

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/273490018>

# Brand authenticity: An integrative framework and measurement scale

ARTICLE *in* JOURNAL OF CONSUMER PSYCHOLOGY · DECEMBER 2014

Impact Factor: 1.71 · DOI: 10.1016/j.jcps.2014.11.006

---

CITATIONS

10

---

READS

416

5 AUTHORS, INCLUDING:



**Felicitas Morhart**

University of Lausanne

38 PUBLICATIONS 135 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE



**Lucia Malär**

Universität Bern

6 PUBLICATIONS 123 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE



**Amélie Guèvremont**

Université du Québec à Montréal

6 PUBLICATIONS 22 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Accepted Manuscript



Brand Authenticity: An Integrative Framework and Measurement Scale

Felicitas Morhart, Lucia Malär, Amélie Guèvremont, Florent Girardin,  
Bianca Grohmann

PII: S1057-7408(14)00108-9  
DOI: doi: [10.1016/j.jcps.2014.11.006](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2014.11.006)  
Reference: JCPS 450



To appear in: *Journal of Consumer Psychology*

Received date: 23 August 2013  
Revised date: 13 November 2014  
Accepted date: 26 November 2014

Please cite this article as: Morhart, F., Malär, L., Guèvremont, A., Girardin, F. & Grohmann, B., Brand Authenticity: An Integrative Framework and Measurement Scale, *Journal of Consumer Psychology* (2014), doi: [10.1016/j.jcps.2014.11.006](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2014.11.006)

This is a PDF file of an unedited manuscript that has been accepted for publication. As a service to our customers we are providing this early version of the manuscript. The manuscript will undergo copyediting, typesetting, and review of the resulting proof before it is published in its final form. Please note that during the production process errors may be discovered which could affect the content, and all legal disclaimers that apply to the journal pertain.

**Brand Authenticity: An Integrative Framework and Measurement Scale****Felicitas Morhart**

Assistant Professor of Marketing  
Marketing Department  
University of Lausanne, UNIL-Dorigny, Bâtiment Anthropole, 1015 Lausanne, Switzerland  
Phone: (41) 21 692 3578  
Fax: (41) 21 692 3305  
Email: Felicitas.Morhart@unil.ch

**Lucia Malär**

Assistant Professor of Marketing  
Marketing Department  
University of Bern, Engehaldenstrasse 4, 3012 Bern, Switzerland  
Phone: (41) 31 631 8026  
Fax: (41) 31 631 8032  
Email: malaer@imu.unibe.ch

**Amélie Guèvremont**

Ph.D. Candidate in Marketing  
John Molson School of Business  
Concordia University, 1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd. West, Montréal, Canada  
Phone: (1) 514 848 4845  
Fax: (1) 514 848 4554  
Email: a\_guevr@jmsb.concordia.ca

**Florent Girardin**

Ph.D. Candidate in Marketing  
Marketing Department  
University of Lausanne, UNIL-Dorigny, Bâtiment Internef, 1015 Lausanne, Switzerland  
Phone: (41) 21 692 3465  
Fax: (41) 21 692 3305  
Email: Florent.Girardin@unil.ch

**Bianca Grohmann**

Professor of Marketing  
John Molson School of Business  
Concordia University, 1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd. West, Montréal, Canada  
Phone: (1) 514 848 4845  
Fax: (1) 514 848 4554  
Email: bgrohmann@jmsb.concordia.ca

### Abstract

Although brand authenticity is gaining increasing interest in consumer behavior research and managerial practice, literature on its measurement and contribution to branding theory is still limited. This article develops an integrative framework of the concept of brand authenticity and reports the development and validation of a scale measuring consumers' perceived brand authenticity (PBA). A multi-phase scale development process resulted in a 15-item PBA scale measuring four dimensions: credibility, integrity, symbolism, and continuity. This scale is reliable across different brands and cultural contexts. We find that brand authenticity perceptions are influenced by indexical, existential, and iconic cues, whereby some of the latter's influence is moderated by consumers' level of marketing skepticism. Results also suggest that PBA increases emotional brand attachment and word-of-mouth, and that it drives brand choice likelihood through self-congruence for consumers high in self-authenticity.

*Keywords:* brand authenticity; iconicity; indexicality; existentialism; scale development; self-authenticating acts

### **Brand Authenticity: An Integrative Framework and Measurement Scale**

Brands play an important role in consumers' identity projects (Edson Escalas, 2004; Kirmani, 2009) insofar as consumers rely on brands to express themselves, self-enhance, or self-verify (Aaker, 1999). At the same time, consumers are confronted with increasing commercialization, an overflow of the fake, and an omnipresence of meaningless market offers (Boyle 2004). To overcome this meaninglessness, consumers look for brands that are relevant, original, and genuine: they increasingly search for authenticity in brands (Arnould & Price, 2000; Beverland, 2005; Brown, Kozinets, & Sherry, 2003). Gilmore and Pine (2007, p. 5) acknowledge this development, stating that "authenticity has overtaken quality as the prevailing purchasing criterion, just as quality overtook cost, and as cost overtook availability."

In order to engage in meaningful branding efforts, it is imperative for marketers to understand the nature of authenticity of their branded products and services, as well as its drivers and consequences. Both academics and practitioners therefore agree on the importance of authenticity for consumer behavior and branding (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Gilmore & Pine, 2007; Holt, 2002; Leigh, Peters, & Shelton, 2006; Newman & Dhar 2014; Rose & Wood, 2005). However, marketing practice relies on intuitive and isolated appeals to heritage (e.g., Kiehl's "since 1851"), origin (e.g., Victorinox's "made in Switzerland"), production methods (e.g., Lush's "handmade"), credibility (e.g., Julius Bär's "true to you"), self-verification (e.g., Dove's "real beauty"), or moral values (e.g., Microsoft's "empower youth to change their world") to convey authenticity of a brand. In addition—despite various efforts aimed at conceptualizing and operationalizing brand authenticity (e.g., Eggers, O'Dwyer, Kraus, Vallaster, & Guldenberg, 2013; Napoli, Dickinson, Beverland, & Farrelly, 2014)—questions regarding its measurement, drivers, consequences, as well as underlying processes and boundary conditions remain.

Against this background, this article seeks to shed light on the nature of perceived brand authenticity (hereafter referred to as PBA), its measurement, and its relation to other theoretically and managerially meaningful constructs. To this end, we report (1) a synthesis of research on authenticity leading up to a definition and integrative framework of PBA, (2) the development of a scale to measure PBA, and (3) an empirical examination of drivers, consequences, boundary conditions, and a process mediating the effects of PBA for some consumer segments. This article aims to advance the theoretical understanding of PBA and highlight its relevance for consumers' brand-related behaviors. The findings of the current research facilitate further inquiries into authenticity in a consumer context and in several related domains, such as identity-related consumption. This research also provides marketing practitioners with an instrument to evaluate and track the level of brand authenticity and suggests specific strategies to strengthen it.

This article proceeds as follows: We first review the literature on authenticity and propose that three perspectives (i.e., objectivist, constructivist, and existentialist) encompass all current authenticity conceptualizations. The objectivist perspective refers to authenticity as an objectively measurable quality of an entity that can be evaluated by experts (Trilling, 1972). According to the constructivist perspective, authenticity is a projection of one's own beliefs, expectations, and perspectives onto an entity (Wang, 1999). The existentialist perspective considers authenticity to be related to the self—and not to an external entity—and involves the notion that authenticity means being true to one's self (Golomb, 1995). In order to define the dimensions of PBA in relation to these three perspectives on authenticity, we build on an extensive literature review combined with exploratory in-depth interviews that reveal four dimensions of PBA (continuity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism). We then present a conceptual framework that identifies indexical cues (i.e., evidence-based brand characteristics), iconic cues (i.e., impression-based brand characteristics), and existential cues (i.e., self-referential brand characteristics) as drivers of PBA. We also propose a positive relation between PBA and emotional brand attachment, word-of-mouth, brand choice likelihood, and brand consumption. In addition (in line with the subjectivity of authenticity assessments; Grayson & Martinec, 2004), we identify individual difference variables that act as boundary conditions for PBA emergence and effects, and propose self-verification as a central working mechanism of PBA for some consumer segments. We report the results of a qualitative study, five survey studies, and an experiment.

### **Conceptualizing Perceived Brand Authenticity**

The marketing and consumer research literature acknowledges that a quest for authentic consumption arises from a loss of traditional sources of meaning and self-identity that is associated with postmodernity (Arnould & Price, 2000; Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Thompson, Rindfleisch, & Arsel, 2006). Authentic consumption is relevant for a wide range of consumption objects and activities that hold potential for meaning creation (e.g., luxury wines; Beverland, 2005, tourist attractions; Grayson & Martinec, 2004, and advertising; Beverland, Lindgreen, & Vink, 2008). Despite high levels of agreement on authenticity's relevance for consumer behavior and its association with genuineness, truthfulness, and conveying meaning to consumers, the literature is characterized by diverse and fragmented approaches and foci in the quest for a commonly accepted conceptualization of authenticity. In line with this observation, Beverland and Farrelly (2010) state that "[...] the nature of authenticity in consumption is contested" (p. 838). This challenge extends into the branding context, where a commonly accepted definition of perceived *brand authenticity* is still lacking. We therefore suggest a conceptualization of PBA that encompasses three authenticity-related perspectives found in the literature.

#### **The Objectivist Perspective**

According to Trilling (1972), the provenance of the term “authenticity” is in museums, “where persons expert in such matters test whether objects of art are what they appear to be or claim to be [...]” (p. 93). Authenticity is seen as a quality inherent in an object and evaluated by experts. Grayson and Martinec (2004) use the term “indexical” to refer to this type of authenticity: “indexicality distinguishes ‘the real thing’ from its copies” (p. 298). For these authors, indexicality refers to a perceiver’s experience of physical or behavioral fact that provides some verification of what is claimed to be delivered. Similarly, Beverland and colleagues (2008) discuss how consumers use objective sources of information to judge a product’s authenticity, such as cues reinforcing continuance of historic practices. In a branding context, the objectivist perspective suggests that brand authenticity perceptions arise from an evidence-based reality that can be assessed using verifiable information about the brand, such as labels of origin, age, ingredients, or performance.

