

The ‘Fong kong’ phenomenon in Botswana: a perspective on globalisation from below*

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Abstract

Made in China goods have received widespread criticism in Africa for their poor quality and negative effects on the local marketplace. They are termed *fong kong* (Barrett, 2007) goods, and in Southern Africa including Botswana, are regarded as cheap copies or fakes (Park, 2013a). In Botswana, *fong kong* is linked to Chinese merchants, bringing a negative image to Chinese businesses and triggering governmental restrictions on *fong kong* goods and Chinese businesses. However, surprisingly, *fong kong* goods continue to be sold in the local market.

This paper discusses how *fong kong* goods affect local people’s lives. The research data presented is based on a ten-month field research in major cities and rural towns in Botswana. Data was collected using participant observation and conducting in-depth interviews with Chinese merchants, managers of South African chains, local

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customers and officials, and so on. After explaining details associated with the supply chain, this article describes local people's experiences of *fong kong* goods. The findings show that, despite the negative image attributed to *fong kong* goods, they have contributed to clothing the needy, initiated creativity and brought convenience to members of local society. Adopting low-end globalisation as theory, this article argues that despite wide criticism received and associated illegalities, *fong kong* goods have helped poor and middle class individuals greatly to improve their quality of life, thereby creating a more egalitarian society in Botswana.

Introduction

"*Fong kong*" is a term referring to something that is very obviously fake, plastic, or inauthentic. In areas of Southern Africa, including Botswana, Made in China goods are called *fong kong* goods. This connotes poor quality, and implies the products being sold are cheap copies or fakes (Park, 2013). It is also important to clarify that a copy is an imitation or reproduction of an original work using the original brand name; this differs from a knockoff, which is a copy of a designer product sold under a different name (Mathews and Yang, 2012). In this article, the phrase "counterfeit goods" refers to both copies and knockoffs. Since the 1990s, soaring numbers of Chinese merchants have migrated on a global scale, in response to the influence of globalisation and changes to immigration policy in China and its increasing role in the production of consumer goods. Chinese shopkeepers are now found worldwide. Such entrepreneurial migration is reflected by the opening of wholesale centres in Africa to supply retailers; both Chinese and native (Ma Mung, 2008:648-649). In many African countries, Chinese merchants are involved in the trade of *fong kong* goods. For the majority of the Africans cannot afford an authentic brand, *fong kong* goods sold at an acceptable price and of good quality is an ideal choice. Despite this, local media, branded companies and local government officials have denigrated these products (Gaotlhobogwe, 2009a, 2009b, 2012; Anonymous, 2010).

Thus far, research about *fong kong* goods is scarce. Key research to date was produced by Park (2013a and 2013b), and discussed the issue in the context of

African country's de-industrialisation processes. Most of the related research done in African countries portrays Chinese merchants as "dumping" cheap China-made products, and discusses their socio-economic influence on local society (Carling and Haugen 2004, 2005; Dobler 2009; Laribee 2008; Tanga 2009). Research focusing on Made in China goods mainly discusses manufacture and distribution systems, the process of counterfeiting in China, their negative influence on copyright brands and global society, and the importance of intellectual property rights (Chow, 2003; Lin, 2011; Swike and Thompson and Vasquez, 2008). Besides, due to the harm of counterfeit medicines (Wertheimer and Norris, 2009; Nayyar and Breman and Newton and Herrington, 2012) and counterfeit trading's relation with criminal activities (Hardouin and Weichhardt, 2006), researches suggest dissuading consumers to purchase counterfeits might focus on educating consumers about the adverse consequences of their purchases, in other words. criminal activity including drug trafficking, child labour, and terrorism is supported through the sale of counterfeits (Lee, 2008). However, this tendency to see only the negative influence of *fong kong* goods, neglects considerations of convenience and benefits to people living in developing countries. In most research to date, judgements have been based on the values of outsiders and the values of developed countries; therefore, the local perspective is lacking. Thus, a question arises concerning whether there is a distinct difference between the views of outsiders and those of involved merchants and local customers.

The aim of this paper is to identify the social influence of *fong kong* goods on Botswana's society through studying the local perspective. The rest of this paper is arranged into several sections, beginning with a general background to Botswana-China relations and 'fong kong' goods in Botswana. This is followed by research findings concerning local perspectives. Finally, by discussing 'fong kong' goods' social function in the context of Botswana's development and related legal and moral considerations the author attempts to challenge existing beliefs about fong kong goods.

