Brand Authenticity:

Definition, Measurement, Antecedents, and Consequences

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ABSTRACT

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Consumers are increasingly demanding authentic products, experiences, and brands. Although brand authenticity is gaining interest from academics and practitioners, research is lacking regarding the nature of an authentic brand and the implications of brand authenticity. This dissertation focuses on conceptualizing brand authenticity and understanding its antecedents and consequences in the marketplace.

The first objective of this research is to develop and validate a reliable and parsimonious scale measuring brand authenticity (chapter 2). An extensive literature review across domains is followed by a qualitative study in which fourteen in-depth interviews are conducted. Results show that brand authenticity comprises four dimensions: longevity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism. The following studies focus on scale development. A second-order four-dimensional scale with 17 items provides satisfactory psychometric properties. This scale is validated across different brands, product categories, and groups of consumers. Subsequent studies show the discriminant validity of the scale with regard to existing brand-related constructs and its predictive validity. Nomological validity is tested. Results show the importance of indexical, iconic, and existential cues in creating brand authenticity perceptions—in line with the objectivist, constructivist, and existentialist perspectives on authenticity identified in the literature review—, the moderating effect of consumer skepticism, as well as the positive influence of brand authenticity on emotional brand attachment. The role of authenticity in understanding consumers' reactions to a scandal is also explored. Results suggest that brand authenticity protects brands from negative consequences of a scandal.

The second objective of this research is to understand the situations that might enhance consumers' interest in authentic brands (chapter 3). Three studies test the influence of uncertainty, exclusion, and self-inauthenticity on consumers' responses towards authentic brands. Results show that an authentic brand is particularly valued when consumers feel excluded and inauthentic. The effects are observed for specific consumer segments, such as

consumers with high brand engagement in self-concept and with high importance of personal authenticity, respectively.

The research concludes with a general discussion of the findings, theoretical and managerial implications, as well as limitations and future research ideas (chapter 4).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTRIBUTION OF AUTHORS

The writing and empirical studies reported in this dissertation (i.e., chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4) reflect my own work, completed under the supervision of Dr. Bianca Grohmann. The beginning of this research dates back to 2009, when I had the idea of studying brand authenticity when I was attending one of Dr. Grohmann's Ph.D. seminars ("The Meaning and Management of Brands"). I developed this initial idea into a series of studies examining the conceptualization, antecedents, consequences, and limits of brand authenticity from a consumer perspective. In this process, Dr. Grohmann provided feedback, which I incorporated into the development of the current dissertation.

I had already completed writing the conceptual background section and the data collection for studies 1 – 4, when Dr. Grohmann learned that Dr. Lucia Malär (University of Bern), Dr. Felicitas Morhart (University of Lausanne), and Dr. Florent Girardin (former Ph.D. student at the University of Lausanne) were also conducting a research project on authenticity in a consumption context and were about to begin the development of a scale. Based on a common interest in exploring authenticity and its role in consumption, we decided to combine efforts and examine brand authenticity as a research team. To this collaboration, I contributed my version of the conceptual framework (similar to the one presented herein) and the scale development studies that I had completed up to that point. Together, we developed the theoretical background presenting the three authenticity perspectives (i.e., objectivist, constructivist, and existentialist) and developed study 7 in order to test this theoretical framework in terms of antecedents, consequences, and moderators of brand authenticity. We jointly conducted this study in three countries: Switzerland, Russia, and Canada. I was responsible for the data collection in Canada, and this dissertation reports the data and analysis arising from my work completed under the supervision of Dr. Grohmann (i.e., study 7 of chapter 2). The research collaboration with Drs. Malär, Morhart, Girardin, and Grohmann resulted in an article forthcoming at the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*. This article comprises the scale development studies (with a few modifications that are not reported in this dissertation), the nomological validity study, and an additional experiment not reported in the current dissertation.