### **The Constructivist Perspective**

According to this perspective, authenticity is a socially or personally constructed phenomenon (Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Leigh et al., 2006), such that reality is the result of different interpretations of what “the real world” looks like. Authenticity is not seen as a quality inherent in an object, but a projection of one’s own beliefs, expectations, and perspectives (Wang, 1999). This explains why some consumers find authenticity in reproductions such as the VW Beetle (Brown et al., 2003) or fabricated touristic settings like Disneyland (MacCannell, 1973) that represent “commercially created authenticity” (Stern, 1994) or “iconic authenticity” (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). In a branding context, this type of authenticity refers to a brand’s ability to create a schematic fit with consumers’ expectations of an authentic brand (Beverland et al., 2008). Hence, authenticity emerges from consumers’ perceptions of abstract impressions, such as the brand's essence as communicated through its marketing cues (Brown et al., 2003), as opposed to the brand’s objective properties.

### **The Existentialist Perspective**

This perspective is rooted in philosophical existentialism (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006) and examines authenticity as it relates to one’s identity. The existentialist perspective advances the notion that authenticity means being true to one’s self. This type of authenticity is prominent in the study of authentic functioning (Kernis & Goldman, 2006), authentic leadership (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008), and tourist experiences (Wang, 1999). Handler and Saxton (1988), for example, define an authentic experience as “one in which individuals feel themselves to be in touch both with a ‘real’ world and with their ‘real’ selves” (p. 243). In a consumption setting, authenticity, from an existentialist perspective, is attributed to an object if it assists consumers in uncovering their true self through its consumption (Arnould & Price, 2000). For example, consumers consider reality television as a resource

to discover their self-identities insofar as these programs provide self-relevant information (Rose and Wood 2005). In the context of branding, existential authenticity refers to a brand's ability to serve as a resource for consumers to reveal their true selves or to allow consumers to feel that they are true to themselves by consuming the brand. Thus, from an existentialist perspective, authenticity emerges from an object's ability to serve as an identity-related source.

Overall, the literature also suggests that the objectivist, constructivist, and existentialist perspectives on authenticity are intertwined, and that each provides input to the conferring of authenticity to objects (Leigh et al., 2006). We therefore propose that PBA arises from the interplay of objective facts (indexical authenticity), subjective mental associations (iconic authenticity), and existential motives connected to a brand (existential authenticity). Brand authenticity thus emerges to the extent to which consumers perceive a brand to be faithful and true towards itself and its consumers, and to support consumers being true to themselves.

### **Dimensions of Perceived Brand Authenticity**

The first research objective was to explore the content, dimensionality, and structure of consumers' brand authenticity perceptions. Along with a literature review, we conducted interviews with fourteen consumers to uncover the dimensionality of PBA, following McCracken's (1988) procedure. Prior to the interview, participants were asked to think about what an authentic brand is to them and to bring logos, images, and objects representing authentic brands to the interview. This process facilitated articulation of unconscious meanings. Interview data was interpreted in light of the literature (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Gilmore & Pine, 2007; Urde, Greyser, & Balmer, 2007) and yielded four brand authenticity dimensions: continuity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism.

**Continuity.** When asked about what makes a brand authentic, the majority of participants referred to continuity and cited examples such as Heinz, Coca-Cola, Campbell and Quaker. Michele talks about Quaker: "I have been eating Quaker oatmeal since I was a little girl. Today there are so many versions [...] But it's always the same oatmeal, with Mr. Quaker's face, it did not change." For Denise, Campbell is authentic for the same reasons: It never changed over time. Another important facet is a brand's ability to survive trends. Florence states: "Noa Noa does not copy from today's fashion trends. That is the way the clothes stay throughout time." Thus, the continuity dimension reflects a brand's timelessness, historicity, and its ability to transcend trends. With regard to the past-related aspect, the continuity dimension resembles the concept of pedigree (Beverland, 2006). Conceptual similarities also exist between continuity and brand heritage (Merchant & Rose, 2013; Urde et al., 2007; Wiedmann, Hennigs, Schmidt, & Wuestefeld, 2011), as both refer not only to the brand's history and stability over time, but also the likelihood that it will persist into the future.

**Credibility.** Consumers associate authentic brands with a high level of credibility—the brands' willingness and ability to deliver on their promises. Participants stressed the importance for authentic brands to deliver what they say they will. For Jean-Pierre, Wal-Mart is authentic, because the brand delivers what it promises: The lowest price, every time. Denis discussed his Victorinox Swiss Army knife: "I'll get the authentic product of high quality. That will not break when I need it. That will not betray me." We conceptualize credibility as the brand's transparency and honesty towards the consumer, as well as its willingness and ability to fulfill its claims. This dimension is similar to Boyle's (2004) honesty element of authenticity. As such, brand credibility has similarities with brand trustworthiness. In fact, the literature describes brand trustworthiness as a component of brand credibility that relates to consumers' perceptions of a firm's willingness to honor its promises (Erdem & Swait, 2004). Credibility has commonalities with brand quality, which reflects the extent to which a brand performs according to consumers' expectations (Frazier & Lassar, 1996), and the sincerity dimension of brand personality (Aaker, 1997), which subsumes traits such as being honest and sincere.

**Integrity.** Authenticity perceptions further involve a sense of integrity based on virtue reflected in the brand's intentions and in the values it communicates. Several participants mentioned Apple as a brand that acts according to deeply held values, passion, and loyalty. Other participants commented on a brand's integrity that manifests when it "acts correctly, ethically." Michele talked about Green Peace: "Green Peace for me, it's highly authentic. They fight for authentic values. It's a brand, but there is something behind it." The integrity dimension signifies the moral purity and responsibility of the brand (i.e., its adherence to good values and sincere care about the consumer). This dimension parallels commercial disinterestedness of authentic brands put forward by Holt (2002) and virtuousness described by Beverland and Farrelly (2010): To be authentic, brands must be without an instrumental economic agenda, and be disseminated by people who are intrinsically motivated by deeply held values (Holt, 2002). Beverland and Farrelly (2010) argue that virtuousness arises from staying true to one's morals.

**Symbolism.** Participants discussed authentic brands as brands that reflect values that they consider important and may thus help construct who they are. For Denis, authentic brands relate to many facets of his self: "Let's now talk about John Deere [...] I am a rural person. I grew up in a construction company, and my dad had a forestry company. When I think about farm and heavy machinery [...], it's part of my life. I think about my brothers too [...]. When I go back to the West, many people display the John Deere logo and plate in front of their trucks. People identify to this product. I do too. It's my family, the way I was raised." Based on these considerations, we conceptualize symbolism as a brand's potential to serve as a resource for identity construction by providing self-referential cues representing values, roles, and relationships. In other words, symbolism reflects the symbolic quality of the brand that consumers can use

to define who they are or who they are not. The symbolism dimension is similar to the connection benefit of authentic brands (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010) and the identity-related aspect of brand attachment (i.e., brand-self connection; Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci, 2010), although the latter denotes consumers' actual use of a brand to define themselves rather than a brand's general potential to serve as a symbolic resource.

**Summary of the PBA Dimensions.** The interviews further revealed a relation between PBA and the three authenticity perspectives (i.e., objectivist, constructivist, and existentialist) outlined in the literature: First, consumers ascribe authenticity to brands based on facts, such as a brand's founding date (e.g., Alexandre: Coca-Cola 1916; Denis: Ford Mustang 1964). This reflects the objectivist perspective on authenticity. Second, brand authenticity perceptions arise from consumers' subjective construction of the brand's essence as communicated through the brand's marketing efforts. Denis talked about Remington firearms: "This advertisement [...] they were able to bring in the traditional aspect, with the ducks, the colors [...]." Third, many participants inferred brand authenticity on the basis of the brand's ability to reflect values or relationships they deem important for identity construction. For Denis, for example, John Deere represents a connection with family and childhood, and Remington his passion for hunting. Results further reveal that the three perspectives of authenticity (i.e., objectivist, constructivist, and existentialist) contribute to consumers' judgment of PBA dimensions. For example, brand continuity is conferred through an objectivist lens when the brand creation date served as an indexical cue, through a constructivist lens when a consumer formed an overall impression of brand continuity from the brand's imagery or design, or through an existential lens when consumers referred to the brand's connection to their childhood and feelings of nostalgia.

Based on the four dimensions identified in the literature and interviews, we define PBA as the extent to which consumers perceive a brand to be faithful towards itself (continuity), true to its consumers (credibility), motivated by caring and responsibility (integrity), and able to support consumers in being true to themselves (symbolism).

### **Measurement of PBA**

Several studies addressed the second research objective, which pertained to the operationalization and validation of the PBA dimensions across different brands, product categories, and consumer groups. Study 1 focuses on item generation and content validity. Studies 2a and 2b refine the scale using different brands and consumer samples into a 15-item

four-factor correlated model (continuity, credibility, integrity, symbolism). Study 3 examines known-group validity, whereas study 4 focuses on discriminant validity.

### **Study 1: Item Generation and Content Validity**

An initial set of 194 Likert-type items (anchored 1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) capturing the PBA dimensions was developed based on content generated in the interviews and the literature on authenticity. Four experts (marketing faculty and Ph.D. students recruited by the authors) judged the items after being introduced to the notion of brand authenticity and being informed that the purpose of the research was to develop a brand authenticity measure. The experts indicated how representative the items were of brand authenticity (“please indicate for each of the following items if it is a poor, fair, good, or very good representation of the concept of brand authenticity”). They could modify, add, or eliminate items. An item was removed or modified if at least one expert rated it as a poor representation of brand authenticity, at least one expert mentioned it was ambiguous, or two or more experts rated the item as fair. This process resulted in the removal of 119 items and a final set of 75 items.

### **Study 2a: Initial Administration**

A North American panel of 254 adults (52% female) participated in an online study. Participants rated one of four brands (Coca-Cola, Harley-Davidson, McDonald’s, Starbucks) that were selected considering expected variations with regards to brand authenticity based on the interviews and literature (e.g., Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Thompson & Arsel, 2004). Participants indicated their level of agreement with the 75 initial items (e.g., “this is a timeless brand”; 1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Data from participants who were unfamiliar with the brand (i.e., with a mean score of 1 on the familiarity scale: “Please indicate your level of

experience with this brand”: *unfamiliar/familiar, not knowledgeable/ knowledgeable, inexperienced/experienced*,  $\alpha = .93$ ) was removed, resulting in a final sample size of 246.