Research data was gathered applying an anthropological method between September 2011 to November in 2014 (total 10 months) in retail China shops, China wholesale

markets and South African large retail chain shops (for example *PEP*, *Ackermans*, *Mr Price*) in Botswana. To achieve balance in the qualitative data set, the researcher visited the randomly selected China shops repeatedly. Mandarin Chinese was used when speaking with the Chinese merchants and English for speaking to local people. The primary sources of data were the informal and in-depth interviews with Chinese merchants, the managers of South African large chain shops and local customers, concerning their attitudes towards goods made in China. Participant observations were conducted in the China shops during visiting time, concentrating on interactions between Chinese merchants and local customers. Furthermore, a document survey was conducted to reveal the voice of local media and governmental activities.

Overview of Botswana and its trading relation with China

Botswana is one of the most dynamic economies in Africa. However, according to the Botswana Economic Outlook¹, current unemployment stands at 17.8 per cent, and 18.4 per cent of the population live below the poverty line. Mineral extraction and diamond mining are the principal economic activities, although tourism is a growing sector because of the country's conservation practices and extensive nature reserves. The Mbendi information service (2014) states that the manufacturing sector in Botswana is relatively small, accounting for only an estimated 5 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP); this is due to the small domestic market, and the fact that South Africa supplies most of the country's needs. Aside from meat processing, Botswana has had no notable manufacturing activity at its independence in 1966.

According to Best (1970), for a considerable period, people originating from Europe and India occupied crucial roles within Botswana's economy, while the Batswana were relative newcomers to the trading community. Because of Botswana's inexperience and undercapitalisation, the country was highly dependent upon European and Indian wholesalers and transporters (1970:610). Even now, Botswana remains influenced by many South African investments, including supermarket chain stores such as *Shoprite*, *Pick n Pay*, and *Spar*, and clothing and apparel chain stores,

examples of which are *PEP, Ackermans, Mr Price, Bata, and Fashion*. These chain stores can be found distributed throughout the cities' shopping malls, and, in some cases, even in medium sized towns. Therefore, despite Botswana having attained full independence from Britain some time ago, the influence of South Africa originating from colonial times remains.

Botswana established diplomatic relations with China in 1975. Since then, inter-governmental co-operation in the fields of the economy and technology has been a driving force in their relationship. China has provided a level of financial assistance to support the construction of its national infrastructure, offering grants and preferential loans (Embassy of China, 2008; Liu, 2010). In parallel, over the past decade, Chinese merchants have migrated on a global scale, distributing made-in-China goods (Ma Mung, 2008:648). Currently, it is estimated that there are approximately 1,000 China shops² distributed across the cities and rural towns. The spread of these shops to villages throughout the country has brought a great deal of convenience to consumers, particularly those living in remote areas; and Chinese products have also curbed price rises, especially in response to pressure caused by mounting inflation of the local currency (Bolaane, 2007:164).

The nature and supply chain of *fong kong* goods

According to field research, China shops in Botswana supply almost every daily need; from small things like needles, stationery, to cell phones, clothes, and TV sets. The majority are stocked by Chinese merchants from wholesaler markets in China, like Yiwu and Jinjiang. Some Chinese people obtain clothes and shoes from the wholesale markets in South Africa, since the clothes made there are better suited to their customers, in terms of size and colour³. From the Chinese wholesale market-*Oriental Plaza* in Botswana⁴, merchandise is distributed to cities and towns across the country, through retail trading activities conducted by both Chinese and local retailers. The majority of local merchants and street hawkers prefer to buy clothes and shoes from Chinese wholesalers; however, a handful of them travel to South Africa and China to purchase unique goods in order to avoid direct competition with the Chinese merchants.

The distinguishable *fong kong* goods sold in the China shop are goods like knockoffs and copies of brand named goods, and poor quality goods that are particularly notorious. The counterfeits found in China shops are usually of a high quality and have a contemporary design (this is particularly true of clothes and shoes), and so they attract many local customers. When regulations concerning counterfeits are at their strictest, few knockoffs and copies are available in China shops. This results in local street hawkers travelling to neighbouring South Africa to buy knockoff sports shoes from Indian and Pakistani traders instead of resourcing from China shops. Usually the same knockoff product is sold by street hawkers at a price two or three times higher than that offered by Chinese retailers. However, many local customers think the sneakers sold in China shops are fake but those sold in street are authentic although they are both fake. Nowadays, very poor quality textiles (expected to only last a few weeks) are gradually disappearing from sale in China shops, particularly in the big cities, because the locals have higher salaries and can choose to buy better products. As Mathews and Vega (2012:12) state, poor quality China-made goods are imported to Africa largely because the Chinese merchants in Africa focus on price as the primary determinant when purchasing. People tend to judge overall quality of China-made goods as a whole, while in fact China produces goods in different qualities.

