DO COUNTERFEITS ONLY AFFECT LUXURY BRANDS THAT ARE HEAVILY COUNTERFEITED?

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Doctor of Philosophy

2023

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements of the
University of Northumbria at Newcastle
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Research undertaken in the faculty of
Business and Law

June 2023

Abstract

Counterfeit trade has been growing incessantly every year and due to its impact on legitimate brands, it has garnered the attention of researchers, policy makers, and brand managers. Research has largely focussed on the direct influence of counterfeits on original luxury brands and has ignored the potential impact of counterfeits on non-luxury brands. Luxury and counterfeit luxury consumption is particularly prominent during status signalling amongst social classes. Literature on socioeconomic status (SES) reveals that self-discrepancies arise from social comparisons, leading consumers to seek compensatory consumption to alleviate these discrepancies through luxury, counterfeit luxury, and non-luxury brands. Therefore, it is crucial to include non-luxury brands in the debate of impact of counterfeits on original brands.

The present research aims to bridge this research gap by investigating the impact of counterfeits on non-luxury brands, beyond luxury brands. Specifically, it explores the substitution mechanism between the three brand substitutes – counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands. This research is delineated in accordance with SES, brand substitution, and symbolic self-completion as a compensatory consumption strategy to address the self-discrepancies generated by SES. To achieve this aim, it adopted a mixed methods approach which involved a netnographic study, followed by in-depth interviews with 26 consumers based in the UK.

This research provides a comprehensive understanding of the impact of counterfeits on original luxury brands and beyond. In finding that non-luxury brands are also substituted by counterfeit luxury; this research contributes to the counterfeit consumption literature by adding non-luxury brands to the debate related to the concurrent ownership of counterfeits and original luxury brands. Using thematic content analysis, this research identifies four consumer types based on their childhood SES, adulthood SES, and emotional wellbeing (EW) factors and demonstrates how these factors shape the brand substitution between the three brand types (i.e., counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands). In doing so, this research contributes to the consumer taxonomies by Han et al. (2010) and Wall & Large (2010) that have identified counterfeit and luxury consumption based on wealth and status needs. By unearthing the underlying causes of brand substitution in counterfeit consumption through compensation strategy, it extends the role of symbolic self-completion theory, dissociation, and self-verification theory to counterfeit consumption literature and compensation strategy theory.

Keywords: Counterfeits, luxury, non-luxury, socioeconomic status, symbolic self-completion

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Acknowledgements

Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this commentary has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted through the Researcher's submission to Northumbria University's Ethics Online System on 17th May, 2022.

I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 82,961 words.

Name: Jaishree Prasad

Date: 9th June 2023

Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 Overview

This chapter provides an introduction and overview of the present study. It establishes the foundations of the study and presents the rationale for examining the impact of counterfeiting on everyday brands or non-luxury brands, beyond luxury brands. Firstly, the chapter begins by presenting the literature review in counterfeiting and identification of research gaps. Secondly, it outlines the literature review in childhood and adulthood Socio-Economic Status (SES) and discusses the identified research gaps. Thirdly, based on the identified research gaps, the chapter reports the aims and research questions which the study addresses. Fourthly, it discusses the research approach adopted to undertake this study. Fifthly, it maps out the significance of this study and draws its contribution to knowledge, practice, and policy. Finally, the chapter concludes with the overview of the thesis structure.

1.2 Literature review in counterfeiting and identification of research gap

Counterfeit products account for a growing portion of world trade. According to the joint report published by the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (hereafter OECD) and the European Union Intellectual Property Office (hereafter EUIPO), the volume of international trade in counterfeit and pirated products is estimated to be $509 billion (OECD/EUIPO, 2019). This represented 2.5% of world trade in 2019 (OECD/EUIPO, 2021) with China as the main producer of counterfeits (figure 1.1).
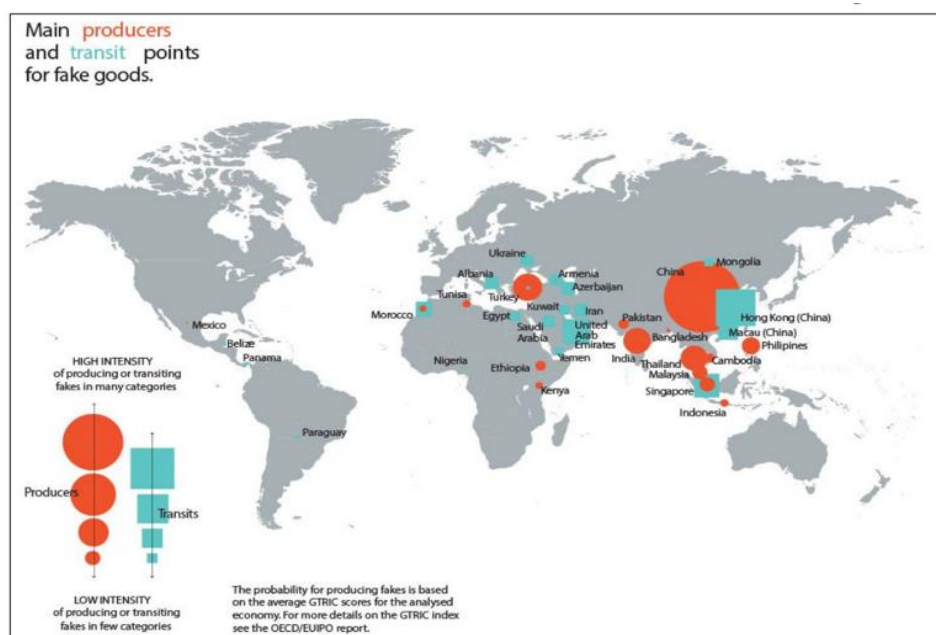
Figure 1.1 Main producers and transit points for counterfeit goods

In terms of imports into the European Union in 2019, counterfeit goods accounted for 5.8% of total imports (OECD/EUIPO, 2021). The counterfeit trade is constantly changing every year depending on the global trade, posing momentous threat to global economies. The following figure 1.2 represents the estimates of global trade in counterfeit and pirated goods and the corresponding share of world imports across 2017-2019 as per the latest OECD/EUIPO report (2021):
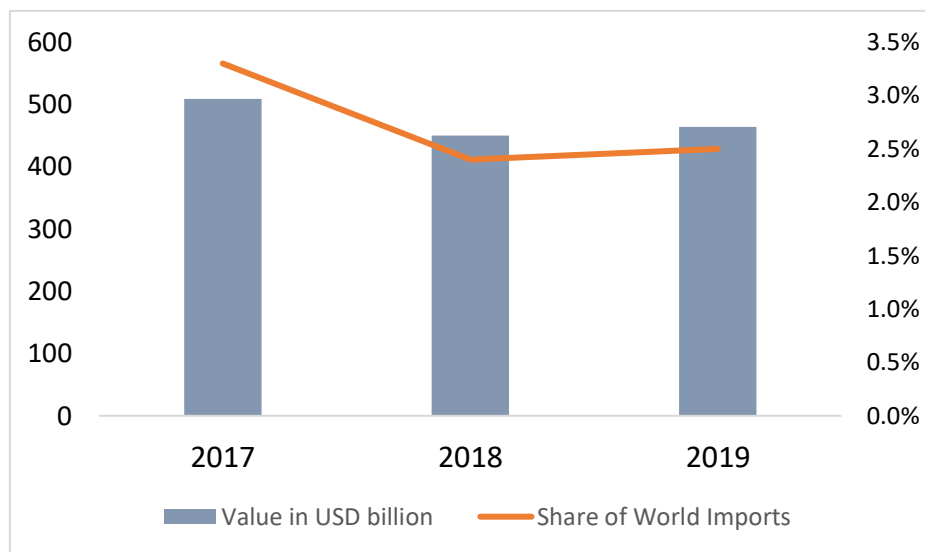
Figure 1.2 Estimates of global trade in counterfeit and pirated goods, 2017-2019
(Source: Adapted from OECD/EUIPO report, 2021, p. 53)

In figure 1.2, the counterfeit trade shows a decrease in 2018 from 2017 which reflects the decrease in the overall world trade in 2018. According to OECD/EUIPO (2021) following a reduction from 2014 to 2016, world trade grew by nearly 22% from 2016 to 2018 and then reduced 2.7% from 2018 to 2019. Thus, the global counterfeit trade mirrors the world trade. Due to the massive extent of counterfeiting, it has garnered the attention of researchers, policy makers, and brand managers in the last few decades (Gentry et al., 2006; OECD, 2017; OECD/EUIP, 2019; Wang et al., 2019; World Bank, 2016).

1.2.1 Counterfeiting of fashion brands

Counterfeiting looms over a considerable number of industries. Counterfeit products are found across many types of goods, such as fashion products (clothing, footwear,

watches, cosmetics, handbags), business-to-business products (spare-parts, pesticides), food, toys, pharmaceuticals, and medical equipment (OECD/EUIPO, 2021). The following figure 1.3 presents the product categories most subject to counterfeiting and piracy in 2016 and 2019 for a comparative representation of global customs seizures across these two years (OECD/EUIPO, 2021). The present research is focused on the counterfeiting of fashion brands because these include a majority of seven product categories (out of the 11 product categories in figure 1.3) including footwear, clothing (knitted or crocheted), articles of leather, handbags, cosmetics, watches, jewellery, clothing, and accessories (not knitted or crocheted). This implies that fashion brands are predominantly affected by the counterfeiting phenomenon compared to other product categories (OECD/EUIPO, 2021).
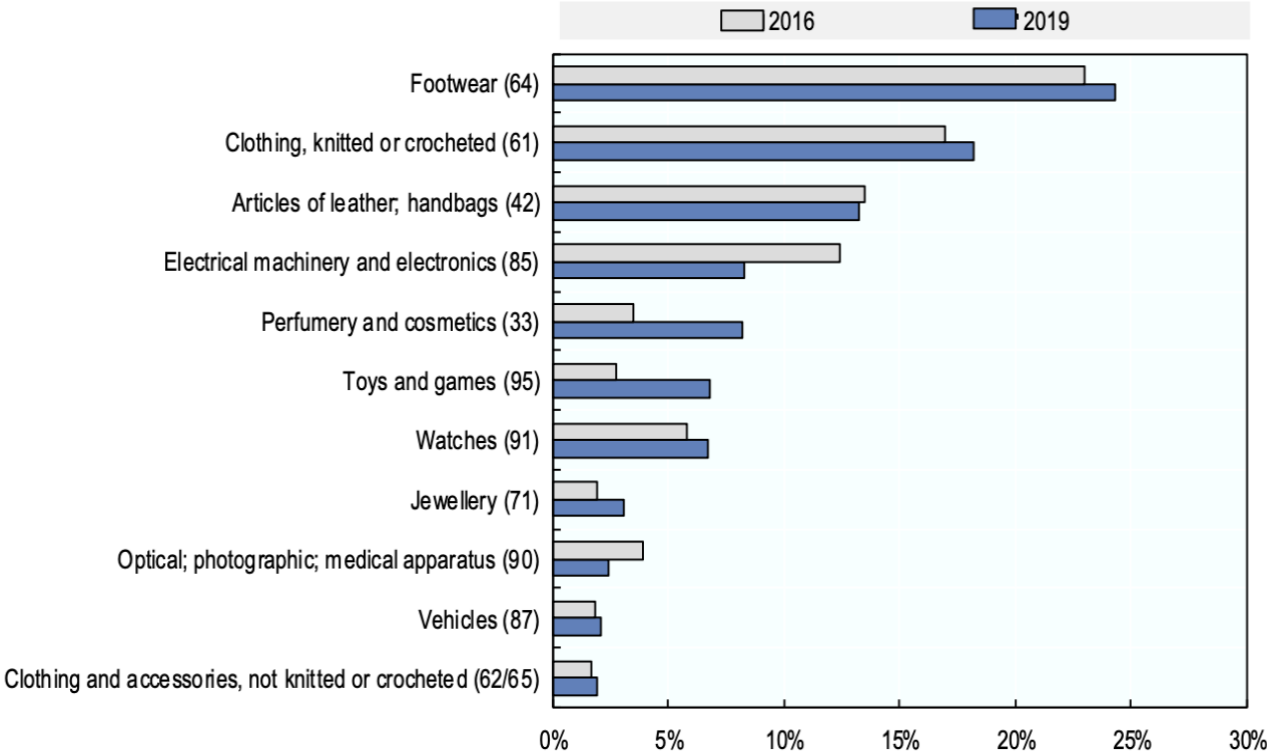
Figure 1.3 Differences in product categories most subject to counterfeiting and piracy, 2016 and 2019, in terms of global customs seizures

(Source: Adapted from OECD/EUIPO report, 2021, p. 23)

The fashion brands include luxury (such as Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Chanel, etc.) and non-luxury brands (such as Nike, Marks & Spencers, H&M, etc). However, a growing research stream has focussed on the impact of counterfeiting on the original luxury brands as the direct targets and ignored the counterfeiting impact on the non-luxury brands (Bian, 2018; Bian and Moutinho, 2011; Commuri, 2009; Geiger-Oneto et al.,

2013; Hietanen et al., 2020; Qian, 2014a; Qian, 2014b; Qian et al., 2013). Some researchers have argued on the alleged benefit of counterfeiting on the original brand, suggesting that the counterfeits may even raise the appeal of luxury brands (Romani et al., 2012). Research has largely capitalized on the 'direct influence of counterfeits on original luxury brands' either negatively or positively and even neutrally (Nia and Zaichkowsky, 2000). Notably, all these research studies rest on the common belief in marketing and trademark law that a legitimate item would have been bought in the absence of the counterfeit product, which is not always true (Antonopoulos, 2018; OECD, 2017). Many consumers of counterfeits do not necessarily substitute their counterfeit purchase with the original luxury brands (OECD, 2017). This implies that these counterfeit consumers do not cause loss to the original luxury brands. Andreas (2010), a Professor of Political Science and International Studies at Brown University, in his book – Sex, drugs, and body counts – demonstrated the quantitative misrepresentation and the politics of numbers in global crime and conflict. He supports this argument by pointing out the remarkably unchallenged numerical move in the context of calculating the loss of sales of original luxury brands, which is done by citing sales of their counterfeit versions as full-price lost sales of the former.

> "This falsely and misleadingly presumes that if knockoff CDs, DVDs, computer software and Rolex watches were not available then the buyers of these goods would be purchasing the real thing. The result is grossly inflated figures regarding how much these illicit goods cost legitimate industry. It is simply implausible that the typical buyer of a $50 fake Rolex would instead spend $5,000 on the genuine item." (Andreas, 2010, p.33)

Furthermore, this line of reasoning is also supported by the recent OECD report (2017). According to this report, nearly half (47%) of the counterfeit and pirated products are sold to consumers consciously looking for fake products (OECD, 2017) which means that these customers would not substitute their counterfeit purchase for the genuine product (Andreas, 2010). This usually occurs in *secondary markets*[1] where fake products are openly sold (figure 1.4) as non-deceptive counterfeits, in contrast with primary markets that deceptively sell fakes (OECD, 2017).

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[1] The distinction between primary and secondary markets for counterfeit goods is very crucial, which distinguishes between fake products that deceive consumers (primary markets) and those that are openly sold as fakes to consumers (secondary markets). The markets for deceptive (primary) and non-deceptive products (secondary) have significantly different characteristics, and these differences have significant implications in assessing their impacts [*see* OECD 2017. *Trade in Counterfeit Products and the UK Economy*. This is discussed further in chapter 2, section 2.8]
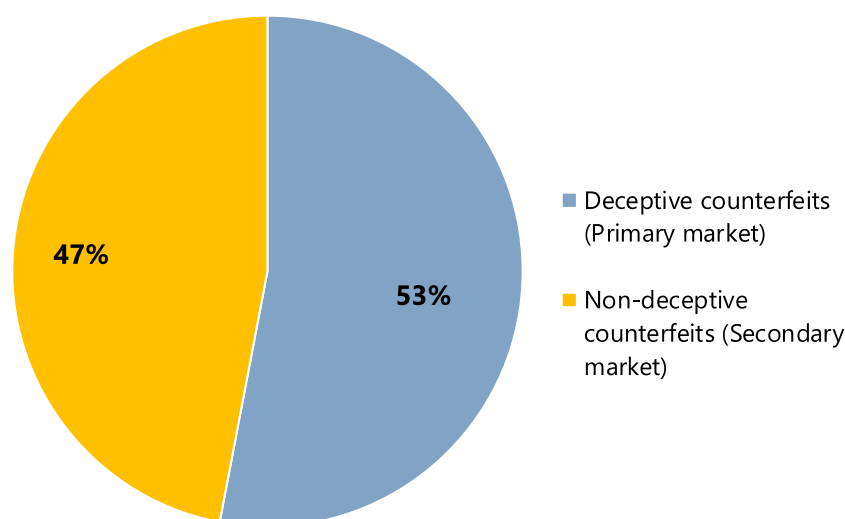
Figure 1.4 Types of Counterfeit Markets
(Source: Adapted from OECD report, 2017)

This implies that almost half of the total volume of counterfeits does not cause direct loss to the legitimate luxury industry. Two questions arise out of this implication in terms of the impact of counterfeits. First, would these consumers be willing to substitute their deliberate counterfeit purchase with any legitimate brands? Second, if they are willing, which are the legitimate brands who are affected by the sale of these 47% share of counterfeit products? The present research contends that these consumers may be potentially replacing non-luxury brands with counterfeits because they mostly consume non-luxury brands (and not luxury brands). Therefore, their purchase of non-deceptive counterfeits is almost never replaced by original luxury. This standpoint is crucial in determining the true impact of counterfeits, especially in the context of non-deceptive counterfeiting because it contributes almost half the total sale of counterfeits.

As discussed above, most researchers have emphasised on the impact of counterfeits on luxury brands, and ignored the other alternative of non-luxury brands which may bear the brunt of counterfeits (Bian, 2018). To provide an illustration of the coexistence of luxury and non-luxury brands as popular consumer choices, which could be substituted by luxury counterfeits in secondary markets, the following figure 1.5 provides the top 20 fashion brands, including luxury and non-luxury brands:

Top 20 fashion brands based on financial years 2019-2021, economic profit, in USD million

Brand	Value
Nike	3,767
LVMH	3,258
Inditex	2,463
Kering	1,867
Hermès	1,754
TJX Companies	1,228
Adidas	977
Fast Retailing	962
Anta Sports	928
Ross	902
Lululemon	576
Dick's Sporting Goods	549
Next	484
Pandora	476
JD Sports	379
Hanes Brands	334
Richemont	331
Li Ning	316
Deckers Outdoor	314
VF Corporation	309
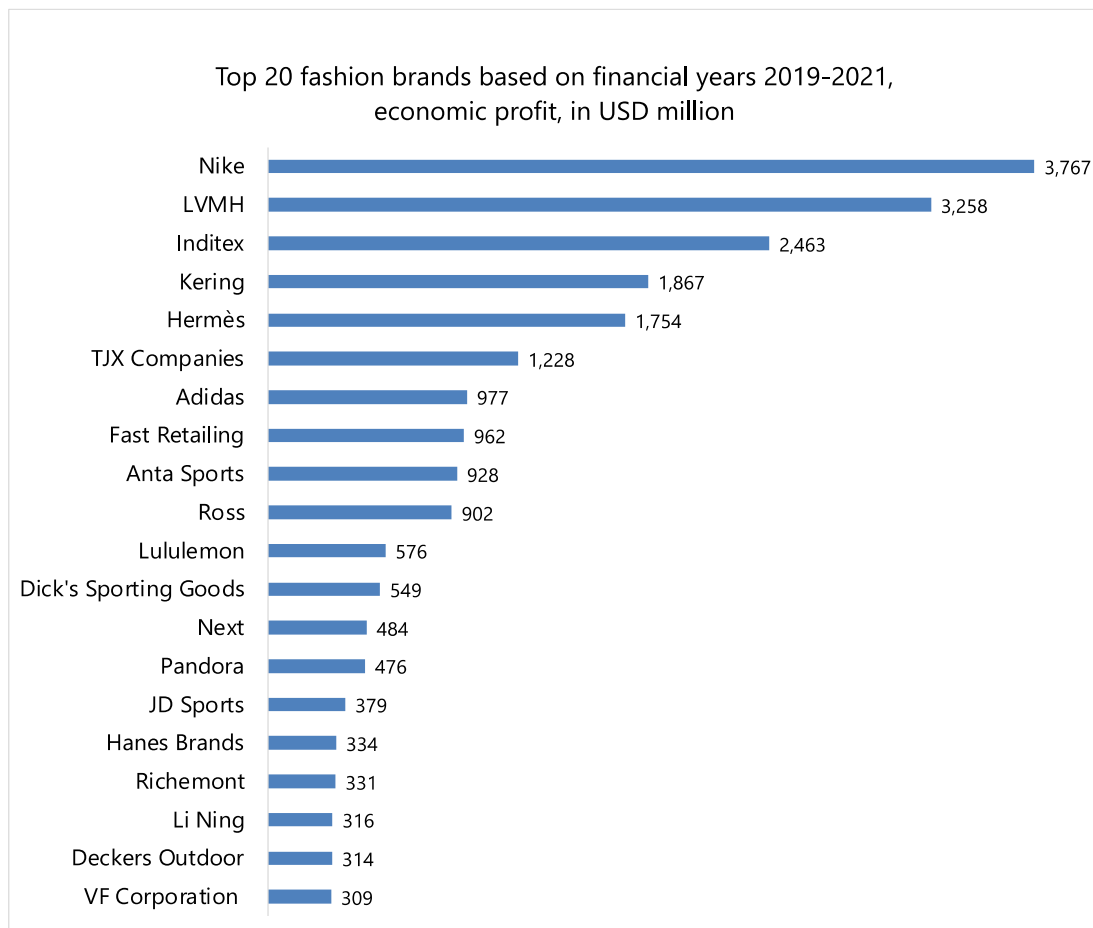
Figure 1.5 Top 20 fashion brands including luxury and non-luxury brands
(Source: Adapted from McKinsey Global Fashion Index, 2019, p.120)

It is noteworthy that many of the top 20 fashion brands are non-luxury brands such as Nike, Adidas, Inditex (Zara, Pull&Bear, etc.), TJX companies (TK Maxx), Fast Retailing (Uniqlo), Next, etc. Some of these brands are premium non-luxury brands. These non-luxury brands are less counterfeited compared to luxury brands (Bian, 2018). However, the non-luxury brands bear similar quality and fall into the same price range as counterfeit luxury brands (Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013; Goor et al., 2020). Therefore, it is very likely that these non-luxury brands are substituted by the non-deceptive counterfeits sold in secondary markets (Bian, 2018).

However, there is a paucity of research in this regard, despite the existence of a considerable body of literature available on non-deceptive counterfeiting (Bian and Veloutsou, 2007; Bian et al., 2016; Davidson et al., 2019; Eisend et al., 2017; Grossman and Shapiro, 1988b; Hawkins, 2020; Li et al., 2020; Orth et al., 2019; Samaddar and Menon, 2020; Sharma and Chan, 2011; Sun et al., 2020; Veloutsou and Bian, 2008; Wilcox et al., 2009). Grossman and Shapiro (1988a) found that original brands are forced to enhance the quality of their products in an effort to battle

counterfeits which in turn, increases the home (destination countries of counterfeits) and global welfare. In another study, Grossman and Shapiro (1988b) found that the presence of counterfeits has an adverse effect on the status of genuine-brand consumers. Contrary to this finding by Grossman and Shapiro (1988b), Nia and Zaichkowsky (2000) found that a majority (58%) of participants did not believe that counterfeits decrease the demand for original luxury brands. Romani et al. (2012) further added to this finding by Nia and Zaichkowsky (2000) by illustrating that counterfeits actually increase consumers' Willingness to Pay (WTP) for the original luxury brands, however, this was possible only in the case of popular luxury brands such as Gucci and Louis Vuitton. Contrarily, many researchers found that counterfeiting has a harmful effect on the original luxury brands and devalue their brand equity (Gao, 2018; Stevenson and Busby, 2015; Wang and Song, 2013). Therefore, there is no uniform consensus on whether counterfeits have a positive or negative effect on the original luxury brands.

Bosworth and Yang (2002) highlighted the causal factors of manufacturing and supply of counterfeit products such as income and cost disparities, size, and proximity of the market, etc. By investigating the ethical aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), Hilton (2004) questioned the ethical norms prevalent in the fashion industry. Similarly, Yao (2005a, 2005b) explored the IPR enforcement aspects by the government and policy makers and proposed a vertical product-differentiated counterfeiting model. According to this model, Yao (2005b) argued that strict IPR enforcement and strong Veblen effects of seeking status through luxury brands, benefit the original luxury brands because it incentivises the monopolist to improve the product quality and increase prices. The researcher justified this assertion on the fact that it the original luxury brand owners who pocket the penalties from IPR enforcements (and not the government). This was a fascinating finding because it brought forth the positive effects of counterfeiting and illustrated how the IPR holders (luxury brand owners) can in fact benefit from the proliferation of counterfeits. Biancardi et al. (2020) seconded Yao's (2005b) findings about the positive effect of counterfeits on authentic luxury brands due to the penalties received due to enforcement efforts. However, Biancardi et al. (2020) also argued that increased levels of fines could prove to be harmful to the total demand for the genuine luxury brands.

Adding onto the research by Yao (2005a, 2005b), Qian (2008) reiterated the original luxury brand's strategies to increase product quality for a higher price to combat the

entry of counterfeits in the market. She also suggested innovation as a brand strategy which could help the original luxury brands fight counterfeits. In a later study, Qian et al. (2013) argued that more investment by luxury brands on searchable qualities of their products (e.g., appearance) compared to experiential qualities (e.g., quality, durability) to fight counterfeiting would be socially uneconomical. However, a major research gap in counterfeiting literature is that most of prior research has focused on the effects of counterfeiting on luxury brands and ignored another alternative of non-luxury brands (Bian, 2018; Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013).

Moreover, this lack of empirical research with regard to the substitution rate of counterfeits with original brands in secondary markets has been acknowledged by OECD (2017). The present research aims to bridge this research gap by investigating the impact of counterfeits on non-luxury brands, beyond luxury brands. The next subsection discusses this further.

1.2.2 Do counterfeits only affect luxury brands?

Building on the aforementioned premises, this question is the crux of this study because it underlines the importance of evaluating the real impact of counterfeiting on brands which are less counterfeited. Therefore, pointing to the need to look beyond the luxury brands whose logos are visibly counterfeited as the lone targets (Grossman and Shapiro, 1988b). It is imperative to gauge the impact of counterfeiting on the brands truly affected. For example, expanding on the illustration in the previous section by Andreas (2010) regarding the quantitative misrepresentation of loss to luxury brands, in the event of unavailability of the counterfeit version, the tangible likelihood is that the typical buyer of a $50 fake Rolex would instead buy an affordable non-luxury brand such as H&M. This leads to the concept of substitution rate (OECD, 2017). Substitution rate is the rate of "likelihood that consumers would have purchased the genuine product at its full price" (OECD, 2017, p.31). Literature suggests that the substitution rate for luxury fashion clothing and accessories is only 21% according to the sample study of Korean female college students (Yoo and Lee, 2009). This means that merely 21% of the consumers would buy original luxury instead of counterfeits according to the research by Yoo and Lee (2009). Though there are not many studies which investigated this substitution rate further, the report by OECD (2017) emphasises that it opens doors for further research required to investigate whether consumers of counterfeits would substitute them for the original luxury brand. The

present research questions argues that it is non-luxury brands that are substituted by the counterfeit luxury brands. This implication needs to be verified by including non-luxury brands as a third alternative between counterfeit luxury and original luxury brands. This research is based on this premise and consequently, it aims to explore the effect of counterfeits on non-luxury, besides the original luxury brands.

The need to include non-luxury brands in the debate of impact of counterfeits on the original brands gains further prominence in the counterfeiting literature by reiterating the non-luxury market share in the overall fashion retail market. The following figure 1.6 demonstrates the escalating year-over-year growth in retail sales of non-luxury brands in comparison with that of luxury brands across China, Europe, and the US (McKinsey and company, 2023).

The growth rate of non-luxury brands is particularly swelling in the last two years across 2021 and 2022 compared to luxury brands, especially in Europe than in China and the US (figure 1.6).
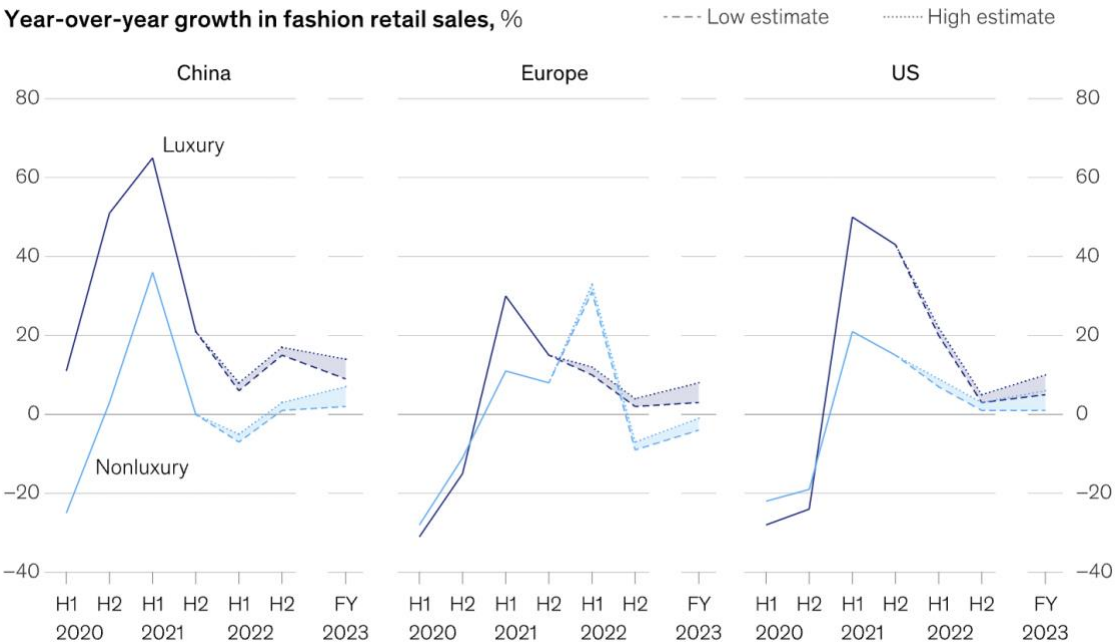
Figure 1.6 Growth in fashion retail sales of luxury and non-luxury brands across China, Europe, and the US

(Source: Adapted from McKinsey and company report, 2023)

This shows the increasing popularity of non-luxury brands, besides luxury brands, and further strengthens the need to include non-luxury brands in the debate of substitution between luxury and counterfeit brands (Bian, 2018; Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013; OECD, 2017).

The consumers' substitution between counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury, among other factors, is predominantly affected by their income (Nia and Zaichkowsky, 2000), social class (Amaral and Loken, 2016), childhood socioeconomic status (Whelan and Hingston, 2018), and their need for social status (Han et al., 2010; Walasek et al., 2018). Therefore, the present research builds upon the conceptual framework of Socioeconomic Status (SES) which is discussed in the next section. It discusses the literature review in this area and identifies the research gap.

1.3 Literature review in childhood SES and adulthood SES and identification of research gap

Research shows that consumption is greatly influenced by individual's social class and social status (Amaral and Loken, 2016; Han et al., 2010; Kraus et al., 2010; Manstead, 2018). An aggregate concept which incorporates both measures of social class and status – called Socio-Economic Status (SES) – is linked with both childhood and adulthood social class positions (Krieger et al., 1997). Therefore, to investigate consumers' substitution between counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands, the current study considers childhood SES and adulthood SES of consumers. In particular, it draws from the social cognition model based on Kraus et al. (2010) and Manstead (2018), and wealth and status-based taxonomy proposed by Han et al. (2010). This study also compares these models with the analysis of the Great British Social Class Survey by Savage et al. (2013).

Furthermore, literature review of childhood SES and the level of resources present during childhood indicates health, education attainment, and the overall consumer behaviour (Mittal and Griskevicius, 2016; Richins and Chaplin, 2015). Researchers Whelan and Hingston (2018) found that the self-esteem of low childhood SES consumers is threatened by non-luxury brands, and *not* by luxury brands because for these consumers, non-luxury brands represent the material norm in their social class. Therefore, Whelan and Hingston (2018) emphasise on including non-luxury brands in studying the consumer behaviours of individuals with poor childhoods. Similarly, recent research by Park et al. (2022) found that individuals who grew up with low childhood SES are more likely to value cooperation in the community and as a result, they prefer *sustainable* luxury brands (compared to regular luxury brands). Their research also indicates that this consumer tendency to prefer sustainable luxury brands diminishes significantly during consumption of non-luxury brands.

Regarding high SES individuals, research indicates that they are more accustomed to luxury consumption compared to low SES individuals (Krekels et al., 2020). Furthermore, most genuine luxury brand consumers are affected by the presence of counterfeits of their favourite luxury brands (Commuri, 2009). These studies, among several others, show that childhood and adulthood SES have a huge influence on consumers' preferences for and rejection of different types of brands such as luxury, non-luxury, and counterfeit luxury brands. However, research in this area is fragmented and almost no study has been conducted to study the effects of childhood and adulthood SES on consumers brand substitution between luxury, non-luxury, and counterfeit luxury brands, to the best of the author's knowledge. Therefore, the present research aims to investigate consumers' brand substitution and brand preferences from the lens of childhood and adulthood SES.

While adulthood SES is important, this study puts particular focus on childhood SES, besides considering adulthood SES. This is because many researchers indicate that the advent of consumer behaviour takes root during childhood (Griskevicius et al. 2011a, 2011b, 2013; Hamilton et al., 2019; Hilton et al., 2004; Mittal and Griskevicius, 2014; Mittal and Griskevicius, 2016). Therefore, research has shown that consumer behaviour can be better predicted by studying childhood SES than adulthood SES (Thompson et al., 2020; Ward, 1974; Whelan and Hingston, 2018).

Childhood socioeconomic status (SES) is defined as the extent to which an individual grew up in a resource plentiful versus resource scarce environment (Griskevicius et al., 2011). It is represented by the total of parental income, education, and occupational prestige during one's childhood (Bradley and Corwyn, 2002). In conjunction with childhood SES, the childhood Emotional Wellbeing (EW) also plays a significant role which shapes the consumer socialisation process during childhood and adolescent years (Hill et al., 2018). Childhood emotional wellbeing is defined as the emotional, mental, and moral support that a child receives from parents, siblings, extended family, peers, and friends (Hill et al., 2018). The emotional wellbeing aspects are included in the current study to present a wholistic picture of the overall influence of childhood and adulthood SES on consumers' brand substitution between counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands.

Furthermore, the practice of compensatory consumption as a means to balance between the goals of achieving higher social status and/or social class through the purchase of brands has been researched widely (Belk, 1988; Fisher, 1987; Gao et al.,

2016; Mandel et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2020). Research also shows that compensatory consumption is not limited to achieving social class and status goals but also to overcome emotional distress with material possessions (Belk, 1988; Mandel et al., 2017). For example, low power individuals try to compensate for their low power by consuming status goods such as luxury brands (Rucker and Galinsky, 2008). As a compensatory consumption strategy, symbolic self-completion is often used by individuals to acquire and display symbols associated with the ideal self (Wicklund and Gollwitzer, 1982). symbolic self-completion has been applied as a compensatory consumption strategy by consumers in various domains of self-discrepancies. These self-discrepancies could be in the domain of academic ability (Dalton, 2008), personal freedom (Levav and Zhu, 2009), control (Cutright, 2012), power (Dubois et al., 2012; Rucker and Galinsky, 2008, 2009), self-concept (Gao et al., 2009; Morrison and Johnson, 2011), social belongingness (Lee and Shrum, 2013; Loveland et al., 2010; Mead et al., 2011; Wan et al., 2014; Wang et al. 2012), and social status (Harmon-Jones et al., 2008) among many others.

The current study focuses on the symbolic self-completion in the context of socioeconomic status and social status. This is because luxury brands and counterfeit luxury consumption is more prominent during status signalling amongst social classes (Charles et al., 2009; Desmichel et al., 2020). Self-discrepancies arise from social comparisons, especially upward comparisons with someone from higher social class than oneself (Carr and Vignoles, 2011; Mandel et al., 2017; Manstead, 2018). Such upward comparisons may trigger tendency for compensatory consumption. For instance, consumers feeling less powerful than others and more likely to indulge in high-status products to reinstate feelings of power (Rucker and Galinsky, 2008, 2009). Likewise, people tend to buy brands signalling their status or affiliation to a particular group when they feel socially excluded from that group (Lee and Shrum, 2009; Mead et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2014; Wan et al., 2012). Therefore, symbolic self-completion is crucial in self-enhancement in SES. However, an important aspect of achieving self-enhancement of social class and SES, using various brands through symbolic self-completion remains unresearched. This is particularly significant in the counterfeiting literature because one of the key motivators of counterfeit consumption is influenced by the status associated with luxury brands (Commuri, 2009; Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013; Han et al., 2010). The present research aims to address this research gap by

exploring the role of social class, childhood and adulthood SES and symbolic self-completion to address self-discrepancies related to SES.

Based on the literature review on counterfeiting and socioeconomic status discussed in the above sections, the identified research gaps which require research attention can be summarised as follows:

1. The role of social class, childhood SES, and adulthood SES on consumers' brand preferences between the substitutes of counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands

2. The significance of symbolic self-completion as a compensatory consumption strategy to address self-discrepancies related to SES

3. The impact of counterfeits on non-luxury brands (besides luxury brands)

Based on these identified research gaps, the following section discusses the research aim and the research questions which emerge out of the literature review.

1.4 Aim of the study and research questions

The aim of this research is to undertake a comprehensive investigation of the impact of counterfeits on original brands and beyond. In particular, it aims to assess how non-deceptive counterfeits sold in secondary markets affect non-luxury and luxury brands. In other words, the current research explores the substitution mechanism between the three brand substitutes – counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands. In order to achieve this overarching aim, this research is delineated in accordance with socioeconomic status (SES), brand substitution, and symbolic self-completion as a compensatory consumption strategy to address the self-discrepancies generated by SES. In line with the aim, the present study sets out to address the following research questions (RQ):

RQ1: How do childhood SES and adulthood SES affect consumers' preferences while choosing between the substitutes of counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands?

RQ2: What is the role of symbolic self-completion in consumers' brand substitution between counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands?

RQ3: What is the impact of counterfeits on non-luxury brands, besides luxury brands?

1.5 Research approach

To achieve the overarching aims and to address the identified research questions presented in the prior section, the current study follows a pragmatic mixed methods approach to research design (Morgan, 2007). Pragmatism is a widely used stance within mixed methods research (Creswell and Tashakkori 2007; Denscombe 2008; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004; Hall 2013). Pragmatism is not a philosophical stance; however, it is a set of tools which are used to address research questions (Biesta, 2010). The choice of mixed methods is beneficial for the current study because in the contemporary marketplace, consumers' engagement with counterfeits is changing with the increasing use of the online shopping environment, besides the traditional counterfeit markets (Sun et al., 2020). To address this, it is crucial to engage with the consumers of counterfeits, both offline and online, to investigate their counterfeit consumption behaviours (Malik et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2020). The decision to use a pragmatic approach strengthened the need to adopt mixed methods – netnography and in-depth interviews. The data from online sources using netnography and qualitative interviews with consumers is useful to examine the interplay of SES, and counterfeit luxury consumption. The findings would be richer and more complex, leading to a better understanding of consumers' brand substitution behaviours between counterfeits, original luxury, and non-luxury brands.

The next section presents the significance of the current study and its contribution to knowledge, practice and policy.

Mixed methods allow data triangulation and deeper understanding of the research (Bryman, 2004; Denscombe, 2003; Halcro, 2008). The pragmatic approach frames a multi-method approach to gain a deeper understanding of consumers preferences for counterfeits and original brands (including both luxury and non-luxury brands). Initially, this involves a netnographic study of consumers' views with regard to consumption of original luxury, counterfeit luxury, and non-luxury brands using online user-generated platform called Reddit. This is followed by qualitative, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 26 consumers based in the UK. The two datasets are subsequently analysed individually using thematic content analysis (Crowe et al., 2015; Miles and Huberman, 1994), followed by integration of the two datasets using data triangulation (Farmer et al., 2006, Harris, 2019). Ethical aspects of each research method are considered as per the prescribed ethical guidelines.

1.6 Contribution of the study

The current study aims to provide significant contributions to knowledge, policymaking, and practical implications for brand managers. It aims to explore the role of social class and socioeconomic status on consumers' brand choice while choosing between the substitutes of counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands. Additionally, the study explores the role of symbolic self-completion as a compensatory consumption strategy to address self-discrepancies related to SES. In doing so, the research plans to evaluate the impact of counterfeits on non-luxury brands (besides luxury brands). It will potentially contribute to the counterfeiting literature by adding non-luxury brands to the debate related to the concurrent ownership of counterfeits and original luxury brands (Bian et al., 2016; Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013; Stottinger & Penz, 2015).

Furthermore, the present research plans to contribute to the SES literature by examining the effects of childhood and adulthood SES on consumer choice for counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands. Additionally, it aims to extend the role of symbolic self-completion theory to counterfeit consumption literature by exploring the causes of brand substitution adopted by consumers while choosing among counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands.

Besides the abovementioned contributions to knowledge, the present research aims to provide practical implications to the brand managers of luxury and non-luxury brands, in terms of the impact of counterfeit luxury products on their brands. Additionally, the research aims to contribute to policy makers by bridging the gap identified by OECD (2019), related to the lack of knowledge about the degree of substitution between counterfeit luxury and genuine luxury and non-luxury brands. These are potentially significant contributions to practice and policymaking because a majority of existing counterfeiting literature has not included the effects of counterfeits on non-luxury brands.

1.7 Overview of the thesis

This thesis consists of eight chapters. The outline of each of these eight chapters are discussed below.

Chapter Two presents the literature review related to the research on counterfeiting and their impact on luxury and non-luxury brands. The literature review draws from the extant literature related to consumers' behaviour with regard to the purchase of counterfeits and underlying theories. It provides profound context regarding the present study by exploring research in the area of counterfeiting and highlights the probable factors that can contribute to the purchase of non-deceptive counterfeits.

Chapter Three presents the development of the conceptual background for the present study. The chapter provides a brief historical backdrop exhibiting the nexus between social class and consumption. It discusses the contemporary British social class structure, followed by a brief overview of social status. It introduces the concepts of socioeconomic status and childhood emotional wellbeing and delves into the relationship between socioeconomic status and consumption. It also explores the compensatory consumer behaviour, followed by symbolic self-completion theory and self-verification theory. It touches upon the concept of substitutes, leading to the amalgamation of two bodies of literatures on brand types and consumer types. The chapter presents the identified research gaps and the resultant research questions for the present study.

Chapter Four This chapter discusses the methodology used in the present research to address the research questions. It discusses the research philosophy, epistemological and ontological stances underpinning this study. It then discusses the research strategy and the research methods chosen for the study, providing the rationale to choose netnographic study and qualitative in-depth interviews. It also explains the data collection process and data analysis process used in this thesis. The chapter concludes with discussing the limitations to the data and the ethical considerations.

Chapters Five analyses the findings of the current research with respect to the effects of childhood and adulthood socioeconomic status (SES) and childhood emotional wellbeing (EW) on consumers' brand choice. It explains the emergence of the four consumer types based on SES and EW, vis-à-vis, Privileged consumers, Protesting consumers, Passive consumers, and Penurious consumers. Then, the adulthood SES and consumption of original luxury, counterfeit luxury, and non-luxury brands of each consumer type is explored and analysed with support from relevant literature and conceptual grounding.

Chapter Six This chapter delves into detailed discussions around the impact of luxury counterfeits on non-luxury brands, besides the original luxury brands alone with comparisons drawn from the four consumer categories from the previous chapter. It explores and analyses the consumers' various coping strategies of variety-seeking, symbolic self-completion, dissociation, and self-verification as compensatory consumer behaviours to mitigate their respective SES-EW generated issues.

Chapter Seven This chapter synthesises the findings from netnographic data analysis and compares them with the findings discussed in the previous two chapters. It discusses the effect of childhood and adulthood SES affect consumers' preferences while choosing between alternatives of counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands. It compares netnographic findings with the qualitative data analysis discussed in chapters five and six.

Chapter Eight This chapter discusses the overall findings of the study and concludes the thesis by assessing its contribution to knowledge, implications for brand management, and implications for policy makers. The chapter also discusses the limitations of the research and highlights areas for future research.

1.8 Summary

This chapter discussed the rationale for examining the impact of counterfeiting beyond luxury brands, particularly on non-luxury brands. It presented the overview of the literature review in counterfeiting and socioeconomic status and identified the research gaps. It subsequently established the overarching aim of the study and the research questions which it aims to address. The chapter then reviewed the research approach to undertake this study. Subsequently, it charted out the contribution of this study, discussing its significance to knowledge, practice, and policy. Finally, the chapter presented the overview of the thesis structure. The next chapter presents the literature review related to the research on counterfeiting and the impact of counterfeits on luxury and non-luxury brands.

Chapter 2
Literature Review:
Counterfeiting

2.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to present the literature review related to the research on counterfeiting and their impact on luxury and non-luxury brands. The literature review draws from the extant literature related to consumers' behaviour with regard to the purchase of counterfeits and underlying theories. The purpose of the literature review is to provide profound context regarding the present study by exploring prior research in the area of counterfeiting and to highlight the probable factors that can contribute to the purchase of non-deceptive counterfeits. The chapter begins with an examination of existing literature to lay the theoretical foundation for the framework. This entails revisiting the definitions of counterfeits, luxury brands, and types of non-luxury brands. It also highlights the distinction between deceptive and non-deceptive counterfeiting with respect to primary and secondary counterfeit markets.

After defining counterfeiting and the types of counterfeits, it is essential to delineate the types of original brands which the counterfeits imitate and affect. These original brands are primarily the luxury brands, but also non-luxury brands. The chapter further delves into the definitions and types of luxury and non-luxury brands. The subsequent section of the chapter explains why the choice of non-deceptive counterfeiting in secondary markets was made. Next, to structure the relevant literature systematically, the literature review on counterfeits has been broadly classified into three areas based on their impact on – original luxury, counterfeit luxury, and non-luxury brands. Subsequently, the impact of counterfeits on original luxury brands is explored which paves the background for examining the impact of counterfeits on non-luxury brands.

The next section of the chapter explores various theories relevant to counterfeit related research so that the context of relevant theories and concepts for the present research can be elucidated. Supporting this context further, various factors and models in the context of counterfeiting established by various researchers are presented so that the conceptual framework for the present research can be contextualised. All these steps eventually lead to the identification of research gaps in the literature which this research aims to address. Successively, the chapter summaries the literature and presents the identified research gaps.

2.2 How Counterfeiting is defined in literature and the choice of definition

Counterfeit goods can be described as "any unauthorised product that infringes upon intellectual property rights (brand names, patents, trademarks, or copyrights)" (Swami et al., 2009, p. 820). In another definition provided by the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) of the World Trade Organisation (WTO, 2021), counterfeit goods are described as "goods involving slavish copying of trademarks, and pirated goods as goods which violate a reproduction right under copyright or a related right." OECD/EUIPO (2019) also adopts this definition by TRIPS in their reports on counterfeiting. The term "counterfeit" is defined as "tangible goods that infringe trademarks, design rights or patents" (OECD/EUIPO, 2019, p.14).

Prominent academics in the field of counterfeiting research have adopted the definition of counterfeits as "those products bearing a trademark that is identical to, or indistinguishable from, a trademark registered to another party, thus infringing the rights of the holder of the trademark" (Bian and Moutinho, 2009, p. 368). Most academics in the field have agreed and adopted this definition of counterfeits (Chaudhry and Walsh, 1996; Grossman and Shapiro, 1988a, b). A counterfeit, by definition, must be a copy of a brand which is trademarked according to Cordell et al. (1996).

On the other hand, to some academics (e.g., Bloch et al., 1993; Cordell et al., 1996), counterfeiting signifies the unsanctioned duplicating of goods which are copyrighted or trademarked whereas to some others (e.g., Ang et al., 2001; Eisend and Schuchert-Güler, 2006; Wee et al., 1995) it signifies the manufacture of articles with packaging as regards labels and trademarks or characteristics identical to an existing product. Also, these may be sold at a price lower than that of the original. Nia and Zaichkowsky (2000) define counterfeits as "illegally made products that resemble the genuine goods but are typically of lower quality in terms of performance, reliability, or durability" as cited in Wilcox et al. (2009, p. 247).

Counterfeits vary from pirated products because in contrast to counterfeits, pirated goods are defined as "products that are exact copies of the original and are typically limited to technology categories such as software" (Wilcox et al., 2009, p.247). Other similar terminology, which is often confused with counterfeits are gray markets, and therefore, must be defined to establish the difference between the two (Zhao et al., 2016). Gray markets are defined as "the sale of genuine trademarked products through

distribution channels unauthorised by the manufacturer or brand owner" (Antia et al., 2006, p. 92). Besides piracy and gray markets, other similar terms to counterfeiting are 'imitation' and 'overruns' (Bian, 2006). Imitation is defined as "legal manufacturing of look-alikes (including many generics) or 'knockoffs' while overruns are associated with outsourced manufacturers who produce more than the contracted amount and distribute the extras through unauthorised channels (Nia and Zaichkowsky, 2000). Therefore, counterfeits are different than pirated goods, gray market goods, imitation goods, knockoffs, and overruns as explained.

The current study uses the definition of counterfeiting provided by Cordell et al. (1996), that is, "any unauthorized manufacturing of goods whose special characteristics are protected as intellectual property rights (trademarks, patents, and copyrights)" (Cordell et al., 1996, p. 41). This definition is consistent with specialist viewpoints and has been used widely in inquiries (e.g., Chaudhry and Zimmerman, 2013; Jiang and Cova, 2012; Trinh and Phau, 2012). Also, the use of the term "counterfeit" in the present study is consistent with the consumption of "non-deceptive" counterfeits. This is because non-deceptive counterfeiting is particularly widespread in the luxury brands markets wherein consumers knowingly purchase counterfeits (Wilcox et al., 2009), which is the focus of the current study.

2.3 Origin of Counterfeiting

Counterfeiting is a contemporary global issue (Eisend, 2019) which accounts for up to 2.5% of world trade (OECD/EUIP, 2019), however, the provenance of counterfeiting goes back to ancient times. The counterfeiting of currency is possibly the oldest form of counterfeiting (Jones, 2018). There are also evidences of the Imperial Roman fashion of using Egyptian sculptural representations in the form of either copying an earlier work of art or offering an interpretation (Ashton, 2002). For example, copies, interpretations and versions of Ptolemaic sculptures found in Roman emperor Hadrian's villa at Tivoli, provides evidence of the counterfeiting phenomenon during the mid-late first to second centuries A.D. (Ashton, 2002). According to Tim (2005) as cited in Wilcox et al. (2009), counterfeiting of luxury products dates back to as early as 27 B.C., when a wine merchant in Gaul started selling cheap local wines disguised as expensive Roman wine by fooling buyers by using counterfeit trademarks on wine amphorae.

These substantiations demonstrate that counterfeiting is one the oldest crimes in history. In doing so, counterfeiting gave birth to the concept of 'labelling products' as a means to safeguard their authenticity, which we now call 'branding'; the historical evidence of this can be found in prior Anthropological studies (McKendrick et al., 1982; Wengrow, 2008). For instance, in order to protect the integrity of products from counterfeiters, merchants in Mesopotamia in the fourth millennium B.C. started the practice of applying "seals" on their products (Wengrow, 2008). The author arguably compares this phenomenon to the contemporary concept of commodity branding. Nevertheless, counterfeiting seems to have been closely associated with consumption since a long time. The phenomenon is not limited, however, to the consumption of objects alone, but also in status consumption and material culture (McCracken, 1988; Walasek et al., 2018).

2.4 Global counterfeit market

The global counterfeit market amounted to 2.5% of total world trade in 2019 as per the latest OECD report (2021). In terms of imports into the European Union in the same year, counterfeits constituted up to 5.8% of total imports (OECD, 2021). These numbers are constantly increasing and pose a serious threat to the global economies. The latest joint report by the OECD and the European IPO revealed that the value of the total counterfeit and pirated goods trade across the world is worth $424 billion (ACG report, 2022). The highest producer of counterfeits and pirated goods in 2019 remains China, just like many previous years' trends. The distribution of counterfeit production from their provenance economies is displayed in figure 2.1.
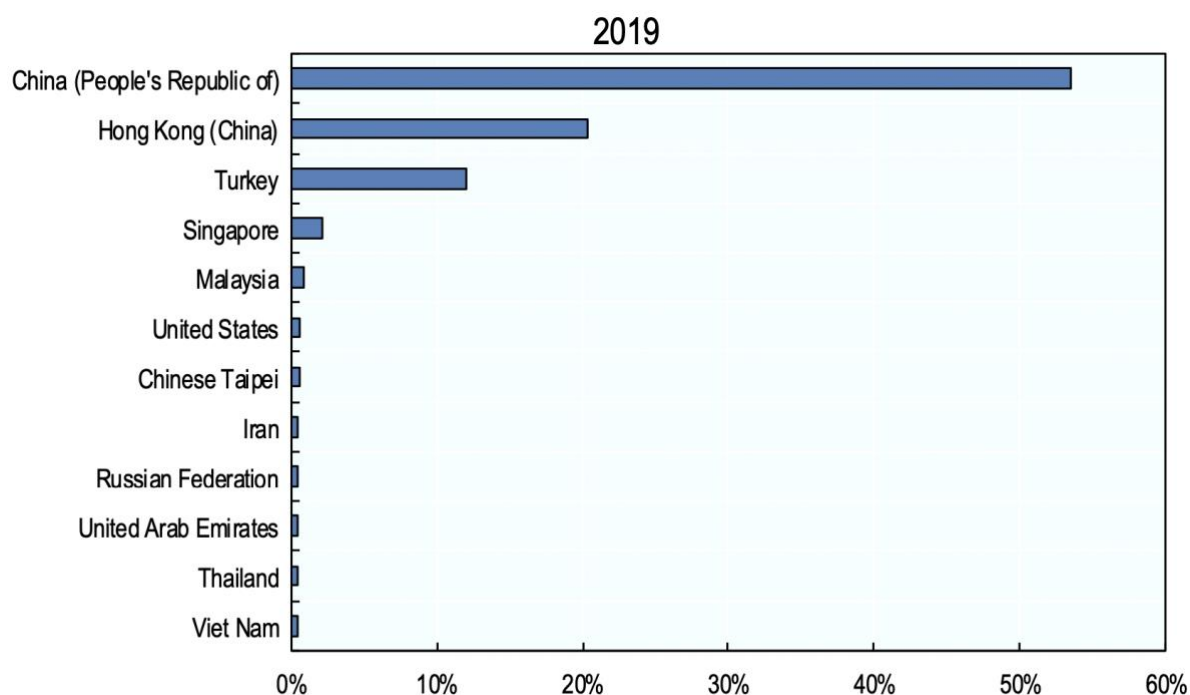
2019

Figure 2.1 Top provenance economies of counterfeit and pirated goods in terms of customs seizures in 2019

(Source: Adapted from OECD/EUIPO, 2021, p.20)

In terms of product categories, footwear is the most counterfeit product in the last several years (2017-2019), followed by clothing and leather goods as shown in figure 2.2 (OECD/EUIPO, 2021). The other product categories include electronics, perfumes and cosmetics, toys, watches, medical apparatus, and accessories as displayed in figure 2.2 below.

Further showing the extent of distribution of counterfeit and pirated goods via a large and complicated distribution network using several conveyance methods, the following figure 2.3 presents a glimpse.

Besides the traditional conveyance methods via sea, mail, roads, and air, counterfeit trade has seen a substantial shift towards online platforms in the recent years (OECD/EUIPO, 2021). This trend has further exacerbated the proliferation of counterfeits due to increased usage of the Internet and overall skyrocketing digitalisation (OECD/EUIPO, 2021; Sun et al., 2020). The latest report by the Anti-counterfeiting group (ACG) reported that 64% of worldwide border seizures of counterfeits constituted of small and single mailed parcels bought online. It becomes harder for the authorities to keep track due to many small packages.
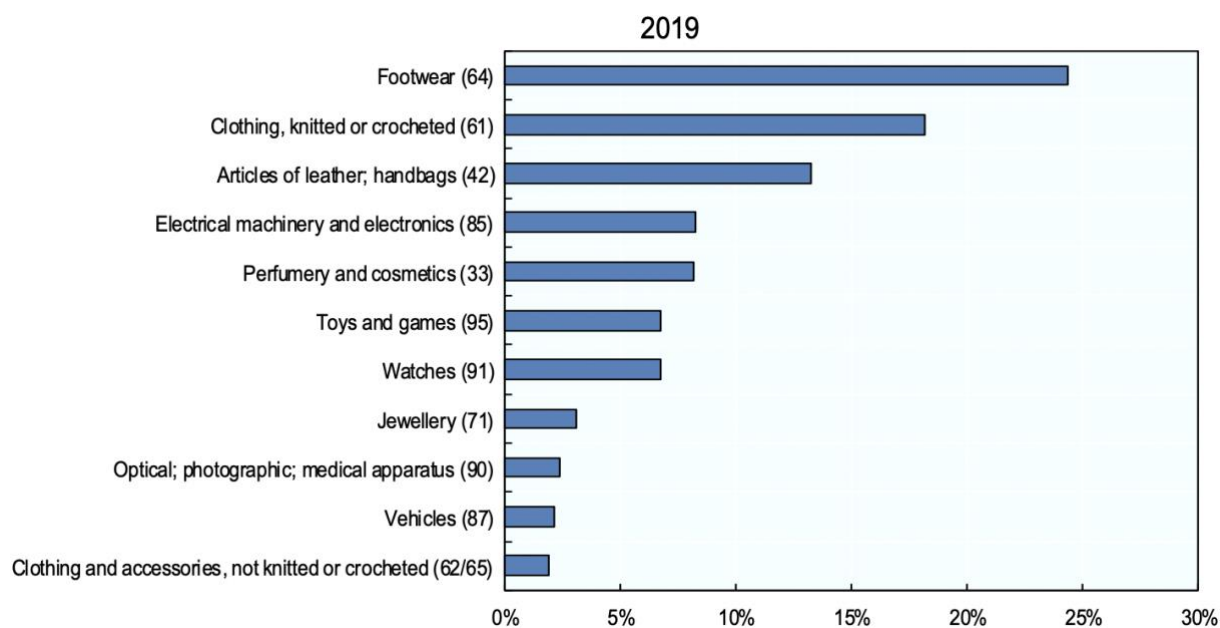
Figure 2.2 Top product categories of counterfeit and pirated goods in terms of global customs seizures in 2017-19

(Source: Adapted from OECD/EUIPO, 2021, p.22)
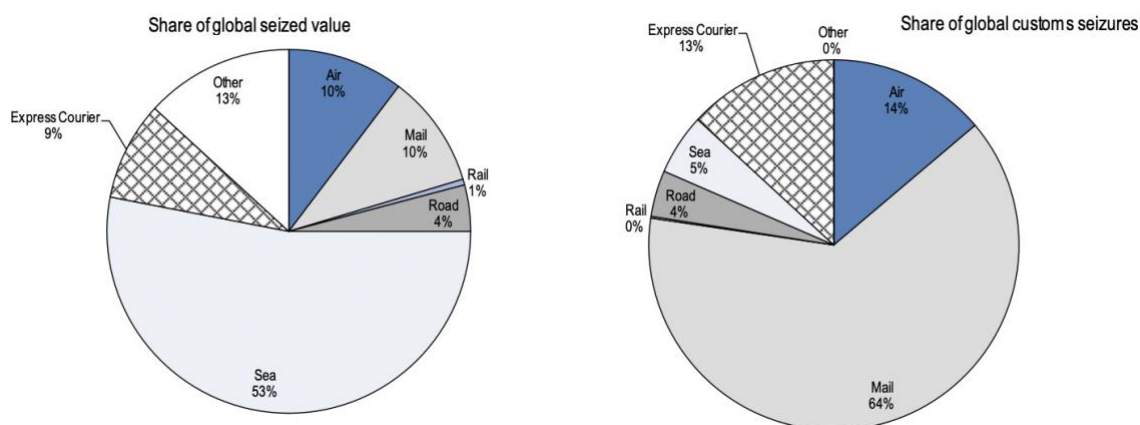
Figure 2.3 Conveyance methods for counterfeit and pirated goods in 2017-19

(Source: Adapted from OECD/EUIPO, 2021, p.24)

2.5 Counterfeit market in the UK

In the European Union, the counterfeit and pirated goods have an estimated value of EUR 119 billion in 2019 as per the latest EUIPO/Europol report (2022). The Intellectual Property Office in the UK, hereafter mentioned as the IPO, conducted research on the purchase of counterfeit goods in the UK (n= 4990) and found that 29% of UK consumers have purchased a counterfeit product and 17% admitted to buying counterfeits often as shown in figure 2.4 (IPO report, 2020). The study also found that

younger British consumers aged under 35 were more likely to consume counterfeit goods.
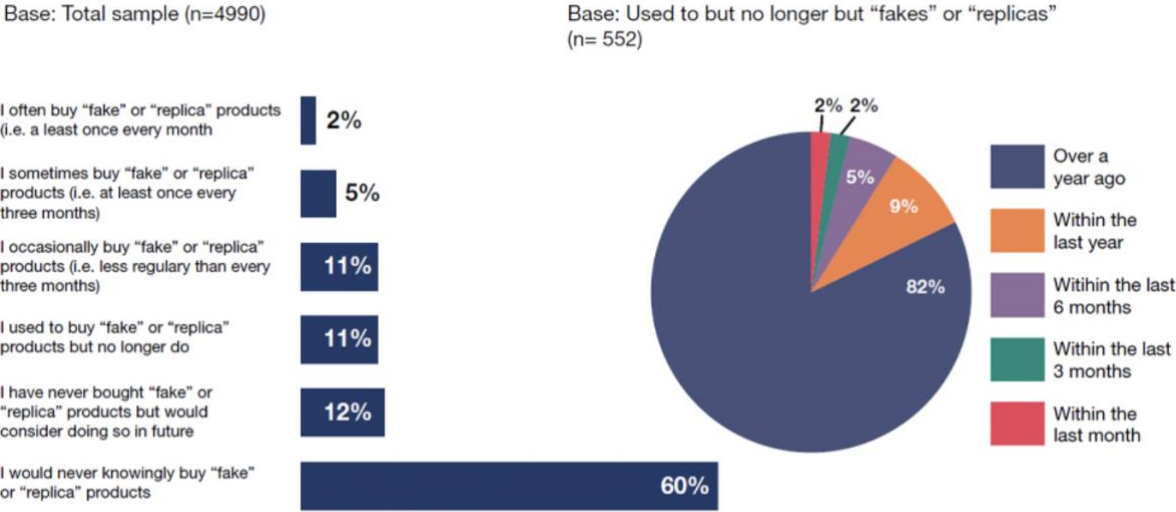
Figure 2.4 UK consumers' trends related to the purchase of counterfeits
(Source: Adapted from IPO report on counterfeit goods research, 2020, p.9)

Furthermore, the main reason for purchasing counterfeits was found to be their considerably cheaper prices than the original luxury brands as depicted in figure 2.5 below (IPO, 2020). Beside the cheaper price, the design of counterfeits being similar to the original luxury brands was found to be a prevalent reason for consumers' inclination towards counterfeits. The consumers admitted preferring the aesthetics of the counterfeits being similar to the original product.

Across a majority of product categories, the participants in the study were willing to pay half the price of an original brand for the counterfeit version. Online shopping on e-commerce websites has been found to be the most preferred platform to purchase counterfeits in all product categories, such as beauty products, footwear, sportswear, electronics, etc. (IPO, 2020). Another important source to procure counterfeits was holiday markets selling clothing, accessories, watches, and sports footwear.
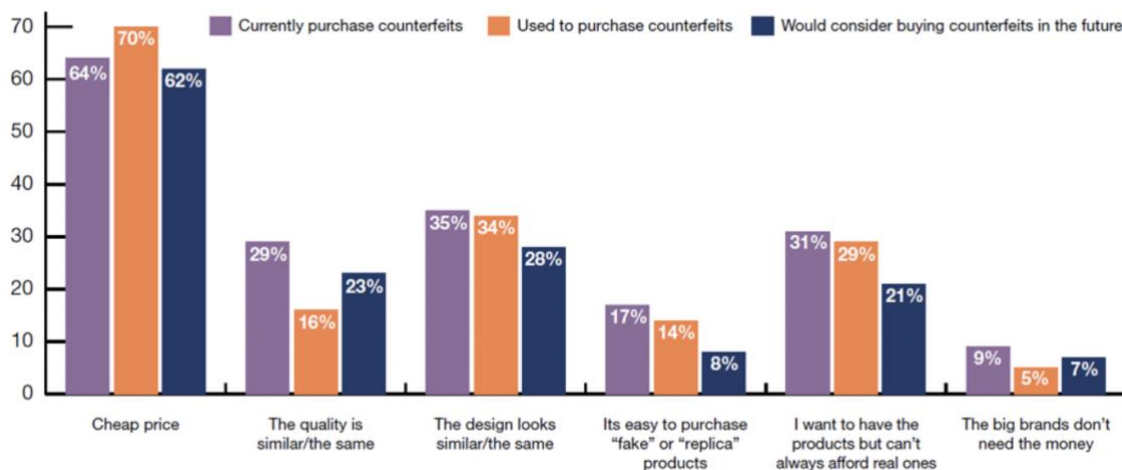
Figure 2.5 UK consumers' main reasons for purchasing counterfeits
(Source: Adapted from IPO report on counterfeit goods research, 2020, p.12)

The next section discusses types of counterfeiting.

2.6 Types of Counterfeiting

There are two major types of counterfeiting – deceptive counterfeiting and non-deceptive counterfeiting. Deceptive counterfeiting occurs when consumers suppose that they are buying an authentic product but mistakenly buy a counterfeit product (Staake et al., 2009). Such deception typically occurs in product categories such as, automotive components, consumer electronics, and pharmaceuticals (Vida, 2007) and when the consumer is poorly informed or has no prospect or occasion to examine all the characteristics of the product (Grossman and Shapiro, 1988a). On the other hand, non-deceptive counterfeiting takes place when the quality of the goods is clearly indicated by the price, site of purchase, and level of quality of the product. Moreover, the counterfeit product is purchased willingly by the consumer in place of the genuine article (Eisend, 2016; Grossman and Shapiro, 1988b).