In a principal component exploratory factor analysis with oblimin rotation, a four-factor solution emerged (eigenvalues  $> 1$ ). These factors were labeled credibility (eigenvalue = 49.61), continuity (eigenvalue = 3.69), symbolism (eigenvalue = 1.98), and integrity (eigenvalue = 1.21). Examination of the scree plot confirmed the presence of four major factors. Items with factor loadings below .4 on their main dimension and cross-loading items were eliminated from the item set. Items were then removed one at a time based on modification indices in the measurement model ( $> 3.84$ ; Bagozzi & Yi, 1988) and item-to-total correlations. After removal of each item, a  $\chi^2$  difference test of the two measurement models was carried out and the reduced model was accepted when  $\chi^2$  improved significantly and the adjusted GFI increased. The final set of 15 items reflect the dimensions continuity (a brand with a history, a timeless brand, a brand that survives times, a brand that survives trends), credibility (a brand that will not betray you, a brand that accomplishes its value promise, an honest brand), integrity (a brand that gives back to its consumers, a brand with moral principles, a brand true to a set of moral values, a brand that cares about its consumers) and symbolism (a brand that adds meaning to people’s lives, a brand that reflects important values that people care about, a brand that connects people with their real selves, a brand that connects people with what is really important; see Appendix A for scale characteristics). Examination of a series of measurement models (see Appendix B for details) indicated that a four-factor correlated model fit the data best (NNFI = .97, CFI = .98, GFI = .92, SRMR = .03, RMSEA = .07,  $\chi^2(84) = 175.56$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\chi^2/df < 3$ ; Bollen, 1989). This model was therefore accepted as the best structural representation of PBA.

## **Study 2b: Validation Sample**

This study validated the PBA scale with a new sample and self-selected authentic/inauthentic brands. In line with the procedure of Thomson and colleagues (2005), 71 adults from a North American consumer panel (54% female) were asked to think about a brand that—in their opinion—was authentic or inauthentic. They then rated the brands on the PBA items (anchored 1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Results of a confirmatory factor analysis with the validation sample indicated acceptable fit for the four-factor correlated model (NNFI = .93, CFI = .95, GFI = .78, SRMR = .03, RMSEA = .12,  $\chi^2(84) = 165.33$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\chi^2/df < 3$ ; Bollen, 1989) and satisfactory psychometric properties of the scale (see Appendix A).

### Study 3: Known-Group Validity

This study demonstrates that the PBA scale differentiates between brands that are a priori expected to differ with regard to brand authenticity. In a pretest ( $n = 109$ , 43.9% female), participants rated the perceived authenticity (not at all authentic/very authentic, on seven-point scales) of the following brands that were mentioned as more and less authentic in the interviews: Tim Hortons and Starbucks (coffee), Coca-Cola and Red Bull (soft drinks), Levi's and Guess (jeans). Planned contrasts between brands within the same product category show that Tim Hortons was perceived as directionally more authentic than Starbucks ( $M_{\text{Tim Hortons}} = 5.89$ ,  $SD = 1.55$ ;  $M_{\text{Starbucks}} = 5.73$ ,  $SD = 1.53$ ;  $t(108) = 1.28$ ;  $p > .05$ ), Coca-Cola as more authentic than Red Bull ( $M_{\text{Coca-Cola}} = 6.02$ ,  $SD = 1.47$ ;  $M_{\text{Red Bull}} = 5.61$ ,  $SD = 1.60$ ;  $t(108) = 3.32$ ;  $p < .01$ ), and Levi's as more authentic than Guess ( $M_{\text{Levi's}} = 5.59$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ;  $M_{\text{Guess}} = 5.17$ ,  $SD = 1.78$ ;  $t(108) = 2.82$ ;  $p < .01$ ). Based on this pretest, we administered the PBA scale to these pairs of brands because they were expected to differ with regard to perceived authenticity.

A North American panel of 463 adults (52% female) participated in an online study. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the brands and rated it on the 15-item PBA scale

(anchored 1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). We also included additional brands to reassess the psychometric properties of the scale, although these brands were not used for the test of known-group validity (Apple, Axe, Budweiser, Canadian Tire, Dove, Ford, Lululemon, Microsoft, Molson, Toyota, WalMart). Data of participants who were totally unfamiliar with the brand ( $n = 23$ ) was removed prior to analysis.

**Confirmatory factor analysis.** Results indicated good fit for the four-factor correlated model (NNFI = .98, CFI = .98, GFI = .94, SRMR = .03, RMSEA = .06,  $\chi^2(84) = 234.129$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\chi^2/df < 3$ ; Bollen, 1989), and satisfactory psychometric properties (see Appendix A).

**Mean comparisons.** Mean comparisons on each dimension supported expected variations in authenticity among brands (coffee: continuity  $M_{\text{TimHortons}} = 5.63$ ,  $M_{\text{Starbucks}} = 4.58$ ,  $t(49) = 2.95$ ,  $p < .01$ ; credibility  $M_{\text{TimHortons}} = 5.28$ ,  $M_{\text{Starbucks}} = 4.45$ ,  $t(49) = 2.41$ ,  $p < .05$ ; symbolism  $M_{\text{TimHortons}} = 4.90$ ,  $M_{\text{Starbucks}} = 3.72$ ,  $t(49) = 2.75$ ,  $p < .05$ ; integrity  $M_{\text{TimHortons}} = 5.23$ ,  $M_{\text{Starbucks}} = 4.15$ ,  $t(49) = 2.91$ ,  $p < .05$ ; soft drinks: continuity  $M_{\text{CocaCola}} = 5.63$ ,  $M_{\text{RedBull}} = 3.65$ ,  $t(51) = 5.01$ ,  $p < .01$ ; credibility  $M_{\text{CocaCola}} = 4.44$ ,  $M_{\text{RedBull}} = 3.44$ ,  $t(51) = 2.58$ ,  $p < .05$ ; symbolism  $M_{\text{CocaCola}} = 3.71$ ,  $M_{\text{RedBull}} = 2.55$ ,  $t(51) = -2.59$ ,  $p < .05$ ; integrity  $M_{\text{CocaCola}} = 4.18$ ,  $M_{\text{RedBull}} = 2.81$ ,  $t(51) = 3.15$ ,  $p < .05$ ; jeans: continuity  $M_{\text{Levi's}} = 6.10$ ,  $M_{\text{Guess}} = 4.50$ ,  $t(51) = 5.02$ ,  $p < .01$ ; credibility  $M_{\text{Levi's}} = 4.96$ ,  $M_{\text{Guess}} = 4.19$ ,  $t(51) = 2.18$ ,  $p < .05$ ; symbolism  $M_{\text{Levi's}} = 4.61$ ,  $M_{\text{Guess}} = 3.88$ ,  $t(51) = 1.80$ ,  $p > .05$  but directionally consistent; integrity  $M_{\text{Levi's}} = 4.95$ ,  $M_{\text{Guess}} = 4.11$ ,  $t(51) = 2.51$ ,  $p < .05$ ). These findings provide support for known-group validity.

#### Study 4: Discriminant Validity

This study examines PBA's discriminant validity with regard to related scales and tests the psychometric properties of the PBA scale in a different market context. A sample of 810 European students (63% female) participated in an online study and rated two of twenty-one

brands (Amazon, Apple, Burger King, Coca Cola, Easyjet, H&M, IBM, Ikea, J.P. Morgan, Levi's, L'Oréal, McDonalds, Microsoft, Nespresso, Red Bull, Starbucks, Swatch, The Body Shop, United Airlines, Victorinox, Zara). Participants indicated their familiarity with two randomly assigned brands and were assigned to a different brand if they scored below five on a seven-point brand familiarity scale. Participants completed the PBA scale, and brand trustworthiness, sincerity, brand quality, brand heritage, brand attachment, partner quality, integrity, and brand attitude scales (Appendix C shows scale and item information).

**Confirmatory factor analysis.** The four-factor correlated model (NNFI = .92, CFI = .93, GFI = .90, SRMR = .07, RMSEA = .09,  $\chi^2(84) = 627.20$ ,  $p < .01$ ) had acceptable fit and satisfactory psychometric properties (see Appendix A).

**Discriminant validity of the PBA dimensions.** We tested discriminant validity between the PBA dimensions and related constructs: *Credibility* was compared with brand trustworthiness ( $\alpha = .89$ ; Erdem & Swait, 2004), the brand personality dimension sincerity ( $\alpha = .85$ ; Aaker, 1997), and brand quality ( $\alpha = .81$ ; Frazier & Lassar, 1996), *continuity* with brand heritage ( $\alpha = .66$ ; Wiedmann et al., 2011), *symbolism* with the identity-related aspect of brand attachment (i.e., brand-self connection,  $\alpha = .90$ ; Park et al., 2010), and *integrity* with partner quality ( $\alpha = .86$ ; Fournier, 1994), the integrity dimension of brand personality ( $\alpha = .78$ ; Venable et al., 2005), and brand trustworthiness ( $\alpha = .89$ ; Erdem & Swait, 2004). First, the confidence intervals around the correlations between the individual PBA dimensions and other constructs did not include  $|\pm 1|$ , supporting discriminant validity for all PBA dimensions (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Second, model comparisons in which the covariance between each PBA dimension and each of its related constructs was constrained to 1 supported discriminant validity in that the constrained models reduced fit significantly. Third, average variance extracted was compared with the squared

correlation between each pair of constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). These comparisons supported discriminant validity for all pairs of constructs, with the exception of the comparison between the credibility dimension and trustworthiness, and the credibility dimension and sincerity. These constructs share conceptual similarities and center on delivering what is promised, honesty, and building trust. Such conceptual similarities likely precluded discriminant validity based on the Fornell-Larcker criterion ( $AVE > r^2$ ). All AVE and  $r^2$  comparisons are summarized in Appendix D.

**Discriminant validity of the overall PBA construct and brand attitude.** PBA is related to, but distinct from, brand attitude. Brand attitude is defined as consumers' overall evaluations of a brand and is a function of a brand's salient attributes and benefits (Keller, 1993). As such, attitude toward the brand is a result of consumers' judgment of whether a brand possesses attributes they consider desirable. Although brand attitude and PBA are both assessments of a brand, the latter is indicative of the presence of authenticity as a desirable attribute which then leads to positive attitudes. Further—in contrast to PBA which helps consumers to be true to themselves—attitude does not necessarily connect the brand to consumers' self (Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005). Brand attitude is therefore conceptually distinct from PBA.