Since the majority of *fong kong* goods are manufactured in China, the counterfeit manufacturing environment there, must be understood when considering the supply chain of *fong kong* goods. Lin (2011) maintains that the country's counterfeiting culture was fuelled by waves of Post-Fordism⁵, and other trends in the global economy, such as consumerism, the culture of Chinese migrant workers, and the entrepreneurial spirit that arose in countless small apartments in various cities around China. However, much of the counterfeiting can be attributed to China's emergence as a world economic power. To date, counterfeit manufacturing in China has been the target of considerable criticism and pressure globally, especially from developed countries (Swike *et al*, 2008; Chow, 2003). However, counterfeit manufacturing has survived and even thrived in China over the years for a number of reasons. "Local protectionism" is considered one of its root causes; some government officials in

China see counterfeiting as an opportunity to innovate, or view it as a product of democracy and popular culture, and thus support it (Lin, 2011:23). Furthermore, campaigns against counterfeiting usually deliver short-term results with raids carried out against individual counterfeiters and distributors to seize counterfeit products, ignoring the manufacturers (Chow, 2003).

Thus, Chinese merchants initiated the business of *fong kong* goods in Botswana, and they have become partners with Botswana local traders in the supply chain of *fong kong* goods over the years. In the current climate, *fong kong* goods will neither disappear from the manufacturing in China nor from Botswana market. However, we assume this mechanism is not simply driven by the pushing power of Chinese goods, but also the pulling power exerted by African consumers.

Theory of globalisation from below

“Globalisation from below”, also called “low-end globalisation”, can be defined as the transnational flow of people and goods involving relatively small amounts of capital, and informal, often semi-legal or illegal transactions. It is often associated with “the developing world”, but is, in fact, apparent across the globe (Mathews and Vega, 2012:1). The “below” can be understood, as Mendieta (2001:23) states as: “the below of the poor and destitute, the below of those who are not seen, and do not register in the radar of social theory”. Mathews and Vega (2012:2) argue that globalisation from below solves problems that globalisation from above cannot, because of inaccessibility. It provides cheap merchandise, and offers employment to millions of people who would not find it elsewhere. The links between globalisation from below and globalisation from above emerge clearly, when we look at the key players. Whether a trader or a banker, those involved share the same desire to become affluent; albeit with different limitations and access to capital.

Mendieta (2001) and Benton-Short and Price and Friedman (2001), in their research concerning immigrant cities, tried to look at the world from below, from the perspective of those who seemed to be more detrimentally than beneficially affected by the processes that comprise globalisation. Benton-Short et al (2005), argue that immigration is a powerful example of “globalisation from below”; adopting the view

that globalisation from below forges a link between immigration and cities. Similarly, this article attempts to use globalisation from below as a theory to link Chinese merchants and Botswana traders with *fong kong* goods. This paper aims to clarify the “*fong kong*” phenomenon in Botswana society, by collating the voices of Chinese merchants and local people which represent the perspectives of “globalisation from below”.

Findings

Despite its middle-income status, Botswana continues to grapple with significant social challenges including unequal distribution of wealth and unemployment (Kariuki and Abraha and Obuseng, 2014:2). Chinese goods are priced to meet the needs of the local population in spite of their limited quality. Therefore, the low-income group in society rely most on low-quality goods. By contrast, the middle classes usually purchase counterfeit clothes and pirate DVDs to fulfil desires that their economic situation would not permit otherwise. Rich people despise low-quality goods and counterfeits; however, they also visit Chinese merchants for Made in China goods that cannot be obtained elsewhere. Thus, China shops serve different needs for members of society according to their economic backgrounds. This section is divided into sub-sections according to the different social needs served by *fong kong* goods: low-quality cheap goods, counterfeit goods, and novelties goods.