A complete spectrum of deceptiveness was suggested by Bosworth (2006) with "super-deceptive" on one end, where it is nearly impossible to distinguish between authentic and counterfeit items, to "completely non-deceptive" on the other, where authentic and counterfeit can be clearly distinguished. In this regard, researchers (e.g., Gentry et al., 2006; Wilcox et al., 2009) report that the quality of counterfeits has progressively improved resulting in the emergence of "super copies" which make it increasingly challenging to distinguish between authentic and counterfeit items. Consequently, it is the understanding, awareness, and familiarity of consumers that

determine the extent to which deceptiveness can occur (Eisend and Schuchert-Güler, 2006).

Subsequently, after defining counterfeiting and the types of counterfeits, it is essential to delineate the types of original brands which the counterfeits imitate and affect. These original brands are primarily the luxury brands, but also non-luxury brands. The next section delves into the definitions and types of luxury and non-luxury brands.

2.7 Types of brands

The classification of the types of brands is useful for the present research to focus on the brands most affected by counterfeit luxury brands. This classification has been done in terms of fashion brands, i.e., both luxury and non-luxury brands sold in the fashion sector. The three main types of brands are luxury (and/or prestige brands, masstige brands, and mass-fashion (or non-luxury) brands (Kapferer, 1998; Kumar et al., 2019; Silverstein and Fiske, 2003; Yann et al., 2009). This classification is in accordance with Okonkwo (2007) as depicted in figure 2.6 below.

Figure 2.6 Types of brands
(Source: Adapted from Okonkwo, 2007)

Advancing this approach further, while the above figure2.6 gives a broad classification of brands, it fails to segregate the nuances of mass-fashion or non-luxury brands. The more relevant terminology to the present research is 'non-luxury' brands because it encompasses a wide range of brands of varying degrees of quality, price, varieties, and other dimensions. To define the broad term 'non-luxury', the following sections segregate the definitions of brand typology. In particular, the next section defines luxury brands, followed by the non-luxury brand typology, defining the generic brands, store brands, and mass fashion brands.

2.7.1 Definitions of luxury brands

Luxury brands embody the epitome of high status (Nelissen and Meijers, 2011). At the same time, arguably, luxury brands are the reason counterfeits exist (Commuri, 2009). With this reasoning, there exists an extensive body of literature dedicated to luxury brands. Luxury research even has its own journal (Kapferer, 2012). However, as established earlier, this research focuses on the potential impact of counterfeit on the non-luxury brands, and hence, a detailed review of luxury literature is beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, to build a holistic outlook of brand typology, the table 2.1 reflects a confined fraction of the evolution of definitions of luxury brands in chronological order.

One of the key studies on luxury is by Berry (1994) which explores the meanings and ramifications of the idea of luxury and is frequently cited in the luxury literature (Antoinette and Christopher, 2009; Dubois and Czellar, 2002; Han et al., 2010; Kapferer and Laurent, 2016; Kapferer, 2012a; Vigneron and Johnson, 1999; Wiedmann et al., 2009). While Berry (1994) provides a complex, in-depth conceptual and historical investigation of luxury with insights from political, philosophy and intellectual facets; a comparatively simpler, etymological definition by Nueno and Quelch (1998) serves the purpose for this study:

> Luxury: The word luxury comes from the Latin word "luxus" meaning indulgences of the senses regardless of cost.

It is a well-established notion that luxury as a concept is debatable and subjective (Kapferer, 2012). The multiple facades of this debatable concept of luxury have been critically evaluated by Kapferer as he argues, "Critics define luxury as superfluous objects bought mostly for conspicuous consumption" (Kapferer, 2012, p.477). Another definition of luxury by Vigneron and Johnson (1999) just substitutes the term 'prestige' for the word luxury:

> "Luxury goods are referred to as prestige goods which are of superior quality, expensive, and for the wealthy." (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999, p.11)

The present study uses this definition of luxury brands because it includes the aspects of prestige which is in line with the social status and reputation attaching luxury brands with the social class and socioeconomic status aspects of the present study (as discussed in the next chapter on conceptual framework).

Table 2.1 Definitions of luxury brands

Terminology	Researcher(s)	Year	Definition	Short description
Elite fashion/ Haute couture	(Horowitz)	1975	Elite fashion is produced in a limited number of copies, it is high status oriented and tends to assert status differences in terms of dress It can also be described as individual-oriented in the sense that it emphasizes the unique in each garment and each individual wearer rather than the common elements in each garment	The main source of elite fashion is haute couture which caters for rather narrowly selected groups of consumers
Luxury brands	(Nueno and Quelch)	1998	The word luxury comes from the Latin word "luxus" meaning indulgences of the senses regardless of cost	
Luxury goods	(Franck and Lester)	1999	Luxury goods are referred to as prestige goods which are of superior quality, expensive, and for the wealthy (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999).	
Luxury goods	(Nia and Zaichkowsky)	2000	Conventionally, luxury goods are defined as goods for which the mere use or display of a particular branded product brings esteem to the owner, apart from any functional utility	
Luxury brands	(Lloyd and Luk)	2010	Luxury is about pleasure, perfection, and rarity, but not necessarily of a high price (Roux and Floch, 1996)	

2.7.2 Non-luxury brands

Prior researchers have examined concurrent ownership of original luxury and their counterfeit versions (Stöttinger and Penz, 2015), providing a pragmatic view of the marketplace reality. However, the study by Stöttinger and Penz (2015) is limited to only two dimensions – that of authentic brands and counterfeits – ignoring the simultaneous presence of the ordinary or non-luxury brands. Whereas considering a more practical approach, the existence of ordinary brands seems an uncontested reality. This third possibility of preferring non-luxury (ordinary) to luxury brands has been researched by Geiger-Oneto et al. (2013), wherein the authors argue that instead of "buying the label", consumers may choose the alternative to reject both original and counterfeit luxury. Instead, these consumers may "select non-luxury goods in the belief that the prestige

of a label does not enhance quality and may increase price" (Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013, p.362). In general, it has been observed that individuals with greater occupational prestige prefer non-luxury to luxury goods and prefer authentic luxury goods over their counterfeit versions. However, non-luxury brands have been largely overlooked for the pursuit of luxury brands and their counterfeits.

Predictably, literature related to non-luxury brands is limited, though substantial research efforts have been made to study, analyse, and interpret the interplay of counterfeits and genuine luxury brands, both from brands' and consumers' perspectives (Bekir et al., 2013; Chen et al., 2018; Gino et al., 2010; Hamelin et al., 2013; Hietanen et al., 2019; Hopkins et al., 2003; Juggessur and Brunel, 2011; Large, 2019; Phau and Teah, 2009; Romani et al., 2012). As counterfeits and genuine brands have been extensively researched in juxtaposition with each other (Amaral and Loken, 2016; Bian and Moutinho, 2011a; Kaufmann et al., 2016; Nia and Zaichkowsky, 2000; Yoo and Lee, 2009; Yoo and Lee, 2012); in similar veins, the interplay of switching behaviour between counterfeits and ordinary brands need to be investigated to get a holistic picture of consumer choices. To attain this investigation, the classification of brands requires to be discoursed first, to encompass all the substitution choices available to the consumer.

2.7.2.1 *Non-luxury brand typology*[2]

Building on the above premises, it is imperative to identify the brands affected on account of substitution. However, due to the complex variety of brands, put in juxtaposition with a multiple quality-tiers of counterfeit products (McColl and Moore, 2011), the substitution choices could have several junctures. This can be simplified by defining the typology of brands such as generic brands, store brands, mass-fashion brands, etc. based on the literature (Anvik and Ashton, 2016; Baumann and Hamin, 2014; Cunningham et al., 1982; Geyskens et al., 2010; Kumar et al., 2019; Palmeira and Thomas, 2011). Therefore, the subsequent subsections will delve into the typology of brands and evaluation of definitions of each type. This step is particularly useful for contextualising product substitution choices considered during purchase intentions of counterfeits.

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[2] In this study, typology entails the classification of non-luxury brands based on various types or brand categories.

Furthermore, branding literature is scattered in terms of providing clear cut definitions of each brand type; their concepts are obtainable in bits and pieces in a variety of sources as displayed chronologically in the tables (viz. tables 2.2 to 2.4) in the following sections. To streamline this issue, the definitions of unbranded or generic brands will be evaluated first, gradually progressing towards related terminologies from branding literature. These include definitions of generic brands, private labels/ store brands, and mass-fashion brands.

2.7.2.2 Definitions of Generic brands

One of the early authors to define the new phenomenon of the arrival of generic brands in the 1970s were Murphy and Laczniak (1979). Soon there was a plethora of research on generic brands, some of which have been cited below in Table 2.2 to study the definitions provided by each of these studies to explore this terminology from various perspectives. Prior to reviewing the academic definitions from branding literature, it is crucial to focus on the dictionary meaning of the word 'generic' to comprehend the term accurately which is as follows:

> Generic: (of a product) not using the name of the company that made it.

This literal meaning of generic as being without the name of the company is mirrored by the academic definitions of 'generic brands' on multiple occasions (Bellizzi et al., 1981; McEnally and Hawes, 1984; Murphy and Laczniak, 1979). Most researchers agree on the definition of generic brands as plainly packaged products without a traditional brand name as displayed in Table 2.2 (Bellizzi et al., 1981; McEnally and Hawes, 1984; Murphy and Laczniak, 1979). However, there are some contradictory views related to the quality of the generics; Hawes and Crittenden (1984) suggesting that they are usually of a lower quality than the respective manufacturers' brands whereas Prendergast and Marr (1997) argue that generics are positioned at a comparable quality level to national brands. In the context of counterfeiting, Grossman and Shapiro (1988b) argued that if and when counterfeiters compete in submarkets with generic products, they suffer a cost disadvantage because generic products do not bear the cost of copying the brand name or design of other brands. This argument implies that all the quality-tiers of counterfeits can be compared to all quality-tiers of generic brands, yet other studies indicates that this is far from true (Cunningham et al., 1982; Palmeira and Thomas, 2011). For instance, 'premium generic brands' offer a

touch of luxury at an affordable price (Baumann and Hamin, 2014) which can possibly be compared with a counterfeit luxury product in terms of quality.

Table 2.2 Definitions of generic brands

Terminology	Researcher(s)	Year	Definition	Short description
Generics/ Unbranded products	(Murphy and Laczniak)	1979	Generics or unbranded products are a series of supermarket items packaged or contained in plain white wrappers, save for required label information and the printed name of the product	Relatively low price seems to be the primary appeal of generic items
Generic brands	(Bellizzi et al.)	1981	No-name brands	Reduced prices and packaging visuals
Generic brands	(Hawes and Crittenden)	1984	Plainly packaged, economy-oriented items which are usually of a lower level of quality than respective manufacturers or distributors' brands	Noticeable absence of traditional brand names
Generic brands	(McEnally and Hawes)	1984	A distributor's brand that does not include a traditional brand name on its label	Products simply labelled "cola," "batteries"
Generic products/ Produit libres	(Prendergast and Marr)	1995	Generic products were termed as Produit libres in 1976 by Carrefour, which are wrapped in plain white packaging and labelled with nothing more than the compositions inside these containers	Positioned at a comparable quality level to national brands but at substantially more competitive prices
Premium generic brands	(Baumann and Hamin)	2014	Brand category still offering a touch of luxury, but at a much more affordable price	

It is worth noting that all the academic studies related to generic brands (examined for this research) are mainly related with groceries and supermarkets (Hawes and Crittenden, 1984; McEnally and Hawes, 1984; Murphy and Laczniak, 1979). However, the term 'generic brand' has rarely been used within the fashion retailing literature so far; instead, the more common terminology used in fashion retail is store brands.

2.7.2.3 *Definitions of Store brands*

The terminologies used in the generic retailing literature vary across five dimensions: own label brands, private label brands, retailer brands, distributors brands and store

brands/ labels (McColl and Moore, 2011). The term generally used in the USA is 'private brand/ label' while the term widely used in the UK is 'own brand'. On the contrary, other researchers differ in this claim, contending that the term used in the USA is 'store brand' (Palmeira and Thomas, 2011).

Hitherto there exists no universally accepted terminology. Most researchers seem to agree on the definition of a store brand (Table 2.3) as a brand owned, controlled and sold exclusively by a retailer, albeit the terminology varies across different countries as mentioned earlier (McColl and Moore, 2011; Palmeira and Thomas, 2011). This is a potential source of confusion and misunderstanding as pointed out by Singh (1991). To avoid this confusion, this study will use the term 'own brand' since this research is based in the UK [based on prior norms, Palmeira and Thomas (2011)].

Previous research has established that store brands are less expensive than national brands (Ailawadi et al., 2001; Garretson et al., 2002). Though all the academic papers cited in Table 2.3 to compare the definitions of store brands are pertaining to grocery products, there have been very few papers extending the research on store brands to fashion retail sector (McColl and Moore, 2011; Moore, 1995). Own brands have been variously defined (Table 2.3), however, the definition by Whelan and Davies (2006) is appropriate, because it is inclusive, encompassing all those products which are not necessarily of the same name as the store name.

> "Own brand is any brand name used exclusively by a retail business and controlled by that business; this encompasses those products that are labelled by the retailer but because their names are not the same as the store name, can be sold more widely." (Whelan and Davies, 2006, p.393)

This definition provides a more pragmatic standpoint as per the current UK marketplace. To illustrate this further, the following own brand example is appropriate:

> "Boots, the chemist chain based in England, use their corporate name on certain products but a range of independent brand names on other own brands, such as No. 7, a range of cosmetics. Such naming strategies are especially apparent among British retailers where own brand marketing practices are more advanced than elsewhere." (Whelan and Davies, 2006, p.394)

Since own brands are much more advanced in the UK, it will be interesting to explore whether the consumption of counterfeits have any effect on own brands, in context of this research. However, as own brands are inexpensive, low-risk purchase (Quelch and Harding, 1996), there's another category of non-luxury products which are in price competition with own brands known as mass-fashion brands.

Table 2.3 Definitions of private labels
own brands/ store brands (vs national brands)

Terminology	Researcher(s)	Year	Definition	Short description
Store brands/ Private labels	(Raju et al.)	1995	Store brands are brands owned, controlled, and sold exclusively by a retailer	Provide acceptable quality at reasonable prices
Private labels Versus National brands	(Quelch and Harding)	1996	Private labels are "Store-brand" goods; while National brands are 'Brand-name products'	Private labels are inexpensive, low-risk purchase, favouring local suppliers
Private label products	(Burton et al.)	1998	Private label brands are those sold under retailers' (or wholesalers') own labels rather than the brand name of a national manufacturer	Consumers may view private label products positively due to a desire to pay low prices (i.e., price consciousness), or a strong desire to maximize the ratio of quality received to the price paid (i.e., value consciousness), or view them negatively because they believe that price is a strong indicator of quality (i.e., a price-quality schema)
Private label brands	(Batra and Sinha)	2000	Private label brands (PLBs) are also called "store brands"	
Store brands versus National brands	(Ailawadi et al.)	2001	No definition provided	The average store brand sells for approximately 30% less than national brands
Private label brands	(Garretson et al.)	2002	No definition provided	Private label brands are typically priced below non-price promoted nationally branded goods
Own brands	(Whelan and Davies)	2006	Own brand is any brand name used exclusively by a retail business and controlled by that business	Encompasses those products that are labelled by the retailer but because their names are not the same as the store name, can be sold more widely
Private label brands	(Palmeira and Thomas)	2011	Also known as store brand (US), own brand (UK) and home brand (Australia)	Two categories of store brands: Premium store brand and value store brand

2.7.2.4 *Definitions of mass-fashion brands*

In the context of fashion sector, the mass-fashion brands are the most interchangeably used with non-luxury brands. They are also called as "high-street brands" colloquially by consumers of fashion. The mass-fashion brands, as the name suggests, are mass produced in large quantities with low emphasis of displaying status (Horowitz, 1975;

table 2.4). These brands are driven by durability, and value for money due to their low costs compared to luxury brands.

Table 2.4 Definition of mass fashion brands

Terminology	Researcher(s)	Year	Definition	Short description
Mass fashion brands	(Horowitz)	1975	Mass fashion is mass produced. It tends to be less related than elite fashion to the assertion of status differentiation in terms of dress. Mass fashion is inclined to express the aspiration to conformity rather than to assert the uniqueness of each individual wearer. Low emphasis on status differences.	It is 'economy' oriented in the sense that consumers' demand is determined primarily by considerations of durability and low prices.

The present research uses the term 'non-luxury' brands in sync with the definitions of store brands and mass-fashion brands because these definitions represent a collective understanding of the 'high-street' brands as agreed by researchers and consumers as discussed in these sections. Non-luxury brands attach low emphasis on social status connotations and are economy orientated.

After establishing the definitions of counterfeits, luxury brands, and non-luxury brands, the next section discusses the types of counterfeit markets to illustrate their impact on the original luxury and non-luxury brands.

2.8 Type of Counterfeit markets

In principle, there are two market segments that counterfeiters target: primary markets and secondary markets (OECD/EUIPO), 2019). Primary markets are defined as those markets where the categories of counterfeit goods which are priced close to those of genuine products are sold (OECD, 2019). Secondary markets are defined as those markets where counterfeits with a larger variation in price compared to the original brands are sold (OECD, 2019).

Due to being priced close to the original products, the counterfeits sold in primary markets may comprise of goods sold deceptively to consumers who purchase them unknowingly and unwillingly, known as deceptive counterfeiting (Grossman and

Shapiro, 1988b; Juggessur and Brunel, 2011) as mentioned earlier. This is because consumers mistake their purchase of the counterfeit as original because of almost similar prices of the counterfeits and original brands (OECD, 2019). This has also been established in a study by Atsumi (2016) on deceptive counterfeiting in primary markets, by applying entrepreneur formulation of monopolistic competition in the counterfeiting equilibrium. He empirically proved that in deceptive counterfeiting, there is a direct impact on all legitimate stakeholders (i.e., brand-owners, governments). Fundamentally, deceptive counterfeiting usually occurs in primary markets and is beyond the scope of this study. It is because this study intends to focus beyond this direct impact on the legitimate luxury brands.
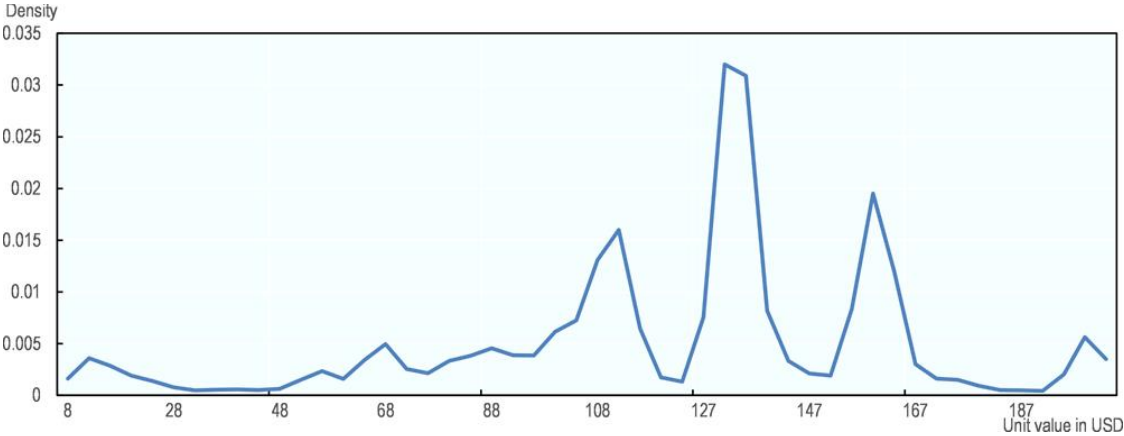
Figure 2.7 Price distribution of counterfeit shoes of brand X seized by global customs, 2014-16

(Source: Adapted from OECD, 2019, p.64)

By contrast, it is argued, whether it is indeed the case that all counterfeit goods are sold with a one-to-one substitution rate. And thus, questioning whether the counterfeits cause a one-to-one direct loss for the industry. This is a critical question but has not garnered enough deliberation by previous researchers, except only a very few (Andreas, 2010; Antonopoulos, 2018). Nevertheless, none of the prior researchers have addressed it. This research argues that the response to this can be established – to some extent – by the presence of secondary markets.

Secondary markets sell counterfeit products with a larger variation in price compared to that of genuine products (OECD, 2019). For example, figure 2.7 displays the price distribution of counterfeit shoes of a certain original brand, X seized by global customs between 2014 and 2016 (OECD, 2019). Most counterfeit shoes priced lower than $121 in the graph (figure 2.7) were targeted at secondary markets, while those priced higher than $121 (observations in the middle and on the right-hand side of the distribution)

were targeted at the primary market. Therefore, the consumers knowingly purchase the counterfeit goods sold in secondary markets and expect to a pay a lower price than for a genuine product (OECD/EUIP, 2019). The OECD report places emphasis to the distinction between primary and secondary markets. This is relevant for this research because every sale of a counterfeit product in a primary market represents a direct loss for the original luxury brand. "In secondary markets, however, only a *share* of consumers would have deliberately substituted their purchases of counterfeit products for legitimate ones. This is because in secondary markets consumers know what they are buying is fake" (OECD, 2019, p.35). Grossman and Shapiro (1988b) named it non-deceptive counterfeiting where consumers knowingly purchase counterfeits (as discussed in types of counterfeits in section 2.6 earlier). Tom et al. (1998) labelled these consumers as 'consumer accomplices.' Therefore, it can be inferred that the counterfeits sold in secondary markets do not affect the original luxury brands, rather they potentially affect the non-luxury brands.

2.8.1 Choice of non-deceptive counterfeiting in secondary markets

Based on this foundation, the present research will investigate the substitution of non-luxury brands by counterfeit luxury, in the context of secondary markets. This research zeroes in on secondary markets and excludes primary markets to focus on non-deceptive counterfeiting only. This is because non-deceptive counterfeiting mainly occurs in the domain of secondary markets as discussed.

Furthermore, most researchers have focussed on the impact of counterfeits on luxury brands (Bekir et al., 2013; Nia, A. and Zaichkowsky, 2000; Romani et al., 2012; Qian et al., 2013). The next section delves into the counterfeiting literature and synthesises the impact of counterfeits on genuine brands as studied by researchers.

2.9 Counterfeiting Research areas

To structure the relevant literature systematically, the literature review on counterfeits can be broadly classified into three areas based on their impact on – original luxury, counterfeit luxury, and non-luxury brands (figure 2.8). These three areas can be further categorised into consumer and brand perspectives. The counterfeit impact on original luxury and non-luxury brands will be discussed in detail in the next section. A list of key papers is also included in Appendix A of the thesis.
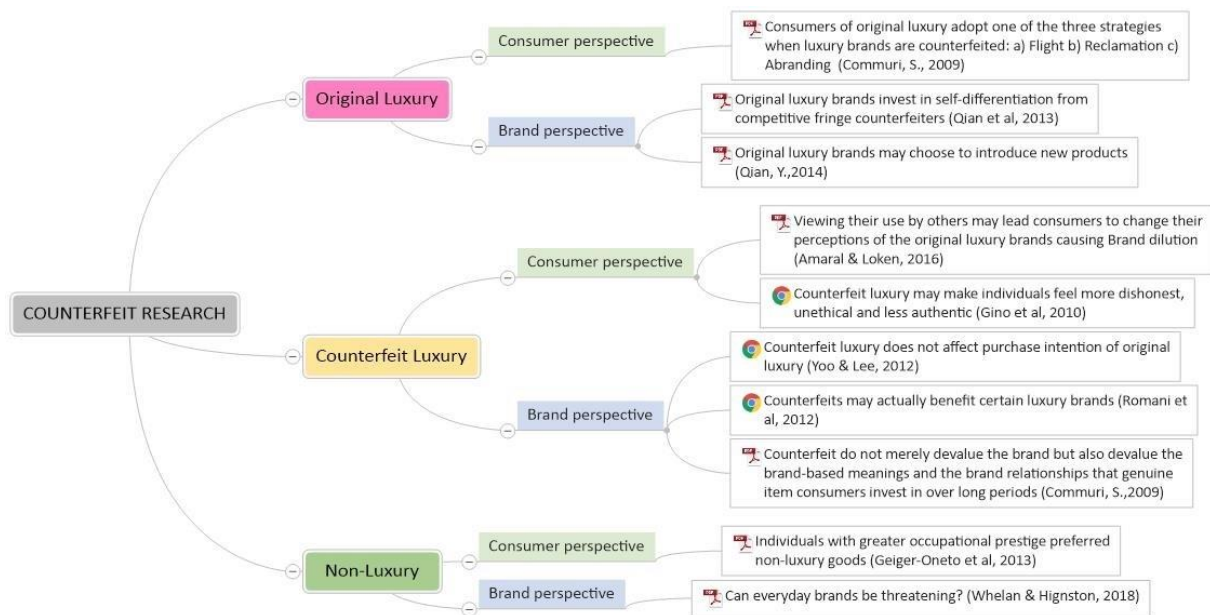
Figure 2.8 Counterfeit Research Areas

(Source: Mind map based on literature review by author)

Furthermore, counterfeiting research can also be categorised based on various areas which have been explored by researchers. Some of these are as follows which are depicted in figure 2.9:

a. Counterfeiting ecosystems: Many studies have studied counterfeiting ecosystems such as demand (Large, 2009) and supply of counterfeits (Staake et al., 2012), counterfeit supply chains (Atsumi, 2016; Staake et al., 2009)

b. Counterfeit purchase antecedents: Reasons consumers willingly purchase counterfeits (Bian and Moutinho, 2009; Bian et al., 2013; Bian et al., 2016; Phau and Teah, 2009; Tom et al., 2009; Wilcox et al. 2009)

c. Consumer psychology: Self-concept and counterfeit consumption (Malik et al., 2020), effects of counterfeit consumption on females' moral disengagement and behaviour (Wang et al, 2019)

d. Luxury brands perspectives: Examination of consumer–brand connections (Randhawa et al., 2015); impact of counterfeits on luxury brands (Bekir et al., 2018; Bian et al., 2015; Yoo and Lee, 2009)

e. Morals and ethics: The ethics of counterfeiting in the fashion industry (Hilton et al., 2004); moral decoupling (Orth et al., 2019)

f. Economics of counterfeit trade: Scholars have studied the economics aspects (Grossman and Shapiro, 1988a, b.; Qian 2008; Qian et al., 2014).
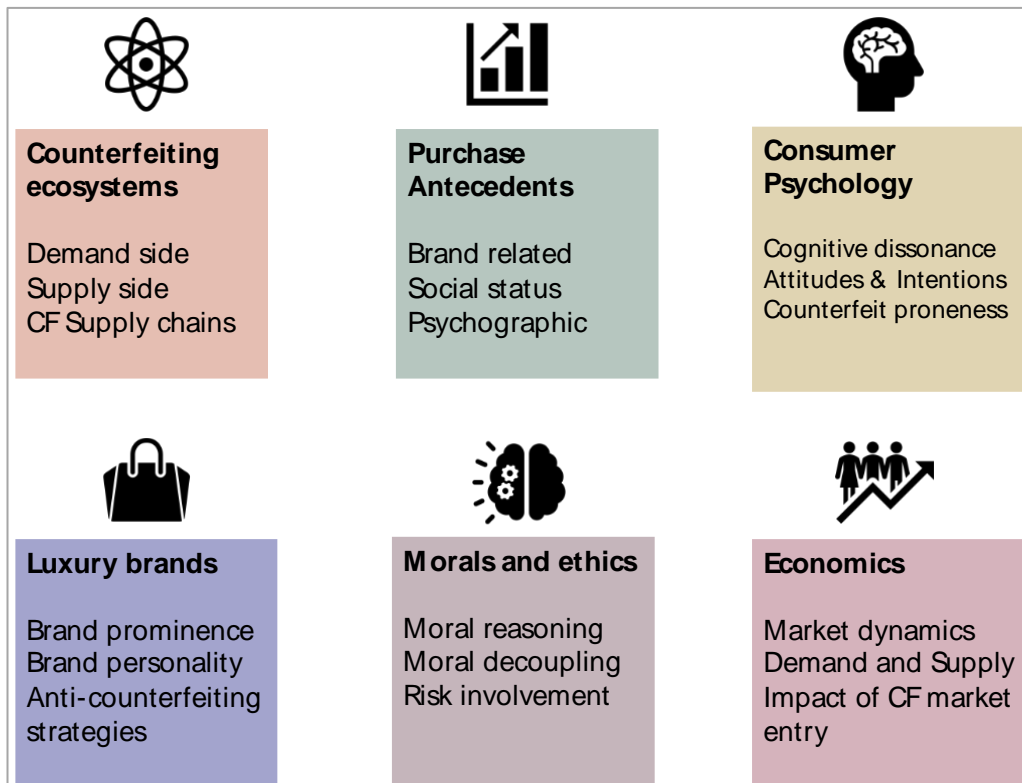
Figure 2.9 Counterfeit Research Areas

(Source: Based on literature review by author)

The areas depicted in fig. 2.9 which will be elaborated more in the subsequent sections (2.10 onwards). The three aspects of counterfeit-related research with respect to original luxury, counterfeit luxury, and non-luxury brands are mainly constituted in marketing, psychology, and sociology areas of research. These research areas can be further subdivided into five research categories, namely, brand management, ethics and behaviour, counterfeit business related, psychology, and social psychological aspects of counterfeiting (figure 2.10). The lion's share of brand aspects of counterfeiting research constitutes of their effect on the original luxury brands, and their brand protection (Bosworth and Yang, 2002; Gao, 2018; Grossman and Shapiro, 1988a; Grossman and Shapiro, 1988b; Montoro-Pons and Cuadrado-García, 2006; Qian, 2014a; Qian et al., 2013; Qian and Xie, 2014; Stevenson and Busby, 2015; Wang and Song, 2013). This is followed by few research studies on non-luxury brands (Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013).
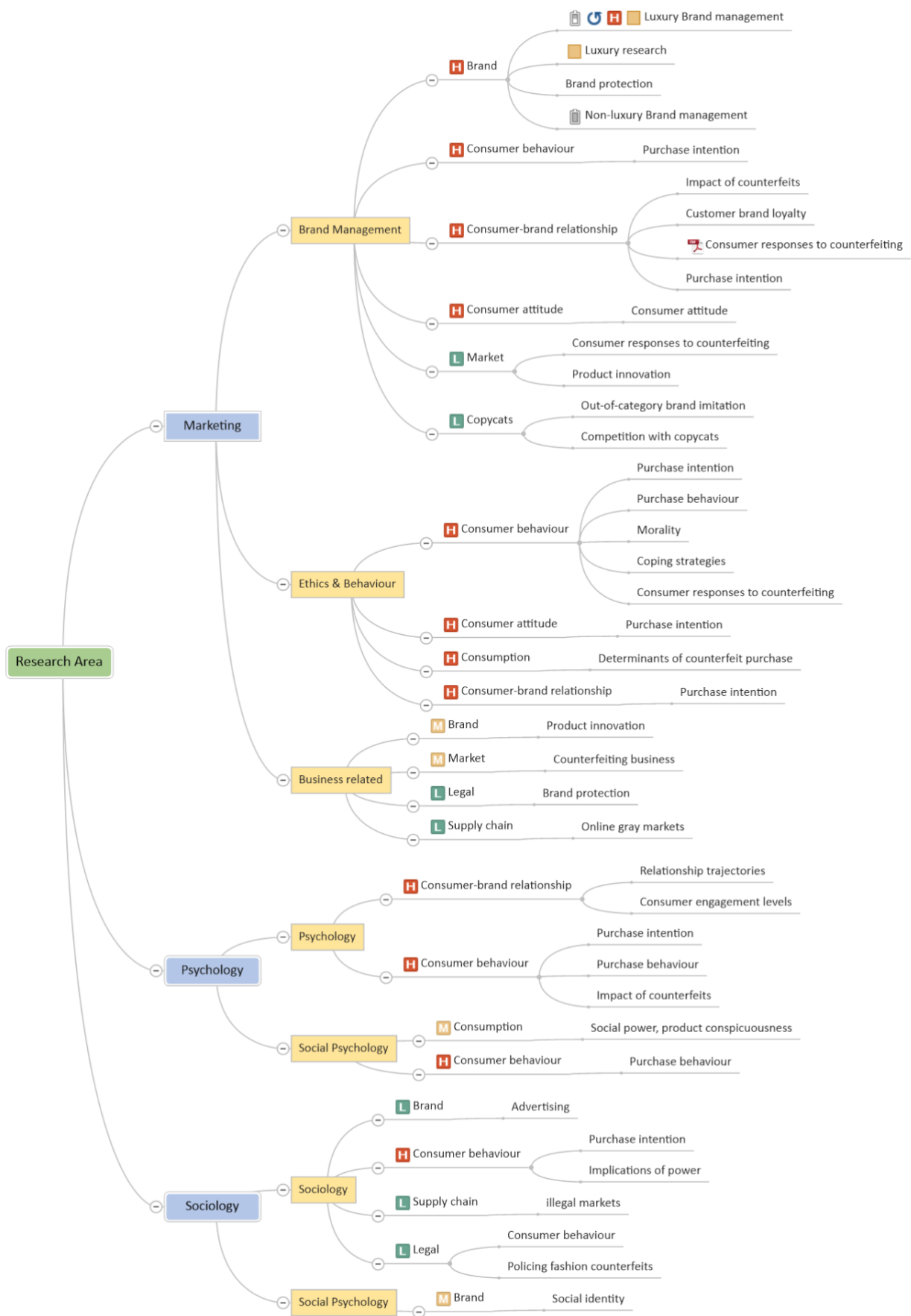
Figure 2.10 Counterfeit Research Areas

(Source: Mind map based on literature review by author)

Similarly, consumer behaviour towards counterfeits has been heavily researched to determine factors motivating consumers' preferences for counterfeits (discussed in subsequent sections). The ethical and moral aspects of counterfeit consumption have been explored by a considerable section of studies (Chen et al., 2018; Eisend, 2019; Hilton et al., 2014; Orth et al., 2019). These research areas have been depicted in the mind map in figure 2.10 which will be discussed in detail in the subsequent sections.

2.10 Impact of counterfeits on original luxury brands

As mentioned earlier, most counterfeiting related research has focused on the impact of counterfeits on the original luxury brands and has largely ignored their impact on non-luxury brands. The chronological synthesis of literature on the impact of counterfeits on original luxury is displayed in the following table 2.5. It also depicts the overall effect of counterfeits on the genuine brands according to the respective researchers, for some they have positive effect on the genuine brands (Nia and Zaichkowsky, 2000; Romani et al., 2012; Yao, 2005b), while most researchers seem to agree that counterfeits have a negative effect on the genuine brands (Bosworth and Yang, 2002; Gao, 2018; Grossman and Shapiro, 1988a; Grossman and Shapiro, 1988b; Montoro-Pons and Cuadrado-García, 2006; Qian, 2014a; Qian et al., 2013; Stevenson and Busby, 2015; Wang and Song, 2013). In some cases, the research also demonstrates mixed effect on genuine brands (Bekir et al., 2013; Biancardi et al., 2020; Qian, 2008; Qian, 2014b; Yao, 2005a).

Table 2.5 Literature review: Impact of counterfeits on original luxury brands

Authors	Year	Method	Key findings	Effect on brands
Higgins and Rubin	1986	Econometric	The optimal public and private solutions to counterfeiting are the same in the absence of enforcement costs. However, in the presence of enforcement costs, optical public enforcement is better than private enforcement.	Mixed effect
Grossman and Shapiro	1988a	Econometric	Consumers are harmed by deceptive counterfeits when they buy counterfeits unknowingly. Counterfeits cause original brands to increase their product prices and quality as a strategy to fight imitators. This decreases home and global welfare. However, when firms enhance their product quality	Negative effect

Table 2.5 [continued]

			to battle counterfeits, the home and global welfare may increase. Overall, counterfeits cause harms to the legitimate businesses and to the consumers who purchase counterfeits. The costs incurred by governments to counter counterfeits are an additional expenditures.	
Grossman and Shapiro	1988b	Econometric	Some consumers indulge in counterfeits for the status of a prestigious brand logo without paying the high price for the original brand. However, in doing so, these consumers impose a negative externality on other genuine-brand consumers who pay the hefty price for the high status of the original brand because counterfeits degrade the value of the original brands. Furthermore, the presence of counterfeits affects the supply chain of the genuine brands. Imposing tariff on low-quality imports is one of the ways to fight counterfeits which reduces the volume of counterfeit-product trade. Tariffs also enhance the supply of high-quality products. However, larger tariffs may prove detrimental to some consumers in their pursue of counterfeits.	Negative effect
Nia and Zaichkowsky	2000	Quantitative	Respondents who had a strong positive image of original luxury brands found counterfeits to be inferior; whereas those who viewed counterfeits positively did not perceive them to be inferior products. Most respondents (58 percent) did not perceive that counterfeits negatively affect the demand for original luxury brands. Moreover, a majority of respondents (69 percent) the presence of counterfeits in the market does not affect the value, satisfaction, and status associated with original luxury brands. Most respondents perceived original luxury brands to possess high brand equity. Therefore, despite the common belief that counterfeits damage the original brands, this study found that many consumers are aware of the key attributes and high-quality of original luxury brands, despite the presence of counterfeits.	Positive/ neutral effect
Bosworth and Yang	2002	Econometric	The available statistics verify the common viewpoint that counterfeiting is a significant global issue. It is not limited to developing countries but some of the major sources of counterfeit products are China and other regions of Asia Pacific. Some of the important causal factors which lead to the increase in the manufacturing and supply of counterfeit products are income and cost disparities, the varying market size, and proximity of the market.	Negative effect

Table 2.5 [continued]

Hilton et al.	2004	Qualitative	Counterfeiting in the clothing industry has several complex issues surrounding the ethical judgments related to Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). Some cases of IPR infringement may seem easy to perceive legally, however, there may be underlying factors which need to be examined which may affect the ethical judgments. For instance, norms in the fashion industry itself, cultural differences, and economic resources which may vary across countries.	Does not cover
Yao	2005a	Econometric	Introduction and enforcement of IPR laws can mitigate the problem of counterfeiting to some extent because it strengthens the incentives of the monopolist (original brands) to enhance product quality. However, this may deter their production in large quantities and impact the distribution of genuine products. The solution lies in the trade-off between underproduction and underutilisation by policy makers. The study provides criteria to minimise social welfare losses using a single-period counterfeiting model to resolve the trade-off.	Mixed effect
Yao	2005b	Econometric	The study proposes a vertical product-differentiated counterfeiting model, which considers the monitoring rate to detect counterfeits as a barometer to check the strength of IPR enforcement. The study is based on a luxury market with Veblen effects (preference for status goods). In the presence of firm IPR enforcements and strong Veblen effects, the counterfeits benefit the monopolist (luxury brand owners) by incentivising it to enhance the product quality and increase prices. Most studies claim that counterfeiters harm the monopolist profits, however, this study argues that this is not true due to Veblen effects. On the contrary, the study shows that counterfeits can even help original brands to sell at higher prices because the penalties under IPR enforcement are pocketed by the IPR holders (and not by the government). Therefore, the original luxury brands gain more income from successful enforcement, and this incentivises them to increase their selling-price.	Positive effect
Qian	2008	Econometric	In the short term, the entry of counterfeits in the market may diminish the expected quality of products and exert a downward pressure on prices. However, counterfeits also cause the original	Mixed effect

Table 2.5 [continued]

			brands to improve their product quality and sell at a higher price. The author suggests innovation as a business strategy to fight counterfeits. Due to costly differentiation strategies of the original brands, prices of authentic products increase after two to three years of counterfeit entry. Additionally, counterfeits induce legitimate brands to invest in self-enforcement initiatives and facilitate downstream vertical integration. An interesting finding is that companies with adverse relationship with the government (especially in countries such as China) encounter more counterfeiting infringements. Therefore, fostering a good relationship with the government can bolster efforts in fighting against counterfeits.	
Romani et al.	2012	Quantit ative	In the context of luxury fashion products, counterfeits can enhance consumers' willingness to pay (WTP) for the original luxury brands. However, this is applicable only in the case of popular luxury brands such as Gucci.	Positive effect
Qian et al.	2013	Econo metric	In scenarios of non-deceptive counterfeiting, the original luxury brands increase the searchable quality (e.g., appearance) of their products to differentiate from the counterfeits, however, they do not increase the experiential quality (e.g., functionality). Original brands are able to invest in innovation when they enjoy a cost advantage over counterfeits, and therefore, when there is no significant cost advantage, the original brands have no incentive to innovate. In the scenarios of deceptive counterfeiting, the market incentive shifts from pooling equilibrium to separating equilibrium. Due to the separating equilibrium, the original brands are more likely to increase their products' searchable quality and decrease their investment in experiential quality. This is socially wasteful if searchable quality of products are not as useful for consumers as their experiential quality.	Negative effect
Bekir et al.	2013	Econo metric	Counterfeits have the capability to produce a positive externality on the demand for original luxury brands if the aspirational effect is stronger than the snob effect. However, if the substitutability of original brands and counterfeit brands is higher, it implies that counterfeiting is less profitable for the original brands.	Mixed effect

Table 2.5 [continued]

Wang and Song	2013	Quantitative	Chinese consumers have two main attitudes in regard to counterfeit luxury brands – first, that counterfeits have education effect and seconds, that counterfeits have devaluation effect. Irrespective of their prior experiences purchasing original luxury brands and/or counterfeit brands, consumers generally believe that counterfeits have a harmful effect on the original luxury brands, and they damage the value of these brands.	Negative effect
Qian	2014a	Econometric	This paper maps the economic impacts of counterfeiting. The author examines the market equilibrium conditions, and the brand strategies of the original brands to determine the quality standards of their products, other strategies beside price in an effort to fight counterfeiting. In doing so, the study unveils the effects of counterfeit entry on the existing marketing norms of the original brands. Counterfeits tend to exert downward pressure on prices of original brands by decreasing the quality expectation in the short-term. However, original brands are encouraged to increase their quality standards further and offer their products at a higher price. Therefore, in a bid to battle counterfeiting, authentic brands adopt innovation as a business strategy.	Negative effect
Qian	2014b	Quantitative	The study uncovers the heterogeneous effects of counterfeits on the sales of branded products of three quality tiers among existing product lines. Specifically, counterfeits have both advertising effects for the brand and substitution effects for the authentic products. The advertising effect appears to dominate the substitution effect for high-end authentic products, as reflected in the finding of a net positive effect of counterfeiting on the sales of such goods. The substitution effect outweighs the advertising effect for low-end product sales, resulting in a net negative effect.	Mixed effect
Stevenson and Busby	2015	Qualitative	This research identified the strategies adopted by counterfeiters to exploit the legitimate supply chains in the proliferation of counterfeit products. It developed a theoretical understanding of the counterfeit trade and mapped its effect on competitive resources. The authors proposed measures to protect the legitimate supply chains against the rival counterfeiters.	Negative effect

Table 2.5 [continued]

Gao	2018	Econo metric	This study found that increasing overt anti-counterfeiting technologies does not necessarily help in convincing consumers to not buy counterfeit products.	Negative effect
Biancard i et al.	2020	Econo metric	High penalty fines and IPR enforcement efforts against counterfeits benefit the original brands. Counterfeits lead to increased prices of the original products, thereby decreasing their overall demand in the market. However, if the income from the penalties is high, it helps the original brands sell more in the presence of counterfeiting than in its absence. The authors argue that the genuine firms enjoy the benefits of competition from counterfeits when the production costs of the original branded products are high. Nevertheless, the penalty levels at very high level may damage the overall demand for the genuine products.	Mixed effect

(Source: Based on literature review by author)

One of the key papers studying the perceptions and attitudes of luxury brand owners towards counterfeit luxury goods was by Nia and Zaichkowsky (2000), which found that majority of the respondents disagreed that their purchase intentions of the original luxury brands are adversely affected by the presence of counterfeits. An interesting finding from their study is the purchase frequency of counterfeits and originals; notably, *only nine percent* of the respondents had purchased *counterfeits* more than seven times in the past three years, whereas 46 percent respondents had purchased original luxury more than seven times in the same time period. A critical aspect to be noted in their sample of 74 luxury brand consumers is the fact that all these respondents are mainly high-income individuals. This indicates easy affordability of the high priced original luxury products, and therefore, more inclination to purchase them regardless of the availability of their counterfeit versions. Nia and Zaichkowsky (2000) also concluded that the majority (58 percent) of respondents believe counterfeits do not decrease the demand for the original luxury brands. However, this finding would have been more generalizable if the sample also included middle/ low class consumers. This was achieved to some extent by researchers such as Commuri (2009) and Romani et al. (2012) who considered samples from different strata of society.

In contradiction to the above findings by Nia and Zaichkowsky (2000), a later study by Commuri (2009) concluded that the consumers of original luxury brands are not indifferent to the widespread availability of counterfeits as concluded by the former.

Rather, using 40 in-depth interviews of genuine-item consumers, the research by Commuri (2009) concluded that using different strategies these consumers manage brand associations in their own ways when challenged by migrants of social class. A particularly interesting finding was that consumers from previously underprivileged classes tend to distance themselves from widely counterfeited luxury brands to escape the stereotype and confusion about the authenticity of the brand logo they display. Though Commuri's (2009) work draws attention to the competition between consumers of counterfeits and those of original luxury, it does not encompass the competition between luxury counterfeits and the non-luxury brands. This is principally relevant because he discussed about strategies such as *abranding* wherein affluent customers tend to hide brand affiliations in order to avoid emulation by the *nouveau riche*. It implies that as a strategy to delineate this demarcation some consumers could also reject luxury altogether and adopt non-luxury instead. This concept was explored by Geiger-Oneto et al. (2013) in their research on the third possibility of consumer choice: non-luxury, after rejecting both luxury and its counterfeit versions.

2.11 Impact of counterfeits on non-luxury brands

Pertaining to the aspect of non-luxury as an alternative choice to luxury (or counterfeits), Geiger-Oneto et al. (2013) found that consumers with higher occupational prestige showed higher propensity to choose non-luxury brands over luxury brands. Their research is one of the rare studies which have incorporated the non-luxury viewpoint into the counterfeiting debate. Despite criticism about overemphasis on luxury brands (Cannon and Rucker, 2019; Whelan and Hingston, 2018), the branding literature has increasingly focused on luxury brands and overlooked the brands that are "everyday, pedestrian, and seemingly unimportant" (Coupland, 2005, p.115).

Although Geiger-Oneto et al. (2013) did blaze the trail highlighting the possibility of non-luxury brands as an alternate consumer choice in terms of original versus counterfeit luxury, there have been no further research in this area to the best of the researcher's knowledge. This research gap needs to be addressed because the presence of non-luxury gains further prominence when the counterfeits are placed according to their quality tiers on a Genuine-Counterfeit Continuum as proposed by Gentry et al. (2001) in the figure 2.11 below. The last two columns in the figure depict

the key difference between high- and low-quality counterfeits. It can be argued that though high quality counterfeits could be competing with the genuine luxury brands and are possibly sold in the primary markets (as deceptive counterfeits), the low quality counterfeits are easily detectable, are sold in secondary markets (as non-deceptive counterfeits) to consumers looking for them (OECD, 2017). It is the latter which could be competing with non-luxury brands, on account of being low quality and sold at low prices.

Genuine item	Second	Overrun	Legitimate copycat	High quality counterfeit	Low quality counterfeit
Original product with full warranty	Manufacturer authorized products with defects or out of date	Manufacturer unauthorized locally produced to original standards	Retailers such as the Limited copy designs from fashion houses	Not produced to original standards yet similar on key attributes	Significantly different from original on several key attributes

Figure 2.11 Genuine-Counterfeit Continuum
(Source: Adapted from Gentry et al., 2001, p.262)

Among several researchers evaluating the impact of counterfeits on the original brands (Bekir et al., 2013; Bosworth and Yang, 2002; Grossman and Shapiro, 1988a; Yao, 2005b), it was Qian (2014b) who specifically dealt with this perspective of analysing the precise impact of counterfeits by considering the quality-tiers. However, from the quality-tiers proposed by Gentry et al. (2001) the key departure point for Qian (2014b) is that she considered the quality-tiers within the luxury brand product lines. Despite this dissimilarity, both these research studies are significant because they depart from the dichotomy of genuine and counterfeit luxury and draw attention towards a more continuous differential relationship between the two. This consideration of various quality-tiers of the genuine product stands in contrast with the basic assumption made by Grossman and Shapiro (1988b) that all high-quality products of a given status level are perfect substitutes. This perspective is relevant for this research because it opens the potential positioning of non-luxury brands in this continuum for a more nuanced analysis of the counterfeit impact on brands. A key finding by Qian (2014b) was that counterfeits hurt the low-end products of a genuine brand more than the high-end products because counterfeits are closer substitutes for low-end products than the high-end ones. This finding is critical because it clearly identifies the specific product lines of genuine brands which are competing directly with the counterfeit products,

which had not been identified by prior researchers. However, a missing link which further advances our knowledge of counterfeit impact is the connection between these low-end genuine product lines and the competing quality-grade of counterfeits. This was achieved by Bian et al. (2013) by adding the detailed quality-grades of counterfeits and the corresponding consumer base who appreciate these different grades of counterfeits.

Going one step further from Gentry et al. (2001), Bian et al. (2013) advance the classification of the grades of counterfeits into four categories from low to high level of counterfeit product-quality: B-level, A-level, AA-level and super AA-level. Ferreira (2016) proposed a further nuanced version of counterfeit quality-tiers in the form of a palette of marketplace options based on their materiality and risk in acquiring the counterfeits (figure 2.12). This model of "the palette of marketplace options" propositioned a wider continuum of counterfeit types including various types of "inspired-items" in the model. According to Ferreira, the conceptual fashion product, placed in the middle of the arc, represents the aesthetic reference for both – counterfeits and inspired-items. The conceptual fashion product is the first product launched in the market with a new product design concept which is then copied by counterfeiters. The curve represents the variation in materiality and the base of the model represents the variation in risk in acquiring the counterfeit.
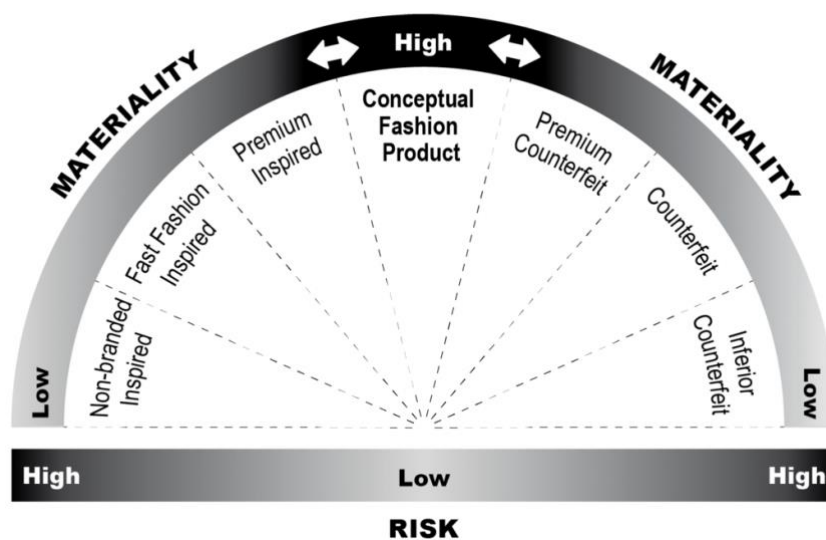
Figure 2.12 The Palette of Marketplace Options
(Source: Adapted from Ferreira, 2016, p.212)

Ferreira argues that the consumption of inspired-items of low material quality, represented on the left side of the arc, is a high-risk option. Similarly, inferior

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counterfeits produced using low quality material (e.g., synthetic leather-like fabrics) are considered high risk associated with a negative consumption experience. Likewise, the premium counterfeits and premium inspired-items earn high on material quality and possess low risk due to their stronger resemblances to the original conceptual fashion product in the centre of the arc. Moving away from the Gentry et al.'s (2001) hierarchical model of genuine-counterfeit continuum, Ferreira's (2016) model of the palette of marketplace options depicts a more fluid consumer search for counterfeits. A major limitation of this model though is being a generalised depiction of consumers' counterfeit consumption which may not fit all qualities of counterfeits neatly into each model categories. Nevertheless, it does suggest some useful insights into consumers' choices pertaining to counterfeit brands.

2.12 Types of counterfeit consumers and counterfeiting research from consumers' perspectives

Bian et al. (2013) matched the desirability of these various grades of counterfeits with different types of consumers by linking the classification of consumers by Han et al. (2010). According to the taxonomy proposed by Han et al. (2010), consumers can be divided into four types based on their wealth and desire for status: Patrician, Parvenu, Poseur, and Proletarian. Patricians are consumers with significant wealth but with a low need to display status as they pay a premium price for the subtle differences which only they can recognize. Parvenus are those with significant wealth along with a desire for status, therefore, preferring loud branded goods to signify their status. Poseurs and Proletarians are those with lesser wealth; however, a key difference between them is though Poseurs crave for status, Proletarians are less status conscious. Therefore, Poseurs need to signal their need for status by displaying loud products, but due to their low incomes, they often buy counterfeit branded products with loud signals.

Building on the above discussion, as Poseurs are more susceptible to buying counterfeits due to financial inability to purchase the genuine luxury brands, it is unlikely that *all the products* which Poseurs consume are counterfeits. In other words, it is intuitive that Poseurs devote some portion of their total consumption to ordinary, everyday brands, i.e., non-luxury products. This means that on some occasions, they could substitute *non-luxury brands* with counterfeits of luxury brands in an attempt to signal status. This argument is also supported by Qian's (2014b) finding that the genuine brands are not affected by counterfeits of low quality as they capture a very

different consumer segment that would not purchase the original product anyway. This effectively implies that it is this consumer segment (i.e., the Poseurs) that generally consumes non-luxury brands and sometimes substitute them with counterfeits of luxury. Furthermore, since these Poseur consumers are consciously looking for counterfeits (i.e., indulging into non-deceptive counterfeits), it is likely that they are looking for *secondary markets* openly selling counterfeits (as established earlier). The present research will incorporate these types of counterfeit consumers and investigate their consumption choices. It will also explore other categories of consumer types depending on other relevant factors which may present deeper insights into the psychological aspects of consumers which motivate them to purchase or reject luxury brands and their counterfeits. Additionally, the research will explore the factors which lead other consumers to choose non-luxury brands. For example, research by Geiger-Oneto et al. (2013) reported that factors such as occupational prestige and value consciousness may deter some consumers to avoid both luxury and counterfeits due to the label attached to them. And that consumers with high occupational prestige tend to find buying luxury as the easy and quick access to status because these brands are akin to buying status without having the intelligence or capability which may require more effort and perseverance. For example, getting a degree or a gaining employment at a prestigious organisation is much harder to achieve status without buying the label of luxury brands. As a result, such consumers with high occupational prestige are more likely to prefer non-luxury brands (Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013).

After discussing the types of consumers purchasing counterfeits, the next section will discuss various theories and theoretical models used by many researchers to rationalise consumers' purchase behaviour of counterfeits.

2.13 Theories related to the purchase of counterfeit products

With specific regard to non-deceptive counterfeits, Samaddar and Menon (2020) drew attention to the different theoretical models used to explain consumers' readiness to purchase such products. For instance, the theory of reasoned action (TRA; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977) endeavours to explain the connection between attitude and actions whereas the theory of planned behaviour (TPB; Ajzen, 1991) extends this model to connect a person's beliefs to his/her actions. These two theories have been widely utilised in counterfeit research to ascertain the linkages between beliefs, attitudes, the intention to behave in a certain manner, and actual behaviour.

A further theory utilised is the Cognitive Dissonance Theory (CDT; Eisend and Schuchert-Güler, 2006; Sharma and Chan, 2016) which chiefly addresses circumstances where contradictory outlooks or viewpoints are experienced by a consumer (Festinger, 1962). Such attitudes lead to emotional stress and consequently to an amendment of outlooks, viewpoints, or behaviours, to reduce the extent of stress and restore stability (Bem, 1967). In the context of counterfeit products, Penz and Stöttinger (2012) highlight that although consumers are aware, in general, of the illegality of purchasing such products, they disregard their moral fears and make the purchases resulting in cognitive dissonance (Eisend and Schuchert-Güler, 2015).

Another theory, the Social Learning Theory (SLT; Bandura & Walters, 1977) attempts to explain the manner in which consumers take the social acceptance of the purchase counterfeit products into consideration and hence not only purchase counterfeit products but also develop a favourable outlook in this regard (Stöttinger et al., 2017). On the other hand, Shan et al. (2021) used self-discrepancy theory in their endeavour to explain how consumers' actual and ideal images influenced their purchase of counterfeit luxury goods. In their study, Marticotte and Arcand (2017) utilise the social identity theory and TPB to study the relationship between Schadenfreude and consumers' attitude toward counterfeiting and intention to purchase counterfeit goods.

The functional theory of attitudes (or attitudinal functions) conceptualised by Smith et al. (1956) and Katz (1960) has also been utilised in attempts to explain the purchase of counterfeits. For instance, Sharma and Chan (2017) used this theory to create an extended conceptual framework to investigate the role played by attitudinal functions in the purchase behaviour related to counterfeits. The knowledge function basically helps consumers develop an attitude towards an object and hence to take quick decisions. On the other hand, consumers are helped by the value-expressive function to communicate their core principles, characteristic predilections, and insights with others, leading to interaction and identification of other consumers with compatible thoughts. The ego-defensive attitude pertains to outlooks that help a person to preserve his/her self-confidence and deal with concerns stemming from internal struggles. This attitude is also referred to as the externalization function (Smith et al., 1956) wherein individuals are revealed to utilise defence systems such as, 'denial', 'repression', and 'projection', as safeguards from threats originating from their surroundings, both external and internal (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Consumers are aided in increasing incentives and reducing penalties from entities in their surroundings

by outlooks that achieve the function of utility or contribution (Herek, 1987; Katz, 1960). Consumers are helped by the last attitudinal function, social-adjustive, to relate to reference groups and to agree with the expectations of others to guarantee social interactions that are effortless and successful (Smith et al., 1956; Snyder & DeBono, 1989).

The Consumption Value Theory (CVT) of Sheth et al. (1991) is another theory utilised in studies related to the purchase of counterfeits (e.g., Weidmann et al., 2017). This theory was developed to capture the different value-related components that influence the behavioural choices of consumers. The theory uses five diverse values: 'functional', 'emotional', 'social', 'epistemic', and 'conditional' (Sheth et al., 1991, p. 160-163) to explain the choice-related behaviour of consumers. All the five values signify various perceptions of "perceived utility". For instance, in the case of functional value, the "perceived utility" is obtained from the capacity of an alternative for functional, physical, or utilitarian performance whereas in the case of emotional value the perceived utility is obtained from the capacity of the alternative to stir up feelings or emotions. In the case of social value, the perceived utility is obtained from the association of an alternative with at least one exclusive social group, while for epistemic value, the perceive utility is found in the capacity of an alternative to stir up interest, offer freshness, and/or fulfil a thirst for information. Finally, in the case of conditional value, an alternative obtains perceived utility as the outcome of a certain situation or group of situations encountered by the person making the choice (Sheth et al., 1991).

In recent research by Manstead (2018) on how socioeconomic status impacts thoughts, feelings, and behaviour, he illustrates how the long-lasting impact of SES influences individual and social identities of people and their consumption behaviours. The lower social classes are more prone to perceived threat compared to the middle- and upper-class, on account of less security in employment, safety, health (Kraus et al., 2012; Manstead, 2018). To further illustrate the interplay between SES and consumption in the context of fashion brands, Wall and Large (2010) proposed a model of aspirational hierarchy of brand consumption. At the top of the pyramid lie the "trend setters" who are the celebrities, fashion models, and reference group for the others in the social hierarchy to follow. The second stratum in the model of brand consumption belongs to the *"cognoscenti"* who are the privileged consumers belonging to the elite social class. Underneath the *cognoscenti* on the consumption hierarchy lie "the crowd",

who consume fashion brands primarily to be able to conform to the standard fashion norms and mainly consume mass fashion brands (Wall and Large, 2010). The crowd can be divided into two sub-groups – aspirational consumers and conformity consumers. The "aspirational consumers" aspire to be at top of "the crowd" and tend to be concurrent consumers of both original luxury and counterfeit luxury brands. These will be discussed more in detail in chapter 3.

Following this discussion on theories used in counterfeiting research, the next section discusses the factors affecting counterfeit purchase.

2.14 Factors affecting the purchase of counterfeits

Eisend and Schuchert-Güler (2006) noted that consumers' readiness to purchase counterfeits was based on the typology of goods, that is, "search" and "experience" goods (Nelson, 1970). Search goods refer to goods where the customer can evaluate a product's quality prior to purchase. On the other hand, a customer cannot perform this evaluation in the case of experience goods. In addition, customers' readiness to take chances can determine their readiness to buy counterfeits that have chiefly experience features. A further facet that influences consumers is product differentiation (Shultz & Saporito, 1996) wherein consumers purchase products either due to their status (i.e., search goods) or their functionality (Eisend and Schuchert-Güler, 2006).

Another study by Penz and Stöttinger (2005) used the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB, Ajzen, 1991), Self-Identity (Campbell et al., 1996), and Personality Traits (Fullerton et al., 1996; Raju, 1980; Tigert et al., 1976) in an attempt to explain the reason behind consumers' decision to purchase counterfeits. TPB notes that a person's intention to engage in a behaviour influences the behaviour. In addition, the intention itself is influenced by the consumers' opinions of the behaviour, the belief that significant persons will support or approve of the behaviour (subjective norm), and the consumers' perceptions regarding their ability to behave in a certain manner (perceived behavioural control) (Ajzen, 1991). In other words, TPB combines a person's control over their own behaviour and explains the influences on it. On the other hand, Self-Identity (Self-Concept) pertains to the impact of a person's self-esteem on their intentions (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Sparks & Shepherd, 1992). Additionally, it is posited that a person with undefined or ambiguous self-concept may be more vulnerable to the impacts of external stimuli on their self-concept and hence

be inclined to purchase notable luxury items to indicate a more privileged self-concept (Brockner, 1984; Campbell et al., 1991; Cook et al., 2002; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Personality traits, such as, readiness to take risks (Cordell et al., 1996; Cox, 1967; Tan, 2002), fashion involvement (Tom et al., 1998; Wee et al., 1995), and ethical predisposition (DeGeorge, 1982; Dodge et al., 1996), can also influence the attitudes of consumers with regard to purchasing counterfeits.

In their study, Harun et al. (2020) suggested that the past experiences of consumers with regard to purchases of counterfeits, could influence their perceptions, attitudes, and repurchase behaviour. Their study submitted that repurchase intention (Ahmad et al., 2014), that is, the intention of a customer to choose a certain service or product after having already chosen it was related to the consumers' past purchases (e.g., Ahmad et al., 2014; De Matos et a., 2008; Othman et al., 2018; Yoo and Lee, 2009), materialism, that is, the importance of material goods and their influence on a person's behaviour as regards the ownership of such goods (e.g., Goldsmith et al., 2011; Ong et al., 2013; Phau et al., 2009; Tsang et al., 2014), social factors such as, social status/class and social pressure (e.g., Fernandes, 2013; Hidayat and Diwasasri, 2013; Ong et al., 2013), economic benefits (e.g., Ahmad et al., 2014; Norum and Cuno, 2011; Ong et al., 2013; Poddar at al., 2012), and attitude (e.g., Ahmad et al., 2014; Bestoon, 2013; Hidayat and Diwasasri, 2013; Rizwan et al., 2012) together with demographic characteristics such as, gender, age, and income (e.g., Swami et al., 2009; Wee and Cheok, 1995). Overall, Harun et al. (2020) found that consumers' intentions to repurchase counterfeits were influenced by their gender but not by their age and income. Moreover, the consumers repurchase intentions were influenced by their past purchases and materialism, social factors, economic benefits, and attitude.

Adiprima et al. (2020) used Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) as their basis in their attempt to understand the factors influencing the intention of students to purchase counterfeit fashion products. The TRA postulates that a consumer's purchase behaviour is influenced by the intention to purchase which in turn is influenced by the consumer's attitude as regards the product. Adiprima et al. (2020) further incorporated value consciousness, social risk, performance risk, subjective and descriptive norms, ethical consciousness, status consumption, Muslim religiosity, previous experience, and attitudes into their theoretical model (figure 2.13). Of the different determinants, social risk, performance risk, descriptive norms, ethical consciousness, and Muslim religiosity, were found to influence the students' attitude

towards counterfeit fashion products. Moreover, this attitude influenced their intention to purchase counterfeits. Additionally, this study found that consumers who had prior experience with purchasing counterfeit products had favourable attitudes towards counterfeit products and the intention to purchase such products.
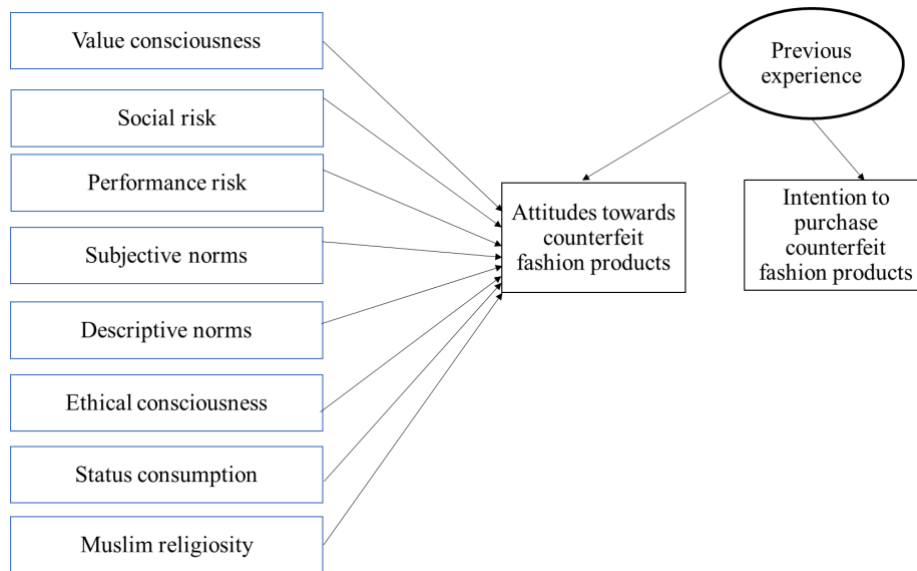
Figure 2.13 Theoretical model to assess intention to purchase counterfeit fashion products
(Source: Adapted from Adiprima et al., 2020, p. 1327)

Samaddar and Menon (2020) highlight that the influences on non-deceptive counterfeit purchases may be grouped into three categories: related to product or brand, social facets, and the psychological attributes and emotions of consumers. Some of the popular factors associated with products/brands are product features, objective of the purchase, character and status of the brand. On the other hand, social facets encompass factors such as, social assessments, social effect, and subjective norms. Psychological facets include consumers' personality traits, their outlooks, values, viewpoints, lifestyles, interests, brand consciousness, materialist, hedonic consumption, perceived risk, moral equity, and ethics (Samaddar and Menon, 2020). Other facets such as, consumers' opinions towards and trustworthiness of counterfeits, are also studied. For instance, Bian and Veloutsou (2007) found that both British and Chinese consumers, in general, have a poor opinion regarding counterfeit brands and find them untrustworthy. Moreover, both find it difficult to differentiate between original and fake products (Bian and Veloutsou, 2007).
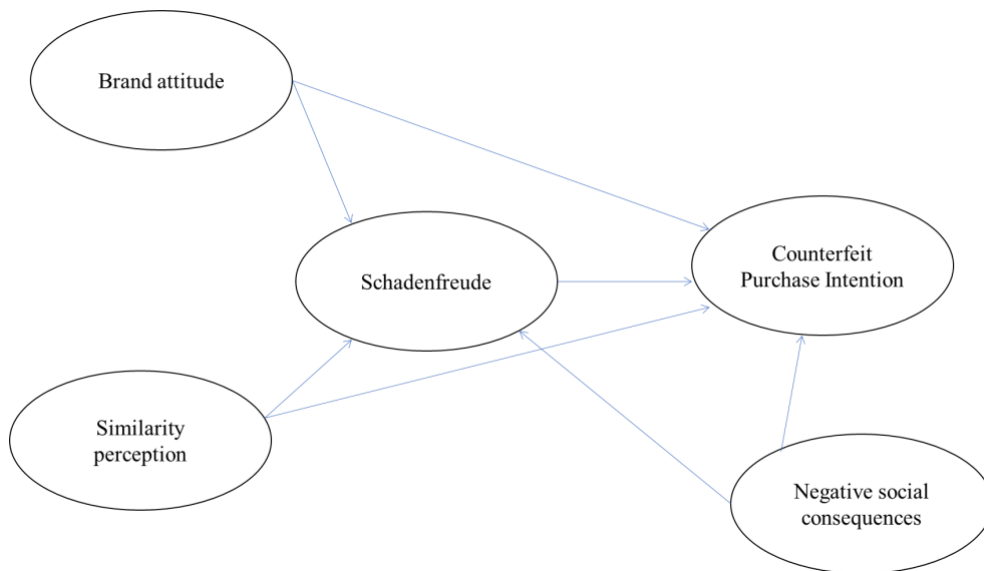
**Figure 2.14 Conceptual Model to assess Schadenfreude, attitude,
and purchase intentions of counterfeits**

(Source: Adapted from Marticotte and Arcand, 2017, p. 5)

Further, researchers have used demographic factors such as, gender and level of income, situational aspects, and newer aspects such as, mindfulness (Sheth et al., 2011) and Schadenfreude (that is, the pleasure experienced in response to the adversity of another; Marticotte and Arcand, 2017). Schadenfreude has its basis in social identity theory (SIT; (Grohs et al., 2015; Phillips-Melancon and Dalakas, 2014) which claims that individuals consider that they fit into a certain social group and also that their group differs from other groups. Maricotte and Arcand (2017) found that there was a positive relationship between Schadenfreude, consumers' intention to purchase, and consumers' attitude as regards counterfeiting (figure 2.14). On the other hand, Schadenfreude was found to have a negative relationship with the consumers' attitude to the genuine brand (Marticotte and Arcand, 2017).

