

2020

## Multidimensional Strategies to Mitigate Counterfeiting

Tan Vu  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Tan Dinh Vu

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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Walden University  
2020

Abstract

Multidimensional Strategies to Mitigate Counterfeiting

by

Tan Dinh Vu

MBA, Strayer University

BS, Georgia Southern University

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2020

## Abstract

Counterfeiting causes substantial negative impacts on intellectual property and opportunity costs to businesses worldwide. Anticounterfeiting department executives who lack multidimensional anticounterfeiting strategies to mitigate fakes may incur substantial financial loss and intellectual property theft. Grounded in the systems theory, the purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies that anticounterfeiting department managers use to mitigate counterfeiting. The participants comprised 4 anticounterfeiting representatives of a consumer products company in a metropolitan area of Georgia who successfully devised and implemented anticounterfeiting strategies. Data were collected from semistructured interviews and the firm's online resources. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data, and 3 themes emerged: using online resources, increasing awareness, and continuous improvement. A key recommendation is for anticounterfeiting managers to integrate online resources created by experts in the field to improve the current anticounterfeiting strategy. The implications for positive social change include the potential for anticounterfeiting leaders to increase awareness and understanding of effective anticounterfeiting strategies, help businesses protect intellectual property and creations, increase profitability, extend business lifespan, and promote national economic advancement. Reducing counterfeiting also lessens the negative socioeconomic impacts that harm consumer morale, health, safety, and national economic advancement.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my father, Minh Vu, a war veteran and a political prisoner who endured many years of hard labor in various re-education camps. Your life experience is a great inspiration and influence for me to finish this degree. To my exemplary mother, Huyen-Nga, for motivating me to complete this mission. Also, to Linh-Trang and Minh-Uyen, your love, patience, and encouragements are the main reasons that empower me to complete this milestone. Last but not least, to all who have supported me directly and indirectly, I appreciate everything you have done for me.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Counterfeiting causes substantial adverse impacts on intellectual property and opportunity costs to businesses worldwide. The lack of sufficient literature, scholarly studies, and multidimensional anticounterfeiting knowledge to address the mitigation or elimination of fakes conveys the need for this study. In this section, I reveal the business problem and explain the research method I used to explore anticounterfeiting strategies that some anticounterfeiting department managers developed and implemented to successfully eradicate or diminish imitated products. Next is a critical review of the professional literature relating to the business problem that validates new research. In conclusion, I explain how this study can contribute to positive social changes in businesses, society, and national economic advancement.

### **Background of the Problem**

Counterfeiting is spreading rapidly and causing substantial financial losses and opportunity costs to businesses worldwide (Bu, 2018; Martinez & Jaeger, 2016; Wilson, 2017). Despite efforts from business executives and intellectual property owners, many anticounterfeiting department leaders cannot address the counterfeit issue resolutely (Jolly, 2015; Soares & Kauffman, 2018; Tripoli, 2016; Yang, 2015). Many scholars believe that the counterfeit issue is complex, so there is a need for effective anticounterfeiting strategies to mitigate or eliminate fakes effectively (Peng, Ahlstrom, Carraher, & Shi, 2017; Yushi, Luo, Jalees, Naqvi, & Zaman, 2018). Having effective anticounterfeiting strategies can aid firms' leaders in protecting intellectual property,

increasing economic benefits, growing business, and extending the business lifespan significantly.

Firm leaders who can develop and implement anticounterfeiting strategies efficiently can ensure their prosperous business outlook and sustainable business development. Executives who create effective anticounterfeiting strategies combine a process that requires in-depth and multidimensional knowledge of the counterfeit phenomena and the ability to understand different theories explaining the why and how counterfeiting has been existing and spreading, the deficiencies of current anticounterfeiting strategies, and industries that have the pressing issue. However, many anticounterfeiting department managers do not have sufficient knowledge and understanding of developing and creating effective anticounterfeiting strategies (Lee & Trim, 2019). Globalization and the constant and unforeseeable progress of advanced information technologies, 5G technologies, sophisticated digital technologies, artificial intelligence, global e-commerce, and worldwide logistics capabilities are some of the reasons that proliferate and facilitate the spread of imitated goods worldwide. Thus, anticounterfeiting department leaders need to understand that they must know how to develop and implement effective anticounterfeiting strategies in the globalization era to minimize the negative impacts of fakes and compete in the fast-paced business world successfully.

### **Problem Statement**

Counterfeiting is detrimental to businesses worldwide (Martinez & Jaeger, 2016). The Business Action to Stop Counterfeiting and Piracy projected the negative

impacts of counterfeiting and piracy to be \$4.2 trillion from the global economy and put 5.4 million legitimate jobs at risk by 2022 (Business Action to Stop Counterfeiting and Piracy, 2019). The general business problem was that counterfeiting causes significant financial losses and opportunity costs to many companies in the consumer product industries. The specific business problem was that some anticounterfeiting department managers in consumer product industries lack appropriate anticounterfeiting strategies to resolve or mitigate counterfeiting.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies that anticounterfeiting department managers of a consumer products company have successfully developed and implemented to resolve or mitigate counterfeiting. The study population included a purposeful sample of four adult male and female anticounterfeiting department executives from a consumer products company in a metropolitan area of Georgia who have successfully developed and implemented anticounterfeiting strategies. The anticounterfeiting department managers were over 18 years of age and had more than 2 years of job experience. Anticounterfeiting managers can use the study results to develop and implement better strategies to eliminate or reduce counterfeiting. The reduction or elimination of counterfeiting can benefit inventors, intellectual property owners, investors, and businesses by protecting intellectual property, creations, investments, and the financial interests. Additionally, reducing counterfeiting lessens the negative socioeconomic impacts that harm consumer morale, health, safety, and national economic advancement.

### **Nature of the Study**

There are three methods of analysis: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. I chose a qualitative approach to study the appropriate strategies to resolve or mitigate counterfeiting from anticounterfeiting department managers of the consumer products industries. The qualitative researcher can interpret a phenomenon or complicated subject matter with depth, richness, and complexity inherent in the phenomenon to gain insights and comprehensive characteristics by analyzing the research participants' responses to interview questions, which show their diverse perspectives, unique experiences, and actual knowledge (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2017; Cassell, 2018; Hannes, Heyvaert, Sleger, Brandenbrande, & Nuland, 2015; Munoz-Plaza et al., 2016). Using a qualitative approach can aid the researcher to gain meaningful results from a small sample size of participants and their perspectives, experiences, explanations, actions, and behaviors (Bruin, 2018; Byskov, 2019; Fleet, Burton, Reeves, & Dasgupta, 2016; Khoo & Saleh, 2017).

In a quantitative study, the researcher collects data using specific scales of measurements, concrete mathematical figures, objective measurements, a set of variables, mathematical analysis, or statistical information from the participants for hypothesis testing about quantitative models' relevance (Thurairajah, 2019; Williams, Ashill, & Naumann, 2017). Typically, the quantitative researcher needs multiple participants and carefully controlled dependent and independent variables to generate meaningful outcomes (Baldan, Geretto, & Zen, 2016; O'Doherty et al., 2018). Furthermore, the quantitative researcher usually uses empirical logic, numerical data, statistical analysis,

and hypotheses to examine variables' relationships to forecast behavior in specific occurrences (Baldan et al., 2016; Liao & Hitchcock, 2018; Sedov, 2018; Zhang, Wang, & Wang, 2017). I did not use the quantitative method because I examined the anticounterfeiting strategies by collecting and interpreting data from interviewing the participants and their unique attributes, body language, insights, intelligence, nonidentical cognitive processes, progressive patterns, and their experiences, which would not meet the quantitative method required elements. The mixed methodology integrates qualitative and quantitative methods (Ingham-Broomfield, 2016; May, Hunter, & Jason, 2016; Ochieng & Meetoo, 2015). Because quantitative analysis was not selected, the mixed method was not an option in this study.

Qualitative researchers utilize study designs, including case study, ethnography, narrative, and phenomenology. In a case study design, the researcher assesses and interprets complex and emergent issues of a phenomenon to attain far-reaching outcomes (Berg & Struwig, 2017; Berthelsen & Holge-Hazelton, 2018; Glasser & Strauss, 2017). Researchers using a case study design can address research questions in detail through a circumscribed scheme over time (McGinley, 2018; Ridder, 2017; Scholl, 2017; Sheppard & Vibert, 2016). Furthermore, researchers can exploit various types and sources of information from their participants' interviews through direct observations, documentation, and interactions to understand and verify their experiences and knowledge (Barnham, 2015; Sjoval, Bitzen, Kjellen, Nilsson, & Brun, 2016). I used a case study to explore multidimensional anticounterfeiting strategies to resolve or reduce counterfeiting.

Conversely, in ethnographic design, the researcher observes the participants' environment to understand the areas, themes, and population or through ethnographic fieldwork (Reynolds, 2015). Counterfeiting is not an issue associated with one specific ethnicity or society but people of many nationalities; thus, the ethnographic design was not applicable in this study. Further, applying the narrative design may reveal a cohesive story about the research participants over stories of their personal lives (Bruce, Beuthin, Shields, Molzahn, & Schick-Makaroff, 2016). But in this study, I examined strategies to mitigate counterfeiting; hence, using the narrative design was inappropriate. Finally, the phenomenological design describes the participants' feelings of experiencing an event, activity, or phenomenon (Sneed & Hammer, 2018). I did not plan to describe the research participants' personal meanings of different experiences with anticounterfeiting strategies in this study; therefore, the phenomenological design was not a suitable choice.

I executed the single qualitative case study design to collect data, extract anticounterfeiting strategies from the participants, and understand the counterfeit issue. Researchers using a single qualitative case study collect data through semistructured interviews, documents, and participant observations (Chesnay, 2015; Devaney, Spangler, Lee, & Delgadillo, 2018; Zahke, 2017). Researchers also employ a single case study by applying process-tracing methods to explore theoretical frameworks' relevance through a rigorous research design (Ulriksen & Dadalauri, 2016). Researchers using a case study design can probe in-depth knowledge and develop a vibrant picture of a phenomenon within its existing framework via observations, semistructured (or open-ended questions) interviews, body language, articles, narratives, direct quotes, audio-visual materials,

company reports, and analyses (Hott, Limberg, Ohrt, & Schmit, 2015; Quaquebeke & Felps, 2016). Accordingly, I chose a qualitative single case study because the single qualitative case study approach offered a considerable advantage in research suitability and flexibility (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2016; Garnett, Baeza, Trenholm, Gulliford, & Green, 2018). Furthermore, I was able to adequately depict the scale, scope, and dimensions of the anticounterfeiting themes through direct reflections, prearranged or casual semistructured interviews, and appropriate data (Greco, Bernadowski, & Parker, 2018; Molk & Auer, 2018).

### **Research Question**

What strategies do anticounterfeiting department managers use to resolve or mitigate counterfeiting?

### **Interview Questions**

1. What successful strategies did you implement to mitigate counterfeiting?
2. What anticounterfeiting strategies were unsuccessful?
3. How did you implement anticounterfeiting strategies effectively?
4. What challenges did you experience when implementing anticounterfeiting strategies?
5. What strategies did your organization employ to collaborate with other stakeholders to combat counterfeiting?
6. What anticounterfeiting strategies resulted in undesirable results?
7. What additional information can you share with me about the strategies used to mitigate or resolve counterfeiting?

## Conceptual Framework

I used the systems theory as the conceptual framework for this study as a lens and a foundation to explore the strategies that some anticounterfeiting department managers developed and executed to resolve or reduce counterfeiting. William Ross Ashby, Gregory Bateson, Kenneth Boulding, and Ludwig von Bertalanffy developed the systems theory in the 1940s (also known as the theories of the organization). The systems theory is a model or conceptual framework that researchers and scientists use to clarify and comprehend the complexity of reality by studying the interactions among the parts or components of a system to determine emerging patterns when different elements intermingle with one another, instead of examining each piece individually (Bohanon, Wahnschaff, Flaherty, & Ferguson, 2018; Kostoulas, Stelma, Mercer, Cameron, & Dawson, 2018; Malecic, 2017; Rousseau, 2017). Belifanti and Stout (2018), Heng (2017), and Karimi-Aghdam (2017) asserted that systems theory is instrumental in the evolution of human knowledge about the world and reflects a field of inquiry for understanding complex combinations of different research fields such as biology, cognitive science, criminal justice, ecological science, economics, law, mathematics, management, philosophy, political science, sociology, and business administration. Scholars use systems theory to explain a phenomenon by considering all knowledge areas have systems and systems have common characteristics and laws irrespective of the area in which they exist (Belifanti & Stout, 2018; Matook & Brown, 2017; Valentinov, Hielscher, & Pies, 2016). Likewise, counterfeiting is a system with many components and involves many players and stakeholders in different socioeconomic and

governmental segments representing manufacturers, traders, distributors, buyers, regulatory agencies, and law enforcement entities interrelated with common characteristics.

### **Operational Definitions**

*Bootleg*: The copying of newly created commercially released records either on a mass scale or for personal use, or any work that was not legitimately released in its present form, which was presumed as illegal materials (Morris, 2015; Reardon, McCorkle, Radon, & Abraha, 2019).

*Copyright*: Copyright is a form of intellectual property that the owner of an original creative work can claim a limited legal right to control whether and under what circumstances the original work may be copied and used by others within a limited term of years (Nikzad & Solomon, 2019; Okediji, 2019).

*Copyright law*: The law that protects the artistic creation by rewarding artists and authors with limited legal rights to ensure these individuals can produce and sell copies of their creative works, derivative products, and perform or exhibit their artistic creations in the public within a time limit of 70 years before their works become public domain (Ard, 2019; Matulionyte, 2019).

*Counterfeiting*: Counterfeiting is the illegal manufacturing or imitating of a product or original work on a commercial scale or for personal use such as fake paper currency of a government, fake check of a bank, bogus trademarks, drugs, fashion, digital products, works of art, or any accessories with the intent to deceive the receivers or

buyers into accepting it as the original product (Kerr, 2018; McKenna, 2018; Sullivan, Chan, Fenoff, & Wilson, 2017).

*Fakes:* Fakes are goods that are not genuine, real, or what they were supposed to be that counterfeit vendors or fraudsters deceive the buyer or receiver into believing such imitated products are genuine products (Sullivan, Wilson, & Militz, 2017; Thompson, 2019).

*Intellectual property:* Intellectual property refers to the creations of the mind, originations, or intangible property such as inventions, trade secrets, designs, patents, trademarks, logos, digital work, or artistic work (Hentschke, 2017; Hyde & Kulkami, 2017).

*Intellectual property law:* Intellectual property law is the area of law that addresses the protection of legal rights of the original creation, creative works, and inventions that allow intellectual property owners to profit and benefit from their invention or creative work (Nichols, 2019; Soares & Kauffman, 2018).

*Opportunity cost:* An opportunity cost is an economic principle that illustrates the value of a possibility that is not selected in a choice between two or more mutually exclusive alternatives measuring the value of a missed prospect in circumstances where resources are limited and must be utilized for one opportunity at the expense of another (Mickiewicz, Nyakudya, Theodorakopoulos, & Hart, 2017).

*Piracy:* Piracy is the illegal, unauthorized, or unlicensed reproduction of original work, trademarks, original products, copyrighted content, creation, or invention for commercial purpose such as video piracy, DVD Movie/CD Music piracy, software

program piracy (Beard, Ford, Sorek, & Spiwak, 2018; Guofang, Dan, Minqiang, & Yong, 2018).

*Supply chains ecosystems*: Ecosystems consist of various components in different sizes that make up an efficient and unified supply chain system (Flynn, Pagell, & Fugate, 2018; Manners-Bell, 2017).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

#### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are information or principles that are acceptable as facts or logically and factually sound in supporting a study without the need to verify or prove such information or principles are true (Chesnay, 2015; Hurlbut, 2017; Wolgemuth, Hicks, & Agosto, 2017). In this study, I assumed that the research participants would answer the interview questions truthfully according to their cognizance and experiences in developing and implementing anticounterfeiting strategies. Second, I assumed that the study findings would unveil the anticounterfeiting themes through the anticounterfeiting department managers' expertise and experiences.

#### **Limitations**

Limitations are encumbrances that can affect the research outcomes of a study such as the quality of the research, the state of being valid, or the enhancement of creditability, validity, and generality of research findings (Fletcher, 2017; Nir, 2018; Shen & Antonopoulos, 2017). In this qualitative single case study, the limitation was human knowledge and the participants' limited multifaceted knowledge of counterfeiting and anticounterfeiting themes. These factors also hindered many executives from

developing and implementing multidimensional anticounterfeiting strategies to mitigate or eliminate counterfeiting successfully. An additional limitation was that I collected data from a small sample size, which may not reflect the entire population's viewpoints.

