that four to five depth interviews that are focused on identifying and understanding core themes can provide up to 90 per cent of the information available from a larger set of interviews (Zaltman & Coulter, 1995).

PART 2: Quantitative Research to Test the Conceptual Model

We do not intend in this part to describe all the statistical techniques which will be used to test our model, but rather to provide some ideas about how we will measure the variables of interest to us.

Investigating the Existence of Conformity Seeking and Attribution Processes

Our first study will be designed to investigate the existence and the strength of conformity seeking when individual consumers subjected to direct/indirect group pressure face the possibility of buying a counterfeited product (H1). We also want to assess the extent to which inferences about the behaviour and opinions of others are made in conformity situations (H2a). This beginning phase of the research will be intended to be exploratory and descriptive of cognitive responses to counterfeited products purchase situations. We will also try to assess the degree of association between attribution processing and conformity. To conduct our study, we will use role-playing methods, giving to subjects of the sample one of two written descriptions. In both scenarios, subjects will be

described as evolving in an area with potential sellers of counterfeited products. In one of the descriptions, they will be said willing to belong to a group whose members possess counterfeited products. In the other one they are described as physically encountering one or several group members during the counterfeiting purchase situation. The subjects will be given a questionnaire that will require them to list any thought that they have regarding any aspect of the conformity situation. The instructions will be purposely non-directive to avoid requiring the respondents to engage in any particular thought pattern. After listing their thoughts, the respondents will be asked to rank order these thoughts according to importance to the conformity decision.

Role-playing methods being limited in their ability to re-create the richness of real settings in which people are exposed to peer pressure, we will thus then conduct a second study to get additional insights regarding the realism of the purchase scenarios. This study will use a series of in-depth interviews. Its purpose will be to provide a richer description of the conformity pressures actually faced by the subjects, to examine the prevalence of the cognitive responses and attribution processing previously described. It will also provide some support for the realism of the role-playing scenarios. We will use semi-structured interviews, lasting approximately half an hour and conducted privately (and anonymously) in a conference room. The sample will ideally drawn from previous field observations in settings largely known for being place of counterfeits sales, enabling to 'pick up' relevant subjects (people buying counterfeited products or hesitating to buy some of them). Anonymous guarantees would be ensured to the participants.

Measuring Conformity Seeking

To measure the conformity intentions, we would use the scenarios already designed to assess the impact of H2a (see Appendix). It would employ various response formats. Therefore, responses to these items would be standardized to eliminate scaling differences. We would use Cronbach's alpha to assess the reliability of the scale.

Testing the Influence of the Attribution Processes

A third study will be conducted with the objective to test hypothesis H2b. The scenarios used will be identical as the one presented in study 1. We will use a questionnaire with scales to assess the normative versus dispositional dimension of the attribution process. We will adapt the scale used by Rose et al. (1992). The internal versus external attribution dimensions will be assessed with a nine-point scale anchored by "completely internal" (1) and "completely external" (9). The target explanations used to construct the situation-specific attribution measures will be derived from the two previous studies and pre-tested. This scale will be used as a dispositional factor that may influence the impact of Group Pressure on Conformity Seeking.

Measuring Self-monitoring

We also want to experiment the moderating role of Snyder's self-monitoring construct (see Snyder [1987] for a detailed discussion of this construct) on the impact of Group Pressure on Conformity Seeking, as well as on the impact of Conformity Seeking on the Intention to purchase a counterfeited luxury good (Hypotheses H3a & H3b).

To do this, we will make all participants complete a filler task consisting of several unrelated questionnaires before completing the 18-item version of the self-monitoring scale (Snyder, 1987). This scale is displayed in the Appendix. The scale includes items such as "I guess I put on a show to

impress or entertain others” to which participants respond either “True” or “False”. Participants will get one point for each item they will choose indicating that they do put on a show to impress or entertain others (high self-monitoring direction). For eight items, a response of “True” is high the self-monitoring response; for the ten other ones, it is the “False” answer. Then, the points will be summed and as recommended by Snyder, participants with scores of 10 or below will be labelled as low-monitors, while participants with scores above 11 will stand for high-monitors.

This self-monitoring scale will be used as a dispositional factor that may influence the relationships as stated previously.