In a recent study, Tunçel (2021) investigated consumers' readiness to buy counterfeit luxury brands (CLB) and highlighted that the personal factors most studied by researchers with regard to consumers' readiness to purchase CLB included attitude towards counterfeits, personal integrity, status consumption/status-seeking, materialism, value consciousness, and personal gratification. A few other personal factors are also sometimes considered such as, idealism, possession-based happiness (PBH), and attitude toward the legality of counterfeit products (LCP). Tunçel (2021) used the general theory of marketing ethics (Hunt and Vitell, 1986) and the

theory of reasoned action (TRA; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) as the bases for a theoretical model to assess the readiness of consumers to purchase CLB (figure 2.15).
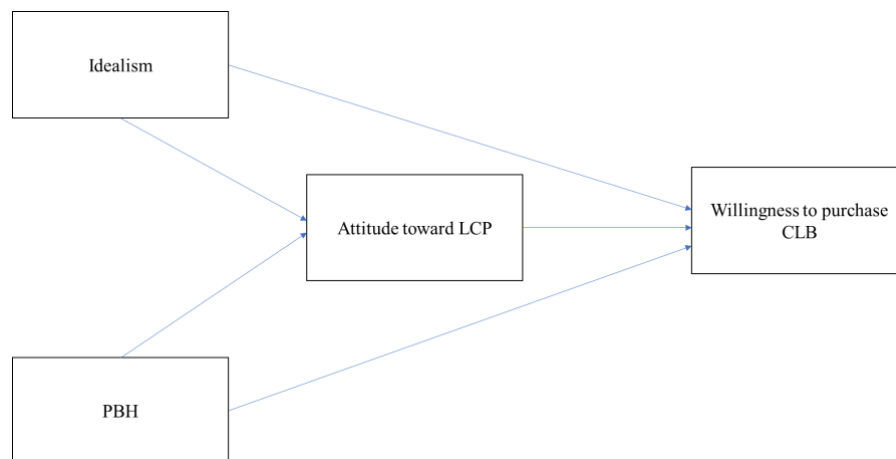
Figure 2.15 Theoretical Model to assess readiness to purchase CLB
(Source: Adapted from Tunçel, 2021, p. 5)

Hunt and Vitell's (1986) theory suggests that consumers make moral judgments based on 'deontological' or 'teleological' assessments when faced with a moral dilemma (for instance, whether or not to purchase a counterfeit product). The key issue considered by the deontological method is the ethical status of the behaviour. In contrast, the key issue considered by the teleological method is the extent of benefit or detriment that will be caused by the behaviour. These assessments are strongly associated with the moral philosophy and personal principles of a consumer. Favourable outcomes and being concerned about the well-being of others are promoted by idealism, a facet of ethical thinking, which corresponds to the teleological approach. Consequently, there is a lower probability that idealistic consumers would purchase CLB. Materialism, as another individual value, is a factor that can further influence not only the attitude towards LCP but also the intent to purchase CLB. Subsequently, Tunçel (2021) found that while idealism negatively impacts LCP, it positively impacts the willingness to purchase CLB.

Another empirical study by Shan et al. (2021) investigated the influence of actual-ideal self-discrepancy (AISD) on the purchase intentions of consumers with regard to counterfeit luxury brands. (figure 2.16). The basis of AISD is the self-discrepancy theory which marks the differences between the 'actual' and 'ideal' selves (Higgins, 1987). The actual self signifies an individual's view of his/her existent characteristics while the ideal self indicates an individual's view of the characteristics which he/she would ideally like to own. Consequently, AISD generates feelings that are

uncomfortable or unpleasant and which a person attempts to lessen or settle (Higgins, 1987). Research (e.g., Dittmar, 2005; Elliott and Wattanasuwan, 1998; Hirschman, 1981; Kaminakis et al., 2014; Kim and Rucker, 2012) indicates that individuals use some forms of consumption behaviour deal with self-discrepancy including the compulsive buying, the buying of 'symbolic' products, and luxury products. Further, counterfeits may provide persons with AISD with a reasonably priced choice to help develop an improved self-regard (Bian et al., 2016; Penz and Stöttinger, 2005). Shan et al. (2021) further used self-enhancement, the stimulus that promotes positive feelings about self and obtain positive observations from others (Jones, 1973), and moral decoupling, the process of emotional detachment by which individuals deliberately separate beliefs of morality from beliefs of performance (Bhattacharjee et al., 2013). Their rationale for using these two parameters as mediating and moderating influences, respectively, was the indications in prior research that while self-enhancement can be enabled through the purchase of counterfeit luxury products, consumers can decouple the performance facets (e.g., increase in status, affordability) of such purchases from their moral facets. Overall, Shan et al. (2021) found that the intention of consumers to purchase counterfeit luxury products was favourably associated with AISD and that this association was mediated by the necessity for self-enhancement. In addition, the relationship was found to grow in strength with the extent of moral decoupling.
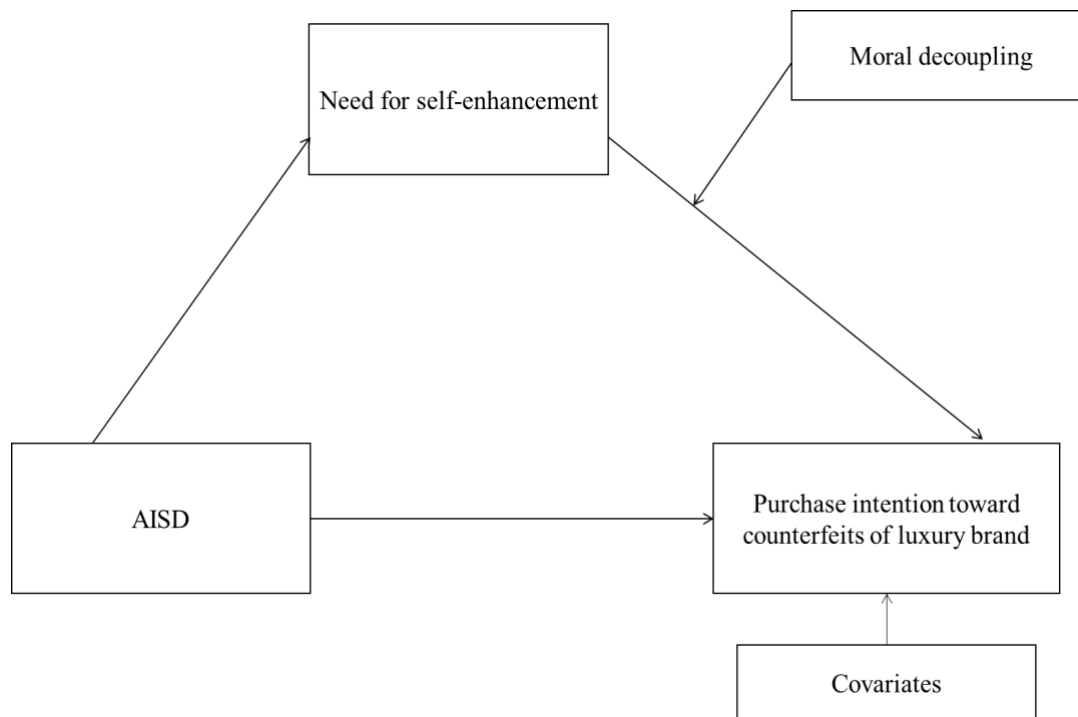
Figure 2.16 Conceptual Model to assess impact of AISD on the intention to purchase CLB

(Source: Adapted from Shan et al., 2021, p.4)

In their attempt to investigate the underlying motives of buyers of counterfeit luxury products, Wiedmann et al. (2017) incorporated four principal facets associated with the perception of luxury value. These are the financial, functional, individual, and social dimensions. While direct financial aspects such as, price, cost of resale, investment, discount, and what is forfeited/sacrificed as regards the product, are addressed by the financial dimension, the functional dimension indicates the core benefits of the product and fundamental functions such as, attributes, usability, durability, uniqueness, and reliability (Sheth et al., 1991). Again, the individual dimension places emphasis on the personal orientation of customer towards consumption of luxury products and deals with individual themes such as, materialism, self-identity, and hedonism. Lastly, social dimension signifies the utility of products/services as perceived by individuals in their own social groups namely, prestige value and noticeability. Further, Wiedmann et al. (2017) suggest that countermeasures, legal, ethical, and economic, may hold customers back from purchasing counterfeits and hence enhance the desire for authentic luxury brands (figure 2.17).
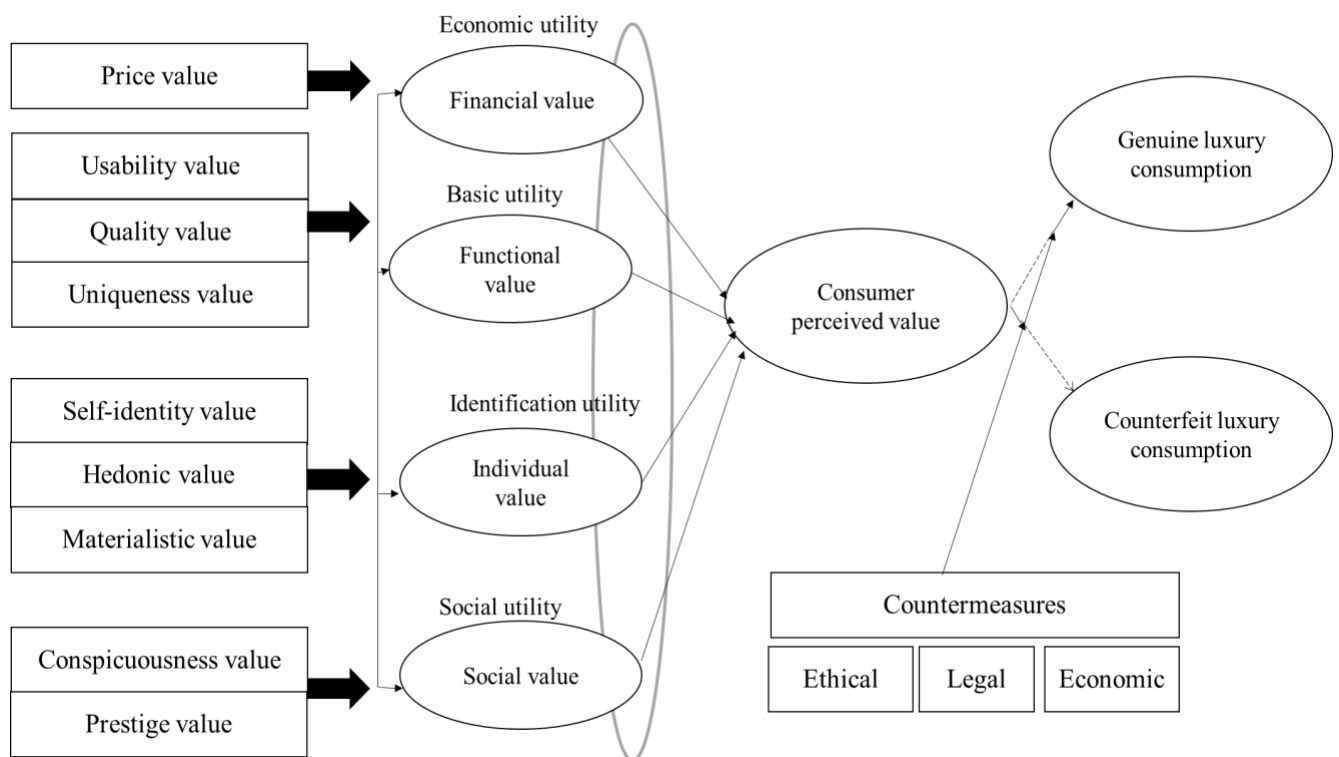
Figure 2.17 Conceptual model to measure consumers' underlying motives and value-based drivers

(Source: Adapted from Wiedmann et al., 2017, p. 98)

Researchers Fan et al. (2013) used a relationship model comprising facets such as, consumer values (CV), consumer involvement (CI), consumer satisfaction (CS), and purchase behaviour (PB) to study the purchasing behaviour of Taiwanese teenagers. The objective of the study was to ascertain whether or not consumers feel the same level of satisfaction with counterfeit products after their use as they do with genuine products (figure 2.18). Overall, Fan et al. (2013) found that consumer values did not have an impact on purchase behaviour related to counterfeit goods or consumer satisfaction. However, purchase behaviour was found to influence consumer satisfaction. Also, consumer involvement had an impact on purchase behaviour related to counterfeit goods and to the subsequent consumer satisfaction. Moreover, consumer values had a positive impact on consumer involvement. Hence, Fan et al. (2013) concluded that while the consumer behaviour of teenagers revealed a high extent of independence and rational evaluation, some factors could still influence their behaviour as regards counterfeit purchase such as, fashion, individual style, and satisfaction.
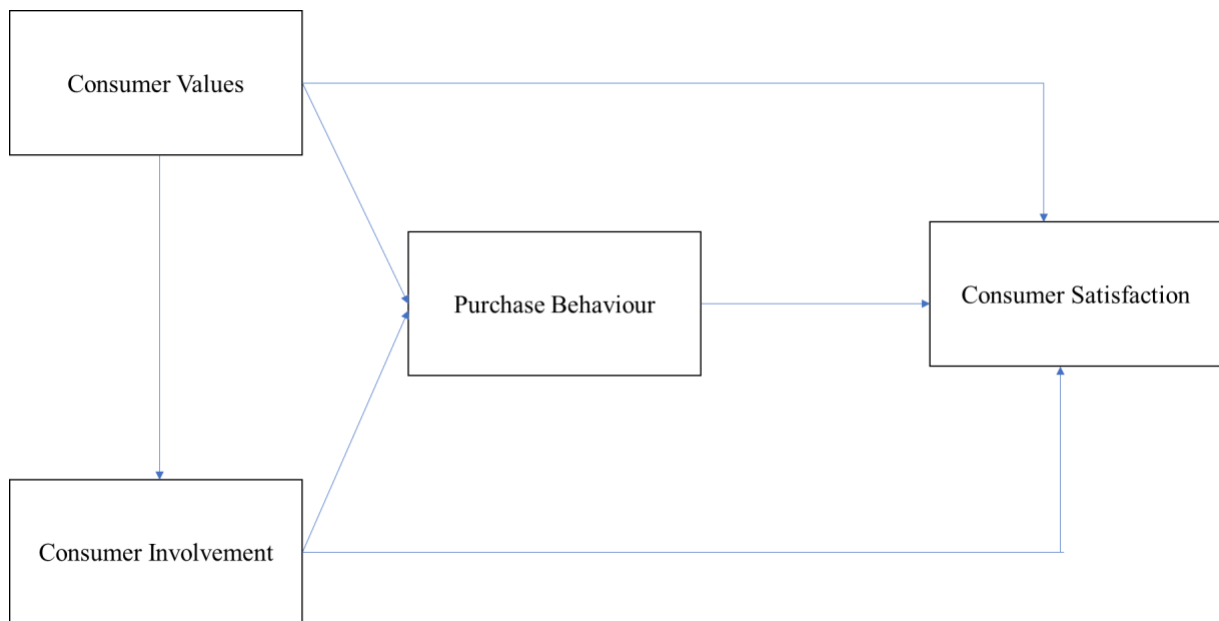
Figure 2.18 Research framework to investigate purchasing behaviour of Taiwanese teenagers

(Source: Adapted from Fan et al., 2013, p. 1292)

A different perspective could be seen in a study by Qin et al. (2017) wherein the researchers focused on a certain kind of imitation good known as Shanzhai imitation. Shanzhai imitation signifies a manner of replication that resembles the genuine article on the surface or in function but frequently offers improved or inventive characteristics tailored to suit the needs of the local market. In contrast to other studies, Qin et al. (2017) used a mixed methods approach to obtain insights regarding the decisions of buyers to purchase Shanzhai products. Their findings revealed that the consumers were influenced by the social value (Nia and Zaichkowsky, 2000), individual values such as, materialism and novelty (Hirschman, 1980), functional value such as, utility of a product and its functional benefits (e.g., usability, quality, durability, uniqueness, and reliability; Sheth et al., 1991), and financial value (Wiedmann et al., 2012; 2017) of the products. Moreover, buyers of Shanzhai products were found to be more concerned with the functional benefits of the products rather than their status or social conformity.

Relatedly, a study by Sharma and Chan (2017) proposed that five attitudinal functions had a direct effect on counterfeit product evaluation (CPE). Drawing on the functional theory of attitudes (Katz, 1960; Smith et al., 1956), their rationale was that while most studies place emphasis on the effect of attitude of consumers toward counterfeits on CPE and intentions to purchase or previous purchases, they overlook the part played by consumer attitudes toward the category of product and the purposes achieved by these outlooks. Moreover, the various functions served by consumer attitudes and

other categories of counterfeit products (apart from luxury) are also often overlooked (Czellar, 2003). Hence, Sharma and Chan (2017) added three attitudinal functions namely, 'ego-defensive', 'knowledge', and 'utilitarian', to the two attitudinal functions most explored by research as regards counterfeit purchase behaviour, that is, 'social-adjustive' and 'value-expressive' (Wilcox et al., 2009; Zampetakis, 2014). Further, Sharma and Chan (2017) added three features of products namely, 'involvement', 'context', and 'motivation', to moderate the direct effects of some of the attitudinal functions (figure 2.19). Overall, Sharma and Chan (2017) found evidence that the counterfeit product evaluation was not only affected by the social-adjustive (positive effect) and value-expressive (negative effect) functions but also the knowledge (negative effect), ego-defensive (negative effect), and utilitarian (positive effect) functions. In addition, they showed the complementary moderating effects of level of involvement on utilitarian (positive) and knowledge (negative) functions. Also, they found that the context of consumption similarly has a complementary moderating effect on the respective influences of social-adjustive (positive) and value-expressive (negative) functions.
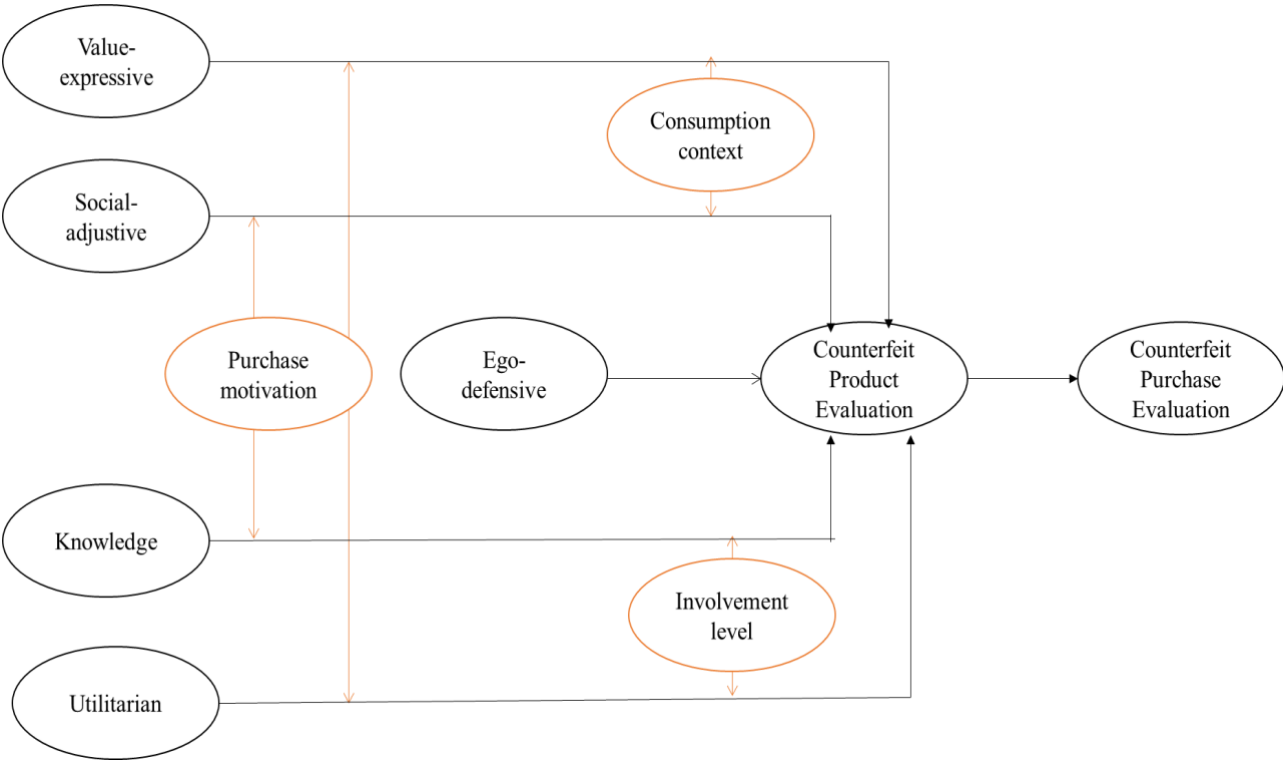
Figure 2.19 Extended conceptual framework to investigate the role of attitudinal functions on CPE

(Source: Adapted from Sharma and Chan, 2017, p. 296)

In another study, Sharma and Chan (2016) used the cognitive dissonance theory in an attempt to understand the deliberate purchase behaviour of consumers towards counterfeits (figure 2.20). Using the notions of counterfeit proneness (CFP; the typical inclination to choose and buy counterfeit goods), ethical judgments (the assessment of a moral concern based on the moral or ethical principles of an individual), and subjective norms (the symbolised expectations of significant others), they found that CFP has a greater influence on the purchase of counterfeit products through subjective norms in contrast to ethical judgments. Moreover, subjective norms have a greater impact on product evaluation and purchase intention than ethical judgments.
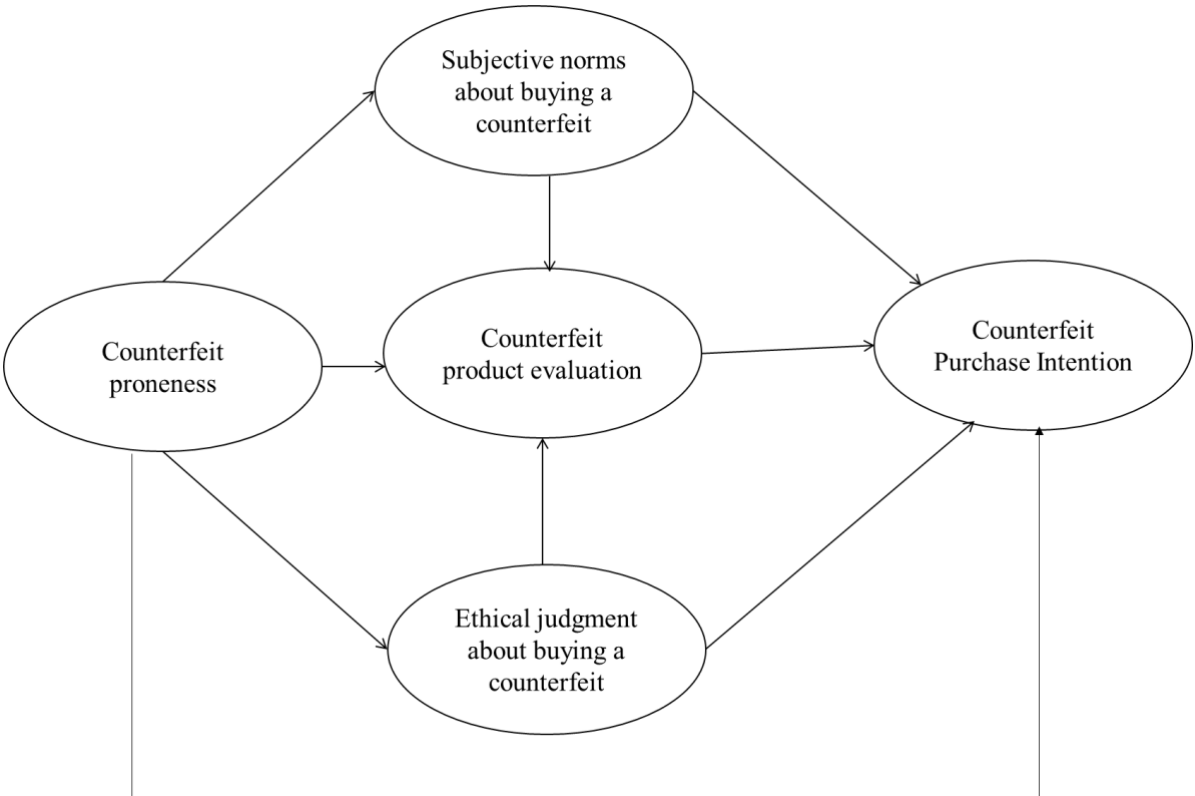
Figure 2.20 Conceptual framework to understand consumers' deliberate purchase of counterfeits
(Source: Adapted from Sharma and Chan, 2016, p. 320)

Some other researchers have explored the impact of socioeconomic status (SES) on consumer preferences. For example, Ahuvia and Wong (2002), Connell et al. (2014), Mittal and Griskevicius (2016), Richins and Chaplin (2015), Whelan and Hingston (2018), among others, found that childhood SES influences the consumer behaviour of adults. This perspective scrutinises the significance of the material norm, that is, facets that indicate a standard of existence that is adequate and appropriate from a social perspective. Individuals with a lower childhood SES are more likely to be preoccupied with attaining the material norm, participating in societal assessments of

material possessions, and basing their own value and the value of others on possession of branded goods (Ahuvia & Friedman, 1998; Belk et al., 1984; Chaplin et al., 2012; Hamilton, 2012; Isaksen & Roper, 2012). Childhood SES is particularly relevant to the present research because the choice of luxury, non-luxury and counterfeit luxury brands are greatly influenced by childhood SES (Whelan and Hingston, 2018).

From the preceding review of the factors affecting the purchase of counterfeit products, it can be inferred that there is a considerable body of research related to this area. Researchers have placed a significant emphasis on different factors. For instance, some researchers (e.g., Eisend and Schuchert-Güler, 2006; Wiedmann et al., 2017) highlight that the basis of the willingness of consumers to purchase counterfeits is related to the product itself, its typology (i.e., search or experience) and differentiation (i.e., by status or functionality).

In contrast, some researchers (e.g., Fan et al., Harun et al., 2020; Marticotte and Arcand, 2017; Penz and Stöttinger, 2005; Shan et al., 2021; Sharma and Chan, 2017; Tunçel, 2021) base their exploration on facets of the consumer (e.g., their attitudes, ability to control their behaviour, external influences, past experience with purchasing counterfeits, intention to repurchase, religiosity, value consciousness, ethical/moral judgment, status, etc.) and utilise existing theories such as, the theory of planned behaviour, the theory of reasoned action, social identity theory, general theory of marketing ethics, self-discrepancy theory, functional theory of attitudes, cognitive dissonance theory; and the concepts of self-identity, personality traits, materialism, social factors, economic benefits, Schadenfreude, idealism, possession-based happiness, moral decoupling, consumer values, consumer satisfaction, consumer involvement, to develop conceptual models to direct their investigation.

The next section further synthesises the determinants of consumers' responses to counterfeits, specifically based on consumer profiling in terms of demographic and psychographic factors.

2.15 Determinants of consumers' responses to counterfeits

Several studies have attempted to sketch a profile of consumers who purchase counterfeits so that anticounterfeiting communications can be directed at these consumers accordingly (Eisend et al., 2017; Phau et al., 2001). Eisend et al. (2017)

conducted a meta-analysis of these studies based on 98 separate studies which were conducted across 29 countries and published between 1998 and 2016. The researchers categorised these consumers' profiles based on their demographic and psychographic factors as demonstrated in figure 2.21. The demographic factors displayed on the left-hand side of the figure include age, education, employment status, family, gender, and income. The psychographic factors exhibited on the right-hand side include fashion seeking, innovativeness, integrity, materialism, risk aversion, self-concept, status seeking, smart shopping, and susceptibility. Corresponding to each of these factors are some of the researchers who have contributed to counterfeiting literature by focussing on each factor in their respective studies.
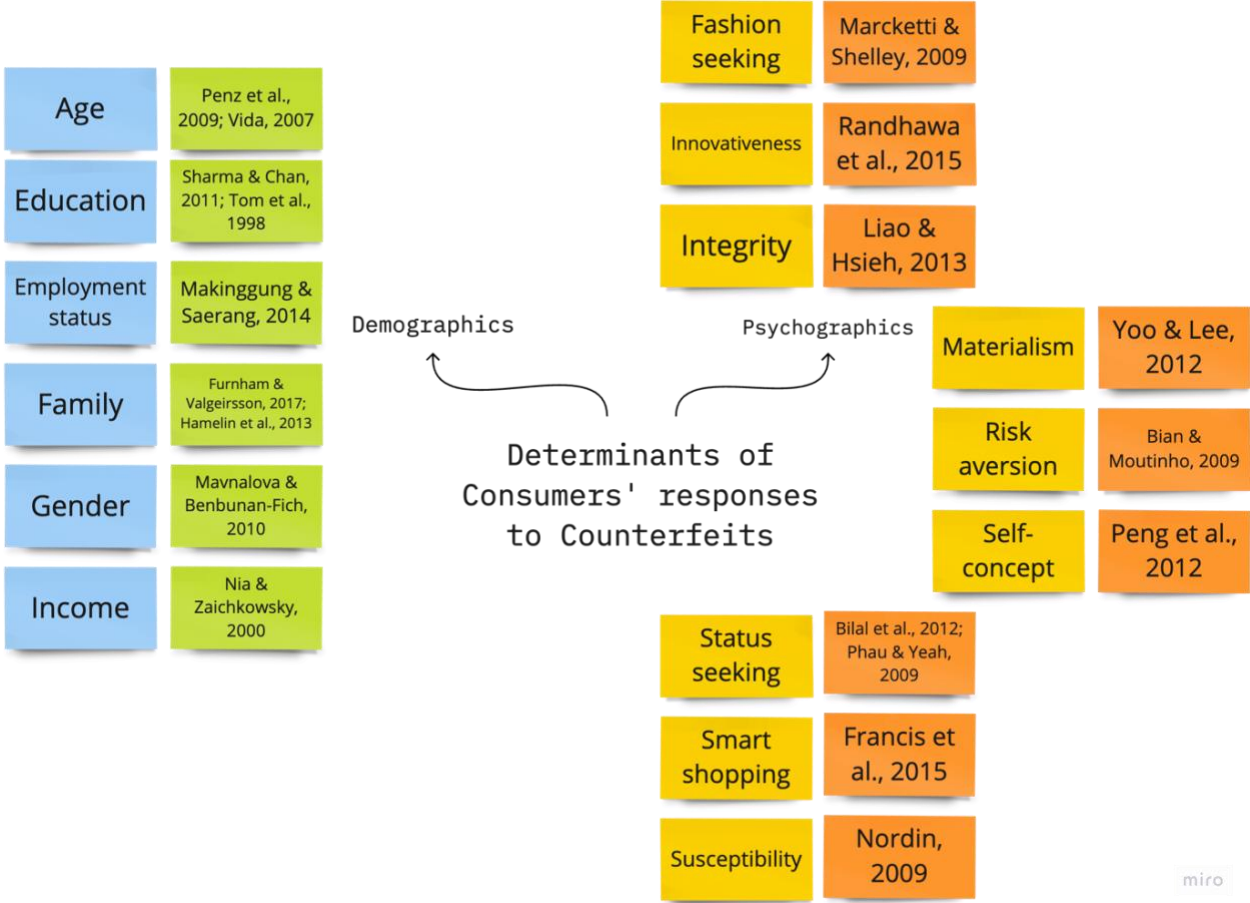
Figure 2.21 Demographic and Psychographic determinants of consumers' responses to counterfeits
(Source: Adapted from Eisend et al., 2017)

Overall, upon synthesis of these research studies, it was found that the psychographic factors have stronger effects than demographics on the consumers' attitudes, intentions, and behaviours towards counterfeits (Eisend et al., 2017). This is because

consumers seek meanings assigned to brands to construct their self-identities as per the identity theory (Grubb and Grathwoh, 1967; Richins, 1994). Likewise, counterfeit brands provide meanings to consumers which aid them in constructing desired self-identities (Eisend et al., 2017). Brand signals are more profoundly associated with psychographics than demographics, consequently, psychographic factors are more likely to influence counterfeit purchase decisions (Eisend et al., 2017). However, a major drawback of segregating all factors into two categories of demographics and psychographics is that it undermines the complex nature of the human mind and the resulting consumer behaviours. For example, income (a demographic variable) may trigger status needs, thus making status seeking (a psychographic variable) as a determinant of counterfeit consumption choice as reported by many researchers such as Desmichel et al. (2020), Gao et al. (2016), Han et al. (2010) among others.

Similarly, education and employment status (demographics) may influence materialism (psychographic factor) and the resultant consumer behaviours (Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013). In such scenarios, though psychographic factors such as materialism may seem to be the determinant of consumers' responses to counterfeits, however, the root cause of materialism could be linked to education and employment status. For instance, Richins and Dawson (1992) assert that people tend to associate their needs for materialism based on their desires for higher income. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the links between the demographics and psychographics in order to ascertain the deeper causes of counterfeit consumer behaviour.

Additionally, beyond demographics and psychographics, research studies have explored other determinants of consumers' proneness to counterfeits. Many researchers (e.g., Bian and Veloutsou, 2007; Connell et al., 2014; Samaddar and Menon, 2020; Sheth et al., 2011; Whelan and Hingston, 2018) have provided insights regarding the influences on the purchase of non-deceptive counterfeits such as, product factors, social aspects, consumers' emotions and psychology, and their socioeconomic status (SES).

Nevertheless, there is a paucity of literature dedicated to the impact of SES on the purchase of non-deceptive counterfeits. Additionally, further research is required to evaluate the impact of SES on the original brands, especially considering their impact on non-luxury brands, a gap this study will endeavour to fill. Social class, social status, and SES are discussed in detail in the next chapter on conceptual framework.

2.16 Identified research gaps

As discussed in this chapter, most of the studies on counterfeiting are predominantly centred on the perspective of the effects of counterfeiting on original luxury brands (Amaral and Loken, 2016; Grossman and Shapiro, 1988b; Qian, 2008; Qian et al., 2013; Romani et al., 2012) and the reasons why consumers buy counterfeits (Bian and Moutinho, 2009; Bian et al., 2017; Eisend et al., 2017; Ngo et al., 2020; Pratt and Zeng, 2020; Tom et al., 1998; Wee et al., 1995; Wilcox et al., 2009; Wu et al., 2019). There also exists a substantial body of literature on the impact of counterfeits on consumer behaviour (Bian and Moutinho, 2011b; Commuri, 2009; Eisend, 2019; Gino et al., 2010; Malik et al., 2020; Sharma and Chan, 2017; Wang et al., 2019).

Notably, a key focus of most of this body of work is based on non-deceptive counterfeiting, which is defined as the phenomenon wherein consumers knowingly purchase counterfeits (Grossman and Shapiro, 1988a). Furthermore, non-deceptive counterfeiting mainly occurs in the domain of "secondary markets", which are defined as markets selling counterfeits with larger price dispersions (than primary markets) from the prices of original luxury products (OECD/EUIPO, 2019, p. 34). Primary markets, on the other hand, are defined as markets selling counterfeits at prices close to the legitimate products, thus generating deceptive counterfeiting (OECD/EUIPO, 2019). This distinction between primary and secondary markets is critical because every counterfeit sale in primary market is a direct loss to the legitimate brand; on the contrary, in secondary market, very few consumers would substitute their counterfeit purchase with genuine ones (Large, 2019; OECD, 2017). This fact challenges the status quo in two ways: *firstly,* it raises questions on the true scale of counterfeit trade and the reported estimates of losses to the legitimate luxury industry (Andreas, 2010; Antonopoulos, 2018); *secondly,* it confronts academic research to assess this impact of substitution (or the lack thereof) on the real affected stakeholder, which bears the loss from non-deceptive counterfeits, if it is not limited to the genuine luxury brands. Possibly, if not legitimate luxury brands, the potential counterfeit impact could also extend alternatively to the legitimate non-luxury brands. Hitherto previous counterfeiting-related research has overlooked this vital perspective. This is a key research gap, which has also been identified in the latest report by OECD/EUIPO (2019). The present study aims to bridge this gap by investigating the impact of counterfeits on non-luxury brands, besides luxury brands.

2.17 Summary

This chapter provided detailed definitions of counterfeits, luxury, and non-luxury brands (including generic brands, store brands, and mass-fashion brands). It also entailed distinction between the types of counterfeiting (viz., deceptive and non-deceptive counterfeiting), types of counterfeit markets (viz. primary and secondary markets). The chapter presented the literature review pertaining to counterfeiting research area in detail, especially the impact of counterfeits on the original luxury and non-luxury brands. The literature review explored prior work on consumer behaviour related to the purchase of counterfeits and various theories utilised by researchers to explain this behaviour. The literature review on counterfeits was broadly classified into three areas based on their impact on – original luxury, counterfeit luxury, and non-luxury brands. Subsequently, the impact of counterfeits on original luxury brands was explored which paved the background for examining the impact of counterfeits on non-luxury brands. The chapter explored various theories relevant to counterfeit related research so that the context of relevant theories and concepts for the present research can be elucidated. Furthermore, various factors and models in the context of counterfeiting established by various researchers were presented and the conceptual framework for the present research was contextualised. Successively, the chapter summaries the literature and presents the identified research gaps. Building on this chapter, the next chapter discusses the conceptual framework for the present research.

Chapter 3
Conceptual framework

3.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to present the development of the conceptual background for the present study. The purpose of the conceptual framework is to provide profound insights regarding the present study. The chapter begins with a brief historical backdrop exhibiting the nexus between social class and consumption. It subsequently discusses the contemporary British social class structure. This is followed by a brief overview of social status. Next, it sheds light on the differentiations between social class and social status to establish clear demarcations between the two. Successively, this chapter introduces the concepts of socioeconomic status and childhood emotional wellbeing. Then, it delves into the in-depth discussion on the relationship between socioeconomic status and consumption. In particular, it draws from the social cognition model based on Kraus et al. (2010), aspirational hierarchy of brand consumption model by Wall and Large (2010), and wealth and status-based taxonomy by Han et al. (2010). It compares these models in juxtaposition with the Great British Class Survey analysis. Next, the chapter explores the compensatory consumer behaviour, symbolic self-completion theory and self-verification theory to conceptualise the research problem. Then, it touches upon the concept of substitutes, leading to the amalgamation of two bodies of literatures on brand types and consumer types. The chapter concludes by presenting the identified research gaps and the resultant research questions for the present study.

Research indicates that consumption is greatly influenced by individual's social class and social status (Amaral and Loken, 2016; Han et al., 2010; Kraus et al., 2010; Manstead, 2018). Therefore, the present research builds upon the conceptual framework of social class and social status which are discussed in the next sections.

3.2 Social Class

"The middle class were invented to give the poor hope; the poor, to make the rich feel special; the rich, to humble the middle class." - Mokokoma Mokhonoana.

Social class refers to "social groups arising from independent economic relationships among people" (Krieger et al., 1997). These economic relationships are determined by property ownership, and labour and their associations through production, distribution, and consumption of goods, services, and information (Krieger et al., 1997). Social classes exist in relationship to each other and also co-define each other. Kreiger et al.

(1997, p.345) in their study on measuring social class define social class as "a social category referring to social groups forged by interdependent economic and legal relationships, premised upon people's structural location within the economy – as employers, employees, self-employed, and unemployed, and as owners, or not, of capital, land, or other forms of economic investments; possession of educational credentials and skill assets also contribute to social class."

The nexus between social class and consumption is deep-rooted (Veblen, 1997). This nexus has been remarkably prominent in the context of luxury consumption (Han et al., 2010). In his historical investigation of the idea of luxury, Berry (1994) points at the sumptuary laws prevalent in the Middle Ages, which specified what each social class was allowed and prohibited to consume. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, a Royal Proclamation dated 15 June 1574 (figure 3.1 below) on the subject of 'excess of apparel' was issued, which entailed dress codes ordaining the colours and fabrics for people of each social class and social rank (Norton and Bill, 1618 [1558-1603]). These were called the sumptuary laws. The primary purpose of these laws was to dictate personal expenditure on luxuries such as clothing. Restrictions were imposed on a range of fabrics such as cloth of gold, velvet, silks, furs, and even on buttons and swords (Berry, 1994). Historically, the consumption of apparel had been a clear indicator of social hierarchy (Amaral and Loken, 2016; Escalas and Bettman, 2003).

Figure 3.1 A Book Containing All Such Proclamations,
as were published during the reign of the late Queen Elizabeth
Source: Adapted from Norton and Bill, 1618 [1558-1603]).

Although the historical sumptuary laws do not exist in today's modern society, a wide assortment of brands, particularly luxury brands, communicate social class standing and enable the subtle prevalence of those bygone sumptuary laws (Englis and Solomon, 1995). Luxury brands, by the virtue of their exorbitant prices are the modern version of the restrictions imposed by the sumptuary laws – not legal restrictions but pecuniary restrictions. Luxury brands enable, restrict, and alter the social class boundaries.

Counterfeit luxury enables vicarious perception of the symbolic luxury lifestyle to those who seek cheaper alternatives to luxury lifestyle (Amaral and Loken, 2016). Contrary to luxury and counterfeit luxury, the third alternative of non-luxury are the quintessential brands for most consumers belonging to the middle-class and working-class consumers who dissociate from materialism (Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013). While some middle-class consumers seeking enhancement in their social position do turn towards luxury brands, presumably in such scenarios, some of the upper-class consumers avoid those popular luxury brands to distance themselves from the *nouvueu riche* (Commuri, 2009; Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013; Trigg, 2001). These dynamics between the social classes and their associated consumption patterns have been studied by researchers leading to the formation of various theories such as the trickle-down theory and trickle-round theory (Bourdieu, 1984; Trigg, 2001; Veblen, 1997).
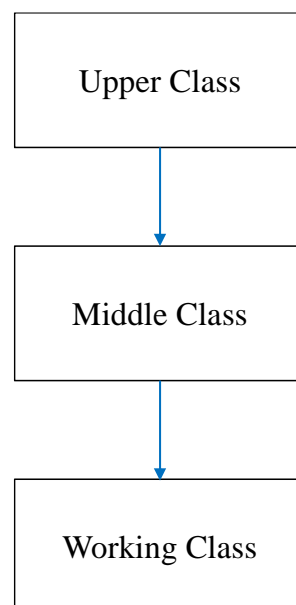
Figure 3.2 Trickle-down model
(Source: Adapted from Trigg, 2001, p.107)

In an elementary depiction of portrayal of consumption behaviours, Trigg (2001) presented two alternative models of the transmission of tastes across social classes based on Veblen's trickle-down model (figure 3.2) and Bourdieu's trickle-round model (figure 3.3). Trickle-down model posits that tastes transmit from the upper class to the middle- and working-class echelons of society (Veblen, 1997).

Bourdieu's trickle-round model is an extension of trickle-down effect by allowing a circular transmission of tastes with upper class drawing inspirations from the working-class while also transmitting to the middle-class (Bourdieu, 1984). The dotted line in figure 3.3 represents the possibility and flexibility of taste transmission between the middle- and working-classes (Trigg, 2001).
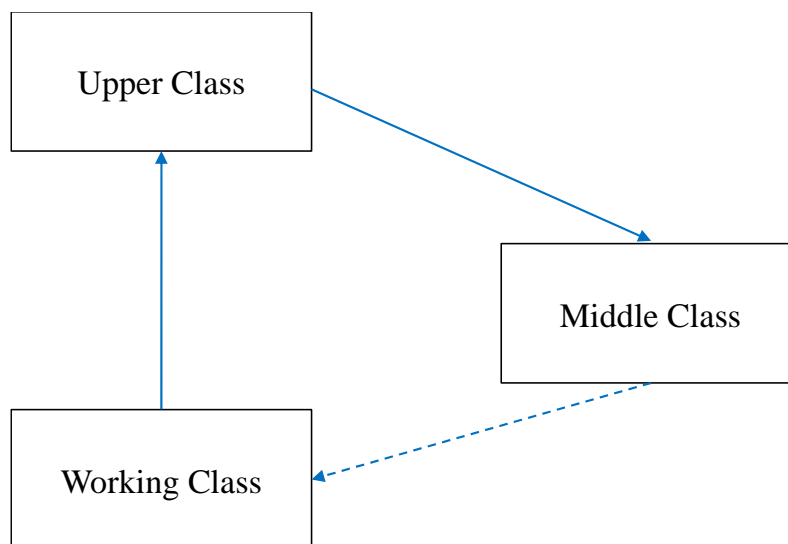
Figure 3.3 Trickle-round model
(Source: Adapted from Trigg, 2001, p.107)

While traditionally, the three major social classes have been categorised as upper class, middle class, and the working class (Trigg, 2001), however, Savage et al. (2013) conducted an in-depth analysis of the findings from the BBC's Great British Class Survey (GBSC; 2011) and provided a summary of the seven social classes in the UK based on economic, social, and cultural capital (table 3.1):

The elite class are the most privileged ones with the highest economic capital, very high social capital and highbrow cultural capital (Savage et al., 2013). Not surprisingly, they are the epitome of social advantage in the British society. Unlike Bourdieu's focus on high cultural capital of the elite class, Savage et al. (2013) provides a more nuanced

analysis of the surging cultural capital of emergent service workers. Drastically, at the contrasting end of this social hierarchy lie the "precariat" who score the lowest on economic, cultural, and social capital, though they constitute a significant proportion of 15 percent of the total population in the UK (Savage et al., 2013). This is an accurate example of the growing social inequalities (Witteveen, 2020).

Table 3.1 Summary of social classes in the UK

	% GfK	% GBCS	Description
Elite	6	22	Very high economic capital (especially savings), high social capital, very high highbrow cultural capital
Established middle class	25	43	High economic capital, high status of mean contacts, high highbrow and emerging cultural capital
Technical middle class	6	10	High economic capital, very high mean social contacts, but relatively few contacts reported, moderate cultural capital
New affluent workers	15	6	Moderately good economic capital, moderately poor mean score of social contacts, though high range, moderate highbrow but good emerging cultural capital
Traditional working class	14	2	Moderately poor economic capital, though with reasonable house price, few social contacts, low highbrow and emerging cultural capital
Emergent service workers	19	17	Moderately poor economic capital, though with reasonable household income, moderate social contacts, high emerging (but low highbrow) cultural capital
Precariat	15	<1	Poor economic capital, and the lowest scores on every other criterion

(Source: Adapted from Savage et al. (2013) and GBCS (2011))
GfK: Nationally represented survey by the survey firm GfK
GBCS: Great British Class Survey

The established middle class comprises of a quarter of the British population and therefore is the largest single class (Savage et al., 2013) as presented in table 3.2. It has high economic, social, and cultural capital. In contrast with the middle class, the traditional working class is shrinking (14 percent of the British population) due to comprising of the older population with an average age of 65. The 'new affluent workers' and the 'emergent service workers' have widespread social capital as well as

increasing cultural capital (Savage et al., 2013). Overall, the analysis of the Great British Class Survey (2011) provides a glimpse of the reconstruction of social classes in contemporary Britain, illuminating the increasing social inequality between two extremes as the Elite and the Precariat and disintegration of the traditional middle- and working-class into more fragments of the social fabric (Savage et al., 2013).

Table 3.2 Seven latent social classes in the UK

	Elite	Established middle class	Technical middle class	New affluent workers	Traditional working class	Emergent service workers	Precariat
Household income	£89,082	£47,184	£37,428	£29,252	£13,305	£21,048	£8,253
Household savings	£142,458	£26,090	£65,844	£4,918	£9,500	£1,138	£793
House value	£325,000	£176,834	£163,362	£128,639	£127,174	£17,968	£26,948
Social contact score	50.1	45.3	53.5	37.8	41.5	38.3	29.9
Social contact number	16.2	17.0	3.6	16.9	9.8	14.8	6.7
Highbrow cultural capital	16.9	13.7	9.2	6.9	10.8	9.6	6.0
Emerging cultural capital	14.4	16.5	11.4	14.8	6.5	17.5	8.4

Source: Adapted from Savage et al. (2013) based on the survey by GfK

Connecting the contemporary social classes with consumption, consumer behaviour, and culture, researchers in their research dialogue of "Social class matters", have emphasised how people designate social and relational functions to material purchases to the extent that they signal status to others (Carey and Markus, 2016; Shavitt et al., 2016). Furthermore, several researchers have highlighted the significance of social class and the associated social status as a precursor to desire for more wealth (Wang et al., 2020; Weber, 2018), impact on thoughts, feelings, and consumer behaviour (Fisher, 1987; Manstead, 2018), and even to self-concept (Easterbrook et al., 2020). Therefore, it is critical to discuss next the relevance of social status.

3.3 Social Status

Status is a fundamental individual motive that shapes organisations, relationships, and marketplaces (Anderson at al., 2020). High-status individuals have access to higher economic and social rewards compared to low-status individuals (Nelissen and

Meijers, 2011; Sundie et al., 2011). Therefore, people spend a substantial amount of money and effort to achieve and display their social status to others (Desmichel et al., 2020; Lisik, 2018). A wasteful display of status signals through the purchase of luxury brands is known as conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1997).

Researchers have identified two main types of status – achieved status and ascribed status (Desmichel et al., 2020; Foladare, 1969). *Achieved status* is acquired by an individual through own efforts and skills, whereas *ascribed status* is acquired through birth, inheritance, or social connections, irrespective of individual's efforts or skills (Foladare, 1969). Researchers in the field of Organisational Behaviour and Human Decision Processes such as Doyle (1971), Ravlin and Thomas (2005), and Desmichel et al. (2020), argue that individuals with achieved high status are respected more in organisational settings compared to the individuals with ascribed high status. However, in the field of Marketing and Luxury branding, many researchers have a different opinion in this regard, perhaps because they view status more from consumer's perspectives and in the context of social class. These researchers have found that consumers disdain achieved status as the *nouveau riche*, a term associated with those with gauche taste in consumption style who have aspiring desires for upward social mobility (Commuri, 2009; Fisher, 1987; Han et al., 2010). Therefore, the economic order and the social order are not identical (Weber, 2018). The economic order is demarcated by the distribution of goods and services in society, but the social order stands beyond the ostentations of mere goods and services (Weber, 2018). This leads to the discussion on the differences between class and status will thus be discussed next.

3.4 Social Class vs Social Status

Class is focused on an individual and their occupation, while status revolves around the family and their position in society such as family descent, education, occupational prestige, home type, postcode, affiliations to schools, groups, or organisations (Fisher, 1987). Therefore, individual consumer decisions relate to the social class compared to joint consumer decisions (Dominquez and Page, 1981). The connection between class and status is complex (Fisher, 1987). While Fisher analyses the classic Marxist position that class is the primary determinant of status, he provides several basic propositions to support Weber's (1946) stratification of 'status groups' according to their lifestyles. One of the important propositions Fisher discusses is the idea of goods

becoming 'status symbols' when their purchase indicates membership in a particular status group. Status symbols lie at the intersection and coexistence of Weber's class and status dimensions (Fisher, 1987).

With regard to status symbols, researchers have pointed out the practice of *compensatory consumption* to balance between the goals of achieving status and/or class by compensating for one with the other (Belk, 1986; Fisher, 1987; Gao et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2020). For example, an individual from middle class sending their children to private schools (a status consideration) by compensating living in a smaller house (Fisher, 1987). Another example to illustrate this further, can be the consumption of luxury brands by the 'New Affluent Class' (Savage et al., 2013) to gain a sense of belonging to the upper class (Amaral and Loken, 2016; Bellezza and Berger, 2020; Commuri, 2009; Gao et al., 2016). A more comprehensive account of compensatory consumption will be discussed in later sections of this chapter.

Overall, as discussed in the prior sections, social class and social status are interrelated and share a complex relationship (Fisher, 1987). An aggregate concept which incorporates both these measures of class and status is known as Socio-Economic Status (SES) and it is linked with both childhood and adulthood social class position (Krieger et al., 1997). The next section discusses SES and the rationale to emphasise more on childhood SES.

3.5 Childhood Socio-Economic Status (SES)

Socioeconomic status blurs the distinctions between actual resources and status-related descriptions of socioeconomic status (Krieger et al., 1997). While adulthood SES is important, childhood SES plays a central role in understanding consumer behaviour because the advent of development of consumer behaviour occurs during childhood which is hugely influenced by childhood SES (Richins and Chaplin, 2015; Whelan and Hingston, 2018). Adulthood behaviour is not only shaped by childhood experiences (Ward, 1974) but can be predicted better by childhood SES than current SES (Thompson et al., 2020). Therefore, several researchers have studied how and why childhood SES influences consumer behaviour (Chen, 2004; Griskevicius et al. 2011a, 2011b, 2013; Mittal and Griskevicius, 2014; Mittal et al. 2015; Roux and Goldsmith, 2014). Consequently, while the present study takes into consideration both

childhood and adulthood SES, childhood SES seems to play a somewhat higher noteworthy role.

Childhood socioeconomic status (SES) is the extent to which an individual grew up in resource plentiful versus resource scarce environment (Griskevicius et al., 2011). It is the summation of parental income, education, and occupational prestige during one's childhood (Bradley and Corwyn, 2002). Although there has never been a complete agreement on what does it precisely represent (Liberatos et al., 1988, McLoyd, 1997), there is a general consensus amongst social scientists that childhood SES parental income, education and occupation together represent SES better than any of these alone (White, 1982; Bradley and Corwyn, 2002).

The two major schools of thoughts on childhood SES exist between advocates of SES as a representation of social class (or economic position) and advocates of SES as a representation of social status (or prestige) according to Bradley and Corwyn (2002). The association of SES with capital (resources and assets) is possibly the most acceptable premise amongst psychologists (Coleman, 1988; Thompson et al., 2020). As studied by several researchers, many individual values and beliefs are imbibed in childhood in which the family plays an indispensable role (Parke and Buriel, 2006; Richins and Chaplin, 2015). Childhood SES is often more predictive of consumer behaviour than adulthood SES due to the behavioural patterns and responses being shaped during early formative years of childhood and adolescence (Griskevicius et al., 2011).

Furthermore, before discussing the interplay of childhood and adulthood SES with consumption behaviour in the subsequent sections, the next section discusses in detail the childhood emotional wellbeing aspects which is an important link between SES and consumption behaviour.

3.6 Childhood Emotional Wellbeing (EW)

Although childhood SES mainly includes parental income, education, and occupational prestige, there seemed a gap in literature pertaining to the aspects of emotional support during childhood and its effect on consumer socialisation and resultant consumer behaviour. The present research establishes some interesting emotional aspects of upbringing which contribute significantly to the child development stage

which is at interplay along with childhood SES in shaping consumption behaviour. These aspects can be termed as Childhood Emotional Wellbeing (EW).

Childhood Emotional Wellbeing can be defined as the emotional, mental, and moral support that a child receives from parents, siblings, extended family, neighbours, peers, and friends (Hill et al., 2018). Childhood emotional wellbeing does not necessarily correspond to the childhood SES, meaning the emotional support a child receives cannot be equated to the material benefits. For instance, an individual with high childhood SES may have not been emotionally well-supported by family, though they might have access to immense wealth and material luxuries. In cases like this the high childhood SES but low EW will have a different type of influence on consumption compared to someone with high SES along with high EW (Nomaguchi and Milkie, 2020).

In other words, emotional wellbeing refers to the support that a child receives from their parents, siblings, extended family, and friends, while socioeconomic status (SES) corresponds to the material benefits that a child has access to (Nomaguchi and Milkie, 2020). Although the two may seem similar, they can have very different effects on consumption patterns. For example, children who come from high-SES families but have low EW are more likely to grow up feeling entitled and entitled consumption has been shown to lead to negative outcomes like impulsivity, credit card debt, and compulsive spending (Thompson et al., 2020). On the other hand, children who come from low-SES families but have high EW are more likely to develop a sense of resilience and resourcefulness that can help them overcome difficult circumstances later in life.

The field of emotional wellbeing has seen a surge in interest in recent years, with a growing body of literature highlighting the importance of childhood experiences in shaping later life outcomes (Choi, 2018; Ding and Tseng, 2015; Glover 1998). A number of studies have shown that children who grow up in supportive and nurturing environments are more likely to develop into emotionally well-adjusted adults (Choi, 2018; Glover 1998; Nomaguchi and Milkie, 2020; Woolf, 2011). Conversely, those who experience difficult childhoods are at increased risk of mental health problems in adulthood (Chapman et al., 2007; Mullen et al., 1993). The literature on emotional wellbeing therefore underscores the importance of providing support and care to children during their formative years (Chapman et al., 2007; Mullen et al., 1993). This

can help them to develop the skills and resilience needed to cope with the challenges of adult life. In turn, this can lead to improved outcomes for individuals. The next section discusses the literature on the effects of SES and EW on consumption behaviour.

3.7 Socioeconomic Status and consumption

This section discusses the literature on SES based consumption patterns identified across social classes by several researchers. In particular, it draws from the social cognition model based on Kraus et al. (2010) and Manstead (2018), aspirational hierarchy of brand consumption model by Wall and Large (2010), and wealth and status-based taxonomy by Han et al. (2010). It compares these models in association with the Great British Class Survey analysis by Savage et al. (2013) discussed earlier (in section 3.2).

3.7.1 SES and social cognition model

In recent research by Manstead (2018) on how socioeconomic status impacts thoughts, feelings, and behaviour, he illustrates how the long-lasting impact of SES influences individual and social identities of people and their consumption behaviours. The lower social classes are more prone to perceived threat compared to the middle- and upper-class, on account of less security in employment, safety, health (Kraus et al., 2012; Manstead, 2018).
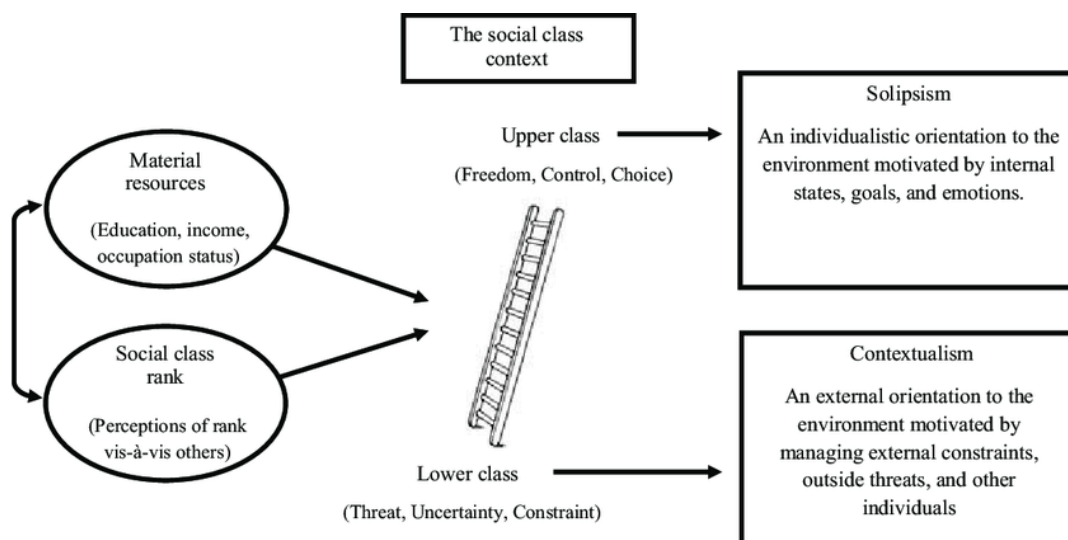
Figure 3.4 Model of the way in which middle- and working-class contexts shape social cognition

(Source: Adapted from Kraus et al., 2012)

In the theoretical model (figure 3.4) proposed by Kraus et al. (2012), these outside threats encountered by the lower classes has been depicted as a psychological orientation called 'Contextualism'. On the contrary, the upper classes have access to individual freedom, control, and choice due to easier access to material resources such as income, education, occupational status which leads to an individualistic orientation motivated by internal states, goals, and emotions called 'Solipsism' (Kraus et al., 2012; Manstead, 2018).

Though this model explores the social cognition caused by socioeconomic status and emotional wellbeing of social classes, it is restricted to the psychological orientations of Solipsism and Contextualism. It does not extend the impact of these orientations to the consumption behaviour patterns developed within the social classes. To address this limitation, the next section discusses the aspirational hierarchy of brand consumption model based on the wealth, status of consumers from strata of social classes (Wall and Large, 2010).

3.7.2 Aspirational hierarchy of brand consumption model

To further illustrate the interplay between SES and consumption in the context of fashion brands, Wall and Large (2010) proposed a model of aspirational hierarchy of brand consumption (figure 3.4). At the top of the pyramid lie the "trend setters" who are the celebrities, fashion models, and reference group for the others in the social hierarchy to follow. However, their goal is purely based on conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1997) rather than status signalling because most of their fashion items are £50,000+ Haute Couture which they receive is *gratis* by the luxury brands to endorse their new collections and trends (Wall and Large, 2010). The second stratum in the model of brand consumption belongs to the *"cognoscenti"* who are the privileged consumers belonging to the elite social class. This group consumes only the original luxury brands and takes pride in their social status and economic freedom to be able to do so – also known as the 'Snob effect' – likewise possess high cultural capital too (Commuri, 2009; Savage et al., 2013; Wall and Large, 2010).

Underneath the *cognoscenti* on the consumption hierarchy lie "the crowd", who consume fashion brands primarily to be able to conform to the standard fashion norms and mainly consume mass fashion brands (Wall and Large, 2010). The crowd can be divided into two sub-groups – aspirational consumers and conformity consumers. The "aspirational consumers" aspire to be at top of "the crowd" and tend to be concurrent

consumers of both original luxury and counterfeit luxury brands. Most of these aspirational consumers may belong to the middle class based on their economic, social, and cultural capital (refer table 3.1) according to Savage et al. (2013). This phenomenon of concurrent ownership of both original and counterfeit luxury brands has also been researched by Stöttinger and Penz (2015) who found that this is an increasingly common practice among contemporary consumers. The second sub-group of the crowd are the "conformity consumers" in the consumption hierarchy pyramid who consume fashion brands to conform to the ongoing fashion norms to avoid being isolated from the general crowd (Wall and Large, 2010). As illustrated in figure 3.5, most of these consumers buy counterfeits with legal look-a-likes (Wall and Large, 2010).
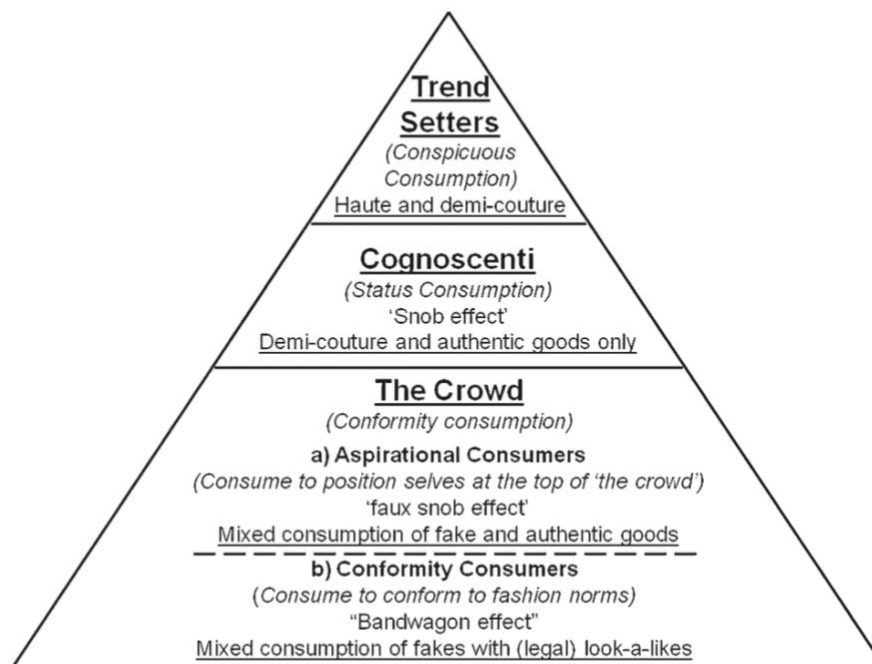
Figure 3.5 Aspirational hierarchy of brand consumption model
(Source: Adapted from Wall and Large, 2010, p. 1103)

To some extent, this model of brand consumption overlaps with the trickle-down model in figure 3.2 (Trigg, 2001; Veblen, 1997) and trickle-round model as shown in figure 3.3 (Bourdieu, 1984) of transmission of tastes amongst various social classes. The *cognoscenti* from the pyramid (Wall and Large, 2010) are the upper-class consumers described in the trickle-down and trickle-round models (Bourdieu, 1984; Veblen, 1997). The aspirational consumers seem aligned with the middle class and the conformity consumers appear to belong to the working class based on their moderate and lower

access to economic capital respectively (Savage et al., 2010; Wall and Large, 2010) with some degree of potential overlaps. Though these overlaps between the consumer groups can be extrapolated with the respective social classes based on other researchers, the aspirational hierarchy model is limited to the consumer types without attaching them with any social class. To some extent, this limitation can be addressed with a further nuanced taxonomy of consumer groups based on wealth and status needs been proposed by Han et al. (2010) which will be discussed next.