### **Delimitations**

Researchers use the term *delimitations* to emphasize the research's restrictive scope (Le Roux, 2017; Tight, 2016). The delimitations in this study consisted of (a) a consumer products company in a metropolitan area of Georgia, (b) anticounterfeiting department managers with at least 2 years of experience in developing and implementing anticounterfeiting strategies successfully, and (c) the anticounterfeiting strategies are for domestic or global markets.

### **Significance of the Study**

#### **Significance of the Study**

This study outcomes can be valuable and essential to businesses worldwide, as having effective anticounterfeiting strategies can protect firms' intellectual property and economic benefits in the globalization era. Many scholars and activists have pointed out that fakes and bootleg products are spreading uncontrollably and surpassing many business executives' counter-measures and efforts in curbing the proliferation of counterfeiting and piracy (Gurhan-Canli, Sarial-Abi, & Hayran, 2018; Zameer, Wang, Yasmeen, Mofrad, & Saeed, 2018). This study's results can help firms' leaders recognize the significance of having effective anticounterfeiting strategies, which can inspire more inventions, creativities, innovations, research, and development of new technological breakthroughs, products, opportunities, and business sustainability to

achieve prosperity, growth, and overall national economic advancement. Furthermore, learning from anticounterfeiting department managers who have developed and executed anticounterfeiting strategies effectively can help business leaders compete profitably.

### **Contribution to Business Practices**

The study can be useful and enriching anticounterfeiting department executives' multidimensional anticounterfeiting knowledge and understanding of the counterfeiting issue. Intellectual property protection is vital to any business or economy, especially as globalization is mostly about the power of knowledge and multidimensional brainpower. Firms with the desire to remain a dominant force in the intellectual property creation field, encourage current and potential inventors, promote business spirits, generate more favorable economic activities, and make positive social changes must have effective anticounterfeiting strategies to protect their intellectual creations, business trademarks, and intellectual property rights. One of the most decisive factors concerning the economic measurement of sustainable business development is the level of protection of high-value genuine products from being copied and then mass-produced illegally (Blankenburg, Horn, & Kruger, 2015; Sullivan et al., 2017). This element is especially true for consumer products, as the sustainable manufacturing process gains an increasingly central role in building a brand image (Noman & Stiglitz, 2017; Rooij, Fine, Zhang, & Wu, 2016). Corporate executives must have both a concurrent business vision and the control of propriety intellectual property rights. Organizational principals can gain necessary knowledge and understanding of the counterfeiting issue in this study and then create appropriate anticounterfeiting strategies to eradicate or mitigate imitated

products. The successful elimination or mitigation of counterfeit supply chain ecosystems, illegal products, and all the parties involved in the network can help organizational leaders to improve their business income potentials, secure research and development investments, protect their intellectual property and rights through generating and promoting awareness of counterfeit impacts and anticounterfeiting strategies in combating the spread of counterfeits (Lang, 2017; Liao & Hitchcock, 2018; Tebben & Waterman, 2016).

### **Implications for Social Change**

The implications for positive social change include the awareness of the counterfeiting issue and its adverse impacts on businesses, people, society, nation, and the world. Having effective anticounterfeiting policies to combat knockoffs can substantially advance the nation's business environment and economy (Eisend, Hartmann, & Apaolaza, 2017; Farrand, 2015; Gregson & Crang, 2017). Numerous consumers, industry stakeholders, organizations, and states have begun to proactively combat counterfeit goods because they pose a significant risk to human health and safety, national security, economic progression, innovations, and expanding research and development capabilities (Bikoff, Heasley, Sherman, & Stipelman, 2015; Dreyfuss Cooper, & Lobel, 2016; Eisend, 2019). Companies can compete in the world efficiently if there are robust policies and strategies to protect intellectual property rights (Fandl, 2016; Pueschel, Chamaret, & Parguel, 2017). As a result of exploring successful strategies to alleviate or mitigate counterfeiting, business leaders can have more income opportunities, the potential for business expansion, and enthusiastic investors to invest in

research and development to create employment opportunities and positive social contributions. Moreover, having effective anticounterfeiting strategies may boost consumer morale, create prosperity for stakeholders, provide more employment opportunities, and promote national economic advancement.

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

In this study, I reviewed the counterfeiting's multidimensions philosophically, economically, scientifically, legally, ethically, politically, and practically. I explored various theories applicable to the subject matter, current anticounterfeiting strategies, and related industries that have the pressing issue. In the following sections, I elaborate on counterfeiting, counterfeit ecosystems, the current state of knowledge about the subject matter, faulty assumptions, inconsistencies, widespread views, and then expand the themes of counterfeiting and anticounterfeiting strategies through supplementary theories such as consumer culture, behavioral decision, competitive advantage, contingency, and complexity theory. Furthermore, I evaluate regulatory and law enforcement agencies and their anticounterfeiting solutions in terms of effectiveness, challenges, contradictions, deficiencies, remedies, the health and safety concerns, legal, and ethical implications in mitigating or eradicating imitated goods.

I used systems theory as the conceptual framework for this study. The selection of systems theory was appropriate for this study because counterfeiting is a system consisting of many separate but interdependent sub-systems linked together like living organs of the human anatomy. Using systems theory, anticounterfeiting department leaders can acquire in-depth knowledge of the counterfeit systems, how each component

within works, causes and effects, and the socioeconomic impacts (Wimmer & Yoon, 2017; Yushi et al., 2018). Understanding the characteristics of fakes can help anticounterfeiting department leaders create effective anticounterfeiting strategies (Werner, 2017; Zameer et al., 2018). The counterfeit systems, sub-systems, causes and effects, appropriate measures, and challenges are the elements that anticounterfeiting department managers need to address to reduce or eliminate fakes successfully.

Counterfeiting can spread to most geographical locations, cause serious business issues, and ultimately destroy firms. Anticounterfeiting department managers must understand how the entire counterfeit systems and their different components function to devise appropriate counter plans such as through legislation and law enforcement.

Anticounterfeiting department managers may have difficulty in diminishing or eliminating counterfeits without understanding the counterfeit ecosystems and their inner workings thoroughly. Anticounterfeiting department executives can create effective anticounterfeiting strategies by acquiring multidimensional knowledge from the strategies that other businesses have successfully developed and implemented (Chaudhry & Cesareo, 2017; Friedman, Herrington, & Bepko, 2018).

### **Literature Search Strategy**

In searching for data to support the study, I reviewed various sources such as online libraries, search websites, e-books, scholarly materials, peer-reviewed, and academic journal articles relating to the counterfeit themes that reflected gaps in earlier study literature. I structured the literature review to show the framework from a general assessment to a specific foundation. I addressed the synopsis of counterfeiting, its

harmful socioeconomic impacts on industries and society, and the strategies to mitigate fakes. The principal sources and search databases I used came from the Walden University online library, the Georgia public library, ABI/INFORM Complete, Business Source Complete, EBSCO, Emerald Management Journals, ProQuest, Google Scholar, Sage Journals, SAGE Premier, Thoreau, and Galileo Scholar. The necessary foundation research for this study included relevant, information-rich peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and dissertations. There were 525 references published within the past 5 years of the expected graduation date including 265 were peer-reviewed journals, 46 were books, and 214 were seminal articles. I illustrated this doctoral study main points in the problem statement, purpose statement, and research question. Search terms and keywords included *anticounterfeiting strategies, counterfeit, counterfeit products, copyright, copyright infringement, copyright law, bootleg, fakes, imitated goods, intellectual property, and intellectual property law.*

### **Introduction to Purpose of Study**

Anticounterfeiting department managers who can acquire in-depth knowledge and different perspectives about the counterfeit phenomenon, the involved parties, challenges, deterrence, and the whole counterfeiting ecosystem can create the best anticounterfeiting strategies and protect firms' intellectual property and economic benefits. Thus, company anticounterfeiting leaders can successfully mitigate or eliminate the spread of imitated products. I used a single qualitative case study to explore and analyze data relating to anticounterfeiting strategies that some anticounterfeiting department executives developed and implemented to assess their effectiveness and deficiencies. I selected the

search results showing the highest relevancy to the subject matter and supported the study themes. Anticounterfeiting department managers can use the study findings to devise optimal anticounterfeiting strategies. With multidimensional knowledge and facts, anticounterfeiting department managers can create successful strategies in combating counterfeiting.

### **Application to the Systems Theory**

In this study, I sought exhaustive knowledge about the counterfeit phenomenon and the most effective anticounterfeiting strategies. I applied the systems theory as the conceptual framework to explore and understand the business problem, find anticounterfeiting strategies, and gather solutions to curb counterfeiting. Ludwig von Bertalanffy was the theorist who originated systems theory, also known as the general systems theory or the theories of the organization (Belifanti & Stout, 2018; Gulick, 2019; Jung & Vakharia, 2019). The systems theory is a model or conceptual framework that researchers and scientists use to define, clarify, and comprehend the complexity of a system by studying the interactions among the parts, sub-systems, or independent components within to determine emerging patterns when different components intermingle with one another, instead of examining each piece individually (Bohanon et al., 2018; Kostoulas et al., 2018; Malecic, 2017; Rousseau, 2017). I assumed that the counterfeit phenomenon was a system with various sub-systems or independent components.

Furthermore, systems theory is similar to a human body system in which the mind controls the body and all the conjoining organs, even though these living organs have

distinctive functionalities as separate systems (Nada & Bishiri, 2019; Pennartz, 2015; Raffe, 2015). According to Descartes' philosophical and mathematical reasoning, all parts of the complex human body system as a whole are interconnected living organs, and the mind is the predominant force of that living system; it is there to reveal *I think; therefore, I am* (Hattab, 2016; Sterling & Laughlin, 2015; Wang & Wang, 2016). Researchers and scientists believe the best way to understand a phenomenon is to consider it as a system with multiple systems or sub-systems and components or distinctive systems within, dissect it, take it apart, then probe what each component or each system is all about (Gerim, 2017; MacGill, 2018; Perkins, 2017). Scholars can use the systems theory to understand complicated interrelationships and interrelated systems by dividing them into analyzable rudiments, deconstruct, and then study them individually (Johnson & Leydesdorff, 2015; Morgner, 2018; Weaver, 2018). Systems theory is instrumental in understanding about the world and complex combinations of different research fields such as artificial intelligence, law, biology, philosophy, cognitive science, ecological science, mathematics, economics and management, political science, sociology, and business administration (Grisold & Peschl, 2017; MacGill, 2018).

Researchers use the systems theory to explain an observed phenomenon by assuming all knowledge areas have systems and systems have common characteristics and laws irrespective of the area in which they exist (Belifanti & Stout, 2018; Matook & Brown, 2017; Valentinov, Hielscher, & Pies, 2016). Researchers enabled by the findings can identify what elements are present and their tasks in the system and show the details and composition of the system. Descartes, a French mathematician and philosopher, also

argued systems theory is the answer to every *what is this* question after analyzing the systems issue carefully to conclude *this is what it is made of* (Frank, 2016; Rosen, 2017). Systems theory can bring to light the knowledge and comprehension of different types of systems as they study the interrelationships, interconnections, interdependencies, and interactions of different and autonomous elements of a system to see how they can work efficiently as a whole even though each self-regulating component is a system by itself (Saatsi, 2017; Tada, 2019).

Additionally, using Niklas Luhmann's interpretation of the systems theory, scholars can find the embryonic chattels of the economic and other social networks (Valentinov, 2019; Valentinov et al., 2016). Especially in the context of social theory and the relationship between morality and sustainability of social systems in the modern society, researchers can reformulate the concept of accountability at the individual-level or organizational-level systems in society and how society evolves. Anticounterfeiting department managers can absorb Luhmann's interpretation of the systems theory as a supplementary source of knowledge in understanding the counterfeit issue quickly, as Luhmann emphasized that money and power are the two critical components of any social systems and play the controlling role over other essential elements in the course of societal evolution of the systems theory. The money and power elements are also present in the counterfeit ecosystems. Moreover, Luhmann showed how people are enlightened through the systems theory to explain a phenomenon as factual and acceptable when flawlessly proven with evidence clarifying the independent but interdependent relationships of individual systems within the systems (Peltonen, 2016; Valentinov, Roth,

& Will, 2019). Thus, researchers can apply Luhmann's philosophical interpretation of the systems theory to illustrate the counterfeiting phenomenon.

Based on the systems theory, a counterfeit network is a system with many self-governing but interconnected actors and stakeholders, including producers, distributors, sellers, and buyers (Bhushan, 2017). Most counterfeiters have the same objectives concentrating and capitalizing on the firms' intellectual property and make profits at the expense of the intellectual property owners (Forgione, 2016; Kiser, 2016; Ting & Ip, 2015). Counterfeiting is a business system involving symbiotic participants: leaders, workers, public servants, and supporters. Though all individuals are autonomous, they must work together in concert to achieve the objectives of the business (Belifanti & Stout, 2018; DiMase, Collier, Carlson, Gray, & Linkov, 2016). Counterfeiters cause detrimental, ethical, and legal predicaments to firms and society. The illegal actors aid and abet people to unlawfully and carelessly manufacture, sell, buy, and ignore the established laws and regulations. However, societies are held together by functioning systems consisting of economics, businesses, law, politics, and social connectors, as Luhmann illustrated (Gerim, 2017; Weaver, 2018).

Using Forrester's systems thinking as a supplement along with the systems theory, anticounterfeiting managers can boost their cognitive development in creating effective measures and tactics (Davis & Stroink, 2016; Forrester, 2016; McCabe & Halog, 2018). Professor Jay W. Forrester at the Sloan School of Management at Massachusetts Institute of Technology created the theory of systems thinking in 1956 in which he theorized that to understand a system, people must see its integration of

different components and how the different components operate when separated from the system's environment or other components (Barlas, 2016; Frank, 2016). Many scholars have claimed that systems thinking is a theory emphasizing that leaders need to comprehend or intercede when issues arise within a large or complicated system (Frank, 2016; Gulick, 2019). Researchers and social scientists use the systems thinking in combination with the systems theory in probing the interactions and influences among independent entities or apparatuses as a whole to understand how the elements interact with each other according to their ranks in an equilibrium and unity manner (Davis, Leppanen, Mularczyk, Bedard, & Stroink, 2018; Thibodeau, Frantz, & Stroink, 2016). A counterfeit network has many participants such as manufacturers, sellers, buyers, and supporters. Each participant thinks and works independently as a system, and each member interacts and supports other systems according to their tasks. Applying systems thinking as a supportive learning resource and mechanism, anticounterfeiting leaders can recognize counterfeiting causes and effects. Each counterfeit system is independent but works together to support each other directly or indirectly.

There are also apparent differences between the living (or open) systems and closed systems. Living or open systems have current and new elements regularly circulate and share among the various organs internally and externally, and the components digest new ideas and exchange resources (Busby, 2018; Tebben & Waterman, 2016). A closed system is not receiving or exchanging ideas or resources (Giudici, Reinmoeller, & Ravasi, 2018; Novatorov, 2019). Counterfeit operatives work together as a whole living system where the producers, sellers, supporters, and buyers are

the distinctive actors interacting and exchanging information, goods, currency, and services (DiMase et al., 2016; Su, 2018). Moreover, a counterfeit ecosystems network is a complex system in which all-embracing knowledge is derivative from members' or systems' implicit and distinct learning apparatuses. Many members gain knowledge and share collective experiences from each other to facilitate the whole counterfeiting operation to fine-tuning and adapting to encounters through the successive generation of ideas and products.

Applying the systems theory based on the concept of sustainability to create multidimensional anticounterfeiting strategies, executives can achieve practical solutions, business objectives, and meet the constant challenges of counterfeiters. In this study, I learned from four anticounterfeiting department executives in a metropolitan area of Georgia who developed and implemented anticounterfeiting strategies effectively in the domestic market. I sought to discover a critical dimension that empowered counterfeiters to sustain their illicit business efficaciously, which was the local purchasing power. According to the United Nations' definition and vision of sustainability, this power is an active contributor and the core factor to business sustainability (Testa, Russo, Cornwell, McDonald, & Reich, 2018). To have effective anticounterfeiting strategies to combat fakes, anticounterfeiting managers must understand the counterfeit ecosystems, how counterfeiters penetrate different industries, the theories that explain their inner workings, actions, and motivations, and then find remedies to curb imitated goods that are mainly through the local law enforcement agencies and the legislation.