Measuring Role-relaxed Consumers

To measure role-relaxed consumer, we would rely upon a scale developed by Kahle (1995). It is a seven-item, seven-point Likert-type scale purported to measure the degree to which a consumer is concerned about adhering to group norms with specific regard for what products/brands to buy. Appendix provides the scale items. A score of 1 indicates strong agreement with the statement, and a score of 7 strong disagreements with it. Because by definition role-relaxed consumers are not conformists, all the items are worded such that disagreement with the item implies agreement with the role-relaxed concept. The summated scores on the scale range between 7 for consumers highly susceptible to personal influence and 49 for highly role-relaxed consumers. In our case highly-role relaxed consumers are low in sought for conformity and vice-versa.

To measure the impact of Role-relaxed Consumers on Conformity Seeking (H4), we will compute chi-squared tests. If we do not find a discernable pattern we will on top of this assess the relationship using Pearson’s coefficient of correlation.

Measuring the Impact of Reference Group’s Cohesiveness and Group Knowledge on Sought for Conformity

To measure the group cohesiveness/attractiveness, we would use the Seashore’s Index of Group Cohesiveness (Seashore, 1954). The index uses Likert-type questions requiring the respondent to choose among group oriented, indifference and non group oriented responses. Actually, the idea is to assess three different meanings of group cohesiveness in a single index: identifiable membership in the group, attraction to the group or resistance to leaving it, and perception of the group as being better than others in terms of getting along together, helping each other and sticking together. We would use the same wording manipulation as the one done by Witt (1969): our sample being a convenient one, it would not be composed of professionals (the original index was developed for use in an industrial research environment), but by students. Witt’s new wording has been proved as being valid to measure common factor group cohesiveness.

The index scores of group members would be averaged to produce the group’s index of cohesiveness. The maximum attainable score is 19; the minimum is 5.

We also want to measure the extent to which members know if their fellow members do possess a counterfeited luxury item. Each subject would have an individual group knowledge score that would range from 4 (complete knowledge) to 0 (no knowledge). The scores of the members of the group would then be added. Two variations of group knowledge would be considered: perceived group knowledge and correct group knowledge. “Obtaining a measure of correct [group] knowledge as well as perceived [group] knowledge increases the likelihood of identifying a knowledge-sought

for conformity relationship if one exists” (Witt, 1969).

The following formulas were used in calculating perceived and correct brand choice knowledge:

$$(1) KP_j = \sum K_{pij}$$

Where KP_j is perceived brand choice knowledge for Group j and K_{pij} is perceived brand choice knowledge for the i th member of Group j .

$$(2) KC_j = \sum (K_{pij} - ei)$$

Where KC_j is correct brand choice knowledge for Group j ; K_{pij} is the perceived brand choice knowledge of the i th member of Group j and ei is the number of instances in which the i th member incorrectly perceived the brand choice of a fellow group member.

To test H5a and H5b hypotheses, we would examine the significance of the appropriate correlations between constructs, using the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient and the coefficient of determination. The combined relationship of Group Cohesiveness and Group Knowledge to Sought for Conformity will be evaluated by multiple correlation, with Sought for Conformity as the dependant variable and Group Cohesiveness and Group Knowledge as independent variables.

Measuring Consumer’s Ethical Predisposition

Building upon the method presented by Fullerton et al. (1996), we will rely on a set of 15 scenarios depicting potential unethical behaviour. A six-point Likert-type style will be used to assess the structure of attitudes on potentially unethical behaviour. The assumption in using a balanced scale with the polar descriptives of acceptable and unacceptable is that

it represents the range of various positions on an issue order reliably from one extreme position to the other (Sherif & Sherif, 1967). The survey items are given in the Appendix.

To determine an individual’s overall ethical predisposition, the grand mean of the 15 items will be computed for each respondent. This will reduce the potential bias attributable to item non-response. Cronbach’s coefficient alpha will be reduced to measure internal consistency. Then this result will be compared with the different intervals defining the ethical taxonomy already mentioned:

- Less than 3.64: permissives
- 3.64 – 4.48: situationalists
- 4.49 – 5.32: conformists
- Higher than 5.32: puritans

To investigate the potential relationship between purchase intention and ethical predisposition of the individuals (H6), we will compute chi-squared tests. If we do not find a discernable pattern we will on top of this assess the relationship using Pearson’s coefficient of correlation.