Low-quality cheap goods

In the 1990s, on the arrival of pioneering Chinese merchants in Botswana, Chinese exports to Africa were typically low in price, and low in quality, in order to match local buying power. As a pioneering Chinese merchant said:

“Most local people went barefoot in those days. A pair of shoes could cost 300 Pula (1 Pula=US\$ US 0.5 in those days) in white people’s and Indian’s shops, and local people’s salary was around 200 Pula per month. The quality of Chinese goods was lower, because most were leftovers from factory, but at least local people could buy a pair of shoes for 10 or 20 Pula, even if they only lasted one month. Poor people would never spend 300 Pula on a pair of shoes, no matter how good the

quality". (CEco158, 2014)

Therefore, although the quality of the textiles was poor, they effectively clothed local people, especially the needy on limited income. However, with respect to low-quality electronics the scenario is more complicated. During one interview, a Chinese merchant described replacing a TV set for a local customer who had bought it the previous day:

"The TV worked well when we tested it here yesterday, but today it doesn't work....Most of the TV sets sold in China shops are second hand inside, with new cases outside. Otherwise, how could it be so cheap! It is sold at 600 Pula (US\$ 62). Nobody uses this kind of TV set in China any more. I assume some small factory managed to gather the old equipment together to generate business". (CTco23, 2014)

Most Chinese merchants do not want to deal with electronics because the profit is low, and no warrantee of quality is offered by the factories in China. However, in response to the need in Botswana, the merchants do sell them despite the low profit and high risk. "Local people cannot afford a TV set that cost several thousand", commented a Chinese respondent.

Chinese merchants argue that they sell low-quality goods to match the buying power of the majority. However, this preference is the reason for the poor reputation of Made in China goods in Africa (Mathews and Vega, 2012:12). "Since Botswana is greatly influenced by Western media, local people believe that goods from western are good quality but from China are bad", said a professor at Botswana University. In response to recent changes in China shops, opinions concerning quality and price in China shops have split:

"Now when local customers come to buy a cell phone or a TV, they want to open the back of the case to check them! What do they want to see? Even if we sold high quality goods at our shops local people would not trust us. However, if the same goods are sold in a white person's shop, they would pay a lot of money to buy them and believe they are high quality". (Chinese merchant, CTco34, 2013)

"We are so thankful for the China shops. Because of them we have a TV to watch, and clothes to wear. Although some people say that Chinese clothes are smelly, not all of them are bad quality.... I think they are kind people and they sell goods of good quality as well". (Local customer, Pb178, 2012)

"The goods here are almost the same quality as in the China shop, but the China shops sell them cheaper. However, China shops do not display goods properly. Some goods in China shops are good quality if you know how to choose". (Manager of South African chain shop, FTbm102, 2014)

To keep pace with the development of Botswana's society, the majority of goods have improved in quality in tandem with price rises in China shops. However, the image of China shops remains the same: cheap, low quality, and disorganised. Besides, the failure of several Chinese construction projects also contributed to destroying the reputation of the whole Chinese community. This annoys some Chinese merchants, and their anger has a racial component: "They call our goods *fong kong* because we are Chinese. The goods sold in South African chain shops are also made in China! The Chinese construction company did implicate us in blaming". The infamy of China shops not only limits their business, but also opens up a loophole for local consumers, who claim for replacement goods stating the goods were of poor quality, even if they were at fault:

"One customer brought a satellite dish but did not know how to set it up. Then he brought the dish back to us and sworn: "Chinese bad quality." Then one of our local assistants set it up for him. I was angry and did not want to sell to him, but he insisted that he wanted it. Where else could he find a dish at such a low price?" (CTco22, 2014)

Thus, while low-quality goods have brought business to Chinese merchants, they have also contributed to improving the quality of life of low-income people in local societies. However, the increased presence of Chinese construction workers and shop-owners after 2000 created tensions in community relations, which attracted negative media coverage (Youngman, 2013:6). Local people are aware of the limited quality of the low-quality goods, however, some of them are quite rely on them due to their low buying power.