To establish discriminant validity, brand attitude ( $\alpha = .87$ ; Nan & Heo, 2007) was tested against a second-order factor model of PBA. This second-order modeling strategy for PBA was required to test discriminant validity at an overall construct level. The confidence interval around the correlation between the constructs did not include  $|\pm 1|$ , supporting discriminant validity. Model comparison revealed that constraining the covariance between the constructs to 1 reduced fit significantly. Finally, discriminant validity was supported according to the Fornell-Larcker criterion (see Appendix D).

### **Scale Development Summary**

The 15-item PBA scale captures four dimensions of PBA (continuity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism) and is reliable across brands and cultural contexts (North America and Europe).

We could not fully establish discriminant validity between the PBA dimension credibility and brand trustworthiness and the brand personality dimension sincerity. It is important to note that we tested for common method bias using Harman's single factor test (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003) in the four scale development studies. In all of these tests, the  $\chi^2$  values of the single factor models were significantly worse than those of the multi-factor models. This suggests that common method bias should not be a concern. The findings also suggest that common method variance is not a likely explanation for the lack of discriminant validity between PBA's credibility dimension and brand trustworthiness and sincerity. The results are most likely due to a conceptual overlap between constructs. Although PBA consists of a specific array of dimensions that capture its content, some of its dimensions are not novel constructs per se; they share conceptual similarities with other brand-related constructs and are based on similar scale items. The contribution of this research lies in bringing together the dimensions that combine into the PBA construct.

### **Drivers of PBA Dimensions and Implications for Consumer Behavior**

The third objective of this research was to examine PBA's role in a nomological network that involves antecedents and outcomes, as well as moderators and a central process underlying PBA's effects on consumer responses to brands. Two studies address these issues.

### **Study 5: Antecedents of PBA dimensions and their influence on emotional brand attachment and word-of-mouth**

In study 5, we propose a comprehensive conceptual framework (see Figure 1) and test it in a large-scale survey study. The relational hypotheses are based on the objectivist, constructivist, and existentialist perspectives on authenticity. Although some of the hypotheses may appear somewhat obvious, they are critical in establishing PBA's role within a network of theoretically related constructs and in demonstrating the PBA scale's nomological validity.

Insert Figure 1 about here

**Antecedents of PBA dimensions.** Consumers use various cues to evaluate authenticity (Beverland & Farelly, 2010; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Leigh et al., 2006). The use of *indexical* cues may be particularly important to confer authenticity from an objectivist perspective. In a branding context, indexical cues refer to attributes that provide consumers with evidence for what a brand claims to be. In the absence of objective information about a brand (e.g., age, country of origin, method of production), consumers might rely on actual brand behavior as information source. One manifestation of brand behavior consists in corporate scandals (e.g., financial, ecological, quality, or child labor scandals), which contribute to perceptions of irresponsibility (Gilmore & Pine, 2007). If a brand is involved in scandals, consumers may believe that it does not adhere to moral principles and places self-interest before other stakeholders' interests. Brand scandals act as indexical cues for a brand's unwillingness or inability to act according to moral values. Therefore, we hypothesize a negative impact of scandals on the PBA dimension integrity:

**H1a.** Brand scandals decrease perceived integrity.

Another manifestation of brand behavior (i.e., indexical cue) consists in behavior of employees who represent the brand. Employees who deliver on a brand's promise are important for a brand's success (Henkel, Tomczak, Heitmann, & Hermann, 2007; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007; Wentzel, 2009). If promises made in a brand's communication activities are not kept along all consumer-brand touch points, the brand's credibility decreases (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005). For example, a brand might be perceived as less credible and therefore less authentic if its employees act in a reserved manner despite the brand's core positioning on excitement. Conversely, if employees act and behave in accordance with the brand's values and mission, they demonstrate to consumers that the brand is "walking its talk" and is true to itself. Therefore, brand-congruent employee behavior (i.e., employee behavior in line with the brand's promise) is likely to reinforce consumers' perception of the PBA dimension credibility.

**H1b.** Brand-congruent employee behavior increases perceived credibility.

From a constructivist perspective, consumers also use *iconic* cues in authenticity judgments. Iconic authenticity cues are qualities that suggest a schematic fit with a person's mental picture of how an authentic object should look like (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). In a branding context, iconic cues refer to marketing and promotional cues, such as a brand's advertising or design features that create impressions about the brand's essence (Brown et al., 2003; Leigh et al., 2006). One way to project an authentic image is to feature historicity, heritage, locality, tradition, and pedigree of the brand in its communication activities (Beverland et al., 2008). We subsume such communication activities in a communication style that focuses on a brand's roots (i.e., tradition, heritage, locality, and country of origin). Prominent examples are Hermès (contemporary artisan since 1837), Patek Philippe (begin your own tradition), and

Lindt (Master Swiss Chocolatier since 1845). We suggest that this iconic cue links the brand to its past and projects its future potential, and therefore increases the PBA dimension continuity.

**H2a.** A brand's communication style emphasizing its roots increases perceived continuity.

Another way to increase authenticity perceptions via communication is to feature the brand's motives, means, and ends. Such a communication style features a brand's moral values (social responsibility), dedication in execution (sincere motivations), and the human factor (care for consumers), and aims to convey a sense of "moral authenticity" in consumers' minds. It conveys the brand's commitment to go beyond profitability and economic interest (Beverland et al., 2008). We subsume such communication activities in a communication style that emphasizes the brand's virtue. Prominent examples are TOMS (one for one, giving is what fuels us, giving is our future), Whole Foods (nothing artificial, ever), Swiss (Airlines; our sign is a promise), Kodak (because we care). We propose that this communication style is an iconic cue that reinforces the PBA dimension integrity.

**H2b.** A brand's communication style emphasizing its virtue increases perceived integrity.

The existential authenticity perspective suggests that consumers are in search of their true selves through consumption (Arnould & Price, 2000; Leigh et al., 2006). In "authenticating acts" consumers attend to self-referential information that reveals or helps construct their identity. In a branding context, existential brand cues refer to self-referential aspects of a brand in consumer-brand relationships. Such self-referential cues might be provided through brand anthropomorphism. Anthropomorphism is the attribution of human characteristics and features to nonhuman entities (Aggarwal & McGill, 2012). Brand anthropomorphism denotes the degree of humanization and personification of a brand, and captures the extent to which consumers can imagine the brand as a person (Aaker & Fournier, 1995). Brands that are associated with human characteristics and features provide vivid self-referential cues that can support consumers in testing, refining, and constructing their self-identity. A higher level of anthropomorphism makes it easier for consumers to recognize the values represented by a brand, which increases the brand's symbolism, and in turn provides existential authenticity in consumers' brand experience (Rose & Wood, 2004). We therefore hypothesize:

**H3.** Brand anthropomorphism increases perceived symbolism.

**Consequences of PBA dimensions.** Since consumers seek authenticity in consumption acts (Arnould & Price, 2000; Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Boyle, 2004; Holt, 2002), they likely respond positively to brands that they perceive as authentic (Rose & Wood, 2004). Through their symbolic qualities, authentic brands offer meaning and identity-relevant benefits that may entail positive consumer responses in a context of abundant standardized and meaningless market offers. Apart from this symbolic

aspect, the higher level of credibility, integrity, and continuity associated with an authentic brand entails perceptions of a brand being faithful and true towards itself and its consumers, and as such, the perception of a brand's dedication to its business and consumers. Consumers are likely to reciprocate dedication in terms of positive responses to the brand. One such response is emotional brand attachment which involves feelings towards a brand (Thomson et al., 2005). In addition to such a privately held response to the brand, consumers might also be more likely to make a public commitment to an authentic brand by engaging in positive word-of-mouth. Based on these considerations, we hypothesize:

**H4.** The PBA dimensions (symbolism, integrity, continuity, credibility) positively relate to (a) consumers' emotional brand attachment and (b) consumers' word-of-mouth.

**Moderating effects.** Based on a social constructivist perspective which suggests that the consumer is an "active consumer [...] of authenticity rather than a passive receiver of information" (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010, p. 852), the strength of some of the hypothesized effects may depend on consumers' individual beliefs and traits. We therefore explore whether consumer skepticism moderates the relationship between iconic cues and PBA.

Consumer skepticism is defined as the tendency toward disbelief of advertising (Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998) or—more generally—marketing claims (Gaski & Etzel, 1986). Highly skeptical consumers are aware that ads are meant to be persuasive; they develop persuasion knowledge (i.e., beliefs about marketers' motives, strategies, and tactics; Campbell & Kirmani, 2000) that helps them "identify how, when, and why marketers try to influence them" (Friestad & Wright, 1994, p. 1). Based on greater persuasion knowledge, highly skeptical consumers develop strategies to cope with influence techniques and generally respond less positively to marketing communication: They like it less, rely on it less, attend to it less, are less persuaded by it, and respond more positively to emotional appeals than to informational appeals (Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998; Obermiller, Spangenberg, & MacLachlan, 2005). We therefore expect that in forming brand authenticity impressions highly skeptical consumers rely less on a brand's communication style than consumers low in skepticism. Thus, we hypothesize:

**H5.** Skepticism towards marketing weakens the relationship between (a) a communication style emphasizing the brand's roots and the PBA dimension continuity and (b) a communication style emphasizing the brand's virtue and the PBA dimension integrity.

**Sample, procedure, and measures.** A sample of 932 consumers from North America, Russia, and Europe (51% female) completed an online questionnaire about one randomly assigned brand (Abercrombie & Fitch, Apple, Beeline, Burton, Canadian Tire, Coca-Cola,

Emmi, Harley Davidson, IKEA, Krasnii Oktyabr, Lululemon, Mammot, Microsoft, Molson Canadian, Rivella, Sberbank, Swisscom, Tim Hortons, UBS, and Unzija). Measured antecedents of PBA consisted of brand anthropomorphism (based on Aaker & Fournier, 1995), brand-congruent employee behavior (Morhart, Herzog, & Tomczak, 2009), brand scandals (Wagner, Lutz, & Weitz, 2009), communication style emphasizing a brand's roots (new), and communication style emphasizing a brand's virtue (new). Emotional brand attachment (Thomson et al., 2005) and word-of-mouth (Price & Arnould, 1999) served as dependent variables and skepticism towards advertising (Gaski & Etzel, 1986) as moderator. All constructs were measured on seven-point Likert scales (Appendix C shows scales and items).

The measurement scales showed sufficient reliability and validity (composite reliabilities  $> .6$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha > .7$ ). Discriminant validity was supported in that average variance extracted exceeded the squared correlations between all pairs of constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). We also tested for common method bias using Harman's single factor test (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The  $\chi^2$  value of the single factor model was significantly worse than that of the multi-factor measurement model, suggesting that CMV was not a concern.