Limits

Our results will be subject to the two usually recognized limitations in measuring attitude. Firstly, differences in experience among participants in the study can exist. With greater experience, individuals will be more likely to assume a more definitive position by accepting or rejecting the rightness of a given situation (Kiesler et al., 1969). Secondly, empirical evidence suggests that respondents who adopt extreme positions are more likely to be highly involved with the subject matter under investigation (Wilkes, 1978).

LIMITS TO OUR RESEARCH

Some limitation of the proposed research should be noted.

One concern is the use of role-playing scenarios and intention measures rather than actual behaviour and real peer pressure contexts. It would be desirable to go beyond role playing in examining the relationships reported in this paper. However, experimental work involving real illicit consumption of counterfeited luxury goods is simply not feasible or ethical. We do believe that more qualitative research methods should be used as a triangulation tool. We would for instance advocate for an original method: the video-elicitation technique, introduced in the last part of this paper.

FURTHER RESEARCHES & MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The first point concerning this paper is that it does not aim at providing empirical results but rather at suggesting a conceptual model do be tested in a second phase. Besides, as mentioned in the methodological part, the studies suggested will be exploratory. Therefore we will advocate for more confirmatory studies to be conducted in order to validate the empirical assumptions and results.

We also want to point out that the proposed model does obviously not include an exhaustive list of the potential moderators for the impact of group pressure on the intention to purchase a counterfeited product process. Other constructs and factors (such as the place of purchase, the presence/absence of a brand logo, the role to be played within the group, the legal environment and so on) should be the object of further investigations (Chiki et al., 2007). We chose to focus on factors

already proven as being relevant in similar settings regarding consumer misbehaving, especially as far as illegal drug consumption is concerned. Besides, a too complex model would not make any sense in this first exploratory phase of the study. The idea is to provide bases for a theoretical model in the rather unexplored field of consumers' behaviour with regard to the purchase of counterfeited products, within a social setting.

Further Topics of Interest

As far as the characteristics of the reference group are concerned, only two determinants of group influence were involved in this study. The relationship of other determinants of group influence to sought for conformity should be investigated, using multivariate rather than bivariate analysis to the extent possible. This empirical evaluation should consider not only variation in the susceptibility of sought for conformity to social influence, but also the relative effectiveness of the various determinants of social influence in different types of purchase situations of counterfeited luxury goods.

Additional Methodological Tool

We have already mentioned the fact that triangulation of our proposed experiments with qualitative research methods could provide more insight to our work. We would like to introduce here a recent qualitative research method which has been developed by Sayre (2006), namely video-elicitation. The technique is particularly relevant when the research context involves a potential reluctant population to be studied and an emotional sensitivity of the situation (following natural disaster period in the case of the conducted study). It combines story vignettes with visual projectives to produce a talk-show format for depth interviewing. The idea is that trust could be

established through a fictitious survivor's verbal and visual disclosure. If the actor-victim appeared genuine and his or her comments plausible, respondents could identify with that person and be forthcoming about their own experience (Sayre, 2006). We do believe that this technique could be adapted to be used in our research context, although we admit that further investigations as of how to do this should be previously conducted. It could enable to gather relevant data on real feelings, deep thoughts and beliefs from the consumers without any researcher bias and any trouble linked to trust issues...

Managerial Implications

As far as the business community is concerned, we do believe that the model we have presented could provide professionals with more insight on the way people may be influenced in their intention to buy counterfeited products. Therefore new strategies to fight counterfeiting could be drawn, especially in terms of advertising campaigns dealing with anti-counterfeiting. So far, much of the campaigns have dealt with very normative messages focusing on economic or legal consequences. We believe that taking into account emotions and personal characteristics, with regard of cultural background could provide better results within certain communities. We would expect those better targeted and better designed communication campaigns to be more successful than the ongoing ones.

[Reviewed by Professor Pierre DESMET, June 2008]

APPENDIXES

Steps in the ZMET interview

1. Please, tell me how this image relates to your thoughts and feelings about the concept of counterfeiting.
2. Were there any thoughts and feelings for which you were unable to find an image? Please describe the thought or feeling, and tell me about an image that you would use to represent the thought or feeling?
3. If you could widen the frame of this picture in all directions, what else would I see that would help me better understand your thoughts and feelings about counterfeiting and the role it might play in your life?
4. What sound/odour/taste could I hear/smell/taste that would represent your thoughts and feelings about counterfeiting and the role it might play in your life?
5. I would like you to use your imagination to create a short story. The story should express your thoughts and feelings about counterfeiting and the role it might play in your life. Please, include at least these characters: (1) you, (2) sellers of counterfeits, (3) friend(s) of you, and (4) a similar form of consumption experience you might enjoy/dislike.