Dr. Malär, Dr. Morhart, and Dr. Girardin were not involved in the development, data collection, and analysis that are the foundation of the other studies reported in this dissertation

(i.e., studies 5, 6, and 8 of chapter 2, studies 9, 10, 11 of chapter 3). This dissertation thus reflects my own contributions to a joint project as well as additional contributions that I developed under the guidance of my supervisor.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Authenticity is a central concern in consumers' lives. According to Brown, Kozinets, and Sherry (2003), "the search for authenticity is one of the cornerstones of contemporary marketing" (p. 21). This need for authenticity arises in multiple contexts, from touristic visits of historic sites (Chronis and Hampton 2008; Grayson and Martinec 2004) to consumers' participation in subcultures of consumption (Leigh, Peters, and Shelton 2006; Schouten and McAlexander 1995), as well as in consumers' interpretation of reality shows (Rose and Wood 2005), advertisements (Beverland, Lindgreen, and Vink 2008) and retro brands (Brown et al. 2003). Claims of authenticity resonate with consumers who are looking for what is real and genuine (Fine 2003; Grayson and Martinec 2004; Kates 2004; Rose and Wood 2005). Brand positioning strategies reflect the importance of authenticity, such as Hellmann's slogan "it's time for real", Levi's "Authentic Stone Wash" jeans or Coca-Cola branding around "The real thing".

This desire for authentic products, brands, and experiences arises in a market context characterized by standardization and homogenization (Arnould and Price 2000). With modernity comes a loss of meaning in favour of commercial motives, pushing individuals to look for authenticity in themselves and in their activities (Cohen 1988). Leigh et al. (2006) argue that consumers demand authenticity to cope with the inauthentic nature of contemporary life.

Authenticity has been studied in various disciplines, leading to a multitude of conceptualizations. In the arts, for example, authenticity discussions revolve around a work's inherent properties and original characteristics (Benjamin 1973), whereas debates in philosophy argue for a connection between authenticity and the pursuit of a higher good in one's life (Kernis and Goldman 2006), or for the presentation of one's true self to others (Lindholm 2008). In consumer research, interest in authenticity is recent and perspectives diverge. Some authors focus on consumers' assessments of market offerings, such as the promotion of heritage and history (Beverland 2006) or commitment to place and origin (Beverland et al. 2008). In the context of retro brands, Brown et al. (2003) discuss the importance of the preservation of the brand essence in the revival process of such brands. Social constructivists further argue that authenticity is contingent upon the individual, the marketplace, and the cultural context. Beverland and Farrelly (2010) reveal that identity benefits (i.e., control, connection, and virtue) underlie the assessment of authenticity. Grayson and Martinec (2004) define authenticity as "an

assessment made by a particular evaluator in a particular context" (p. 297), not as a property of the object. Rose and Wood (2005) explain that it is through the active negotiation of paradoxes inherent in authenticity that consumers reach a "self-referential authenticity" (p. 284). Other scholars (e.g., Kates 2004; Leigh et al. 2006) confirm consumers' need for authentic market offerings, regardless of research perspective or form of authenticity that is involved.

Although authenticity has been studied extensively, its characterization suffers from a lack of consensus. As Grayson and Martinec (2004) mention, "despite their frequent use of the term authentic, few consumer researchers have explicitly defined it, and this has allowed the term to be used in different ways to imply different meanings" (p. 297). The primary objective of the second chapter of this dissertation is to operationalize and validate the construct of brand authenticity through (1) a synthesis of existing interdisciplinary research on authenticity, (2) the development and validation of a measurement scale to assess brand authenticity and its main dimensions, and (3) an empirical validation of the scale in terms of nomological validity and its integration into a conceptual framework. First, this chapter presents a literature review on authenticity across disciplines. It is proposed that three perspectives (i.e., objectivist, constructivist, and existentialist) encompass all conceptualizations in terms of how authenticity perceptions are created. Second, in order to define the dimensions of brand authenticity, this chapter presents an exploratory study in which fourteen consumers participated in individual in-depth interviews. Results reveal four dimensions of brand authenticity (longevity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism) consistent with anecdotal evidence from managerial literature (e.g., Gilmore and Pine 2007) and case studies (e.g., Beverland 2006). Seven empirical studies are then conducted to develop and validate the brand authenticity scale. These studies include the development, refinement, and validation of the brand authenticity scale across brands and product categories, as well as the predictive and discriminant validity of the construct and its subdimensions. Third, based on a synthesis of theory and interview findings, 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 antecedents of brand authenticity is presented. Brand authenticity is proposed to be a key mechanism for a brand to establish an emotional bond with consumers. Lastly, a study investigates the role of brand authenticity in understanding consumers' reactions to a scandal.