**Results.** We tested the hypotheses 1 to 4 in terms of significance of paths in an SEM (AMOS 20) model (see Appendix E for a summary of results). Model fit was acceptable (NNFI = .86, CFI = .87, GFI = .82, SRMR = .15, RMSEA = .08,  $\chi^2(505) = 3600.67$ ,  $p < .01$ ). As hypothesized, PBA was influenced by indexical, iconic, and existential cues. The results support the hypothesized impact of (H1a) brand scandals on integrity ( $\gamma = -.46$ ;  $p < .01$ ), (H1b) brand-congruent employee behavior on credibility ( $\gamma = .65$ ;  $p < .01$ ), (H2a) communication style emphasizing a brand's roots on continuity ( $\gamma = .61$ ;  $p < .01$ ), (H2b) communication style emphasizing a brand's virtue on integrity ( $\gamma = .70$ ;  $p < .01$ ), and (H3) brand anthropomorphism on symbolism ( $\gamma = .63$ ;  $p < .01$ ). Hypotheses 1 to 3 are thus supported. The results also show a positive relation between three PBA dimensions and emotional brand attachment (H4a;  $\gamma_{\text{credibility}} = .29$ ;  $p < .01$ ;  $\gamma_{\text{symbolism}} = .28$ ;  $p < .01$ ;  $\gamma_{\text{integrity}} = .29$ ;  $p < .01$ ), but not for continuity ( $\gamma = .04$ ;  $p > .05$ ). Similarly, the results confirm a positive relation between three PBA dimensions and word-of-mouth (H4b;  $\gamma_{\text{credibility}} = .46$ ;  $p < .01$ ;  $\gamma_{\text{continuity}} = .08$ ;  $p < .05$ ;  $\gamma_{\text{integrity}} = .37$ ;  $p < .01$ ), but not for symbolism ( $\gamma = -$

.05;  $p > .05$ ). We calculated the explained variances for the endogenous variables: The antecedents explained 40% of the variance in symbolism, 79% in integrity, 42% in credibility, and 37% in continuity. The explained variance for emotional brand attachment was 42% and 50% for word-of-mouth.

We used regression analysis to test H5 (see Appendix E for a summary of results). First, a regression of the continuity dimension on communication style emphasizing a brand's roots (continuous, mean-centered), ad skepticism (continuous, mean-centered), and the interaction between these two variables (H5a), shows a significant conditional effect of communication style emphasizing a brand's roots ( $b = .41$ ,  $t = 15.81$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and a non-significant conditional effect of ad skepticism ( $b = -.05$ ,  $t = -1.80$ ,  $p > .05$ ). The interaction coefficient was not significant, although it was directionally consistent ( $b = -.03$ ,  $t = -1.30$ ,  $p > .05$ ). H5a was not supported. Second, we conducted a regression of the integrity dimension on communication style emphasizing a brand's virtue (continuous, mean-centered), ad skepticism (continuous, mean-centered), and their interaction (H5b). The conditional effects of communication style emphasizing a brand's virtue ( $b = .66$ ,  $t = 22.80$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and ad skepticism ( $b = -.11$ ,  $t = -3.85$ ,  $p < .01$ ) were significant, as was their interaction ( $b = -.04$ ,  $t = -2.03$ ,  $p < .05$ ). H5b was supported. Spotlight analyses at high and low levels of ad skepticism illustrate the nature of this interaction: As expected, for individuals high in ad skepticism (at +1SD), the positive effect of communication style emphasizing a brand's virtue on the PBA dimension integrity is weaker ( $b = .61$ ,  $t = 16.62$ ,  $p < .01$ ) than for individuals low in ad skepticism (at -1SD;  $b = .71$ ,  $t = 17.96$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Overall, skepticism towards marketing has a negative moderating effect only when it comes to the relation between a communication style emphasizing a brand's virtue and integrity, while it does not moderate the relation between a communication style emphasizing a brand's roots and continuity. H5 was only partially supported. We interpret this finding in the discussion section.

### **Study 6: PBA Effects on Brand Choice Likelihood and Consumption**

To provide additional evidence for PBA's ability to predict consumer behavior, and to examine an underlying mechanism of its effects, we conducted a lab experiment involving fictitious brands. Although this allowed us to control for the confounding effects of existing brand associations, a drawback of using fictitious brands is that emotional brand attachment ceases to be a viable outcome variable, since brand attachment tends to develop over time (Swaminathan, Stille, & Ahluwalia, 2009). We therefore used more meaningful outcomes for a fictitious brand setting: brand choice likelihood and actual consumption. Further, we investigated the mediating effect of self-congruence, and self-authenticity as boundary condition of this mediation.

In line with the existentialist perspective of authenticity, PBA likely interacts with consumers' identity-related characteristics. One variable that should be particularly important in a brand authenticity

context is the extent to which individuals connect with and enact their true selves by living in accordance with their values and beliefs (i.e., a trait perspective on self-authenticity; Lenton, Bruder, Slabu, & Sedikides 2013; Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis, & Joseph, 2008). While self-authenticity comprises several facets (i.e., absence of accepting external influence, self-alienation, and authentic living), we focus on authentic living. Authentic living “involves behaving and expressing emotions in such a way that is consistent with the conscious awareness of physiological states, emotions, beliefs, and cognitions. In other words, authentic living involves being true to oneself in most situations and living in accordance with one’s values and beliefs” (Wood et al. 2008, p. 386). Consumers who are highly self-authentic stand by what they believe in, think that it is better to be oneself than to be popular, and value authenticity in their everyday life to maintain self-authenticity. Self-authentic consumers who put more emphasis on maintaining self-authenticity in everyday life likely engage more in authenticating acts through consumption. In a brand context, highly self-authentic consumers should be more likely to choose and consume an authentic brand compared to less self-authentic consumers. Less self-authentic consumers likely attribute less importance to authenticity in their lives and therefore should be indifferent to whether a brand is authentic or not.

**H6a.** Consumers’ self-authenticity strengthens the relationship between PBA and brand choice likelihood as well as consumption, such that PBA has a stronger positive effect on brand choice likelihood and consumption for consumers who are high (vs. low) in self-authenticity.

Furthermore, this interaction effect likely unfolds through perceived self-congruence. Consumers should perceive a greater congruence between themselves and an authentic brand if they are high in self-authenticity than if they are low in self-authenticity. Self-congruence (i.e., the extent to which a consumer perceives a brand to be similar to his or her own self-concept; Malär et al., 2011), in turn, has been shown to lead to positive consumer responses to a brand (Grohmann, 2009; Malär et al., 2011). PBA should therefore have a stronger effect on self-congruence and subsequent brand choice likelihood and consumption when consumers’ self-authenticity is high versus low. This implies a moderated mediation of the effect of PBA on brand choice likelihood and consumption.

**H6b.** PBA has a positive effect on brand choice likelihood and consumption by increasing self-congruence. This indirect effect depends on consumers’ level of self-authenticity such that it is stronger for consumers who are high (vs. low) in self-authenticity.

**Participants and design.** A sample of 204 participants (46% women) recruited from the subject pool of a European university completed the study in exchange for monetary remuneration. Data from four additional participants were eliminated because they completed the follow-up questionnaire in an unrealistically short amount of time, with three completing it only after several reminders (an analysis

based on all data points also supports the results). Participation involved a 30 minute lab experiment using a single between participants factor design (high versus low brand authenticity;  $n = 102$  per condition), with self-authenticity and self-congruence as measured variables that were collected in a follow-up online questionnaire.

**Procedure, manipulation, measures.** The experiment consisted of a blind product test of a skincare brand. The manipulation involved participants reading a description of an anonymized skincare brand purportedly written by an independent journalist. In the description, the brand was either presented as highly authentic or less authentic. We manipulated brand authenticity by varying information along the four PBA dimensions. For example, in order to vary the continuity dimension, the brand's founding date was described as 1854 (highly authentic condition) or 2012 (less authentic condition). In order to vary the integrity dimension, the brand was founded by French monks (highly authentic) instead of French businessmen (less authentic). The manipulation of the credibility dimension indicated, for example, that the founders of the highly authentic brand developed and patented a proprietary herbal formula, whereas the founders of the less authentic brand purportedly acquired such formula. An example of the manipulation of the symbolism dimension consists of the brand slogan as "Feel nature – Feel like yourself" (highly authentic brand) or "Feel nature – Feel like a different person" (less authentic brand). The Methodological Details Appendix includes the full manipulations. We held the quantity of information constant and the quality of information neutral across conditions (e.g., no outright betrayal of consumers in the less authentic condition) to preclude confounds.

After reading the brand description, participants tested the product (i.e., a hand cream sample that was identical across conditions) and completed the brand choice likelihood measure ("Would you choose brand ABC over [retailer name]'s private hand cream label?") as well as several manipulation checks: PBA ( $\alpha_{\text{continuity}} = .85$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{credibility}} = .78$ ;  $\alpha_{\text{integrity}} = .83$ ;  $\alpha_{\text{symbolism}} = .86$ ), general brand evaluation (bad/good; negative/positive;  $\alpha = .94$ ), quality (low quality/high quality), price level (inexpensive/expensive; low cost/high cost;  $\alpha = .91$ ), competence (reliable; intelligent, successful,  $\alpha = .65$ ; Aaker 1997), familiarity (not at all familiar/very familiar), credibility of the information provided (not at all credible/very credible; not at all believable/very believable,  $\alpha = .92$ ), mood (bad/good; unpleasant/pleasant; sad/happy; negative/positive,  $\alpha = .89$ ; Roehm & Roehm, 2005), all on seven-point scales.

After each experimental session, we weighed the remaining amount of hand cream with a high precision balance (recorded to the nearest .01 grams) and compared it to the initial amount. The difference between the pre- and post-weight served as measure of each participant's brand consumption. After two weeks, respondents completed the self-authenticity measure ( $\alpha = .66$ ; Wood et al., 2008), viewed the same brand description again, and completed a measure of self-congruence (adapted from Sirgy et al.,

1997;  $\alpha = .90$ ). Self-authenticity and self-congruence were both measured by three items each on seven-point scales (see Appendix C).