Scale items for the measurement of Sought for Conformity

1. If I were in the situation described here, ("there is no chance that I would buy a counterfeit"=1, "I would certainly buy a counterfeit"=11)
2. How likely is that you would buy a counterfeit? ("very unlikely"=1, "very likely"=9)
3. How likely would you be to say "no" in this situation? ("very unlikely"=1, "very likely"=9)
4. Considering this situation, what would you do? ("do something else"=1, "go along with the group members"=6)

Scale items for the measurement of self-monitoring¹ (Snyder, 1987)

1. I find it hard to imitate the behaviour of other people. (F)

2. At parties and social gatherings, I do not attempt to do or say things that others will like. (F)
3. I can only argue for ideas which I already believe. (F)
4. I can make impromptu speeches even on topics about which I have almost no information. (T)
5. I guess I could put on a show to impress or entertain others. (T)
6. I would probably make a good actor. (T)
7. In a group of people I am rarely the centre of attention. (F)
8. In different situations with different people, I often act like very different persons. (T)
9. I am not particularly good at making other people like me. (F)
10. I'm not always the person I appear to be. (T)
11. I would not change my opinions (or the way I do things) in order to please someone or win their favour. (F)
12. I have considered being an entertainer. (T)
13. I have never been good at games like charades or improvisational acting. (F)
14. I have trouble changing my behaviour to suit different people and different situations. (F)
15. At a party I let others keep the jokes and stories going. (F)
16. I feel a bit awkward in public and do not show up quite as well as I should. (F)
17. I can look anyone in the eye and tell a lie with a straight face (if for a right end). (T)
18. I may deceive people but being friendly when I really dislike them. (T)

Scale items for the measurement of role-relaxed consumer (Kahle, 1995)

1. How elegant and attractive a product is, is as important as how well it works.
2. It is important that others think well of how well I dress and look.
3. When I am uncertain how to act in a social situation, I try to do what others are doing.
4. My friends and I tend to buy the same brands.
5. If I were to buy something expensive, I would worry about what others would think of me.
6. I buy brands that will make me look good in front of my friends.
7. When I buy the same things my friends buy, I feel closer to them.

¹ High self-monitoring people are expected to answer True or False as indicated by the key at the end of each item whereas low self-monitoring people would likely answer in the other direction (Snyder & Gangestad, 1986)

Survey items for the measurement of ethical predisposition

1. A co-worker was given too much change from a grocery store clerk and kept it.
2. A friend had a fire in his/her apartment. In reporting the losses to the insurance company, he/she included items they never owned and inflated the price of items that were lost.
3. You have seen other people misrepresent their age to take advantage of a senior citizen discount.
4. You have seen other people misrepresent their children's age to take advantage of a child's discount.
5. A friend of yours finds an item that was obviously mismarked at a cheaper price. Rather than notifying the store, your friend purchased the product for the incorrect price.
6. Some people will go to a retailer to get information on a specific product and then use this information to purchase the product from a cheaper source (catalogues, etc.).
7. Some people will go to the same store repeatedly in order to take advantage of an offer which limits the amount that can be purchased per visit.
8. Someone you know has sold a frequent flier ticket to a friend.
9. Through the grapevine you hear that a neighbour returned merchandise to a store where it was not purchased.
10. Someone went to purchase a television set and in order to get a better deal, told the salesperson that another retailer was selling the same set at a much cheaper price. The retailer, without checking, matched the lower price.
11. At the grocery store, the person in front of you redeems cents-off coupons for items that were not purchased.
12. In order to sell an item at their garage sale, your neighbour exaggerated its quality.
13. People you know have told less than truth on surveys.
14. Friends of yours have purchased clothing. After wearing the clothing, they see it at another store for a substantially lower price. They return the original purchase and buy the clothing at the store offering the lower price.
15. At the grocery store, you notice someone using food stamps to buy steak and shrimp.

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