3.7.3 Signal Preference and Taxonomy Based on Wealth and Need for Status

According to the taxonomy proposed by Han et al. (2010), consumers can be divided into four types based on their wealth and desire for status: Patrician, Parvenu, Poseur and Proletarian. Patricians are consumers with significant wealth but with a low need to display status as they pay a premium price for the subtle differences which they only can recognize. Parvenus are those with significant wealth along with a desire for status, therefore, preferring loud branded goods to signify their status.
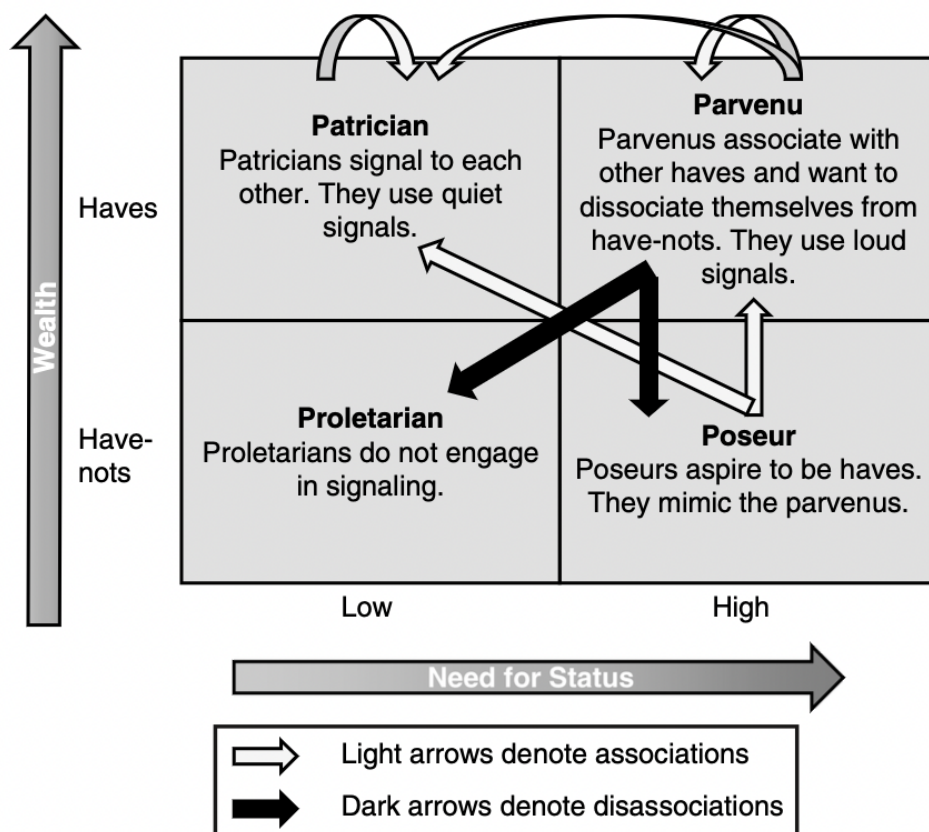
Figure 3.6 Signal Preference and Taxonomy Based on Wealth and Need for Status
(Source: Adapted from Han et al., 2010, p.17)

They are concerned about dissociating from those with low wealth, i.e., the have-nots (figure 3.6). Poseurs and Proletarians are those with lesser wealth; however, a key difference between them is though Poseurs crave for status, Proletarians are less status conscious. Therefore, Poseurs need to signal their need for status by displaying loud products, but due to their low incomes, they often buy counterfeit branded products with loud signals as cheap substitutes for the original luxury brands. They desire to be like the 'haves' – Patricians and Parvenus – thus imitate them by associating with their styles and consumption patterns.

3.7.4 Comparison and critique of relevant models of consumer taxonomy

This subsection provides a comparison of various models of consumer taxonomies, namely, Han's taxonomy model (2010) with Wall & Large's Aspirational hierarchy of brand consumption model (2010) and Savage's analysis of the Great British Class Survey (2013). The four consumer types identified above by Han et al. (2010), vis-à-vis, patricians, parvenus, poseurs, and proletarians, and their corresponding status needs (figure 3.6) can be compared with the four consumer types identified by Wall and Large (2010) in their aspirational hierarchy of brand consumption model (figure 3.5). Furthermore, these comparisons can be further extended to the analysis of the Great British Class Survey (table 3.1) by Savage et al. (2013). Several parallels can be drawn between consumer types identified by these models (Han et al., 2010; Wall and Large, 2010) and the characteristics of the British social classes (Savage et al., 2013) as represented in figure 3.7 and discussed below:
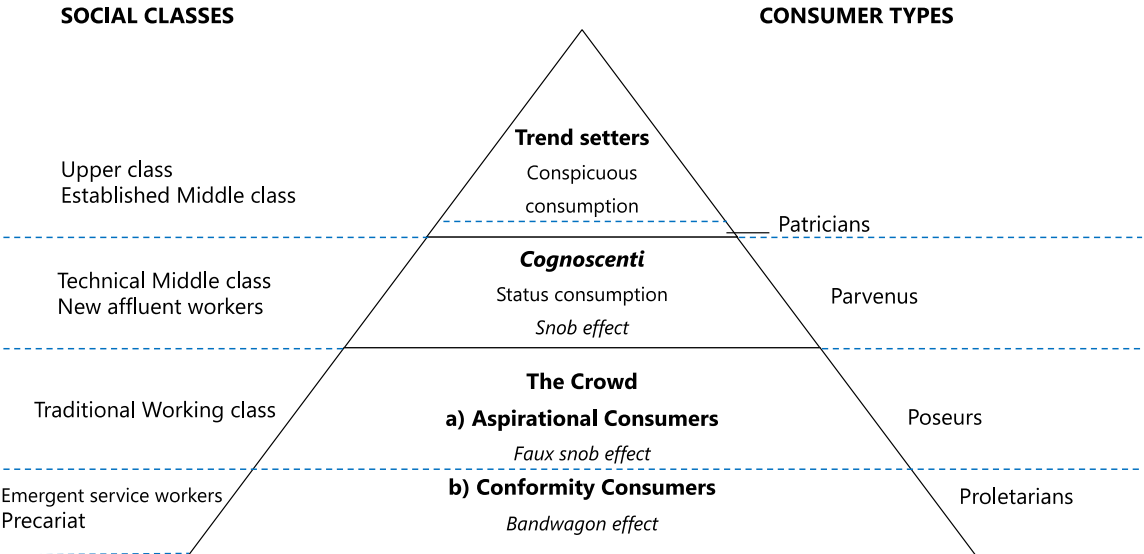
Figure 3.7 Comparison of Social classes and Consumer types
(Adapted from Han et al., 2010; Savage et al., 2013; Wall & Large, 2010)

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3.7.4.1 *Patricians*

The Patricians identified by Han et al. (2010) seem to exist between the Trend setters and the *Cognoscenti* in the Aspirational hierarchy of consumer groups identified by Wall and Large (2010). This is because both these groups as described by these researchers are very wealthy but do not possess the need to display their social status except to those 'in the know', such as luxury brands with no logo e.g., Bottega Veneta (Commuri, 2009; Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013). One of the limitations in Wall and Large's (2010) Aspirational hierarchy model is that it does not recognise the existence of very wealthy consumers who take pride in *not* displaying their high status. Therefore, the Han et al.'s (2010) Patricians seemingly exist between the Trend setters (characterised by conspicuous consumption of Haute Couture by celebrities) and the *Cognoscenti* (status seekers) in the Wall and Large's (2010) pyramid (figure 3.5).

The characteristics of Patricians also aligns with the Upper-class and established middle-class in the Great British Class Survey analysis by Savage et al. (2013) because they possess high economic capital, high highbrow, and high cultural capital.

3.7.4.2 *Parvenus*

Han et al.'s (2010) Parvenus seem to the counterparts of Wall and Large's (2010) *Cognoscenti* – both have wealth and the need to display status. These two consumer groups also align with the characteristics of the Technical middle class (with high economic capital moderate cultural capital) and New affluent workers (with new money, moderate highbrow cultural capital; Savage et al., 2013). Both groups consume luxury brands, mostly with loud, conspicuous branding. Though Han et al. (2010) and Wall and Large (2010) delve into the aspects of wealth (economic capital) and status signalling (social capital), they overlook the influence of cultural capital to a large extent which has been acknowledged as a key parameter in defining and demarcating the social classes by Savage et al. (2013).

3.7.4.3 *Poseurs*

Han et al.'s (2010) Poseurs together with the Proletarians form the Crowd at the base of the Aspirational hierarchy pyramid by Wall and Large (2010) as shown in figure 3.5. This inference can be drawn from the fact that they both mainly consume mass fashion brands as they hold lower economic capital. Poseurs particularly align with Aspirational

consumers in the Crowd because both crave for status but lack wealth, thereby indulging in counterfeit luxury consumption. One key difference between them is the cognition of concurrent ownership of both original and counterfeit luxury by Aspirational consumers (Wall and Large, 2010), however, Han et al. (2010) overlooks this phenomenon in their taxonomy. This aspect is crucial because the consumer groups are not rigid but very fluid and dynamic. Therefore, they cannot be segregated as consumers of only one type of brands – either only original luxury or only counterfeits. Several other researchers provide evidence to support this phenomenon of concurrent ownership of both as mentioned earlier (Stöttinger and Penz, 2015; Yoo and Lee, 2009).

These consumer groups also seem to align with the descriptions of the Traditional working class with moderately poor economic capital and low highbrow, emerging cultural capital (Savage et al., 2013).

3.7.4.4 *Proletarians*

The Proletarians identified by Han et al. (2010) seem to be similar to the Conformity consumers in the Aspirational Hierarchy model by Wall and Large (2010). This inference is based on their two defining features – both consume mass fashion brands, and both have poor economic capital. They are least concerned about status signalling and therefore tend to mostly consume non-luxury brands (Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013; Han et al., 2010; Whelan and Hingston, 2018). However, one key deviation in this consensus lies in the Aspirational hierarchy model that Wall and Large (2010) indicate the consumption of counterfeit luxury by this group. This can be attributed to the fact that social classes and their consumption behaviours are fluid, and it is difficult to draw a general conclusion about everyone in one particular social class.

These consumer groups also seem aligned with the descriptions of the Emergent service workers (with moderately poor economic capital though with reasonable household income, moderate social contacts, and high emerging but lowbrow cultural capital) and with the Precariat (with poor economic capital, and the lowest scores on every other criterion; Savage et al., 2013).

Overall, this section can be concluded by establishing the strong association between SES and consumption behaviour as evident from the detailed discussion and analysis of various models by several researchers in this field. The next section takes this

narrative of consumer behaviour one step further by exploring the concept of compensatory consumption in conjunction with SES and emotional wellbeing.

3.8 Compensatory consumption

As briefly discussed earlier (in section 3.4), the practice of *compensatory consumption* to balance between the goals of achieving status and/or class by compensating for one with the other has been researched widely (Belk, 1986; Fisher, 1987; Gao et al., 2016; Mandel et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2020). Compensatory consumption is not restricted to improving class and status goals but also to counterbalance emotional distress with material possessions (Belk, 1988; Mandel et al., 2017). For instance, compensatory consumption occurs by emphasis on material resources to compensate for the higher levels of personal insecurity and emotional wellbeing during childhood than others (Richins and Chaplin, 2015; Richins, 2017). Low power is compensated by acquiring status goods as found by researchers Rucker and Galinsky (2008) during their research on the association between powerlessness and compensatory consumption. Individuals with low SES (compared to high SES) are more likely to attribute economic inequality to uncontrollable external factors such as political impact (Kraus et al., 2011) and compensate it with variety-seeking tendency (Yoon and Kim, 2018).

According to Higgins (1987), the predisposition for compensatory consumption is conceived in one's mind when one identifies a self-discrepancy between one's ideal and actual self. To illustrate this further, Mandel et al. (2017) give example of how social exclusion can increase self-discrepancy between an individual's actual and desired levels of belongingness. These researchers provide a detailed synthesis of separate findings from research on self-discrepancy and how it is addressed by compensatory consumption behaviour. They have identified five major consumer behaviour strategies which consumers use to address their self-discrepancy, namely, direct resolution, symbolic self-completion, dissociation, escapism, and fluid consumption (see table 3.3 for a summary).

i.   Direct resolution

Direct resolution involves engaging in activities or goal-directed behaviours which directly resolve the source of the self-discrepancy (Mandel et al., 2017). Research provides evidence to support this strategy such as consumer's perceived body weight

concerns encourages him/her to join a gym to address the weight issue (Shcouten, 1991).

ii. Symbolic self-completion

The theoretical foundation of compensatory consumption behaviour begins from the symbolic self-completion theory by Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1981; Mandel et al., 2017). Symbolic self-completion addresses a perceived self-discrepancy without directly resolving its source (Mandel et al., 2017). It is like a coping mechanism adopted by an individual to address a self-discrepancy which s/he may find hard to address directly. For example, universities with lower status listed more professional titles on their departmental websites and less-cited professors listed more professional titles on their email signatures (Harmon-Jones et al., 2008; Rozin et al., 2014). Symbolic self-completion will be discussed in more detail later (in section 3.9).

Table 3.3 Five distinct compensatory consumer behaviour strategies

Strategy	Definition	Example
Direct resolution	Behavior that resolves the source of the self-discrepancy.	A person who feels less intelligent than desired purchases and reads books to become smarter.
Symbolic-self completion	Behavior that signals mastery in the domain of the self-discrepancy.	A person who feels less intelligent than desired buys a conspicuous frame for his diploma and displays it above his desk.
Dissociation	Behavior that separates oneself from products or services related to the self-discrepancy.	A person who feels less intelligent than desired cancels his subscription to The Economist.
Escapism	Behavior that distracts oneself from thinking about the self-discrepancy.	A person who feels less intelligent than desired goes to the movies in order to direct his thoughts away from the discrepancy.
Fluid compensation	Behavior that reinforces another aspect of one's identity distinct from the self-discrepancy.	A person who feels less intelligent than desired purchases a Rolex in order to feel financially successful.

(Source: Adapted from Mandel et al., 2017, p.138)

iii. Dissociation

Unlike direct resolution and symbolic self-completion, dissociation means disengaging with the self-discrepancy by avoiding any purchases or involvement in that area (White

and Dahl, 2006; Mandel et al., 2017). For example, men were found to be less interested in ordering a steak when it was labelled a "ladies' cut" compared to a steak without such label (White and Dahl, 2006).

iv.   Escapism

Escapism involves intentionally directing one's thoughts away from a self-discrepancy by focussing on something else (Mandel et al., 2017). For example, going for shopping to avoid feelings of sadness, also called as retail therapy (Atalay and Meloy, 2011; Mandel et al., 2017). Similarly, binge watching a television series is a form of escapism when trying to avoid self-focus (Moskalenko and Heine, 2003). Escapism does not resolve the source of self-discrepancy but merely reduces the awareness of the self-discrepancy temporarily (Mandel et al., 2017).

v.   Fluid consumption

When an individual address a self-discrepancy by affirming the self in a different domain than the domain of the self-discrepancy, it is called fluid consumption (Heine et al., 2006). The theoretical roots of fluid consumption originate from self-affirmation theory (Steele, 1988). According to the self-affirmation theory, strengthening valued aspects of the self alleviates the salience of self-discrepancy (Mandel et al., 2017; Steele, 1988). For example, choosing an aesthetically pleasing product instead of a functionally superior one is a way to affirm the self (Stele, 1988).

All these five consumer behaviour strategies are complementary and supplementary with each other in various degrees in different phases of self-discrepancies identified by consumers. However, the most significant one relevant to the present research is the symbolic self-completion because in the context of luxury and counterfeit consumption, both luxury brands and counterfeits are used as symbols of status signalling (Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013; Grossman and Shapiro, 1988; Wang et al., 2019). Therefore, consumers adopt forms of symbolic self-completion to alleviate self-discrepancies related to their social class, status, and cultural capital (Wicklund and Gollwitzer, 1981). The next section focuses on symbolic self-completion.

3.9 Symbolic self-completion theory

Consumer behaviour is often shaped by childhood experiences (Ward, 1974), which when coupled with low socioeconomic status, may create a sense of incompleteness in self-definition in terms of achieving preferred social status (Wicklund and Gollwitzer,

1982). This results into a desire to reduce this self-discrepancy through luxury brands (Kaufmann et al., 2016). As a method of symbolising the possession of status, display of the luxury brand logo (Nelissen and Meijers, 2011) gives an enhanced feeling of being complete as proposed by Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1982) in the theory of symbolic self-completion. Symbolic self-completion is a psychological theory stating that individuals seek to acquire and display symbols which are strongly associated with what they perceive as the ideal self (Wicklund and Gollwitzer, 1982).

The core idea on which the theory of symbolic self-completion is based is the condition of *incompleteness* in the self-definition of an individual according to Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1982) who are the pioneers of this theory. They described self-definitions as goals which an individual may pursue. Defining oneself as a violinist, mother, humanitarian, academic, football fan, and Spanish-speaker are all examples of self-definitions. Any perceived deficiencies related to a self-definition creates the drive to pursue additional evidence of possessing the self-definition. This pursuit is called self-symbolising which may occur in the form of positive self-descriptions, in the use of visible symbols of the aspired self-definition (Wicklund and Gollwitzer, 1982).

As discussed in the previous section, symbolic self-completion has been applied as a compensatory consumption strategy by consumers in various domains of self-discrepancies. Mandel et al. (2017) provide evidence of research exhibiting areas of self-discrepancies associated with symbolic self-completion as a coping strategy (table 3.4). These self-discrepancies could be in the domain of academic ability (Dalton, 2008), personal freedom (Levav and Zhu, 2009), control (Cutright, 2012), power (Dubois et al., 2012; Rucker and Galinsky, 2008, 2009), self-concept (Gao et al., 2009; Morrison and Johnson, 2011), social belongingness (Lee and Shrum, 2013; Loveland et al., 2010; Mead et al., 2011; Wan et al., 2014; Wang et al. 2012), and social status (Harmon-Jones et al., 2008) among many others.

3.9.1 Symbolic self-completion in the domain of SES

This research focuses on the symbolic self-completion with respect to socioeconomic status and social status. This is because luxury brands and counterfeit luxury consumption is more prominent in the context of status signalling amongst social classes (Charles et al., 2009; Desmichel et al., 2020). Self-discrepancies arise from social comparisons, especially upward comparisons with someone from higher social class than oneself (Carr and Vignoles, 2011; Mandel et al., 2017; Manstead, 2018).

Table 3.4 Symbolic self-completion as a compensatory consumer behaviour in prior research

Domain of self-discrepancy	Coping strategy	Dependent Variable	Citation
Academic ability	Symbolic self-completion	Trading up	Dalton (2008)
Business success	Symbolic self-completion	Ownership of symbolic success indicators	Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1982)
Control	Symbolic self-completion	Choice of products containing boundaries	Cutright (2012)
Financial resources	Symbolic self-completion	Consumption of scarce goods	Sharma and Alter (2012)
First-year status (insecurity)	Symbolic self-completion	Ownership of university-branded clothing	Braun and Wicklund (1989)
Masculinity	Symbolic self-completion	Preference for masculine products	Willer et al. (2013)
Personal freedom	Symbolic self-completion	Variety-seeking	Levav and Zhu (2009)
Physical appearance	Symbolic self-completion	Choice of appearance-enhancing accessories	Hoegg et al. (2014)
Power	Symbolic self-completion	Preference for larger items in a hierarchy	Dubois et al. (2012)
Power	Symbolic self-completion	WTP for status products	Rucker and Galinsky (2008, 2009)
Self-concept certainty	Symbolic self-completion	Product choice	Gao et al., (2009)
Self-concept certainty	Symbolic self-completion	Symbolic value of possessions	Morrison and Johnson (2011)
Social belongingness	Symbolic self-completion	Horizontal and vertical brand differentiation	Dommer et al. (2013)
Social belongingness	Symbolic self-completion	Financial risk-taking	Duclos et al. (2013)
Social belongingness	Symbolic self-completion	Conspicuous consumption of or charitable contribution	Lee and Shrum (2012)
Social belongingness	Symbolic self-completion	Nostalgic brand choice	Loveland et al. (2010)
Social belongingness	Symbolic self-completion	Choice of products that signal affiliation	Mead at el. (2011), Wan et al.
Social status	Symbolic self-completion	Professional titles listes in email signatures	Harmon-Jones et al. (2008)
Sociocultural system	Symbolic self-completion	Choice of system-defending products	Cutright et al. (2011)
Socioeconomic status	Symbolic self-completion	Conspicuous consumption	Charles et al. (2009)

(Source: Adapted from Mandel et al., 2017, p.136)

Such upward comparisons may trigger tendency for compensatory consumption. For instance, consumers feeling less powerful than others and more likely to indulge in high-status products to reinstate feelings of power (Rucker and Galinsky, 2008, 2009). Likewise, people tend to buy brands signalling their status or affiliation to a particular group when they feel socially excluded from that group (Lee and Shrum, 2009; Mead et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2014; Wan et al., 2012). Therefore, symbolic self-completion is crucial in self-enhancement in SES.

However, in contrast with self-enhancement motive, in some circumstance, consumers may be more likely to pursue self-verification motive, predominantly when they view their self-discrepancy as perpetual rather than transitory (Mandel et al., 2017). Therefore, self-verification theory is equally relevant to the present study. It is discussed in the next section.

3.10 Self-verification theory

Self-verification theory is a social psychological theory that asserts that individuals desire others to view them as they view themselves, and to ensure this they take active steps to confirm that others perceive them in ways that mirrors their stable self-views (Swann 1989; 2012). They pursue self-verification even if their self-views are negative (Swann, 2012). For example, Brannon and Mandel (2016) found that when consumers feel less powerful, they purchase brands consistent with their low power, i.e., low-status brands, when they were aware of their self-verification versus self-enhancement mindset. In another study, Rucker and Galinsky (2014) found that consumers feeling less powerful were inclined to buy low-status brands when they were more aware of others' expectations of them in their high or low power role. These researchers show how self-verification plays a role in maintaining one's social status in the context of low power and low status, unlike symbolic self-completion. This theory is particularly relevant to the present study to gauge the consumption behaviour of low SES consumers in the context of non-luxury brands.

Based on the self-verification theory, low SES consumers may tend to choose non-luxury brands; while based on compensatory consumption via symbolic self-completion, low SES consumers may desire to choose luxury or counterfeit luxury brands for self-enhancement to reduce self-discrepancies related to status as discussed in the previous sections. Furthermore, high SES consumers often choose

luxury brands for status signalling (Ruckus and Galinsky, 2008, 2009), or even associate with low-status consumers in order to avoid association with middle-status consumers in accordance with the trickle-round model (Bellezza and Berger, 2020; Trigg, 2001). To oversimplify, the three major social classes high-status (upper class), middle-status (middle class), and low-status (working class) often tend to choose from three substitutes of brands – luxury brands, counterfeit luxury brands, and non-luxury brands. Therefore, the concept of substitutes is discussed next.

3.11 Substitutes

In general, substitutes, or substitute goods are two alternative goods which could be used for the same purpose (Schrezenmaier, 2005). It is a concept found in economics and consumer research. Counterfeits and genuine products have been considered as substitutes by several researchers (Falkowski et al., 2015; Grossman and Shapiro, 1988a; Qian, 2014b). According to Qian (2014b), counterfeits have heterogeneous effects on various product lines of authentic brands; namely, *substitution effects* and advertising effects. In case of high-end authentic products, counterfeits cause advertising effect, which means counterfeits grow brand awareness in the minds of consumers. On the other hand, for low-end product sales, the substitution effect of counterfeits outweighs their advertising effect, thus causing harms to the sale of these authentic product lines. Therefore, counterfeits are closer substitutes for low-end authentic luxury products (Qian, 2014b) and potential substitutes for non-luxury products.

Furthermore, it is important to underpin under what circumstances do consumers choose non-luxury and when do they decide to substitute them with counterfeits of luxury. Literature suggests a number of factors such as status-signalling (Han et al., 2010), value-expressive or self-adjustive functions (Wilcox et al., 2009), income levels (Phau and Teah, 2009; Stöttinger and Penz, 2015; Tom et al., 1998), situational factors (Belk, 1974), etc. In this context of brand choice between three substitutes – counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands – Geiger-Oneto et al. (2013) developed and tested a theoretical model of antecedents to predict choices amongst these three brand types using a nested logit model.

3.11.1 Nested logit model

The nested logit model is used by researchers to group together sets of choices which admits non-zero correlation between unobserved components of choices within a nest and maintain zero correlation across nests (Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013). In the alternative nested model (figure 3.8), Geiger-Oneto et al. (2013) categorised the three brand types on the basis of status, economic factors, and authenticity.

Firstly, the status-focused model considers brands signalling status (i.e., authentic luxury and counterfeit luxury) and those brands which do not signal status (i.e., non-luxury brands). Secondly, the economic-focused model considers inexpensive (i.e., non-luxury and counterfeits) versus expensive (i.e., luxury) brands. Finally, the authenticity-focused model groups together genuine (i.e., authentic luxury and non-luxury) versus fake (i.e., counterfeit luxury) brands.

The present research focuses mainly on the status-focused model and economic-focused model because these two models are relevant to socioeconomic status, social class, and status which form the conceptual framework for this study. The findings of the study by Geiger-Oneto et al. (2013) demonstrate that individuals with higher occupational prestige choose non-luxury brands instead of counterfeits because they feel secure in terms of their status and hence, do not require to signal their status in the social realm. However, when they do choose to buy status products, they choose original luxury rather than their counterfeits. This finding is significant because it establishes the significance of status security.

Furthermore, Geiger-Oneto et al. (2013) also found that those with status insecurity tend to choose counterfeit luxury brands instead of non-luxury to reinforce their perceptions of status. However, one major limitation in this finding is determining the circumstances under which the substitution between non-luxury and counterfeit luxury brands takes place. This is crucial because if the non-luxury brands are replaced by counterfeit luxury, it questions the potential impact of counterfeits on non-luxury brands too (besides the authentic luxury brands). This is the premise of present research as already discussed in chapter two in detail.
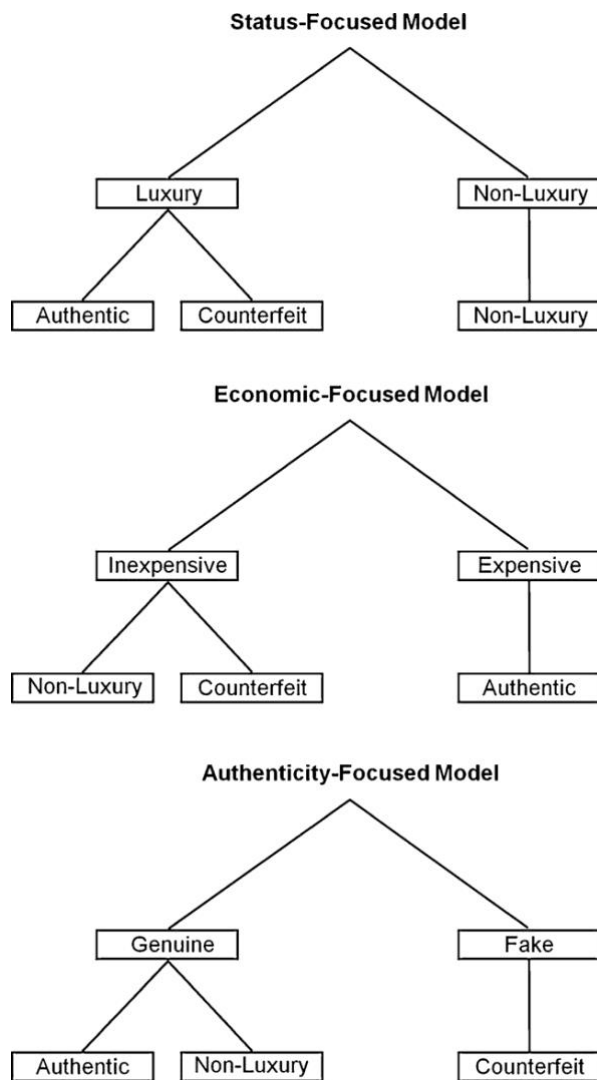
Figure 3.8 Alternative nested models
(Source: Adapted from Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013, p.358)

Additionally, the second major limitation in the research by Geiger-Oneto et al. (2013) is that they do not consider the social class of the consumer, while considering their status consumption. Social class is an equally important factor in this regard as established earlier (Carey and Markus, 2016; Easterbrook et al., 2020; Fisher, 1987; Manstead, 2018). For example, if a low SES consumer gets into a prestigious occupation on account of skills, his/her status insecurity and choice between non-luxury, luxury, and counterfeit brands will be significantly different compared to the occupational prestige of the participants in the study by Geiger-Oneto et al. (2013). Similarly, their another finding confirming status conscious people choosing luxury and counterfeit luxury (instead of non-luxury) brands may be affected if social class is also considered. For example, Bellezza and Berger (2020) found that upper-class consumers sometimes consumer with low-status products like lowbrow food such as

potato chips, macaroni and cheese, and downscale clothing such as ripped jeans and duct-taped shoes.

To address this limitation, the present study will consider the social class and SES of consumers and its association with the corresponding brand choices. Building on this background further, the next section discusses the substitutes (i.e., the three brand types) and brings it together with the consumer types found in literature.

3.12 Brand types (substitutes) and consumer types

The three brand types (substitutes) discussed above vis-à-vis, counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands can be aligned with another body of literature related to the four consumer types identified by Han et al. (2010), vis-à-vis, patricians, parvenus, poseurs, and proletarians (in section 3.7). In doing so, the present research paints a clearer picture of consumers and their corresponding choice of brand types (table 3.5). This will further lead to the identification of research gap and development of research questions in the next sections.

Table 3.5 Brand types and Consumer types

Consumer type / Brand type	Patricians	Parvenus	Poseurs	Proletarians
Counterfeit luxury brands	⊗	✓	✓	?
Luxury brands	✓	✓	⊗	⊗
Non-luxury brands	?	⊗	?	?

(Source: Adapted from Han et al., 2010)
⊗ *represents not consumed;* ✓ *represents consumed; ? represents research gap*

As discussed earlier, based on the description of the patricians by Han et al. (2010), they mostly consume luxury brand but with subtle signals. They do not consumer

counterfeit luxury. However, it is not clear from their research if the patricians also consume non-luxury brands. This research gap is indicated by a question-mark in table 3.5. Secondly, the parvenus consume luxury brands with loud signalling, however, though Han et al. (2010) assert that the poseurs are more prone to counterfeits, it is not very evident whether the parvenus also buy counterfeits occasionally. However, considering parvenus' desire for loud signalling, and gathering from the literature on the concurrent ownership of both luxury and counterfeits as a popular phenomenon, it can be assumed that occasionally parvenus might consume counterfeits too. Furthermore, there is no mention of non-luxury brands consumption by the research by Han et al. (2010) as it is limited to status goods. However, going by the description of parvenus' extreme likeness for loud status signalling, it seems unlikely that they would consume non-luxury brands which bear no status claims.

Thirdly, poseurs' proneness to buying counterfeits is obvious in their description by Han et al. (2010). Additionally, their financial limitation to access original luxury brand is evident too. However, their consumption of the third substitute of non-luxury brands remains unknown. And lastly, the dissociation of proletarians with signalling is evident, however, there could be some potential consumption of counterfeits as a substitute for non-luxury brands by the proletarians – this remains a gap in the literature.

The present research aims to bridge the research gaps identified in this section. The next section summarises the identified research gaps, followed by research questions.

3.13 Identified research gaps

Building on the conceptual framework discussed across all the sections in this chapter, the identified research gaps are as follows:

i.   The role of social class and socioeconomic status on consumers' brand choices among counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands needs to be investigated

ii.   Research is required to establish how do consumers adopt symbolic self-completion as a compensatory consumption strategy to address self-discrepancies related to SES by using different brand types (e.g., counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands)

iii.   Existing counterfeiting literature does not include the impact of counterfeits on non-luxury brands (besides luxury brands)

The entire chapter has discussed the conceptual foundations of this present research, entailing the detailed justifications, reasoning, and identification of the aforementioned research gaps. Based on these research gaps, the next section posits the research questions.

3.14 Research questions

The present research aims to address the following research questions:

RQ1: How do childhood SES and adulthood SES affect consumers' preferences while choosing between the substitutes of counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands?

RQ2: What is the role of symbolic self-completion in consumers' brand substitution between counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands?

RQ3: What is the impact of counterfeits on non-luxury brands, besides luxury brands?

3.15 Summary

This chapter positioned the conceptual foundations for the present research. It explored and demarcated overlapping concepts related to social class, social status, and socioeconomic status. Different models emerged from the literature to explain the nexus between socioeconomic status and consumption behaviour of different types of consumers. Most notably, the four consumer types based on wealth and status needs – patricians, parvenus, poseurs, and proletarians (Han et al., 2010) and the four consumer groups based on the aspirational hierarchy of brand consumption model – trend setters, *cognoscenti*, aspirational, and conformity consumers (Wall and Large, 2010). The chapter further drew parallels between two these two sets of consumer types and compared them further in juxtaposition with the British social classes (Savage et al., 2013). The key to understanding consumer behaviour related to class and status is to underpin the strategies to manage self-discrepancies related to class and status. This chapter has argued that consumers engage in different compensatory consumer behaviour strategies to mitigate identified self-discrepancies in various domains. Symbolic self-completion is the most relevant coping strategy to reduce feelings of social exclusion and reinforce status or belongingness to social groups. Original luxury and counterfeit luxury brands are often used for status signalling. However, in some circumstances, consumers with low-status may resume self-verification to reinforce their low-status by consuming low-status brands such as non-

luxury brands. Therefore, three substitutes of brand types emerge – counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands. Furthermore, the chapter aligned the three brand substitutes vis-à-vis, counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands with another body of literature related to the four consumer types identified by Han et al. (2010), vis-à-vis, patricians, parvenus, poseurs, and proletarians. In doing so, it painted a clearer picture of consumers and their corresponding choice of brand types. Finally, the chapter summarised the identified research gaps and silhouetted the ensuing research questions for the present study. The next chapter discusses the methodology adopted to address the research questions.

Chapter 4
Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology used in the present research to address the research questions. The last two chapters positioned this research within the context of non-deceptive counterfeit consumption and socioeconomic status of consumers. This chapter elaborates and outlines the methodology that was drawn upon to conduct this study. First, it summarises the nature of this research based on the last two chapters, outlining the research questions. Then, it discusses the research philosophy, epistemological and ontological stances underpinning this study. Subsequently, the chapter discusses the research strategy and the research methods chosen for the study, providing the rationale to choose netnographic study and qualitative in-depth interviews. Following this, it explains the data collection process and data analysis process used in this thesis. Finally, the chapter concludes with discussing the limitations to the data and the ethical considerations, with particular emphasis on ethical issues related to netnographic study.

4.2 Nature of the research

The aim of the current research was to assess how non-deceptive counterfeits sold in secondary markets affect non-luxury and luxury brands. The literature review revealed that besides luxury brands, the counterfeits could potentially affect non-luxury brands too. This encouraged to study the substitution mechanism between the three brand substitutes – counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands. In order to achieve this overarching aim, it was necessary to delineate this research in accordance with socioeconomic status (SES), brand substitution, and symbolic self-completion as a compensatory consumption strategy to address the self-discrepancies generated by SES, as explored in the conceptual framework chapter. In line with the overarching aim and building on the literature review and conceptual framework chapters, the present study set out to address the following research questions:

RQ1: How do childhood SES and adulthood SES affect consumers' preferences while choosing between the substitutes of counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands?

RQ2: What is the role of symbolic self-completion in consumers' brand substitution between counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands?

RQ3: What is the impact of counterfeits on non-luxury brands, besides luxury brands?

4.3 Research philosophy

Bryman (2004) argues that social science research should be channelled by the relationship between the theory and the data required, and whether the data are collected to test, or to build theories. This philosophy establishes either a deductive, or an inductive approach. The former approach seeks to test hypotheses by collecting data, analysing it and consequently confirming or rejecting the hypotheses. This approach suggests a fixed, linear series of stages with a clear start and end (Blaxter et al., 2001). However, sometimes research is under theorised or lacks empirical evidence and an inductive approach is more appropriate, since it allows ideas and theory to be generated from the research data (Blaxter et al., 2001). An inductive approach requires the researcher to adopt an iterative approach by visiting and re-visiting links between the data and the theory. A deductive approach has been commonly associated with quantitative data; by contrast an inductive approach tends to use qualitative data, but this is not a definitive rule. It is noted that increasingly researchers are combining approaches that generate both quantitative and qualitative data to develop a richer understanding of the issue being investigated (Bryman 2004; Punch 2003).

The research problem identified in the previous chapters indicates that the impact of counterfeits on non-luxury brands requires empirical research, especially in the context of secondary markets. Likewise, there are gaps in knowledge related to the brand substitution process by consumers while choosing between counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands, influenced by SES factors. The role of childhood and adulthood SES affecting consumers' preferences between these three brand substitutes needs an explorative and inductive approach. This is particularly relevant for non-luxury brands (compared to luxury brands) because of the lack of empirical research in this area. Moreover, understanding the 'why' and 'how' of consumer behaviour gains significance on account of getting a deeper insight into their minds. Before adopting the inductive approach, it is crucial to discuss the epistemological and ontological viewpoints supporting this approach.

4.3.1 Epistemology and Ontology

Epistemology is related to framing knowledge (Bryman, 2004) and can be viewed, as designed either to test a hypothesis, or to interpret meaning. Testing hypothesis is frequently associated with a deductive approach, whilst interpreting meaning is

associated with an inductive approach from which meaning, and occurrences are sketched (Marshall & Rossman 1999; Neuman 2004). Central to the inductive approach is the viewpoint of the subject, rather than the observer, therefore there is greater focus on the meaning and perspective of events, rather than the researcher hypothesising that the social world can be condensed to a collective approach (Halcro, 2008; Marshall & Rossman 1999; Denscombe 2003; Neuman 2004). Since the present research focuses on the effect of SES on brand substitution between original luxury, counterfeit luxury, and non-luxury brands which has not been researched earlier, therefore, it undertakes an inductive approach. This allows the researcher to explore the respondents' thought processes, childhood experiences and their effect on their consumption behaviour.

Ontology studies the form and nature of reality, and whether reality is separate from social actors or influenced by social actors (Bryman, 2004). While the standpoint of objectivism regards social phenomena and their associated meaning as distinct from social actors, constructivism argues that social actors interact and influence social phenomena. The former emphasises a quantitative methodology, the latter a qualitative methodology. Since the present study is qualitative in nature, the ontological assumption is that of constructivism because it assumes that the respondents of the study play an active role in their brand substitution decisions through their dynamic interactions and perceptions.

Bryman (2004) suggests that these theoretical, epistemological, and ontological considerations guide the choice of research strategy towards either a quantitative or a qualitative research strategy (table 4.1). The table signifies that a qualitative research strategy supports an interpretivism epistemological orientation and a constructive position.

Table 4.1 Fundamental differences between quantitative and qualitative research strategies

Orientations	Quantitative	Qualitative
Principal orientation to the role of theory in relation to research	Deductive; testing of theory	Inductive; generation of theory
Epistemological orientation	Positivism	Interpretivism
Ontological orientation	Objectivism	Subjectivism/ Constructivism

(Source: Adapted from Bryman, 2008, p.22)

4.4 Research strategy

Pragmatism is a well-used stance within mixed methods research (Creswell and Tashakkori 2007; Denscombe 2008; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004; Hall 2012). It is oriented towards solving practical problems in the real world (Hall, 2012). Pragmatism is not a philosophical stance, rather is a set of tools which are used to address research questions (Biesta, 2010). The present research follows a pragmatic mixed methods approach to research design. This is because in the current study, consumers' engagement with counterfeits is changing with the increasing use of the online shopping environment, besides the traditional counterfeit markets. To address this, it is crucial to engage with the consumers of counterfeits, both offline and online, to investigate their counterfeit consumption behaviours. The pragmatic view is valuable for the researcher to move backwards and forwards between specific results and their implications (Morgan, 2007). The decision to use a pragmatic approach strengthened the need to interview consumers as well as collect data from online sources regarding the interplay of SES, and counterfeit consumption. The findings would be richer and more complex, leading to a better understanding of consumers' brand substitution behaviours between counterfeits and original luxury & non-luxury brands.

Mixed methods allow data triangulation and deeper understanding of the research (Bryman, 2004; Denscombe, 2003). The pragmatic approach framed a multi-method approach to gain a deeper understanding of consumers preferences for counterfeits and original brands. Initially, this involved a netnographic study of consumers' views about counterfeit consumption. This was followed by qualitative in-depth interviews with consumers. The two datasets were analysed individually, followed by data triangulation (figure 4.1). The two research methods and the rationale for choosing each of them is discussed in the subsequent sections.

```mermaid
flowchart TD
    A[Research problem] --> B[Study 1 – Netnographic study]
    B --> C[Netnographic data analysis]
    C --> D[Study 2 – Qualitative in-depth interviews]
    D --> E[Interview data analysis]
    E --> F[Data triangulation]
    F --> G[Reporting findings]
```
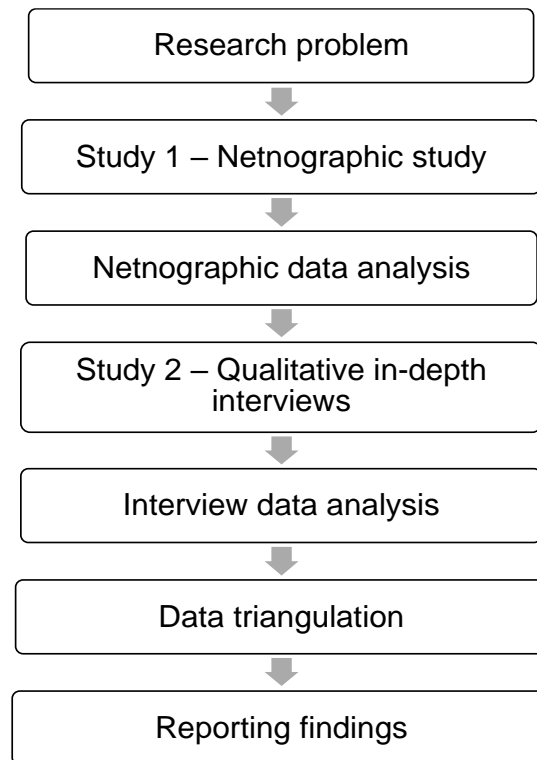
Figure 4.1 The Research strategy

(Source: Author)

4.5 Study 1 – Netnographic study

The first phase of the study started with a netnographic study aimed at conducting preliminary search for data pertaining to the identified research questions. The study included searching for the most appropriate and suitable online platform to choose for this research. This included social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc. and user-generated discussion forums such as Quora, Reddit, etc. The decision to choose Reddit for the netnographic study is discussed in the subsequent subsections. Once the online platform was decided upon, the study involved data collection from the relevant discussions and posts which were most relevant to each research question. The rational for choosing netnography is discussed in detail in the following subsection.

4.5.1 Definitions of netnography

There are many definitions in the context of studying online communities such as digital ethnography (Hughes, 2012), virtual ethnography, online ethnography (Beaulieu, 2004), and netnography (Kozinets, 2002). The study 1 in the present research is described as netnography because it is a market research method and is the adaption of ethnography to online communities (Kozinets, 2002). "Netnography is a qualitative,

interpretive research method that uses Internet-optimised ethnographic research techniques to study virtual communities and networks" (Sharma et al., 2018, p. 27). It is faster, simpler, and less expensive compared to ethnography. Moreover, compared to focus groups and interviews, netnography is more natural, real, and unobtrusive because it reveals symbolism, meanings, and consumer behaviours of online consumer communities (Kozinets et al., 2010).

4.5.2 Rationale for netnographic study

Netnography has been widely used by marketing researchers to understand consumer behaviour and they often choose appropriate online platform suitable to their specific study requirements (Goor et al., 2021; La Rocca et al., 2014; Sharma et al., 2018). For example, recent research by Goor et al. (2021) related to status pivoting used netnography to study consumers' status threat by using another user-generated platform (like Reddit), known as Quora. The researchers chose a Quora post by a user asking, "how can you overcome your envy of people who are your age but far more successful?" which was relevant to their respective study.

In context of the present study of counterfeits consumption, netnographic study of Reddit communities was found to be the most appropriate due to the presence of enormous Reddit communities called "subreddits" (with millions of members/ users) widely using counterfeits and discussing these in detail. These subreddits are discussed in detail in the following sections. The Reddit users often indulge in sharing their recent counterfeit purchases with many pictures of the counterfeit luxury brands and compared these products side-by-side with the original luxury to initiate discussions around the quality of counterfeits. Moreover, unlike focus groups, or interviews, these Reddit posts and discussions on counterfeits were voluntary, non-biased, and discussed openly by counterfeit enthusiasts. Considering counterfeit consumption has legal, ethical, and moral concerns, many users of counterfeits are hesitant to admit their behaviours openly in an interview or a focus group setting. This meant that the choice of netnographic study using Reddit proved more unbiased and easily available for the present research.

4.5.3 Data collection process

The netnographic study was aimed to provide preliminary results about how childhood and adulthood SES affects consumers' choices among alternatives of counterfeit

luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands. Firstly, a search was conducted for relevant posts on a social network with a forum-style discussion structure, known as Reddit. The posts were selected based on the authenticity and popularity of the Reddit posts – this was achieved by checking the responses to the posts by other Reddit users and by choosing posts with most comments of participation by other users. The search for posts included questions and/or discussion forums on Reddit which were related to the research questions posed by the present study. For example, when searched about SES related counterfeit consumption, some relevant posts were found with posts by Reddit users asking, "Do rich people buy fakes?" and another user who asked: "Women who don't spend money on luxury clothes, how do you feel about yourself?" (figure 4.2).
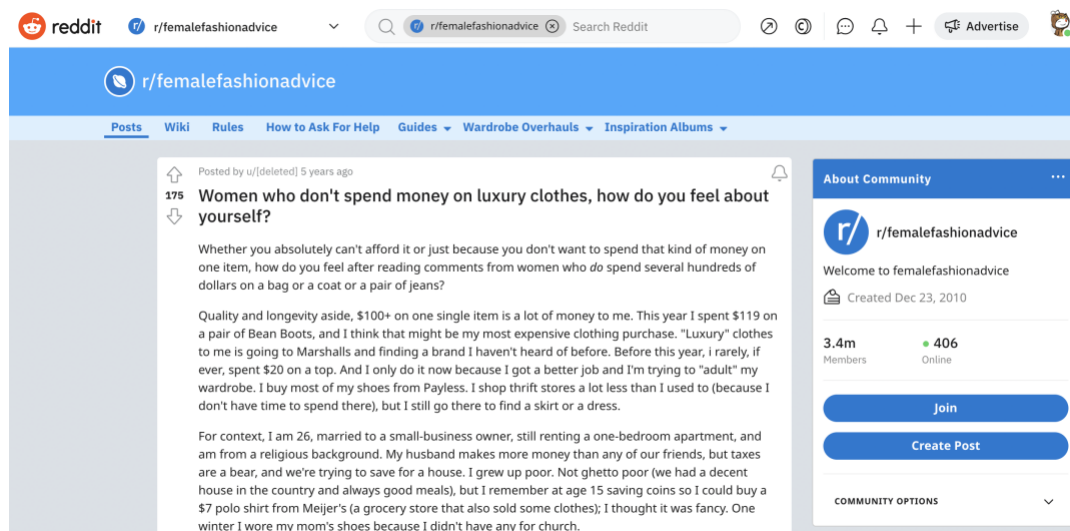
Figure 4.2 Screenshot of Reddit post used during Netnographic study
(Source: Reddit.com, 2023)

The Reddit posts mentioned above were in line with the first and second research questions (i.e., how does childhood SES, adulthood SES, and symbolic self-completion affect consumers' preferences while choosing between the substitutes of luxury counterfeits, original luxury, and non-luxury brands?). The search for posts was conducted to find the most relevant posts which helped answer the research questions of the current study and had the greatest number of comments by other Reddit users (compared to other similar posts) indicating that the post was relevant and popular among users. In total eight relevant Reddit posts were found pertaining to the three research questions of the study – these are displayed in the table 4.2 below. The number of posts chosen for the study was decided on the basis of relevance of the

posts to the respective research questions which was found to be the following eight posts related to each research question as displayed in the table.

Furthermore, other Reddit posts were searched related to consumers' choices between counterfeit luxury vs non-luxury brands such as posts which started discussions on "Replicas are better than fast-fashion" (figure 4.3) and "Retail vs reps". These posts mirrored the third research question (i.e., how do the consumers choose between the substitutes of luxury counterfeits, original luxury, and non-luxury brands?). The analysis of these posts provided a background for study 2 to formulate the interview questions based on the contents of the Reddit discussions. For example, posts related to the effect of childhood and adulthood SES on consumer behaviour provided the basis to form interview questions related to SES such as what kind of neighbourhood the respondents grew up in, how did they compare their purchase behaviour with their peers, etc. Similarly, Reddit posts and discussions on seeking status by using luxury brands and their counterfeits provided the platform to form interview questions such as if the respondents believed in achieving status through brands.

Table 4.2 Netnographic data collection

Research Question	Posts searched on Reddit	Title of the Reddit post	No. of comments
RQ1: How do childhood SES and adulthood SES affect consumers' preferences while choosing between the substitutes of counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands?	Posts related childhood and adulthood SES and brand consumption (e.g., rich/ poor people buying/ not buying luxury brands)	Women who don't spend money on luxury clothes, how do you feel about yourself?	231
		Women who do spend money on luxury clothes, how do you feel about yourself?	117
		Do rich people buy fakes?	25
RQ2: What is the role of symbolic self-completion in consumers' brand substitution between counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands?	Posts related to seeking status via purchase of counterfeit luxury, original luxury brands	How do you feel about knockoff or fake designer handbags?	48
		Purchasing luxury goods can affirm buyers' sense of status and enjoyment of items like fancy cars or fine jewellery. However, for many consumers, luxury purchases can fail to ring true, sparking feelings of inauthenticity that fuel what researchers have labelled the "impostor syndrome"	1024
RQ3: What is the impact of counterfeits on non-luxury brands, besides luxury brands?	Posts comparing Counterfeits with non-luxury brands	Replicas/ Counterfeits are better than fast-fashion/ non-luxury brands	43
		Retail vs reps: Why it really doesn't matter	73
		What do y'all think about fake designer tho?	242
		Total comments	**1803**

(Source: Reddit.com, 2023)

110
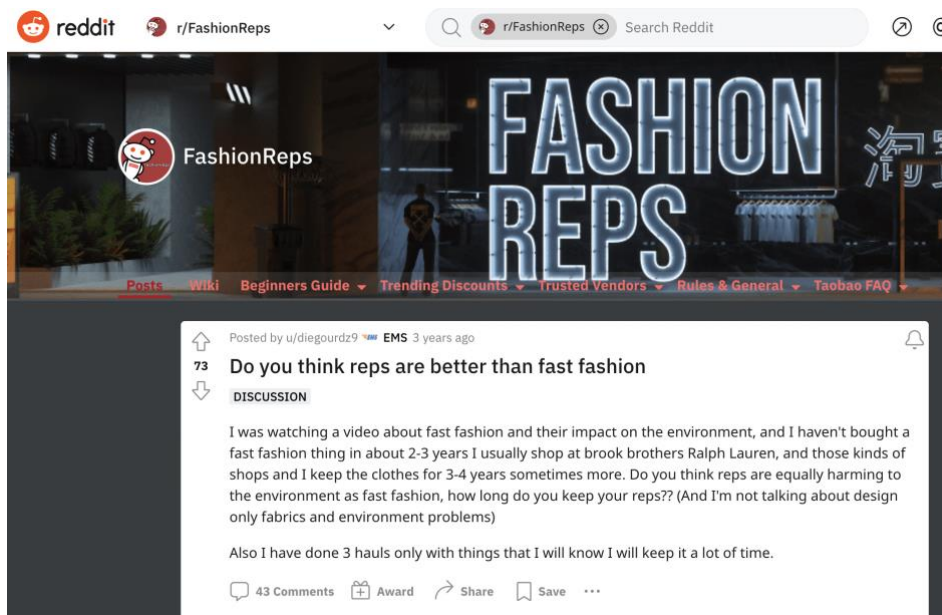
Figure 4.3 Screenshot of Reddit post used during Netnographic study
(Source: Reddit.com, 2023)

The comments and discussions on these posts were collected for data analysis to address the research questions of the present study. Though a data scrapping tool would be an efficient tool to collect data from Reddit, it was not used in the present study due to the long learning curve which requires complex steps of learning the issues to scrap data from a website and finding solutions to these issues (Adams, 2022). Even after building a data scrapper, there is a risk of the scrapper being blocked by the websites from which the data has to be scrapped. Furthermore, data collected using a scrapper requires multifaceted skillsets to process such complex data which the researcher could not pursue due to limited time and resources.

The data collection process from all the relevant posts resulted in 37 pages of data. The Reddit users shared their sources of buying their counterfeit products with other users in the communities, promoting good counterfeit sellers. For example, a Reddit community called "FashionReps" is one of the largest online communities with an enormous group of 1.2 million Reddit users openly discussing their counterfeit purchases. Figure 4.4 is a screenshot of this community which boasts of its members' distinct skills in "distinguishing replicas from authentic products" but mainly discussing counterfeit purchases as "replica hobbyism" as they call it. They call themselves "Rep family". Notably, these users address the luxury counterfeits as replicas or reps in short, but they mean counterfeits because these Reddit communities deal with the purchase, sale, and reviews of counterfeit luxury brands bearing original brand logo as

shown in figure 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7 below, and *reps* is more of a popular internet lingo for counterfeits.
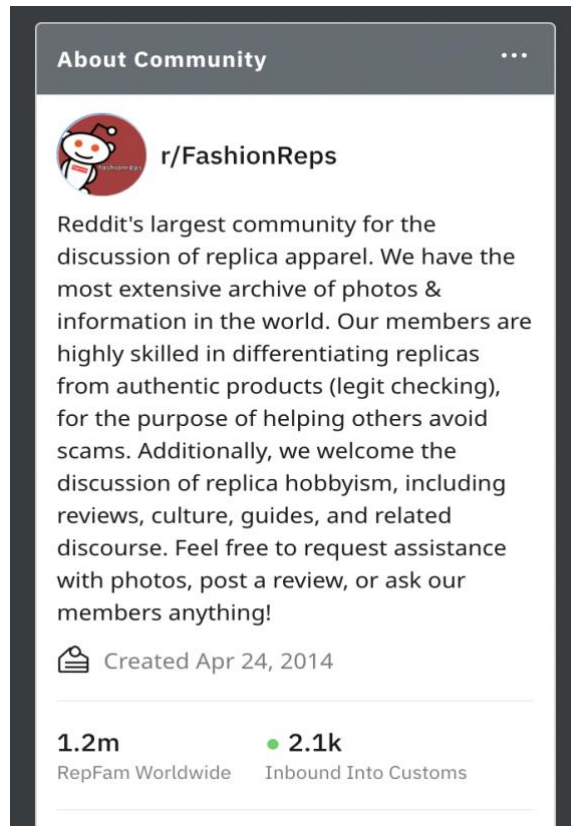
Figure 4.4 Screenshot of a Reddit community - FashionReps

(Source: Reddit.com, 2023)
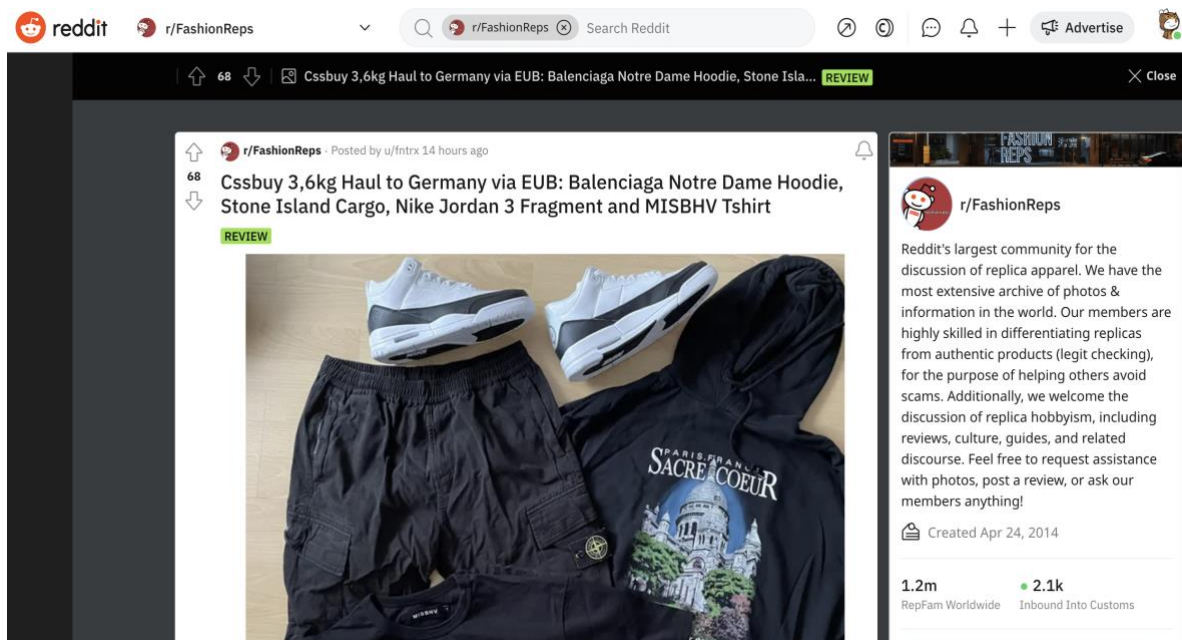
Figure 4.5 Screenshot of Reddit community users sharing their counterfeit purchase reviews

(Source: Reddit.com, 2023)
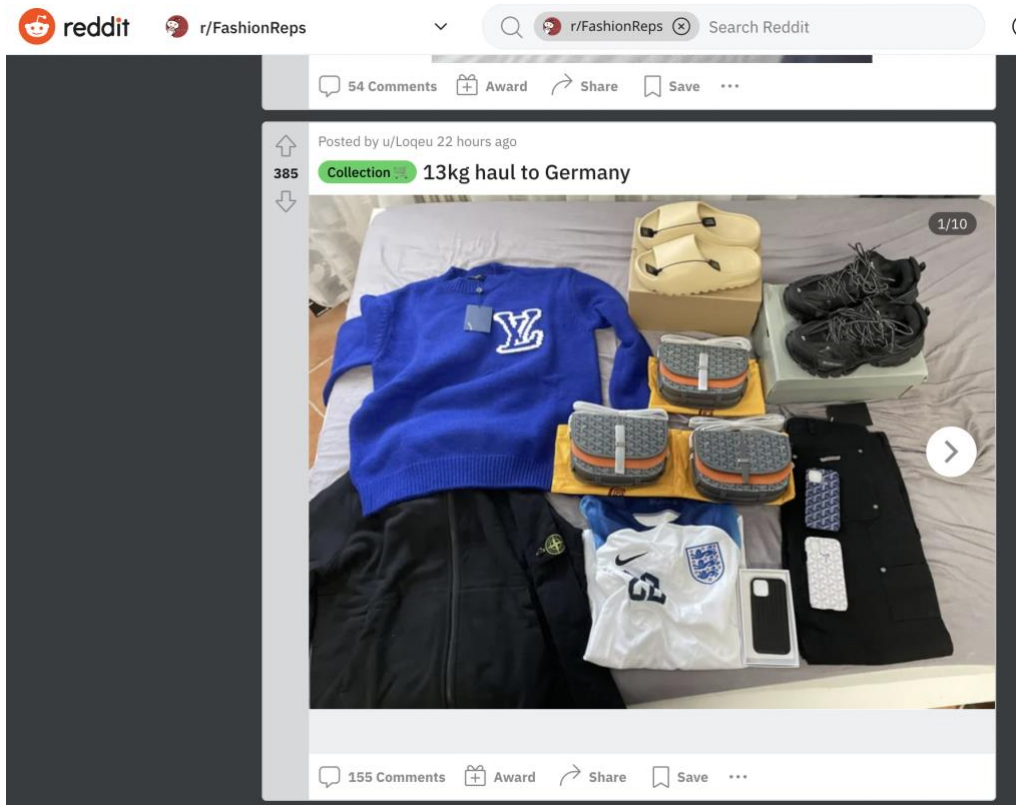
Figure 4.6 Screenshot of Reddit community users sharing their counterfeit purchase reviews

(Source: Reddit.com, 2023)
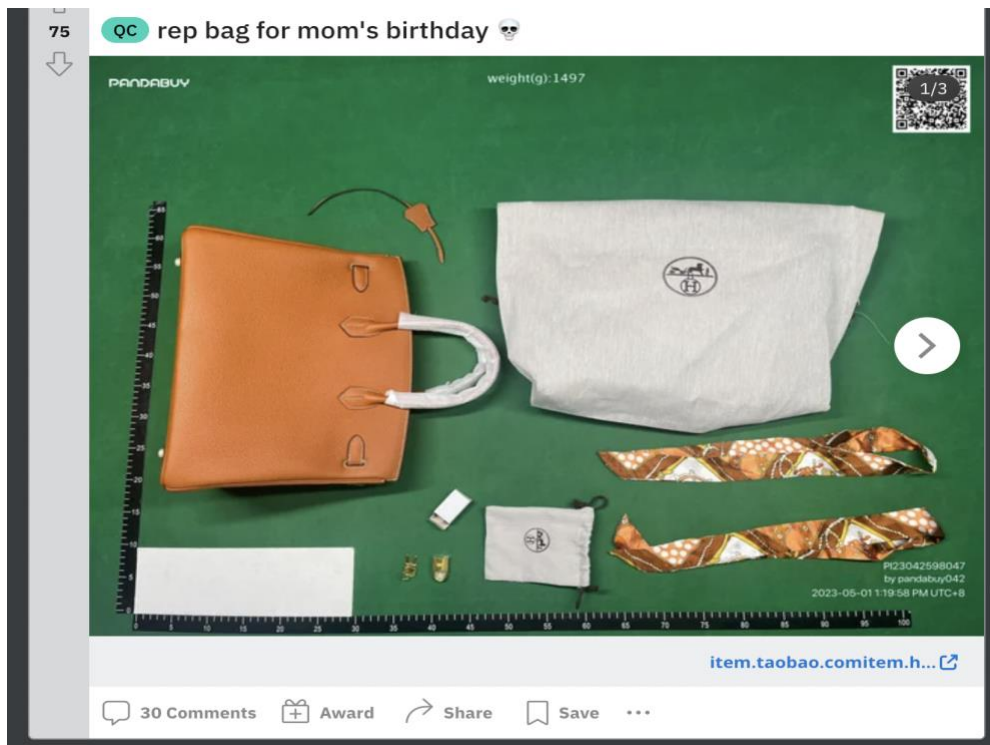
Figure 4.7 Screenshot of Reddit community users sharing their counterfeit purchase reviews

(Source: Reddit.com, 2023)

As seen in the images, the counterfeit consumers in these popular Reddit communities often describe their purchases in kilograms, e.g., 3.6 kg haul to Germany showing Balenciaga Notre Dame hoodie, Stone Island cargo, Nike Jordon 3 fragment, and a MISBHV t-shirt (figure 4.5), or 13 kg haul showing a counterfeit Louis Vuitton sweater, handbags, etc. and a counterfeit Hermès handbag "for mom's birthday" (figure 4.7). There are thousands of such posts, images, and reviews of counterfeits by these online consumers in many such Reddit communities and subreddits such as RepSneakers with more than 7,42,000 users, DesignerReps with 317,000 members. For example, figure 4.8 shows another example of a consumers' review of a Hermès footwear on DesignerReps community. Other online platforms such as Quora, Instagram, and Twitter were also searched for relevant data for the present study, however, none of these other platforms matched the extent and popularity of counterfeits enthusiastically discussed by such a massive number of users and community members on Reddit. Therefore, Reddit was found to be an apt platform to collect data for the present study and yielded a rich dataset. The next section discusses the data analysis of the netnographic data.
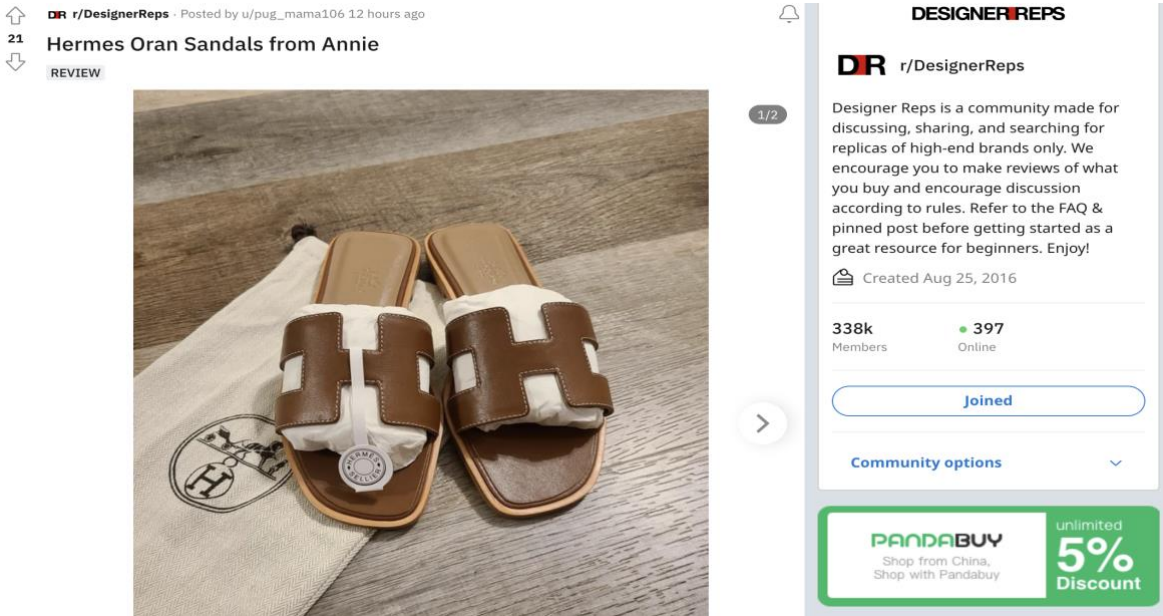
Figure 4.8 Screenshot of Reddit community users sharing their counterfeit purchase reviews

(Source: Reddit.com, 2023)

4.5.4 Data analysis of netnographic study

The data from the netnographic study was analysed using thematic content analysis (Shaw, 2020) of the comments posted under the posts pertaining to each research question as mentioned earlier. The reason for the choice of thematic content analysis was twofold – first, it was best suitable to find answers to the research questions and second, researchers have successfully used thematic content analysis to analyse Netnographic data (Kozinets, 2018; Langer and Beckman, 2005; Shaw, 2020). The comments were coded to find common themes across the dataset. Repetitive words were colour coded to find common patterns in the netnographic data. The themes were identified by closely examining the data to find repetitive ideas, topics, patterns in the comments by the Reddit users (Kozinets, 2018). These identified themes are discussed in detail in chapter seven of this thesis. The dataset from this study was used for triangulation with the dataset from study 2 and will be discussed at a later stage (see section 4.6.4).

