

Thrill of the hunt motivates some to buy counterfeit goods

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People buying fake 'luxury brand' goods experience a range of psychological motivations - including the 'thrill of the hunt' - new research has shown.

Consumer behavioural expert Dr Xuemei Bian, of the University of Kent, together with researchers from three other universities, carried out the first in-depth study of why consumer demand for counterfeit brands is growing.

The researchers found that the 'thrill of the hunt' and 'being part of a secret society' are often prime motivational factors behind purchases. They also found that, following the purchase of known [counterfeit goods](#), people experienced a range of associated emotional outcomes, including shame and embarrassment as well as positive hedonistic feelings.

The research team chose the Chinese marketplace for the study as China is both the largest producer and the largest consumer of [counterfeit products](#). They found that there were three primary themes relating to unethical counterfeit consumption and purchase behaviour: First, motivations and coping strategies; second, a consumer hierarchy based on uncertainty and consumer expertise in counterfeits, and third, risk, rewards, and self-conscious emotions.

All of the respondents could readily account for their desire for luxury brands or could provide accounts of their associates' preoccupations with

such brands. This desire was thought to be a result of people feeling aspirational and social comparison pressures, which are common in rapidly developing economies.

Although some respondents were conscious of the harm to the brand being copied, others expressed little concern, with some even arguing that counterfeiting is good for the brand being copied, almost as if the illegal counterfeit industry is paying the brands a compliment or is promoting the legitimate.

The researchers found evidence that various 'neutralization' techniques were employed by [consumers](#) to rationalise their unethical purchases. The most common of these involved a 'denial of responsibility', where the consumer argued that she/he is not personally accountable for the behaviour that violated social norms because factors 'beyond one's control' were involved.

The research, entitled *New Insights into Unethical Counterfeit Consumption* (Xuemei Bian, Kent Business School, University of Kent, UK; Kai-Yu Wang, Goodman School of Business, Brock University, Canada; Andrew Smith, Nottingham University Business School, UK; Natalia Yannopoulou, Newcastle University Business School, UK) is published in the March issue of the *Journal of Business Research*.

More information: Xuemei Bian et al, New insights into unethical counterfeit consumption, *Journal of Business Research* (2016). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.02.038](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.02.038)

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