Anticounterfeiting department managers should have sufficient knowledge about counterfeiting to generate effective anticounterfeiting strategies. In addition to the systems theory, leaders should understand the complexity theory to improve their leadership skills and lead their organization fighting against counterfeiters. The complexity theory illustrates that executives need to realize their internal organizational strengths, challenges, and deficiencies in creating effective strategies to achieve desirable outcomes (Wheatley, 2016). Several unidentifiable theorists developed the complexity theory (also called complexity strategy or complex adaptive organizations), derived from the systems theory in the 1960s (Eppel, 2017; Szekely & Mason, 2019). Researchers use the complexity theory to demonstrate that systems are unpredictable with endless deviations, dynamic interactions, and exchanges among systems; thus, leaders need to adapt to different settings and manage unforeseeable circumstances effectively (Han & McKelvey, 2016). Anticounterfeiting managers using the system complexity theory should also continuously assess, improve, develop, and make necessary changes to promulgate and implement business models and practical anticounterfeiting strategies to cope with constant changes and challenges in the marketplace and maintain the business systems properly (Ke, Chen, & Su, 2016; Sullivan et al., 2017).

Further, globalization has caused consumer culture changes rapidly, with two distinctive features: the global consumer culture versus the local consumer culture (Steenkamp, 2019). Counterfeiters use the two different features to ensure counterfeiting networks proliferate around the world. The proponents of both globalization and homogenization favor business executives who can position their brands as global

consumer culture symbols. Executives who recognize global consumer culture changes thoroughly realize both opportunities and threats to their companies as they must compete for dominant roles in the fierce competition worldwide, especially when counterfeiters take advantage of the global brand products and prestige, then copy and market them according to the local consumers' unique cultures (Gupta, 2015).

Consumer culture changes according to market evolutions, diverse consumer experiences, and practices over time (Thompson, 2019; Jeffrey & Putman, 2015). Globalization, e-commerce, advanced information technologies, artificial intelligence, and improved logistics capabilities contribute to increasing international counterfeit goods. Many local brand owners have access to their global competitors' products through the internet or different digital means, which enable them to copy and mass-produce counterfeits easily and quickly or refine the global brand designs to make them more locally suitable, competitive, and attractive goods (Chaudhry, 2017; Pueschel et al., 2017). The availability of sophisticated information technologies, worldwide logistical advancements, and international e-commerce aid counterfeiters to alter various consumer cultures as consumers can choose locally made products with similar designs and better quality than global brand products (Thyroff, Murray, & Belk, 2015). Such challenges amplify that anticounterfeiting must understand the consumer culture in the fight against counterfeiting.

## **Supplementary Theories of the Multidimensional Anticounterfeiting Strategies**

### **Themes**

Researchers and social scientists apply various conceptual frameworks or theories to explore a phenomenon and answer the research questions. To acquire additional knowledge and in-depth understanding of multidimensional anticounterfeiting strategies and the counterfeit issues, I explored supplementary theories to support this qualitative single case study, explain the counterfeit conundrums, and elaborate on multidimensional anticounterfeiting strategies. As a result, I conducted further research on the following theories: decision theory, contingency theory, competitive advantage theory, and complexity theory.

**Decision theory.** Scholars, social researchers, or behavioral scientists apply decision theory in postulating that a person can understand how decisions are made by observing them in the making (Davis et al., 2018; Nemkova, Souchon, Hughes, & Micevski, 2015). The works of Giacomoni (2019) and Miah, Gammack, and McKay (2019) conveyed that researchers can utilize the decision theory pioneered by the theory of games and economic behavior of Neumann and Morgenstern in 1944 to understand why and how people make their decisions based on his or her values, attitudes, and desires while making the decision. Anticounterfeiting department executives and intellectual property owners can manage the counterfeiting issue and its associated negative socioeconomic impacts adequately if they understand the decision theory in the decision-making process involving risks versus opportunities and anticounterfeiting strategies (Buruonu Latif, Kaytaz Yigit, & Kirezli, 2018; Dogan, 2018; Jeffrey &

Putman, 2015). The most damaging and detrimental factor to the brands' investment in exclusivity and eminence in the market is the rampant selling of counterfeit products (Li & Seaton, 2015; Pathak, Velasco, & Calvert, 2019; Singh & Kumar, 2017). The counterfeiters' illegal acts of manufacturing and selling counterfeit products to consumers who want to possess a part of an iconic brands' fame for a fraction of the original product price amplify the need to understand the behavior decision theory. Brand managers can create a practical anticounterfeiting strategy to inhibit counterfeits based on behavioral decision theory knowledge. Anticounterfeiting department leaders can comprehend why individuals manufacture, sell, and purchase counterfeit products by learning how the parties make their decisions and why they act the way they act (McKenna, 2018; Rooij et al., 2016).

**Contingency theory.** Having excellent anticounterfeiting department managers to combat counterfeiting can help businesses substantially. The contingency theory, created by psychologist Fred Fiedler in the late 1960s, offers a solution to find the leader and matching criteria (Cameron & Green, 2017). The contingency theorists pointed out that there is no optimal way to lead or manage a business or an organization, and leadership style determines or influences the success or failure of an organization (Smith, Jayaram, Ponsignon, & Wolter, 2019; Vidal, Campdesuner, Rodriguez, & Vivar, 2017; Williams et al., 2017). Based on the contingency theory, executives can understand why leaders play a vital role as their leadership reflects organizational behaviors, efficiency, and accomplishment in multiple dimensions (Cashman, 2017; Nikhili, Chakroun, & Chtioui, 2018; Stewart & Kuenzi, 2018; Tsai & Liao, 2017). Knowledgeable anticounterfeiting

department executives can formulate successful anticounterfeiting strategies in eliminating or reducing counterfeiting. Business principals need to recognize the interdependence among the company's leadership, performance, and organizational structure (Fu & Liu, 2018; Siska, 2018). Organizational executives can relate a leader-match model and direction style on how a leader can impact organizational performance and outcomes in various situations by applying the contingency theory (Madlock, 2018; Tsai & Liao, 2017). The contingency theory's essential elements include the leader's characteristics, structure behaviors, leadership consideration in team building, and appropriate guidance in leading the firm to achieve the mission in different situations (Romero-Silva, Santos, & Hurtado, 2018; Vidal et al., 2017).

Anticounterfeiting department leaders should have a clear mission and build a robust collaborative organization to combat counterfeiting successfully. Based on Fiedler's theory of leadership and the least preferred coworker index, there are two types of leaders: relationship-oriented and task-oriented (Dolan & Kawamura, 2015; Hladio, 2017; McNutt, Murphy, Sowcik, & Andenoro, 2015; Rosa, 2016; Sims, 2017). Organizational leaders can apply the least preferred coworker index to compute the individual leader's success ratings on a scale of one to eight features, which either boost proficiency or discourage deficiency. Anticounterfeiting executives can use the least preferred coworker index to determine who is an excellent leader in the fight against counterfeiting. Anticounterfeiting leaders can use the contingency theory to evaluate and rate the suitability of how managers handle the circumstances and how they respond to situational variables to determine a strong leader (Gentry, 2016). Anticounterfeiting

department managers who understand the contingency theory thoroughly can develop and implement successful anticounterfeiting strategies. Anticounterfeiting department leaders should be able to foresee or predict the potentially uncontrollable widespread of counterfeit products.

**Competitive advantage theory.** Business leaders should apply competitive advantage theory in operating their organization because it emphasizes the significance of cost advantage, differentiation advantage, and leader's unique set of qualities and strategies to outperform their competitors and achieve business success in the marketplace (Caldwell & Anderson, 2017; Rau, Zbiek, & Zonas, 2017).

Anticounterfeiting department managers can create effective anticounterfeiting strategies by using the competitive advantage theory. The competitive advantage theory focuses on two areas: the market-based view in which a firm provides similar products or services comparable to its competitors at a lesser cost, and the resource-based view which emphasizes on better quality in products and services when a firm has better resources, knowledge, and capability (Bednarz, Nikodemka-Wolowik, Bielinski, & Otukoya, 2017; Rau et al., 2017). The differentiation advantage plays a more prominent role in the rivalry, which illustrates that even with inexpensive labor and natural resources, these factors are not necessarily the central factors for economic success (Bhupendra & Sangle, 2018). Intellectual property owners and anticounterfeiting department leaders must understand that counterfeiters have a cost advantage over their firms because counterfeiters have access to cheap labor and materials. Consequently, counterfeiters can sell their fake products at much lower prices. Additionally, counterfeiters do not have to

fulfill high-quality craftsmanship requirements that genuine brands must, simply because counterfeit buyers understand that they are paying for imitated products that are at a fraction of the cost of original ones.

**Complexity theory.** Anticounterfeiting department managers must be familiar with the complexity theory to efficiently operate their business (Eppel, 2017; Hartwell, 2017). Anticounterfeiting department executives can create effective anticounterfeiting policies using the complexity theory. Understanding the complexity theory thoroughly can help business leaders organize their firms better as the behaviors of complex systems, behavioral patterns, organizational structures, and their interactions from within and outside of the regulatory norms determine the firm's success (Han & McKelvey, 2016). The counterfeit phenomenon is a sophisticated business threat with varied implications, including market penetration through digital means (Busch, Henriksen, & Saebe, 2018; Tenbenschel, 2018). Counterfeiters comprehend the internal and external strengths and weaknesses of brand name firms, and they practice such knowledge to facilitate and collaborate with other illicit actors in the counterfeiting business (Sullivan et al., 2017; Tebben & Waterman, 2016). Anticounterfeiting department managers can block the transgressions of intellectual property rights and reduce the sale and distribution of imitated goods if they can thoroughly grasp the complexity theory.

### **Comparing and Contrasting Viewpoints**

Fakes are present in almost all geographical areas globally (Becker, Fisher, & Schmitz, 2017; Eisend et al., 2017). The International AntiCounterfeiting Coalition, an affiliate of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and the

publisher of the Business Action to Stop Counterfeiting and Piracy, estimated the total global value of counterfeiting and piracy reached USD 1.7 trillion in 2015 (Business Action to Stop Counterfeiting and Piracy, 2019). The production and sales of counterfeit goods are a significant industry in the global economy, and nowhere is this more manifest than in China (Yang, 2015). Rapid globalization since the early 1990s was the motivation that proliferated the interrelations of various cultures and fierce competition between global brands and local brands (Gurhan-Canli et al., 2018; Thyroff et al., 2015). Global brands serve different terrestrial areas with the same brand names, similar marketing strategies, and a vital feature of global consumer culture; in contrast, local brands concentrate in a specific nation or a circumscribed geographical area which cater only to the local consumers, their cultures, and unique customs (Eisend et al., 2017). Counterfeiting is a ubiquitous and essential feature of many countries and cultures such as China, Turkey, Singapore, Thailand, and India (Abma, 2016; Qin, Shi, Song, Stottinger, & Tan, 2018). Many social activists and consumers believe imitations exemplify many social characteristics interrelating to ideas of genuineness, legitimacy, invention, imagination, tradition, and innovation (Frances & Lede, 2015). Some researchers pointed out that liberal people consider forgeries are not illegal copies or disgraced rip-off of some originals (Alvarez, Patty, & Raciti, 2015; Bergmann & Friedman, 2016). Numerous scholars argued fakes are autonomous aesthetic practices, productive mimetic processes, and a creative act in itself allowable in some special situations or activities such as disguise traditions, pseudo translations, imposters, identity theft, and hoaxes in traditional or customary arts and historical settings (Liu,

Yannopoulou, Bian, & Elliot, 2015; Okada & Ishibashi, 2017). According to Oscar Wilde, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery that mediocrity can pay to greatness (Boparai, 2017; Braga-Pinto, 2019).

### **Motivations to Purchase Counterfeit Luxury Brand Products**

Recent consumer behavior on luxury goods consumption studies indicated that spending on luxury items grew among the top tier of 100 categories of consumer spending (Chen & Luk, 2017; Tajaddini & Gholipour, 2018). There are various factors influencing consumers to purchase counterfeit luxury brand products, including personal characteristics such as acquisitiveness, value perception, brand compassion, fashion awareness, and social incentives including status consumption, self-monitoring, normative stimuli, and correlated product features like supposed value and menace (Amaral & Loken, 2016; Engizek & Sekerkaya, 2015; Stottinger & Penz, 2015). Furthermore, the multilayered set of benefits that luxury brands offer creates a strong bond between users and luxury brands. The durable and useful product features, excellent product quality, and brand exclusiveness satisfy the consumers' individual needs, self-gratification, strategic aims, and hedonic aspirations are the contributing influences that enhance the real self of the consumer to reach the ideal person and enable the luxury brand product owners to gain recognition within their social groups (Davidson, Nepomucene, & Laroche, 2019; Stottinger & Penz, 2015). Brand companies utilize such dynamic features to establish a stable personal connection between the users and the luxury brands, which is the foundation for the product to be classified as a luxury. A

high price tag alone is not enough to attract the consumers' desire and purchasing decision.

The wide gaps in economic disparity among consumers, especially between the high-income earners and low-income earners, reflect a different side of luxury brands consumption (Plantinga, Krijnen, Zeelenberg, & Breugelmans, 2018). The customers' demand for non-deceptive counterfeit goods illustrated various external motivations to purchase fakes, including social reception, peer encouragement, sense of belonging, the desire of external image, perceived risks connected with purchasing, perceived risks accompanying with usage, affordability, convenience, degree of justice and penalty, and social networking implications (Khalid & Rahman, 2015; Thaichon & Quach, 2016). The internal motives are the sense of escapade, fashion or novelty pursuer, knowledge of principles, perception toward disparity, discernment toward the actual product, superiority acceptance, and acquisition experience (Baxendale, MacDonald, & Wilson, 2015; Bian, Wang, Smith, & Yannopoulo, 2016). Counterfeit users perceive certain types of social feedback, e. g. moral disengagement, as a defense to their behaviors (Li, Lam, & Liu, 2018). The perception of receiving compliments from others increases consumers' moral reasoning and interest in buying more fakes (Blankenburg et al., 2015). The other types of social feedback have the reverse effect and generate questions about the source of luxury counterfeit. Consumers concerned about face consciousness are more likely to purchase luxury counterfeits than cheap imitated products (Jiang & Shan, 2016). Effective communication strategies, including anticounterfeiting ads that focus on

social sanctions, can help consumers quickly recognize the negative aspects of counterfeit goods and diminish the desire to buy counterfeit goods.

### **Consumer Industries and Counterfeiting Issues**

**Fashion industry.** The fashion industry is essential in world trade with an estimated value at 1.2 trillion dollars generating approximately \$250 billion in annual sales and about 1.9 million jobs in the United States alone (Elrod, 2017). The improvement of sophisticated high technologies to find, process, and imitate images, and the wide-ranging usage of new digital conduits for online sales have simplified both production and distribution of counterfeit fashion products (Bertola & Teunissen, 2018; Meraviglia, 2018; Tripoli, 2016). Counterfeiters sell unlicensed and pirated merchandise in the informal market economy while paying no royalties to the intellectual property owners; most counterfeit products are selling at substantial discounts compared to the prices that formal vendors offer which capture the demand of purchasers with fewer resources to spend on these goods (Agarwal & Panwar, 2016; Fandl, 2016). Fashion consumers liked to pay as little as possible to vary their appearances more often, but their pockets were not so deep to have new designer fashion items all the time; therefore, they chose to buy imitated products which were much more affordable and widely available (Khan & Fazili, 2019; Park-Poaps & Kang, 2018). Similarly, the consumer demands for fake fashion increased because many purchasers wanted to be in tune with the latest fashion trends but could not afford the original brands, so they opted for knockoffs (Agarwal & Panwar, 2016). Counterfeit fashion saturation harmed brand owners tremendously by plummeting sales, weakening brand prestige, and corroding brand

values and profits along with undermining the national economy by avoiding various obligations and levies (Martin, 2019; Martinez, 2019; Tripoli, 2016). There is a severe lack of intellectual property protection law for the fashion and clothing industry, which can significantly curb counterfeiting fast fashion (Appel, Libai, & Muller, 2018). The fashion industry has been struggling in fighting against design piracy in the United States and urged Congress to endorse the Design Piracy Prohibition Act to address the piracy issue (Martinez, 2019). The multi-billion-dollar fashion industry still faces under-regulated and primitive conditions that many brand owners have to reluctantly tolerate unethical companies stealing of designs and styles or utterly ignore the fact that counterfeiters are destroying the industry and numerous businesses have gone into oblivion (Berridge, 2018; Neuwirth, 2017).