Counterfeit goods

Along with the arrival of China-made goods, competition among Chinese merchants grew fiercer, as China shops boomed. Meanwhile, local merchants and street vendors also benefited from the rich resources brought by Chinese merchants. Since “Chinese markets” were founded in Botswana, many local traders and traders from neighbouring countries have been sourcing Chinese merchandise from China shops and Chinese wholesale markets, such as *Oriental Plaza*, before distributing them in rural towns and neighbouring countries. According to one Chinese retailer:

“Local street hawkers obtain great profits from selling counterfeits. One of them used to buy 20 to 30 pairs of fake brand shoes at my shop every time. I gave him 50 Pula (US\$ 5.2) for one pair, and he sold them at more than 300 Pula (US\$ 31). He nagged me for discount every time. It took him only three years to build a big house”. (CTcof93, 2014)

A street vendor selling fake brand shoes reveals, “I used to get these shoes from China shops, but they cannot sell them now. So I go to South Africa every month to restock”. Therefore, many counterfeits are distributed by local street hawkers who benefit greatly from conducting trading activities below the radar of local government; this is a typical characteristic of globalisation from below. Even when Chinese merchants are forbidden to sell counterfeits, the supply chain continues. Local street hawkers also sell other Chinese goods; however, their profits are much smaller than when selling counterfeits. Furthermore, in recent years many African traders have travelled to China as “suitcase traders”, representing globalisation from below (Mathews, 2012). According to the interviews, a small number of Botswana traders travel to China and other Asian countries several times each year to restock unique designed clothes, in order to avoid competition with China shops and South Africa chain shops. Therefore, generally, street hawkers in Botswana are the main distributors of counterfeits nowadays, and they benefit from this business.

Although many anti-counterfeiting campaigns are conducted at governmental level, their policies towards counterfeits show some favouritism according to Chinese merchants, for the following reasons. First, the tightening of regulations has

increasingly targeted Chinese merchants since 2008, and local officials have concentrated on sales of counterfeits in China shops (Gaotlhobogwe, 2009b, 2010). However, the government has not pursued local traders or street hawkers for their involvement with counterfeits. Second, local government is trying to empower locals to initiate business and manufacturing, instead of relying on imports (Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2011), through Economic Diversification Drive (EDD) and Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency (CEDA), which provides a holistic approach to the development and promotion of viable sustainable citizen-owned enterprises. When analysing governmental policies, many Chinese merchants argue that local government is playing a game of "local protectionism" with the intention of driving Chinese businesses away.

Regardless of tightened regulations, counterfeit goods continue to play a crucial role in Botswana's society. In recent years, given the increasing influence of television, considerable numbers of local people developed a taste for elite culture, aspiring towards a higher social status. In response to the fashion influences of neighbouring South Africa, branded textiles are available in almost every shopping mall, stimulating consumers' desire to buy. However many local people are unable to discriminate between counterfeit and genuine merchandise; the majority identify the quality of goods by looking at their prices. In fact, many locals do not care whether they are wearing a genuine brand or a fake one, as long as the quality is fine and the brand confers the social status they desire. Counterfeit goods are mass-produced to supply lower class consumers; the knowledge of luxury goods increases the referential value of both the counterfeit goods and the brand names (Lin 2011).

Counterfeits, despite the criticism, are products that answer lower-income and medium-income customers' needs and desires. It seems likely that the government approach balances their activities by being strict about some goods, while ignoring the majority; this is especially true since the global economic crisis in 2008. To date, the government's "Clean Sweep" activities have concentrated on counterfeits, with their actions directed by "outsiders", such as brand makers from the US and South Africa (Motllogelwa, 2007). A Chinese shop owner stated: "These days people from South African clothes factories are accompanying Botswana's officers to check

China shops. Once counterfeit brand clothes are found, owners will be fined and the goods confiscated”. Since most counterfeit clothes and pirate DVDs are copies of US and South African brands, it is unsurprising that these two governments are devoting considerable energy and attention to the problem. Although Botswana government’s public attitude towards counterfeit merchandise is clear, its activities are in some extent directed by external forces.

Novelties goods

The variety of *fong kong* goods has increased quietly over time. Local government shows limited interest beyond counterfeit textiles and pirate DVDs; most likely because they are comparably easy to distinguish from genuine items. In response to the growing needs of local society, Chinese merchants have introduced novelties goods to the market, challenging the existing image of *fong kong* goods, since most of these novelties goods are of good quality. They are called *fong kong* only because they are sold in China shops.

Chinese merchants themselves also call China shops “baihuo dian (shops with assorted goods)” in Botswana and other African countries (Haugen and Carling, 2005). Some China shops sell as many as 1,000 product lines. When there is a requirement for a special item, local people ask the Chinese merchants for help. In some suit shops, customers can even order bespoke suits from China through the Chinese merchants. The demand for goods in Botswana has risen, and therefore the huge and varied market in China has become increasingly attractive to locals. In addition, Chinese merchants’ willingness to help their local customers also contributes to the fascination of China shops.