**Manipulation checks.** We regressed the PBA scale dimensions and control variables on brand authenticity condition (high/low PBA), self-authenticity, and their interaction. The results confirmed that the authenticity manipulation was successful: participants in the authentic brand condition rated the brand significantly higher on each of the PBA dimensions than participants in the less authentic brand condition (continuity:  $M_{AU} = 5.78$ ,  $SD = .80$ ;  $M_{INAU} = 3.79$ ,  $SD = 1.25$ ;  $b = 1.98$ ,  $t = 13.51$ ,  $p < .01$ ; credibility:  $M_{AU} = 5.16$ ,  $SD = .99$ ;  $M_{INAU} = 4.61$ ,  $SD = .94$ ;  $b = .54$ ,  $t = 4.02$ ,  $p < .01$ ; integrity:  $M_{AU} = 5.35$ ,  $SD = .88$ ;  $M_{INAU} = 4.67$ ,  $SD = .99$ ;  $b = .68$ ,  $t = 5.16$ ,  $p < .01$ ; symbolism:  $M_{AU} = 4.15$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ;  $M_{INAU} = 3.77$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ;  $b = .38$ ,  $t = 2.17$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The two brand authenticity conditions did not differ in terms of mood, general brand evaluation, quality, competence, price, familiarity, and credibility of brand information (regression coefficients'  $t < 1.97$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Self-authenticity did not influence perceptions of PBA dimensions ( $ts < 1.11$ ,  $p > .05$ ) or control variables ( $ts < 1.80$ ,  $p > .05$ ) with the exception of price ( $t = 2.48$ ,  $p < .05$ ). No significant interaction between authenticity manipulation and self-authenticity emerged for PBA dimensions ( $ts < .65$ ,  $p > .05$ ) or control variables ( $ts < 1.48$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Appendix F summarizes these regression results.

**Results.** An ANOVA revealed a significant effect of brand authenticity condition on brand choice likelihood ( $F(1, 202) = 5.03$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Participants in the highly authentic brand condition reported a higher likelihood to choose the brand over a private label brand ( $M_{AU} = 5.05$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ ) than those in the less authentic brand condition ( $M_{INAU} = 4.61$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ ). In contrast, there was no significant difference in brand consumption ( $M_{AU} = .70g$ ,  $SD = .67$ ;  $M_{INAU} = .66g$ ,  $SD = .61$ ;  $F(1, 202) = .27$ ,  $p > .05$ ). We speculate that consumers' potentially increased use of an authentic brand might be canceled out by the belief that it is more effective and thus demands less usage quantity. It is also possible that there is an optimal amount of hand cream beyond which consumption is counterproductive (e.g., too much makes hands greasy). Alternatively, participants may have limited their consumption in order not to appear greedy, that is, due to self-presentation motivations. These speculations offer an opportunity for additional research.

In order to test H6a, we regressed brand choice likelihood on brand authenticity condition (dummy coded with 1= highly authentic, 0=less authentic), self-authenticity (continuous, mean-centered), and the interaction term. The effect of brand authenticity condition was significant ( $b = .44$ ,  $t = 2.27$ ,  $p < .05$ ) as was the effect of self-authenticity ( $b = -.34$ ,  $t = -2.01$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Furthermore, the condition  $\times$  self-authenticity interaction was significant ( $b = .59$ ,  $t = 2.45$ ,  $p < .05$ ). To explore the nature of this interaction, spotlight analyses were conducted at higher and lower levels of self-authenticity. As expected,

for individuals high in self-authenticity (at +1SD), the effect of condition was significant, such that these individuals had a higher brand choice likelihood for the highly authentic brand versus the less authentic brand ( $b = .92$ ,  $t = 3.34$ ,  $p < .01$ ); for individuals low in self-authenticity (at -1SD), brand authenticity did not have an effect ( $b = -.04$ ,  $t = -.13$ ,  $p > .05$ ). This pattern of results is consistent with H6a and is illustrated in Figure 2. As hypothesized, consumers' self-authenticity interacts with a brand's perceived authenticity such that consumers who pursue authenticity in their own lives prefer brands they perceive as authentic. At the same time, our results suggest that consumers who are low in self-authenticity are indifferent towards PBA and do not try to compensate their low self-authenticity through the consumption of authentic brands (i.e., self-enhance).

Insert Figure 2 about here

To examine the moderated mediation hypothesis (H6b), we ran a conditional process analysis using Hayes' SPSS macro PROCESS (model 7, 5000 bootstrap samples), with brand authenticity conditions (dummy coded with 1 = highly authentic, 0 = less authentic) serving as the predictor, self-congruence as the mediator, self-authenticity as the first-stage moderator, and brand choice likelihood as the criterion.

First, we found a significant interaction between brand authenticity condition and self-authenticity on self-congruence ( $.67$ , 95% CI =  $[.23; 1.10]$ ). Second, controlling for brand authenticity condition, self-congruence had a significant effect on brand choice likelihood ( $.29$ , 95% CI =  $[.15; .43]$ ). Third, controlling for self-congruence, the direct effect of brand authenticity condition on brand choice likelihood was no longer significant ( $.26$ , 95% CI =  $[-.12; .65]$ ). Next, we examined the moderation of the indirect effect. The confidence interval for the index of moderated mediation (Hayes 2014) did not include zero ( $.19$ , 95% CI =  $[.05; .43]$ ), indicating that the indirect effect of PBA on brand choice likelihood through self-congruence depends on self-authenticity. Probing the moderation of mediation through a spotlight analysis (summarized in Table 1) revealed a significant indirect effect of PBA on brand choice likelihood through self-congruence for consumers high in self-authenticity (+1SD) and for consumers moderate in self-authenticity (at mean), but not for consumers low in self-authenticity (-1SD).

Insert Table 1 about here

This suggests that authentic brands elicit higher levels of self-congruence only among moderate and highly self-authentic consumers (but not consumers low in self-authenticity), which in turn increases their propensity to choose the authentic brand. This finding supports the proposed moderated mediation account (i.e., mediation through self-congruence conditional upon high levels of self-authenticity) for an effect of PBA on brand choice likelihood.

### **Summary of the Studies Examining PBA Drivers and Consequences**

Study 5 embedded PBA in a nomological network and showed that PBA is influenced by iconic, indexical, and existential cues, and increases emotional brand attachment and word-of-mouth. One of the antecedent effects was moderated by consumers' skepticism towards advertising. Study 6 provided experimental evidence for an effect of PBA on brand choice likelihood. It showed that consumers' self-authenticity interacts with a brand's perceived authenticity such that consumers who pursue authenticity in their own lives perceive authentic brands as more self-congruent, which in turn increases their brand choice likelihood.

### Discussion and Conclusions

Although practitioners have begun to embrace the notion of PBA in brand positioning and communication efforts, research still lags behind in understanding the concept's nature and role for the brand management domain. Based on a definition that reconciles existing perspectives (objective, constructive and existential) on authenticity, we proposed that evidence-based (indexical), impression-based (iconic), and self-referential (experiential) cues are central to the formation of consumers' brand authenticity perceptions. We then developed and validated a scale to measure PBA. A multi-phase scale development process resulted in a 15-item scale that captures PBA through four dimensions (credibility, integrity, symbolism, and continuity). This scale is psychometrically sound and—with few exceptions—shows discriminant validity with regard to related constructs. Furthermore, examination of PBA within a nomological network supported theory-based predictions and shows its influence on relevant brand outcomes.

Overall, this research shed light on PBA's (1) measurement, (2) drivers, (3) consequences, as well as (4) an underlying process of its effects and (5) boundary conditions. The current research provides novel insights regarding brand authenticity's nature and highlights its importance for branding theory and practice: First, this research extends recent efforts to measure brand authenticity (e.g., Eggers et al., 2013; Napoli et al., 2014). By conceptualizing PBA along the three perspectives, delineating PBA from related constructs in the marketing literature, and extensively validating the scale, this article provides researchers with a comprehensive conceptualization and valid measure for future studies on brand authenticity. Building on and integrating qualitative research on authenticity (e.g., Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Leigh et al., 2006; Rose & Wood, 2005), the current research makes the construct amenable to quantitative research. Importantly, the current scale development empirically supports the theoretically founded notion that symbolism is a key component of PBA. We find clear evidence for a symbolism dimension of PBA, which corroborates the importance of symbolic brand qualities in the context of authenticity put forward in the literature (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Leigh et al., 2006; Rose & Wood, 2005). Recent scale development efforts (Napoli et al., 2014) failed to find

empirical support for this dimension and acknowledged that the conceptualization and operationalization of the construct needed to be re-examined. The current research addresses several other limitations noted by Napoli and colleagues (2014): It involves a wide range of product and service brands, and examines scale performance in different cultural contexts.

Second, concerning the emergence of brand authenticity, we identified several antecedents based on the three theoretical authenticity perspectives. Our findings show that consumers tend to rely on a communication style based on a brand's virtue and roots (iconic), the absence of brand scandals and brand-congruent employee behavior (indexical), and brand anthropomorphism (existential) when forming brand authenticity impressions. Although the list of antecedents considered here is not exhaustive, it opens avenues for future research on drivers of brand authenticity. For example, future research might examine the role of co-creation and customization in brand authenticity formation. Such activities shift attention from a brand's moneymaking motives to the consumers' self-defining pursuits (Gilmore & Pine, 2007) and may thus affect brand authenticity perceptions.

Third, concerning the outcomes of brand authenticity, we contribute to the understanding of other marketing constructs (emotional brand attachment, positive word-of-mouth, and brand choice likelihood). For example, by examining the role of brand authenticity in the development of consumers' brand attachment, we heed Park and colleagues' (2010) call for more research on brand attachment and shed light on how brand attachment arises. While we found positive effects of integrity, credibility, and symbolism on emotional brand attachment, continuity did not significantly relate to emotional brand attachment. It is possible that continuity did not have an effect on emotional brand attachment because it is the least self-referential PBA dimension. Prior literature suggests, however, that the formation of emotional brand attachment requires the involvement of consumers' selves (Chaplin & Roedder John, 2005). Of interest is also the fact that symbolism did not significantly relate to word-of-mouth. Symbolic brand qualities that serve as a personal resource for identity construction are probably of private value to consumers. Therefore, the brand as a resource for identity construction is less publicly palpable and even less desirable to promote, especially if consumers have a high need for uniqueness (Cheema & Kaikati, 2010). Thus, future research on the moderating role of need for uniqueness could be particularly beneficial in the context of PBA. Future research might also examine other potential outcomes of PBA, such as subjective well-being (Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2009) or brand relationship quality (Fournier, 1998). In this context, a promising avenue for future research lies in an investigation of relational authenticity in consumer-brand relationships (for authenticity in interpersonal relationships, see Lopez & Rice, 2006).