The objective of the third chapter of this research is to address whether contextual factors increase or decrease the appeal of authentic brands to consumers. Three studies investigate the influence of uncertainty, social exclusion, and induced self-inauthenticity on consumers' reactions towards an authentic brand. Results show that an authentic brand is particularly valued when consumers feel excluded and inauthentic. Results also indicate that specific consumer segments (i.e., consumers with high brand engagement in self-concept and with high personal authenticity) develop increased levels of attachment towards an authentic brand in a situation of exclusion and self-inauthenticity.

This dissertation contributes to a literature characterized by a multiplicity of meanings and a lack of consensus regarding the nature of brand authenticity. It proposes a valid, reliable, and parsimonious scale measuring brand authenticity, providing for the first time an understanding of the structure and the dimensionality of the concept. It further provides a framework for understanding the antecedents, moderators, and consequences of brand authenticity. It sheds light on the motivations underlying the preference for authentic brand, and addresses brand authenticity as a relevant brand characteristic in a choice context.

Chapter 2: Conceptualization, Measurement, and Validation of Brand Authenticity

The objectives of this chapter are threefold. First, it presents a multidisciplinary literature review on authenticity. It is proposed that three perspectives encompass all conceptualizations in terms of how authenticity perceptions are created (i.e., objectivist, constructivist, and existentialist). Second, this chapter defines the dimensions of brand authenticity. It reports a qualitative study as well as seven empirical studies to develop and validate a scale measuring the construct of brand authenticity, which consists of four dimensions (i.e., longevity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism). Third, a study embeds the brand authenticity scale in a conceptual framework and relates it to the three perspectives identified in the literature. It is argued that indexical, iconic, and existential cues—in line with the objectivist, constructivist, and existentialist perspectives—influence the perception of brand authenticity. Findings support the positive influence of brand authenticity on emotional brand attachment, as well as the role of an authentic positioning in understanding the consequences of a brand scandal.

2.1 Literature Review

The term "authentic" is associated with "genuineness", "reality," and "truth" (Grayson and Martinec 2004, p. 297). Synonyms of authentic include genuine, honest, and being exactly what is claimed (Stevenson 2010). Authenticity is a central concern to many domains. The next paragraphs present an overview of authenticity discussions within each domain.

2.1.1 Philosophy

For Aristotle and Socrate, the search for authenticity is linked to the pursuit of a "higher good" in one's life ("an activity in accordance with the best and most complete virtue in a complete life"; Kernis and Goldman 2006, p. 284). Existential philosophers such as Heigedder and Sartre argue that the quest for an authentic living is rooted in a social environment that constantly impedes people from developing their real self (Kernis and Goldman 2006). Sartre proposes that people are authentic when they take full responsibility for their life, choices, and actions. Sartre and other philosophers such as Rousseau emphasize the social barrier to achieving authenticity (Lindholm 2008). Recently, philosophers have questioned the relevance of authenticity (e.g., Baudrillard 1983; Eco 1986). Baudrillard (1983) proposes that signs and

symbols of the real have substituted the real itself, leaving the world as a copy world (i.e., hyperreality). To Baudrillard, authenticity is irrelevant in a hyperreal world.

2.1.2 Arts

In the arts, authenticity lies in a work's inherent properties and original characteristics (Benjamin 1973; Trilling 1972). According to Benjamin (1973), "the authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced" (p. 215). To Benjamin, the most perfect reproduction lacks the aura of the original and is not authentic. Others (e.g., Cornet 1975; Derbaix and Decrop 2006) agree with this view and argue that to be claimed as authentic, a work of art needs to be original and unique. Cornet (1975) further proposes that to be authentic, an object has to be made by a traditional artist for a traditional purpose. Dutton (2003) proposes that nominal authenticity stands for the correct identification of the origin, authorship, or provenance of an object, whereas self-referential authenticity refers to the ability of an object to be a true expression of an individual's or a society's values and beliefs.