Countless stakeholders in the fashion industries believe most law enforcement agents treat style infringement more leniently than other crimes involving deprivation of individual's rights and property because of the lack of consistent government policies, directives, and the issue of whether government agents can conduct searches and seizures to enforce different jurisdictional law (Johnson & Stephens, 2019; Kerr, 2018). To address the widespread counterfeit of fashion appropriately, anticounterfeiting leaders should use more resources and put more efforts into anticounterfeiting publicity primarily through the media, social networks, social gatherings, and community awareness events emphasizing the negative implications, ethical concerns, and social impacts that fakes can cause in the community and national dimension (Ahmed, 2016; Jones, Ruddell, & Summerfield, 2019). Various governmental agencies at all levels need to get involved

proactively in investigating and prosecuting the actors of the illicit trades to protect intellectual property and businesses from going out of business (Neuwirth, 2017; Salehnia, 2016).

**Pharmaceutical industry.** Scholars believe that the counterfeit drug trade is a severe threat creating an extensive danger to the country, public safety, and people's health (Lima, Da Silva, Filho, & Dias, 2018; Mihaila, 2018; Ping & Chen-Bo, 2017). Pharmaceutical products are vital to patients' health and safety because they can save lives (Donley, 2015; Mages & Kubic, 2016). However, medications must be safe, effectual, good quality, affordable, and the government must control and maintain such required elements of drugs and eliminate the propagation of accepting unsafe counterfeit medicines (Kuanpoth, 2018; Valverde, 2017). Pharmaceutical companies spend hundreds of millions of dollars to develop each drug with failure rates at approximately thirty-nine percent between 2000 and 2010, and the market value of drugs worldwide is several trillion dollars per annum (Banerjee & Siebert, 2017). Two of the most popular counterfeit drugs treating erectile dysfunction that affect more than 100 million men worldwide are Viagra and Cialis. Counterfeiters can make billions of dollars and cause severe health and negative socioeconomic impacts by counterfeiting Viagra, Cialis, and Fentanyl, which is a potent synthetic opioid analgesic that is similar to morphine but is 50 to 100 times more powerful (Cannon, 2015; Kralik, Jirmasek, Kuchar, & Setnicka, 2018; Mages & Kubic, 2016; Pergolizzi, LeQuang, Taylor, & Raffa, 2018; Werle & Zedillo, 2018).

Furthermore, Viagra and Cialis are among the most counterfeited medicines globally, including Brazil, China, and India (Coelho Neto & Lisboa, 2017). The Pfizer pharmaceutical company leaders cited statistics showing over twenty-three million men worldwide used Viagra since its approval in 1998, generating billions of dollars in annual sales (Mages & Kubic, 2016; Perelman, 2016; Sharife, 2016). According to many sources, including ICOS and Eli Lilly and Co., millions of men used Cialis (or Tadalafil) or similar generic drugs worldwide since 2003 (Custers et al., 2016; Fan, 2016; Kralik et al., 2018). Transnational criminals and terrorists like to exploit counterfeit drugs as weapons of mass destruction because of the low risk of being detected or prosecuted, high profitability, and fast and easy money-making capability (Kralik et al., 2018; Naghavi & Tsai, 2015). The socioeconomic and security impacts are dangerous and imminent and can cause unimaginable devastation to innocent people and companies (Lee & Trim, 2019). Fake medicines value is approximately \$200 - \$250 billion per year worldwide (Cuntz, 2016). Counterfeit drugs contain wrong, inactive, and insufficient ingredients, toxins, or contaminants causing disastrous health consequences; the World Health Organization assessed that up to fifty percent of drugs on the market in the developing countries are counterfeit (Mani, Danasekaran, & Annadurai, 2016). Chinese companies continue to produce more than thirty percent of the fake medicines circulating in every country today (Bakken, 2017). Despite international trade concerns and continuous pressure to reform patent law, some countries are still incapable of enforcing intellectual property rights. Researchers and scholars still see the counterfeit issue as frequent and disastrous as it has always been (Buddle-Sung, 2017). For example, China's

leading role in the counterfeit drug market shows China's ongoing failure to protect intellectual property rights or to prosecute counterfeiters using its administrative, civil, or criminal law (John, 2017; Yang, 2015). The spurious, falsely-labeled, falsified, counterfeit medicines, and medical products ranging from treatments for life-threatening circumstances to less expensive generic versions of painkillers are widespread in most of the world (Wilczynski, Koprowski, & Blonska-Fajfrowska, 2016). The growth of underground drug market platforms such as darknet or crypto markets operating on the same online design similar to eBay offers a display place and marketing venue where approved vendors can set up a cybernetic shop and place all kinds of drug listings, including counterfeit medicines for sale that any person can purchase with just a few clicks of the mice (Decary-Hetu, Paquet-Clouston, & Aldridge, 2016). If a person consumed counterfeit medicines, the individual could become one of the 100,000 sub-Saharan African victims who die each year from ingesting poor-quality drugs (Jarrells, 2015). Many studies illustrated that a large population of patients were willing to buy counterfeit medicines to treat various ailments (Lexchin, 2016; Valponi, 2015).

The American research-intensive pharmacological sector is one of the world's most successful enterprises and one of the country's most profitable industries. Hence, having proper laws to protect intellectual property for the industry is the foundation of its existence and growth (Jiang, Xiao, Jalees, Naqvi, & Zaman, 2018). China, India, Mexico, Thailand, and Brazil are the primary counterfeit drug producers (Koczwara & Dressman, 2017). The pharmaceutical industry should have appropriate strategies to reduce fake medicines effectively. Counterfeiting and piracy often go undetected, and if

detected, punishment in many cases is minimal or non-existent (Chen, Teng, & Liao, 2018). Despite the current anticounterfeiting trade agreements that many countries signed and promised to enforce intellectual property rights law strictly, counterfeiters still managed to expand their illicit business and networks without any restrictions (Cuntz, 2016; Floridi, 2015). The opponents of the agreements claimed that the agreements failed because officials could not enforce the agreements due to undisclosed negotiations, absence of consultation, the ambiguity of formulation, negotiations outside any international body, and the unapproved creation of the new governing body outside of the already existing forums generated unintended ethical consequences and unpersuasive (Jiang, Miao, Jalees, & Zaman, 2019; Souiden, Ladhari, & Amri, 2018). The anticounterfeiting agreement frameworks' ethical matters prove the disproportionate and inappropriate kind of responsibility, a sweeping diminution in freedom of expression, and a severe decrease in information confidentiality in solving the counterfeit issue successfully (Chen et al., 2018; Dewey, 2019). The rapid spread of counterfeit drugs worldwide exemplifies many forms of available counterfeiting supply chains, and counterfeiters gain much higher profit margins than legitimate companies (Eser, Kurtumusolu, & Bicaksiz, 2015). Anticounterfeiting department leaders can reduce or eliminate fakes if counterfeiters were challenged with severe punishments or threatened with lawsuits, or law enforcement personnel put more pressure and priority on combating imitated products that endanger public health and safety (Khalid & Rahman, 2015; Liebman, 2015). Moreover, counterfeit drugs cause the prices of brand name medicines to fall significantly. Researchers pointed out that many anticounterfeiting department

executives did not have effective strategies to combat counterfeiting because of factors such as consumers were unaware of the seriousness of the issue and insufficient law enforcement regimes which enable the survival and thriving of counterfeit drugs (Dreyfuss & Lobel, 2016; Eisend, 2019; Eisend et al., 2017). To develop efficient deterrence regime and countermeasures for counterfeit medicines, anticounterfeiting leaders must have a complete understanding of the supply and demand aspects and characteristics of faked pharmaceutical products (Alfadl, Ibrahim, Maraghi, & Mohammad, 2016; Wilczynski et al., 2016).

**Software and digital products industries.** The U. S. intellectual property protection law only prohibits the act of copying in certain conditions to incentivize invention and creativity (Norton, 2018; Osborn, 2018). The software piracy, digital bootlegs, music, movies, and e-books result in over one billion dollars loss of revenues per day and hindered economic growth of many businesses (Dilmperi, King, & Dennis, 2017; Reardon et al., 2019). Digital piracy happens every second, and it blocks the advancement of various industries because of counterfeiters' unfair business practices (Thongmak, 2017). The complex digital counterfeiting business ironically illustrates the concepts of sense perception and bias, defines geopolitical spaces, and maneuvers the excesses and shortfalls that arise in digital circulations which distinguish intellectual property formality from informality, and formulates various levels and forms of piracy participation, sabotages the original production creations, and consumes illegal commodities (Dent, 2016; Liu, 2015). The intellectual property thefts are detrimental to copyright owners and such thefts post immeasurable apprehensions about the potential

limitlessness of counterfeit product circulation (Pu, 2018; Stapleton & Nandialah, 2016). The lack of sufficient data on the scale of the counterfeit phenomena, as well as the hesitancy of e-commerce companies to confront online infringements, make it extremely difficult to reduce or eliminate online sales of counterfeits (Farrand, 2018).

When a company created a digital product, it is relatively easy to duplicate and mass produce without damaging the original one; therefore, digital products are classified as intangible properties, making them difficult to protect without strict law and enforcement regimes (McKenna, 2018; Wallberg, 2017). The internet empowers counterfeiters to sell imitated products without prior consumer inspection, and counterfeiters use dishonest product presentations and bogus websites to characterize fakes genuine items (Thaichon & Quach, 2016). The universal protection of intellectual property rights on the internet is significant; however, many business managers and policymakers do not have sufficient legal support from the government (Aguiar, 2017; Meraviglia, 2018). The rapid digital network evolution is an essential factor facilitating dishonest consumers to disparage a company's intellectual property rights and acquire copied digital products through illegal downloading (Beard, Ford, & Stern, 2018; Stemberger & Cencic, 2016). Scholars and social scientists believe the widespread usage of counterfeit software and digital products are the result of the easiness of obtaining pirated software or digital products online and offline and the lacks of consumer education, innovation policy, and appropriate enforcement of intellectual property rights (Edler & Fagerberg, 2017; Rooij et al., 2016). Business owners and anticounterfeiting department managers need to examine the intellectual property issue from the historical,

cultural, political, and legal physiognomies (Robinson & McDuire-Ra, 2018; Simmons, 2016; Usnick & Usnick, 2016).

Most federal and state agencies can engage copyright owners, product producers, traders, and consumers for inputs for new laws and regulations since current intellectual property law and enforcement mechanisms have only achieved limited success. There are various intellectual property laws among jurisdictions, often challenged, inconsistently enforced, and subject to prevailing social norms such as the cult of imitation, cultures of legal casualness, and nonexistence of social contracts (Haiyan, 2015; Stapleton & Nandialah, 2016). Researchers and scholars indicated that a higher piracy enforcement level might be harmful to firms if the consumer perception concerning the quality of a premium version is lower than the quality expectation of the pirated version, and such a suggestion illustrates the presence of a pirated version is detrimental for the business to sustain (Carpou, 2016; Guofang et al., 2018).

**High-tech industry.** Counterfeiting is not limited to low-tech products and small or medium private firms, but high-tech industries, large-scale institutions, and different government agencies as well. Researchers asserted that most nations have to confront the common threat of counterfeiting throughout history, and restricting the spread of counterfeits remains a significant challenge (Chambers, Yan, Garhwal, & Kankanhalli, 2015). High-tech copying is a diagram of how innovative gears of deception such as sophisticated color printers, digital copiers, super scanner devices, and other high-tech machines can create and replicate unnoticeable counterfeit currencies, banknotes, checks, credit cards, or debit cards (Baek, Choi, Baek, & Lee, 2018; Snehlata & Saxena,

2017). In spite of exhaustive measures from the United States federal and state governmental agencies to guard against counterfeit currency crimes, new and improved technologies have made reproducing fraudulent bills relatively easy (Kang, 2017; Yan, Wang, & Wu, 2017). More than ninety percent of counterfeit money in the United States produced by the readily available digital technology and high-tech apparatuses, banknotes or counterfeit money can transpire in equilibrium when both costs and the inflation proportion are sufficiently low (Kang, 2017). An abundance of affordable high-end printers, scanners, and copying machines with high resolutions and multiple features such as speedy two-sided imaging and scanning capability facilitate mass production of fake money and packaging of counterfeit products in beverages, pharmaceuticals, electronics, apparel, food, personal care items, jewelry, beauty accessories, and tobacco (Ahmed, 2016; Sholy & Saliba, 2018; Stobie, 2015). Likewise, advanced graphics software made by Adobe such as Photoshop, Illustrator, and Altsys's FreeHand that counterfeiters can use to closely simulate the excellent details and sophisticated techniques of engraving which is almost impossible to forge by hands on the US dollar bills (Eldefrawy & Khan, 2015; Snehlata & Saxena, 2017). China, India, Iran, Syria, Colombia, and many South and some Central American countries with connections to major drug cartels and multinational gang groups are the primary producers of counterfeit money (Hamann, 2016; Snehlata & Saxena, 2017; Viswanathan, 2016; Yang, 2015). Counterfeiters employ experts and sophisticated printing technologies that caricature the complicated methodologies used by the U. S. Treasury Department to churn out virtually undetectable fake \$100 bills (Cho, Fang, & Sridhar, 2015; Eldefrawy & Khan, 2015).

## **The Remedies**

The role of law enforcement and legislation is essential in addressing the counterfeit issue effectively (Chitadze, 2016; Kerns, 2016; Wu, Gong, & Chiu, 2016). Besides having various anticounterfeiting, intellectual property, and copy right laws, regulations, legal frameworks, and legislation, law enforcement is still the main force to deter counterfeiters and protect intellectual property rights and copyright laws. However, the United States has different policies towards countries that have blatantly violated intellectual property law (Chaudhry & Cesareo, 2017; Sullivan, Chan, Fenoff, & Wilson, 2017; Yu, 2017). Notwithstanding similarities in the Russian and Chinese development and implementation of copyright laws, the two nations received very different treatments from the United States when they violated the United States copyright law (Chaudhry & Cesareo, 2017; Hong & Su, 2016; McDougal, 2015; Su, 2018). For instance, the United States adopts a far less aggressive tactic toward Russia but pursues severe trade sanctions against China to force it to enact stricter intellectual property law (Trimble, 2015; Tripoli, 2016). Numerous law enforcement officers lack in-depth knowledge and understanding of the dynamics and socioeconomic implications of counterfeiting in the domestic front (Testa et al., 2018). Counterfeiters are saboteurs of business, innovations, intellectual creations, research and development, and legal shields that impair firms' ability to compete and succeed in domestic and international markets. The impact of fake products in the economy is incalculable, and the actual costs and immediate loss in sale revenues for the original brands, a decline in employment lost incomes, research investments,

development costs, and labor expenditures in addressing the issues associated with counterfeit commercial activities are also a significant concern (Ahmed, 2016).

Furthermore, law enforcement officials and subordinates do not have sufficient intellectual capacity to understand complicated intellectual property law, strong administrative directives, or assigned specific responsibilities to carry out their duties such as frequent crackdowns, increase governmental seizures of counterfeit goods, and more stringent import inspections procedures from national ports of entry to enforce the anticounterfeiting law accordingly (Chaudhry & Cesareo, 2017; Lang, 2017). There are existing legislation, sentencing guidelines, and large-scale political enforcement campaigns at different levels of coordination to increase prosecutions and indictments of counterfeiters, their accomplices, and sympathizers (Haiyan, 2015). Nevertheless, criminal proceedings and sanctions remain a tiny percentage of the total volume of civil intellectual property infringement disputes that actually go through the judicial systems each year. Crackdowns are the executive choice to strengthen the strict enforcement of intellectual property law, anticounterfeiting rules, and regulations; however, this executive choice is only applied when necessary to a particular class of offenders or offenses as scapegoats (Sohoni, 2017). The official statistics and reports from many government agencies show the quantities and dimensions of counterfeit product seizures are not indicative or commensurate the actual level or the urgency of the counterfeit issue as only a small volume of confiscated counterfeit goods equivalent to less than ten percent of the total global trades are reported (Busch et al., 2018). Researchers avowed that such ineffective legal actions, casual or symbolic implementation, and no concerted

efforts from law enforcement agents to resolve the counterfeit issue entirely reflect inadequate capabilities, exertions, and commitments in prosecuting counterfeit crimes as well as protecting intellectual property and copyright owners (Bikoff et al., 2015; Yang, 2016).