4.5.5 Validity and reliability of netnographic data

One of the important issues which affects netnographic data is the trustworthiness of the data collected (Chung and Kim, 2015). The validity and reliability of the data related to the assumption that only the participants can verify the authenticity of the data (Chung and Kim, 2015). To ensure the rigour of the current study, only publicly visible online reviews and comments posted by registered Reddit users are included. This is done by most researchers using netnographic data (Kozinets, 2018; Langer and Beckman, 2005; Shaw, 2020).

4.5.6 Limitations to the netnographic data

There are limitations to every research method and the resulting dataset. In the present study, some limitations were encountered during the data collection and analysis phases. Firstly, as discussed briefly, one of the major limitations of the netnographic data was gauging the direct associations between SES and counterfeit consumer behaviour. This was because the researcher could not deep dive into the 'why' and 'how' aspects of the discussions on the Reddit posts. For example, though the data revealed online consumers' discussions around wealth and status, purchase of luxury brands and their counterfeits, but establishing links between counterfeits and SES required deeper insights into the consumer's minds. This limitation was mitigated by the complementing the study with the in-depth interviews, which allowed the researcher to ask these detailed questions to establish a deeper understanding of the underlying mechanisms of consumer behaviour.

Secondly, the UK was chosen as the field of study for choosing the target population for the in-depth interviews. However, demarcating the geographical boundaries was impossible for the netnographic study because most online communities include global users from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and countries. Particularly in the context of Reddit communities related to counterfeit purchase, the users are based across the globe, making it impossible to segregate a particular consumer base of UK consumers. Therefore, the data from the netnographic study and the data from the interviews bear this variation in the consumer base. Though the datasets did not seem much different in terms of the content and quality, nevertheless, it is important to identify this limitation upfront.

Thirdly, in some Reddit posts only women were mentioned in the post, e.g., in these two posts: 'Women who don't spend money on luxury clothes, how do you feel about yourself?' and 'Women who do spend money on luxury clothes, how do you feel about yourself?' This limitation was mitigated by complementing the current study using qualitative interviews by including both men and women in the study.

Further substantiating the netnographic study, and to address the research questions more specifically and in-depth, the next stage of data collection embraced qualitative in-depth interviews as discussed in the next section.

4.6 Study 2 - Qualitative in-depth interviews

The second phase of the research involved qualitative, semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Semi-structured interviews were used instead of unstructured or structured interviews because they combine elements of both unstructured and structured interviews and provide flexibility to the participants while allowing some structure to the researcher to conduct the interview (Brinkmann, 2014). The qualitative interviews aimed to substantiate the preliminary findings from the netnographic study and deep dive into detailed one-to-one discussion with each consumer about their counterfeit and original brands consumption. The most important element which the qualitative study included was the effect of childhood and adulthood SES on consumer behaviour. This element was lacking in the netnographic data because it was harder to gather this specific perspective of social class, status, and its impact on counterfeit consumption which was the primary aim of the study.

Qualitative data was collected using in-depth, semi-structured interviews of consumers who purchase luxury and non-luxury brands (both male and female) aged 20-60 years based in the UK. The interviews were conducted online using Microsoft Teams platform. The sample size of the study was 26. The interview questions have been included in appendix B and will be elaborated in the subsequent sections.

4.6.1 Rationale for qualitative interviews

Qualitative interviews were chosen as the second research method to facilitate in-depth discussions with consumers to understand the 'why' and 'how' aspects of their consumption behaviours which was hard to uncover using netnographic study (Miles

and Huberman, 1994). As mentioned earlier, this was particularly useful in the context of discussing SES related aspects in the context of counterfeit and luxury/ non-luxury brand substitution behaviours. The 26 qualitative interviews were conducted online with consumers based across many cities in the UK. Conducting the interviews online mitigated the geographical distance between the researcher and the participants, allowing the researcher to access consumers who would be otherwise hard to reach. The travelling and face-to-face meeting restrictions implemented due to the Covid-19 pandemic was another concern which was mitigated by using online interviews.

Online interviews are increasingly viewed as a valued and legitimate research method (O'Connor and Madge, 2017). Practically, conducting online interviews allow greater flexibility in organising time for the interviews with participants' schedules, saving costs and addressing concerns related to health and safety risks caused by the pandemic (O'Connor and Madge, 2017). However, like every research method, online interviews have some limitations. For instance, recruiting participants, building rapport, and online interactions are some of the challenges (O'Connor and Madge, 2017). Accessing interested participants online while negotiating access to them through gatekeepers, site moderators, group moderators, and social media can be challenging (Germain et al., 2017). This challenge was addressed by starting the interview with a general conversation with the participant about the weather, research topic, and an introduction of the researcher. This helped provide a context for the interview, addressed any concerns or questions of the participants, and helped build a rapport with them.

Overall, qualitative in-depth interviews were the best choice to address the research questions this study aimed to answer. The next section discusses the data collection process.

4.6.2 Data collection process

This section discusses the chosen research site of the qualitative interviews, the sample, and the interview process.

4.6.2.1 Research site of the qualitative study

The qualitative interviews were conducted with participants based in United Kingdom. The UK was chosen as the research setting for this study due to two reasons: (a) the widespread popularity of counterfeits amongst UK consumers, and (b) UK is one of the

main recipients of counterfeit goods in the world (OECD, 2017). According to the OECD report published in 2019, the total volume of forgone sales for UK wholesalers and retailers due to counterfeit and pirated products smuggled into the UK was £9.2 billion in 2016 (£4.2 billion in 2013). This is equivalent to 2.7% of total sales in the UK wholesale and retail sector in 2016 (1.4% in 2013; OECD, 2019). The total volume of UK companies' forgone sales due to infringement of their IP rights in global trade amounted to £11 billion (£8.6 billion in 2013), or 2.1% of total sales of these UK companies in 2016 (OECD, 2019). These figures illustrate the impact of counterfeiting in the UK economy.

After discussing the field of the research, the following subsection details the decisions regarding the data sample and the interview process.

4.6.2.2 The sample

The strategy for participant selection should be integrated with the overall aim of the study in alignment with the epistemological and ontological stances (Punch, 2004). In qualitative research, it is more likely to achieve depth of understanding (rather than breadth) if a relatively small and purposive sample is selected (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Purposive sampling is used "to select respondents that are most likely to yield appropriate and useful information" (Kelly, 2010, p.317). The present research used purposive sampling because particular types of consumers who are interested in luxury and non-luxury brands were more likely to address the research questions of this study (Campbell et al., 2020) and therefore, they need to be included in the sample. The participants were selected based on their expression of interests to the Facebook advertisement posted by the researcher (see appendix C) which invited participants to discuss their fashion consumption and purchase behaviour related to fashion brands. In total, 26 in-depth interviews were conducted for the study, out of which 16 were women and 10 were men. The participants were between the ages of 20 and 60 years. This age range was decided to include perspectives and experiences of a wide variety of individuals from different age groups. The summary of the participants' profile is displayed in table 4.3.

The choice of purposive sample allowed the researcher to recruit participants for the interview who were interested in the purchase of fashion brands – luxury, counterfeits, and non-luxury brands – who expressed their interest in the Facebook advertisement. This was important because the current study required participants to discuss their

brand consumption to answer the identified research questions pertaining to consumers' preferences and/or substitution among the three brand types – original luxury, counterfeit luxury, and non-luxury brands. Since the participants were interested in fashion consumption such as clothing/ shoes brands, they were drawn to the Facebook advertisement in this regard.

Table 4.3 Participant profile

Sr. No.	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Occupation
1	Amelia	Female	44	Retail employee
2	Anne	Female	56	Carer
3	Brad	Male	29	Programmer
4	Calvin	Male	32	Maintenance officer
5	Claudia	Female	31	Oncology researcher
6	Daniel	Male	38	Telecom employee
7	Emma	Female	22	Nursery teacher
8	Eva	Female	51	Aromatherapist
9	Georgia	Female	43	Financial controller
10	Greg	Male	20	Security personnel
11	Hanna	Female	38	Event consultant
12	Harper	Female	27	Office manager
13	Harry	Male	38	Travel advisor
14	James	Male	27	Photographer, writer
15	Jordon	Male	46	Specialist teacher
16	Kate	Female	58	Fashion blogger
17	Kerry	Female	54	Cleaning supervisor
18	Kevin	Male	30	Real estate agent
19	Leanne	Female	33	Brand strategist
20	Lisa	Female	35	Civil servant
21	Lucy	Female	53	Tailor
22	Mark	Male	26	Warehouse worker
23	Olivia	Female	40	School Administrator
24	Rebecca	Female	53	Teaching assistant
25	Tom	Male	24	Teacher
26	Victoria	Female	58	Care worker

4.6.2.3 The interview process

The interviews were conducted online using Microsoft teams and lasted between 40 to 60 minutes. All the interviews were conducted in English. The participants were asked for their consent before recording the interviews. After an initial introduction and

briefing about the research, the interview started with open-ended questions about participants' last shopping experience of a fashion brand. Subsequently, more detailed, and specific questions were asked. The overarching goal of the interviews was to discuss thoughts, feelings, behaviours, and experiences associated with purchasing counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands. With the aid of a set of detailed interview questions (Appendix B), the interviews aimed to cover three themes: a) general consumption of fashion brands (including original luxury, counterfeit luxury, non-luxury brands); b) childhood SES and adulthood SES and their impact on brand consumption choices; c) opinions and experiences related to counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands, including brand substitution between these three substitutes. Additionally, some questions were framed around feelings of authenticity during brand consumption and instances of symbolic-self completion behaviours.

Semi-structured and open-ended questions allowed the participants to recount their experiences in detail. For instance, the interviews were particularly insightful during discussions about participants' childhood backgrounds, their family dynamics, social status, reminiscences from their school years, the brands they consumed, and any nostalgic thoughts about any brands and/or brand advertisements from their childhoods. This data obtained from interviews complemented the netnographic dataset by answering insightful questions such as the 'why' and 'how' aspects of the effect of SES on consumption behaviours which were difficult to answer using the Reddit comments alone. This was possible because interviews are interactive, unlike the netnographic data. This resulted in a rich dataset that provided valuable insights into the ways childhood experiences and SES can shape consumer behaviour. The interviews were conducted in alignment with the research questions and aim of the study. The interviews were recorded and stored on OneDrive in accordance with the permitted ethical considerations.

4.6.3 Qualitative data analysis

The data collection of 26 qualitative interviews resulted in 264 pages of data. To begin with qualitative data analysis, most researchers agree on the process to organise the data by coding text and breaking it down into more manageable chunks (Miller, 2000; Welsh, 2002). The qualitative data analysis software package, NVivo (version 12) was used to facilitate data analysis and coding for this research. NVivo was chosen because it is a user-friendly software and it has been widely used by social science

researchers for qualitative data analysis (Welsh, 2002; Woods et al., 2016). The coding process yielded themes in the qualitative data which were aligned with the research questions using theoretical underpinning from the conceptual framework chapter. The thematic content analysis enables the researcher to capture and interpret the meanings in the data (Crowe et al., 2015). The themes help in organising and interpreting qualitative data to build a narrative by bringing the similarities and differences between experiences of various participants (Crowe et al., 2015; Miles and Huberman, 1994).

The first step in the thematic analysis is reading and re-reading the interview transcripts (Crowe et al., 2015). Following this close reading, a set of initial codes are identified by examining the transcripts with the research questions in mind (Crowe et al., 2015). Furthermore, any additional material is also noted which may not be directly related to the research question but may be used as additional inputs to answer the research questions. In the current study, this first step was followed in detail by reading all the transcripts multiple times and generating initial codes and notes. A sample of the interview transcript from one interview is included in Appendix E.

The next step in the thematic analysis is searching for themes (Crowe et al., 2015). The themes in this study were searched using the answers to various interview questions which were aligned with each research question. The identified themes were created as "nodes" in NVivo. This made it easier for the researcher to refer to the data in these 'nodes' multiple times during the entire data analysis process. A narrative was starting to develop at this stage of the data analysis process by using the themes to answer the research questions (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

The presentation of each theme requires a process of writing and re-writing the findings using these themes to develop an in-depth understating of the relationships between the themes (Crowe et al., 2015; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Miller, 2000). At this stage, the interpretative phase of the data analysis begins (Crowe et al., 2015). Therefore, it is crucial to provide sufficient evidence to support each interpretation of the data. In the current study, the researcher presented each theme and derived interpretations of the data by writing the findings using quotes from participants' experiences and gathering enough evidence from several participants.

The final step of the thematic content analysis is to synthesise all the findings by exploring relationships between each theme and assigning meanings in the context of

the research questions (Crowe et al., 2015). The analytic arguments arising from the data are then contextualised withing the existing literature on the topic (Crowe et al., 2015). The researcher completed this last step in the thematic data analysis by comparing and situating the findings in the context of the existing literature on each of the identified themes.

4.6.4 Data triangulation

Analysing data from various studies is one of the most challenging steps in mixed methods research (Combs and Onwuegbuzie, 2010). The analysis process for mixed methods involves convergence of results from both the methods and includes triangulation (Teddlie and Tasjakkori, 2010). According to O'Cathain et al. (2010), triangulation is used to explain the process of corroborating findings from two datasets. It is used to compare and converge the findings from different research methods (Morgan, 2013). Therefore, in the present study, the data from both the studies – the netnographic study and the qualitative interviews – were analysed separately and then, the two datasets were integrated together at a later stage. The findings from the qualitative interviews analysis (discussed in detail in chapters five and six) were compared and converged with the findings of the netnographic analysis (in chapter seven).

Though triangulation is widely used within mixed methods, there is a paucity of literature on the procedures required for the triangulation process (Harris, 2019). Most researchers seem to take an intuitive approach to the triangulation process due to the lack of methodological frameworks and systematic accounts of triangulation (Farmer et al., 2006, Harris, 2019). Several recent researchers have utilised netnography data to triangulate with qualitative interview data (Brace-Govan & Demsar, 2014; Brodie et al., 2013; Costello et al., 2017). Brace-Govan & Demsar (2014) began their research with netnography, followed by qualitative interviews to collect personal, subjective experiences of participants and then triangulated both the datasets through thematic analysis. In another study by Brodie et al. (2013), the researchers used netnography to explore the nature and scope of consumer engagement in an online brand community environment. This was followed by in-depth interviews to examine the meanings which the participants ascribe to their experiences within the online community. Similarly, Costello et al. (2017) have illustrated using netnography studies with qualitative interviews to triangulate data to strengthen the findings. Following suit

of these researchers, the present study adopted netnography as a preliminary study, followed by in-depth interviews to gain insight and then triangulate both datasets.

In context of the present study, the complexity of triangulating two rich data sets from the netnographic study and in-depth interviews was challenging. To address this challenge, the triangulation protocol proposed by Farmer et al. (2006) was beneficial. According to the triangulation protocol, Farmer et al. (2006) outline six steps as described below:

i) Sorting: In the first step, themes emerging from individual datasets are reviewed to create a unified list of themes in a coding matrix. In this study, themes emerging from the interviews and the netnographic data were reviewed to find integrated themes.

ii) Convergence coding: In the second step, the findings from all the datasets are compared, followed by a convergence coding to identify similarities, differences, silence, and partial agreement between the themes across the studies. Following this step, the two datasets in the present study were compared and contrasted with each other.

iii) Convergence assessment: In the third step, the agreements, similarities, partial agreements, and dissonance between the datasets are reported. In the present study, the themes from the interview data analysis were aligned with the netnographic data themes where possible. In other cases where some elements were missing, the data sets were used to complement each other, and the differences were reported (subtitled 'comparison with qualitative data' subheadings in chapter seven of this thesis).

iv) Completeness comparison: In the fourth step, findings from each study are compared for overall contributions to the research questions of the study. In this study, the combined and unique findings were reflected upon to build the broader understanding of the research questions.

v) Researcher comparison: In this step, a level of agreement is established between all the researchers in the study. This step was not applicable to the present study because the data analysis process was conducted by one researcher. However,

findings from each dataset and the triangulation of combined findings were shared with the supervisory team.

vi) Feedback: In the sixth and final step, Farmer et al. (2006) suggest discussing the triangulated results with the research team and significant disagreements are incorporated in the study. This step was also achieved with the feedback from the supervisory team.

Largely, the interview data analysis process incubated the conceptual model based on the findings of the study. The triangulation process incorporated the netnographic study findings to further validate and contrast the overall findings of the study. The next section discusses the limitations to the data.

4.6.5 Validity and Reliability

The relevance of validity and reliability aspects in qualitative research has been widely debated by researchers, and some of them argue using other terminologies instead, for example, "trustworthiness", "quality", or "rigorousness" of qualitative data (Creswell, 1998; Kirk and Miller, 1986; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Seale, 1999). Nevertheless, it is uncommon to find published research pinpointing the exact manner in which the data has been analysed and therefore, causing allegations of unthorough research practice (Welsh, 2002). Qualitative data analysis has been deemed as "impression analysis" due to the lack of scrutiny on the analysis process (Welsh, 2002). This aspect of building transparency in qualitative methodology has been addressed to some extent by the present research by the usage of data coding software, NVivo. Researchers have argued that one of the primary advantages of using a software package like this, is that it builds a level of trustworthiness and transparency in these methodological issues (Welsh, 2002). Therefore, in doing so, the present research has aimed to attain some level of transparency and rigour in coding of themes in the data.

The validity of qualitative data can be addressed by recognising three aspects identified by Noble and Smith (2015). First, it is crucial for a qualitative researcher to admit that multiple realities exist; second, recognising that the researchers' personal experiences and viewpoints may cause some degree of methodological bias; and third, clearly presenting the participants' perspectives is important (Noble and Smith, 2015). In the current study, the researcher recognises that prior experiences and viewpoints

may have subconsciously caused some bias in interpreting the qualitative data unknowingly. Additionally, the researcher has attempted to present the perspectives of the participants of this study as accurately and clearly as possible by using verbatim quotes.

4.7 Ethical considerations

Any research involving people has ethical implications, therefore, the researcher needs to ensure appropriate ethical standards are met in the context of participants and future researchers who may wish to investigate this population (Blaxter et al., 2001). For example, assuring anonymity to the participants is a key ethical consideration. Additionally, the researcher must ensure the research topic does not cause any offence or disagreement and must device the means to deal with complaints if they surface (Blaxter et al., 2001). Also, researchers must ensure that research does not entail any potential conflicts of interest.

The present research used online data via netnography, followed by in-depth interviews. Ethical approval was granted in accordance with the university policies on ethics by Northumbria University. Additional ethical issues were considered specifically for online research. The ethics of online research has garnered increasing attention (British Psychological Society (BPS), 2013; British Sociological Association, 2017; Markham and Buchanan 2012). However, there is no unanimous agreement on the best practice in this area due to the complexity of online research (Germaine et al., 2017). Due to the presence of numerous online cultures and methods, a single code of ethics is deemed insufficient to deal with various ethical considerations concerning online research (Harris, 2019).

There are four primary concerns debated in the online methodological literature, viz., perceptions of public and private space, seeking consent, protecting participants from harm, and whether to use verbatim quotes when collecting data online (Germaine et al., 2017; Kozinets, 2015). According to the British Psychological Society (2010) guidelines, an online public space is described as one where an individual or their online activities may be witnessed by strangers. Some researchers argue that privacy is not guaranteed on an online platform whereby posting anything online is considered as an automatic consent for wider use of the data, however, this is open to interpretation by online users (Beninger et al., 2014). The ambiguity of public versus

private spaces online raises ethical concerns for researchers whether informed consent is required from the users (Germaine et al., 2017). The British Psychological Society (2013) guidelines suggest that the use of research data without gaining consent may be justified in cases where there is no possible discernment or expectation of privacy online. This guideline is arguably open to interpretation.

Discussions on Reddit are principally public in nature because anyone can view the contents of the posts and comments (except in private subreddits) with or without a Reddit account (Proferes et al., 2021). Original posts and comments on Reddit can be "voted" on by Reddit users, which indicate their popularity. The platform discourages participants to use their real names as a privacy-protecting measure (Proferes et al., 2021). Due to the names of the users being pseudonyms, tracking their demographic data is not possible. According to the website administrators of Reddit, a majority of users (approximately 58%) are between 18 and 34 years old and 57% of the users have identified themselves as male (Proferes et al., 2021). Very few sensitive subreddit communities carry specific warnings to researchers about data collection (e.g., r/depression). However, the Reddit communities (e.g., r/FashionReps, r/RepSneakers, r/DesignerReps) accessed for the purpose of the present research are publicly available and can be accessed freely by anyone. Moreover, the privacy of the participants is ensured on account of them being pseudonyms. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that the netnographic study of this research has ensured ethical considerations.

In the context of in-depth interviews, anonymity of the participants was guaranteed and maintained by using pseudonyms. The participants were ensured about the confidentiality of their personal identity as all stages of the research before starting the interview and that their data will be strictly stored and used for research purposes in accordance with highest ethical standards (Germaine et al., 2017). The consent form was mailed to the participants to ensure informed consent (Appendix D). As per the ethical guidelines of the university, the interviews were conducted only after gaining informed consent to each participant. To further ensure informed consent, at the start of each interview, the participant was requested for their approval for audio-recording the interview and ensured to be able to withdraw their participation anytime (Blaxter et al., 2001). It is crucial for participants to know that their participation is voluntary and more importantly, that they can withdraw from the study at any point without giving any explanations (Blaxter et al., 2001). This step was ensured in the current study by

assuring the participants about their right to withdraw anytime and at any stage of the research. Furthermore, the participants were informed that the interview will not include any sensitive question which might cause distress or discomfort to them during or after the interview.

4.8 Summary

This chapter outlined the research methodology that underpinned the present study. It discussed the research philosophy, epistemology, and ontology aspects of the study. The overall research strategy and the mixed methods chosen for this research – netnographic study and in-depth interviews – were discussed in detail. The chapter also delved into the rationale for choosing each of these research methods. The data collection and data analysis processes were discussed in detail, underpinning various methodological issues and the suitable resolutions adopted by the researcher. Finally, the chapter discussed the limitations to the data, followed by the ethical considerations for each study. The next three chapters discuss the findings from the in-depth interviews and the netnographic study in detail. Chapter five discusses the findings of the effect of SES on brand substitution. Chapter six discusses the findings related to brand substitution. And finally, chapter seven discusses the findings from the netnographic study.

Chapter 5
Analysis and Research: Effect of SES on brand substitution

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the current research with respect to the effects of childhood and adulthood socioeconomic status (SES) and childhood emotional wellbeing (EW) on consumers' brand choice. It begins with a brief overview of the effects of childhood SES and EW, followed by the emergence of the four consumer types based on SES and EW, vis-à-vis, Privileged consumers, Protesting consumers, Passive consumers, and Penurious consumers. Then, it presents the childhood SES – childhood EW matrix. Subsequently, the chapter discusses each of the four consumer types and their consumption behaviour in detail. Each consumer type is defined, elaborated, and contextualised from the perspectives of childhood SES and EW. Following this, the adulthood SES and consumption of original luxury, counterfeit luxury, and non-luxury brands of each consumer type is explored and analysed with support from relevant literature and conceptual grounding. Each section on the consumer types also draws parallels with the consumer taxonomy by Han et al. (2010) to compare the findings with relevant literature. The chapter also amalgamates the comparison of social class and consumer types discussed in the conceptual framework chapter from three studies by – Han et al. (2010), Savage et al. (2013), and Wall and Large (2010) – with the findings of the present study. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the findings discussed in it.

5.2 Effect of childhood Socioeconomic Status (SES) and childhood Emotional Wellbeing (EW)

As discussed in chapter three, childhood socioeconomic status (SES) is the extent to which an individual grew up in resource plentiful versus resource scarce environment (Griskevicius et al., 2011). It is the summation of parental income, education, and occupational prestige during one's childhood (Bradley and Corwyn, 2002). Though there has never been a complete consensus on what does it precisely represent (Liberatos et al., 1988, McLoyd, 1997), there is a general consensus amongst social scientists that childhood SES parental income, education and occupation together represent SES better than any of these alone (White, 1982; Bradley and Corwyn, 2002).

This research investigated the effect of childhood and adulthood SES on consumers' preferences while choosing between counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury

brands. The study found some interesting emotional aspects of upbringing which contribute significantly to the child development stage which is at interplay along with childhood SES in shaping consumption behaviour. To recall, as discussed in the conceptual framework chapter, these aspects can be termed as childhood Emotional Wellbeing (EW).

Childhood Emotional Wellbeing (EW) can be defined as the emotional, mental, and moral support that a child receives from parents, siblings, extended family, neighbours, peers, and friends (Hill et al., 2018). Childhood emotional wellbeing does not necessarily correspond to the childhood SES, meaning that the emotional support a child receives cannot be equated to the material benefits. For instance, an individual with high childhood SES may have not been emotionally well-supported by family, though they might have access to immense wealth and material luxuries. In cases like this the high childhood SES but low EW will have a different type of influence on consumption compared to someone with high SES along with high EW. As already discussed in chapter three, the literature on emotional wellbeing therefore underscores the importance of providing support and care to children during their formative years (Chapman et al., 2007; Mullen et al., 1993).

The present research explored the effects of childhood SES and EW on consumer behaviour in the context of brand substitution. The following section discusses the findings in detail.

5.3 Findings

The findings from the netnography data analysis will be briefly presented to build the foundation for the interview data analysis. The detailed discussion of netnography findings and triangulation with interview data will be presented in chapter seven of this thesis. The netnography data analysis about how childhood SES affects consumers choice among alternatives of counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands found that the comments they garnered can be categorised as two major groups based on high and low SES: Privileged consumers and Penurious consumers respectively. This classification has also been found in qualitative interviews data analysis. However, EW could not be determined using netnography data because it involves emotional wellbeing aspects along with SES which is difficult to determine from online comments. Discussing emotional wellbeing was easily incorporated in detailed, in-

depth interviews, however, identifying it within a limited space of comments Reddit posts is difficult and usually absent. Therefore, this dataset identified consumers based on their high and low SES respectively. Building on these preliminary findings from the netnographic study, the in-depth interviews also incorporated the childhood EW aspects into the study. The findings from the qualitative interview data is discussed next.

Based on the qualitative interview data, the present research proposes a taxonomy of consumers based on two distinct characteristics: childhood SES and childhood EW. Research indicates that childhood SES of an individual has a significant impact on his/her consumer behaviour as an adult (Ahuvia and Wong, 2002; Jhang et al., 2023; Knight et al., 2014; Mittal and Griskevicius, 2016; Richins and Chaplin, 2015; Whelan and Hingston, 2018). Therefore, first, this research divides consumers into those with high childhood SES and those with low childhood SES. Whelan and Hingston (2018) found that childhood SES influences how individuals respond to brands as consumers in adulthood; and that the self-esteem of individuals with poor childhoods are threatened by non-luxury brands (surprisingly, not by luxury brands). Recent research by Park et al. (2022) found that consumers with low childhood SES are more likely to prefer sustainable luxury brands compared to those with high childhood SES, due to differences in the significance of cooperation in the community. The researchers also found that this consumer tendency is attenuated during consumption of non-luxury brands. In comparison with low SES individuals, high SES individuals are more accustomed to luxury consumption (Krekels et al., 2020). Furthermore, Commuri (2009) found that consumers with high adulthood SES who purchase genuine luxury brands are affected by the proliferation of counterfeits. Thus, childhood SES and adulthood SES play a crucial role in consumers' preferences for different brand types such as luxury and non-luxury brands.

Second, the current study further divides consumers into those with high childhood EW and those with low childhood EW. This second layer of classification of consumers based on their childhood EW is based on the findings of the qualitative data. Childhood EW is essential to depict a wholistic overview of the effects of childhood SES, and therefore, this research found that childhood EW and childhood SES must be analysed in conjunction with each other. This finding finds support in literature related to childhood emotional wellbeing (Choi, 2018; Ding and Tseng, 2015; Glover 1998). A number of research studies have indicated that childhood experiences affect later life

outcomes to a great extent (Choi, 2018; Glover 1998; Mullen et al., 1993; Nomaguchi and Milkie, 2020). Children who grow up in emotionally supportive environments grow up into emotionally well-adjusted individuals (Glover 1998; Woolf, 2011). Contrarily, children who experience adverse childhoods are at greater risk of being affected by mental health problems, and negative life outcomes such as bankruptcy, gambling, etc. (Chapman et al., 2007; Mullen et al., 1993; Thompson et al., 2020).

The current study found some interesting emotional aspects of upbringing which contribute significantly to the child development stage which is at interplay along with childhood SES in shaping consumption behaviour. Therefore, the taxonomy of consumer types based on childhood SES and childhood EW supports this study to examine consumers' brand substitution between counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands. This relates back to the first research question which this chapter aims to address which is to determine the effect of childhood and adulthood SES on consumers' preferences during adulthood while choosing between the substitutes of counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands.

5.4 Consumer types based on childhood SES and EW

The present research found that childhood SES and childhood EW have a significant impact on the overall quality of childhoods of consumers. The four major categories of consumers emerged from the data analysis based on the effects of childhood SES and childhood EW. For mnemonic reasons, the four consumer types are named as follows (figure 5.1):

   i.   Privileged consumers
   ii.   Protesting consumers
   iii. Passive consumers
   iv. Penurious consumers
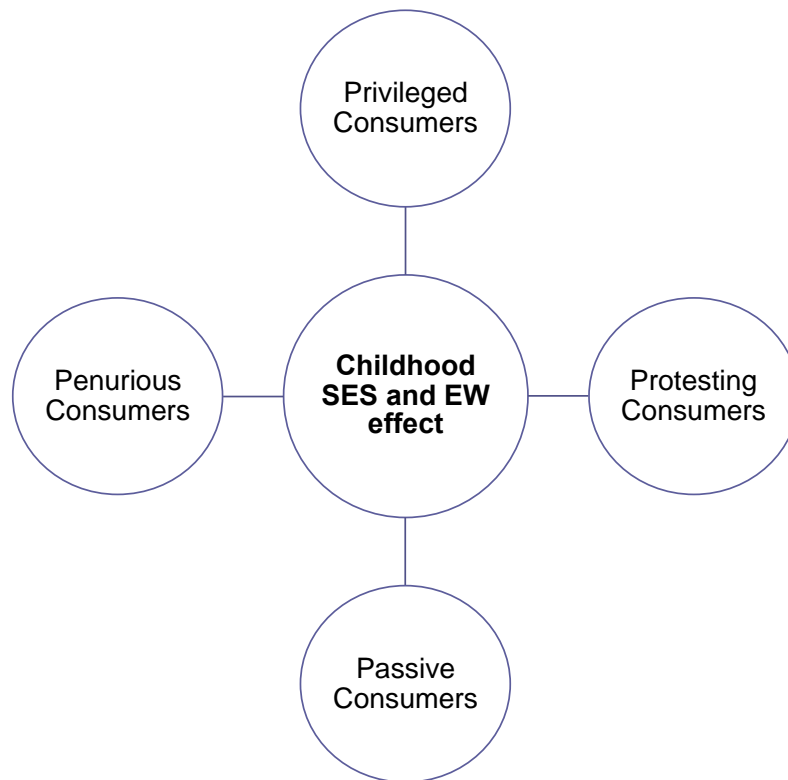
Figure 5.1 Childhood SES and EW effect on consumer type
(Source: Author)

Firstly, <u>privileged</u> consumers are those who have had a childhood with high SES and high EW. Consequently, they tend to be more satisfied with their childhoods and overall life quality.

Secondly, <u>protesting</u> consumers are those who have had a childhood with high SES but low EW. While they may have had access to wealth, they are usually dissatisfied with their childhoods.

Thirdly, <u>passive</u> consumers are those who have had a childhood with low SES but significantly high EW. They generally have high satisfaction with their childhoods and overall life quality.

Finally, <u>penurious</u> consumers are those who have had a childhood with low SES as well as low EW. They often have the lowest satisfaction with their childhoods and overall life quality.

Accordingly, these four consumer categories have been depicted in the childhood SES – childhood EW matrix below (figure 5.2). This research finding is important because it highlights the different ways that childhood SES and EW can impact an individual's

life quality as a consumer. The detailed descriptions of each of these categories mentioned in the matrix will be discussed in the subsequent sections. Furthermore, the effects of childhood and adulthood SES of each consumer type and their consequent consumption behaviour will also be explored in terms of consumers' brand choice between substitutes of counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands.

CHILDHOOD SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

	Low	High
PASSIVE CONSUMER		**PRIVILEGED CONSUMER**
• Does not seek social approval • Non-luxury consumer • Occasional counterfeit consumer • Countryside kids • Elementary Consumption		• Does not seek social approval • Luxury consumer • Purchase counterfeits for aesthetics • Privileged Consumption
PENURIOUS CONSUMER		**PROTESTING CONSUMER**
• Seeks social approval • Counterfeit luxury consumer • Thrift shopper • Adverse childhood experiences • Compensatory consumption		• Situational attribution to social approval • Selective luxury consumer • Protests counterfeits • Compensatory consumption • Comfort consumption

(left axis: **CHILDHOOD EMOTIONAL WELLBEING** — High / Low*)*

Figure 5.2 Childhood SES - Childhood EW Matrix

(Source: Author)

5.4.1 Privileged consumer *(High SES, High EW)*

The participants who came from a wealthy family background who also had high emotional wellbeing (EW) are categorised as having had a privileged childhood with emotionally supportive parents. Being privileged means having an advantage or opportunity that most other people do not have, often on account of wealth and high social class. They are afforded higher social status compared to those with less income, less education, and less prestigious occupations (Easterbrook et al., 2020). These privileged participants typically belonged to the upper class or upper (established) middle class with a lot of disposable income and lived in big houses (Savage et al., 2013). In most cases, their parents owned businesses and spent a lot on quality experiences, expensive holidays abroad, and luxury brands.

These participants with privileged childhoods often described their younger selves as being 'spoilt' which meant they had access to excessive money, latest fashion items, and all kinds of luxuries in life (Hällsten, 2013; Laurison and Friedman, 2019). This also meant that unlike their peers, they did not have to wait to get the latest fashion in trend, to go to the new movies and concerts in town, or to get anything they desired. As two of the participants described their childhoods:

> I think my childhood background was quite loved to be honest. I was in one of these... very nice house. My dad had his own business. We didn't really wait for anything. You know like other kids were getting stuff and they would have to wait to get stuff, while we always were one of the first to get them. Like, when the Crombie coats and shoes and stuff would come out, we always had them. My dad was always... we'd always had what we wanted, to be honest. To be honest, I think we were probably very spoilt. Because we didn't have to wait for our stuff. We did always get what we wanted which probably sometimes makes you a little bit greedy in ways. It makes you not wanna wait for stuff. To be honest, my dad used to spoil me so much, he got me everything when I was only young. He still liked one of these, any of these designer clothes, because he would have just carried on with that. (Rebecca)

> Even though we were quite equal, I think my parents tried to spend more on quality things or quality experiences, more cultured things than people in my area. We liked going on nice holidays, we'd go to nice theatres, concerts, or go to nice restaurants. So, I guess in that sense I felt more privileged. But I won't say it's the only thing; it's choosing how to buy things, how to spend it. (James)

The study found that the privileged child often had their needs taken care of by their father and this becomes a norm since a young age. Researchers have studied the effect of such affluence in childhood and reported that it predicts the onset of materialism in adulthood (Richins and Chaplin, 2015). Though their study was limited to the overall picture of materialism, this research further delves into the nuances of specific types of brands choices (such as luxury, counterfeit luxury brands, etc.) made by these privileged children when they step into the role of a consumer. For example, Rebecca reminisces having access to the latest coats and shoes by high-end luxury brand Crombie during her childhood. Her association between Crombie coats and being spoilt by the available luxury reflects the symbolic connotation of entitlement, indulgence, and parental warmth, often characterised within individuals with high childhood SES. This prerogative is further accentuated by the immediate gratification, an epitome of the trickle-down theory of fashion, which suggests the hierarchical flow of fashion from the upper classes to the lower classes of society (Bellezza and Berger, 2020; Trigg, 2001).

The study discovered that the privileged consumers had high EW; they were not just benefited with materialistic possessions but also with parental warmth. These

participants usually shared intimate relationships with their parents and siblings, had good childhood memories, had family holidays abroad, and usually were the popular kids in class.

James' narrative of his bond with his close-knit family unit was distinctly visible during the entire interview when he talked about his inheritance of good fashion sense from his fashion-conscious parents and equally chic twin sisters. His overall depiction of childhood emotional support exuded warmth, cordiality, and conviviality:

> Yeah, I grew up in the outskirts of south London; nice childhood; I have got my family, twin sisters. Close to my parents, close to all my family. My family is very much into fashion as well, like they are very... they have their own distinctive style, maybe I got it from there. My parents like to dress in like 1940s, 1950s inspired trends, especially my dad. So, he is always getting rare items of clothing, shopping around. Yeah, I am close to my family, I still live with my parents and get on very well.

Resembling James, Kate also speaks from a social position that showcases her social class (Laurison and Friedman, 2019) complemented by high EW. This was evident during her interview when she recounted being pampered by her doting father and how that made her very fashion-conscious.

> […] The neighbourhood that I grew up in, when I was young, it was a more upper-class neighbourhood. Probably, I was I guess as they say, spoilt… I was my father's baby; he took care of everything. He owned a very lucrative business […] I grew up with a lot of young girls my age, my neighbours, so we all were very much into fashion. Hair, skin, and nails was big for me, uh, I was into everything. I would colour the hair, do the nails, facial, arching eyebrows, it was dawned on me at a very young age, and it just didn't go. (Kate)

These sentiments were visible in other participants who had the features of privileged consumers.

5.4.1.1 *Privileged consumers: Adulthood SES and privileged luxury consumption*

Both James and Kate had privileged childhoods on account of having high SES and high EW. In the next excerpts, Rebecca and Kate provide similar accounts of how they continue to buy luxury brands as adults, an opulence instilled in them since their childhood days. Unsurprisingly, privileged childhood also enabled high-quality education, cultural capital, and social contacts (Manstead, 2018; Weber, 2018) which in turn facilitated having high adulthood SES as well. Therefore, privileged consumers seem to be the beneficiaries of not just high social class but also high social status (Kraus et al., 2012; Manstead, 2018; Weber, 2018) because while social class focuses on the individual and their occupation, social status revolves around the family and its

social position based on home type, location and value, and family background (Fisher, 1987).

A good quality, expensive leather handbag acts as a status symbol of good taste and class for Rebecca by separating her self-identity to distinguish herself from other people who buy cheap handbags to match their outfits. This tacit class distinction provides her with a sense of affiliation to her childhood family conventions to "do what you see your family do" as she proudly proclaims (Toft et al., 2021). This is a classic example of asserting social belongingness by the choice of products that signal affiliation echoed by many researchers (Mandel et al., 2017; Mean et al., 2011; Wan et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2012). For Kate, her collection of luxury shoes had been her most prized possession as an adult till her fateful accident after which her daughter acquired it, yet she continues to buy her favourite luxury brands even today:

> I do [buy luxury brands] with some of them, for stuff like handbags and stuff like that. I do like to have a leather handbag because I am not like people who buy handbags to match whatever outfits they were wearing. I tend to go for a really good leather handbag and use it for everything. I wouldn't keep swapping over my handbags, so I don't mind paying the extra for my handbag. I don't mind paying extra when I am buying stuff like that because I am using it every day. So, I wouldn't be buying cheap handbags because I don't buy handbags to match everything I am wearing. (Rebecca)

> I used to have Prada shoes, the red bottom shoes, I loved Prada shoes, until that 20 years ago when I had the accident. And the most fun I think my daughter had, was taking my collection of shoes, I had a closet just for my shoes. And I had the Prada, and I had Candy, and I had Jimmy Choo, I mean I had shoes!! I loved shoes! I loved purses, make-up. (Kate)

Both Rebecca and Kate identified themselves coming from privileged childhood backgrounds and discussed about their personal experiences from their childhoods and their preferences during adulthood. Their dispositions inculcated during the initial years of primary socialisation were a result of their parents' economic status and this association has also been identified by researchers such as Friedman et al. (2021) and Mare (2011) when they talk about the 'two-generation view of the world' in the field of social stratification. In general, participants with privileged childhoods seemed to be more self-reliant and distanced themselves from seeking any social approval, yet there were instances of implicit desire to associate themselves with the status of luxury brands and their social implications. The occasional status signalling is not for social validation but more for enjoying the perks of their privileges. This mirrors the findings from the recent study by Easterbrook et al. (2020) wherein they report higher class participants placed greater significance on identities indicative of their social class. It is evident in James' association with Burberry trench coats collection as signalling self-identity, though he denies seeking social approval:

I guess I don't need validation from other people, coming from quite strong family. So, I don't buy brands because other people are going to like that, or people are going to see me wearing this; I just wear it for myself because I have that assurance from my family to be yourself and be true to yourself. So, I guess in those terms, it comes from quite a stable, structured background which maybe other people don't always come from. But I feel like I am free to express myself and don't have to dress for other people. (James)

Further James strengthens his argument by providing the example of his Burberry brand purchases:

Yeah, the Burberry one is a good example actually. So, I have four Burberry trench coats, different styles, I think that's probably a good one. I do it to make myself part of the collection; I do like to collect them. I really like loafers as well, so I really like Italian leather loafers. I really like Gucci loafers as well but sadly my last pair is getting repaired at the moment, so I haven't been able to wear them. So, I would say something like the Gucci loafers, I also like the buckles on them as well; it gives them a cool look. If I had to say, yeah, probably would be those. (James)

James, Rebecca, and Kate all deny ever having sought social approval from their friends and family. James insists that he has always been a loner and that he has never felt the need for approval from others. Rebecca says that she is comfortable in her own skin and that she does not care what others think of her. Kate reveals that she has been called a snob by her family members because of her love for luxury brands and her tendency to overindulge in her appearance. However, Kate says that she does not let the opinion of her family affects her self-esteem. All three individuals insist that they are content with who they are and that they do not seek validation from others.

My sister is like she is in the 1800s, she is from the Victorian era, I am the youngest of six siblings. My sisters kind of laugh at me, I am more like out there. To me, they have no sense of style. I mean, I have been called a snob by my family just because of the way I dress. (Kate)

The above discussion provides an understanding on how adulthood SES affect luxury consumption of consumers with high childhood and adulthood SES and high childhood EW.

5.4.1.2 *Privileged consumers: Counterfeit consumption*

In some cases when these privileged adults admitted buying luxury counterfeits, the underlying reason was for the look and the aesthetics of the counterfeit luxury brand and not so much for social approval as found in the case of participants with low childhood SES discussed later. This is evident from James' remark about not being bothered by the logo or the absence of logo on his counterfeit shoes. Later in the

interview James even boasted about feeling pride in using a counterfeit version of the shoes as he got the design and the look which he wanted for a cheaper price.

> For me, wearing it for the logo and stuff, it personally doesn't bother me. In fact, I would wear a knock off. For example, I have a pair of American brand Red Wings shoes... so a normal pair of Red Wings is £350 but I bought a pair from Japan, £30 for counterfeit ones. That doesn't bother me at all, even if it doesn't have the Red Wings logo on it. I just like the look of it, the style, so yeah, the counterfeit doesn't bother me. (James)

> Erm... I have seen it [counterfeit luxury brands] and I have talked about it now and then when I see jewellery and stuff there. Clothes maybe not, but when you see jewellery and stuff like that, I have been tempted for the jewellery but then I thought no, because it'll probably come, and it won't work, or it'll be probably broken, and you can't get your money back. So, no I don't think I will be tempted to buy fake stuff like that. (Rebecca)

James and Rebecca's differing approaches to counterfeit luxury items can be attributed to their different priorities. For James, the style of the product is more important than the quality. As long as the counterfeit product looks like the original and meets his aesthetic needs, he is content. On the other hand, Rebecca is more concerned with quality than style. She fears that counterfeit products will be of inferior quality and therefore avoids them altogether. This difference in approach is likely due to the different priorities that each person places on luxury items. For James, luxury is about status and aesthetics. For Rebecca, luxury is about quality and craftsmanship. As a result, James is more likely to be satisfied with a counterfeit product that looks like the real thing, while Rebecca is only interested in products that are made with care and attention to detail. Privileged consumers like James were found to be attracted to occasional counterfeit consumption to meet some of their aesthetic needs.

Therefore, this discussion indicates that while some privileged consumers may engage in counterfeit luxury because of the aesthetics of counterfeits, others are more inclined to avoid counterfeit luxury brands due to their perceived poor quality compared to the original luxury brands.

5.4.1.3 *Privileged consumers: Non-luxury consumption*

It was found that although privileged consumers differ in their perspectives of counterfeit luxury, they also buy non-luxury brands. However, unlike their less privileged counterparts, they purchase only high-quality, premium non-luxury brands such as from Uniqlo and John Lewis and avoid cheaper alternatives of non-luxury such as the mass-fashion brand Primark:

> Uniqlo, I think is a pretty good brand. I think I love their quality. I think they are quite good for the basic stuff. I like the minimalistic look of them. I like that the quality of their

products last long. I wouldn't say I shop all my stuff there; I like to shop about. But I think for some basic stuff it's a good brand. But you'd feel conscious when you wear a Primark t-shirt, you probably don't want anybody to see it because it's really quite cheap and not good quality. (James)

I like John Lewis. […] John Lewis' clothes are a bit in between. And I always think you get what you pay for, so they are a bit more expensive. They do tend to last longer. (Rebecca)

Rebecca's inclination towards higher end non-luxury brands such as John Lewis can be attributed to her early exposure to quality-focused brands. As she recalls, her mother shopped exclusively at Marks and Spencers when she was young, and this was considered a store for those with money. This early exposure to the quintessential British brands likely had a positive impact on Rebecca's view of these types of brands. In addition, her childhood experience with her mother's shopping habits may have subconsciously influenced her own preferences in later life (Richins and Chaplin, 2015). Consequently, it is not surprising that Rebecca now displays a preference for brands that represent a similar level of quality, prestige, and nostalgia:

Erm... definitely a lot of Marks and Spencers because that was one of the top shops back then. We used to shop food... everything was from Marks and Spencers; everything was top of the range. Everybody wanted Marks and Spencers. You had plenty of money if you went shopping there. That was definitely one of the main stores. And when the Crombie coats came out, I don't know what make they were because they were in every shop. You could get them in any shop but if I definitely think of a brand, it was Marks and Spencers. They always classed you as someone with money if you shopped at Marks and Spencers. I remember my mum was always in Marks and Spencers. (Rebecca)

Like Rebecca, Kate prefers high-quality non-luxury brands such as Marks and Spencers along with luxury brands like Prada and Hermès, though she struggles with the ubiquitous onset of Spandex pants in most non-luxury brands. She is willing to spend more on something if she knows it will last longer. For her, it is important to invest in clothing that will stand the test of time both in terms of quality and style. She has a few timeless pieces in her wardrobe that she can always rely on to make her feel put-together and confident. While she does enjoy the odd trend, she prefers to stick to classic silhouettes that won't go out of fashion any time soon. This means that she often ends up spending more money upfront on classic British brands, but it saves her money in the long run as she doesn't need to buy new clothes as often.

Well, I think it can be a mix, you can do a mix of both. I mean I like a Prada shoe and those shoes are fab and if they are well taken care of, then they are going to last a long time. Mainstream [non-luxury] brands, uh… I catalogue buy, but I think the mainstream don't carry a lot of… all you find in a mainstream brand is Spandex, they are completely over the top with Spandex, they wear the Spandex pants to work! (Kate)

While most existing research has ignored including non-luxury brands purchased together with luxury brands by high SES, privileged consumers, this study illustrates that many privileged consumers often buy non-luxury brands (besides luxury brands), especially the premium non-luxury brands, and avoid the cheaper mass-fashion brands.

5.4.1.4 Privileged consumers: Overall discussion

The influence of a privileged upbringing can be both intentional and unintentional. On the one hand, children who grow up in affluent families are often taught to be self-sufficient and independent, instilling in them a confidence to pursue their individual paths without seeking social validation. On the other hand, growing up surrounded by luxury items can lead to a desire for status and prestige, causing these individuals to seek out similar brands in adulthood (Richins and Chaplin, 2015).
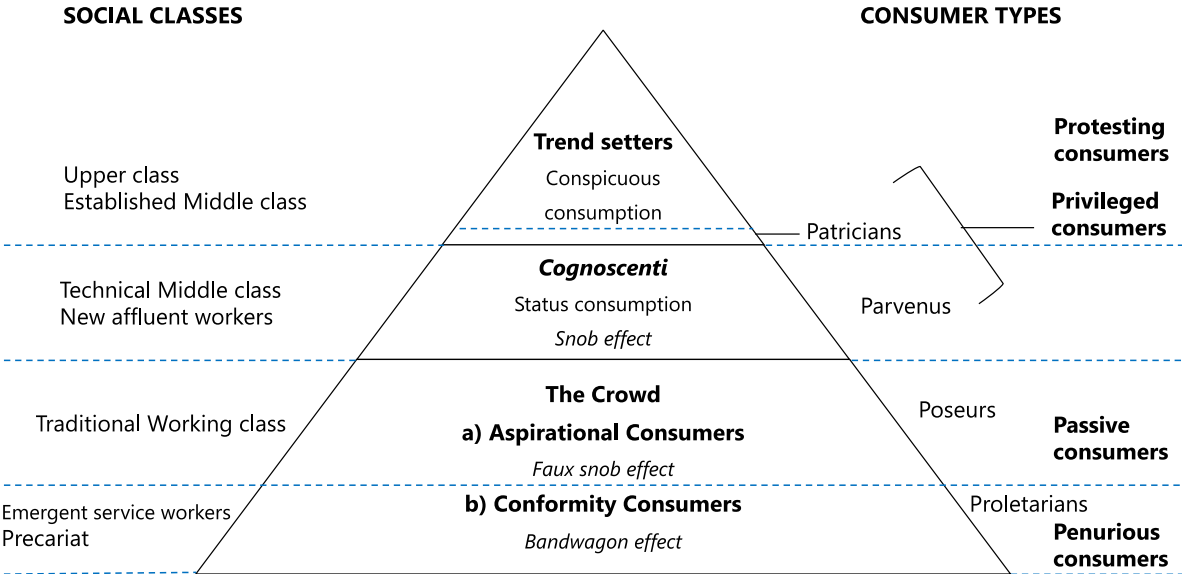
Figure 5.3 Comparison of Social classes and Consumer types
(Adapted from Han et al., 2010; Savage et al., 2013; Wall & Large, 2010; and author's current findings)

Just like their privileged childhood backgrounds and high social status of their families, it is important to note that those from privileged backgrounds often have the means to purchase high-quality luxury brands even as an adult with high socioeconomic status. As such, their brand choices are usually indicative of their personal values and beliefs, and also a reflection of the environment in which they were raised (Fisher, 1987; Kraus et al., 2012). Nevertheless, this study illustrates that the influence of their high childhood SES is inadvertently visible in their self-identity construction, connotation of

their social belongingness to the upper class, and the resultant brand choice. The finding that the privileged consumers consume counterfeits contrasts with the findings of Han et al. (2010) who argued that the "patricians", who are the equivalent of the privileged consumers (figure5.3) do not consume counterfeits. The present study found that the upper-class and the established middle-class consumers purchase counterfeits to satisfy their aesthetic needs provided by some high-quality, or design of counterfeits. Overall, the privileged consumers' consumption behaviour is linked to undertones of both social class and social status (Desmichel et al., 2020; Foladare, 1969; Han et al., 2010).

To summarise, this section illustrated that privileged consumers purchase all three brand type substitutes, i.e., original luxury, counterfeit luxury, and non-luxury brands as displayed in table 5.1 below:

Table 5.1 Brand type and Consumer type

Consumer type / Brand type	Privileged consumers	Protesting consumers	Passive consumers	Penurious consumers
Counterfeit luxury brands	✔	✘	✔	✔
Luxury brands	✔	✔	✘	✘
Non-luxury brands	✔	✔	✔	✔

(Source: Author)
✘ *represents not consumed;* ✔ *represents consumed*

Besides privileged consumers' brand consumption, the table 5.1 also presents the brand types consumed by the other consumer types, namely, protesting, passive, and penurious consumers. Each of these consumer types and their respective brand type consumption behaviours are discussed in the subsequent sections in detail. The next section discusses the protesting consumers.

5.4.2 Protesting Consumers *(High SES, Low EW)*

The current study found that the participants with high childhood SES but low EW reported protesting against their parents and their own social class as a sign of rebellion towards their expensive lifestyles. Therefore, these second consumers are termed as the protesting consumers. They recounted having abusive parents who were emotionally neglectful towards them during their developmental years. Most of these consumers belonged to the upper class, established middle class, and some of them even belonged to the technical middle class (Savage et al., 2013). However, the protesting consumers do not seem to align with the Han et al's (2010) consumer taxonomy because they are a divergent sub-group of the privileged upper and middle-class due to their dissociation from their respective social classes and status. For this reason, they also alienate from Wall and Large's (2010) *cognoscenti* who seek status (figure 5.3).

The protesting consumers displayed rebellion and dissociation from any indicators of their high (and upper middle) social class which is also in contrast with the findings of Easterbrook et al. (2020). Although coming from a privileged family, Eva carries a disdain for the shallowness of her image-conscious childhood background:

> It was a small town, and everything was about the image and what you're wearing, how much money you've and what car you drive. My parents were upper middle class; my dad was quite a famous journalist, and my mum didn't work. We had a lot of disposable income which my mum just used to binge spend; she bought designer clothes. She was a designer clothes buyer really, perfumes, everything expensive, so yeah it was very, very image conscious. And that's probably why I rebelled because I felt like it was really shallow, and I hated it. There wasn't much to do as a kid really and I hated it to be honest; didn't really like where I grew up really, it was such a ... I felt like it didn't represent the rest of the UK. It was very sort of closed and sheltered and I didn't like it, yeah. (Eva)

According to Eva, the association of being upper middle class and the social image consciousness is reflected in the "designer" (luxury) brands that her mother bought. The luxury brands encode an implicit model of class superiority. Those wearing designer clothes are interpreted as symbolising wealth, elitism, superficiality, and social conformity to the higher classes rather than the masses, which is not representative of the British population. Eva's disdain for this kind of shallowness drove her deviance and dissociation from the predominant fashion motif of luxury brands in her social setting. This dissociation from social identity has been also reported by White and Argo (2009) in their research on social identity threat causing social identity avoidance effect on their consumer preferences. Throughout her interview, Eva expresses a general disregard toward dressing up and anything that denotes any sort of labels or brands affiliating to upper class – in contrast from any of the other

participants with privileged childhoods. Her rebellion is symbolically associated with using non-luxury clothing and abandoning her social class norms demonstrates the tension between independence and conformity (Thompson and Haytko, 1997). This anti-conformist narrative reinforces Eva's sense of self-reliance:

> I haven't really got any brands in my head at the moment because most of the things I buy are from Simplybe and they're not really branded, they're not label things, so I really don't know. Maybe I am not the right person for this because brands are not really my forte. (Eva)

Another group of individuals who fit into these protesting consumers category with high childhood SES, but low childhood EW are the influenced teenagers as teenage is an impressionable age shaped by social bonds, peer pressure and adolescent friendship groups (Gentina et al., 2016). In her narrative of teenage years, Eva recalls starting work at an age of 14 years despite having a high childhood SES but not receiving enough support from her parents, unlike her wealthy peers who received a lot more money from their parents' disposable income to spend on fashion:

> We were completely not so loaded as compared to my classmates because I went to grammar school and people were loaded there, really loaded. You know, everyone was going to Oxford or Cambridge. So, I had a lot less, a lot less money. I think my family, they had a lot of money, but I didn't get it. They put it into my education, but I didn't have much to spend on what I wanted to spend you know. So, my friends had lots of money that their parents would give them, so they could buy whatever they wanted, you know, whereas my parents were very strict with money, they didn't give me much. So, I started working when I was 14. So, I used to work to get money, not as much as my friends, but to just to have more money. Most of them didn't work but I did, yeah. (Eva)

In her attempt to harbour a sense of belonging to her peer group, as a teenager Eva decided to start working to keep up with her peer group. She wanted to be able to afford the same kind of lifestyle as them, which meant being able to buy the same kinds of things. However, over time she grew to dislike the shallowness of her materialistic teenage lifestyle. Instead of following the social norms of consumption that were prevalent in her upper social class, she chose to rebel against them by embracing a more hippie lifestyle as an adult. As a result, she now feels a sense of belonging not to her peer group, but to a community of like-minded people who share her values.

> It was really the 80s when things really hit the fans for me. I mean 70s yeah, but I was sort of too young to remember. When I left home and went to the university and just sort off became a hippie really. So, yeah, 70s stuff I liked; reminded me of my grandmother actually, because my grandmother was a yoga teacher which was quite unusual in the west in the 70s. And she was a real hippie, but I can't really think of any brands. (Eva)

Another protesting consumer, Emma, explained how she protested being flamboyant by displaying high status by trying to be "invisible" and just wanted to "blend in" instead of standing out in her social circle:

> I think growing up I didn't want to stand out. I just want to I remember thinking I'm very happy to be invisible. I never wanted to be like, well not famous or anything like that. So, I suppose I just want to blend in. So, I will wear what is fashionable to a point. […] I never really wanted to go down the route of sort of being flamboyant or like posing and showing off. I just wanted to blend in. And I do wear more colours now. I used to wear a lot of grey and black and brown before. (Emma)

Furthermore, research on childhood abuse and neglect has shown that individuals who experienced such trauma often have difficulty developing a sense of self-identity in adulthood (Font and Maguire-Jack, 2016; Liming and Grube, 2018). This is often because they avoid thinking about their childhoods, as the memories are so traumatizing. Eva, who experienced both emotional abuse and neglect during her childhood, fits into this category. She reported having high SES but low EW. As a result of her childhood experiences, Eva rebelled when she grew up to develop her own sense of self-identity. While she was successful in this endeavour, it is clear that her childhood experiences still had a profound impact on her life:

> I really stay away from nostalgia because I have such terrible memories from my childhood. It was really the 80s when things really hit the fans for me. I mean 70s yeah but I was sort of too young to remember. When I left home and went to the university and just sort of became a hippie really. So, yeah, 70s stuff I liked; reminded me of my grandmother actually, because my grandmother was a yoga teacher which was quite unusual in the west in the 70s. And she was a real hippie, but I can't really think of any brands. My parents were upper middle class; my dad was quite a famous journalist, and my mum didn't work. We had a lot of disposable income which my mum just used to binge spend; she bought designer clothes. She was a designer clothes buyer really, perfumes, everything expensive, so yeah it was very, very image conscious. And that's probably why I rebelled because I felt like it was really shallow, and I hated it. There wasn't much to do as a kid really and I hated it to be honest; didn't really like where I grew up really. (Eva)

As discussed above, penurious consumers provided their childhood accounts of high SES but low EW. As a result, they developed a dislike for the high social status and protested display of status.

5.4.2.1 *Protesting consumers: Adulthood SES and selective luxury consumption*

In Eva's case, her rebellion as a consumer can be attributed to her low emotional support, more so than her high childhood SES. Therefore, the concept of childhood emotional wellbeing signifies a crucial predictor of consumer behaviour, along with SES (Nomaguchi and Milkie, 2020). Although having had high childhood SES, Eva's adulthood SES was drastically low, and she described herself as poor. Despite low

adulthood SES, some of her expensive choices are a consequence of having tasted the finer things in her childhood and her pursuit of emotional support. This often caused her financial troubles. Her choice of selective luxury consumption of extravagant Japanese bathtub, expensive vegan, organic food from high-end supermarket, Waitrose and yet her rejection of luxury brands for clothing can have labelled her as a 'selective luxury consumer' and her consumption pattern can be called comfort consumption because she does seek emotional contentment:

> This brings me to my other thing. For everything else [apart from clothes], I buy expensive everything. I think clothes are the one thing I don't which is really weird but for everything else like I am a total food snob, and I can't eat value food even though I need to because I am poor [adulthood SES], but I love Waitrose food, I love posh, vegan, organic food and things like that. Everything I but like electronics, I need to have the best, you know, like furniture. Like when I bought this flat, I did my bathroom and I got a really, really expensive Japanese soaking tub with jets and lights and stuff. So, in all other areas, I am a complete shopaholic and I have to have the best. But for clothes, I am not, I don't know if it's because growing up and being taken to markets, not being used to nice clothes. I really don't know. Otherwise, I really need to overcompensate. My shopping addictions have got me into loads of trouble, and I have had to go bankrupt and got myself heavily in debt. I am doing it again, I just bought a brand-new MacBook which I can't afford, it's on credit. (Eva)

Children who come from high-SES families but have low EW are more likely to grow up as adults with adverse habits like impulsivity, credit card debt, and compulsive spending (Thompson et al., 2020) as seen in Eva's case when she revealed that her compulsive shopping addiction lead her to filing bankruptcy. The underlying cause for such impulsive indulgence is the emotional pain initiated by low childhood EW which individuals often attempt to compensate with possessions (Mandel et al., 2017). This behaviour can be termed as *compensatory consumption* (Wicklund and Gollwitzer, 1981). This will be discussed in detail in the next chapter in the context of symbolic self-completion.

Overall, penurious consumers selectively indulge in luxury brands on some occasions, but other than the occasional indulgence, they generally choose to dissociate from status by avoiding luxury brands.

5.4.2.2 Protesting consumers: Counterfeit consumption

In terms of counterfeit luxury consumption, protesting consumers such as Eva strongly objects to counterfeits due to her high moral standards and she even tried to convince others in her social group to avoid them, though unsuccessfully. This can be associated with her predisposition for the finer things in life which she was accustomed to consuming in her wealthy parents' house such as furniture, gadgets, food (Font and

Maguire-Jack, 2016), except for inaccessibility to personal fashion items such as clothing. Therefore, her inclination towards these non-fashion items and not for luxury fashion can be explained:

> It's morally wrong, I think. It's dangerous if it is used in something which is possibly bad; even if using in something like a dye, in clothes I imagine, with toxic ingredients, it's really risky because you don't know where it's been made. Also, you know it's made in poor working conditions I imagine; I really don't like that. You know, people working in a sweatshop and things like that and for brands it's really not good, is it, because they live off their money. I have had a couple of friends who have consciously bought counterfeits in the past. I have one friend who used to buy fake Prada handbags, you know, but I never did, and I would never do it; that's not something I ever wanted to do. Even my ex-boyfriend as well, he used to buy a couple of fake things as well over the years, but I didn't approve of it. (Eva)

Like Eva, Emma also protests the use of counterfeits for different reasons. Emma is concerned about the quality of counterfeit products and believes that buying authentic items is a better investment in the long run. She also feels that well-known brands should be treated with care, and counterfeit products would not be given the same level of care. On the other hand, Eva argues that counterfeits are morally wrong and potentially dangerous to use on account of poor working conditions of the people manufacturing counterfeits as discussed earlier.

> I did think about the quality [of counterfeits] and if I want those Gucci trainers, I want that quality and I want that authentic feel like the original Gucci, with all its stitching intact, like it's going to be for lifelong... more than if I have shoes like that, I'd like the real ones that will last forever. That should work out better in the long run. That's what I tell myself anyway. If they are real ones, and you have got Gucci and it's a well-known brand, so you would tell people that. Also, I wouldn't put them in my own washing machine; I'd pay the professionals to clean them. Because they are Gucci, you'd expect the professionals to use the most delicate product because it's Gucci. (Emma)

Similar to Eva and Emma, Lisa also protests against counterfeits because they are fraudulent products and would rather purchase non-luxury brands instead of indulging into counterfeits. As her low adulthood SES prevents her from buying high-quality luxury brands which she would prefer, nevertheless, Lisa prefers the choice of non-luxury brands instead of counterfeits:

> So, if I had all the money, I probably would buy luxury because I know it will be good quality. But for that reason only, not to say that it is the brand or whatever. But now I would just buy a high street [non-luxury] item. And I yeah, I just buy high street. I would never buy counterfeit. Because, well, counterfeit is probably like a fraudulent item. So illegal. (Lisa)

Overall, Emma, Eva, and Lisa agree that counterfeits are not worth their purchase.

5.4.2.3 *Protesting consumers: Non-luxury consumption*

In terms of non-luxury consumption, protesting consumers such as Emma described her consumption in adulthood was affected by her early exposure to popular high-street brands. She recalled the influence of her teenage classmates from school who introduced her to the world of brands – the popular sports brands among teens – e.g., Nike and Adidas, which she continues to purchase as a devout patron even into her adulthood. Teenage influence is rightly considered as a strong predictor for the development of loyal consumers throughout adulthood (John, 1999; Ward, 1974). It is easier for brands to build a strong consumer base for a long term at this stage as an augmented awareness of other peoples' outlooks and a need to outline their own personality by belonging to a desired social group encourages teenagers to imitate their peers in terms of making choices and consuming brands (John, 1999; Mead et al., 2011; Wan et al., 2014). Emma embodies this teen behaviour of social conformity as a coping strategy to register her social belongingness to her peer group in her choice of brands:

> So, I started school where I was at, I was heavily influenced by branded stuff that I have been into, since like primary school PE lessons, and people always had the most expensive Nike, Adidas shoes at the time which I think drew me into it. Once we got the branded stuff, because that was the first time of having seen other people. And I think in our PE classes in secondary school was the same. It was basically competition for the Jordans, the Nike... I think that's what got me into it all. (Emma)

Emma started using the popular non-luxury brands such as Adidas and Nike as a teenager and that influenced her choice as an adult (John, 1999). She never bought into the luxury brands, finding them overpriced and unnecessary. When she reached adulthood, Emma found that she still preferred the more affordable brands. She appreciated that they were just as well-made as the designer items but didn't come with the same high price tag. In addition, she liked that non-luxury brands were much more accessible and could be found in a variety of stores. As a result, Emma has continued to patronize non-luxury brands, finding them to be a better value for her money:

> I think it definitely does because they still have an outgrowing market for Adidas. I think it has expanded a little bit. I think it definitely started big because I have seen people in my group in school wearing the same stuff which I think kind of made me get into it. Yeah, I think it has definitely influenced what I wear today. (Emma)

5.4.2.4 *Protesting consumers: Overall discussion*

Social approval is highly important to some protesting consumers such as teenagers, as it provides a sense of belonging and validation from their peers (Gentina et al.,

2016) while others may protest and reject social approval, following their own paths, thus exhibiting situational attribution to social approval. These variations can be seen in the examples of Emma and Eva respectively. For instance, Emma's adherence to her school PE classmates, as she simply wants to fit in and be accepted by them. However, Eva has taken a different approach, rebelling against the mainstream, and instead aligning herself with a group of hippies. This shows that teenagers will change their allegiances depending on who they feel a resonance with and who they feel disconnected from. In other words, they pursue situational attribution in order to gain social approval. Consequently, this can lead to them changing their interests and opinions on a regular basis in order to fit in with different groups. To summarise, protesting consumers avoid counterfeit luxury brand, and mostly consume non-luxury brands and occasionally buy original luxury brands.