2.1.3 Sociology

The dichotomy between reality and subjectivity is central to the understanding of authenticity within the sociological field: "Authenticity is not so much a state of being as it is the objectification of a process of representation, that is, it refers to a set of qualities that people in a particular time and place have come to agree represent an ideal or exemplar" (Vannini and Williams 2009, p. 3). Weigert (2009) highlights the challenges associated with authenticity, as it involves a complex interplay between the self, others, institutions, and cultural codes. According to Cohen (1988), the question is not whether the individual does or does not really have an authentic experience, but rather what endows his experience with authenticity in his own view. In the context of subcultures and social communities, studies show that authenticity concerns are essential in understanding group membership, collective and personality identity, as well as questions of status within a social group (Guilar and Charman 2009; Lewin and Williams 2009).

2.1.4 Psychology

From a psychology perspective, people are considered authentic when their behaviors

reflect their true self (Kernis and Goldman 2006; Sheldon et al. 1997). Harter (1999) defines authenticity as "the ability to act in accord with one's true inner self" (p. 329). Wood et al. (2008) propose that living authentically involves behaving and expressing emotions in such a way that is consistent with the "conscious awareness of physiological states, emotions, beliefs, and cognitions" (p. 386), as well as being true to oneself in most situations. Horney (1977) argues that authenticity is reached when people accept themselves as they are, including their limits, shortcomings, and feelings. To Franzese (2009), what matters is if a person feels authentic. Authenticity is an affective experience, when one feels congruent to one's true self.

2.1.5 Consumer Research

The quest for authenticity is recognized among consumer researchers. The search for authenticity in relation to the self, in line with the psychological and philosophical domains, has attracted considerable interest in the literature. For example, Arnould and Price (2000) propose that the search for an authentic self in contemporary society occurs through authenticating acts and authoritative performances. Consumers engage in authenticating acts by imbuing products, brands, or consumption practices with individual meaning and connecting them with narratives of self-identity (Belk 1988). Authoritative performances are collective displays, such as festivals or family traditions, aimed at reinforcing a sense of collective—and authentic—identity. Beverland and Farrelly (2010) suggest that the search for authenticity is contingent on consumers' goals. They propose that three personal benefits are central to the quest for authenticity (control, connection and virtue) and argue that these benefits relate to a favourable characterisation of one's true self. Rose and Wood (2005) propose that consumers negotiate actively elements of paradoxes inherent in reality television (i.e., the tensions between the subjectively real, the simulation, and the fantastic) to attain a "self-referential" authenticity (Rose and Wood 2005, p. 284). The interpretative studies discussed here describe the search for authenticity as a personal quest. Although this is informative in terms of understanding why consumers are looking for authenticity (e.g. Hall 2010; Kozinets 2002; Thompson et al. 2006), other work looks at how authenticity perceptions are created (i.e., the antecedents of brand authenticity) and what constitute an authentic brand (i.e., the dimensions of brand authenticity). The next sections present this literature in terms of the antecedents and the dimensions of brand authenticity.

2.1.6 The Antecedents of Brand Authenticity

In consumer research, some authors focused on understanding the creation of authenticity perceptions from a consumer perspective. Brown et al. (2003) studied authenticity in the context of retro brands. Their findings indicate that some consumers rely on physical cues (e.g., engine-related characteristics) to evaluate the authenticity of a car, while others form their judgment in a more holistic way (e.g., whether the brand remained loyal to its core). In the luxury wine sector, Beverland (2006) indicates that consumers use both real (e.g., proof of commitment to quality) and stylized versions of the reality (e.g., downplaying of commercial exploitation) to evaluate the authenticity of a brand. Grayson and Martinec (2004) propose two types of authenticity used by consumers in the context of tourist sites. Whereas indexical authenticity distinguishes the original object from its copy, iconic authenticity describes something whose physical manifestation resembles something that is indexically authentic. In the first case, individuals use verifiable characteristics of the object to evaluate its authenticity, and in the second, they focus on impression-based indices. Beverland et al. (2008) also discuss the interplay between indexicality and iconicity for beer advertisements. Results show that consumers use what they believe are objective—and indexical—sources of information (e.g., proof of origin) to form their judgment of authenticity in some cases. In other cases, they rely on abstract—and iconic—elements of the advertisement (e.g., impression of sincerity). Other studies provide insights in terms of the antecedents of authenticity perceptions (e.g., Alexander 2009; Chronis and Hampton 2008; Ewing et al. 2012; Muñoz, Wood, and Solomon 2006; Visconti 2010). It is proposed that three perspectives encompass all notions of authenticity found in the literature, in terms of how authenticity perceptions are created: objectivist, constructivist, and existentialist. The three perspectives provide a unifying framework to understand the antecedents to authenticity regardless of domain (see table 1, p. 19). The next paragraphs explain each perspective, provide a brief summary of their relevance across domains (e.g., philosophy, psychology), and discuss their application in a branding context.