Globalization is continuously making international trades more interdependent and easier access among nations, and access to counterfeits seems to be widely available and more convenient than ever before (Ferrante, 2015; Gao, 2018; Ting & Ip, 2015). However, Congress and the executive branch appear to be failing to enact and execute au fait laws and regulations to correct the complicated legislative loopholes and enforce the product counterfeiting legal obligations successfully (Benton, 2018). Rapid globalization is one of the reasons that the costs of transportation and communication throughout the world reduced as well as increasing innovative digitization expansion in all technological fields enabling counterfeiters escalating their capabilities to copy digital intellectual property creations and copyrightable works without much effort (Foldvary & Hammer, 2016; Stobie, 2015). The explosion in internet super highspeed capability facilitates the international transfer of digital works in a flash; therefore, firms need to pressure Congress to have legal modifications of national and international laws to address the counterfeit phenomenon accordingly (Obokata, 2017).

There are opposing viewpoints among law enforcement agencies regarding how to properly handle intellectual property thefts and copyright infringement laws in the context of implementing strict rules, regulations, and legal prosecution (Beard et al., 2018; Shi, 2016). The counterfeit sympathizers share similar worldviews, disciplines,

beliefs, economic, social, or cultural tolerances with counterfeiters and believe law enforcement personnel should be lenient when enforcing the law against counterfeiters. The counterfeit sympathizers argue against any strict measures to defeat the open and free-market economic principles and let the law of supply and demand dictate its course in the product counterfeiting concern. Furthermore, the opponents of stern anticounterfeiting law believe counterfeiting does not cause various socioeconomic destructions, chaotic lawlessness, threats to national security, and a disastrous economy. The individuals show a lack of competency in implementing the overall national socioeconomic advanced strategies.

On the contrary, the proponents of the strict anticounterfeiting law claim that the inactions or mild enforcing of intellectual property law from law enforcement personnel can lead to serious legal violations, lawlessness, an uncontrollable saturation of counterfeit products, and numerous negative socioeconomic consequences (Davidson et al., 2019). The culture of tolerance towards substantive justice over procedural justice seems to be prevailing in the anticounterfeiting fight (Sullivan et al., 2017; Robinson & McDuie-Ra, 2018). The lack of personnel also causes a predicament in enforcing intellectual property law and diminishing the spread of imitated products (Singh, 2019). Perhaps, anticounterfeiting department managers should request more substantial legal and enforcement commitments from different governmental levels to focus on the negative socioeconomic impacts and implications that the counterfeit issue creates and combat its severe effects on the business environment, commercial activities, economic advancement, and national security. Government agencies need to develop a self-interest

stance in tackling the counterfeit issue (Gianopoulos, 2018; Herstein, Drori, Berger, & Barnes, 2015).

### **Literature Review Conclusion**

In the literature review, I examined theories, industries, and current multifaceted anticounterfeiting strategies. I analyzed the counterfeit topic from the framework, approaches, and factors showing the counterfeiting phenomenon and its multidimensional perspectives. The findings can aid anticounterfeiting department managers in developing and implementing effective anticounterfeiting strategies. Furthermore, I supplemented and expanded the research topic with supplementary theories and literature. Many counterfeit researchers' works showed that anticounterfeiting department executives do not have multidimensional knowledge of the counterfeit issue. Therefore, countless anticounterfeiting department managers lack sufficient understanding of the adverse implications and consequences of fakes. Numerous companies fail to collaborate with regulatory and law enforcement agencies to enforce intellectual property law effectually. These elements are the key reasons why many anticounterfeiting department managers cannot develop and implement successful anticounterfeiting strategies to mitigate knockoffs.

I illustrated the validity and necessity to conduct this study by expounding the literature gap in addressing the business problem's qualitative dimension. I sought various scholars' philosophical, legal, political, judicial, scientific, logical, and practical explanations to understand why many businesses do not have effective anticounterfeiting strategies. The literature review exposes anticounterfeiting department executives

ineffective anticounterfeiting strategies and deficiencies in mitigating or eradicating imitated goods. Moreover, I exhibited evidence and relevant facts supporting this study. The spread of counterfeiting is increasingly uncontrollable in scope, scale, and dimensions and detrimental to businesses worldwide.

Additionally, I pointed out the lack of literature in addressing the qualitative dimension of the business problem by justifying the study's purpose in the literature review with supporting details. I applied supplementary theories to address the general business problem and illustrate why many anticounterfeiting department managers do not have effective anticounterfeiting strategies. Several enlightenments emerged from the wide-ranging literature review showing ineffective anticounterfeiting strategies and the deficiencies in mitigating or eradicating imitated goods. Anticounterfeiting leaders can understand how to develop and implement successful multidimensional anticounterfeiting strategies from the research outcomes. Anticounterfeiting department executives can incorporate the findings derived by experts in the field to improve the current anticounterfeiting strategy.

### **Transition**

In Section 1, I elaborated on the following components of the study: (a) background of the problem, problem statement, purpose statement, (b) nature of the study, and (c) research question. Further, I discussed the following elements: (a) conceptual framework and operation definitions, (b) assumptions, limitations, and delimitations, (c) significance of the study, and (d) review of the professional and academic literature which consists of relevant multidimensional anticounterfeiting

strategies various scholarly sources ranging from 2015 to 2020. In Section 2, I present a complete process involving how I conducted the study with the following sub-sections: (a) purpose statement and the researcher's role, (b) participant selection, the study population, and sampling method, and (c) ethical research. The remainder of section 2 contained (a) data collection instruments, (b) data collection techniques, (c) data analysis, and (d) qualitative reliability and validity principles. In Section 3, I enunciate the research outcomes, including the following components: (a) professional practice, (b) implications for change, presentation of the findings, themes, applications to the professional practice, implications for social change, (c) recommendations for action, and (d) the need for further research. Finally, I conclude the study with reflections.

## Section 2: The Project

In this section, I illustrate the research method, design, and the processes I used to conduct the study to address the central point, which is that many anticounterfeiting department managers lack multidimensional anticounterfeiting strategies to mitigate or eradicate counterfeit effectively. The section includes the following components: the purpose statement, role of the researcher, the study participants, research method and design, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instruments, data organization techniques, data analysis, and the study reliability and validity. The spread of imitated products is detrimental to businesses worldwide. Having effective anticounterfeiting strategies can help anticounterfeiting department managers protect their firm's intellectual property and economic interests better.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies that anticounterfeiting department managers of a consumer products company have successfully developed and implemented to resolve or mitigate counterfeiting. The study population included a purposeful sample of four adult male and female anticounterfeiting department executives from a consumer products company in a metropolitan area of Georgia who have successfully developed and implemented anticounterfeiting strategies. The anticounterfeiting department managers were over 18 years of age and had more than 2 years of job experience. Anticounterfeiting department managers and business leaders can use the study results to gain more knowledge, understanding, skills, insights, and approaches to develop and implement better strategies to eliminate or reduce

counterfeiting. The reduction or elimination of counterfeiting can benefit inventors, intellectual property owners, investors, and businesses by protecting intellectual property, creations, investments, and the financial interests. Additionally, reducing counterfeiting lessens the negative socioeconomic impacts that harm consumer morale, health, safety, and national economic advancement.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The researcher's main role is designing the research method, gathering data, organizing and constructing the themes, and reporting the outcomes of the study (Wesely, 2018). More precisely, the researcher collects data related to the research subjects, analyzes and interprets the participants' responses, documentation, and any relevant materials in identifying emerging themes, answering the research question, and supporting the conceptual framework (Devaney et al., 2018; Wesely, 2018). Furthermore, the research results reflect the researcher's adeptness in finding data, perspectives, and gaps in previous literature to support the research topic and answer the research questions (Bechky & Elsbach, 2016; Fleet et al., 2016). In this qualitative single case study, my role was the sole data collector. I collected data from four research participants, field notes, and the company online resources. The participants were anticounterfeiting department executives of a consumer products company located in a metropolitan area of Georgia. The anticounterfeiting department managers developed and implemented anticounterfeiting strategies successfully. After receiving the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, I began collecting data, ensuring properly protecting participants' rights and safety.

To ensure meeting all ethical and regulatory requirements for this study, I complied with the 1979 Belmont Report requirements published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Adashi, Walters, & Menikoff, 2018; Mick, 2019). The Belmont Report entails ethical principles and guidelines to protect research participants mandated by the U.S. National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research in 1979 (Adashi et al., 2018; Hottenstein, 2018). The rules and regulations include (a) respect and protect the individual's volunteer research participation by providing informed consent and (b) beneficence in using the research participants' responses to support the study while not harming the participants (Kerns, 2016; Wolf et al., 2015). Under the Belmont Report, researchers must adhere to three principles: (a) informed consent, (b) a risk-benefit assessment, and (c) selection of research participants for research (Friesen, Kearns, Redman, & Caplan, 2017). I followed the interview protocols (Appendix B) to set the rules of engagement for the interviews, explore, and collect data about anticounterfeiting strategies.

Avoiding bias in research is essential to the study outcomes, especially when the researcher selects a research method and design, gathers, examines data, and explains findings (Alweis, Fitzpatrick, & Donato, 2015; Weeks, 2017). Biases are severe issues in research, and researchers may find themselves changing personally or professionally while generating research themes or achieving the study objectives, which may cause undesirable influences (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2017; Leichsenring et al., 2017). I was aware of the potential unintended bias and prevented it from happening by not letting my viewpoints interfere with any research processes while collecting data, coding data,

analyzing information, interpreting data, and reporting results. I used the bracketing method to reduce any possible effects of bias that could taint the research results. I conducted face-to-face, semistructured (open-ended) interviews with participants and processed all data without adding any personal points of view. While interviewing the participants, I encouraged the interviewees to answer the research questions honestly to the best of their knowledge and lead the discovery phase as they saw fit. Afterwards, I requested the interviewees to validate the accuracy and suitability of data and my interpretations by using member checking to alleviate potentially deleterious bias effects that may taint the findings (Watson, 2018).

### **Participants**

The study population consisted of 4 anticounterfeiting department managers of a consumer products company located in a metropolitan area of Georgia. The anticounterfeiting department executives developed and implemented effective anticounterfeiting strategies. I searched for consumer products companies that matched the study criteria to collect data. I invited the participants to take part in the study by invitation. I conducted face-to-face semistructured interviews with the participants in a comfortable, cordial, and tranquil venue. I followed the interview protocol closely. I triangulated the findings by using the respondents' data, field notes, and the company's online resources to compare results from different standpoints to prevent potential biases arising from using a single source. Using triangulation is a good practice in conducting a qualitative case study research and usually considered as offering validity through the convergence of findings, sources, or methods (Farquhar, Michels, & Robson, 2020). I

manually processed, organized, analyzed, and identified emerged themes. After the interviews, I met with the interviewees to conduct member checking to review and verify the accuracy of their responses to the interview questions and my data interpretations. This member checking process aims to enhance the accuracy of the collected data, documentation, and field notes (Hammack-Aviran, Brelsford, Beskow, Rothstein, & Wilbanks, 2020). I achieved data saturation after processing the fourth participant's data.

## **Research Method and Design**

### **Research Method**

Researchers select the research method and design as the strategy to collect data that they can use to answer the research questions (Flynn et al., 2018; Stemberger & Cencic, 2016; Zadrozny, McClure, Lee, & Jo, 2016). I used the qualitative approach to collect data and analyze anticounterfeiting themes. Researchers use the qualitative approach to interpret and clarify the complicated subject matter with depth and richness intrinsic in the phenomenon to procure meaningful findings from the research participants (Sarsa & Escudero, 2016; Schirmer, Lockman, & Schirmer, 2016). Moreover, researchers can use data from a small sample of participants to determine critical findings and support the study objectives. Correspondingly, researchers can generate themes by interpreting participants' responses to semistructured or open-ended interview questions, observations, fieldnotes, body language, documentation, audio-visual materials, and company reports reflecting their perspectives, experiences, explanations, actions, and behaviors (Bruin, 2018; Khoo & Saleh, 2017). Qualitative researchers can systematically comprehend and explain the characteristics of a

phenomenon, as they have the flexibility in selecting semistructured interviews, convenient interview venues, and techniques to achieve the study objectives (Cassell, 2018).

In quantitative research, the researcher collects data using specific scales of measurements, concrete mathematical figures, objective measures, a set of variables, numerical analysis, or statistical information from the participants for hypothesis testing about quantitative models' relevance (Costa, Demo, & Paschoal, 2019; Williams et al., 2017). Typically, the quantitative researcher must have multiple research participants to control dependent and independent variables to generate meaningful findings (Li, Chen, & Hsu, 2019; O'Doherty et al., 2018). Besides, the researcher also uses empirical logic, numerical data, statistical analysis, and hypotheses to establish variables' relationships to predict behavior in specific occurrences (Baldan et al., 2016; Liao & Hitchcock, 2018; Li, Lam, & Liu, 2018; Zhang et al., 2017). I used a qualitative single case study to collect different anticounterfeiting strategies from a small sample size of anticounterfeiting department managers. The quantitative method was not applicable in this study because I extracted the anticounterfeiting strategies from the participants' exclusive attributes, body language, insights, intelligence, unique cognitive processes, progressive patterns, and experiences, which would not meet the required elements of the quantitative method. The mixed methodology is the integration of qualitative and quantitative methods which contribute to the researcher's multifaceted interpretation of an issue or a phenomenon (Bolibar, 2016; Ingham-Broomfield, 2016; Makrakis & Kostoulas-Makrakis, 2016; May

et al., 2016). I did not use quantitative analysis; therefore, I did not use a mixed methodology.

### **Research Design**

There are qualitative research designs such as the narrative approach, case study, ethnography, or phenomenology (Hernandez-Hernandez & Sancho-Gil, 2015; Hesse-Biber, 2015; Liao & Hitchcock, 2018). Researchers using a case study design can address research questions in detail through a limited arrangement in a pre-set timeframe (Hoorani, Nair, & Gilbert, 2019; McGinley, 2018; Raeburn, Schmied, Hungerford, & Cleary, 2015; Ridder, 2017; Scholl, 2017; Sheppard & Vibert, 2016). In addition, researchers using a single qualitative case study collect data through semistructured interviews, participants' observations, fieldnotes, documentation, audio-visual materials, reports, and internal analyses (Hott et al., 2015; Klenke, Wallace, & Martin, 2015; Quaquebeke & Felps, 2016; Woodside, 2017). Using a single case study, scholars can acquire in-depth knowledge and develop a clear picture of a phenomenon within its actual context (Chesnay, 2015; Devaney et al., 2018; Tibben, 2015; Zahke, 2017). Additionally, case study researchers have a significant advantage in research suitability and flexibility, and they can sufficiently and effectively portray the scale, scope, and dimensions of the research question through direct reflections, prearranged or casual semistructured interviews, and appropriate data (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2016; Csiernik & Birnbaum, 2017; Garnett et al., 2018; Greco et al., 2018; Molk & Auer, 2018). Researchers can select various categories and cross-reference data from the participants' interviews through direct observations and interactions to understand and verify their

experiences and knowledge (Barnham, 2015; Honig, 2019; Noble, 2016; Sjoval et al., 2016). Having sufficient data can enhance the researcher's understanding of how and why the phenomenon transpires and confirming the participants' experiences and knowledge (Ridder, 2017; Saxena, 2019). I collected data and extracted multidimensional anticounterfeiting strategies from the participants.

In an ethnographic design, researchers typically examine the participants' premises, populace, or through ethnographic factfinding to comprehend the setting, themes, and unique characteristics through open-ended interviews, field notes, and observations (Rainsford, Phillips, Glasgow, McLeod, & Wiles, 2018; Reynolds, 2015). The ethnographic design was not appropriate in this study because counterfeiting is not an issue associated with one particular ethnicity or society but people of many nationalities and demographics. Additionally, researchers usually select the narrative design to reveal a cohesive story about the research participants over stories of their personal lives (Bruce et al., 2016); however, I did not expose any cohesive story about any participants and their personal lives. Finally, the phenomenological model illustrates the participants' feelings of experiencing an event, activity, or phenomenon (Filhour, 2019; Sneed & Hammer, 2018). I was not unfolding the participants' meanings of different experiences with anticounterfeiting strategies; thus, the phenomenological design was not a justifiable research design in this study.

In a case study, the researcher assesses and interprets complex and emergent issues of a phenomenon to attain far-reaching outcomes (Berg & Struwig, 2017; Glasser & Strauss, 2017). Researchers using a case study design can address research questions

in detail through a circumscribed scheme over time (McGinley, 2018; Ridder, 2017; Scholl, 2017; Sheppard & Vibert, 2016). Furthermore, researchers can exploit various types and sources of information from their participants' interviews through direct observations and interactions to understand and verify their experiences and knowledge (Sneed & Hammer, 2018). I used a case study to explore multidimensional anticounterfeiting strategies to resolve or reduce imitated products.