Furthermore, the protesting consumers' group does not directly fit into the prototypes of the any of the four consumer categories by Han et al. (2010), that is, patricians, parvenus, poseurs, and proletarians because none of these categories display the characteristics of proactively protesting counterfeits which the protesting consumers usually do. Therefore, a direct parallel comparison cannot be drawn in this case. However, they are aligned with the patricians to some degree simply because they belong to the upper-class (figure 5.3), at least according to their childhood SES.

5.4.3 Passive consumer (Low SES, High EW)

The third category of participants reported having a happy and submissive childhood, though not necessarily affluent. Several participants reported having to accept whatever brands their parents got them in their childhoods without any protest, hence these consumers were termed as *passive consumers*. They reported living in nice houses in the suburban areas of town. They seemed to have good relationships with their parents and siblings and shared happy childhood memories. They usually lived in a good neighbourhood and harboured great bonds with the neighbourhood kids. Many individual values and beliefs are imbibed in childhood in which the family plays an indispensable role (Parke and Buriel, 2006; Richins and Chaplin, 2015) and these participants seemed to display this in their narratives of their childhood backgrounds. The passive consumers usually belong to the traditional working class (Savage et al., 2013). They also seem to align with the poseurs from the consumer taxonomy by Han

et al. (2010) in terms of their wealth and occasional need for status, however, in many cases they do not seem to care about social approval. Some degree of parallels can be drawn with the "aspirational consumers" forming "the crowd" in the aspirational hierarchy of brand consumption model (Wall and Large, 2010) because both these consumer groups also mostly consume mass fashion (non-luxury) brands.

The participants with low childhood SES yet high EW or passive consumers reported having a passive childhood, which was quite submissive and usually filled with memories of happy family relationships. They experienced an average, ordinary upbringing which was not much impacted due to low SES, perhaps due to positive parental warmth. As two of the participants described their childhood backgrounds:

> Yeah, so I was born in the Caribbean, and I came to the UK when I was 14, so my childhood was... I am an only child of my mum, and it was very pleasant. Caribbean is hot, tropical and then I came and joined my mum two years after she came here, and lived with mum and stepdad, he has passed away. But yeah, it was a happy childhood, and I think until now its happy. (Olivia)

> I grew up in Birmingham. It was not a bad area; I wouldn't say it was affluential or anything, but it wasn't a bad area. It was very busy. And even though I lived off a high street, there were always people moving around and different sorts of shops. And then I moved to the town I am in now, when I was six. And that's more of a housing area, you have to travel a bit longer to get to the shops. (Amelia)

It was found that these consumers experienced high childhood emotional well-being (EW). Both Olivia and Amelia reported having a normal and happy childhood, though they recalled not being particularly affluential. In contrast with previous sections with high childhood SES individuals, high income and status seems relatively inconsequential for the overall quality of childhood years for this group of individuals. This phenomenon again highlights the significance of childhood emotional wellbeing as a contributory factor. They describe their adherence to non-luxury, elementary consumption as:

> I think it's more like sports brands because I don't tend to dress up too often. It's sports brands like Nike or Adidas that make me feel better.
> Olivia: I think if you have an underlying understanding of who you are, you know wearing a brand or wearing any kind of luxury brands or whatever, shouldn't make a person feel the way they feel; it's something inner and once you put it on, it looks good, for me that's an added bonus. Yeah, it makes me feel good in the moment when you have it on but within, I am feeling good anyway because I have got that kind of energy and kind of personality about it. (Amelia)

5.4.3.1 Passive consumers: Adulthood SES and elementary consumption

These individuals of lower socio-economic status are often characterized by their *elementary consumption* habits. With limited financial resources due to low adulthood

SES, these individuals tend to favour basic, non-luxury brands when making purchases in order to maximize the value they receive from them (Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013). Even though they cannot usually afford luxury consumption, they may occasionally indulge in premium non-luxury brands to make statements with their spending habits and feel a sense of freedom from the restrictions that control their financial resources. This behaviour allows them to show an indication of success and break away from the monotony that characterizes their typical consumption practices such as Olivia's perception of Calvin Klein as luxury:

> No [I don't buy luxury brands]. Because they put their price tags so much marked-up, however much percentage. I don't see they value their workers that work on their brands. They are more about profit than anything else. (Amelia)

> I shop at Next quite often and I have got one of their cards, sometimes I like to buy from their brand range - they do sell like Calvin Klein, DKNY and all the different stuff, so most of the time they have 'sale' and you get a really good buy. […] Personally, the thing with me, I do like Calvin Klein, it's a brand I iconise, or idolise, however you want to class it. Erm... I just feel it's luxury. (Olivia)

Interestingly, low socioeconomic status did not seem to be a significant factor in their perceived upbringing though there were subtle instances of comparisons with peers in their consumer socialisation process (Connell et al., 2014). The presence of good interpersonal relationships and strong friendships seemingly played a more critical role than material hedonisms. As one of the participants reminisced happy memories of an upbringing that expresses a theme of predilection for a carefree regime:

> Generally, it was a nice area, it's just on the outside of a small town, so it's kind of suburban. So I am just outside the town, so I am not in a busy area. And where I grew up, it was nice because what you found at this stage was people didn't really seem to move, so I kind of got to know the kids around. And I had a fantastic childhood, you know I was always playing, always had friends around, I loved it around there. There were plenty of places to go, so there were parks, I had a great childhood because there was always somewhere to go, so we had brooks down the way, we had fields on the other side, tall trees, we had parks not too far away. So, yeah it was a lovely childhood; I was out all the time, I was hardly in. (Daniel)

5.4.3.2 *Passive consumers: Counterfeit consumption*

Adolescents often face peer pressure and though this may be a rather common experience, adolescents with low socioeconomic status face more peer pressure and status insecurity compared to their counterparts with middle or high socioeconomic status (Uslu, 2013). These passive consumers sometimes indulged into counterfeit consumption; however, it was usually the result of low adulthood socioeconomic status and not so much to do with social conformity as Daniel shared his experience of buying a counterfeit t-shirt of his favourite football club:

> There's one shirt that's fake and you can tell, and it makes you feel like you know it's fake... I am a big football fan and occasionally I have bought the fake football shirts of my club which is Aston Villa and you can tell that it's fake because the quality isn't the same as compared to... my son's always had the original, I would always buy the original for him, so for myself I bought a fake version and you can tell by looking at its quality, it's not the same, so you feel like fake when you are wearing it, something like that ... (Daniel).

Interestingly, some of the passive consumers such as Mark shared fascinating experience of being introduced to counterfeits by their parents. Childhood experiences like this set aberrant moral standards in the early years by their family (Parke and Buriel, 2006; Richins and Chaplin, 2015), which sets the course for counterfeit purchase as customary occurrence and also as a novelty-seeking experience.

> Yeah, sometimes my mom buys fake clothes, she got a lot of fake stuff, like fake clothes. Once I wore a t-shirt she gave me, and when I wore it outside, it looks original but inside I know it's not original, the brand is basically a fake brand. It affected me, in terms of the way I felt. I was aware of what I was wearing was fake. (Mark)

Nevertheless, the level of social conformity found in passive consumers seemed to diminish as they enter adulthood. As Daniel admits being more open to counterfeits during his adulthood compared to his teenage years due to assuaged social conformity:

> I think, it's okay for someone to buy counterfeits, if they feel comfortable with the people to know that it's fake, because I think it again depends on your age as well. If you are in school, and you get a fake Gucci t-shirt or bag or whatever, you get the Mickey taken out of you; but as you got older and you ask someone, what do you think of this, do you think it's real, looks pretty real and it's fake and they say, yeah, yeah cool. So, it all depends on your age. (Daniel)

5.4.3.3 *Passive consumers: Non-luxury consumption*

Although several researchers have emphasised on the effect of childhood SES on educational attainment, health, and well-being (Brooks-Gunn and Duncan 1997; Duncan et al. 2002), interestingly, it is not limited to childhood SES but also dependent on the level of contentment, parental warmth, and interpersonal family dynamics (Richins and Chaplin, 2015). Several passive consumers reported having to accept whatever brands their parents bought for them. On many occasions this did not fit with the contemporary trends, and it was a reminder of their socioeconomic status. Childhood and adolescence bring forth an understanding of the role of brands in presenting self in the society, and the resultant social pressures to fit into their groups by conforming to the preferred brand of that group (Chaplin and Roedder, 2005). As Daniel shared his secondary school experience of feeling left out and lacked the sense

of social belonging to his peer group when his family income prohibited him from obtaining his preferred Adidas trainers to fit into the school peer group:

> [...] because my dad couldn't afford the Adidas trainers that I wanted or the trainers that I wanted and I had to have a lesser well-known brand, obviously they had four kids, so they had to buy four, so sometimes I had to wear brands that I might not wear today at all, or the type of shoes that I am wearing, especially at school, you have to be conscious because you are not yourself. Fashion at school, especially secondary school is quite important when you are that age. So, yeah, it was in school when I was younger in high school. (Daniel)

Mostly this group of participants consumed non-luxury brands and associated their childhood nostalgia with these non-luxury brands. Unlike the privileged consumers who have access to luxury brands, the passive consumers preferred the popular non-luxury brands in their high schools and insisted on acquiring them. Resembling the influence of exposure to childhood advertising on product evaluations by parents (Connell et al., 2014), the school peer groups had a significant influence on children to persuade their parents for the prevalent brands. Popular brand names such as Kickers and their possession often become a symbol of social belongingness to teenagers to be able to fit in and this holds significant influence on parental purchase for the same brand:

> Erm... probably Levi's jeans and Wranglers make me feel nostalgic about my childhood, because it kind of reminds me like of Christmas and birthdays when I used to get 'em, I always stuck with the same type of jeans, bootcut, I have always had bootcut, I have always preferred bootcut anyway. So, I suppose if you can probably find those jeans, I used to love getting them at Christmas or for my birthday, when I needed any pair... so I suppose yeah, I remember wearing those. The one brand that does bring back some memories which I did have a pair but I haven't anymore, was Kickers as well because it reminds me of high school when I begged mum and dad, that I need Kickers, all my friends got Kickers, I need Kickers, and they'll say we'll see what we can do and then they would come out with a pair of Kickers. So, yeah that's one of the brands I have nostalgic thoughts about, yeah. (Daniel)

The passive consumers often experienced alienation from their peers and felt like a fake and they often justified it by assuming that everybody probably had to deal with this situation sometime or the other. A countervailing nature of subservience to either parental norms or social conformity to peers is often demonstrated by the passive consumers in their struggle to establish their sense of social belonging:

> Hanna: [...] sometimes I have felt that (being fake) you know when your parents got you stuff and you gotta deal with that because everyone else might not have that and you don't fit in, because you are not in trend, and they are in trend. That time you feel like you force yourself to wear some stuff just because you felt like that's what you should wear. Everybody goes through that phase.

The passive consumers tend to be submissive to their parents and peer groups during their formative years but with slightly decreased inclination towards social conformity to their peers in their adulthood. Because of low childhood SES and often similarly low adulthood SES, they usually preferred elementary consumption of non-luxury brands as consumers apart from occasional encounters with counterfeits and abstained from luxury consumption. They seem aligned with the "Poseurs" consumer group by Han et al. (2010) as shown in figure 5.3 because of their SES and consumption habits. However, one difference between them is that though poseurs actively seek status, the passive consumers are not very driven by status. In a nutshell, passive consumers mainly purchase counterfeit luxury and non-luxury brands but avoid original luxury brands as discussed in this section.

5.4.4 Penurious consumer *(Low SES, low EW)*

Participants with low childhood SES as well as low EW are categorised as having had penurious childhoods and were often abused, deprived by their caregivers. Adverse childhood experiences have been found to affect health and behavioural issues, but childhood abuse is more likely to have a direct impact on poor health compared to other adversities (Font and Maguire-Jack, 2016; Liming and Grube, 2018). Most of the penurious consumers in the present study belonged to the working class, constituted by the emergent service workers and the "Precariat" with low economic capital and low social status in accordance with the British social class survey analysis by Savage et al. (2013). The penurious consumers also align with the "Conformity consumers" from the base of the pyramid in the aspirational hierarchy of brand consumption model (Wall and Large, 2010). This is because their consumption of mass fashion (non-luxury) brands mixed with some amount of counterfeit luxury consumption matches with the consumption habits of penurious consumers as discussed in following section.

Some of the participants who were classified as penurious consumers experienced adverse childhood circumstances reported having abusive parents and limited resources such as Victoria only had second-hand clothes while growing up:

> I was born in Wednesfield at my Naan's, we lived in a flat. We moved from that flat when I was two and we moved to a house. A mixed childhood really, happy in the sense that I was always playing outside, and sad that my dad used to beat my mum, so that was sad, you know why. Then I had to look after my sister as well, because my mom was ill all the time. It was happy memories and sad memories. […] We had second hand clothes; we didn't have much. I didn't have many clothes, I got second hand

clothes. I never had any brands, mostly hand-me-downs from my brother and from charity shops. I had most clothes handed down to me. (Victoria)

When asked about childhood backgrounds, participants with low childhood SES often provided narratives of financial scarcity and how it was more prominent when they inherently involved upward social comparison with their wealthy peers. Brad, belonging to an ethnic minority in the UK, analyses his alienation from his rich classmates by emphasising on fashion-based categorisation using the type of brands which often act as status symbols (Mills, 2017). It also germinates feelings of envy and desire during formative years affecting child development process and therefore has long lasting effects later in the adulthood (Bradley and Corwyn, 2002).

> So, I grew up in London but actually I was in a very poor part of London, called tower hamlets. It's one of the poorest boroughs in the UK. So, I dint grow up well, like I dint grow up rich. I went to primary state school. When I was a child, fashion was quite important, so if children were wearing some brand, people were like wow, he must be so rich. And for me, I always wanted to wear those items, but I couldn't. I couldn't afford it because I came from a poor household. So, yeah, that's a little bit about me and my livelihood. (Brad)

Although childhood SES has been studied extensively as a predictor of consumer behaviour (Hamilton et al., 2019; Mittal and Griskevicius, 2016; Thompson et al., 2014), the effect of adverse childhood experiences on consumption during adulthood has been largely overlooked. This is a significant finding of this present research as those participants who reported having experienced adverse childhood circumstances such as domestic violence, emotional abuse, and even being fostered had significantly different behaviour as consumers than those who reported positive childhood experiences. For instance, in the above excerpt Victoria shared her childhood experience of getting mostly "hand-me-downs" from her brother and this consumption pattern can be evidently seen in her consumption of second-hand clothes from charity shops, Facebook Marketplace and Vinted (where second-hand products are sold) which constituted a majority of the clothes she owns:

> **Interviewer**: Can you tell me your last shopping experience of a fashion brand?
> **Victoria**: I do like shopping from marketplace a lot, on Facebook, you can find second hand stuff there. I like New Look as well.
> **Interviewer:** Okay, why do you choose Marketplace or New Look particularly?
> **Victoria:** Marketplace is quite cheap for second hand clothes, and you can find some nice clothes, I have got a lot of clothes from Marketplace. I also use Vinted as well.

The interpersonal family relationships have a much deeper impact during the formative years of childhood and the experiences often last through the later adulthood years

(Font and Maguire-Jack, 2016). Some more severe form of childhood abuse could result into being sent to a foster home as experienced by one of the participants and it is linked with low childhood SES:

> Okay, so I grew up in a neighbourhood that was quite a low-income neighbourhood, but it was nice, and even though it wasn't safe, it felt safe, you know, like all the neighbourhood kids would go out and play, it was quite nice and there were open fields to play in. But yeah, my family life wasn't great, and I ended up being fostered when I was 14. So, yeah it wasn't great, but I have good memories from when I was a lot younger. (Harper)

Like Victoria, Harper experienced extremely adverse childhood which landed her in a foster home, although it is interesting how she almost tries to deny it by providing quite a defensive and contradictory account of her childhood by using phrases like "even though it wasn't safe, it felt safe" and that her childhood "wasn't great" but she has "good memories". However, her early childhood experiences accelerated her into starting early employment, undertaking responsibilities quicker and becoming a savvy consumer:

> I think I have always worked quite hard to get as much money as I can. I am not particularly clever or very accomplished, but I have always had side hustles on the side because I am quite protective over the fact that if I don't have any money to pay rent, then I don't have anyone to fall back on. So, I think it made me grow up quite quickly and work quite hard which in turn has given me a bit money to buy the things that I like, buy clothes from Asos. So, yeah, it definitely made me more savvy and probably a bit more guarded as well. (Harper)

This aspect of Harper's narrative reveals that her maturity is aligned with her ideals of economic independence, financial security, and self-protectiveness to mitigate the risks of being vulnerable to others as learnt in her harsh childhood experiences of a foster home. Harper's early transformation into adulthood is highly consistent with recent findings of low childhood SES being associated with early adoption of life history strategies such as quicker development, early sexual maturity, and opportunism (Stamos et al., 2021).

5.4.4.1 *Penurious consumers: Adulthood SES and elementary consumption*

Kerry's upbringing in a low socioeconomic status environment resulted from her parents' substance abuse, an issue she attributed little importance to at the time. As an adult looking back, however, Kerry's understanding of the situation and its implications has deepened markedly. She recognises how parental substance use often sets children up for a complex series of economic and social disadvantages that

can be difficult to transcend even into adulthood due to their lasting effects (Mittal and Griskevicius, 2016; Hamilton et al., 2019).

> Kerry: Yeah, so both my parents worked when I was younger, had three sisters, no brothers, my dad worked as a postman, my mom worked as a dental lady. But I always felt when we were growing up that we were poor because we didn't have much, and I realised when I got older that it was quite sad really. I realised when I got older that the reason for that was that my mom and dad smoked a lot of cigarettes, and my dad was always in the pub. When I was younger, I didn't realise why there was no money and only when I got older that I realised. My mom still smokes now, and she will be 80 this year, smokes 40 cigarettes a day! My dad doesn't smoke anymore but he drinks. And yeah, it's strange really because when we were kids, you don't realise, you just think you're a poor family. You know, we had hand-me-down clothes and there was never any eating out or going out anywhere, and yeah, it's kind of sad really in a way.

The social comparison process plays a crucial role during the formative years of young consumers such as Kerry, who reported feeling poor as a recent illustration. Research by Chan and Briers (2019) and Lockwood and Kunda (1997) suggest that memories of these experiences are well-retained, even years later. In particular, individuals possessing enduring recollections - such as Kerry's quite visceral memory - suggest the psychological effect of this process on its subjects is deeply profound. Furthermore, this process can have a significant influence on shaping behaviours, including those in terms of their economic decisions and attitude towards their possessions:

> Kerry: I can remember an incident, I think I would've fourteen years old, I had to do some work for money, a paper on five times a week, and I went to the cinema with two school friends, went by bus, never had a car, never had a house phone, nothing like that and I went to cinema with these two friends and my clothes were really shabby and they had really nice clothes on them and little handbags and I remember feeling really embarrassed and you know, it kind of brought it home to me, they had a lot more than I did.

The penurious consumers often endured hardships since their formative years – most of the experiences shared by participants can be categorised as having had adverse childhood experiences due to low SES and adverse emotional states either due to domestic violence, parental substance abuse, parental divorce, or arduous family dynamics. Adverse childhood experiences like this contribute immensely towards low emotional wellbeing and can have grave impact on an individual throughout later life (Font and Maguire-Jack, 2016; Liming and Grube, 2018). Harper acknowledges harbouring abundant patience because of having to wait in the streets for hours for her parents to return home, however, as an adult she avoids waiting for someone because it triggers the same old childhood wound of rejection. Nevertheless, her patience to wait for the whole year for the 20 per cent discount on her favourite non-luxury brand,

Asos, despite having selected the items in her shopping bag for months, can be attributed to her perseverance learnt in her childhood:

> Harper: I choose Asos because it's affordable and to make it more affordable, every now and then they have a discount code, that is a 20% off. So, I wait for that email that they have 20% off and then I get all my stuff. So, throughout the year, I save things in my basket and when they give the discount, I buy it all, then it's more affordable. And I just like their style of the things that you can buy from Asos as well. It's quite a lot of options on there.

5.4.4.2 *Penurious consumers: Counterfeit consumption*

Penurious consumers such as Brad was conscious of the growing popularity of counterfeit luxury brands and could not bring himself to engage with them - not only because of the inauthenticity he would feel after purchasing but also his fear of potentially being caught by the authorities. He believed that partaking in this activity only served to contribute to illegal activities, when many of those who indulged in counterfeiting were already struggling financially. Brad's total refusal of participating in any way with this fraudulent industry showed his strong commitment to eschewing from anything considered shady or morally dubious:

> […] it's either illegal or umm.. these goods could come from China, so the police could crackdown, so I don't want to get myself involved in and get into trouble buying counterfeit goods, so that's another reason, uhh, and to me it feels like I am being fake, like wearing something that is not me. (Brad)

Unlike Brad, Victoria displayed no qualms about buying luxury or even counterfeits as long as she bought them from a charity shop "at a bargain". This is because as a low SES adult, she chooses value consciousness which counterfeits can offer (Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013).

> Oh yes, like a designer, yeah, I would buy from a charity shop. I feel great if it's a designer because I got it at a bargain price. I would like to buy it because it has got a designer label on it at a cheaper price. […] once I had a handbag from a charity shop, and it looked like a Radley, but it wasn't a Radley. It had a brand label on the side, it was a good replica of Radley. (Victoria)

Kerry's perception of luxury brands is unique compared to the predominant view of most of the participants who associated luxury brands with wealth, social status, and high prestige. However, she did not shy away from buying a counterfeit Chanel bag for social validation, but she experienced an adverse social reaction that made her avoid counterfeits. Gino et al. (2010) found similar adverse social experiences of consumers using counterfeit as they increased the feelings of inauthenticity.

Yes, I have bought a Chanel handbag which was a fake. So, I definitely felt like an imposter wearing that. I saw people looking at me and thinking, is that real or not real. So, I didn't use it again. I bought it thinking I would feel good going out with it. But when I did go out with it, because I saw people looking and staring and I knew myself that it wasn't the real deal, it kind of, hmm.. it made me uncomfortable, and I didn't use it again for the same reason because so many people were looking at it. (Kerry)

To summarise penurious consumers' counterfeit consumption, they tend to buy counterfeit luxury brands, lured by their cheap prices but struggle with the social approval of counterfeits and with the fear of being caught using counterfeits.

5.4.4.3 *Penurious consumers: Non-luxury consumption*

As Whelan and Hingston (2018) found in their study that even non-luxury and everyday brands could have a difficult material norm to attain for consumers with low childhood SES. This finding is echoed by Brad further when he reflected his early years that even non-luxury brands like Nike and Kickers were as extraordinary as luxury and only a few people in his neighbourhood could afford them:

Yeah, a big one was called Kickers, which is a kind of shoes, another one was Timberland as well. Also, Nike, sometimes some Nike shoes as well. They were only like certain people could afford to buy them. (Brad)

Consumers make their decisions to choose among desirable products based on resource scarcity or product scarcity (Hamilton et al., 2019). However, sometimes even an increase in financial resources with an increased adulthood SES than childhood SES, some consumers may tend to restrain themselves from indulging into more expensive brands as a result of value consciousness to maximise value for the money spent. For example, although Brad shared his low childhood SES upbringing, his current adulthood SES is much higher with higher occupational prestige and income as a software programmer, however, this he still chooses to buy mainly from Primark, which is an inexpensive non-luxury brand compared to other high-street brands. This is a classic example of self-verification wherein consumers take active steps to ensure others see them as they see themselves (Mandel et al., 2017; Swann, 2012; Swann et al., 1989). Recent research echoes this finding that consumers with low self-esteem consume inferior products to self-verify a sense of familiarity (Stuppy et al., 2020).

Brad: I don't buy that much, because price is still very important for me, for me the main thing is whether it's comfortable, and whether it makes me feel happy, whether it's from a luxury brand or not.
Interviewer: So, which brands do you buy from usually?
Brad: I usually buy from Primark, they don't have any brands as such, it's just called Primark. I like Primark, because it's quite affordable and their clothes are very, very

comfortable. And even though it's not that prestigious as Louis Vuitton for example, I am still happy with it, which is the most important thing.

It is not constrained by Brad's value conscious upbringing alone which determines his brand preference for value brands, but also the fact that even when he purchases an expensive brand, he feels inauthentic to wear it purely due to his low self-esteem originated from his childhood SES as he puts it as "because of where I come from" (Manstead, 2018; Stuppy et al., 2020; Weber, 2018). This alienating experience further illustrates the long pervading effects of childhood SES through adulthood.

> Yeah, I experience feeling like a fake sometimes as well, because when I buy a certain item that is like authentic, I feel that I shouldn't be wearing it because of where I come from. (Brad)

Kerry holds a different viewpoint than Brad. Kerry finds the luxury brands as 'greedy' and sometimes even 'expensive and ugly' as she describes the famous Burberry checks:

> **Kerry:** I do care about the social reputation with some brands but not others. I like Next, River Island and brands like that but some brands are greedy like Armani, Chanel, the real top brands, Burberry, I think Burberry stuff is horrible, it's ugly, it's expensive and ugly, their checks.
>
> **Interviewer:** Still people think that luxury brands are prestigious.
>
> **Kerry**: What does prestigious actually mean?
> **Interviewer**: It displays their wealthy status, like high status.
> **Kerry:** No, I don't believe that because somebody would be in debt buying that product. They could have bought them on credit card. When I see someone with a brand-new car and it's an expensive car, to me, I look at that person and I don't immediately think they are rich, I am more likely to think that they owe a lot of money in credit.

Kerry associates non-luxury brands with high social reputation as opposed to the common notion of luxury brands as symbols of high social status (Mills, 2017). Her discernment of luxury brands is not with wealth but with debt with which people often accrue to possess those affluences.

5.4.4.4 _Penurious consumers: Overall discussion_

Overall, adverse childhood experiences act as a catalyst in exacerbating the effects of low childhood SES on individuals as value conscious consumers who predominantly consume non-luxury brands, and sometimes purchase counterfeit luxury brands from charity shops. Some of these individuals with deprived childhood did not experience any clear abuse but resource scarcity resulted into a different consumer socialisation process. Recent research on scarcity found that those with low childhood SES are

more likely to devaluate an alternative if it is unavailable (Thompson et al., 2020). There have been many other studies pertaining to the effects of resource scarcity (Hamilton et al., 2019; Park et al., 2020), however, the current study is restricted to the scarcity aspects which is symbolised by the social class and some aspects of social status. Other resource scarcities such as culture, time, etc. are beyond the scope of this research. A significant feature of the penurious consumers found in this study is their similarity with the "Proletarians" of the consumer taxonomy proposed by Han et al. (2010) in terms of their low wealth and need for status (figure 5.3). However, the point of departure from the Proletarians is the occasional counterfeit consumption and premium non-luxury consumption driven by intergenerational aspirations reported by the penurious consumers (e.g., Kerry, Victoria) in the present research. Unlike Han et al.'s (2010) assertion that the proletarians do not seek status related consumption, this study found that the low status, working class, penurious consumers are also driven by their need for social belongingness (e.g., Kerry), materialistic overconsumption (e.g., Harper), and compensatory consumption (e.g., Kerry). In summary, penurious consumers buy counterfeit luxury and non-luxury brands but avoid luxury brands.

To sum up the analysis of findings, all the above sections provided detailed discussions on the four consumer types (*viz.,* privileged, protesting, passive, and penurious consumers) based on childhood SES and EW; and their consumption of brand types among three brand substitutes (*viz.,* counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands). First, the privileged consumers (with high SES and high EW) purchase all three brand substitutes - counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands. Second, the protesting consumers (with high SES but low EW) purchase non-luxury brands and occasionally buy original luxury brands but avoid counterfeit luxury brands. Third, the passive consumers (with low SES but high EW) purchase counterfeit luxury and non-luxury brands but avoid the original luxury brands. And fourth, the penurious consumers (with low SES and low EW) buy counterfeit luxury and non-luxury brands but avoid original luxury brands.

5.5 Summary

To summarise this chapter, the role of childhood emotional wellbeing (EW) along with childhood SES is significant on the consumer behaviour as demonstrated in the resulting four types of consumers, viz. privileged consumer with high SES and high

EW, protesting consumer with high SES but low EW, passive consumer with low SES but high EW and finally penurious consumer with both low SES and low EW. Overall, this chapter attempted to address the first research question pertaining to the effect of childhood and adulthood SES on consumers' preferences while choosing between the substitutes of counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands. The next chapter discusses the role of symbolic self-completion and other coping strategies employed by consumers in their substitution between brand types.

Chapter 6
Analysis and Research:
Brand Substitution

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the role of symbolic self-completion and other coping strategies employed by consumers in their substitution between brand types. It builds on the findings from the empirical elements of the research explored in the previous chapter. Based on the four types of consumers identified based on childhood and adulthood Socioeconomic Status (SES) and Emotional Wellbeing (EW) in the last chapter, this chapter illustrates the brand choice of these consumer types between the substitutes of counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands. The chapter begins with the brand substitution between the three substitutes mentioned above and aligns them with their respective consumer types. In doing so, it also compares these findings with previous research by Han et al. (2010) on consumer taxonomy based on wealth and status needs. It proposes the "consumer-type-based brand substitution model" to construct the mechanism of the underlying coping strategies causing the distinct consumption behaviours of consumers. The subsequent sections and subsections examines the root causes of the brand substitution of consumers emerging from the SES-EW issues nascent in their childhood socioeconomic status and emotional wellbeing factors. Each of these are discussed in detail. Consequently, it explores how do counterfeits affect the original non-luxury and luxury brands.

6.2 Brand substitution

As discussed in the previous chapter, this research found four major categories of consumers based on the effects of childhood SES and childhood EW: Privileged consumers, Protesting consumers, Passive consumers, and Penurious consumers. Often, these consumers treat one or more of these three alternative brand choices (original luxury, counterfeit luxury, and non-luxury brands) as substitutes because they are used for the same/ similar purpose by consumers (Amaral and Loken, 2016), as discussed in the following sections. The present study found that in some cases such as by the privileged consumers, the original luxury brands are substituted by counterfeits, whereas in other cases (e.g., passive, and penurious consumers), the non-luxury brands are substituted by counterfeits. This phenomenon of brand substitution will be discussed in detail in the subsequent sections.

To recall, substitutes are defined as goods which can be used for the same purpose by consumers, for example, Nike and Adidas sell sports shoes and can be used by

consumers for the same purpose as sportswear and as casual shoes (Milgrom and Strulovici, 2009). Furthermore, in context of counterfeit consumption, substitution rate is the rate of "likelihood that consumers would have purchased the genuine product at its full price" (OECD, 2017, p.31). The OECD report further states that almost 47 percent of the counterfeits are sold in the secondary markets to consumers actively seeking counterfeits. This implies that these consumers most likely do not buy the original luxury brands. Furthermore, they are likely to purchase the everyday, non-luxury brands. The empirical findings of present research about brand consumption provide evidence to support this assertion that consumers do consider counterfeits, original luxury, and non-luxury as substitutes, as discussed in the last chapter. The following table 6.1 condenses these findings from the previous chapter on the brand types consumed by each consumer type.

Table 6.1 Brand type and Consumer type

Brand type \ Consumer type	Privileged consumers	Protesting consumers	Passive consumers	Penurious consumers
Counterfeit luxury brands	✔	✘	✔	✔
Luxury brands	✔	✔	✘	✘
Non-luxury brands	✔	✔	✔	✔

(Source: Author)
✘*represents not consumed;* ✔ *represents consumed*

Firstly, the privileged consumers were found to consume all three brand types, *viz.*, counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands. This finding contrasts with the findings of Han et al. (2010) who argued that the "patricians", who are the equivalent of the privileged consumers (as elaborated in last chapter; refer figure 5.3) do not consume counterfeits. The present study found that the upper-class and the established middle-class consumers purchase counterfeits to satisfy their aesthetic needs provided by some high-quality, or design of counterfeits. In other cases, they

seek counterfeits to mix and interchange them with the original pieces from the luxury brands to aide them in their conspicuous consumption of luxury, even though it is through counterfeits. This will be elaborated in detail in the subsequent sections.

Secondly, the protesting consumers were found to mainly consume non-luxury brands and occasionally consume luxury brands, however, they tend to avoid and even protest counterfeits due to their distaste of and dissociation from the upper classes. The in-depth insights originating their consumption behaviours will be discussed in the subsequent sections.

Thirdly, the passive consumers buy counterfeits and non-luxury brands, however, they avoid original luxury brands primarily due to their low adulthood SES. Their substitution between the counterfeits and non-luxury brands cause harm to the non-luxury brands (and *not* the luxury brands) because they replace their usual purchase of everyday, non-luxury brands with counterfeits. Besides, their inability to afford the original luxury means they would not substitute the counterfeits with the original luxury brands. This finding supports the argument which challenges the true impact of counterfeits on the luxury brands alone by diminishing the "likelihood that consumers would have purchased the genuine product at its full price" (OECD, 2017, p.31). And it further provides evidence of counterfeit impact on the non-luxury brands which are essentially substituted by the counterfeits by the passive consumers.

Lastly, the penurious consumers consume counterfeits and non-luxury brands. This finding of penurious consumers' counterfeit consumption contrasts the avoidance of counterfeits by their equivalent counterparts from Han et al.'s (2010) proletarians. Similar to passive consumers, they also avoid luxury brands due to limited financial capital. And as explained above, their substitution of non-luxury brands with counterfeit luxury impacts the non-luxury brands.

Overall, based on the above elaboration of the brand type-consumer type (table 6.1) the present research proposes the consumer-type-based brand substitution model to construct the mechanism of the underlying coping strategies causing the distinct consumption behaviours of consumers.

6.3 Consumer-type-based brand substitution model

The present research examines the root causes of the brand substitution by the four consumer types developing from the SES-EW issues nascent in their childhood socioeconomic status and emotional wellbeing factors. Majority of the coping

strategies implemented by the consumers to mitigate these issues can be rationalised via the psychology of symbolic self-completion (Wicklund and Gollwitzer, 1981). Other coping strategies find their genesis in dissociation, self-verification, and variety-seeking behaviours (Mandel et al., 2017; Swann, 2012). The conceptual foundation of symbolic self-completion as a compensatory consumption strategy by consumers in various domains of self-discrepancies has been developed by prior researchers as discussed in the conceptual framework chapter of this thesis (Cutright, 2012; Dalton, 2008; Dubois et al., 2012; Gao et al., 2009; Levav and Zhu, 2009; Mead et al., 2011; Rucker and Galinsky, 2008, 2009, Wan et al., 2014; Wang et al. 2012). Mandel et al. (2017) provide evidence of past research exhibiting areas of self-discrepancies associated with symbolic self-completion as a coping strategy (table 3.4). This research expands this literature further by extending symbolic self-completion in the context of counterfeit and luxury consumption by aligning it with SES and EW concepts.
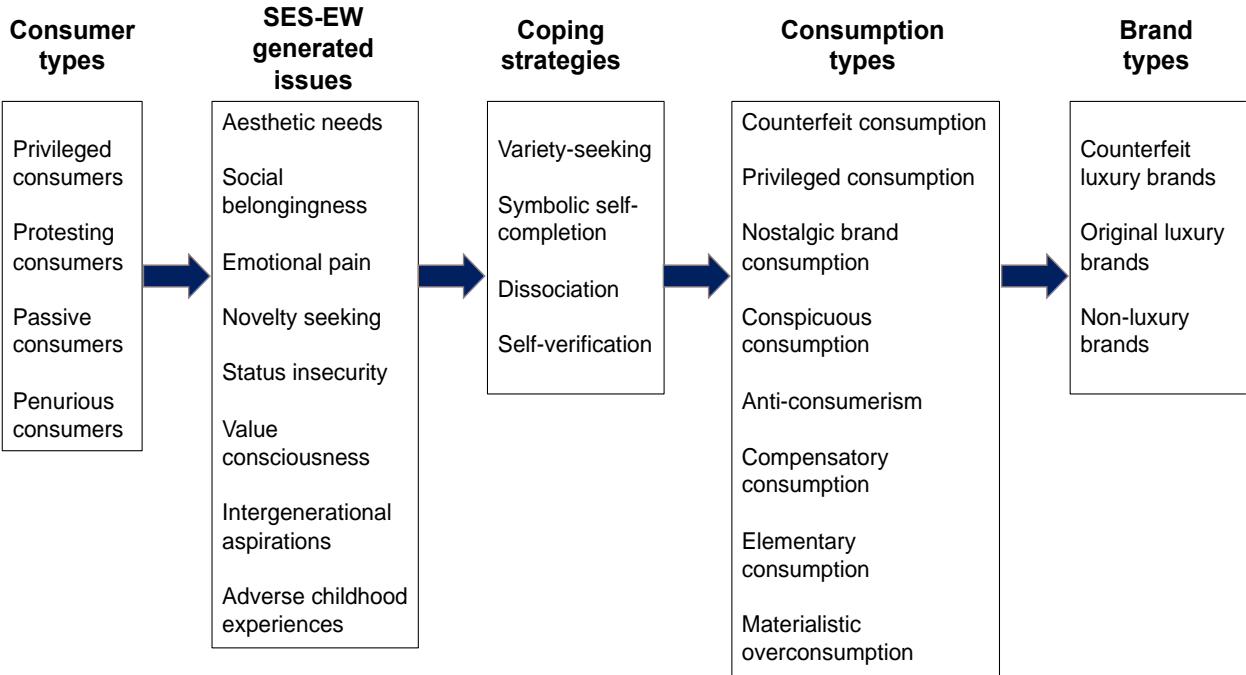
Figure 6.1 Consumer-type-based brand substitution model
(Source: Author)

Building on these foundations, this research proposes the consumer-type-based brand substitution model as illustrated in figure 6.1. The model portrays a sequential process. The four types of consumer groups deal with various issues generated by their childhood and adulthood SES and emotional wellbeing factors. The last chapter discussed the origin of these issues rooted in childhood SES and EW. To mitigate

Table 6.2 Consumer-type-based luxury, non-luxury, and counterfeit brand substitution

Consumer type	SES-EW generated issues	Coping strategy	Consumption type	Brand type	Examples of participants
Privileged	Aesthetic needs	Variety-seeking	Counterfeit consumption	Counterfeit luxury	James, Claudia
Privileged	Social belongingness	Symbolic self-completion	Privileged consumption	Luxury	Kate, Rebecca
Privileged	Social belongingness	Symbolic self-completion	Nostalgic brand consumption	Premium non-luxury	Rebecca, Lucy
Privileged	Social belongingness	Symbolic self-completion	Conspicuous consumption	A mix of original & counterfeit luxury	Georgia, James
Protesting	Emotional pain	Symbolic self-completion	Compensatory consumption	Selective luxury	Eva
Protesting	Social belongingness	Symbolic self-completion	Elementary consumption	Non-luxury	Emma
Protesting	Social belongingness	Dissociation	Anti-consumerism	Non-luxury	Eva, Lisa
Passive	Novelty seeking	Symbolic self-completion	Counterfeit consumption	Counterfeit luxury	Greg, Mark, Olivia
Passive	Social belongingness	Symbolic self-completion	Elementary consumption	Non-luxury	Amelia, Daniel
Passive	Status insecurity	Symbolic self-completion	Counterfeit consumption	Counterfeit luxury	Anne, Leanne
Passive	Value consciousness	Symbolic self-completion	Counterfeit consumption	Counterfeit luxury	Leanne, Olivia
Penurious	Intergenerational aspirations	Symbolic self-completion	Elementary consumption	Premium non-luxury	Kerry, Victoria
Penurious	Adverse childhood experiences	Symbolic self-completion	Materialistic overconsumption	Non-luxury	Harper
Penurious	Adverse childhood experiences	Symbolic self-completion	Elementary consumption	Premium non-luxury	Kerry
Penurious	Status insecurity	Self-verification	Elementary consumption	Non-luxury	Brad, Harper, Kerry
Penurious	Status insecurity	Symbolic self-completion	Counterfeit consumption	Counterfeit luxury	Kerry, Victoria

(Source: Author)

Table 6.3 Respondents and their consumer type based on their SES/EW

Sr. No.	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Occupation	SES	EW	Consumer type
1	Amelia	Female	44	Retail employee	Low	High	Passive
2	Anne	Female	56	Carer	Low	High	Passive
3	Brad	Male	29	Programmer	Low	Low	Penurious
4	Calvin	Male	32	Maintenance officer	Low	High	Passive
5	Claudia	Female	31	Oncology researcher	High	High	Privileged
6	Daniel	Male	38	Telecom employee	Low	High	Passive
7	Emma	Female	22	Nursery teacher	High	Low	Protesting
8	Eva	Female	51	Aromatherapist	High	Low	Protesting
9	Georgia	Female	43	Financial controller	High	High	Privileged
10	Greg	Male	20	Security personnel	Low	High	Passive
11	Hanna	Female	38	Event consultant	Low	High	Passive
12	Harper	Female	27	Office manager	Low	Low	Penurious
13	Harry	Male	38	Travel advisor	High	Low	Protesting
14	James	Male	27	Photographer, writer	High	High	Privileged
15	Jordon	Male	46	Specialist teacher	High	Low	Protesting
16	Kate	Female	58	Fashion blogger	High	High	Privileged
17	Kerry	Female	54	Cleaning supervisor	Low	Low	Penurious
18	Kevin	Male	30	Real estate agent	Low	Low	Penurious
19	Leanne	Female	33	Brand strategist	Low	High	Passive
20	Lisa	Female	35	Civil servant	High	Low	Protesting
21	Lucy	Female	53	Tailor	High	High	Privileged
22	Mark	Male	26	Warehouse worker	Low	High	Passive
23	Olivia	Female	40	School Administrator	Low	High	Passive
24	Rebecca	Female	53	Teaching assistant	High	High	Privileged
25	Tom	Male	24	Teacher	Low	High	Passive
26	Victoria	Female	58	Care worker	Low	Low	Penurious

(Source: Author)

these SES-EW generated issues, consumers seek various coping strategies. These strategies manifest themselves in the form of distinct consumption types, leading to the choice between the brand substitutes – namely counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands.

The subsequent sections elaborate this process of brand substitution in detail. The tables 6.2 and 6.3 provide a brief overview of the evidence supporting the consumer-type-based brand substitution model with examples of participants exhibiting each

consumption type. Each consumer type and their sequential process of adopting various coping strategies to address their specific SES-EW generated needs will be discussed in the following subsections.

6.3.1 Privileged consumers

As discussed earlier, privileged consumers are the ones who buy luxury counterfeits, original luxury brands and non-luxury brands. Also reiterating the fact that the privileged consumers purchase all three alternatives of luxury counterfeits, original luxury, and non-luxury brands essentially means that these brand types are substitutes of each other (Kirmani, 2009; Randhawa et al., 2015). The mental process of this substitution takes place in the consumers' minds based on several factors. However, zeroing in on the SES-EW generated needs, this research found that the privileged consumers mainly adopt two coping strategies – variety-seeking and symbolic self-completion – to address their aesthetic needs and social belongingness needs respectively (table 6.2). These two coping strategies will be discussed next.

6.3.1.1 Variety-seeking

Owing to high SES and high cultural capital (Savage et al., 2013), privileged consumers often choose brands suiting their rich tastes. When their fashion taste is not met by their preferred luxury brands, they seek variety in the form of counterfeit luxury brands. While some of their basic fashion consumption needs are met by premium non-luxury brands, they often miss the aesthetics found in high-end designer labels. Therefore, some privileged consumers prefer counterfeits on grounds of aesthetics of these counterfeits. They choose luxury counterfeits instead of original non-luxury brands for this reason:

> Yeah, depends on what kind of aesthetics it is. I like kind of hipsterie, vintage kind of vibe, which you don't really get with high-street brands. If it was something I liked, I would definitely consider it. For basic things I buy high-street brands, not for something like trench coats or a big item. […] Yeah, I take pride in it [counterfeit purchase]. (James)

Table 6.4 Comparison of Brand type and Consumer type tables

Consumer types – author

Brand type \ Consumer type	Privileged consumers	Protesting consumers	Passive consumers	Penurious consumers
Counterfeit luxury brands	consumed	not consumed	consumed	consumed
Luxury brands	consumed	consumed	not consumed	not consumed
Non-luxury brands	consumed	consumed	consumed	consumed

Consumer types based on Han et al. (2010)

Brand type \ Consumer type	Patricians	Parvenus	Poseurs	Proletarians
Counterfeit luxury brands	not consumed *(circled)*	consumed	consumed	?
Luxury brands	consumed	consumed	not consumed	not consumed
Non-luxury brands	?	not consumed	?	?

(Source: Adapted from Han et al., 2010 and Author's current findings)
✗ *represents not consumed;* ⊘ *represents consumed;* **?** *represents research gap*

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The table 6.3 illustrates the differences between the findings of Han et al. (2010) and that of the present research. The research gaps represented by question marks in the left-hand-side table are addressed by the present research findings in the right-hand-side table in table 6.3. The counterfeit consumption by the privileged consumers is in contrast with Han et al. (2010) as displayed in table 6.3 (circled in red) who argue that the "patricians" with high SES indulge in original luxury brands with subtle differences without the need to display the logo because they have no desire for status.

As illustrated by James as a privileged consumer with high SES, it stands true that he does not desire social status, however, indulges in counterfeits for their style and aesthetics. While on one hand, the aesthetic needs of some privileged consumers are addressed by variety-seeking in the form of counterfeit consumption, other privileged consumers consider the subtle aesthetics of luxury brands as a better alternative to counterfeits:

> Yeah. I like that - very subtle, classic things. And also, I think with things that are subtle and classic, they're less likely to go out of fashion. I know there are pieces with like Chanel or other places that are timeless over a period of time. (Claudia)

When seeking more variety in her wardrobe, Claudia mentioned how she includes non-luxury brands besides luxury ones because brands like Asos provide the option of choosing from many different non-luxury brands:

> I think within the high street [brands], probably Mango and Zara are probably two brands I'd go for. I also like going to Asos because they have different brands are on that one website, so I like Asos as well. (Claudia)

Besides variety-seeking, privileged consumers also adopt other coping strategies such as symbolic self-completion, discussed next.

6.3.1.2 *Privileged consumers: Symbolic self-completion*

The second coping strategy adopted by privileged consumers is symbolic self-completion. A key component of symbolic self-completion is reducing self-discrepancies by seeking status symbols (Wicklund and Gollwitzer, 1981). Privileged consumers achieve this need by consuming brands with status symbols.

a. *Choice of Brand type – Original luxury*

A key component of symbolic self-completion is reducing self-discrepancies by seeking status symbols (Wicklund and Gollwitzer, 1981). Validating the common characteristic of the upper-class as connoisseurs of luxury, privileged consumers often signal status

using luxury brands (Manstead, 2018; Weber, 2018). Following excerpts from Kate and Rebecca's interviews depict their choice of luxury brands to display their social belongingness to the upper class, as also discussed in the previous chapter:

> I do [buy luxury brands] with some of them, for stuff like handbags and stuff like that. I do like to have a leather handbag because I am not like people who buy handbags to match whatever outfits they were wearing. I tend to go for a really good leather handbag and use it for everything. (Rebecca)

> I used to have Prada shoes, the red bottom shoes, […]and I had Candy, and I had Jimmy Choo, I mean I had shoes!! I loved shoes! I loved purses, make-up. (Kate)

Both Rebecca and Kate displayed their social belongingness to the upper-class using luxury brands and also to dissociate from the other people from lower classes who prefer quantity over quality.

b. Choice of Brand type – Premium non-luxury

In other instances, privileged consumers did not shy away from buying the established, premium non-luxury brands which bore nostalgic memories from their privileged childhoods.

> [I still buy] definitely a lot of Marks and Spencers because that was one of the top shops back then. We used to shop food... everything was from Marks and Spencers; everything was top of the range. Everybody wanted Marks and Spencers. You had plenty of money if you went shopping there. (Rebecca)

Rebecca revealed her inclination for Marks and Spencers because of her early perceptions of the brand's association with "top of the range" and not as much as a non-luxury brand. Her preference for the brand reinstates her social belongingness to the upper-class and higher status.

Furthermore, independent designers are another form of premium non-luxury because they are more expensive than the common non-luxury brands. Some privileged consumers such as Lucy prefers to distinguish her higher social status than her peers by choosing premium non-luxury of independent designers:

> […] And there was lots of like independent designers who were quite reasonable with their clothes. So, I had quite a quirky fashion sense and I kind of bought a lot from independent designers or like boutiques. Do you think that that is kind of a luxury? Because it is like usually more expensive than the usual high street brands but people don't people just presume as well that independent designers are going to be a lot more expensive than non-luxury brands but you're getting something that's usually different to anything else and anybody else. (Lucy)

Overall, for some privileged consumers such as Rebecca and Lucy, it is crucial establishing their higher social status by consuming premium non-luxury instead of

counterfeits or mass fashion brands like Primark which are more popular amongst the working class.

c. Choice of Brand type – A mix of original and counterfeit luxury

Some privileged consumers from the established middle-class feel the need for conspicuous consumption to display their belongingness to the higher strata of society (Trigg, 2001; Veblen, 1997). This need for social belongingness is addressed by symbolic self-completion (Mandel et al., 2017; Wicklund and Gollwitzer, 1981). Besides status signalling using luxury brands, they use a mix of counterfeits and originals. Stöttinger and Penz (2015) have also reported this type of concurrent ownership of both original luxury brands and counterfeits. On being asked about how many counterfeit luxury brands she currently owns, Georgia replied ten of them, along with six original luxury brands. Despite having had a high childhood SES and high adulthood SES, she chooses counterfeits as she finds the good quality counterfeits as good, equivalent substitutes of the original luxury brands (Amaral and Loken, 2016).

> I have ten counterfeits. And I have probably got around six original luxury brands. So, I have got real Prada, I have got real YSL, and I have got real Chloe. And even regards to really expensive make-up, I have used both real luxury make-up and cheap make-up and there's no difference between the two. […] I have got a friend that buys only luxury and I think, she does that to make herself feel better. Well, for me, I am in the middle. I am happy with the counterfeit. (Georgia)

When probed further if she would consider buying non-luxury brands instead of counterfeits, she preferred the counterfeits to suit her need for social belongingness attached with the higher social class and status:

> Non-luxury brands don't excite me as much. I would buy a counterfeit over a high-street [non-luxury] brand unless it was a really nice leather piece from a good quality high-street shop. But for me counterfeit first. [because] There is more status with a counterfeit. You feel more special with a counterfeit. Even though it's fake, you feel more... what's the word... confident... that's the word! You feel more confident. I mean, obviously like, for my everyday bag I have got a rucksack which is just not designer at all. But I have to look for a bag for a wedding, or a special event, or business or work, it would be counterfeit or a real one. (Georgia)

Besides Georgia, James also admitted to buying both original and counterfeit luxury brands. Earlier in the interview, he expressed his love for Burberry trench coats and Michael Kors watches, and also enjoyed the attention and improved social reputation when these luxury brands are recognised in his social groups:

> Probably the Michael Kors watch because I wear that watch a lot and when people see it, they are like, ah, nice watch! Yeah, I'd say probably a good example of a brand improving my social reputation. (James)

However, besides luxury brands, James also admitted to buying counterfeits occasionally and also took pride in it. This shows that some privileged consumers consume a mix of original and counterfeit luxury:

> I take pride in it [buying counterfeits], especially those shoes I got 90 percent cheaper, yeah, they're £30. I got myself a good deal, even though people could tell the difference. (James)

Therefore, it can be argued that in all those scenarios where privileged consumers indulge in the counterfeit luxury brands, treating them as substitutes for the original luxury and/or non-luxury brands, the original brands (both luxury and non-luxury) are impacted.

6.3.2 Protesting consumers

The protesting consumer group were found to avoid and even protest counterfeits as they reflected dissociation from their high social class stature. These consumers tend to purchase only original luxury and non-luxury brands and are strong advocates of authenticity. They are also not much influenced by social approval concerns as discussed in prior sections on CSES and therefore, they are quite independent of the perceptions of social status and social class (Weber, 2018).

> I would never entertain buying counterfeits because they are not up to the standard of say what a Nike would be. They are not authentic. So, they make more cheaply, and I don't know how well they treat their staff that make their products. And it always worries me that they could be dangerous. (Harry)

Since these consumers protest counterfeits, they do not cause any damage to the original luxury and non-luxury brands. Rather, they promote the consumption of authentic brands, and this is in sharp contrast with the passive and penurious consumers morally justifying buying counterfeits (as discussed later). The protesting consumers' group does not fit into the prototypes of the any of the four consumer categories by Han et al. (2010), that is, patricians, parvenus, poseurs, and proletarians because none of these categories display the characteristics of proactively protesting counterfeits which the protesting consumers usually do. Therefore, a direct parallel comparison cannot be drawn in this case. However, they are aligned with the patricians to some degree simply because they belong to the upper-class, at least according to their childhood SES.

Protesting consumers seemed to feel some incompleteness due to their low childhood emotional support from their higher-class families. To fill this incompleteness, some protesting consumers seek material comforts which helps them compensate for the emotional pain they feel due to the lack of family support. Prior research seconds this argument that when people feel they are deprived of societal standards, they tend to compensate for these self-discrepancies by focussing on hedonic stimuli such as food and drinks (Heatherton and Baumeister, 1991). Further supporting this argument, researchers Troisi and Gabriel (2011) found that people consume comfort foods such as mashed potatoes or chicken soup to counter feelings of loneliness. Being preoccupied with food and drink can momentarily reduce feelings of self-discrepancies (Mandel at al., 2017). Although Mandel et al (2017) have grouped these compensatory behaviours as a form of escapism, the present research argues that the protesting consumers seek symbolic self-completion by engaging in materialism as illustrated by the following example of Eva.

Eva's reflection on how she has used food and shopping for luxury brand gadgets such as the Apple MacBook to fill the void created by having no family, speaks to a symbolic form of self-completion. Symbolic self-completion refers to using objects and activities to feel in control and satisfy the inner void associated with experiences of loneliness or loss (Wicklund and Gollwitzer, 1982). It can be seen as a means to honour one's agency and autonomy in light of both real and perceived life conditions beyond our control. This can feel particularly pertinent for those who have experienced marginalisation, abandonment while not dismissing the truth that this behaviour is not always adaptive or productive (Mandel et al., 2017).

> I am definitely trying to fill the void where a loving family wasn't, you know. Like I have no family now. I cut contacts with my parents when I was 25; my dad died when I was 25 and I severed all contacts with my mum. And everyone else just shunned me basically, on my mum's side because they saw her as the victim and me as this awful person you know. They didn't know the horrors that I went through, and they were like her anyway, so they wouldn't have ever known or believed me anyway, I don't know. So, yeah, I think I have had this loneliness, and this hole my whole life; and food is another reason why I am overweight. You know, I did overeat to get... you know, food and shopping, these two things that I did to try and fill that void definitely. You know, treat myself and get myself comforts and yeah, I always feel like I need things, like really intensely, I really need this new Mac, I really need that... and it's constant... when I have got something, I need something else, you know. Yeah, it's hard. I think it's really hard because I did grow up watching my mum blow loads and load of money and my dad would buy Jaguar and things like that, and we always had the really posh

feet as well. So, it's hard for me to live a frugal lifestyle. But the real reason is that yeah, I am overcompensating for the emotional pain that I feel... this space for lack of love definitely, and for the lack of family. Because most people have got at least someone, but I have got no family whatsoever, none. It's hard, you know, especially in the pandemic, I really felt it that I have no one apart from some friends. (Eva)

Although Eva overconsumed food and expensive gadgets, she was not particularly inclined towards fashion apparel. Eva indulged in selective luxury consumption of expensive vegan, organic food from the expensive British supermarket, Waitrose, and expensive Japanese soaking tub to overcompensate for the emotional pain she feels (also discussed in subsection 5.4.2). Compared to her privileged childhood SES, her current adulthood SES is low, however, her consumption choices reflect her rich taste inherited from her upper-class upbringing. Due to these consumption behaviours, Eva revealed that she even had to file for bankruptcy and yet, she indulges in compulsive spending to seek material comforts:

> […] I am a total food snob, and I can't eat value food even though I need to because I am poor, but I love Waitrose food, I love posh, vegan, organic food and things like that. Everything I but like electronics, I need to have the best, you know, like furniture. Like when I bought this flat, I did my bathroom and I got a really, really expensive Japanese soaking tub with jets and lights and stuff. […] I really need to overcompensate. My shopping addictions have got me into loads of trouble, and I have had to go bankrupt and got myself heavily in debt. I am doing it again, I just bought a brand-new MacBook which I can't afford, it's on credit. (Eva)

Eva adopted symbolic self-completion to compensate and overcome emotional pain via selective luxury brands, but another protesting consumer, Emma adopted symbolic self-completion to attain social belongingness via non-luxury brands. Unlike Eva, Emma sought social conformity to her peer group. She chose elementary consumption of popular non-luxury brands such as Adidas and Nike to signal her conformity.

> […] they still have an outgrowing market for Adidas. I think it has expanded a little bit. I think it definitely started big because I have seen people in my group in school wearing the same stuff which I think kind of made me get into it. Yeah, I think it has definitely influenced what I wear today. (Emma)

Thus, it can be argued that protesting consumers adopt the coping strategy of symbolic self-completion to address different SES-EW generated issues (such as emotional pain and social belongingness) via different substitutes of brand types (selective luxury and non-luxury brands). Therefore, they diverge in their consumption types – compensatory, and elementary consumption. Additionally, in some cases, the protesting consumers may also adopt dissociation as a coping strategy (refer table 6.2

for a summary). The dissociation strategy of protesting consumers will be discussed next.

6.3.2.2 *Protesting consumers: Dissociation*

The idea of dissociation gains roots in the works of Steele (1998) related to stereotype threat. According to Steele, when people are confronted by the unwanted negative stereotypes about a social group, they dissociate or disidentify with that social group (Mandel et al., 2017; White and Dahl, 2006). For instance, when women were confronted with the stereotype of them being bad at maths, they dissociated from either the female gender or the domain of maths (Steele, 1998). The present research found similar instances of dissociation from the upper-class by protesting consumers when confronted with conspicuous consumption of luxury fashion brands by the upper-class individuals. In other words, to indicate their rebellion towards the upper-class status signalling, protesting consumers avoided luxury brands in social settings.

This dissociation from looking posh can be illustrated by Eva's dislike for conspicuous, "shallow" consumption in publicly consumed goods. Though Eva adopts compensatory consumption in some product categories related to food, furniture, and electronic gadgets (as discussed in previous section), in other product categories such as apparel, she chooses to dissociate from her social class of "everyone [being] really, really posh". Although she doesn't seem to pinpoint the reason behind her dissociation, it can be noted that most of her 'selective luxury consumption' of food, furniture, and gadgets are consumed in private, while her choice of inconspicuous fashion consumption is mostly publicly consumed such as during work or in a wedding:

> For everything else, I buy expensive everything. I think clothes are the one thing I don't, which is really weird […] so, in all other areas, I am a complete shopaholic and I have to have the best. But for clothes, I am not […] When I am dressed really smart for something, so I think I am not so smart, I am quite casual, so I don't know. I had to give a presentation once and I dressed really smart, and I didn't recognise myself. Or going to a wedding, that was back in where I lived and everyone was really, really, posh and I didn't feel like me either. (Eva)

Later in the interview, Eva disclosed that she is averse to consumerism, specifically conspicuous consumption of brands affiliated to social class and social status. This anti-consumerism approach can be seen in her avoidance of brands or labels in clothing. Ergo, she chooses generic, non-luxury brands for clothing which makes her feel more like herself and dissociate from her upper-class origins.

Similar to Eva, Lisa also admitted feeling out of place when surrounded by her upper-class friends from London. With age, she dissociated from her social status and became less self-conscious of her outfits and the need to never repeat them and also started choosing non-luxury brands, vintage clothes and local brands. Like Eva and Emma, Lisa also protested against using counterfeits.

> I have some of my friends in London. I go and see them sometimes in like, quite lavish areas. So, you know, like in Chelsea, for example. And yeah, I suppose I felt a bit out of place. […] I think probably growing older, not being as self-conscious and not needing to impress. I also don't post on social media much anymore. But I used to in my 20s - obviously we would have one dress for one evening. You would never wear the same outfit twice. And I think that was because it was all on Facebook. You know, you wouldn't be seen in the same dress twice for night out. But now I don't mind. […] I live in the countryside […] I suppose I'm conscious of local brands and things like that. (Lisa)

Overall, protesting consumers are inclined towards selective luxury brands (e.g., by Eva) and non-luxury brands (e.g., by Emma, Lisa) and they protest for counterfeits. Therefore, they do not cause any damage to the original luxury and non-luxury brands by substituting them with counterfeits. Rather, they promote the consumption of authentic brands, and this is in sharp contrast with the passive consumers discussed next.

6.3.3 Passive consumers

Passive consumers were generally found to buy luxury counterfeits and non-luxury brands but almost never bought the original luxury brands. The major cause of this consumption behaviour could be attributed to low childhood and adulthood SES which made them more frugal and value conscious (Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013). Since these group of consumers never purchase the original luxury brands, they consume counterfeit luxury and the non-luxury brands as substitutes (Amaral and Loken, 2016). Therefore, this group of consumers' counterfeit consumption directly impact the non-luxury brands only (and *not* the original luxury brands). This is because the passive and penurious consumers would never purchase the original luxury brands instead of the counterfeit version (OECD, 2017). However, the likelihood of them buying non-luxury brands is very high, indicating that the luxury counterfeits are impacting the non-luxury brands. The following section discusses this in detail.

6.3.3.1 *Passive consumers: Symbolic self-completion*

The passive consumers adopt symbolic self-completion to address four major SES-EW generated needs – novelty seeking, social belongingness, status insecurity, and value consciousness. In doing so, they substitute between counterfeit luxury and non-luxury brands. Each of these will be discussed in the following subsections.

a. Novelty seeking

Several passive consumers tend to adopt symbolic self-completion compensation strategy to fulfil their novelty seeking needs. These consumers have low childhood and adulthood SES and seek some new experiences within the constraints of their economic capital. Therefore, besides their usual elementary consumption of non-luxury brands, they indulge in occasional counterfeit consumption, especially during vacations. The passive consumers in the study were found to justify their counterfeit purchase on account of being abroad. Some of them found the counterfeits as a novelty during their holidays abroad and therefore, they indulge in buying them and even go on to validate the counterfeiters against the "ultra-rich" luxury brands. Thus, these consumers feel highly self-authentic and even morally superior for supporting the poor counterfeit sellers and their livelihoods:

> Yeah, it's [counterfeits] kind of a novelty when you go away because that sort of thing isn't here [in the UK], nobody would do it, so yeah, I would probably still get it. I would still use high-street more, but I would still buy counterfeits yeah. I have bought sort of counterfeit things in the past, usually when I am on holiday, I buy somethings that are obviously counterfeit, so yeah, I buy them. I've been to places like the Canary Islands in Turkey and things like that and they have a lot of counterfeit stuff, it could be anything like Gucci. I bought a fake Rolex; we bought Michael Kors handbags for people I know and stuff like that. I feel fine about it, I mean, it's good for whoever is selling it, that's the way I see it. They are cheap and some of them look decent as well. If anything, they are better than using actual brands, I'd say, yeah. (Greg)

Another participant Mark shares similar beliefs as that of Greg as he compares his counterfeit shirt with a non-luxury brand, Adidas.

> **Mark:** Could have got Adidas shirts, better quality products instead of the £100 AAA shirt, I'd say.
> **Interviewer:** But you still chose to buy the fake shirt?
> **Mark:** Yeah, I was on a holiday, I was in Morocco. I wanted to buy it one time, I wanted to see how people look at you and if they can tell, just to test it out and see what happens.
> **Interviewer:** Would you buy counterfeits again?
> **Mark:** It depends on the quality and getting a better price, last time I got scammed into paying more. Probably next time when I go abroad, I would like to wear it sometimes because you can't afford the original ones, they are so expensive, but it all depends on the quality of it. You should know how much the counterfeit worth is.

Mark agrees that he substituted non-luxury brand Adidas with the purchase of AAA-quality counterfeit luxury brand shirt, despite the quality of the non-luxury brand being better than the counterfeit. Yet, he confessed to buying counterfeits again. This can be attributed to novelty seeking behaviour. He has never bought an original luxury brand and doesn't intend to buy them either but definitely considers the counterfeit luxury and non-luxury as his best substitutes. Therefore, the actual impacted brands by this non-deceptive counterfeit trade are the non-luxury ones (Biancardi et al., 2020; Romani et al., 2012).

Both Mark and Greg would be considered as "Poseurs" according to the classification of consumers (refer figure 5.3) given by Han et al. (2010) who belong to the traditional working class as per the Great British Class Survey (Savage et al., 2013). This research found that these working-class consumers indulge in counterfeit luxury consumption as discussed above. This could be because passive consumers have low adulthood SES and thus, can relate with the struggles of the "little guys" who make a living out of selling counterfeits. And therefore, they perceive that they are supporting other working-class people like themselves by purchasing counterfeits. Nevertheless, they do not consider how their behaviour is impacting the non-luxury brands.

b. Social belongingness

Many passive consumers share the belief of supporting counterfeiters who are the poor people trying to make a living. In doing so, they solidify their social belongingness with other individuals of similar social stature as their own as discussed in the prior section too. In the following excerpts, Olivia reveals her beliefs about helping the livelihoods of counterfeiters:

> Have I used a fake brand in the past? I think I might have. […] I have got a Prada, I have got a Chanel or a Ralph Lauren, whatever the case may be. […] Yeah, sometimes I think people are trying to make a living. I think Turkey is one of the countries, when you go there, you get this stuff and you come back. You think it looks like the real deal but after a while it's really kind of fake it till you make it. (Olivia)

Like Olivia, Greg believes buying counterfeits is helping the counterfeiters against the "ultra-rich companies" and even goes on to justify this behaviour as morally superior. Greg blames the fashion industry as "bad borrowers" of styles, and designs, and this helps him further strengthen his counterfeit consumption to suit his social belongingness to the working-class people and their livelihoods:

Interviewer: Why do you feel counterfeits are better than the actual brands?
Greg: Because I probably see the people who are selling them and they're probably going to make profits and it's useful for their livelihoods, especially in holidays, instead of going to some ultra-rich companies, so morally I think it's better. Yeah, I think I wouldn't do it in the UK but abroad it's a positive thing. I see it as something stimulating people's income that rely on tourism. Also, I think that a lot of fashion brands are bad borrowers anyway, so it doesn't matter which one you pick to some extent.