The objectivist perspective refers to authenticity as an objectively measureable quality of an entity and focuses on the verifiable characteristics of an object (Trilling 1972). Discussions in the arts (e.g., Benjamin 1973) adopt this view as only the original object—or work of art—is truly authentic. This view implies that there is an absolute and objective criterion used to measure authenticity (Wang 1999). In consumer research, Brown et al. (2003) show that

consumers use physical characteristics of the brand to judge the preservation of its essence, a central component of brand authenticity. Grayson and Martinec (2004) indicate that consumers use indexical cues (i.e., verifiable cues associated with the experience of fact) to form their impressions of authenticity. In a branding context, this view proposes that brand authenticity perceptions arise from objective information about the brand (or information perceived as objective by consumers, see Grayson and Martinec 2004), such as labels of origin, age, ingredients, or actual performance.

Advocates of a constructive authenticity argue that authenticity perceptions are contingent upon the individual and the context. Authenticity is thus a projection of one's own beliefs, expectations, and perspectives onto an entity, a central view within the sociological domain (Vannini and Williams 2009; Wang 1999). A significant part of consumer research focuses on this form of authenticity (e.g., Beverland and Farrelly 2010; Rose and Wood 2005). Authenticity perceptions can thus emerge in fiction, fake, fantasy, or reproductions, since this view implies that authenticity judgments are based on individuals' evaluations rather than objective cues. From a branding perspective, a brand is considered authentic if it successfully positions itself as an authentic brand in consumers' minds. Hence, authenticity lies in consumers' perceptions of more abstract concepts (Beverland et al. 2008), such as the brand's positioning or brand image, and not only in a brand's objective properties.

The existentialist perspective considers authenticity to be related to the self—and not to an external entity—and involves the notion that being authentic means being true to one's self, a central assumption in philosophy and psychology (Golomb 1995; Kernis and Goldman 2006). Beverland and Farrelly (2010) relate the search for authenticity to the expression of one's authentic self. Leigh et al. (2006) summarize this view: "In the context of existential authenticity, individuals feel they are in touch both with a 'real' world and their 'real' selves." (p. 483). 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 existential perspective, authenticity is not an objective quality inherent in an object, but emerges from an object's ability to serve as an identity-related source. In terms of antecedents, the use of self-referential information about the brand (e.g., the human side of a brand; Rose and Wood 2005) that can support consumers in constructing their identity is of interest.

Table 1

Three Authenticity Perspectives

Perspectives	Field	Authors	Quotes
Objectivist	Arts	Benjamin (1973), Cornet (1975), Derbaix and Decrop (2006), Dutton (2003), Trilling (1972)	"objects of art are what they appear to be or claimed to be, and therefore worth the price that is asked for them" (Trilling 1972, p. 93)
	Marketing	Beverland (2006), Beverland et al. (2008), Brown et al. (2003), Chronis and Hampton (2008), Grayson and Martinec (2004), Leigh et al. (2006)	"Jaco equates physical characteristics, particularly engine-related ones, of the old Beetle with the brand's value and thus its brand essence" (Brown et al. 2003, p. 24-25)
Constructivist	Sociology	Cohen (1988), MacCannell's, (1973), Vannini and Williams (2009), Wang (1999), Weigert (2009)	"authenticity is a socially constructed phenomenon that shifts across time and space" (Vannini and Williams 2009, p. 2-3)
	Marketing	Beverland (2006), Beverland et al. (2008), Brown et al. (2003), Grayson and Martinec (2004)	"authenticity is not an attribute inherent in an object and is better understood as an assessment made by a particular evaluator in a particular context" (Grayson and Martinec 2004, p. 299)
Existentialist	Arts	Derbaix and Decrop (2006), Dutton (2003)	"an object's character as a true expression of an individual's or a society's values and beliefs" (Dutton 2003, p. 263)
	Philosophy	Aristotle, Heigedder, Kierkegaard, Sartre, Socrate (Kernis and Goldman 2006), Rousseau (Lindholm 2008)	"the existential perspective views authenticity as occurring when people freely choose to commit themselves to engage their activities with agency, in a process of self-authoring their way of being." (Kernis and Goldman 2006, p. 292-293)