Data saturation is one of the central features of a qualitative study, and data saturation emerges when the researcher cannot amass any new data to generate additional themes from the interviewees' responses (Boddy, 2016; Nelson, 2017; Varpio, Ajjawi, Monrouxe, O'Brien, & Rees, 2017; Young & Casey, 2019). I gathered and processed data from the interviewees until no new data, themes, or patterns arose. I triangulated data from the interviewees' responses, the participant's body languages, and the firm's online resources to ensure dependability of findings. Researchers can conclusively validate the study results when attaining data saturation. I achieved data saturation after processing the fourth interviewee's data. There is no standard or well-defined sample size in a qualitative study because the sample size is usually contingent on the interviewees' relevant findings until reaching data saturation (Blaikie, 2018; Deniel, 2019). I achieved data saturation after processing the fourth interviewee's data. Researchers do not need to collect more data after attaining data saturation (Collingridge & Gantt, 2019; Constantinou, Georgiou, & Perdikogianni, 2017; Saunders et al., 2018). I interviewed the four anticounterfeiting department managers to collect data until I had sufficient data to replicate the study and additional data would not generate new themes.

I cross-referenced all collected data to detect incomplete or repetitive data, and then linked it with the conceptual framework to gain more in-depth knowledge.

### **Population and Sampling**

This qualitative single case study population was 4 anticounterfeiting department executives from a consumer products company located in a metropolitan area of Georgia. The participants had at least two 2 years of experience, were over the age of 18, and developed and implemented anticounterfeiting strategies successfully. I sought participants who had extensive knowledge and expertise of the counterfeit issue.

Sampling is one of the main research components (Keidser, Matthews, & Convery, 2019). Determining purposeful sampling is significant in the research process (Allen & Zhang, 2016; Dimitrov, 2015; Liechty, 2018). Researchers select participants who have actual experiences and knowledge about the subject matter and then collect unspecified data to address the research questions, understand the case, and support analytic generalizability and theoretical propositions of the study (Flaig et al., 2019; Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, & McKibbon, 2015). There are no well-defined requirements in determining a qualitative sample size; thus, researchers can rely on a small sample to collect detailed data (Kennedy, 2019; Linos & Carlson, 2017). Furthermore, a case study researcher can reach data saturation with several participants if there is sufficient data from the interviewees to answer the research question, and no new information emerges (Gottfert, 2015). I used purposeful sampling to identify and select anticounterfeiting department managers. The participants met the following requirements: (a) anticounterfeiting department managers of a consumer products company in a

metropolitan area of Georgia, (b) had minimum 2 years of experience in developing and implementing anticounterfeiting strategies successfully, and (c) their anticounterfeiting strategies are for domestic or global markets. Researchers can incorporate participants' data from face-to-face semistructured interviews, documentation, archival records, physical artifacts, direct observation, participant observation, body language, and data interpretations to enhance the analysis process and achieve data saturation (Constantinou et al., 2017; Ospina, Esteve, & Lee, 2018). In analyzing and extracting the best anticounterfeiting strategies, I chose participants with sufficient knowledge, necessary experiences, and a clear understanding of the subject matter (Shah, 2017; Yang & Gabrielsson, 2018).

The objective of this qualitative research was to attain necessary findings of the counterfeit phenomenon and anticounterfeiting strategies to answer the research question. Scholars and scientists stated that qualitative researchers using semistructured interviews could achieve data saturation when no new evidence is learned (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2019; Young & Casey, 2019). I used member checking to identify data and interpretation discrepancies. I collected and analyzed information from the anticounterfeiting department managers' face-to-face semistructured interviews until I achieved data saturation on the fourth interview. The interview venue was comfortable, cordial, and tranquil.

### **Ethical Research**

Researchers must conduct a study responsibly and ethically to warrant reverence and fairness by following the government ethics, rules, regulations, and institutional

guidelines and standards (Bakardjieva & Kimmel, 2017; Lehnert, Craft, Singh, & Park, 2016; Snoek & Horstkotter, 2018; Taylor, 2015). I complied with all ethical requirements as stipulated in the Belmont Report in conducting this research (Friesen et al., 2017; Hottenstein, 2018). I confirmed that all participants were adults over 18 years of age and had no legal restrictions to participate. I started data collection after receiving approval for my study from the Walden University IRB. I treated all participants fairly, respected their privacy rights, and maintained a professional and harmonious working relationship while conducting this research.

All research participants consented to participate in the study, signed, and received a copy of the consent form before the interviews began (see Appendix B). The interviewees acknowledged that the researcher and a Walden University representative contact information, the study purpose, background, benefits, participants, and Walden University IRB's approval number for the research 05-22-20-0631204 with expiration date 05/21/2021 were on the consent form. I informed the participants that they could inquire about the research further at any time by phone or email. To ensure the data accuracy, I offered all participants a 1-2-page summary of findings.

Researchers must respect participants' privacy right and their right to review, participate, or answer interview questions voluntarily (Nnamuchi, 2015; Rallis & Lawrence, 2017; Riddell, Slamanca, Pepler, Cardinal, & McIvor, 2017). Many scholars believe participants should not receive high-valued gifts or unreasonable incentives from the researcher to avoid bias. However, an appropriate gift is considered an ethical and non-coercive offering by researchers and ethics boards as participants' benefits and rights

that they are entitled to, such as their time and effort (Biruk, 2017). Nevertheless, the interviewees participated voluntarily and showed great interest in the research subject (Stang, 2015; Zhang, 2017).

Researchers have the responsibility to ensure trust, dignity, privacy, and confidentiality of the subjects (Bell, Aidinlis, Smith, Mourby, & Kay, 2019; Matarese, 2016; Nissenbaum, 2018; Wolf et al., 2015). I protected the identities and privacy of the participants by using codenames instead of their names. I digitally saved all research materials, files, interview recordings, and company archival records on a password protected computer memory drive, kept it in a passcode-protected safe, and placed it in a secured location (Parker, Pine, & Ernst, 2019). Furthermore, I will keep all non-electronic and electronic data, research materials, including the consent forms (Appendix A), and company materials, to ensure confidentiality and privacy for five years. After that, I will destroy non-electronic research materials by shredding them. I will delete and reformat the memory drive containing all electronic data altogether.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

The researcher is the primary data collection instrument utilizing sources such as (a) interviews, (b) documentation, and (c) archival records (Anselmi, Fabbris, Martini, & Robusto, 2018; Axson, Giordano, Ulrich, & Hermann, 2019; Chatzitheochari et al., 2018; Seeley, Chimonas, & Kesselheim, 2018). I was the sole data collector (see Appendix B - the interview protocol). Researchers can gather, process, and extract data by conducting semistructured interviews, analyzing participants' documentation, and archiving records (Noble, Hendrickson, & Hedberg, 2019; Patel, 2019). I conducted face-to-face

semistructured interviews with the participants. I asked participants open-ended questions so that they could not respond with yes or no answers (see Appendix D). I examined the firm online resources to explore and extract additional data to support the anticounterfeiting strategies themes. I used member checking to ensure that the data analyses and interpretations of findings were accurate and relevant (see Appendix A).

Researchers use triangulation to compare and validate findings as well as develop a theoretical context for the study through cross-checking data from various sources and viewpoints. Thus, researchers can minimize potential unintended biases (Bogo, Lee, McKee, Ramjattan, & Baird, 2017; Brown et al., 2015; Kienle, Mussler, Fuchs, & Kiene, 2016; Neutzling, Pratt, & Parker, 2019; Shannonhouse, Barden, Jones, Gonzalez, & Murphy, 2016; Xerri, 2018). I used audio files, field notes, and the company online resources for triangulation. By exploring the participants' responses and insights, I generated themes and sub-themes to answer the research question: What strategies do anticounterfeiting department managers use to resolve or mitigate counterfeiting?

Researchers employ member checking to boost data accuracy, reliability, validity, and transferability of a study by providing participants the transcripts or reports of findings to confirm the correctness of data and interpretations (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016; Brear, 2019; Naidu & Prose, 2018). I provided participants with a 1-2-page summary of the interview report to validate the data analyses and interpretations. Researchers can spot and revise insufficient data and discrepancies by using the data cleaning method (Hoshino, Nakayama, Ito, Kanno, & Nishimura, 2017;

Rahman & Islam, 2016; Sehgal & Bhargava, 2018). I used data cleaning to detect and revise any data inaccuracies, incompleteness, and irrelevancies.

### **Data Collection Technique**

In this study, I conducted face-to-face semistructured interviews to collect, analyze, and interpret data described in the interview protocol stated in the appendix. I reached the data collecting benchmarks by successfully gaining participants' in-depth perspectives, experiences, insights, and knowledge based on the interviewees' answers while inferring social indications, speeches, inflections, and body language during the analyzing and interpreting progression. Qualitative researchers could gain substantial insights into a phenomenon by interviewing participants with semistructured (or open-ended) questions and analyze company documentation (Blankson, Ketron, & Coffie, 2017). Using a semistructured interview, the researcher can discover and enhance the participant's in-depth perspectives, experiences, and knowledge (Copes, Tchoula, Brookman, & Ragland, 2018). Moreover, the advantages of semistructured interviews include (a) the researcher can digitally record the interview and review later and (b) the interviewer can gain further insinuations to the interviewee's answers while interpreting social cues, voice, intonation, and body language during the progression (Dukala, Sporer, & Polczyk, 2019; Garth & Sterling, 2018). The interview process should be spontaneous without premeditation or external inducement as both interviewer and interviewee can directly respond to what the other says or does instantly (Wesely, 2018). However, there are drawbacks in the qualitative interview as the answers can be unintended or erroneously stated because the interviewee does not have sufficient time to think or

extended reflection (Fisher, Cottin, Behn, Errazuris, & Diaz, 2019; Goodman-Delahunty & Howes, 2016). Therefore, during an unstructured interview, the researcher should formulate questions based on interactive communication nature. Besides, the time-consuming and inconvenient factors can prevent the interviewer and interviewee from finding common ground when setting up time and venue for an interview (Brown et al., 2019).

Printed or multimedia materials showing essential data or facts enable researchers to gain more data for analysis purposes (Goh, Edmonds, & Christos, 2019). There are useful information and narratives within the documentation to enhance the researcher's interpretations, in-depth understanding, and knowledge (Bartelsman, Hagsten, & Polder, 2018). However, documentation may not reflect the correct information or enough data to generate proper interpretations or cause confusions (Andreeva et al., 2017; Ciuhureanu, 2015). I examined the firm's online resources to collect additional information. I am the only person with total control and access to the research digital files (Hu, Liu, & Wei, 2015). I processed all collected data carefully, protected, and ensured the confidentiality of the participants' privacy, locations, and affiliations by removing any identifiable evidence and using codenames. I reviewed and identified unfitting data or misinterpretation of any data or transcript to attain data saturation. To validate and strengthen the research findings, I applied member checking to improve the accuracy and interpretations of findings by asking the participants to verify and validate the information and the researcher's interpretations. I saved all data on a computer hard drive with a security password for five years in a safe. After five years, I will destroy all

data by deleting and reformatting the hard drive completely, as stipulated by Walden University guidelines (Hu, Liu, & Wei, 2015).

### **Semistructured Interviews**

Qualitative researchers conduct semistructured interviews to collect data for the study because of the unrestrictive answers' nature of semistructured questions (Conrad & Tucker, 2019). Furthermore, researchers can gain meaningful data from the participants' responses to generate themes and answer the research question based on the participants' viewpoints, experiences, knowledge, attitudes, reflections, and relevant information relating to the research phenomenon (Evans & Price, 2017; Zink, Schielein, Wildner, & Rehfuess, 2019). Researchers can conduct semistructured interviews by phone, online, or face-to-face (Marshall & Edgley, 2015). However, some participants may not like face-to-face interviews because of time constraints, inconvenience, personal issues, or unpredictable situations such as covid-19 pandemic (Melander, Dahlblom, Jegannathan, & Kullgren, 2016). Researchers can utilize telephone interviews when participants cannot meet for face-to-face interviews, but they should ensure appropriate arrangement to collect meaningful data from the interviewees (Burton, 2018; Clement et al., 2019). Many scholars emphasized that qualitative researchers can offer potential research participants two options to entice more participants such as telephone or face-to-face interviews (Hebert, Geisthardt, & Hoffman, 2019). I conducted face-to-face semistructured interviews with the participants to collect data for the study.

## **Documentation**

In addition to collecting data from semistructured interview questions, qualitative researchers obtain documentary evidence to improve data variance, relevancy, and richness (Walle, 2015). Moreover, researchers can generate meaningful themes by exploring data from various sources (Belk, 2017). Researchers should use the organization's documentation, archival records, business literature, online resources, or relevant printed materials in addition to semistructured interview responses for data analysis to enhance the study reliability and prevent potential bias from using only one source of data (Smyth, Jacoby, Altman, Gamble, & Williamson, 2015). Qualitative researchers usually collect data on multiple sources such as semistructured interviews, firm's documentation, and archival records to prevent potential bias, rationalize research methods, and support the study theoretical framework (Borgerding & Caniglia, 2017; Brown et al., 2015; Smith, 2018). I used the participants' semistructured interview responses and the company's online resources to avoid potential bias from using only one data source and generated meaningful themes.

## **Data Organization Technique**

Data organization is critical in qualitative research (Cassell & Bishop, 2019). Well prepared data organization can facilitate efficient data analyses, data interpretations, and generation of emerged themes. I used a digital audio recorder to record semistructured interviews, and I took notes while interviewing the interviewees. I manually processed and organized all data such as field notes, reflective journal, and

interviews for participants P1, P2, P3, P4, and the emerged themes. I saved all interview files on a password-protected computer hard drive.

Qualitative researchers use thematic coding to organize and recognize texts, words, ideas, patterns, and themes (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). Thematic analysis can help researchers processing, recognizing, categorizing, and identifying essential patterns, patterns correlate to the research question, themes, and significant findings; thus, thematic analysis is a useful and efficient practice in qualitative research (Rashid et al., 2017). I used thematic coding to analyze semistructured interview data.

Researchers must respect all participants' privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality (Chu & Ke, 2017; Palys, Lowman, & Turk, 2018). I conducted face-to-face semistructured interviews and asked all participants the same open-ended questions to prevent receiving yes or no answers from the interviewees. I codified participants as P1, P2, P3, and P4 to protect participants' anonymity and confidentiality while examining the interview data to determine emerged themes.

Organizing data is a task requiring substantial concentration on meaningful findings to achieve maximum values (Valentine, 2019). Many software programs such as NVivo12, Microsoft Excel, and Microsoft Excel are useful for data organization (Verschuuren & Travise, 2017). I manually processed, organized, and interpreted all data. I identified patterns, sub-themes, and then used coding to generate emerged themes. I coded data according to patterns and themes from the interview transcripts. I saved all data to a password-protected computer hard drive and stored it in a passcode-protected safe for five years. The researcher should be the only one who can access the research

materials and files (Carver, 2017). I am the only one who can access the research data. After five years, I will destroy all research materials by deleting and reformatting the data stored on the hard drive and shred all non-digital materials entirely, as stated under the Walden University IRB research guidelines.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative researchers claimed that data analysis is an intricate work requiring extensive efforts and time consuming in evaluating, analyzing, uncovering, interpreting raw data into themes to answer the research question objectively (Braun & Clarke, 2016; Carmichael & Cunningham, 2017; Mackieson, Shlonsky, & Connolly, 2019). I applied triangulation by combining data from multiple sources, including face-to-face interviews, field notes, and the company's online resources to improve reliability and validity of the findings and answer the research question without bias (Solum, 2017). I evaluated semistructured interview data and online resources to understand how anticounterfeiting department managers devised and executed their anticounterfeiting strategies to mitigate or eliminate counterfeit products successfully.

Furthermore, qualitative researchers should use Yin's five-phased approach for qualitative data analysis consisting of (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) interpreting, and (e) concluding to expose meaningful thoughts, patterns, and descriptions to answer the research question (Yazan, 2015). I applied Yin's analytical steps in this study. I used deductive analysis to link data with the research question and then inferred a theory (Pearce, Wassenaar, Berson, & Tuval-Mashiach, 2019).

**Compiling**

Compiling is the first step in data analysis to collect and organize data from interview responses, documents, or records to create a database (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Vergamini, Bartolini, Prosperi, & Brunori, 2019). I manually compiled data. In the data analysis phase, researchers use coding to describe or tag a limited set of data or fragmented data with a label or a code, usually in a short phrase or a word in collective, relevant, core-value, or characteristic terms to create a meaningful pattern or a theme (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Varpio, Ajjawi, Monrouxe, O'Brien, & Rees, 2017). I coded data reflecting different anticounterfeiting strategies themes and sub-themes.