Interestingly, several researchers have argued about some similar perceived benefits of counterfeits as argued by Olivia and Greg in the above excerpts (Amaral and Loken, 2017; Biancardi et al., 2020; Romani et al., 2012; Wang and Song, 2013; Yoo and Lee, 2009). These benefits are justified with beliefs such as counterfeits generate demand for the original luxury brands, and that buying counterfeits supports the "little guys" who stand against the "big businesses" who demand exorbitant prices for similar products (Wang and Song, 2013). For the passive consumers, counterfeit luxury becomes a symbol of showcasing their loyalty and social belongingness to the industrious working-class. Nevertheless, their purchase of counterfeits affects the non-luxury brands because they substitute the non-luxury with counterfeit luxury. Moreover, since they almost never buy original luxury, the probability of these brands being affected by the counterfeit consumption stands negligible.

c. Status insecurity

While some passive consumers bought counterfeits to strengthen their social belongingness to the working-class, others bought counterfeits to address their status insecurity. They bought counterfeits to momentarily feel like belonging to the upper-class. These passive consumers addressed their status insecurity instigated by upward social comparisons by buying counterfeits to feel good, even though ephemerally. It is evident in the following excerpt from Anne's interview:

It [counterfeit products] felt quite nice actually. I am thinking on the same holiday, I bought a Gucci watch, again not the real one because of the price. But it did feel quite nice for the time I wore them. It didn't last very long, I suppose, just, you know, but using them it did feel quite nice... different. You sort of seemed like you have got this expensive bag and watch on your arm. (Anne)

Using counterfeit luxury creates the illusion of using real luxury like the privileged, upper-class people, even though this illusion is transient and does not resolve status insecurity. For Anne, counterfeit consumption mitigates her status insecurity caused by her low adulthood SES via symbolic self-completion. Similarly, another passive consumer, Leanne also bought counterfeit products in her adulthood because her low

childhood SES did not allow her to experience luxury brands. Earlier in the interview, she admitted trying counterfeits to experience the status associated with those labels.

> I come from quite a normal household […] as a child I was not really surrounded at all by luxury bands or anything. […] So yeah, most of what we bought was sort of high street really, growing up. Always sort of thought, you know, if we can get something bit cheaper somewhere, then it's, it's worth it because you have to think about your future and things like that. […] I may have bought like one or two counterfeit luxury bags a few years ago. (Leanne)

Therefore, status insecurity is a reason for some passive consumers to purchase counterfeits, even if they did so occasionally.

d. Value consciousness due to low adulthood SES

Some passive consumers were consumed by the need to justify the value-for-money aspect which are met by counterfeit luxury as against the extravagant luxury brands (Commuri, 2009; Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013). For instance, Leanne justified her preference for counterfeit luxury replacing non-luxury brands to the craftsmanship of the high-quality counterfeit and yet saving the money from the high prices of original luxury, which she preferred to spend on holidays. She also argued about many people buying counterfeits which is a trend she likes to follow. She comments:

> If I could afford it [original luxury], I still would buy counterfeits. Because I would rather spend the rest of the money going on holidays. I think the counterfeit products now, especially handbags, their copies are so spot on, and they are so good, no, it wouldn't bother me at all. And obviously when I am on my office meeting, […] I don't question anything at all when I pick up the fake one and take it to a business meeting. And it makes me feel good. I don't care if it's fake or not. And I think with the world at the moment, more and more people are going down the counterfeit way anyway. There are more and more websites becoming available. When you go on holiday to the likes of Turkey, Dubai, places like that, they have all got counterfeit markets. And you can get good counterfeits and you get bad ones. If you pay... I think for my counterfeit, I paid a £100 and plus, especially for my Chanel classic and my Prada, I think they were about £300. So, that's quite expensive for a counterfeit but it's a good counterfeit. (Leanne)

Sharing similar viewpoints with that of Leanne, Olivia justifies her counterfeit purchase with the value-for-money argument. She also talks about how the guilt associated with the moral aspects of counterfeit consumption is quite ephemeral and vanishes quickly. Researchers Orth et al. (2019) talk about this behaviour of moral decoupling and how this dissociation from guilt makes purchasing counterfeits easier. Olivia, like Greg, is supportive of the livelihoods of the counterfeit sellers (Amaral and Loken, 2017; Biancardi et al., 2020; Romani et al., 2012; Wang and Song, 2013).

> I think personally, it's a period... the time of guilt, after that it will evaporate. And it's affordable and you are thinking, you know what I can get two or three wears, and if it goes bad, then I only paid £10 for it. People look at it like that as well. It's not the real deal, it's PVC, won't last so long, so... I only paid a tenner for it, so what do you expect. You got that mentality too. (Olivia)

The passive consumers such as Leanne and Olivia are similar to the "Poseurs" coined by Han et al. (2010) as presented in table 6.3 who do not have the wealth and the SES and yet they crave for social status and try to achieve this by seeking counterfeit luxury brands. However, they never intend to replace the counterfeits with the original luxury, but they do substitute non-luxury brands with the luxury counterfeits, thereby, impacting these non-luxury brands.

6.3.4 Penurious consumers

The fourth consumer type, the penurious consumers were found to buy luxury counterfeits and non-luxury brands but almost never bought the original luxury brands, just like the passive consumers. Like passive consumers, the penurious consumers' counterfeit consumption directly impacts the non-luxury brands only (and *not* the luxury brands). This finding substantiating penurious consumers' counterfeit consumption contrasts the avoidance of counterfeits by their equivalent counterparts from Han et al's (2010) proletarian consumers. Han et al. (2010) argued that the proletarians do not bother about status needs and therefore they do not indulge in counterfeit luxury consumption. In contrast to their argument, the present research provides evidence of proletarians, or penurious consumers are also users of counterfeits besides non-luxury brands. To reiterate, the penurious consumers also align with the emergent service workers or the "precariat" according to the Great British Social Class survey analysis (Savage et al., 2013) as discussed in the previous chapter (*see section 5.4.4*). They adopt symbolic self-completion or self-verification as coping strategies to meet their SES-EW generated needs. The next subsections discuss the reasons for these coping strategies.

6.3.4.1 Penurious consumers: Symbolic self-completion

Penurious consumers harbour intergenerational aspirations; they have adverse childhood experiences; and they also undergo status insecurity. Each of these are discussed below. To counter these needs generated by their low SES and low EW in their childhoods and adulthoods, they seek elementary (non-luxury) consumption and/or counterfeit consumption (see table 6.2).

a. Intergenerational aspirations

It was found that some penurious consumers harbour intergenerational aspirations as a compensatory coping mechanism for attaining symbolic self-completion. For instance, a penurious consumer, Victoria hopes to help prevent future generations from suffering the same struggles that she experienced as a child due to her low SES and EW. This finding from the present research can be termed as *intergenerational aspirations*. It can be defined as a coping strategy to address the past generation's economic and social limitations by aspiring to improve the socioeconomic status and lifestyle of the next generation. An example to illustrate this is the way Victoria ensures to provide her children with a better lifestyle than her own childhood experience of getting only "hand-me-downs". This is an innate sense coping mechanism to be protective for the next generation and provide them with better resources (such as premium non-luxury brands) as a way to redeem one's own childhood experiences.

> **Interviewer:** So, do you think your childhood background influences the kind of brands you buy today?
> **Victoria**: I think so, because I never always had quality clothes, I was trying to make up when I was younger, and my children always have nice clothes. They never had hand-me-downs from one child to another. They always had shoes from Clarks and stuff like that, whereas I never had shoes from Clarks. Because we couldn't afford shoes from Clarks in those days, because I was born in 64. My nanna used to buy me sandals, my mom would say, aww that's kind of her. My nanna would buy them for me. I always make sure my children have enough clothes, trying to make up for me never having enough clothes really. They always dress nice.

For Victoria, the premium non-luxury brand, Clarks represents a symbol of high quality and an aspirational brand which she couldn't afford to have as a child with low SES. And therefore, she ensures her children have access to Clarks. Like Victoria, Kerry also illustrates intergenerational aspirations in the following excerpt from her interview wherein she purchases luxury and premium non-luxury brands for her son as a form of symbolic self-completion. In doing so, she compensates for her own adverse childhood experiences:

> I tend to buy things like that [luxury brands] for my son, Armani, Hugo Boss clothing. […] it's weird really, I bought that fake Chanel bag for myself, but won't really buy any counterfeit for my son. I would rather buy him the proper stuff from JD Sports, or shops that he likes. (Kerry)

Although Kerry buys counterfeits for herself, she is determined not to buy any counterfeit luxury for her son. This enables her symbolism of improving the experiences of the next generation in stark contrast with her own childhood and

adulthood socioeconomic status. Like Victoria and Kerry, another penurious consumer, Kevin, revealed the reason behind pursuing intergenerational aspirations for his children:

> Yeah, I think it does and I think it applies to everyone. You are what your parents are really, I think. […] I am one of four and we all work hard because we saw how much our mum and dad did struggle at times, and I think that's because we don't want our children to have the same. And also, I think as well, times are tougher now than ever. People are working harder to make sure the children are going to be okay after 10 or 15 years. You don't know what's going to happen. (Kevin)

The above excerpts related to intergenerational aspirations by penurious consumers provide support to the symbolic self-completion coping strategy to mitigate some elements of low SES and EW issues.

b. Adverse childhood experiences

An interesting deviation from Victoria's and Kerry's austerity as an consumer by displaying restraint and self-sacrifice by harbouring intergenerational aspirations for their children, Harper revealed growing into an overconsuming materialistic consumer as a compensatory mechanism to make up for her adverse childhood. This can be largely attributed to flaunting supposed opulence, thus seeking social approval as she asserts "not being seen in anything twice", though she soon realised this flamboyance as unfeasible and unsustainable in the long run and resorted to a more value conscious consumption. Nevertheless, she always buys non-luxury brands.

> Yeah, so I think because I was so materialistic at the beginning when I earned my money, I wasted so much money on clothes that I hardly ever wore. And if I didn't fit into them, I hardly ever retuned them because I just wanted to have them, you know, to show them off. And I think after a while, after a few years, I started to realise that I was wasting so much money and now it has made me smarter. So, I am happy now to wear things over and over and over again, whereas before I wouldn't be seen in anything twice, but now I am happy to. And I prefer to buy things that are long-lasting that you can wear on many different occasions because then I like to have a versatile wardrobe really. So, I think it made me materialistic at the beginning and then it made me smarter. (Harper)

Kerry's consumption pattern is a conscious avoidance of cheap brands and a preference for the "better things in life". This behaviour contrasts with that of Brad's value conscious choice of cheaper brands (will be discussed in the next section), both having had low childhood SES and a likewise low adulthood SES, yet Kerry attempts to dissociate herself with her adverse childhood experiences and compensate them with expensive holidays and indulgence in premium non-luxury brands.

> I think it does, yeah, because I appreciate really nice things, I have been on some really expensive holidays... I went to the Walt Disney world, they are very, very expensive,

been there six times! Yeah, I always pay for the better things in life. I don't choose cheap brands, I always buy nicer brands, things that are nice. (Kerry)

Thus, Harper's materialistic overconsumption and Kerry's search for better life experiences to cope with their SES-EW generated issues and adverse childhood experiences are extensions of symbolic self-completion.

c. Status insecurity

Some penurious consumers buy counterfeit luxury to mitigate status insecurity caused by their low SES-EW factors. Counterfeits serve as a symbol of triumphing their upward social comparisons (like the passive consumers dealing with status insecurity with counterfeit consumption). In the following excerpt from Victoria's interview, she chose counterfeit luxury brands than non-luxury so that she could trick people into thinking that she was carrying a real Gucci handbag. Although she earlier explained about the discomfort she felt with one of the counterfeit brands she had used, this did not hinder her choice for counterfeit luxury. This behaviour can be attributed to her low childhood and adulthood SES and the status insecurity which it generates:

> [I prefer] Fake luxury […] because you could think, you are wearing a Gucci dress and you are not really, or you are carrying a Gucci handbag and you are not really. (Victoria)

Like Victoria, Kerry reveals her inner thought process for choosing counterfeits and how they enable her deception to create the illusion of being rich:

> For my everyday wear, I will pick high-street when it comes to dresses, bodysuits, and everything. But when it comes to things like bags, I pick fake luxury brands and you can just upscale your outfit. But again, a high street brand could upscale your outfit too, but I feel like because it is luxury logo, it is unfortunate that this is the way the society has made it, yeah, you'd want to have that bag and it makes you feel rich, and you could have a dress with it which is £2, just for example, but nobody would notice the £2 dress because when you put on the fake Chanel bag, it just makes the outfit very rich. (Kerry)

Both Victoria and Kerry substitute non-luxury brands with counterfeit luxury to reduce their status insecurity of their low social class and low social status. The luxury brand logo on their fake Gucci and Chanel handbags deceptively conceals their status insecurity, at least transiently. Therefore, the counterfeit luxury brands symbolically provide a sense of completion or attainment of higher social status. Furthermore, since these penurious consumers almost never buy luxury brands, their counterfeit consumption affects their usual brand choice of non-luxury.

<u>*6.3.4.2 Self-verification*</u>

As discussed in conceptual framework chapter, self-verification theory asserts that individuals desire others to view them as they view themselves, and to ensure this they take active steps to confirm that others perceive them in ways that mirrors their stable self-views (Swann et al., 1989; Swann, 2012). They pursue self-verification even if their self-views are negative (Swann, 2012). Unlike symbolic self-completion which is used to improve one's perceived social class and status, self-verification enables low SES consumers to maintain their social belongingness to their low social status. For example, low SES may choose everyday, non-luxury brands to feel safe and maintain status quo. This ascertains their status insecurity by anchoring to their stable self-views as a low SES consumer.

As briefly discussed in the previous chapter (see section 5.4.4) on the consumption of penurious consumers, Brad's poor childhood in one of the poorest boroughs in the UK made him conscious of wearing premium non-luxury brands even with a higher adulthood SES as a software programmer:

> Yeah, I experience that [feeling like an inauthentic person] sometimes as well, because when I buy a certain item that is like authentic [premium non-luxury brand], I feel that I shouldn't be wearing it because of where I come from. (Brad)

Therefore, to feel more like himself, aligning with his self-view as a poor, low status individual, Brad usually purchases mass fashion, non-luxury brands such as Primark. He asserts that he feels comfortable and more like himself using Primark. He doesn't care about buying luxury and counterfeit luxury brands. This is a classic example of self-verification coping strategy (Mandel et al., 2017). This finding finds support in recent work by Stuppy et al (2020) who suggests that consumers with low self-esteem prefer inferior products to self-verify a sense of familiarity and stability.

> No, I care about being authentic [luxury brands] and I don't prefer counterfeit items. I have never bought counterfeit goods ever. When I buy non-luxury brands, I feel like I am being myself. (Brad)

Talking about his low SES background, Brad had described his early childhood memories as follows:

> I grew up in London but actually I was in a very poor part of London, called tower hamlets. It's one of the poorest boroughs in the UK. So, I dint grow up well, like I dint grow up rich. I went to primary state school. When I was a child, fashion was quite important, so if children were wearing some brand, people were like wow, he must be so rich. And for me, I always wanted to wear those items, but I couldn't. I couldn't afford it because I came from a poor household.

Echoing Brad's preference for non-luxury brands, Harper confesses that even if finding good quality products can be challenging, she still chooses non-luxury brands to align with her adulthood SES. Though Harper's brand choice is more associated with frugality, there is some element of seeking refuge and self-verification in the familiarity of accessible and affordable brands:

> I would pick high-street brands because if you look hard enough, you would find good quality pieces that are affordable. It takes a lot more looking, but you can find them. And I think that for most people, they can't support themselves and buy luxury brands. So, I do like that there are high street options available, and you know, they are just in the city centre so I could just walk into one or I can just afford them. So, that's why I prefer them. (Harper)

Likewise, Kerry expresses feeling safe and a sense of security in choosing non-luxury brands compared to luxury or their counterfeits:

> I would choose high-street brand, the reason being its good quality, you can take it back if you don't like it or if you find it doesn't suit you. I think with counterfeits, you wouldn't be able to take them back anyway. And with an expensive, prestigious, luxury brand, I think they'd struggle to take something back because I think they would do anything in their power to not to let you return that product because you know, it's expensive and they wouldn't be able to sell it. So, I prefer to stick to high-street because it's safe, looks good, it's reasonably priced, erm... I could take it back if I wanted to, to the shop.

Some penurious consumers justified their self-verification using non-luxury brands by asserting that they do not need to wear luxury brands because the status attached with luxury will not fetch them any special treatment from others, owing to their actual low SES:

> No, no, I never bought [luxury brands]. But I bought fake version of one shirt, I've got like a fake. I don't have to say the name of it. I bought a premium brand, one shirt that's fake, other than that I don't have any. I don't really buy high end, designer brands. It's not because of not affording it, it's like, if you're not rich and famous and you go out wearing those clothes, no one's going to treat you differently. But of you are rich and famous, you've got a reputation to maintain, you have to dress to impress. If you are a normal person, walking on the street, no one cares what you are wearing. (Kevin)

Overall, many penurious consumers adopt self-verification strategy, even if unknowingly and subconsciously, thus affirming their low social class and social status to feel a sense of stability and familiarity.

6.4 Summary

This chapter provided detailed discussions around the impact of luxury counterfeits on non-luxury brands, besides the original luxury brands alone (Amaral and Loken, 2016; OECD, 2017), with comparisons drawn from the four consumer categories by Han et al. (2010) and the four types of consumers identified based on childhood and adulthood Socioeconomic Status (SES) and Emotional Wellbeing (EW) from the previous finding chapter. This chapter explored and analysed the various coping strategies of variety-seeking, symbolic self-completion, dissociation, and self-verification as compensatory consumer behaviours to mitigate participants respective SES-EW generated issues.

Chapter 7
Analysis and Research:
Data triangulation

7.1 Introduction

This chapter synthesises the findings from the netnographic data analysis and compares them with the findings discussed in the last two chapters derived from qualitative interviews. To recall, the netnographic data was analysed using thematic content analysis (Kozinets, 2018; Langer and Beckman, 2005; Shaw, 2020) as discussed in the methodology chapter. The first section of this chapter discusses the effect of childhood and adulthood SES effect on consumers' preferences while choosing among alternatives of counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands. The first section is synchronised with chapter five of the thesis in terms of studying socioeconomic status. Therefore, it compares the netnography findings with the qualitative data analysis discussed in chapter five and draws parallels between the two datasets. The second section aligns with chapter six, that is, brand substitution. It analyses the netnography data pertaining to brand substitution and compares each section with the qualitative data analysis discussed in chapter six.

7.2 Effect of childhood and adulthood SES

The examined discussion about how childhood SES affects consumers choice among alternatives of counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands, was started by a Reddit user who asked: "Do rich people buy fakes?" (Retrieved on 4th March 2022) and another user who asked: "Women who don't spend money on luxury clothes, how do you feel about yourself?" (Retrieved on 6th March 2022). These two posts and the comments they garnered can be categorised as two major groups based on high and low SES: Privileged consumers and Penurious consumers respectively (figure 7.1). This classification has been done to keep the findings in line with the categories from qualitative interviews data analysis. The other two consumer groups from interview data analysis, *viz.* the protesting and passive consumers, cannot be categorised because they involved emotional wellbeing aspects along with SES which is difficult to determine from these comments. Discussing emotional wellbeing was easily incorporated in detailed, in-depth interviews, however, identifying it within a limited space of comments Reddit posts is difficult and usually absent. Therefore, this dataset identified only privileged and penurious consumers based on their high and low SES respectively.

Penurious consumers can be further categorised into three sub-groups with respect to their consumption habits: non-luxury consumption, thrift shopping and compensatory consumption.

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                    ┌─────────────┐
                    │  Childhood  │
                    │  SES effect │
                    └──────┬──────┘
             ┌─────────────┴─────────────┐
      ┌──────────────┐            ┌──────────────┐
      │  Privileged  │            │  Penurious   │
      │  consumers   │            │  consumers   │
      └──────────────┘            └──────┬───────┘
                        ┌────────────────┼────────────────┐
                ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐
                │  Non-luxury  │ │    Thrift    │ │ Compensatory │
                │  consumption │ │   shopping   │ │  consumption │
                └──────────────┘ └──────────────┘ └──────────────┘
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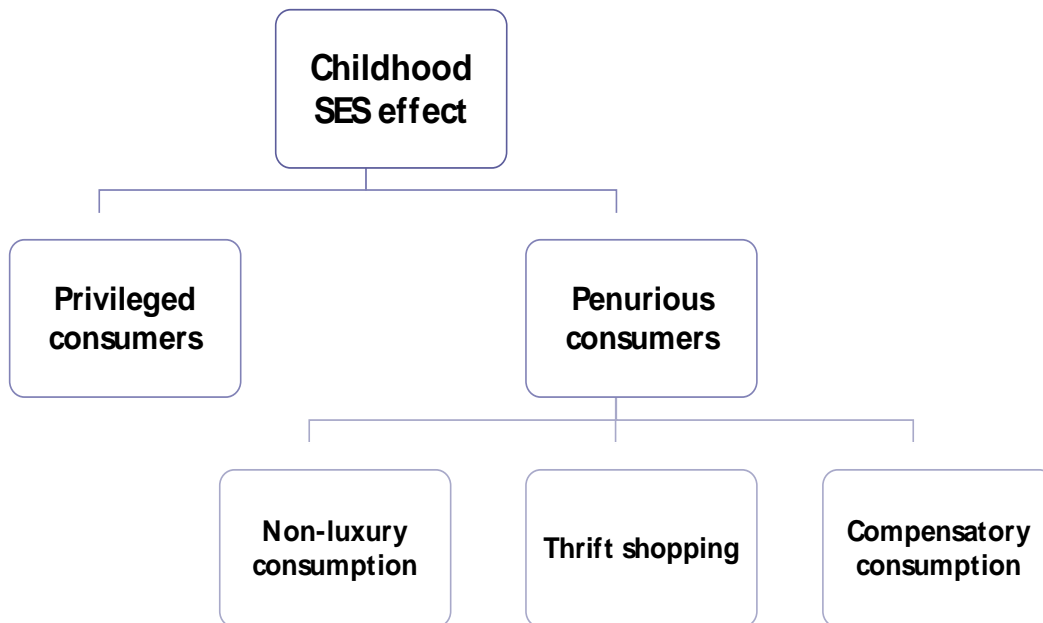
Figure 7.1 Childhood and adulthood SES effect on brand choice - Netnography
(Source: Author)

7.2.1 Privileged consumers

The Reddit post asking, "Do rich people buy fakes?" garnered 25 comments, some of which have been mentioned below. Most of these comments are by seemingly high SES, privileged consumers or about their friends or relatives who are wealthy and their consumption of luxury counterfeits. These users address the luxury counterfeits as replicas or reps in short, but they mean counterfeits because these Reddit communities deal with the sale of counterfeit luxury brands bearing original brand logo, and *reps* is more of a popular internet lingo for counterfeits. They admittedly buy counterfeit luxury, or a mix of original and counterfeit luxury brands as mentioned by the following user in their comment:

> "I'd say I'm pretty well off (or my family is). I go to one of the top boarding schools in England which costs my parents £40,000 a year. I have my fair share of retail clothes from Gucci to Primark (not everyone has to be designer). I spend most of free time in Selfridges, Harrods etc. and London having fancy food and buying clothes etc. And I can 100% confirm that I own more reps than I do real clothes. No one ever calls me out at school or at restaurants etc because everyone assumes that because everyone

is so rich that no one would ever need to buy fakes. I'd say there is less chance of being called out at a school or place where everyone is rich than elsewhere as people just assume it is legit."

This abovementioned comment includes several evidence of belonging to the British upper-class: first, by their expensive boarding school costs of £40,000 every year; second, their consumption of a wide assortment of brands, ranging from popular luxury brands such as Gucci to mass fashion, non-luxury brands such as Primark; third, by their frequent visits to the luxury, upscale department stores in London such as Selfridges and Harrods. Most researchers would classify this type of individual with high SES as a consumer of luxury brands (Han et al., 2010; Wall & Large, 2010) and perhaps being a concurrent owner of both luxury and counterfeits (Stottinger & Penz, 2015) however, tend to underestimate the extent of their co-ownership of both luxury and counterfeits. This fact of consuming more counterfeits than the original luxury seems unlikely as the user himself confesses that "everyone assumes that because everyone is so rich that no one would ever need to buy fakes". This is a significant finding because it illustrates the extent to which privileged consumers knowingly substitute the original luxury with the non-deceptive counterfeits sold in the secondary markets. Similarly, there are many users admitting this as demonstrated by their comments in this section. For example, the following comment by another Reddit user provides an account of their privileged friend's excessive consumption of counterfeits:

> "I have a rich close family friend (paid for her 2-million-dollar house in cash) and I know she owns replicas even though she won't admit it. Her Prada and Louis look awful even compared to my OC Neverfull."

This seems to be a common theme across all the comments about purchasing counterfeits purposefully despite having the financial means to afford the original luxury brands and in many cases, they do own a mix of both originals and counterfeit luxury brands. This behaviour is a classic example of concurrent ownership of both counterfeits and originals by the wealthy, privileged consumers which has been explored by other researchers too (Orth et al., 2019; Stottinger and Penz, 2015). The next Reddit user detailed her account of her sorority sisters buying counterfeits despite their high SES. They seemed to have bought very high-quality counterfeits considering their superior quality and high prices of $2000 (£1606) instead of the original luxury brand costing $3000 (£2409) on the same handbag. The comment also reveals the popularity of Chinese instant messaging services such as "WeChat" as a platform for purchasing these counterfeit items, making it easily accessible for these consumers:

"My sorority sisters were insanely rich international students, and they bought a mix of real and fake. One of them bought a Chanel purse off a random lady in the canals of Venice and it was so supple and soft and heavy and luxurious when I felt it! I didn't know it was fake at the time but looking back, I don't think Chanel does business in Venice alleyways. She said she bought it for $700. My other sorority sisters have a "friend" on WeChat who gets them discounts on various brands...they pay a "discounted price" on these bags. $2000 instead of $3000+ on a Celine bag. But I don't think they know that these bags are fake...lol. I tried telling them!"

The comment claims that their purchase could have been a case of deceptive counterfeit purchase where the buyers seemed too naïve to have known that they were buying fakes. However, this claim is debatable because of the source of their purchases being Venice alleyways and WeChat. And as the user admits that it is an obvious clue of non-deceptive counterfeits because prestigious luxury brands like Chanel would not sell their products using these platforms.

In a similar vein, the following two Reddit users also confess having known wealthy friends, family, and relatives brazenly buying counterfeits. Other times they themselves have indulged in the counterfeit purchase behaviour:

"Yes, I have filthy rich relatives and they buy reps. My dad is an entrepreneur and I too buy replicas; rich people literally stay rich by being cheap."

"I have family friends that are practically millionaires, and they still buy fake Uggs and Coach bags from the flea market, Lol! I remember when I was in middle school, they got me a fake Jimmy Choo bag and I loved it so much."

The abovementioned comments represent privileged consumers' reactions of buying counterfeits for fun and some element of pride in saving money by buying the counterfeits as a fraction of the price of the original luxury brands. They emanate a sense of satisfaction and thrill in their counterfeit consumption. In asserting that "rich people literally stay rich by being cheap", these counterfeit consumers are justifying their purchase of counterfeits to maintain their wealth and status. In all these comments, the users do not seem inclined to buy non-luxury brands instead of counterfeits, given their reasonings as discussed. For instance, if they are overcome by the urge to stay rich by saving money, they can buy every day, non-luxury brands too. Instead, they justify buying counterfeits because they seem attached to the status of the luxury brand image, e.g., fake Uggs, fake Jimmy Choo, etc. Therefore, this demonstrates that they are not driven by saving money by buying non-luxury, but by their association with the luxury brand, despite using counterfeit versions. In all these scenarios, they impact the original luxury brands because these privileged consumers possess the financial capital to buy the original luxury brands and sometimes, they do

buy the originals. A few more comments by three different Reddit users further substantiate this behaviour:

> "Yes. I have a friend whose husband is very, very wealthy. She buys a mix of rep and authentic. More authentic though."

> "Haha yes! I have a family member whose net worth is at least $6M and she buys reps! She actually taught me how to wear rep jewellery and how to pair them with a real piece, etc."

Another Reddit user commented as follows:

> "I don't see why not. Many (not all) rich people are rich because they're frugal. When I hit the lottery, I'm booking a trip to China LOL."

All the above comments are confessions of counterfeit luxury consumers with high SES who do not shy away from using them though the reason is not evidently clear in every case, but some of them seem to be purchasing counterfeits to save money (staying frugal), while others for fun. Nevertheless, their behaviour impacts the original luxury brands due to their usual substitution of an original with a counterfeit. And in most cases discussed in this section, they do not seem to buy non-luxury brands.

Comparison with interview data

The privileged consumers with high SES from both the data sets have admitted to buying counterfeit luxury and even seemingly taking pride in doing so. This finding is in contrast with that of Han et al. (2010) as shown in figure 6.3 in the previous chapter who argue that the "patricians" with high SES indulge in original luxury brands with subtle differences without the need to display the logo because they have no desire for status. The underlying reasons for doing this seems different in each data set. The participants in the qualitative interviews bought counterfeit luxury for aesthetics and to assert their social belongingness to the upper-class, while the Reddit users seem to argue that they remain rich by being frugal and mixing original counterfeits with the counterfeit versions. For instance, analysing privileged consumers' interviews in section 6.3.1.2 (c), Georgia described her collection of a mix of ten counterfeits and six original luxury handbags with pride. Her motivation seemed to originate from her need to reinforce her social belongingness to the wealthy upper-class by buying counterfeits and luxury but avoiding non-luxury brands. She admitted that non-luxury brands did not excite her as much as a counterfeit.

7.2.2 Penurious consumers

The Reddit post asking, "Women who don't spend money on luxury clothes, how do you feel about yourself?" garnered 231 comments, some of which have been mentioned below. This post was addressed to women and excluded men, but it had the most relevance (compared to other similar Reddit posts) to the first research question related to the influence of SES on brand consumption choices. Other posts were searched which asked similar questions but included both men and women, however, none were included because they were not closely related to the current research question. This is a limitation using netnographic data from Reddit, which was addressed by complementing data from the qualitative interviews. For example, another post asked, "If you were rich, would you still buy reps?" but it attracted comments from Reddit users who justified counterfeits irrespective of the SES. This would not be aligned with the research question of the current study, that is, to determine the effect of SES on consumers' brand preferences among counterfeits, original luxury, and non-luxury brands. Similarly, other Reddit posts were not particularly relevant to the study. For instance, a Reddit post asking "Why do poor people waste money on luxury goods?" However, this post attracted comments from individuals with low SES who were compulsive shoppers, and this started a criticism by Reddit users and they debated on the discussion forum regarding blame, shame, shopping out of panic, etc. Therefore, none of these posts, among other searches were deemed suitable to be included in this study.

Consequently, only the first post was included in the study which asked, "Women who don't spend money on luxury clothes, how do you feel about yourself?" Most of the comments to this post were by poor consumers with low childhood and adulthood SES, as evident in their comments where they discuss their consumption habits. Most of these comments – as presented in the next subsections in detail – started with statements such as "I grew up poor", "I grew up frugal", or "I grew up thrifting". Therefore, these Reddit users were classified as penurious consumers. They can be broadly categorised into three groups with respect to their consumption habits: non-luxury consumption, thrift shopping and compensatory consumption.

7.2.2.1 *Non-luxury consumption*

Most of the penurious consumers admit buying non-luxury brands and avoiding luxury brands due to low SES. They often start their comments with their childhood SES and

having grown up poor with fewer means to meet basic needs. This places more significance on childhood SES than adulthood SES as found by several researchers (Chen, 2004; Mittal and Griskevicius, 2016; Mittal et al. 2015; Roux and Goldsmith, 2014). Their consumption behaviour seems influenced by their childhood backgrounds to a large extent as evident in the following comments:

> "I grew up poor. Not ghetto poor (we had a decent house in the country and always good meals), but I remember at age 15 saving coins so I could buy a $7 polo shirt from Meijer's (a grocery store that also sold some clothes); I thought it was fancy. One winter I wore my mom's shoes because I didn't have any for church. So, coming from that background, it's always fascinating to me to read what other women spend on clothes. I appreciate good quality items, but I could never spend that kind of money. In some ways it makes me feel inferior, or like a child. Spending more on a garment makes me feel so grown up. But it's just clothes, so I don't let it worry me that much. Different lifestyles require different things, and my lifestyle doesn't require a Burberry coat."

This Reddit user shared their struggle to purchase items from basic non-luxury brands. Their inability to purchase more expensive brands in their adulthood is a reminder of their low childhood SES and the resulting low self-esteem as expressed in the statement that "it makes me feel inferior, or like a child". This finding is in line with the research by Whelan and Hingston (2018) who found that everyday, non-luxury brands – and not luxury brands – are more likely to threaten the self-esteem of consumers with low childhood SES. Most penurious consumers do not consider luxury brands as an option. A second Reddit user commented as follows:

> "I grew up frugal and don't feel the need to compete with anyone over luxury clothes (to be honest my social circle doesn't care about luxury or fashion at all)."

Interestingly, the above users seem to justify their avoidance of luxury brands by mentioning lifestyle choices and social reference groups respectively, while the underlying cause is the low adulthood SES. They mostly consume non-luxury brands. Further substantiating this viewpoint, the following user compares their adulthood SES with childhood SES. They admit that even though their adulthood SES is higher than the childhood SES, they are unable to indulge in more expensive brands due to the psychological barrier instilled in their mind from an early age about being value conscious (Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2005) by debating if "something was worth it":

> "I grew up in a pretty frugal family, and looking back, I think we were often overly frugal, but my parents never felt secure in their jobs. Throughout grad school and even early years at a well-paying job, I stayed frugal and always had my mom's voice in the back of my head asking if something was worth it. What I've found is that as I've become more financially secure, I've started being able to buy items that I previously loved but

completely dismissed based on the high price for a single item. I bought a lot of cheaper alternatives and found that they didn't really serve the same purpose. Now I've loosened up and allow myself to consider things that used to seem extremely pricey (like coats), and sometimes buy them when they're on sale and I'm pretty confident I will use it a ton."

The above comment reflects that consumers' product evaluations are deeply influenced by their childhood upbringing and the values infused by their parents. Customarily, consumers with low SES are more influenced by the utilitarian aspects of brands, e.g., quality and function, rather than approval seeking motive (Snyder and Debono, 1985). This utilitarian and value conscious mindsets seem to take roots due to resource scarcity and low SES during childhoods (Park et al., 2020). And more often than not, the transition of this mindset during adulthood takes time as evident in the above comment as the user acknowledges that they "completely dismissed [buying items] based on the high price for a single item" despite transitioning to greater financial security as an adult.

Furthermore, the following Reddit user commented that although luxury brands indicate one's taste, social class, and lifestyle, it is more important to consider if the luxury brands are a suitable fit to one's lifestyle:

"I feel like these conversations are always about socioeconomic class. The idea of luxury not only indicates price but also the idea of taste, class, and lifestyle. I don't think it's a bad discussion to have, but it's loaded. It's not just about financial ability to afford a $1k purse, but it's also about what that item signifies about your lifestyle, spending habits, and earning ability. I think it's a good thing to think through your own consumer habits and how it fits your lifestyle, but I feel like this idea of buying "luxury" or not isn't the most productive way to discuss it."

It is an interesting argument which diminishes the salience of luxury consumption as an indicator of social class or social status. This argument finds support in the research by Geiger-Oneto et al. (2013) who found that some consumers do not consider social implications of goods and therefore, they reject the luxury brand label of original and counterfeit luxury. Using nested logit model, the researchers found that these consumers have better claims to status by choosing non-luxury brands instead of the dichotomous choices of luxury and their counterfeits which have been a general consensus among prior researchers.

Other penurious consumers set their own meaning of luxury by considering premium non-luxury brands as luxury. For example, the following Reddit user considers premium non-luxury brands such as Ted Baker, AllSaints, etc. as luxury, deviating from the general definition of luxury brands:

> "I will sometimes buy what I consider luxury (Ted Baker, Stuart Weitzman, AllSaints, Mackage), but maybe not in other definitions of luxury/designer (Gucci, Chanel, Hermes)."

Overall, the penurious consumers provide ample evidence of predominantly preferring non-luxury brands as opposed to luxury brands due to low childhood and adulthood SES and resource scarcity (Hamilton et al., 2019; Park et al., 2020).

Comparison with interview data

Most of the penurious consumers from the qualitative interviews have shared similar adverse childhood experiences and often bought non-luxury brands, some of them admitted consuming counterfeit luxury brands as well. However, the penurious Reddit consumers did not mention counterfeit consumption in any of the comments discussed in this section. This could be because the discussion was more about experiences about unable to afford luxury and not so much about buying counterfeits, unlike some Reddit posts which are exclusively about counterfeits). Nevertheless, unsurprisingly, both data sets reflected higher consumption of non-luxury brands and avoidance of luxury brands by penurious consumers.

7.2.2.2 Thrift shopping

Thrift shopping means buying second-hand products from thrift stores or charity shops (Bardhi and Arnould, 2005). Most of the penurious consumers talked about growing up purchasing from thrift shops and some of them talk about being able to experience a taste of luxury brands only because they were available in the thrift shops. The following Reddit user equates thrift shopping with luxury of time due to the vast amounts of time it takes to find a good piece of luxury item in a thrift shop. Therefore, the experience feels like a hunt for a good bargain by a smart shopper. This finding resembles the motivations of a smart shopper seeking a counterfeit purchase (Eisend et al., 2017) and psychological motivation of "thrill of the hunt" fuelling consumer demand for counterfeits (Bian et al., 2016). Except in this case, the thrill of the hunt is for a second-hand luxury brand hiding in a thrift shop:

> "I only buy luxury brands in thrift shops. But thrifting itself is a luxury, timewise, and I know not everyone can swing it. I don't think I feel any kind of way about others' choices in real life, though sometimes I see photos of celebrities with gorgeous things like Birkin bags and think 'Wow, it would really be something to have money to spend on that kind of stuff' but honestly, I would probably spend that money, if I had it, on travel or a project car."

It is fascinating to note that for many penurious consumers thrift shopping is often a quest for the best options by thrift shopping which they describe as a thrilling experience. Bardhi (2003) explored these hedonic aspects of thrift shopping beyond utilitarian and frugality aspects and found that consumers derive pleasure from thrift shopping. The researcher argues that experiential benefits of thrifting challenge the limited perspective of saving money and frugality as the primary reason for thrift shopping. The following Reddit user commented about this feeling of thrill:

> "I honestly get so much joy from thrifting. There is some 'necessity' to it obviously, but it is such a fun activity too. There is a hunt, and at the end of it you may get a gem. It honestly has made my wardrobe so much more interesting than if I could just drop a ton of money on my ideal wardrobe. Plus, I have pieces that I would not be able to afford or perhaps would never splurge on even if I could afford them (Gaultier dress, Mugler jumpsuit, knee-high Ferragamo boots, etc. etc.) padded with good quality basics like J. Crew or Madewell bought for a tenth of the sale price."

Likewise, another user expressed their love for thrifting due to the sheer variety of styles and designs of brands available in thrift stores. Though the user mentions both their childhood and adulthood SES being very low, a sense of accomplishment is palpable in gaining access to some handmade pieces through thrift shopping:

> "I'm now at the point where I can afford to buy a few $100 pieces from my workplace, but I spent many years here being a very poor student, and also grew up very poor. I love thrifting. You can find so much more variety in style than in mall stores, and I have so many pieces I've thrifted that were probably hand made."

Unlike above comments attributing thrift shopping to hedonic experiences, the following Reddit user confesses shopping from thrift stores purely due to frugality caused by low adulthood SES:

> "I grew up thrifting because my family was pretty broke. I'm still thrifting because I'm pretty broke. Would it be nice to have some more expensive items? Yeah, sure. But that's not a good idea for me right now, so I don't waste my time pining over it."

To sum up, penurious consumers seek luxury brands or premium quality brands through thrift shopping, either for utilitarian reasons, or more often for hedonic experiences.

Comparison with interview data

This interesting consumer behaviour of thrift shopping was found in qualitative interviews as well wherein participants shared their experiences of growing up

purchasing from thrift stores/ charity shops. Like the Reddit users, the interview participants also recollected numerous times when thrifting is not only a necessity but becomes a hobby and 'hunt' for the luxury brands or creative items. This finding is consistent across both datasets.

7.2.2.3 Compensatory consumption

Consuming brands and experiences in adulthood as a means to compensate for the lost materialistic desires during childhood can be termed as compensatory consumption (Rucker and Galinsky, 2008). The desire to fulfil the unsatisfied desires from childhood can be seen in the following comments:

> "I think the connection between growing up never having anything that fit good or was what you actually wanted and desiring "nice" things as an adult (whatever that means to that person) cannot be underestimated. I was always a tall, skinny kid and never had pants or shirts long enough, and now as an adult I will definitely pay extra for super long pants or super long sleeves. I definitely don't need a ton of clothes, and I don't have a ton of clothes, but I really want each piece I have to be just so. I'm probably overcompensating for not having what I wanted as a kid, but I don't spend above my means and I'm careful with my choices, so I feel pretty ok about it."

The above user emphasises on the need to have the exact fit of clothes which they did not have as a child and thinks it is a way of overcompensating for the unfulfilled basic needs of childhood. Similarly, the following Reddit user shared their sister's need for finer things in life as opposed to their own behaviour of remaining immune from materialistic gains despite both having had a low childhood SES:

> "As someone who clawed their way out of poverty and can now afford better things, my self-esteem isn't influenced by the materials I put on my body. However, this is just me; my sister, who is in the same boat, is the opposite – she's always been very self-conscious about how poor she looked and now surrounds herself with the finest things to compensate for youth."

Likewise, the following user shared her compensatory mechanism by becoming a fashionable person and buying luxury brands at a bargain as a means to compensate for her poor childhood when she was teased in school for wearing second-hand clothes. Researchers Rucker and Galinsky (2008) associate this state of powerlessness with compensatory consumption:

> "I grew up 'military poor'. My parents were always spending money on the right things. I got made fun of throughout elementary school for shopping at thrift stores, but it's made me a more fashionable person. I've made flipping clothes a hobby and while I don't shell out insane amounts of money for clothing, I buy quality things, but never pay retail.
> Recent "expensive" purchases have been:
> • $200 Chanel Ballet Flats that retailed for over $850.

- This medium Christian Dior, Diorissimo bag for $245, that retailed for $4,600.
- my Barbour Beadnell Jacket that I purchased off of ebay for ~$320.
- These Frye Boots I got for $95 at a consignment shop.
- Gold Prada Ballet Flats for $30 in excellent condition from Goodwill"

All these examples provide support for the compensatory consumption behaviour found in several adults with a low childhood SES background.

Comparison with interview data

This behaviour of compensatory consumption has been a common theme across qualitative data wherein participants shared their experiences of compensating for emotional pain by consuming more, seeking comfort in luxury consumption despite being in debt, or by compensating for their poor childhoods by buying reputable brands for their children. Similar compensatory consumption behaviour has been shared by these Reddit users which further validates the findings of the first study. Adverse childhood experiences seem to prepare a breeding ground for harbouring feelings of inadequacy and insecurity which cultivates into adulthood as compensatory consumption to counterbalance for the lost time and materialistic desires.

7.3 Brand Substitution

This section explores how the participants chose among the alternatives of counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands. This section aligns with chapter six in terms of analysing brand substitution but by using data from Netnography. The research question about how consumers choose between alternatives of luxury counterfeits, original luxury, and non-luxury brands, was understood by examining the discussion started by a Reddit user who asked: "Do you think reps are better than fast fashion?" (Retrieved on 26th May 2022) and another user who asked: "Retail vs Reps – Why It Really Doesn't Matter" (Retrieved on 2nd June 2022). Most consumers of counterfeit luxury brands seemed to compare them with non-luxury brands and discussed about why they chose counterfeits over non-luxury brands. The main reason they gave was the lower price of counterfeits, superior quality, and designs of the counterfeits, compared to that of non-luxury brands. These emerging themes are discussed below:

7.3.1 Price factor

Most comments were predominantly about the huge price difference between the counterfeits and the original luxury or non-luxury brands. This reflects a sense of value consciousness to derive maximum value for the price paid (Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2005), as revealed in the following comments by two separate Reddit users:

> "I feel you. As someone who is married, has kids, a job, and just doesn't care enough to cop shoes the very minute they drop, Reps are a great alternative for me. I just got into the game, but I don't feel no ways about it. If I ever score some retails, I'll just flip them anyway."

> "Facts I'm in the same boat everything above you mentioned is the reason I don't cop retail like I use to, and reps are the best money saving option with better quality."

The most primary reason for choosing counterfeits (or reps as the Reddit communities call them) over the original luxury brands is the utilitarian aspects of getting maximum value-for-money. The money-saving aspect serves as the perfect excuse for substituting luxury brands with counterfeits. The low-price factor becomes an easy justification for choosing the counterfeit:

> "PREACH! I'd rather pay $80-150 for a rep that looks close to retail or pay the retail price. Would never pay $300+ for a pair of shoes. Don't have the means to do that and to be honest I think it's ridiculous to spend that much."

The above comment demonstrates that the user considers only two substitutes: counterfeits and non-luxury brands, completely ignoring the original luxury brands as a viable alternative. Interestingly, this is a common pattern across all the comments in this section. None of these consumers seem to be willing to purchase the original luxury brands as evident from their comments, though they compare their counterfeit purchases with the original versions of the brands. Therefore, it can be argued that these counterfeit purchases could potentially be impacting the non-luxury brands because in the absence of the counterfeit availability, these consumers are more likely to choose the non-luxury brands primarily due to the similar price factor:

> "3 Yeezys for $350-$450 or one pair that's looks the same and feels the same for 1000+ ...come 'on Man!"

One user admitted that most consumers who purchase counterfeits do not possess the means to purchase the original luxury brands and therefore, these cannot be counted as losses for the original brands. Hence, it can be argued that they essentially impact the non-luxury brands:

> "Economically speaking, it's hard to represent the earnings from sales of counterfeit as losses for the brand, because most of those sales wouldn't have been made; people who buy fakes can't afford designer, and a lot of brands are wary of going the Michael Kors route and putting out cheap subdivisions because they've seen how it devalues the flagship. I'm sure there's possible regulatory solution wherein people can still make fakes and the designers get a cutback."

Going one step further, the next comment shows the addictive thrill of hunting for counterfeits and the feeling of satisfaction with the money saved. Additionally, these Reddit users are seeking validation from fellow counterfeit consumers in their justification of counterfeits being better than the original brands as they agree with each other:

> "100% agree with everything you stated OP [Original Post]! But damn collecting 1:1 reps is very addicting since it's almost too easy and still end spending a lot of money that I overlooked priorities vs needs lol."

Similarly, some users appreciate the high-quality and craftmanship of counterfeits being at par with the original luxury brands, claiming "they look the same", further strengthening their functionality and value:

> "Like the differences are minute and it costs so much less."

> "I just don't have the money to buy some expensive shoes, so I buy reps it's cheaper and they look the same."

Beyond the functionality and value arguments, the next user provides a remarkable perspective of peoples' inaccuracy in distinguishing between the original and the counterfeit versions of popular brands. For example, people mistaking the original Yeezy shoes to be counterfeits, while assuming the counterfeits to be the original. Yeezy sneakers and shoes seem to be a popular counterfeit luxury brand amongst Reddit users, and it frequently appears in their comments:

> "Lmao I wear real Yeezys to school and people still call me out so idk I bought my first reps recently and I like them a lot and they feel the exact same but it's funny because my reps didn't get called out lol... Point is whether they are from adidas or not, Yeezys will always be fake to someone, so you might as well not spend the extra 600$ for the pair that is the exact same."

This is the fiercest argument to buy counterfeits instead of the original because spending more money on the original brand does not serve the purpose of distinguishing oneself from counterfeit consumers. Using this argument, even the consumers of the genuine luxury brands beseech counterfeits instead of the original brands. This is a crucial finding of the present research because it extends

counterfeiting literature by identifying a new strategy applied by the genuine-brand-consumers in response to counterfeits. Research on these genuine-brand-consumers found that when their favourite luxury brands are widely counterfeited, they engage in one of the three strategies to deal with the counterfeits – flight, reclamation, or abranding (Commuri, 2009). The researcher established that using the first strategy of flight, the consumers of the genuine brands flee from using the original brands due to the possibility of being erroneously labelled as a counterfeit consumer (Commuri, 2009). Second, reclamation strategy involves reducing dissonance by stereotyping the counterfeit consumers as immoral. Third, abrading strategy includes disguising all brand cues to avoid being detected as consumers of a popularly counterfeited luxury brand.

However, none of these three strategies adopted by the genuine-brand-consumers depict the fourth strategy of them "resorting to counterfeits" instead of the original luxury brand. Some genuine-brand-consumers even go beyond merely adopting counterfeits by selling their existing original brands to buy counterfeits. For instance, the next Reddit user justifies his choice of counterfeit luxury sneakers, Yeezys instead of the original ones by pointing out the close resemblances between the two substitutes, which prompted him to sell all the original ones for fake ones. This consumer behaviour may have seemed far-fetched if this user did not profess doing it:

> "I've had numerous retails and reps, and realized nobody could tell which were real and which were reps. So, I sold all my retail ones. I'd rather have the extra cash and wear reps. It might help that I live in a small city, so nobody even knows what real yeezys look like."

Therefore, the present research adds another strategy implemented by the genuine-brand-consumers beyond the three strategies of flight, reclamation, and abranding (Commuri, 2009), and that is – resorting to counterfeits – substituting their brand loyalty towards original brands by adopting counterfeits. A major cause for this consumer behaviour is the increasingly higher quality of counterfeits produced by counterfeiters using sophisticated modern technology (Ferreira, 2016) which are replacing the original luxury brands.

Comparison with interview data

Both datasets show that the consumers admitted buying counterfeits on account of low childhood and adulthood SES, especially the penurious consumers who had lower

SES compared to the privileged consumers. The second similarity is the rejection of original luxury brands in both the data sets. This was probably due to low SES and the argument of getting better value from counterfeits (value consciousness).

However, one point of difference in these two datasets was the substitution and comparison of counterfeits with non-luxury brands. This was more noticeable in case of qualitative interviews wherein many passive and penurious consumers often chose between non-luxury and counterfeits, but the Reddit penurious users seem to univocally support counterfeits than the original luxury and non-luxury brands. One significant cause could be the topic of the Reddit discussion and the users being enthusiasts and admirers of counterfeits. On the contrary, the interview participants belonged to a general consumer base of brands.

Furthermore, the phenomenon of genuine-brand-consumers "resorting to counterfeits" observed in the netnographic dataset was not found in the interview dataset. The underlying reason to explain this difference could be the same as mentioned above that the Reddit consumers are particularly enthusiasts of online counterfeit consumption cultures and play an active role in the online counterfeit communities.

7.3.2 The wealthy misers

Only a couple of users seemed to be with higher SES to be able to afford the luxury brands, yet they preferred counterfeits, probably due to value consciousness. Though the following Reddit users substitute the original luxury brands with their counterfeits, not because they cannot afford the original brand but simply because counterfeits provide more value for money:

> "I make more than enough money to buy a lot of hyped stuff even at resale prices thanks to my job, but I still can't justify a $1000 purchase on some shoes instead of $100 on some reps that look exactly the same."

> "100% and spot on. I'll gladly pay retail but NEVER resale. A good chunk of the rep sneakers population is in high school and care about getting called out to the point of where they will RL [Red Light, means a bad quality counterfeit] a pair of shoes because of a minor glue stain. Who cares, wear your sneakers with pride because you like them, not because you want to wear hype. I have a well-paying job and can't imagine dropping $1k for a pair of shoes when a sub-$100 variant will do the job just fine."

These Reddit users also consider price factor of counterfeits like the consumers discussed previous section; however, the point of difference is these consumers' self-identification as high earners with well-paying jobs. Nonetheless, they prefer counterfeits over original luxury brands due to value consciousness.

Comparison with interview data

The wealthy misers can be compared to the privileged consumers from the qualitative data analysis because they seemingly have the financial means to purchase the original brands, but they still choose counterfeits on the grounds of value-for-money argument. These consumers potentially cause losses to the original luxury brands because they treat counterfeits and original luxury as substitutes.

7.3.3 Quality factor

A few Reddit users argued about the superior quality of counterfeits compared to the non-luxury brands which encourages them to substitute non-luxury with counterfeit luxury brands. The substitution of non-luxury brands with counterfeit luxury brands by these consumers are potentially affecting the non-luxury brands. This is because consumers who substitute non-luxury brands with counterfeit luxury brands are not likely to purchase the original luxury brands. This means that the counterfeits purchased by them are instead affecting the non-luxury brands (which are substituted by the counterfeits). The following two Reddit users commented:

> "And for H&M there is some quality, but for the most part it's trash quality with designs that ruin pieces and there's not a lot of premium pieces compared to a lot of rep [counterfeit] pieces which designs and quality is absolutely insane and I've gotten so much more compliments on my rep pieces than my H&M pieces. All it takes is finding these pieces that aren't super popular compared to other stuff on this sub [Reddit thread]."

> "I'm referring to reps that focus on the design aspect rather than the branding. And I have bought a lot of pieces from H&M for two years and I can definitely say that I completely stopped wearing them because [of] the lack of quality. However, I'm still wearing my reps strong to this day."

Both these comments reflect direct comparisons of counterfeit luxury brands with non-luxury brands (such as H&M) in terms of quality and design. It is therefore evident that the consumers substituting non-luxury brand with counterfeits due to allegedly superior quality of counterfeits are affecting non-luxury brands (and not original luxury brands). Furthermore, a third user commented how the counterfeits lasted longer than the non-luxury brands and they have justified the lower prices of counterfeits compared to the original luxury brands, essentially establishing the superiority of counterfeits between these two substitutes:

> "I prefer reps over fast fashion as all I need to do is spend time and find quality pieces that looks unique, fits my personality, and gives all my outfits character no matter when I wear it. Fast fashion is only good for that particular season or two and you're

essentially wasting more money on fast fashion than reps depending on what reps you're buying."

Comparison with interview data

The quality factor of counterfeits as being superior to non-luxury brands was not found in the qualitative interview data analysis. One participant did mention about the increasingly higher quality of counterfeits which lured her to buy them more in comparison with the original luxury brands. However, neither she nor any other interview participant compared their supposedly good quality over the non-luxury brands such as H&M as discussed by the Reddit users above. This could be due to these Reddit users being avid counterfeit consumers and comparing them only with non-luxury brands, indicating that they treat these two as substitutes and in this equation they do not necessarily compare their quality with the original luxury brands.

7.4 Summary

The objective of this chapter was to synthesise the findings of the netnographic data and compare it with the findings of the qualitative data discussed in chapters five and six. Organised closely with this objective, the chapter provided detailed discussions on the effect of childhood and adulthood SES on consumers' preferences while choosing among alternatives of counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands. Additionally, it analysed the finding from the netnographic study related to brand substitution. Overall, the data from netnographic findings validates the findings from the qualitative interviews, with some additional insights such as more univocal support for counterfeits and both privileged and penurious consumers exclusively comparing counterfeits' quality with the non-luxury brands (and not the original luxury brands). Furthermore, a significant finding from the netnographic study found a new strategy of "resorting to counterfeits" implemented by genuine-brand-consumers beyond the three strategies of flight, reclamation, and branding proposed by Commuri (2009). Thus, summarising this chapter, it can be concluded that besides the original luxury brands, counterfeit luxury consumption also impacts the non-luxury brands significantly. The next chapter provides a discussion on the overall findings from this research and compares it with the existing literature and concludes the thesis by assessing its contribution to knowledge, policymaking, and practical implications.

Chapter 8
Discussion and Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This research aimed to investigate the effect of non-deceptive counterfeits sold in secondary markets on non-luxury and luxury brands, from the perspectives of socioeconomic status (SES), brand substitution, and symbolic self-completion. The last seven chapters critically explored the literature, theoretical framework, methodology and findings to address the three identified research questions. This chapter provides a detailed discussion on the key findings of the research, followed by a synopsis of the overall research. The chapter concludes this thesis by assessing its contribution to knowledge, practical implications, and policymaking. It discusses the contribution of this research in the counterfeiting research area (especially the effect of counterfeits on non-luxury brands), SES-based consumption literature, and symbolic self-completion theory. Finally, the chapter discusses the limitations to the research and highlights areas for future research.

8.2 Discussion

The current research reported some interesting findings with respect to the effects of childhood and adulthood socioeconomic status (SES) and childhood emotional wellbeing (EW) on consumers' brand choice. The findings discussed in chapter five address the first research question which was to investigate the effects of childhood SES and adulthood SES on consumers' preferences for among three brand substitutes of counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands. While exploring the effects of childhood and adulthood SES, this study also discovered elements of emotional wellbeing (EW), which were integrated particularly with childhood SES. Integrating the SES and EW factors brought forth the emergence of four consumer types based on their respective SES and EW, vis-à-vis, Privileged consumers, Protesting consumers, Passive consumers, and Penurious consumers. This was presented using the childhood SES – childhood EW matrix which categorised the four consumer types as follows:

   a) Privileged consumers are those with high SES and high EW
   b) Protesting consumers are those with high SES but low EW
   c) Passive consumers are those with low SES but high EW, and
   d) Penurious consumers are those with low SES and low EW

Subsequently, the findings associated each of the four consumer types with their consumption behaviour in detail. The adulthood SES and consumption of original

luxury, counterfeit luxury, and non-luxury brands of each of the four consumer types was explored and analysed with support from relevant literature and conceptual framework. Each consumer type was compared with its respective counterparts from the consumer taxonomy by Han et al. (2010) to compare the findings of this research with relevant literature. Furthermore, the findings were compared in detail with Savage et al. (2013), and Wall and Large (2010) because the findings bore similarities to these research studies.

The findings related to each of the four consumer types with their consumption behaviour is as follows. Firstly, the privileged consumers were found to consume all three brand types, *viz.*, counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands. The upper-class and the established middle-class consumers purchase counterfeits to satisfy their aesthetic needs provided by some high-quality, or design of counterfeits. In other cases, they seek counterfeits to mix them with the original luxury brands to aide them in their conspicuous consumption of luxury, even though it is through counterfeits.

Secondly, the protesting consumers were found to mainly consume non-luxury brands and occasionally consume luxury brands, however, they tend to avoid and even protest counterfeits due to their distaste of and dissociation from the upper classes. This distaste originated due to their poor EW in their childhoods.

Thirdly, the passive consumers were reported to buy counterfeits and non-luxury brands, however, they avoid original luxury brands mainly due to their low adult SES. Their substitution between the counterfeits and non-luxury brands cause harm to the non-luxury brands (and *not* the luxury brands) because they replace their usual purchase of non-luxury brands with counterfeits. Besides, their inability to afford the original luxury means they would not substitute the counterfeits with the original luxury brands. This finding supports the argument which challenges the true impact of counterfeits on the luxury brands alone by diminishing the likelihood that consumers would have purchased the original brand at its full retail price (OECD, 2017).

Finally, the penurious consumers were found to consume counterfeits and non-luxury brands. Like passive consumers, they also avoid luxury brands due to limited financial resources. Also, their substitution of non-luxury brands with counterfeit luxury impacts the non-luxury brands.

Based on the four types of consumers identified, this research proposed the "consumer-type-based brand substitution model" to construct the mechanism of the underlying coping strategies causing the distinct consumption behaviours of these consumers (figure 8.1). In chapter six, it investigated the root causes of brand substitution of consumers germinating from their SES-EW issues nascent in their childhood socioeconomic status and emotional wellbeing factors. It was found that to mitigate these root causes, consumers adopt several coping strategies. To explain these coping strategies, this research utilised the psychological theory of symbolic self-completion (Wicklund and Gollwitzer, 1981), dissociation, self-verification (Swann, 2012), and variety-seeking behaviours (Mandel et al., 2017).
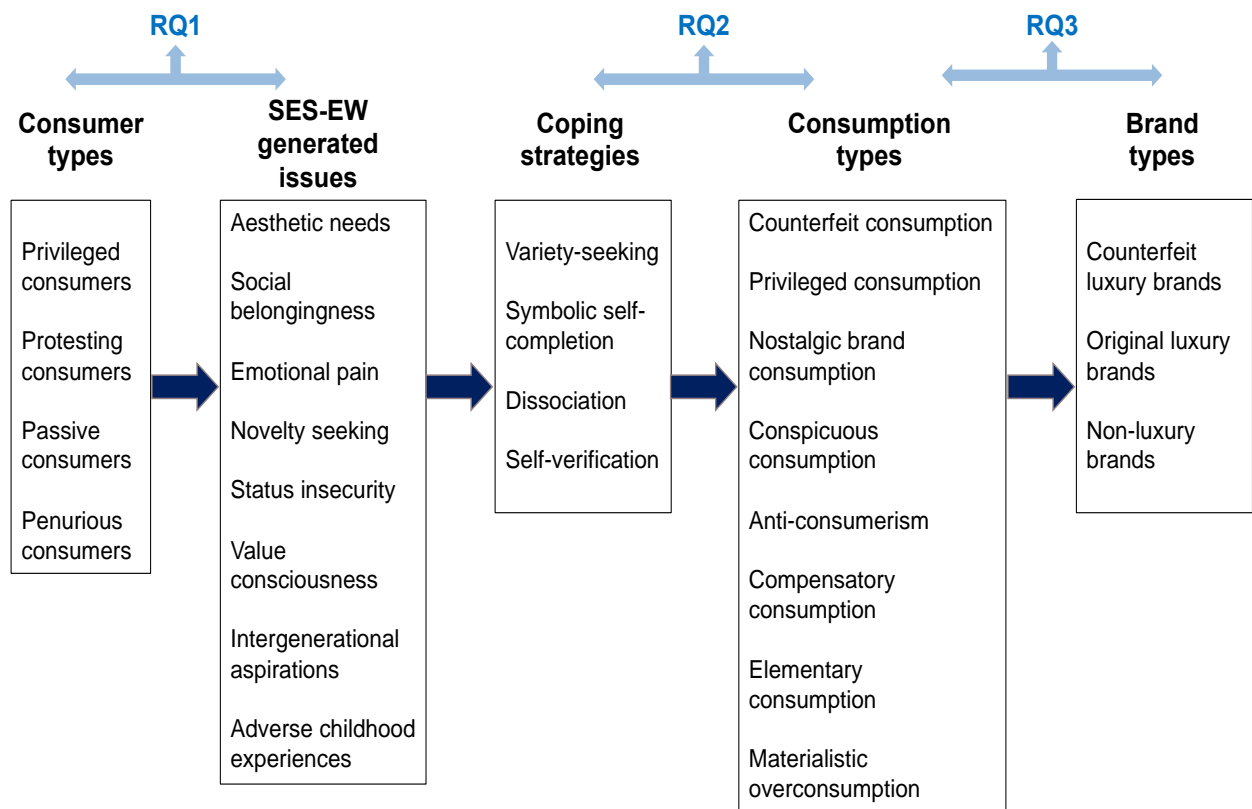
Figure 8.1 Conceptual framework
(Source: Author's current findings)

The conceptual foundation of symbolic self-completion as a compensatory consumption strategy by consumers in various domains of self-discrepancies has been well established by prior researchers (Cutright, 2012; Dalton, 2008; Dubois et al., 2012; Gao et al., 2009; Levav and Zhu, 2009; Mead et al., 2011; Rucker and Galinsky, 2008, 2009, Wan et al., 2014; Wang et al. 2012). This research expands this literature further by extending symbolic self-completion in the context of counterfeit and luxury

consumption by aligning it with SES and EW concepts as displayed in figure 8.1. In doing so, it addressed the second research question which was to explore the role of symbolic self-completion in consumers' brand substitution among counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands.

Each consumer type and their sequential process of adopting various coping strategies to address their specific SES-EW generated needs can be summarised as follows. Firstly, the privileged consumers mainly adopt two coping strategies – variety-seeking and symbolic self-completion – to address their aesthetic needs and social belongingness needs respectively. As a result, they either choose original luxury brands or a mix of original and counterfeit luxury brands. Sometimes, they even choose premium non-luxury brands. in all those scenarios where privileged consumers indulge in the counterfeit luxury brands, treating them as substitutes for the original luxury and/or non-luxury brands, the original brands (both luxury and non-luxury) are impacted.

Secondly, protesting consumers adopt the coping strategy of symbolic self-completion to address different SES-EW generated issues (such as emotional pain and social belongingness) via different substitutes of brand types (selective luxury and non-luxury brands). Therefore, they diverge in their consumption types – compensatory, and elementary consumption. Additionally, in some cases, the protesting consumers may also adopt dissociation as a coping strategy. Protesting consumers adopted dissociation from the upper-class when confronted with conspicuous consumption of luxury fashion brands by the upper-class individuals. In other words, to indicate their rebellion towards the upper-class status signalling, protesting consumers avoided original luxury and counterfeit brands. Because they protest against counterfeits, therefore, they do not cause any damage to the original luxury and non-luxury brands.

Thirdly, the passive consumers adopt symbolic self-completion to address four major SES-EW generated needs – novelty seeking, social belongingness, status insecurity, and value consciousness. In doing so, they substitute between counterfeit luxury and non-luxury brands. Passive consumers never intend to replace the counterfeits with the original luxury due to low SES, but they do substitute non-luxury brands with the luxury counterfeits, thereby, impacting these non-luxury brands.

Finally, the penurious consumers suffer due to low SES and low EW and as a result, they harbour intergenerational aspirations, adverse childhood experiences, and they

also undergo status insecurity. To counter these needs generated by their low SES and low EW in their childhoods and adulthoods, they seek elementary (non-luxury) consumption and/or counterfeit consumption. For these consumers, the counterfeit luxury brands symbolically provide a sense of completion or attainment of higher social status. Furthermore, since these penurious consumers almost never buy luxury brands, their counterfeit consumption affects their usual brand choice of non-luxury. Some penurious consumers adopted self-verification strategy by using non-luxury brands by asserting that they do not need to wear luxury brands because the status attached with luxury will not fetch them any special treatment from others, owing to their actual low SES.