Psychology	Harter (1999), Horney (1977), Kernis and Goldman (2006), Sheldon et al. (1997), Wood et al. (2008)	"to be true to oneself is to behave in accordance with one's own latent traits." (Sheldon et al., 1997, p. 1380)
Marketing	Arnould and Price (2000), Beverland and Farrelly (2010), Leigh et al. (2006), Rose and Wood (2005)	"an MG owner can participate in authentic personal experiences via his or her automobiles, thereby constructing self-efficacy and legitimacy" (Leigh et al. 2006, p. 484).

2.1.7 The Dimensions of Brand Authenticity

The three perspectives suggest that evidence-based, impression-based, and self-referential cues (associated with the objectivist, constructivist, and existentialist perspective, respectively) are central to the formation of authenticity perceptions. The nomological validity study (study 7) will test this proposition. To this point, the nature of an authentic brand in terms of its main dimensions remains unaddressed. In the marketing literature, some authors identified preliminary dimensions of authenticity as it relates to brands or products. The main findings are summarized in Table 2. Dimensions such as a brand's heritage, continuity, quality, and sincerity are identified as important aspects of authenticity (Beverland et al. 2008; Brown et al. 2003; Fine 2003). In the context of luxury wines, Beverland (2006) reveals the existence of six authenticity dimensions: heritage and pedigree, stylistic consistency, quality commitments, relationship to place, method of production, and downplaying commercial motives. In the food category, Camus (2004) highlights that a product's origin, singularity, naturalness, as well as its ability to express consumers' identity, are central dimensions of its authenticity. Rosica (2003) proposes that the central components of an authentic brand are its unparalleled quality, commitment to consumers, and concern for community. Napoli et al. (2014) define quality commitment, heritage, and sincerity as the main dimensions of brand authenticity. Although insightful, these studies are either context-specific (e.g., Beverland 2006), not connected to brands (e.g. Camus 2004), largely interpretative in nature (e.g., Brown et al. 2003; Fine 2003), or based on anecdotal evidence (e.g., Rosica 2003). They do not establish the main dimensions of brand authenticity from a consumer perspective. The next studies focus on this question.

Table 2

Potential Authenticity Dimensions

Authors	Dimensions
Alexander (2009); Brown et al. (2003)	Preservation of essence, continuity, heritage.
Beverland (2005)	Heritage and pedigree, stylistic consistency, quality commitments, relationship to place, method of production, and downplaying commercial motives.
Beverland and Farrelly (2010); Gilmore and Pine (2007)	Purity of motive, reflection of one's identity.
Boyle (2004)	Naturalness, simplicity, honesty.
Camus (2004)	Origin, singularity, naturalness, self-expression.
Eggers et al. (2012)	Consistency, customer orientation, congruency.
Fine (2003)	Sincerity, innocence, originality.
Holt (2002); Kozinets (2002)	Commercial disinterest.
Napoli et al. (2014)	Heritage, sincerity, quality commitment.

2.2 Qualitative Study

The objectives of the qualitative study are to examine the concept of brand authenticity from a consumer perspective and identify its dimensions. This study consists of individual interviews in which four dimensions of brand authenticity are identified.