**Disassembling**

Disassembling is about dividing data into small fragments or pieces and then assign each fragment with a code or a label (Albrecht & Spang, 2016). Disassembling is a significant process in coding data (Fuller & Mazurov, 2019; Patrignani, 2018). I categorized anticounterfeiting strategies semistructured interview data into different themes, disassembled them into patterns, and then assigned each sub-theme with a code that correlated with the study literature and conceptual framework.

**Reassembling**

Reassembling is the third phase in the data analysis. The researcher usually rearranges various disassembled fragments or pieces into different groupings and sequences and then compare them to the original notes or rational connections with the data to generate substantive themes (Hart, 2017; Shukla, Sushil, & Sharma, 2019; Zhu,

Fei, He, & Jiang, 2016). I examined and divided patterns, sub-themes, and compared them to original notes, conceptual framework, and literature to generate themes.

### **Interpreting**

Interpreting is the fourth analytical step in the data analysis in which the researcher uses restructured data to form a new narrative and then generate the report of findings (Naidu & Prose, 2018; Roberts, Dowell, & Nie (2019; Zagarella & Annoni, 2019). The interpreting phase is essential because the researcher has to understand and express the meaning of the data appropriately (Carmo, Margni, & Baptiste, 2017). I analyzed data to form a new narrative and generated the finding report with objectivity to ensure the data interpretation was consistent, unbiased, and trustworthy.

### **Concluding**

Concluding is the fifth and final analytical step (Alexandrov, Ivanov, & Alexandrova, 2019; Chesnay, 2015). The concluding phase is vital in the analysis process, illustrating the research findings from the wide-ranging interpretations and implications (Hofer, 2015; Sellars et al., 2019). I scrutinized all data to determine patterns and themes and then concluded the overall findings showing the connections and interrelationships among the research method, literature, and outcomes of the study. I concluded that the study findings answer the research question.

Thematic analysis is about spotting appropriate data for coding, coding data, and recording emerging themes through recurrent patterns corresponding to the research question and theoretical concept (Boucerredj & Debbache, 2018; Cascio, Lee, Vaudrin, & Freedman, 2019; Sharma & Sharma, 2015). I applied thematic analysis to find

patterns, themes, sub-themes, and then converted data into specific codes for analysis. I manually processed data and used coding to organize emerging themes into various categories (Williams & Moser, 2019). I grouped similar themes with parallel coding. If data is repetitive with no new information or new themes emerge, the researcher can conclude that data saturation is achieved (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Roberts, Dowell, & Nie, 2019). I achieved data saturation to answer the research question and support the conceptual framework after processing the fourth interviewee's data.

Researchers use computers, electronic devices, software, and digital storage to do research efficiently (Goldman, 2019; Quartiroli, Knight, Etzel, & Monaghan, 2017). I recorded semistructured interviews with a digital voice recorder, saved the digital files onto a computer hard drive, and analyzed transcripts carefully to code data and categorize data into different themes. Though there were software with helpful features such as continuous inputting, detecting patterns, and coding themes, I manually processed and identified themes. Using only one source of data is insufficient and unreliable to conclude the study persuasively (Constantinou et al., 2017). Thus, researchers should use more than one data source to enhance data reliability and validity and prevent personal or methodological bias (Bausell, 2015). I used data from face-to-face semistructured interviews, fieldnotes, and the company online resources as thematic analysis. I compared and contrasted various data to detect discrepancies.

## **Reliability and Validity**

### **Reliability**

Researchers must demonstrate quality research and scholarly work when conducting a research study (Belk, 2017; Brown et al., 2015; Varpio, Ajjawi, Monrouxe, O'Brien, & Rees, 2017). Reliability is the value of the study reflecting the research trustworthiness and that other researchers can replicate the study with similar conditions to achieve comparable outcomes (Noble & Smith, 2015; Ramanujam & Roberts, 2018). Moreover, attaining research dependability reflects the fact that researcher selected appropriate research method and design to explore, identify, and conclude the study successfully (Langtree, Birks, & Biedermann, 2019).

The participants in this study exhibited in-depth knowledge of the counterfeiting issue and anticounterfeiting strategies. The interviewees satisfactorily answered the research questions, affirmed the findings, and confirmed that the study's reliability element was achieved and other researchers can replicate the study (Daniel, 2018; Ramanujam & Roberts, 2018). I recorded, transcribed, interpreted data, and generated themes to answer the research question successfully. I used member checking to verify and validate the findings with all participants. All participants confirmed and validated that the findings were accurate and relevant to the study (DeCino & Waalkes, 2019; Livari, 2018; Waltz, Strickland, & Lenz, 2017).

### **Validity**

In a qualitative study, researchers must grasp the participants' actual experiences and knowledge to comprehend the phenomenon (Awasthy & Gupta, 2015; Walle, 2015).

Scholars and researchers emphasized that qualitative researchers should avoid any contextual illogicalities in the study designs and research questions that can compromise the interpretations of findings (Bechky & Elsbach, 2016; Gasparyan, 2016).

Furthermore, some factors can negatively affect the qualitative contextual validity, such as insufficient knowledge, favoritism, prejudice, inadequate descriptive rationality of the situations when analyzing and interpreting data (Beuving & Vries, 2015; Klenke et al., 2015; White, 2015). I collected data by conducting face-to-face semistructured interviews with participants, field notes, the company's online resources. I triangulated all data until achieving data saturation as no new theme emerged.

**Credibility.** Credibility is the most crucial component establishing the trustworthiness of a study (Liao & Hitchcock, 2018; Ospina et al., 2018; Wanner & Janiesch, 2019). Credibility consists of the elements of impartiality and integrity (Aguinis & Solarino, 2019; Arokiasamy, Kwaider, & Balaraman, 2019; Le Roux, 2017). The researcher needs to avoid bias when analyzing and interpreting data from the participants' perspectives, experiences, and knowledge through interviews, applying member checking to reduce discrepancies that may arise during the process (Vogl, Zartler, Schmidt, & Rieder, 2018). I conducted face-to-face semistructured interviews with four anticounterfeiting department managers to explore and understand the counterfeit issue and multidimensional anticounterfeiting strategies. I asked the interviewees open-ended questions in a way that prevented them from responding with yes or no answers. I used member checking and triangulation techniques to ensure data reliability. I kept a record of all the details of the research process, including identifying

the business problem, interviews, and concluding the study. All participants confirmed the interview summary and my interpretation were accurate and relevant to the study findings.

**Transferability.** Transferability is essential in qualitative research as outside researchers can duplicate the study and generate similar findings themselves in similar study (Cassell, 2018; Berg & Struwig, 2017; Walle, 2015). Transferability can be problematic when other researchers cannot produce a comparable finding comparing with the study's findings (Hays, Wood, Dahl, & Kirk-Jenkins, 2016; Sarma, 2015).

Transferability is about providing a full account of the researcher's experiences during the data collection process including geographical and social contexts such as interview locations, specific industry, and the participants' job titles so that other researchers can replicate similarly (Angeles, Centeno, & Villanueva, 2019; Laudien & Daxbock, 2017; Point, Fendt, & Jonsen, 2017). I provided the type of industry, geographical characteristics of the interview venues, and the participants' titles in this study.

**Confirmability.** The term *confirmability* refers to a process the researcher uses to confirm with the participants the findings based on their responses (Glenna, Hesse, & Camfield, 2019; Richards & Hemphill, 2018; Sharidan, 2016). Researchers can use audit trail, triangulation, or reflexivity methods for confirmability (Vicary, Young, & Hicks, 2017; Woods, Macklin, & Lewis, 2016). Researchers use the audit trail to collect unique and exclusive data for analyzing and interpreting emerging themes (Woodside, 2017). The reflexivity technique refers to the researcher's background that can influence the study, including topics, methods, designs, interpretations, and conclusions (Xerri, 2018).

I used triangulation to make sure my data analysis and interpretation were accurate and dependable. The participants confirmed the findings as accurate and relevant.

**Data saturation.** Data saturation is a test to measure the advancement of the theoretical sampling and thus establish the readiness of the research for the concluding analytical phases and the theory building when findings are repetitious and new information is not generating any new themes (Nelson, 2017). Researchers should continue the interview process with open-ended questions until they achieve data saturation (Constantinou et al., 2017). I interpreted the participants' interview data, documents, and company online resources linking the results to the systems theory theoretical framework to achieve data saturation. I achieved data saturation after processing the fourth participant's data.

### **Transition and Summary**

In section 2, I presented the sub-sections including purpose statement, role of the researcher, participants, research method and design, population and sampling, and ethical research. I illustrated the qualitative research instruments in collecting, organizing, analyzing, interpreting, and concluding data. Additionally, I presented the subsequent qualitative components: reliability, validity, transferability, and confirmability. In section 3, I reiterate the purpose of the study, research question, and enunciate the study findings. Besides, I deliberate the sequential sub-sections: (a) presentation of the study findings, (b) application to the business environment, (c) implications of social change, (d) recommendations for action, and (e) recommendations

for future study. In conclusion, I reveal the DBA journey conclusion, reflections, and lessons learned from the study.

### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this single qualitative case study was to explore the anticounterfeiting strategies that some anticounterfeiting department representatives of a consumer products company developed and implemented to mitigate or eliminate counterfeiting efficiently. I conducted semistructured interviews with four anticounterfeiting department representatives who had at least 2 years of experience devising and executing anticounterfeiting strategies. I triangulated the findings by using the respondents' data, field notes, and the company's online resources to compare results from different standpoints and avoid potential biases arising from using a single source (see Farquhar et al, 2020). After the interviews, I met with the interviewees to conduct member checking to review and verify the accuracy of my interpretations of their responses to the interview questions. The member checking process aims to enhance the accuracy of the collected interview data, company's documentation, and field notes (Hammack-Aviran, Brelsford, Beskow, Rothstein, & Wilbanks, 2020). All four participants confirmed that the information was correct and relevant to the study findings.

After collecting data from the research participants, a researcher applies thematic analysis to generate emerging themes (Soeker, 2020). Subsequent to applying thematic analysis, I uncovered three themes from the findings: (a) using online resources, (b) increasing awareness, and (c) continuous improvement. Furthermore, I examined the company online data for additional insights to support the findings from the respondents. In this section, I enunciate the study findings and elaborate on the emerged themes. In

addition, I present the following subsections: the application to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendation for action, further research, personal reflections, and the study conclusions.

### **Presentation of the Findings**

I conducted face-to-face, semistructured interviews with four anticounterfeiting department representatives of a consumer products company to extract anticounterfeiting strategies that the individuals used to mitigate or eliminate counterfeit products efficiently. I unveiled anticounterfeiting strategies from the interviewees' unique attributes, body language, insights, intelligence, nonidentical cognitive processes, progressive patterns, and experiences. Furthermore, I examined the firm's online resources and fieldnotes. The objective was to answer the research question: What strategies do anticounterfeiting department managers use to resolve or mitigate counterfeiting?

Three themes emerged after collecting data, analyzing interview responses, and coding data phases: (a) using online resources, (b) increasing awareness, and (c) continuously improving. Qualitative researchers compare data among the research participants to align the themes and support the study's conceptual framework (Watson & Ekici, 2020; Xue & Hickerson, 2020). Hence, I compared various elements, relationships, and interrelationships of the emerged themes related to the systems theory conceptual framework. Finally, I consolidated the findings to approbate, debunk, or proffer the knowledge and understanding correlated with the literature review.

**Theme 1: Using Online Resources**

The first theme that all participants (P1, P2, P3, and P4) established was using online resources. Scholars asserted that using online resources can help firms acquire up-to-date knowledge about counterfeit products (Frude, McKay, & Dunn, 2020). Online resources are informative and useful for anticounterfeiting representatives to consider when devising and implementing appropriate anticounterfeiting strategies (Hertig, Baney, & Weber, 2020). Additionally, online resources offer some of the most effective anticounterfeiting approaches that anticounterfeiting executives can learn (Espinosa & Quinter, 2020). P1 shared that “the organization relies on online resources most of the time because such resources can aid anticounterfeiting department executives with current, enlightening, and beneficial data to create or improve the firm’s anticounterfeiting strategy.”

Moreover, P1, P2, P3, and P4 emphasized that “using online platforms such as eBay, Google, and other similar websites to search for information on counterfeit products and anticounterfeiting strategies is a good anticounterfeiting strategy.” P4 stated that

There is vast information about numerous products such as specifications, characteristics, quality, and presentations; therefore, it is difficult to compare and contrast the genuine products and counterfeits accurately and efficiently. Hence, acquiring counterfeit product details and anticounterfeiting strategies available on various online platforms is an effective anticounterfeiting strategy.

Besides, new technologies and available advanced computer graphic design software in the marketplace help counterfeiters to imitate the original products with high sophistication that is not visible to the naked eyes or common sense. Similarly, P2 expressed that

Anticounterfeiting department executives must know the products' exact materials and characteristics by researching the companies that manufacture such particular products for images and specifications to differentiate between the authentic ones and fakes. Thus, using online resources to gain knowledge of counterfeit products is a good anticounterfeiting strategy.

Scholars believe it is not easy to detect product counterfeiting, and organizations need to obtain anticounterfeiting knowledge and expertise from online resources or outside sources to achieve successful anticounterfeiting strategy (Bougdira, Ahaitouf, & Akharraz, 2020; Peltier-Rivest & Pacini, 2019).

The findings align this theme to the systems theory conceptual framework, as online resources are a crucial component of the overall counterfeiting system serving as an infrastructure to facilitate the whole counterfeiting business. The systems theory and organization enable consideration of system and organization-level factors in the counterfeiting system (O'Leary & Boland, 2020; Sandberg, Holmstrom, & Lyytinen, 2020). Using online resources is a critical feature of counterfeit trades in facilitating, promoting, and expanding the symbiotic relationships of counterfeiting system networks and infrastructure. Furthermore, P3 shared that "the staff always looked for detailed information on brand name goods and fakes on multiple websites and sources including

YouTube videos as a good anticounterfeiting strategy, which can help anticounterfeiting managers detecting counterfeit products easier.” P4 detailed that “checking the product’s actual physical presentations, images, specifications, and quality descriptions through Google to ensure that the merchandise match the original goods’ images and descriptions is a successful anticounterfeiting strategy.” Online marketplaces offer an analytical framework to investigate the interactions and identifications of online vendors, supply chains, authentic brand vs counterfeit sellers, and network of counterfeiters (Sun, Zhang, & Zhu, 2020). Thus, anticounterfeiting department managers should explore online resources to devise an effective anticounterfeiting strategy because online resources offer information supporting anticounterfeiting managers with substantial counterfeit insights, up-to-date development of counterfeit trades, products, services, and its growing networks.

The theme also aligns with the systems theory conceptual framework in that counterfeiting is a system consisting of multiple components, products, exchange methods, and online resources (Singh, Dwivedi, & Srivastava, 2020; Usmani & Ejaz, 2020). The essential components that enable the counterfeiting systems to flourish widely are currency, ideas, access, methods, and networks, such as online resources serving to ease the flow and expansion of counterfeit goods worldwide. Online resources have been a reliable and indispensable infrastructure connecting and interacting paradigms with stakeholders of the counterfeiting system that empower their business systems and supporting networks to operate smoothly and efficiently. The study findings further correlate to the systems theory conceptual framework in the sense that every

component of the counterfeiting system interacts and connects using online resources, generates new approaches, algorithmic thinking, information exchanges, strategic planning, business links, and then transforms activities on that platform toward an ecosystem-centered organizing logic as an organization of systems theory (Sandberg et al., 2020). Counterfeiters use online resources to promote, distribute, exchange, and sell their products and services for profits as a complete system with commonalities. However, online resources can also offer anticounterfeiting department executives with necessary or supplementary information and knowledge to create an effective anticounterfeiting strategy by taking advantage of the open and accessible information, trade secrets, concepts, access, networks, knowledge, and percipience from that same system. The systemic concept could be connected and learned using creative approaches (Tadros, 2020).

## **Theme 2: Increasing Awareness**

P1 illustrated that “anticounterfeiting department executives could easily mix up original and counterfeit merchandise by their physical presentation and product specifications without increasing awareness. Therefore, increasing awareness is an effective anticounterfeiting strategy.” P2 whispered that “anticounterfeiting executives would have difficulty detecting counterfeit products without increasing awareness; so, they need to constantly obtain new knowledge on counterfeit products from online and other staff members to accomplish successful anticounterfeiting strategy.” P3 shared that anticounterfeiting professionals need to increase awareness on the copiousness of counterfeit products by carefully checking and comparing all suspicious items

using various resources to determine their originality and specifications; thus, increasing awareness of counterfeit products is an efficient anticounterfeiting strategy.