In examining the role of coping strategies leading to various consumption types adopted by all the four consumer groups, this research explained their resultant brand substitution between counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands. Furthermore, it illustrated how and when their brand choices impacted the original luxury and non-luxury brands. In doing so, the current study addressed the third research question (figure 8.1) which was to evaluate the impact of counterfeits on non-luxury brands, besides luxury brands.

Furthermore, the current research discussed the netnographic findings which validated the findings from the qualitative interviews. The netnographic study also provided with some additional insights such as more univocal support for counterfeits and both privileged and penurious consumers exclusively comparing counterfeits' quality with the non-luxury brands (and not the original luxury brands). The netnographic data classified the Reddit users of the posts selected for the study into two categories: Privileged consumers and Penurious consumers. This classification was done in line with the categories from qualitative interviews data analysis so that comparisons could be drawn between the findings from the two datasets from each study. The other two consumer groups from interview data analysis, *viz.* the protesting and passive consumers, could not be identified from the netnographic data because they involved emotional wellbeing aspects along with SES which was difficult to determine from the online Reddit comments. Penurious consumers were further categorised into three sub-groups with respect to their consumption habits: non-luxury consumption, thrift shopping and compensatory consumption.

Firstly, the privileged consumers in the netnographic findings were found to be purchasing counterfeits purposefully despite having high SES and the ability to afford the original luxury brands. Many of them confessed that they do own a mix of both originals and counterfeit luxury brands. This behaviour is classic example of concurrent ownership of both counterfeits and originals by wealthy, privileged consumers which has been explored by other researchers too (Orth et al., 2019; Stöttinger and Penz, 2015). Some Reddit users argued that they remain rich by being frugal and by mixing original counterfeits with the counterfeit versions.

Secondly, the penurious consumers in the netnographic findings revealed that they mostly non-luxury brands and avoid luxury brands due to low SES. This finding also validated interview data findings and it also supports the significance of childhood SES than adult SES as found by several researchers (Chen, 2004; Mittal and Griskevicius, 2016; Mittal et al. 2015; Roux and Goldsmith, 2014). Furthermore, several penurious consumers revealed their indulgence into chasing a 'hunt' for the best options by thrift shopping which they described as a thrilling experience. This finding was found to be similar to getting a good bargain on counterfeits by some consumers who find it a 'thrilling experience' (Bian et al., 2016).

Regarding the second research question about the role of symbolic self-completion as a compensatory coping strategy adopted by consumers, the netnographic findings revealed compensatory consumption behaviour found in several adults with a low childhood SES background. This finding provided support and validation to the compensatory consumption behaviour reported during the analysis of qualitative interview data.

Regarding the third research question about brand substitution and impact of counterfeits on non-luxury brands, the netnographic data provided further validation to the interview data. The netnographic findings revealed that most consumers of counterfeit luxury brands seemed to compare them with non-luxury brands and discussed about why they chose counterfeits over non-luxury brands. The main reason they gave was the lower price of counterfeits, superior quality, and designs of the counterfeits, compared to that of non-luxury brands.

The next section provides a synopsis of the overall research and how it was conducted and presented in the last seven chapters of this thesis. The objective of providing the synopsis is to synthesise all elements of the present research to provide a conclusion.

8.3 Synopsis of the overall research

At the beginning, the current research drew on exploring the effect of counterfeits on brands beyond luxury brands. A subsequent literature review reinforced the need to include non-luxury brands as the third substitute in the counterfeit luxury - original luxury substitution debate (Commuri, 2009; Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013; Stöttinger and Penz, 2015). It was observed that besides the original luxury brands, the non-luxury brands could also possibly be bearing the brunt of counterfeit trade (Bian et al., 2016; Samaddar and Menon, 2020). The demarcation of primary and secondary markets selling deceptive and non-deceptive counterfeits respectively by the recent OECD/EUIP (2019) report further reinforced this narrative of including the less expensive alternative of non-luxury brands in the counterfeiting impact debate. This was particularly relevant in secondary markets selling low priced counterfeits.

A chronological synthesis of counterfeiting literature revealed that a substantial body of the literature limits the discussion on the impact of counterfeits on original luxury brands (table 2.5 in chapter two). Most researchers seem to agree that counterfeits have a negative effect on the genuine luxury brands (Bosworth and Yang, 2002; Gao, 2018; Grossman and Shapiro, 1988a; Grossman and Shapiro, 1988b; Montoro-Pons and Cuadrado-García, 2006; Qian, 2014a; Qian et al., 2013; Stevenson and Busby, 2015; Wang and Song, 2013). In some cases, research also demonstrated mixed effect on luxury brands (Bekir et al., 2013; Biancardi et al., 2020; Qian, 2008; Qian, 2014b; Yao, 2005a). Surprisingly, some researchers also argued that counterfeits have positive effect on the genuine luxury brands (Nia and Zaichkowsky, 2000; Romani et al., 2012; Yao, 2005b). Nevertheless, their impact on every day, non-luxury brands remained scant and underexamined (Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013). Recent morphological counterfeiting literature review by Samaddar and Menon (2020) also supported the need to study counterfeits effect on non-luxury brands, in their future research agenda. Based on these calls for research, this research set out on building the conceptual foundations to identify the counterfeits impact on non-luxury brands.

The literature review also revealed the significance of social class, status, and socioeconomic status as key factors influencing counterfeit consumption (Han et al., 2010; Wall and Large, 2010). Therefore, a thorough review of seminal works on social class, social status, and socioeconomic status was carried out to demarcate the overlapping boundaries between these three concepts. Additionally, an emphasis on childhood SES (besides adulthood SES) and emotional wellbeing factors also surfaced from the review. Numerous models emerged from the literature to explain the nexus between socioeconomic status and consumption behaviour of different types of consumers of counterfeits. Most notably, the four consumer types based on wealth and status needs – patricians, parvenus, poseurs, and proletarians (Han et al., 2010) and the four consumer groups based on the aspirational hierarchy of brand consumption model – trend setters, *cognoscenti*, aspirational, and conformity consumers (Wall and Large, 2010). Furthermore, this research also drew parallels between two these two sets of consumer types and linked them in juxtaposition with the British social classes (Savage et al., 2013).

Subsequently, this study has argued that consumers engage in different compensatory consumer behaviour strategies to mitigate identified self-discrepancies in various domains (Mandel et al., 2017). Symbolic self-completion was found to be the most relevant coping strategy to reduce feelings of social exclusion and reinforce status or belongingness to social groups (Mandel et al., 2017; Wicklund and Gollwitzer, 1982). Original luxury and counterfeit luxury brands are often used for status signalling (Goor et al., 2020; Han et al., 2010; Shin and Youn, 2020). However, in some circumstances, consumers with low-status may resume self-verification to reinforce their low-status by consuming low-status brands such as non-luxury brands (Swann, 2012). Therefore, three substitutes of brand types emerged from the literature – counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands. Furthermore, this study aligned the three brand substitutes vis-à-vis, counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands with another body of literature related to the four consumer types identified by Han et al. (2010), vis-à-vis, patricians, parvenus, poseurs, and proletarians. In doing so, it illustrated a clearer picture of consumers and their corresponding choice of brand types. This helped in developing an understanding of how different types of consumers choose from a variety of brand types; and that classification of consumer types and brand types provides a deeper understanding of consumer behaviour.

Drawing on the literature review, the present research conducted an interpretive study by adopting a pragmatic, mixed methods approach – using netnographic study and in-depth qualitative interviews (Biesta, 2010; Morgan, 2007). This research reveals the effects of childhood and adulthood SES on consumers' preferences while choosing between the substitutes of counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands. It found that the role of childhood emotional wellbeing (EW) along with childhood SES is significant on consumer behaviour. Based on the SES-EW matrix, this study found four types of consumers, viz. privileged consumers (with high SES and high EW), protesting consumers (with high SES but low EW), passive consumers (with low SES but high EW), and finally penurious consumers (with both low SES and low EW). These four consumer types were aligned and contrasted with the four consumer types identified by Han et al. (2010), vis-à-vis, patricians, parvenus, poseurs, and proletarians. The current research adds to the empirical knowledge (Han et al., 2010; Stottinger and Penz, 2015) that the substitution and brand choices between counterfeits and original brands (both luxury & non-luxury) consumption is influenced by SES and EW factors. The findings on the consumption habits of these four consumer types are discussed later in this chapter.

The literature on the impact of counterfeits on the original brands have mostly included only luxury brands. Only a few researchers have included the third alternative of non-luxury brands (Bian et al., 2016; Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013). However, these researchers have not investigated non-luxury brands as an alternative to counterfeits, thus ignoring the effect of counterfeits on these non-luxury brands. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this is the first research to empirically investigate the effect of counterfeits on non-luxury brands in consumers' brand substitution in the socioeconomic status domain. The implication of this knowledge extension is twofold. First, non-luxury brands are the third alternative between counterfeits and luxury brand choices. Thus, counterfeits affect non-luxury brands too, along with the original luxury brands. Second, childhood and adulthood SES and EW affect consumers' choices between brand types in the context of counterfeit consumption.

The literature on counterfeit consumption does not fully explain why consumers substitute original luxury and non-luxury brands with counterfeits. That is when the literature on compensatory consumer behaviour strategies such as symbolic self-completion and self-verification shows its relevance on brand substitution (between the three brand types – counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands). As

mentioned earlier, symbolic self-completion was found to be the most relevant coping strategy to reduce feelings of social exclusion and reinforce status or belongingness to social groups (Mandel et al., 2017; Wicklund and Gollwitzer, 1982). This research extends the role of symbolic self-completion and other coping strategies of variety-seeking, dissociation, and self-verification employed by consumers in their substitution between brand types. The implication of this knowledge extension is that it links the underlying causes of brand substitution in counterfeit consumption to these coping strategies.

8.4 Contribution to knowledge

The present research studied the impact of counterfeits on original brands by bringing into account the non-luxury brands (besides luxury brands) and by exploring the interconnection between SES, EW, and brand substitution. Therefore, it discusses in great depth how consumers' SES-EW issues affect their brand substitution between counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands. Consequently, the current study shows that brand substitution is an outcome of consumers' coping strategies to deal with their SES-EW issues, offering three contributions to the literature. *First,* this research identifies four consumer types based on their childhood SES, adulthood SES, EW factors and demonstrates how these factors (childhood and adulthood SES and EW) shape the brand substitution between the three brand types (i.e., counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands). In doing so, this research contributes to the consumer taxonomies by Han et al. (2010) and Wall & Large (2010) that have identified counterfeit and luxury consumption based on wealth and status needs. This contribution is discussed in detail in the following subsection 8.4.1. *Second,* by unearthing the underlying causes of brand substitution in counterfeit consumption through compensation strategy, it extends the role of symbolic self-completion theory, dissociation, and self-verification theory to counterfeit consumption literature and compensation strategy theory. This contribution is discussed in detail in subsection 8.4.2. *Third,* in finding that non-luxury brands are also substituted by counterfeit luxury, this research contributes to the counterfeit consumption literature by adding non-luxury brands to the debate related to the concurrent ownership of counterfeits and original luxury brands (Bian et al., 2016; Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013; Stottinger & Penz, 2015). This contribution is discussed in detail in subsection 8.4.3.

8.4.1 SES, consumer types and consumption

This research critically evaluates the existing literature pertaining to consumer taxonomies based on wealth, social class, and status (Han et al., 2010; Savage et al., 2013; Wall and Large, 2010). The four consumer types identified above by Han et al. (2010), vis-à-vis, patricians, parvenus, poseurs, and proletarians, and their corresponding status needs (see figure 3.7 in chapter three) were juxtaposed with the four consumer types identified by Wall and Large (2010) in their aspirational hierarchy of brand consumption model (see figure 3.5 in chapter three). Furthermore, these comparisons were further extended to the analysis of the Great British Class Survey (see table 3.1 in chapter three) by Savage et al. (2013). The research critically evaluated these together and mapped it with the present research findings of four consumer types (privileged, protesting, passive, and penurious consumers; see figure 5.3 in chapter five). This synthesis of prior research with the current one presented a clear picture of various consumer types to study their corresponding consumption and substitution of brand types. In doing so, the present research contributes new insights to the existing counterfeiting literature in the context of various social class of consumers discussed as follows.

First, it found that the upper-class, privileged consumers also consume counterfeits to satisfy their aesthetic needs which are met by high-quality and design of counterfeits. This finding challenges the status quo of research arguing that the upper-class consumers do not seek counterfeits due to enormous wealth (Han et al., 2010; Wall and Large, 2010).

Second, this research found an additional consumer category of protesting consumers to the four consumer categories by Han et al. (2010), that is, patricians, parvenus, poseurs, and proletarians. Though protesting consumers typically come from the upper-class, they detest status signalling through luxury brands, and they also protest against counterfeits for the same reason. This consumer type is significant because it segregates high-SES consumers into connoisseurs of luxury and criticisers of luxury. Consumer research has largely ignored this section of the upper-class consumers.

Third, the findings present substitution of non-luxury brands with counterfeit luxury by passive (traditional working class) and penurious (emergent service workers & precariat) consumers. This finding upholds the basic premise of this research, that, non-luxury brands (*besides* luxury brands) are also impacted by counterfeit luxury. This

was further demonstrated by the finding that both these consumer types almost never bought the original luxury brands due to low SES.

Fourth, a significant feature of the penurious consumers found in this study is their similarity with the "Proletarians" of the consumer taxonomy proposed by Han et al. (2010) in terms of their low wealth and need for status. However, the point of departure from the Proletarians is the occasional counterfeit consumption and premium non-luxury consumption driven by intergenerational aspirations reported by the penurious consumers (e.g., Kerry, Victoria) in the present research. Unlike Han et al.'s (2010) assertion that the proletarians do not seek status related consumption, this study found that the low status, working class, penurious consumers are also driven by their need for social belongingness (e.g., Kerry), materialistic overconsumption (e.g., Harper), and compensatory consumption (e.g., Kerry).

Finally, this research proposed a new terminology to explain a particular compensatory consumption behaviour of penurious consumers, called *intergenerational aspirations*. This research defined it as a coping strategy to address the past generation's economic and social limitations by aspiring to improve the socioeconomic status and lifestyle of the next generation. An example to illustrate this is the way Victoria ensures to provide her children with a better lifestyle than her own childhood experience of getting only "hand-me-downs". This is an innate sense coping mechanism to be protective for the next generation and provide them with better resources (such as premium non-luxury brands) as a way to redeem one's own childhood experiences.

8.4.2 Symbolic self-completion theory

The current research dug into the root causes of the brand substitution by the four consumer types germinating from the SES-EW issues nascent in their childhood socioeconomic status and emotional wellbeing factors. The lion's share of the coping strategies implemented by the consumers to mitigate these issues can be rationalised via the psychology of symbolic self-completion (Wicklund and Gollwitzer, 1981). The conceptual foundation of symbolic self-completion as a compensatory consumption strategy by consumers in various domains of self-discrepancies has been developed by prior researchers as discussed in the conceptual framework chapter of this thesis (Cutright, 2012; Dalton, 2008; Dubois et al., 2012; Gao et al., 2009; Levav and Zhu, 2009; Mead et al., 2011; Rucker and Galinsky, 2008, 2009, Wan et al., 2014; Wang et al. 2012). Mandel et al. (2017) provide evidence of research exhibiting areas of self-

discrepancies associated with symbolic self-completion as a coping strategy (see table 3.4 in chapter three). This research expands this literature further by extending symbolic self-completion in the context of counterfeit and luxury consumption by aligning it with SES and EW concepts.

Building on these foundations, this research proposed a "consumer-type-based brand substitution model" (see figure 6.1 in chapter six). The model portrayed a sequential process. The four types of consumer groups deal with various issues generated by their childhood and adulthood SES and emotional wellbeing factors. To mitigate these SES-EW generated issues, consumers seek various coping strategies. These strategies manifest themselves in the form of distinct consumption types, leading to the choice between the brand substitutes – namely counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands.

8.4.3 Impact of counterfeit luxury on non-luxury brands

A growing research stream has focussed on the impact of counterfeiting on the original luxury brands as the direct targets and ignored the counterfeiting impact on the non-luxury brands (Bian, 2018; Bian and Moutinho, 2011; Commuri, 2009; Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013; Hietanen et al., 2019; Qian, 2014a; Qian, 2014b; Qian et al., 2013). Most researchers have emphasised on the impact of counterfeits on luxury brands, and ignored the other alternative of non-luxury brands which may also be affected by counterfeits (Bian, 2018; Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013). Furthermore, this lack of empirical research with regard to the substitution rate of counterfeits with original brands in secondary markets has been acknowledged by OECD (2017). To a certain extent, this research has attempted to address this research gap in the counterfeiting literature by providing evidence to demonstrate the effects of counterfeiting on non-luxury brands, besides the original luxury brands. Therefore, this research contributes to the counterfeit consumption literature by adding non-luxury brands to the debate related to the concurrent ownership of counterfeits and original luxury brands (Bian et al., 2016; Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013; Stottinger & Penz, 2015).

Consequently, the current research added knowledge to the SES-based consumption literature in general, and counterfeiting literature in particular. It explored the role of SES-EW issues and their effect on brand substitution between counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands. Firstly, it found that based on childhood SES, and childhood EW factors, consumers can be categorised into four types – privileged,

passive, protesting, and penurious. The brand substitution between the three brand types – counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands – is shaped by childhood SES and EW factors within each of these four identified consumer types. In doing so, the present study extends the consumer taxonomy based on wealth and status needs identified by Wall & Large (2010). Secondly, by unearthing the underlying causes of brand substitution in counterfeit consumption through compensation strategy, it extends the role of symbolic self-completion theory, dissociation, and self-verification theory to counterfeit consumption literature and compensation strategy theory. Thirdly, in finding that non-luxury brands are also substituted by counterfeit luxury, this research contributes to the counterfeit consumption literature by adding non-luxury brands to the debate related to the concurrent ownership of counterfeits and original luxury brands (Bian et al., 2016; Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013; Stottinger & Penz, 2015).

8.5 Practical implications

The findings of this research carry numerous implications for brand managers. First, the findings suggest that the luxury brand managers need to position their lower-priced product lines to the privileged consumers too because even the privileged consumers indulge in concurrent ownership of both original and counterfeit luxury brands. The study found two underlying reasons for counterfeit consumption amongst this consumer type: a) the desire for conspicuous consumption proving their belongingness to the upper-class and b) variety-seeking to meet aesthetic needs. The first can be addressed by the lower-priced luxury product lines as offered by some luxury brands. For example, Armani Collezioni is the diffusion line of Giorgio Armani that retails as a lower price than the flagship brand and the haute couture line, Armani Privé. Although there is a risk of brand dilution in this case, a fine balance should be struck between maintaining the brand image and introducing more product lines. The second reason of seeking variety to meet aesthetic needs via counterfeits by the privileged class can be catered by the non-luxury brand managers by featuring the "aesthetic" element of their brands to these consumers. For example, the British non-luxury clothing brand – 'Ghost' – offers silhouettes with a vintage aesthetic vibe and has been sported by the elite class such as the likes of Kate Middleton, the Princess of Wales. By positioning themselves as aesthetic brands, the non-luxury brands can easily navigate the privileged consumers seeking counterfeits towards themselves.

Second, the findings of this research suggest that the non-luxury brand managers can target the protesting consumers by directing their brand communications on emphasising their "non-status signalling" aspect because these high SES consumers dissociate from status-signalling luxury brands. For the protesting consumers, the essence of non-luxury brands may seem appealing to them because these brands do not claim status (Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013). For example, recent inclusive adverts by Nike – "For once, just don't do it" – supporting the 'Black Lives Matter' movement advocates race equality. Similarly, Nike can advocate social class equality by advertisements featuring all social classes wearing Nike. This messaging will appeal to the likes of protesting consumers and some sections of the privileged class who like to dissociate from class distinctions (and the associated social status) by supporting social equality and choose their brand consumption accordingly. This finding finds support in research by Geiger-Oneto et al. (2013) which reported that consumers with high occupational prestige gained through limited resources – such as getting employed in a prestigious occupation or having the persistence to earn a PhD – do not like to claim status through luxury brand consumption and therefore, they are more likely to avoid original luxury and counterfeit brands. The present research adds to this knowledge by suggesting non-luxury brands to leverage their brand positioning (of not claiming status) to consumers with high occupational prestige who could be privileged, protesting, passive, and penurious consumers because all these four consumer types consume non-luxury brands. In doing so, the non-luxury brands will also increase their customer retention by discouraging their customer base from purchasing counterfeit luxury brands. By capitalising on their non-status label, non-luxury brands will validate the choice of all these consumers who prefer good quality products without the conspicuous display of brand logos.

REAL LADIES DON'T LIKE FAKE!

DON'T BUY COUNTERFEIT PRODUCTS!

IN FRANCE, BUYING OR CARRYING A COUNTERFEIT PRODUCT IS A CRIMINAL OFFENCE PUNISHABLE BY UP TO 3 YEARS IMPRISONMENT AND A € 300 000 FINE

DOUANES & DROITS INDIRECTS

CAMPAIGN LED BY FRENCH CUSTOMS AND COMITÉ COLBERT UNDER THE AEGIS OF THE FRENCH NATIONAL ANTI-COUNTERFEITING COMMITTEE

Figure 8.2 French customs department's advert claiming,

"Real ladies don't like fake!"
(Source: WWD.com, 2023)

Third, the findings of the current research suggest that the non-luxury brand managers may leverage their market positioning towards the passive consumers by addressing their status insecurity concerns. This can be done by communicating the benefits of using genuine non-luxury brands instead of counterfeit luxury brands. This reinforcing message will motivate them to purchase non-luxury instead of counterfeits, especially by underpinning the benefits of non-luxury brands at the same price point as counterfeits. Till now, only luxury brands and anticounterfeiting agencies communicated the benefits of choosing original luxury rather than counterfeits. For example, French customs department's advert claiming, "Real ladies don't like fake!" as shown in figure 8.2. This research suggests proactive communications by non-luxury brands can go a long way in mitigating consumers' substitution of non-luxury with counterfeit luxury brands.

Fourth, it may prove useful for the non-luxury brand managers to fulfil the intergenerational aspirations of the penurious consumers by drawing their attention to their high-quality products. This finding is especially relevant to the premium high-street, non-luxury brands such as All Saints, Reiss, M&S Autograph, etc. because penurious consumers tend to address their status insecurity by seeking high reputation

non-luxury brands for their children (and even grandchildren). The premium high-street brands can leverage their higher status amongst other brands in the non-luxury marketspace with more conspicuous branding to attract the penurious consumers seeking status signalling within their financial means. Although non-luxury brands do not claim status through their products as discussed earlier, the conspicuous branding of premium non-luxury brands by increasing their brand prominence will appeal to the penurious consumers who are looking to fulfil their intergenerational aspirations. In uncovering the existence of this consumer group who aspire to improve the lifestyles of the next generation through premium non-luxury brands, this research offers a significant targeting opportunity for these brands. The advertising campaigns of premium non-luxury brands directed to the penurious consumer group should thus be aspirational rather than functional.

Fifth, non-luxury brands may need to reassess their policymaking direction which currently does not consider anticounterfeiting strategies. This is based on the conventional assumption that it is only luxury brands which have been affected by the proliferation of counterfeits. The present research has challenged this assumption by demonstrating through the findings of the study that this is not accurate. As discussed earlier, this research has provided evidence that counterfeits also affect non-luxury brands. Traditionally, non-luxury brands have been solely considering luxury and discount brands as their competitors capturing the market share in the fashion retail sector. However, they have never accounted for counterfeit luxury brands as a potential threat capturing a fair share of the pie. For example, the following figure 8.3 demonstrates that the luxury and discount brands have gained economic profit over the three-year period (2019-2021) as reported by the McKinsey and Company report (2023) according to their McKinsey Global Fashion Index (MGFI). The report further states that poor performance of the mid-market brands is disproportionately affected by the Inditex group which is the parent company of brands such as Zara, Pull & Bear, Massimo Dutti, etc. However, this research proposes that the non-luxury brands such as the mid-market, and premium/ bridge non-luxury brands presented in the figure 8.3 should include counterfeit luxury brands as a potential competitor capturing their customer base and reducing their market share. In doing so, the non-luxury brands will be better equipped to target consumers of counterfeit luxury brands towards themselves, and it will also help them retain their loyal customers from substituting their

products with counterfeit luxury products. This can be achieved by reassessing their brand strategies and marketing communications to address these consumers.
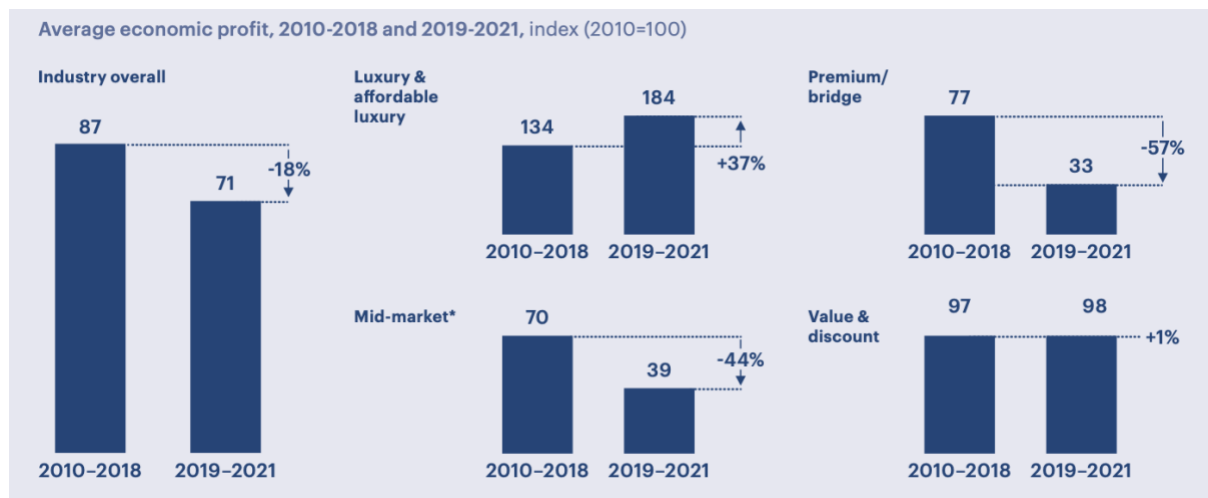
Figure 8.3 Comparisons of average economic profit of luxury and non-luxury brands across 2010-2018 and 2019-2021

(Source: Adapted from McKinsey Global Fashion Index, 2023, p. 116)

Sixth, the non-luxury brand managers should emphasise on the high quality of their products compared to counterfeits and also indicate the social belongingness which these brands provide which cannot be attained through counterfeits. This will appeal to those consumers who often do not compare counterfeits with similarly priced non-luxury brands. The brand managers can achieve this through advertising the social belongingness and ethical aspects of consuming genuine non-luxury brands in contrast with the immoral and illegal aspects of counterfeit consumption. The use of social media influencers would be a great initiative to communicate this to a wide consumer base. Social media influencers' impact will also help strengthen a sense of brand community within the consumers of non-luxury brands, especially the younger consumers.

Seven, with the increasing popularity of fast fashion brands such as Boohoo, Pretty Little Thing, etc. which are quick to bring runway fashion styles to their stores quicker than the traditional high-street brands, non-luxury brands are much more in vogue than before. The recent slowed growth of the luxury fashion industry across China, US, and Europe due to subdued economic growth, persistent inflation, and weak consumer confidence has also added to the popularity of non-luxury brands (McKinsey and Company report, 2023). The findings of this study suggest that the brand managers of these brands should leverage this opportunity to grow patronage of these consumers

in the long term by continuing to offer affordable alternatives to luxury brands to the middle class and the working class which constitute the passive, protesting and penurious consumer categories. Furthermore, this is apt opportunity to emphasise on their superiority to counterfeit luxury as well by educating consumers on this authentic aspect of their products. Similar to the anticounterfeiting advertising by luxury brands, it is time for non-luxury brands to promote their authentic products to fight counterfeits.

In a nutshell, this section provided seven prominent practical implications of the current study which may be useful for the brand managers of luxury as well as non-luxury brands. Following practical implications of the study, the next section discusses the implications of the research for policy makers.

8.6 Implications for policy

The current research addresses the research gap identified by Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in their recent report (2019) about the lack of knowledge about the degree of substitution between counterfeit luxury and genuine luxury & non-luxury brands. There are several implications of this research towards policymaking. First, the findings suggest that the counterfeit trade reporting by OECD and other policy makers should include the impact of counterfeits on non-luxury brands as well. This is particularly relevant for evaluating the impact of non-deceptive counterfeits sold in secondary markets. This is because the counterfeits sold in secondary markets with larger price variations from the original luxury brands are more likely substituting non-luxury brands, as established by the current research. This study found that predominantly the passive and penurious consumers with low childhood and adulthood SES are prone to substitute non-luxury brands with counterfeit luxury. This is because these two substitutes compete proportionately from price points and quality aspects. The present study reported that the passive and penurious consumers almost never bought the original luxury brands due to low SES. This finding further challenges the lost sales of original luxury brands reported as a direct consequence of counterfeits. The non-luxury brands are currently absent in the evaluation of losses from counterfeit trade by policy makers. Therefore, the impact of counterfeits on non-luxury brands must be accounted for while reporting the losses caused by counterfeiting.

Furthermore, the current research suggests government agencies and policy makers to reassess the existing parameters of calculating lost sales to the IPR holders. The UK government's Intellectual Property Counter-Infringement Strategy for 2022-2027

reports that the consequences of counterfeiting on the genuine businesses and IPR holders has long-term impacts on the country's economy (IPO, 2022). The IPO (2022) reports that the total volume of lost sales by IPR holders in the UK amounted to £8.6 billion in 2013. However, these numbers may not be accounting for the losses caused by those counterfeits which are sold in secondary markets which are not always substituted by the legitimate brands who are the IPR holders. Therefore, the conventional framework to measure and report the lost sales due to the counterfeit trade requires reassessment by the relevant government departments and policy makers.

Additionally, this research recommends policy makers to advocate non-luxury brands as an alternate route for counterfeit consumers to quench their thirst for cheaper alternatives to luxury. Currently, most anticounterfeiting communications are directed towards warning consumers of counterfeits, without propositioning a suitable alternative on a similar price point and quality metrics. For example, in many cases (e.g., passive and penurious) consumers are unable to afford the authentic luxury brands if they choose to stop their counterfeit purchases. Because non-luxury brands are universally available and consumed by almost all consumer groups, an advertisement campaign by policy makers reinforcing non-luxury brands as a better substitute for counterfeits will go a long way. Currently, all the anticounterfeiting efforts by the Intellectual Property Office and other government agencies are directed towards protecting luxury brands from counterfeiting. For example, figure 8.4 below shows one such anticounterfeiting advertisement to "be authentic, buy real". While these anticounterfeiting measures are important, directing consumers of counterfeits towards the benefits of non-luxury brands (over counterfeit luxury) via advertising will appeal to those consumers who respond to such communications by arguing that they cannot afford the highly expensive authentic luxury brands. Such consumers justify their counterfeit purchase with flawed reasoning (Orth et al., 2019). Therefore, policy makers should address the concerns of these consumers with an alternate resolution by advocating non-luxury brands by including them in their anticounterfeiting advertising efforts.

Figure 8.4 Comparisons of average economic profit of luxury
(Source: Fondation de la Haute Horlogerie, 2023)

The current research also contributes to policymaking by initiating preliminary qualitative research towards the consideration of substitution rates and attempted to bridge the "information gaps concerning consumer behaviour surrounding their purchase of counterfeit goods" (OECD, 2017, p.83). To recall, substitution rates measure the likelihood of consumers substituting their counterfeit purchases with the legitimate brands at their full price (OECD, 2017). The estimation of substitution rates is crucially important for policy makers to analyse the effects of counterfeiting on the IPR holders more accurately which is currently challenging using the traditional econometric tools (OECD, 2017). Although achieving this research gap fully is beyond the scope of the present study, yet, it has attempted to build the initial foundations of qualitative research to some degree by gathering personal accounts of many UK consumers regarding their inclinations to substitute among counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands. However, a lot more research is required in this area which can be conducted by future research. Nevertheless, the insights and findings of the current research will help future researchers in this area.

8.7 Limitations of the research

This research is not without limitations. First, the data collected using the in-depth interviews is based on perspectives and experiences of consumers based in the UK while the netnographic study involved global consumers as already discussed in detail in section 4.5.6. This could not be prevented due to the universal access to the internet and the presence of a wide variety of Reddit users who are based across diverse countries and cultures. The researcher acknowledges that this limitation may have caused some degree of bias in the reported findings across the two datasets.

Second, this research study encompassed three brand types (*viz.* counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands) in the substitution dynamics. Although it touched upon various types of non-luxury brands such as generic brands, store brands, mass-fashion brands, etc., these could not be included further in studying the brand substitution by consumers due to limited time and space restrictions. Additional research is required to examine the delineation of non-luxury brand types and how they are affected by counterfeiting. For example, research is required to identify whether mass-fashion brands are affected more severely by counterfeits due to the brand substitution between these alternatives by consumers.

Third, the present study incorporated a qualitative approach using netnography and in-depth interviews. The netnographic study used Reddit as the online platform to collect data, however, future researchers can also use other social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, etc. to conduct the study using different datasets. With the increasing popularity of the online marketplace, including social media data and online consumer behaviours surrounding counterfeit purchase and consumption can be valuable.

Fourth, the findings of the present study are solely based on qualitative data. Although the study adopted mixed methods using netnographic study and in-depth interviews, both of these methods were inductive in nature. The mixed methods approach adopted by this research could also be subjected to quantitative methods such as experiments, surveys, etc. Therefore, the current research lacks the statistical rigour of quantitative research. By adding quantitative method within the mixed methods approach, it could have added to the robustness of the study by testing the hypotheses and validating the findings of the research. This is an area for further research.

Fifth, this study was limited to the inclusion of non-luxury brands as a potential bearer of counterfeit related loss of customer equity and brand equity. However, it mainly covered consumer perspectives to study the effect of counterfeits on non-luxury and luxury brands. Thus, brand perspectives of the effect of counterfeits on the original brands could not be included due to limited space. It would be interesting to extend this study by incorporating the perspectives of brand managers of non-luxury brands regarding their views on the effects of counterfeits on their brands. This can be included in future research studies.

Overall, this section discussed five prominent limitations of the present research. The next section highlights the areas for future research.

8.8 Future research directions

Building on the limitations of the present research, this section discusses future research directions in the area of counterfeiting research to address these limitations. First, since this study is limited to the perspectives and experiences of consumers based in the UK, it would be useful if future researchers could conduct similar study based on data from other parts of the world such as the USA, Canada, Asian countries, etc. This would help establish counterfeit consumer behaviour reported in this study using datasets from different countries and cultures. According to McKinsey and Company report (2023), Europe and the United States saw slow growth in the fashion industry throughout the year, while China' s strong performance in the first half of the year faded in the second half. It would be interesting to study how these regional variations in the fashion industry affect consumers' brand substitution behaviours between the alternatives of counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands.

Future work could also explore the effects of cultural differences involving status insecurity and social belongingness needs and their impact on brand substitution between counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands. It would be particularly interesting to study consumers' perceptions of luxury and non-luxury brands in developing countries with different consumer types with a more diverse social class (and SES) structure. For example, unlike individualistic cultures such as the UK, collectivistic cultures such as China, India would provide different results on the account of cultural differences. The ultra-rich billionaires of India, for instance, mainly consume high-end luxury brands while the middle-class and the working class have limited access to luxury and their perception of luxury is that of unnecessary

extravagance. In a social structure with as much economic inequality in per capita income, consumer behaviour towards counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands will vary significantly compared to consumers in the western markets. Future work can draw comparisons in consumer behaviours based on these cross-cultural differences. Therefore, this is an interesting area for future researchers to explore.

The current research entailed three brand substitutes – counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands. However, a fourth substitute beyond these three brand types may be incorporated in developing economies, and that is, counterfeit non-luxury brands (e.g., fake Nike, fake Adidas products). Because unlike the UK counterfeit market, countries like India, China, Thailand also harbour a wide variety of counterfeit non-luxury brands. Future studies based in these countries can include these four brand types and their substitution effects on counterfeit consumption behaviours. Additionally, future researchers could also explore the effect of counterfeits on specific non-luxury brands such as mass-fashion brands, premium non-luxury brands, etc. Furthermore, masstige brands – which lie at the intersection of luxury and mass-fashion brands – can also be included as a brand substitute of counterfeit luxury brands. Due to low purchasing power of consumers in developing countries, often the most popular types of non-luxury brands are the generic brands which do not bear any brand logo. In such markets, it would be interesting to research if consumers compare these generic brands with counterfeit global brands such as Nike, Adidas, etc. This dynamic would be similar to the substitution between counterfeit luxury and non-luxury brands which this present study focussed on. However, the point of difference would be the difference in SES, EW, and cultural factors in these countries compared to the developed economies.

As mentioned previously, future research could build on the foundations of the current study to conduct quantitative research to provide data on the substitution rates which will help policy makers to estimate the effect of counterfeits on the IPR holders more accurately. It will also enable non-luxury brand owners to have more concrete evidence of the losses caused to them by the proliferation of counterfeit luxury brands. This can be done using econometric methods, statistical surveys, experiments, etc. to map the substitution rates of counterfeit purchases. Further research could investigate the computations of the scale at which non-luxury brands are impacted by the counterfeit luxury brands. The quantitative study can also include the socioeconomic backgrounds of consumers, thus measuring their SES and purchasing powers. The brand

substitution rates can then be mapped against the corresponding SES factors, providing a detailed account of the effect of SES on the choice between counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands. This data will provide the foundation for the non-luxury brand managers to pay attention towards protecting their brands from the substitution by counterfeits. It will also strengthen their motive towards changing their marketing communications towards creating consumer awareness towards authenticity as against fake products.

Furthermore, future researchers can include social media influencers and social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, etc. to study the purchase behaviours of consumers on these platforms in the context of counterfeit goods. With the increasing popularity of social media and online shopping, counterfeit trade has shifted to online markets to a great extent. This study conducted Netnography using Reddit platform, however, including these abovementioned social media platforms will further enhance the resources available to brand managers and policymakers towards these changing shifts in counterfeit consumption behaviours. In particular, future researchers can study the decision-making processes of consumers while choosing between easily accessible online counterfeit brands and authentic luxury and non-luxury brands.

Additionally, future work can explore the growing impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the marketing world which is also affecting the purchase and sale of counterfeits. The use of darknet which is an encrypted portion of the internet which is inaccessible using traditional search engines such as Google, has become a breeding ground for illegal activities such as counterfeit trade. Future research could explore the area of darknet in the context of counterfeiting, though accessing it can be challenging and requires special skillset and knowledge. Date science algorithms can detect and deal with new types of counterfeits. AI can help companies and brand managers by screening logos and flagging potential counterfeit products. Future researchers can study how AI can be used to prevent counterfeiting and related activities which is an evolving area of study.

Finally, the current research suggests conducting similar studies from brand perspectives by including data from perspectives of brand managers as mentioned in the limitations section. Incorporating brand managers' views will strengthen the findings of this research and guide future researchers to add some significant findings

from brand perspectives in the overall effect of counterfeits on original brands, especially on the non-luxury brands. Since the present research was limited to consumers' perspectives on brand substitution between counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and non-luxury brands, research from brands' perspectives will provide a broader viewpoint to anticounterfeiting agencies and policymakers. These are some areas for future research.

8.9 Summary

This chapter presented detailed discussion to synthesise the key findings of the current research based on the last three chapters. Following the discussion section, it provided a synopsis of the overall research. This helped in bringing all the key details of the study together. This chapter concludes this thesis by assessing its contribution to knowledge, practical implications, and policymaking. It discussed the contribution of this research in the counterfeiting research area and in doing so, it elaborated how the study achieved the aim of the research which was to study the effect of counterfeits on non-luxury brands. Additionally, it discussed the contributions of the study to SES-based consumption literature, and symbolic self-completion theory. Finally, the chapter discussed the limitations of the current research and highlighted several areas for future research.

Appendix A: Literature review – key papers

Journal	Journal rating	Discipline	Theme	Broad Category (about)	Key words	Title	Year	In-text Citation
Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	4*	Marketing	Non-luxury	Status	Buying Status	"Buying Status" by Choosing or Rejecting Luxury Brands and Their Counterfeits	2013	Geiger-Oneto et al (2013)
Journal of Marketing Research	4*	Marketing	Counterfeit CONSUMER	Impact on brands	Purchase intention	Why Do Consumers Buy Counterfeit Luxury Brands?	2009	Wilcox et al (2009)
Management science	4	Marketing	Counterfeit BRAND	Substitution effect	Product innovation	Counterfeiters: foes or friends? How counterfeits affect sales by product quality tier	2014b	Qian (2014b)
Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin	4	Psychology	Luxury	Luxury negative sides	luxury consumption, social influence, status, warmth, impression management	The Dark Side of Luxury: Social Costs of Luxury Consumption	2019	Cannon, C., & Rucker, D. (2019)
Journal of Consumer Research	4*	Sociology	Meaning	Consumption	McCracken's (1986) theory of meaning movement	Culture and consumption: A theoretical account of the structure and movement of the cultural meaning of consumer goods	1986	McCracken, G. (1986)
Journal of Consumer Psychology	4*	Sociology	Social Class	Status	Income inequality, Positional consumption, Status goods	Positional Goods and the Social Rank Hypothesis: Income Inequality Affects Online Chatter about High- and Low-Status Brands on Twitter	2018	Walasek et al (2018)
Journal of Consumer Research	4*	Marketing	Meaning	Symbol	symbolic interactionism	The role of products as social stimuli: A symbolic interactionism perspective	1983	Solomon, M. R. (1983)
Journal of Consumer Research	4*	Psychology	Self-concept	Consumer behaviour	Self-concept critical literature review	Self-concept in consumer behavior: A critical review	1982	Sirgy, M. J. (1982)
Book	NA	Sociology	Theory	Symbol	Symbolic interactionism	Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method	1986	Blumer, H., 1986
Report	NA	Economics	Counterfeit BRAND	Illicit trade	Counterfeiting trade	Trends in Trade in Counterfeit and Pirated Goods, Illicit Trade	2019	OECD/EUIPO (2019)
Report	NA	Economics	Counterfeit BRAND	Illicit trade UK economy	Fake Goods, Real Losses	Trade in Counterfeit Products and the UK Economy	2017	OECD (2017) Update (2019)
Conference paper	NA	Marketing	Counterfeit CONSUMER	Consumption	Consuming Counterfeits	Consuming Counterfeits	2009	Large, J., 2009
PhD Thesis	NA	Law	Counterfeit CONSUMER	Consumption	Consuming Counterfeits	Criminality, consumption and the counterfeiting of fashion goods: a consumer perspective	2011	Large, J., 2011
Journal of Consumer Psychology	4*	Psychology	Consumer behaviour	Effects of environment on consumer behavior	Unconscious consumer	The unconscious consumer: Effects of environment on consumer behavior	2005	Dijksterhuis, A. et al (2005)
Journal of Consumer Psychology	4*	Psychology	Counterfeit CONSUMER	Counterfeit luxury consumption	females' moral disengagement	Counterfeit luxury consumption in a social context: The effects on females' moral disengagement and behavior	2019	Wang, Y., Stoner, J.L. and John, D.R., 2019
Quarterly Journal of Economics	4*	Economics	Counterfeit BRAND	Impact on brands	Impact of counterfeits entry	Impacts of entry by counterfeiters	2008	Qian, Y., 2008
Journal of Consumer Psychology	4*	Psychology	Consumer Socialization	Friend and Family Accessibility	consumers' socialization processes	"We" are Different: Exploring the Diverse Effects of Friend and Family Accessibility on Consumers' Product Preferences	2020	Fei, X., You, Y. and Yang, X., 2020

Academy of Management Review	4*	Management	Theory	theoretical contribution	What constitutes a theoretical contribution	What constitutes a theoretical contribution?	1989	Whetten, D. A. 1989
Journal of Consumer Psychology	4*	Psychology	CHILDHOOD SES	Self-esteem	Generic brands	Can Everyday Brands Be Threatening? Responses to Brand Primes Depend on Childhood Socioeconomic Status	2018	Whelan, J., & T. Hingston, S. (2018)
Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes	4	Org Studies	CHILDHOOD SES	Patience	Childhood socioeconomic status, Agency	The effect of childhood socioeconomic status on patience	2020	Thompson, D.V. et al. (2020)
Journal of Strategic Marketing	2	Marketing	Counterfeit Literature Review	Non-deceptive counterfeit products	Future research agenda of counterfeit research	Non-deceptive counterfeit products: a morphological analysis of literature and future research agenda	2020	Samaddar, K. and Menon, P., 2020
Journal of Retailing	4	Marketing	Counterfeit BRAND	ONLINE MARKETPLACE	Benefits of counterfeits	Counterfeiters in Online Marketplaces: Stealing Your Sales or Sharing Your Costs	2020	Sun, J., Zhang, X. and Zhu, Q., 2020
Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes	4	Org Studies	Signaling Status	Luxury vs non-luxury	Keywords: Status signaling Social status Social hierarchy Status legitimacy Symbolic consumption	What if diamonds did not last forever? Signaling status achievement through ephemeral versus iconic luxury goods	2020	Desmichel, P., Ordabayeva, N. and Kocher, B.. (2020)
Psychological Bulletin	4	Psychology	Status	SWB	status, respect, rank, desire, motive	Is the desire for status a fundamental human motive? A review of the empirical literature	2015	Anderson, C. et al. (2015)
British Journal of Social Psychology	3	Sociology	SES & Self-concept	Social Class	Socioeconomic status and self-concept	Socioeconomic status and the structure of the self-concept	2020	Easterbrook, M.J. et al (2020)
Journal of Consumer Research	4*	Marketing	Status	Trickle-round signals	status signaling, conspicuous consumption, distinction	Trickle-Round Signals: When Low Status Is Mixed with High	2020	Bellezza, S. and Berger, J., 2020
Journal of Consumer Research	4*	Marketing	SES	Low economic mobility, Compensatory behaviour	perceived economic mobility, socioeconomic status, variety seeking, choice, control, compensatory behavior	Feeling economically stuck: The effect of perceived economic mobility and socioeconomic status on variety seeking	2018	Yoon, S. and Kim, H.C., 2018
Psychological Science	4*	Psychology	Authenticity	Self-concept	Impact of counterfeits	The Counterfeit Self	2010	Gino et al (2010)
Journal of Consumer Research	4*	Marketing	Authenticity	INAUTHENTICITY FEELINGS FROM LUXURY (VS. NON-LUXURY)	luxury, self-authenticity, psychological entitlement, symbolic consumption	The impostor syndrome from luxury consumption	2020	Goor, D. et al (2020)
Journal of Consumer Research	4*	Research	Meaning	dialectical theory of consumer culture and branding	Why do brands cause trouble?	Why do brands cause trouble? A dialectical theory of consumer culture and branding	2002	Holt, D.B., 2002
Annual review of sociology	4*	Sociology	Self-concept	Symbolic interactionism	self-concept	The self-concept	1982	Gecas, V., 1982
PhD Thesis	4*	Psychology	Self-concept	Self-Concept in Consumer Behavior	Self-Concept in Consumer Behavior	Self-Concept in Consumer Behavior. Ph. D (Doctoral dissertation, thesis)	1979	Sirgy, M.J., 1979
Journal of Marketing	4*	Marketing	Self-concept	Symbolic interactionism	Consumer self-concept, symbolism and market behavior	Consumer self-concept, symbolism and market behavior: A theoretical approach	1967	Grubb, E.L. and Grathwohl, H.L. 1967
PhD Thesis	4*	Marketing	Authenticity	self-authenticity	Branding, Symbolic Consumption, Consumer Identity, Luxury Marketing, Status Signaling, Authenticity, Consumer Well-being	Branding in the New World: How Accessible Information, Social Media, and Changing Values Impact Symbolic Consumption	2020	Goor, D. (2020)

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Introductory questions

1. Can you give me a brief introduction about yourself?

   Age

   Occupation

   Marital status

   Children

2. Could you tell me about your last shopping experience of a fashion brand?

Consumption value- functional value:

3. Why did you choose to buy this particular brand?

Consumption value- emotional value:

4. How did you feel about this brand?

Self-authenticity related questions:

5. How much does the last brand you bought make you feel true to yourself?

6. How comfortable do you feel using this brand?

7. Can you tell me an incident when you did not feel like yourself using a brand?

8. Can you recall an incident amongst your friends/ colleagues that made you feel conscious of the brand you were wearing?

9. Do you believe in 'being true to yourself' or in 'fake it till you make it'? Why?

10. Tell me about an incident when you felt like an imposter/ fake using a certain brand?

Symbolic self-completion related questions:

11. Which brand would you wear when going for an important interview? Why?

12. Tell me an experience when the brand you were wearing made you feel better?

13. Have you ever bought a brand to make yourself feel more complete?

14. What are some of your favourite brands and why?

15. Do any of these brands make you feel empowered? How?

16. What do you think about the size of the logo on a product?

17. How do you define yourself as?

Childhood SES related questions:

18. How would you describe your childhood? What kind of neighbourhood you grew up in?

19. How did you feel about your family wealth compared to your classmates?

20. What brands you used as a child?

21. How did you feel about what brands your classmates used?

22. Would you like to share any particular event from your childhood which you think impacted you?

23. What is your happy memory as a child?

24. What is your sad memory as a child?

25. How do you feel your childhood background influences which brands you buy?

26. What is your fondest memory of a brand advertisement as a child?

27. Have you bought this brand when you grew up?

28. Can you tell me about any brand/ product which makes you feel nostalgic about your childhood?

29. How was the emotional support from your parents growing up?

Consumption value – functional value

30. How much importance do you give to what your friends think of a brand as opposed to the utility of the brand? Can you give an example?

31. How important is the functionality of the brand you purchase?

32. What do you think about farm-to-closet fashion?

Consumption value – emotional value

33. Have you/ do you buy luxury brands? How do you feel about luxury brands? Do you buy from thrift stores/ charity shops?

34. How do you feel about low-priced luxury brands e.g., Coach? Would you buy them?

35. How do you feel about fake/ counterfeit brand? Do you buy them?

36. What do you think about the moral aspects of using fake brands?

37. What kind of watches do you like? Why?

38. What is your most valuable piece of clothing/ jewellery/ shoes in your wardrobe?

39. Tell me about a particular outfit which you have saved only for a special occasion?

Consumption Value – social value:

40. How do you feel your friends/ colleagues would describe you as?

41. Can you recall a brand which you feel improved your social reputation? How?

42. How much do you care about the social reputation of brands?

43. Do your friends buy counterfeits?

44. Do your friends know that you buy counterfeits? How does that make you feel?

Substitution related questions:

45. Out of counterfeit luxury, original luxury, and high-street brands, which would you choose? And why?

46. If I look into your wardrobe right now, which brands would I find?

47. If given a choice between a fake luxury brand and a high-street brand, which one would you choose? Why?

48. Would you replace a non-luxury brand with a counterfeit luxury brand?

Closing questions:

49. Would you like to share anything which I did not ask in the interview?

50. Can you refer someone who would be interested in participating in this study?

Appendix C: Facebook advertisement posted for the recruitment of participants for research interview

Hello, are you a UK resident aged 20-60 years old?

I am conducting a research study and I am looking for participants for a 45-minute interview regarding fashion consumption/ purchase behaviour towards fashion brands.

The interview will be online on a video call, and you will get a £20 Amazon gift card.

Your identity will be confidential.

You just have to answer a few questions in an online video call/ meeting. I am conducting this research as a part of my doctoral degree at Northumbria university, Newcastle, UK.

You can be based anywhere in the UK.

If interested, dm me your email address. Thanks.

Appendix D: Consent form – Northumbria University

Project Title: "Do counterfeits only affect luxury brands that are heavily counterfeited?"

Principal Investigator: Jaishree Prasad
Student ID No. (if applicable): s19011025

please tick or initial where applicable

I have carefully read and understood the Participant Information Sheet.   p

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study and I   p
have received satisfactory answers.

I understand I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without   p
having to give a reason for withdrawing, and without prejudice.

I agree to take part in this study.   p

I also consent to the retention of this data under the condition that any   p
subsequent use also be restricted to research projects that have gained
ethical approval from Northumbria University.

I agree to the University of Northumbria at Newcastle recording and
processing this information about me. I understand that this information
will be used only for the purpose(s) set out in the information sheet
supplied to me, and my consent is conditional upon the University
complying with its duties and obligations under the Data Protection Act
2018 which incorporates General Data Protection Regulations
(GDPR).You can find out more about how we use your information here
- Privacy Notices

Name/signature of participant: Date:

INTERVIEWER: Hi, I will start with a brief introduction about me. I am Jaishree, doing a PhD from Northumbria University in Newcastle. The topic of my research is counterfeit luxury brands and consumer behaviour, so I will be asking you a few questions regarding that. Can we start with a brief introduction about you please?

DANIEL: Hi, yeah sure. I am 38, I work for a telecom company. About my family, I currently live with my seven-year-old and my wife. I have lived on the same street for 38 years. I have got two sisters, one brother and mum and dad as well.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, good to know that. So, first of all, can you tell me your last shopping experience of a fashion brand?

DANIEL: I think that was trainers, I normally go to Sports Direct, because they are a good value brand for trainers, which I always have Adidas, I got them for a decent range. it's easier for me to get there because it's 20 minutes off the road.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so compared to other brands, why do you mostly choose Sports Direct?

DANIEL: I mostly buy from them because they are a lot better than most places. Many go to JD Sports, wherever you go, it's getting complex when you grow older, even for sports shops as well. They always seem to have the cheapest at the moment especially with the current situation, I navigate to Sports Direct, they seem to have a range that I prefer anyway. I mostly wear trainers day in and day out, because I don't have to dress up for work, so these ones I wear all the time, they are comfortable, normally Sports Direct is the place to find these anyway.

INTERVIEWER: How do you feel about their products when you are wearing them, when you're wearing those trainers?

DANIEL: To be honest, I have always had brand new trainers. I always tend to navigate towards Adidas, they always seem to be very comfortable and light, unlike Reebok, I have never liked their trainers, they are not very comfortable, but Adidas is always very comfortable for me. Even when I was younger, I would never go away from Adidas.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, and how much do you feel Adidas makes you feel that you are being true to yourself?

DANIEL: Well, yeah, I have always bought trainers that represent me, normally I find a decent pair that I like myself, and you know, the trainers that I have bought, I have always bought Adidas, so yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, and can you tell me an incident when you did not feel like yourself while using a brand, maybe any other brand?

DANIEL: Erm... I would say Reebok, like I say I didn't buy them myself, it was bought for me, and I can't get them on. It's just that they never feel comfortable, so to me, that would be

Reebok when I am not true to myself. That was when I was younger, but I have never tried to get back to them at all.

INTERVIEWER: And do you remember any incident when you felt conscious of the brand you were wearing, especially in front of your friends or colleagues?

DANIEL: More when I was in school, because my dad couldn't afford the Adidas trainers that I wanted or the trainers that I wanted and I had to have a lesser well-known brand, obviously they had four kids, so they had to buy four, so sometimes I had to wear brands that I might not wear today at all, or the type of shoes that I am wearing, especially at school, you have to be conscious because you are not yourself. Fashion at school, especially secondary school is quite important when you are that age. So, yeah, it was in school, when I was younger in high school.

INTERVIEWER: So, especially when you could not buy the trainers you wanted, did you still believe in being true to yourself or in 'fake it till you make it' as they say.

DANIEL: So yeah, I had bought one that I could afford, so it wasn't necessarily what I wanted, and I wasn't necessarily true to myself but it's what could be afforded at the time.

INTERVIEWER: And can you tell me about an incident when you felt like an imposter or a fake when using a certain brand?

DANIEL: So, I always had sort of named trainers, so, I would look at the fact that ... umm.

INTERVIEWER: Maybe when you bought clothes, wallet, sunglasses, or some other products, not necessarily trainers, you know.

DANIEL: There's one shirt that's fake and you can tell, and it makes you feel like you know it's fake is... I am a big football fan and occasionally I have bought the second football shirts of my club which is Aston Villa and you can tell that it's fake because the quality isn't the same as compared to... my son's always had the original, I would always buy the original, so for myself I bought a fake version and you can tell by looking at its quality, it's not the same, so you feel like fake when you are wearing it, something like that ...

INTERVIEWER: And do you think other people could tell if it's fake or not.

DANIEL: Yeah, yeah, 'cause the badge is completely different because when I compare it to my son's who had the original, you could tell the difference within the badge, the print is different, mainly the badge, it looks like the 3D badge in the original one and so you can definitely tell.

INTERVIEWER: So, did any of the friends or acquaintances comment or say something to you on that, or could you just see in their reactions?

DANIEL: You could tell that they have the original and I have the knockoff version, so yeah they could tell that they have the original and mine wasn't the original.

INTERVIEWER: And how does that make you feel?

DANIEL: Well, it kind of makes you feel that they are thinking that he can't afford it, and you are not supporting the club because you are not paying for their prices, their products, that's

your club so you are meant to support, they might think that he can't take the money to put into the club. They assume that he can't much do it, even if that's not always the case, like you might not want to spend the money on that and you buy a fake one.

INTERVIEWER: Which brand would you wear when going for an important interview?
DANIEL: To be honest with you, I would prefer Marks and Spencers. I have always had suits from there, they seem to fit me well. Other places I buy from, they don't fit me well, their sizes are different. I go into Marks and Spencers, and I know what sizes to get and I know that it would fit fine.
INTERVIEWER: And can you tell about an experience when the brand you were wearing made you feel better?
DANIEL: Again, hmm.. I don't wear suit that often, but I used to wear in the job that I had previously and I always felt like wearing the Marks and Spencers one, it looked good quality, while the suit I would get from Asda, they would lack that quality, especially when you'd go into work or go for an interview.
INTERVIEWER: Compared to Asda or cheaper brands, how does a brand like Marks and Spencers makes you feel empowered?
DANIEL: Not so much empowered, they fit better, to me, a lot of different brands, the generic brands, they are all different everywhere; they could be XL in one shop and double XL in another one, Superdry for example, I always had to buy triple XL where normally I would go for double XL. So, it doesn't make me feel empowered, it just makes me feel comfortable.
INTERVIEWER: Yeah, Superdry sizes are really small, whatever you buy, you have to buy one size up.
DANIEL: Yeah, they are one brand I like but I have to buy triple XL, I am quite tall as well, I am 6'2" anyway, so I wear longer t-shirts, but Superdry it's ever so hard to find. I mean, it's quality stuff, looks good, but if it doesn't fit me properly, then it's not going to look good. My wife likes Superdry, and she buys hoodies from there, and she always buys from the men's section, because men's sizes are bigger, so she prefers to buy from there. Because we bought a few things from Superdry, probably it's one of her favourite brands. But Superdry always has to go one size up.

INTERVIEWER: And what do you think about the logo of the brand, the logo should be small or big?
DANIEL: It shouldn't be too big. Like, you could get some t-shirts like the Adidas t-shirt, it's in the middle, like the Nike t-shirt, so I think it depends on the brand, or what sort of clothing you are wearing. Like, t-shirts, I don't mind it being a bit big, because if it's a tiny one there, it looks a bit empty to me. But things like coats, I generally like plain coats, not like with a massive logo all over it. And for jeans, I think what they are at the moment, you have a tag at the back, where

you get like the brand tag at the back, I think that's more than fine. Again, it depends on the type of clothing for me.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, next I want to ask little bit about your childhood. You did talk about it a little bit in one of the questions. So, how would you describe your childhood? What kind of neighbourhood you grew up in?

DANIEL: Generally, it was a nice area, it's just on the outside of a small town, so it's kind of suburban. So I am just outside the town, so I am not in a busy area. And where I grew up, it was nice because what you found at this stage was people didn't really seem to move, so I kind of got to know the kids around. And I had a fantastic childhood, you know I was always playing, always had friends around, I loved it around there. There were plenty of places to go, so there were parks, I had a great childhood because there was always somewhere to go, so we had brooks down the way, we had fields the other side, tall trees, we had parks not too far away. So, yeah it was a lovely childhood; I was out all the time, I was hardly in.

INTERVIEWER: Sounds like you had a good time in your childhood.

DANIEL: yeah, because I was very active, I loved being outside... erm... I was always on my bike, always on the skates, in trainers, just running around, I was always, always outside. I never really liked to step in, I just wanted to be outside, even if I was just walking around, I wanted to be outside, I never wanted to be inside, I used to hate it. When we got grounded for a couple of days, and we had to sit inside with our mum and dad, I never liked it but I loved being outside, especially on my bike and stuff.

INTERVIEWER: So, do you remember, in your childhood which are the brands you used?

DANIEL: There was Nike, I did use Nike. My dad used to buy me Levis' jeans, it was more like a luxury item we used to get on Christmas or birthdays, things like that. My dad used to buy us as much as they could, branded stuff. I remember I used to wear Diadora, back in the past, you don't seem them anymore. I had a bit of Kappa, especially the tracksuits, Ellesse, I used to use some of them. I went through quite different brands, probably a lot of tracksuits. Like I said, I was out all the time, so I was always in comfortable wear to go out. Adidas as well, I preferred those things, I also had other brands like Diadora. And I always had decent jeans, like the ones we would get on Christmas or birthdays, and they would last long.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think your childhood background influences the brands you buy today?

DANIEL: yeah, definitely the Adidas, and I did like and still do. Also, Levi's and Wrangler jeans, those two I like for jeans, of course you can't get Adidas jeans. But now it's definitely things like that, the jeans more than anything.

INTERVIEWER: And, what is your fondest memory of a brand advertisement as a child, do you remember?

DANIEL: No, 'cause when I was younger, I didn't watch a lot of TV, I probably watched like half an hour in the morning and I never really watched TV, I was trying to think of brands, erm... I remember one, I think it was Reebok, a funny advert where they showed a big belly was chasing down the road, I remember this one brand I remember watching it, to see this big belly watch this bloke down the road, saying belly's going to get you. I think it was funny. Yeah, it must be there on YouTube, you can watch it.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, sure, I will do that. And can you tell me about any brand which makes you feel nostalgic about your childhood?

DANIEL: Erm... probably Levi's jeans and Wranglers, because it kind of reminds me like of Christmas and birthdays when I used to get 'em, I always stuck with the same type of jeans, bootcut, I have always had bootcut, I have always preferred bootcut anyway. So, I suppose if you can probably find those jeans, I used to love getting them at Christmas or for my birthday, when I needed any pair... so I suppose yeah, I remember wearing those. The one brand that does bring back some memories which I did have a pair but I haven't anymore, was Kickers as well because it reminds me of high school when I begged mum and dad, that I need Kickers, all my friends got Kickers, I need Kickers, and they'll say we'll see what we can do and then they would come out with a pair of Kickers. So, yeah that's one of the brands I have nostalgic thoughts about, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: yeah, that's good to know, and bootcut was a trend back then, it keeps coming back on and off.

DANIEL: yeah, I don't like skinny, I can't deal with skinny because I got quite thick legs anyway and so, I don't like it, but bootcut I like it because I don't like tight jeans, I like it a bit baggy, so I have always preferred bootcut. So yeah, it's always bootcut for me.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, they're definitely more comfortable I would say.

DANIEL: Yeah, definitely, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And how much importance do you give to what your friends think of a brand?

DANIEL: As I have got older, probably not as much because being a father, you can't get what you can and when you can. And you're really not that bothered, and that goes for my friends as well. They don't look at me and go, oh you really haven't got that because obviously we are old now, nearly forty, you don't really look at fashion the way you would do at school. You kind of get judged for what you are dressed like at school. But as you get older, you don't get judged as much, especially when you are a dad as well, you are going to try and get what you can.

INTERVIEWER: yeah, it becomes less important, I believe, right?

DANIEL: yes, definitely as you grow older. I remember when I was in my teens, early 20s, when you are going out to clubs and pubs, you might want to wear a... I mean, I can't remember the last I went to a club, those days are way behind me, thank you very much. I like to be in bed by ten.

INTERVIEWER: And have you ever bought luxury brands?

DANIEL: I did buy Hugo Boss once, that's probably the most luxury I bought. I mean, I love Gucci and stuff, but the price is astronomical, I mean I looked probably an year ago, in lockdown, when someone was asking me about top brands, I looked at Gucci, I looked at their t-shirt, it was for £300! I was like, I wouldn't spend that much on a t-shirt. I did like Hugo Boss, that's probably the most luxurious brand that I spent on a little bit. I have got to get a way around me. So, if I had a Gucci t-shirt, I wouldn't wear it to work or anything like that. So, I would get to wear it out really, because to be honest, I don't know why they cost so much, probably just their name. I am not really into luxury brands like that purely because of the price. If I was rich, then yeah I would pay those prices but working in a job that I do now and getting this wage, it certainly wouldn't allow a habit to buy Gucci.

INTERVIEWER: And how do you feel about fake luxury brands, like counterfeits?

DANIEL: I think, it's okay for someone to do that, if they feel comfortable with the people to know that it's fake, because I think it again depends on your age as well. If you are in school, and you get a fake Gucci t-shirt or bag or whatever, you get the Mickey taken out of you; but as you got older and you ask someone, what do you think of this, do you think it's real, looks pretty real and it's fake and they say, yeah, yeah cool. So, it all depends on your age. I never personally bought a fake Gucci t-shirt or a luxury brand like that but if I bought one now, I think it wouldn't bother me, because people wouldn't really judge me. i think, if that's something you want to buy, then all the better for you to buy but personally, I don't go looking for it, but if I found one at a good price, and it looked genuine, then probably I would buy it.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know any of your friends who buy counterfeits?

DANIEL: no, I am not sure if they do.

INTERVIEWER: Just a few more questions I have, so, what's the most valuable piece of clothing or shoes you have in your wardrobe right now?

DANIEL: I would probably say the Adidas trainers, I think I got in on sale for £90, to me that's the kind of top end that I go with trainers, especially Adidas, because most of them are in that price range that I like anyway.

INTERVIEWER: And do you think any of these expensive trainers improve your social reputation?

DANIEL: Yeah, because people would comment, oh, they are nice, where did you get them from... how much for those... I have got a couple of colleagues that are majorly into trainers, and if you go in a good pair of trainers, they will be like, yeah, they're quite nice yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Out of counterfeit luxury and high-street brands, which one would you choose?

DANIEL: High-street brands really because that's what I am used to anyway. Counterfeits don't guarantee that the quality is good as they are fake. So, I would always buy what I know. That's what I would prefer, because I know what to wear and what not to wear, so I would stick with the high-street brands.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, great to know that. So, Daniel, I am done with my questions. Do you have any questions for me?

DANIEL: Not really, it sounds interesting what you are studying!

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, it is a very interesting topic to explore, really. And thanks for your time today, it was lovely talking to you!

DANIEL: Yeah, same here. Okay, bye for now. Good luck with your research!

INTERVIEWER: Thank you.

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