Fourth, a contribution of this research is the identification of a mechanism underlying the effect of

PBA on brand choice likelihood. We find evidence for a self-congruence mechanism. This finding is in line with positive effects of self-congruence on brand-related consumer responses (Grohmann, 2009; Malär et al., 2011). Further, while we could not find a significant effect of PBA on brand consumption in study 6, we speculate that this might be due to a potential neutralization effect (i.e., the belief that an authentic brand might be more effective). Such a suppression mechanism could serve as another process worthwhile to explore.

Fifth, concerning boundary conditions of PBA drivers, we expected that highly skeptical consumers would generally rely less on a brand's communication style when forming their PBA perceptions. Although consumer skepticism had an attenuating effect on the effectiveness of a communication style emphasizing a brand's virtues, we did not find such attenuating effect with respect to a communication style emphasizing a brand's roots. That is, independently of consumers' level of ad skepticism, a brand's communication style featuring the brand's roots is equally effective in creating brand authenticity perceptions. This finding suggests that it is probably more difficult to cheat with respect to a brand's roots (i.e., heritage, country of origin, locality, and tradition) than with respect to its virtue (i.e., its values or promises). Thus, highly skeptical consumers are likely more suspicious about communication content that is difficult to verify (i.e., a brand's virtue) as opposed to easily verifiable content (i.e., a brand's roots).

An additional finding is that the effects of PBA vary among individuals. We included self-authenticity as a boundary condition in study 6. Specifically, we found that PBA led to higher self-congruence and consequently higher brand choice likelihood for consumers high in self-authenticity. This pattern of results suggests that authentic brands act as a self-verifying vehicle for consumers high in self-authenticity. Given that authenticity is considered as a positive trait in today's society, one can speculate whether consumers could use the display of authentic brands as a self-enhancing impression management vehicle. This should especially be the case for consumers low in self-authenticity since consumers high in self-authenticity are less likely to adapt their behavior in a socially desirable way (Wood et al., 2008). However, according to our results, consumers who are low in self-authenticity seem to be indifferent towards authentic brands. Thus, they do not try to self-enhance via greater consumption of authentic brands.

Future research might want to examine other boundary conditions of the effects of PBA on brand outcomes, such as need for authenticity in consumption—especially in combination with cultural socialization. In this context, examining the role of authenticity for consumer behaviors in more individualistic versus collectivistic societies or in markets that differ in cultural capital might provide interesting insights. Finally, the brand authenticity construct itself could act as a moderator of previously

identified effects. For example, the brand authenticity construct provides a possible boundary condition of self-extension activities (Belk, 1988). Self-expansion theory (Aron & Aron, 1986) posits that people possess an inherent motivation to incorporate others (in our context, brands) into their self-concept. However, such an incorporation of a brand into the self may depend on the perceived degree of a brand's authenticity.

Lastly, while this research included product and service brands, future research can shed light on the role of authenticity for human brands (e.g., celebrity branding), other offerings (e.g., higher education), and other domains in which authenticity plays an important role. Research opportunities also arise with regard to the recommendation that a firm's response to consumers (e.g., in service recovery) be authentic (Grandey, Fisk, Mattila, Jansen, & Sideman, 2005; Pine & Gilmore, 2007), or with regard to the authenticity of companies' online activities, such as blogs (Yeomans, 2006) and social networking (Pronschinske, Groza, & Walker, 2012).

This research has several practical implications. As marketing practitioners increasingly invest in conveying an authentic brand image, they can use the PBA scale to track consumers' authenticity perceptions. Further, this research provides initial guidelines with regard to how brand authenticity might be enhanced: First, consumers indeed consider a brand's communication activities in their authenticity assessments. Talking about the brand's roots and virtues contributes to an aura of authenticity. Consumers also look for evidence that the brand walks its talk (e.g., they scrutinize employee behavior and brand actions toward stakeholders), however. Furthermore, this research clearly shows that symbolism is an important part of brand authenticity. As has been argued in prior research (Holt, 2002), the notion of authenticity increasingly shifts to a brand's contribution to consumers' identity projects. In order to be perceived as authentic, a brand has to provide identity-relevant features and offer means of self-verification. These insights support management practice in its effort to effectively contribute to consumers' quest for meaningful consumption by helping brands remain true to themselves and to consumers, and to help consumers stay true to themselves.

## References

- Aaker, J. L. (1997). Dimensions of brand personality. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34(3), 347-356.
- Aaker, J. L. (1999). The malleable self: The role of self-expression in persuasion. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 36(1), 45-57.
- Aaker, J. L., & Fournier, S. (1995). A brand as a character, a partner and a person: Three perspectives on the question of brand personality. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 22, 391-395.
- Aggarwal, P., & McGill, A. L. (2012). When brands seem human, do humans act like brands? Automatic behavioral priming effects of brand anthropomorphism. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 39(2), 307-323.
- Anderson, J. C., & Gerbing, D. W. (1988). Structural equations modeling in practice: A review and recommended two-step approach. *Psychological Bulletin*, 103(3), 411-423.
- Arnould, E. J., & Price, L. L. (2000). Authenticating acts and authoritative performances. Questing for self and community. In S. Ratneshwar, D. G. Mick & C. Huffman (Eds.), *The why of consumption. Contemporary perspectives on consumer motives, goals and desires* (pp. 140-163). London: Routledge.
- Aron, A., & Aron, E. N. (1986). *Love and the expansion of self: Understanding attraction and satisfaction*. Hemisphere Publishing.
- Bagozzi, R. P., & Yi, Y. (1988). On the evaluation of structural equations models. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 16(1), 74-94.
- Belk, R. W. (1988). Possessions and the extended self. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15(2), 139-168.
- Beverland, M. B. (2005). Crafting brand authenticity: The case of luxury wines. *Journal of Management Studies*, 42(5), 1003-1029.
- Beverland, M. B. (2006). The 'real thing': Branding authenticity in the luxury wine trade. *Journal of Business Research*, 59(2), 251-258.
- Beverland, M. B., & Farrelly, F. J. (2010). The quest for authenticity in consumption: Consumers' purposive choice of authentic cues to shape experienced outcomes. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36(5), 838-850.
- Beverland, M. B., Lindgreen, A., & Vink, M. W. (2008). Projecting authenticity through advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, 37(1), 5-15.
- Bollen, K. A. (1989). *Structural equations with latent variables*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

- Boyle, D. (2004). *Authenticity: Brands, fakes, spin and the lust for real life*. London: Harper Perennial.
- Brown, S., Kozinets, R. V., & Sherry, J. F. (2003). Teaching old brands new tricks: Retro branding and the revival of brand meaning. *Journal of Marketing*, 67(3), 19-33.
- Burmann, C., & Zeplin, S. (2005). Building brand commitment: A behavioural approach to internal brand management. *Journal of Brand Management*, 12(4), 279-300.
- Campbell, M. C., & Kirmani, A. (2000). Consumers' use of persuasion knowledge: The effects of accessibility and cognitive capacity on perceptions of an influence agent. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27(1), 69-83.
- Chaplin, L. N., & Roedder John, D. (2005). The development of self-brand connections in children and adolescents. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32(1), 119-129.
- Cheema, A., & Kaikati, A.M. (2010). The effect of need for uniqueness on word of mouth. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 47(3), 553-563.
- Diener, E., Oishi, S., & Lucas, R. E. (2009). Subjective well-being: The science of happiness and life satisfaction. In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 187-194). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Edson Escalas, J. (2004). Narrative processing: Building consumer connections to brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 14(1), 168-180.
- Eggers, F., O'Dwyer, M., Kraus, S., Vallaster, C., & Guldenberg, S. (2013). The impact of brand authenticity on brand trust and SME growth: A CEO perspective. *Journal of World Business*, 48(3), 340-348.
- Erdem, T. L., & Swait, J. (2004). Brand credibility, brand consideration, and choice. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(1), 191-198.
- Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equations models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(1), 39-50.
- Fournier, S. (1994). A consumer-brand relationship framework for strategic brand management. Doctoral Dissertation, Department of Marketing, University of Florida.
- Fournier, S. (1998). Consumers and their brands: Developing relationship theory in consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24(4), 343-373.
- Frazier, G. L., & Lassar, W. M. (1996). Determinants of distribution intensity. *Journal of Marketing*, 60(4), 39-51.

- Friestad, M., & Wright, P. (1994). The persuasion knowledge model: How people cope with persuasion attempts. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 1-31.
- Gaski, J. F., & Etzel, M. J. (1986). The index of consumer sentiment toward marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 50(3), 71-81.
- Gilmore, J. H., & Pine, B. J. (2007). *Authenticity: What consumers really want*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Golomb, J. (1995). *In Search of Authenticity: From Kierkegaard to Camus*. London: Routledge.
- Grandey, A. A., Fisk, G. M., Mattila, A. S., Jansen, K. J., & Sideman, L. A. (2005). Is “service with a smile” enough? Authenticity of positive displays during service encounters. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 96, 38-55.
- Grayson, K., & Martinec, R. (2004). Consumer perceptions of iconicity and indexicality and their influence on assessments of authentic market offerings. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(2), 296-312.
- Grayson, K., & Shulman, D. (2000). Indexicality and the verification function of irreplaceable possessions: A semiotic analysis. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27(1), 17-30.
- Grohmann, B. (2009). Gender dimensions of brand personality. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 46(1), 105-119.
- Handler, R., & Saxton W. (1988). Dyssimulation: Reflexivity, narrative, and the quest for authenticity in “living history”. *Cultural Anthropology*, 3(3), 242-260.
- Hayes, A. (2014). An index and test of linear moderated mediation. Working paper.
- Hayes, A. (2013). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Henkel, S., Tomczak, T., Heitmann, M., & Herrmann, A. (2007). Managing brand consistent employee behaviour: relevance and managerial control of behavioural branding. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 16(5), 310-320.
- Holt, D. B. (2002). Why do brands cause trouble? A dialectical theory of consumer culture and branding. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29(1), 70-90.
- Keller, K. L. (1993). Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Marketing*, 57(1), 1-22.
- Kernis, M. H., & Goldman, B. M. (2006). A multicomponent conceptualization of authenticity: Theory