P3 expressed that “increasing awareness on fakes is one of the firm’s current anticounterfeiting strategies, and anticounterfeiting representatives must know how to distinguish the quality of original products and imitated items.” P4 ascertained that anticounterfeit department managers need to increase awareness in detecting counterfeits by creating appropriate standards and policies because most of the counterfeit products have similar product quality, specifications, and presentation compared to brand name goods. Therefore, increasing awareness is a good anticounterfeiting strategy.

Researchers have also suggested that consumers and anticounterfeiting managers need to increase awareness of imitated goods because brand search results are directed to fake e-commerce websites selling and proliferating counterfeit goods that infringe on legitimate holders’ trademark rights (Carpineto & Romano, 2020). Likewise, identifying high quality genuine products requires practical knowledge and constant awareness of new methods and procedures to detect fakes (Liu, Peng, Yu, & Tang, 2020). P1 commented that “increasing awareness is one of the most significant anticounterfeiting strategies that anticounterfeiting department executives must grasp.” To succeed in the fight against counterfeiting, increasing awareness of counterfeit products’ proliferation is a necessity for a company (Naude, 2020; Shufro, 2020). P1 asserted that “anticounterfeiting department executives must be continuously increasing awareness by

acquiring new counterfeit product information, knowing, and identifying the differences between genuine and counterfeit goods in terms of material details, physical presentation, defective evidence, and component specifications.”

The theme aligns with the systems theory conceptual framework, as counterfeiting is a system with various components and derivative products aiming for profits. To understand the counterfeit system accurately and generate a sound multidimensional anticounterfeiting strategy, anticounterfeiting executives must have appropriate solutions and be aware of its products, how the whole system works, interacts, exchanges goods and services, its components, shortcomings, imperfections, and their results such as the manufacturing processes and finished products quality. Henceforth, increasing awareness is an essential factor in distinguishing fakes and handling the counterfeiting system resolutely. Furthermore, counterfeiters and individuals involved in the counterfeiting network regularly conduct their businesses with new products, ideas, networks, and exchange methods within and outside of the systems to achieve the system’s objective of generating revenues and acquiring counterfeit goods and services. Consequently, increasing awareness can ensure anticounterfeiting department managers capable of creating appropriate anticounterfeiting strategies to cope with the constant development of the counterfeiting system.

In the systems theory, all components play a critical operational role to make it work properly and efficiently as a complete system (Grothe-Hammer, 2020). In other words, every member of an organization (or every component of a system) must observe and exercise internal responsiveness development, operational process, and awareness of

what is going on with the system internally and externally. Increasing awareness is an essential feature enabling and ensuring a firm's anticounterfeiting strategy is a success, which also echoes the idea that anticounterfeiting staff members need to increase awareness of new methods, concepts, algorithmic thinking, trades, and imitated products that feed the counterfeit system and counterfeiters.

### **Theme 3: Continuously Improving**

To combat fakes effectively, anticounterfeiting leaders must know how the components within the counterfeiting system work (Edelen, Bush, Simpson, Cook, & Abassian, 2020). The literature review in this study reveals that counterfeiting is an open system exchanging and generating new data, products, profits, losses, concepts, methodologies, accesses, and networks, aiming to improve and adjust its operations according to market fluctuations, unpredictable changes, and consumer demands. The continuously improving theme is also the central point that keeps the counterfeit systems operate and thrive progressively and efficiently. Anticounterfeiting department managers need to continuously improve anticounterfeiting strategies to effectively counter the open counterfeiting system as well as challenges from counterfeiters to achieve the multidimensional anticounterfeiting objectives. All participants discussed how they applied their anticounterfeiting strategies daily, kept themselves up-to-date with new knowledge, understanding, and continuously improving their anticounterfeiting strategies. Researchers pointed out that new and advanced technologies always emerge, which enable counterfeiters to imitate brand name merchandise with quality superiority and difficulty to differentiate between the genuine products and fakes; therefore, firms

need to improve their knowledge relentlessly and develop better anticounterfeiting policies, practices, approaches, systems, counter measures, applications, and mechanisms (Kalita, Malik, & Sarma, 2020; Khalil, Doss, & Chowdhury, 2020; Qian & Zhao, 2020; Rich & Ho, 2020).

P1 avowed that “firms must update data, knowledge, and develop enhanced anticounterfeiting strategies to have successful multidimensional anticounterfeiting strategy.” To improve brand performance and protect original brands from the incomprehensible outpouring of counterfeits, anticounterfeiting leaders need to look for effective anticounterfeiting methods continuously (Bian & Haque, 2020). P2 shared that “anticounterfeiting department executives should facilitate a sound au fait system of detecting counterfeit products to combat counterfeiting successfully.” P3 stressed that “new anticounterfeiting knowledge should be discussed with anticounterfeiting staff members regularly as an anticounterfeiting strategy.” P4 suggested that “any lack of current knowledge on anticounterfeiting can cause severe issues in the fight against counterfeiting.” The lack of knowledge on the counterfeiting issue presents more challenges to brand companies as counterfeiters have unprecedented access to consumers, nonappearance of transparency, and unaccountability for their illegal actions and illicit moral values (Chow, 2020).

Cross-referencing related concepts and investigating multiple data sources to develop a new understanding is a useful anticounterfeiting strategy (Ma, Sun, Lei, Qin, & Lu, 2020). P1 stated that “cross-referencing with other staff members on information that anticounterfeiting managers did not know well could give them insights on

anticounterfeiting strategy.” P2 proclaimed that “discussing new methods and clarifications on counterfeiting with colleagues or experts is necessary and a good anticounterfeiting strategy.” Similarly, P3 shared that “discussing with specialists in certain areas that anticounterfeiting department executives do not have sufficient facts about is one of the most effective anticounterfeiting strategies.” P4 articulated that “it is a good anticounterfeiting practice and an efficacious anticounterfeiting strategy to ask for additional information from other sources and experts to ensure the counterfeit products in question are not fakes.” The theme correlates with the systems theory conceptual framework as counterfeiting is an open system constantly generating new products, services, ideas, accesses, methods, and networks to facilitate changes and improve itself to cope with and satisfy market changes and consumer demands. To have effective multidimensional anticounterfeiting knowledge and strategies, anticounterfeiting leaders should continuously improve their anticounterfeiting knowledge and strategies as an anticounterfeiting open system.

Overall, the study results align with the systems theory conceptual framework and correlate with the current literature. Participants demonstrated that utilizing the themes emerging from the findings could enable anticounterfeiting department representatives to improve and devise anticounterfeiting strategies successfully. All four participants affirmed that using online resources, increasing awareness, and continuously improving are essential elements of an overall successful anticounterfeiting strategy. Therefore, anticounterfeiting department executives should have the following anticounterfeiting

applications in the real-world setting: (a) using online resources, (b) increasing awareness, and (c) continuously improving.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

Anticounterfeiting department managers can enhance their professional practice by implementing the multidimensional anticounterfeiting strategies revealed in this study. Anticounterfeiting leaders can create a policy requiring the use of online resources, mandating anticounterfeiting department executives to increase awareness to handle the counterfeit issue effectively, and continuously improving anticounterfeiting knowledge, understanding, and strategies. In summary, there are three main applications to professional practice that anticounterfeiting department managers can apply: (1) using online resources regularly to acquire new counterfeit product information, anticounterfeiting knowledge, and successful anticounterfeiting strategies that are available online from experts to generate new or integrate their current anticounterfeiting strategies with a better strategy, (2) increasing awareness by researching counterfeiters' new products, technologies, ideas, networks, accesses, and approaches to counter their strategies with stronger anticounterfeiting measures to eradicate or reduce fakes effectively, and (3), continuously improving knowledge, understanding, and advanced tactics that counterfeiters utilize to create better anticounterfeiting strategies. Learning new concepts, exploring the counterfeit systems, networks, and sharing information with co-workers who have insufficient knowledge and understanding of the counterfeiting issue are the professional practice that anticounterfeiting department executives can

cooperate and support each other to achieve the firm's multidimensional anticounterfeiting strategy successfully.

The progress of counterfeiting merchandise has overwhelmed the international community for years, and the battle against counterfeiting remains a substantial challenge (Alzahrani & Bulusu, 2020). The strategies that anticounterfeiting department representatives can learn from the study to resolve or reduce counterfeiting are practical applications to professional practice. The study outcomes can be valuable and useful to contemporary and upcoming businesses in successfully mitigating or resolving the counterfeit issue. The outcomes of this investigation and recommendations may help anticounterfeiting department managers advance their anticounterfeiting strategies, tactics, and professional practices, which can aid firms in protecting intellectual property better, ensure positive business development, facilitate growth, extend business lifespan, and promote national economic advancement. In this research study, three themes emerged, including (a) using online resources, (b) increasing awareness, and (c) continuous improvement.

Businesses worldwide can gain additional knowledge, understanding, and perspectives in the counterfeiting issue, severe threats to multiple industries, and adverse economic implications of disincentivizing new product development, innovation, and invention (Li, He, Peng, & Yuan, 2020). Business leaders can avoid antagonistic effects and undesirable consequences caused by counterfeit products and counterfeiters, including erosion of brand reputation, loss of revenues, unemployment, unsatisfactory business performance, and eventually obliterate the business existence (Kammel, 2020).

Corporate longevity, social responsibility, and intellectual property rights assets are the three essential elements of sustainability defined by the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goal 9 (Denoncourt, 2020).

Furthermore, anticounterfeiting department executives can realize other vital elements that enable firms to succeed in the fight against counterfeiting from this research, such as the business principles of business integrity and ethical practice (Eabrasu, 2020; Jim & Liu, 2020; Pratt & Zeng, 2020). The distribution, promotion, and sales of counterfeit products could be a direct or proximate cause endangering consumers' health and safety. Falsified and fraudulent health products cause detrimental consequences, such as severe bleeding disorders in humans (Pena-Acevedo, Zuluaga, & Aristizabal, 2020). Therefore, anticounterfeiting department executives who understand these critical factors clearly can prevent unwanted and serious consequences that can happen to unsuspected consumers (Layachi, 2020; Rogerson & Parry, 2020).

### **Implications for Social Change**

The implications for positive social change from this study consist of the possibility for anticounterfeiting department managers to apply suitable strategies and acumens to combat and mitigate counterfeit goods efficiently, protect intellectual property, extend business lifespan, and elevate national economic advancement. Anticounterfeiting department executives may benefit from gaining additional knowledge in planning and implementing current anticounterfeiting strategies, increasing business benefits, supporting business growth, prosperity, social morality, and economic sustainability. Firms can achieve higher profitability, contribute to the local economy,

prosperity, facilitate global influence and expansion, motivate innovation and invention, and promote positive social changes (Bergan, 2020; Cabaleiro & Salce, 2020; Ehrlich & Garbarino, 2020).

### **Recommendations for Action**

The recommendations for action are that anticounterfeiting department executives should consider and explore the multidimensional anticounterfeiting strategies presented in the study themes. The findings can be relevant and useful to multiple organizations and business leaders to mitigate or eliminate counterfeit products successfully. Furthermore, the constant evolution and progression of new and advanced technologies, globalization progress, and insufficient multidimensional anticounterfeiting knowledge of anticounterfeiting department personnel enable counterfeiters to improve and perfect their counterfeiting manufacturing capabilities, trades, and widespread symbiotic networks. Therefore, anticounterfeiting department leaders exploring multidimensional anticounterfeiting strategies can use the study's outcomes to acquire an advanced understanding of practical anticounterfeiting strategies that anticounterfeiting department managers of a consumer product company in a metropolitan area of Georgia have been devising and implementing successfully.

Anticounterfeiting department managers can protect their firm's intellectual property, increase profitability, facilitate business development, growth, and prolong business lifespan by applying or integrating the anticounterfeiting strategies revealed in this study. Moreover, anticounterfeiting department representatives can analyze the study's conceptual framework further to develop new or enhanced multidimensional

anticounterfeiting strategies to reduce or resolve the counterfeit issue effectively. The study's findings are pertinent and useful that anticounterfeiting department managers in the nation or the world can apply to devise effective anticounterfeiting strategies.

I will present the study's results to multiple organizations, including consumer products companies, related businesses, trades organizations, ProQuest, and other publishers for dissemination and publication purposes. I will explore opportunities to share the findings with other researchers, business leaders, and government officials. I will continue to research on the anticounterfeiting topic and explore other multidimensional anticounterfeiting strategies that can help firms with the best mitigating or eliminating counterfeit product practices.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The exploration and navigation of multidimensional anticounterfeiting strategies data that anticounterfeiting department managers used in this study generated several themes. The emerged themes from this study reflected multidimensional anticounterfeiting strategies to eradicate or alleviate counterfeit products that future researchers and scholars can probe further. I conducted research on a consumer products company located in a metropolitan area of Georgia. The recommendations for future research include the following: (a) the specific roles of counterfeiters in the macro and micro economy, (b) anticounterfeiting strategies used by international conglomerates, (c) anticounterfeiting strategies implemented by anticounterfeiting department executives with diverse backgrounds, expertise, and more than 5 years of experience.

In addition, future researchers can apply the themes revealed in this study to explore other multidimensional anticounterfeiting strategies using mixed methodology. Future researchers should utilize quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore more effective anticounterfeiting strategies to find ultimate multidimensional anticounterfeiting strategies. Accordingly, anticounterfeiting department managers can formulate and implement the best anticounterfeiting strategies to mitigate or eliminate fakes successfully.

### **Reflections**

The DBA doctoral study journey was challenging, time-consuming, frustrating, and complicated at times. However, I gained substantial knowledge and experience exploring and navigating the doctoral research and writing processes, met the rubric requirements, and achieved the study objectives. With various experiences in business, people skills, analytical expertise, and international relations, I accomplished all the exploratory goals while conducting interviews and compiling data in a comfortable and cooperative atmosphere. Diminishing bias was achieved by not letting personal judgment interfere in the data interpreting stage, analyzing phase, and strictly following the interview protocol. All research participants received the same semistructured (or open-ended) questions and controlled the discovery process to facilitate seamless findings. I concluded the study and generated results for the research question successfully.

### **Summary and Study Conclusions**

Counterfeiting is a significant issue affecting businesses worldwide, and it causes substantial financial losses, widespread intellectual property thefts, and opportunity costs

to firms. Despite extensive efforts from business leaders and an abundance of research data, numerous anticounterfeiting department executives lack effective anticounterfeiting strategies to effectively mitigate or eliminate fakes. Anticounterfeiting department managers need to thoroughly comprehend the counterfeit issue to create, develop, integrate, and implement effective multidimensional anticounterfeiting strategies to reduce or eliminate imitated goods. Having effective anticounterfeiting strategies can help firms mitigate negative economic and social impacts, protect business interests from extinction, support business growth, and extend the longevity of business lifespan.

I researched the counterfeit issue to learn what anticounterfeiting strategies are effective in mitigating or eliminating counterfeits successfully. The research findings uncovered three separate themes that anticounterfeiting department managers worldwide can apply in creating effective anticounterfeiting strategies to mitigate or eliminate counterfeit products: (a) using online resources to gain in-depth knowledge about counterfeiting, (b) increasing awareness of new technologies, e-commerce activities, and business models that counterfeiters continually develop and advance to handle the issue effectively, and (c) continuously improving new anticounterfeiting approaches to combat fakes successfully. Anticounterfeiting department executives should have in-depth knowledge and understanding of the counterfeiting issue in creating and executing effective multidimensional anticounterfeiting strategies.

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## Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

Tan Vu, the interviewer, will be the primary data collector and analyst of the subjects' experiences, perspectives, and explanations pertaining to the research topic in this qualitative single case study design.

## Instructions:

1. Introduce self to interviewee.
2. Explain the purpose of the study to the interviewee.
3. Present consent form, go over contents, answer questions and concerns of the interviewee, and assure confidentiality.
4. Turn on recording device.
5. Follow procedure to introduce interviewee with pseudonym/coded identification.
6. Begin interview with same question order.
7. Follow up with additional questions.
8. End interview sequence; explain and discuss member checking with interviewee.
9. Thank the interviewee for their participation in the study.

## Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. What successful strategies did you implement to mitigate counterfeiting?
2. What anticounterfeiting strategies were unsuccessful?
3. How did you implement anticounterfeiting strategies effectively?
4. What challenges did you experience when implementing anticounterfeiting strategies?
5. What strategies did your organization employ to collaborate with other stakeholders to combat counterfeiting?
6. What anticounterfeiting strategies resulted in undesirable results?
7. What additional information can you share with me about the strategies used to mitigate or resolve counterfeiting?