Regardless of the various restrictions imposed on *fong kong* goods, novelties *fong kong* goods have survived and gathered popularity among local customers. In 2009, when the government tried to drive out China shops, some local people raised their voices in protest, arguing that China shops were a benefit to ordinary people:

“China shops cater for the masses...Batswana women are able to watch their favourite South African soapie ‘Generations’, thanks to the Chinese who

provide the Philibao⁶ decoders, which 'unblock' SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation) channels". (Anonymous, 2010)

Fong kong goods, therefore, counter the rights of the SABC, as people are supposed to pay several hundred Pula every month for the service. However, local government did not take this threat as seriously as fake branded shoes. Some Chinese merchants were warned about the practice by the government; however, it was too difficult for them to refuse their customers who were optimistic.

Besides the needs of locals, novelty *fong kong* goods stimulated creativity and cultural awareness of Chinese merchants. In 2012, Chinese pioneers made baseball caps with the Botswana flag printed on them, and football T-shirts for the Botswana team, expecting these products would be popular during World Cup, which was to be held in neighbouring South Africa. As anticipated, the goods attracted many local people and even foreigners visiting Botswana. However, when the goods were circulated in the country they were instantly forbidden by local government, which claimed that the Chinese merchants used the logo of Botswana without its permission. The goods were quickly removed from the China shops, but the local street hawkers who had sourced them from the Chinese wholesale market were still selling them. Although the Chinese did not benefit, the cultural awareness and creativity of the Chinese had a huge impact on local society.

In order to make clothes that fit local fashion tastes, the Chinese not only import copies and knockoffs of brands, but also seek out ideas from local fashion shops. According to an owner of a fashion shop, some Chinese merchants observed the clothes and styles in her shop:

"We travel to Asian countries every year to find uniquely designed clothes that may be popular in Botswana.... Chinese come to spy our clothes. One Chinese lady was caught taking picture of our clothes in the fitting room.... We were told by customers that in China shops there was a dress with the same design of ours but sold at a much lower price with greatly inferior material". (BTbo69, 2013)

A Chinese pioneer who sells formal suits and shoes states:

“I observe what designs local people prefer, and order similar design from factories in China. My goods are of the same standard as those sold in white people’s shops (representing good quality) regarding design and quality but at a cheaper price. If they sell the same goods as me, they are like a commercial for me. Since the materials of mine are even better than theirs, I manage to keep regular customers”. (CTco104, 2014)

That local merchandise is being copied by Chinese merchants does not necessarily mean that China shops are in direct competition with local shops. The richest customers will visit branded shops to buy authentic goods, while medium earners and the poor will buy the products sold in China shops. Sometimes, copied goods can increase the popularity of fashion goods (Lin, 2011). On the other hand, Chinese merchants consider copying local fashions important, proving that they are integrated into the local Botswana marketplace. In addition, by moving from a *fong kong* goods distribution role, to creator of goods they may even have the opportunity to take a leading role in local business.

Discussion

The arrival of *fong kong* goods has afforded greater choice to local customers and, to some extent, reduced prices in Botswana, which has contributed to improved lifestyles for poor- and medium-level earners. In recent years, despite the limitations of counterfeit goods and the quality improvement of low-quality *fong kong* goods, local media and many local people have continued to criticise the Chinese. McNamee (2012) argues that *fong kong* goods are concocted by African governments and business people attempting to dent the reputation of Chinese traders, because they cannot compete with them. More recently, the political and economic strategy of Botswana has not supported China shops to the same extent as previously, since the government of Botswana has attempted to promote the growth of a vibrant and globally competitive private sector. Consequently, the anti-counterfeiting activities of local government are expected to reduce made-in-China goods and to the control proliferation of China shops. However, although the government is attempting to limit the push-power of *fong kong* goods, the pull of

local needs cannot be controlled as easily as targeting local needs, since Chinese merchants import a huge variety of *fong kong* goods to maintain their businesses. Despite negative social influences, *fong kong* goods can be regarded as popular on a transient basis, whereas the local textile industry and its entrepreneurs are likely to mature.