- and research. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* Vol. 38 (pp. 283-357). Burlington: Academic Press.
- Kirmani, A. (2009). The self and the brand. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 19*(3), 271-275.
- Leigh, T. W., Peters, C., & Shelton, J. (2006). The consumer quest for authenticity: The multiplicity of meanings within the MG subculture of consumption. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 34*(4), 481-493.
- Lenton, A. P., Bruder, M., Slabu, L., & Sedikides, C. (2013). How does “being real” feel? The experience of state authenticity. *Journal of Personality, 81*(3), 276-289.
- Lopez, F. G., & Rice, K. G. (2006). Preliminary development and validation of a measure of relationship authenticity. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 53*(3), 362-371.
- MacCannell, D. (1973). Staged authenticity: Arrangements of social space in tourist settings. *American Journal of Sociology, 79*(3), 589-603.
- Malär, L., Krohmer, H., Hoyer, W. D., & Nyffenegger, B. (2011). Emotional brand attachment and brand personality: The relative importance of the actual and the ideal self. *Journal of Marketing, 75*(4), 35-52.
- McCracken, G. (1988). *The Long Interview*. Thousands Oaks: Sage.
- Merchant, A., & Rose, G. M. (2013). Effects of advertising-evoked vicarious nostalgia on brand heritage. *Journal of Business Research, 66*(12), 2619-2625.
- Morhart, F. M., Herzog, W., & Tomczak, T. (2009). Brand-specific leadership: Turning employees into brand champions. *Journal of Marketing, 73*(5), 122-142.
- Nan, X., & Heo, K. (2007). Consumer responses to corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives: Examining the role of brand-cause fit in cause-related marketing. *Journal of Advertising, 36*(2), 63-74.
- Napoli, J., Dickinson, S. J., Beverland, M. B., & Farrelly, F. (2014). Measuring consumer-based brand authenticity. *Journal of Business Research, 67*(6), 1090-1098.
- Newman, G.E., & Dhar, R. (2014). Authenticity is contagious: Brand essence and the original source of production. *Journal of Marketing Research, 51*(3), 371-386.
- Obermiller, C., & Spangenberg, E. R. (1998). Development of a scale to measure consumer skepticism toward advertising. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 7*(2), 159-186.
- Obermiller, C., Spangenberg, E. R., & MacLachlan, D. L. (2005). Ad skepticism: The consequences of

- disbelief. *Journal of Advertising*, 34(3), 7-17.
- Park, C. W., MacInnis, D. J., Priester, J., Eisingerich, A. B., & Iacobucci, D. (2010). Brand attachment and brand attitude strength: Conceptual and empirical differentiation of two critical brand equity drivers. *Journal of Marketing*, 74(6), 1-17.
- Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (2007). Dealing Authentically with Customers. *The Deluxe Knowledge Quarterly, KQ4*, 10-11.
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J. Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: a critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 879-903.
- Price, L. L., & Arnould, E. J. (1999). Commercial friendships: service provider-client relationships in context. *Journal of Marketing*, 63, 38-56.
- Pronschinske, M., Groza M. D., & Walker, M. (2012). Attracting facebook "fans": The importance of authenticity and engagement as a social networking strategy for professional sport teams, *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 21(4), 221-231.
- Punjaisri, K., & Wilson, A. (2007). The role of internal branding in the delivery of employee brand promise. *Journal of Brand Management*, 15(1), 57-70.
- Roehm Jr, H. A., & Roehm, M. L. (2005). Revisiting the effect of positive mood on variety seeking. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32(2), 330-336.
- Rose, R. L., & Wood, S. L. (2005). Paradox and the consumption of authenticity through reality television. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32(2), 284-296.
- Sirgy, M. J., Grewal, D., Mangleburg, T. F., Park, J. O., Chon, K. S., Claiborne, C. B., Johar, J. S. & Berkman, H. (1997). Assessing the predictive validity of two methods of measuring self-image congruence. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 25(3), 229-241.
- Steiner, C. J., & Reisinger, Y. (2006). Understanding existential authenticity. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 33(2), 299-318.
- Stern, B. (1994). Authenticity and the textual persona: Postmodern paradoxes in advertising narrative. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 11(4), 387-400.
- Swaminathan, V., Stilley, K. M., & Ahluwalia, R. (2009). When brand personality matters: The moderating role of attachment styles. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35(6), 985-1002.
- Thompson, C. J., & Arsel, Z. (2004). The Starbucks brandscape and consumers' (anticorporate)

- experiences of glocalization. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(3), 631-642.
- Thomson, M., MacInnis, D. J., & Park, C. W. (2005). The ties that bind: Measuring the strength of consumers' emotional attachments to brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 15(1), 77-91.
- Trilling, L. (1972). *Sincerity and authenticity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Urde, M., Greyser, S. A., & Balmer, J. M. (2007). Corporate brands with a heritage. *Journal of Brand Management*, 15(1), 4-19.
- Venable, B. T., Rose, G. M., Bush, V. D., & Gilbert, F. W. (2005). The role of brand personality in charitable giving: An assessment and validation. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 33(3), 295-313.
- Wagner, T., Lutz, R. J., & Weitz, B. A. (2009). Corporate hypocrisy: Overcoming the threat of inconsistent corporate social responsibility perceptions. *Journal of Marketing*, 73(6), 77-91.
- Walumbwa, F. O., Avolio, B. J., Gardner, W. L., Wernsing, T. S., & Peterson, S. J. (2008). Authentic leadership: Development and validation of a theory-based measure. *Journal of Management*, 34(1), 89-126.
- Wang, N. (1999). Rethinking authenticity in tourism experience. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 26(2), 349-370.
- Wentzel, D. (2009). The effect of employee behavior on brand personality impressions and brand attitudes. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 37 (3), 359-374.
- Wiedmann, K-P., Hennigs, N., Schmidt, S., & Wuestefeld, T. (2011). The importance of brand heritage as a key performance driver in marketing management. *Journal of Brand Management*, 19(3), 182-194.
- Wood, A. M., Linley, A. P., Maltby, J., Baliousis, M., & Joseph, S. (2008). The authentic personality: A theoretical and empirical conceptualization and the development of the authenticity scale. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 55(3), 385-399.
- Yeomans, M. (2006). Blogs can offer a big advantage to brands – if they're honest, *New Media Age*, 23.03.06.

Fig 1. Conceptual framework of perceived brand authenticity (study 5).

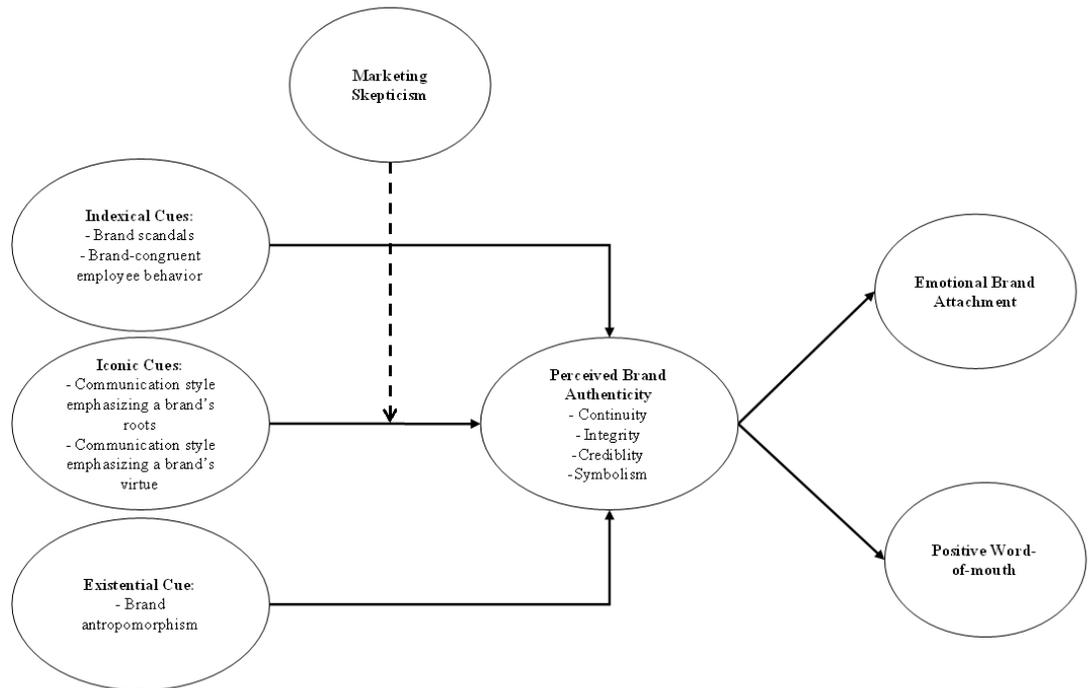
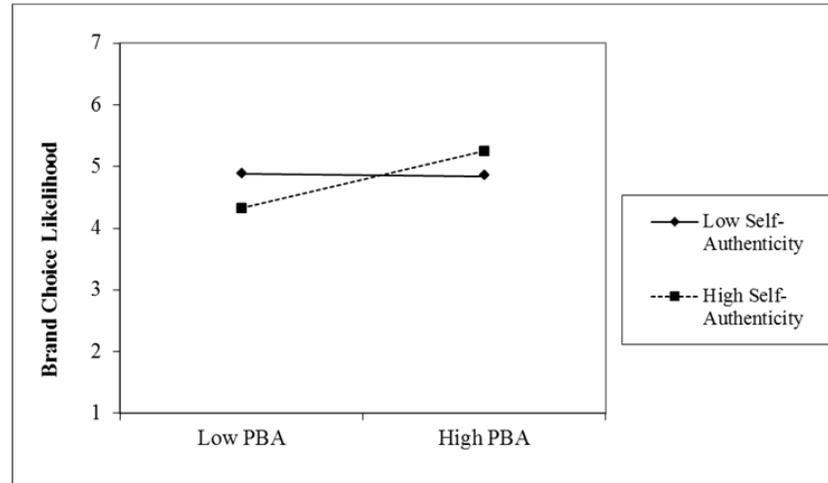


Fig 2. Moderating effect of self-authenticity (study 6).



ACCEPTED

Table 1

Study 6 results: moderated mediation.

Self-Authenticity (Moderator)	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI
<b>4.85 (Mean-1 SD)</b>	.02	.07	-.15	.15
<b>5.67 (Mean)</b>	.18	.07	.07	.35
<b>6.48 (Mean+1 SD)</b>	.33	.13	.13	.64

Notes.

Effect = Conditional indirect effects of PBA on brand choice likelihood through self-congruence at different values of the moderator self-authenticity.