At the state level, the fate of *fong kong* goods varies depending on the local economic status and local business strategies. Botswana's economy has benefitted from its diamond trade; however, as a land-locked country, it remains reliant on South Africa, despite its independence. Achieving a diplomatic relationship with China strengthened the negotiating power of Botswana, and gave the country a greater choice of imports. In the 1990s, low-quality *fong kong* goods with cheap prices were helpful to local people. However, because of economic development, *fong kong* goods have been derided by Batswanas, and China shops are considered a threat, especially following the issue of the Economic Diversification Drive (EDD). In this political and economic environment, *fong kong* goods, as well as the management of China shops, have been targeted by government inspections. Simultaneously, local media has played a crucial role in circulating information about governmental activities concerning Chinese businesses and projects, and has contributed to a more negative image of China.

Fong kong goods, especially counterfeits, raise legal and moral issues. However, the boundary between legal and illegal can be vague, depending on one's perspective. Mathews and Vega (2012:9) argue that it is fair to say that legality is nothing more than something designated as such by the agents of globalisation from above (in other words customs and copyright offices). Making copies of brands is a morally ambiguous activity, particularly when both buyer and seller are aware that an item is a fake. In Botswana, the streams of "globalisation from above" and "globalisation from below" conflict at both the social and individual level. Local society propounds, and the media are broadcasting, a forecast of "high technology" and a "gorgeous life style". On the other hand, issues such as poverty eradication, currency devaluation, and growing youth unemployment need to be addressed domestically. At the individual level, on a monthly income that can barely feed a family, some

people expect to enjoy meals at the Hilton and drive Mercedes Benz cars or Land Rovers. These aspirations, to some extent, increase people's appetites, and create a market, for *fong kong* goods. Therefore, as Mathews and Vega (2012:9-10) emphasise, morality needs to be debated beyond the perspective of globalisation from above alone. *Fong kong* goods can be beneficial, in that they provide the poor of the world with a taste of the goods bought by the rich, and enable hundreds of millions of people across the globe to make a living. Lin (2011:70) concludes:

Counterfeiters are not simply imitating high society; they have become producers of meaning and cultural innovators. We might observe that in some way human culture has always been characterised by an endless series of imitations.

However, perhaps one day, Chinese merchants may source Panda cell phones from Botswana manufacturers.

This research has contributed to an understanding of nature and people's experiences of *fong kong* goods in Botswana, enabling a comprehension of local views concerning *fong kong* goods and their social influence. On the other hand, it challenges existing research concerning "globalisation from below" by applying the theory in an African context, where people are struggling to resolve the gap between "globalisation from above" and "globalisation from below". *Fong kong* goods, despite their negative image, have helped low-income people in Africa to sample the benefits of "globalisation from above", while also creating a more egalitarian society in Botswana.

Endnotes

1. (Available: <http://www.afdb.org/en/countries/southern-africa/botswana/botswana-economic-outlook/>)
2. Both the local population and the Chinese merchants currently operating in Botswana employ the term "China shop." Approximately 99 per cent of China shops in Botswana are Chinese owned and generally sell goods made in China to African customers.

3. Clothes from wholesale markets in South Africa are also resourced from China. However, the Chinese merchants in South Africa make special orders that fit to the size and fashion taste of South Africans from China; while Chinese merchants in Botswana only bring clothes that were made for Chinese from China.
4. There are two *Oriental Plazas* in Botswana: one in Gaborone, the other in Francistown.
5. The idea that modern industrial production has moved away from mass production in huge factories, as pioneered by Henry Ford, towards specialised markets based on small flexible manufacturing units.
6. Brand name

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Appendix A - Interviews cited

Interviewees have been coded and anonymized in order to protect their privacy and interests. The codes are chosen to provide the following general information about the informants:

C: Chinese business; B: Botswana business; F: Foreign business; T: Trade; E: External service provider; M: Middle Size Company; G: Government informant; S: Scholar informant; P: Pilot interview informant

0,1,2 etc. differentiates between respondents of the same affiliation:

c: Chinese individual; b: Botswana individual; i: foreign individual besides Chinese; ex. Indian; Zimbabwean; o: owner; m: manager; e: employee

CTco22. Gaborone, 22 September (2014)

CTco23. Gaborone, 4 September (2014)

CTco34. Gaborone, 11 October (2013)

BTbo69. Gaborone, 13 September labou2013)

CTcof93. Gaborone, 8 September (2014)

CTco104. Gaborone, 3 November (2014)

CEco158. Gaborone, 26 September (2014)

Pb178. Mochudi, 27 January (2012)