2.2.1 Method

Sample and procedures. Fourteen consumers of different age, education, and income profiles participated in the study. Table 3 presents participants' profiles. To facilitate elaboration on the concept of brand authenticity, prior to the interview, participants were asked to think about what is an authentic brand to them and to bring representations of five to seven authentic brands to the interview, in the format of their choice. Participants could bring names, logos, pictures, and objects to illustrate their representation of authentic brands. This process facilitated articulation of unconscious meanings (e.g., Belk, Ger, and Askegaard 2003; Zaltman 1997).

Table 3

Participants Details

Informant	Age	Family status	Educational background	Profession
Genevieve	39	Married	Undergraduate	Human resources counselor
Audrey	27	Single	Postgraduate	Lawyer
Marc	29	Single	Collegial	Writer
Denis	47	Married	Undergraduate	Police detective
Jean-Philippe T.	36	Single	High school	Librarian
Alexandre	33	Single	Collegial	Electrician
Rodrigue	69	Married	High school	Retiree
Denise	64	Married	High school	Retiree
Michele	55	Divorced	Professional	Assistant accountant
Jean-Philippe B.	42	Married	Undergraduate	Manager
Yvette	71	Widowed	Undergraduate	Retiree
Ginette	58	Married	Professional	Secretary
Pierre	64	Married	Professional	Retiree
Jean-Pierre	62	Married	High school	Truck driver

Interview structure. After a preliminary discussion of brand authenticity without reference to brands, participants were asked to show the image, logo, or object representing the brands and to talk about each brand, one at a time, in relation to authenticity. Clarification and elaboration probes were used extensively to understand the ideas and concepts brought up by participants. Interviews were conducted in participants' homes, lasted 75 minutes on average and

were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Appendix 1 illustrates the structure of the interviews.

Data analysis. Interviews were coded in iterative steps in order to group similar ideas into common concepts, starting with in-vivo codes (Strauss 1987), that is the original words used by the participants, and ending with higher-order concepts and overarching dimensions. Codes were compared across interviews and emerging patterns were identified. A recursive and constant comparison process guided the data analysis (Glaser and Strauss 1967; McCracken 1988). Interview data was further interpreted in light of the literature. This process yielded the following four dimensions: longevity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism.

2.2.2 Results

Longevity. Authentic brands have been in the market for a long time; they are long-lasting brands. When asked about which characteristics are most important in making a brand an authentic one, the majority of participants referred to longevity and cited examples such as Heinz and Coca-Cola. Audrey confirms: "those brands have all existed for many years, they have been established for a long time. A brand that would arrive in the market suddenly, it's not authentic, I think." 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 and it lasted throughout the years. Thus, the longevity dimension of perceived brand authenticity reflects the brand's timelessness, historicity, and its ability to transcend trends. In this respect, the dimension resembles the concept of heritage and pedigree suggested by Beverland (2006).

Credibility. Consumers associate authentic brands with a high level of credibility—the willingness and ability of brands to deliver on their promises (Erdem and Swait 2004). Participants stressed the importance for authentic brands to deliver what they say they will and to be trustworthy. For Jean-Pierre, Wal-Mart is authentic, because the brand delivers what it promises: the lowest price, every time. McDonald's is authentic, according to Geneviève, for the same reason (i.e., offering a guaranteed consumption experience). 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. I can trust this brand." Based on these findings,

credibility is conceptualized 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.

Integrity. Participants' authenticity perceptions further involve a sense of integrity, virtue related to the intentions of the brand, as well as in the values it communicates. Several participants mentioned Apple, which is perceived as an upright brand acting according to deeply held values, passion, and loyalty. Other participants' comments relate to a brand's integrity that manifests when a brand "acts correctly, ethically", "has good values," or "stands for something". 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 values […] we live to help each other." Thus, the integrity dimension signifies the moral purity of the brand (i.e., its adherence to good values and sincere care about the consumer). This dimension is close to the aspect of commercial disinterestedness of authentic brands put forward by Holt (2002). Further, it parallels to Gilmore and Pine's (2007) natural authenticity genres as well as to the quality of virtuousness described by Beverland and Farrelly (2010).

Symbolism. Authentic brands are highly symbolic and serve as a resource for identity construction. For many participants, authentic brands are part of their identity and help them reinforce who they are. For Denis, authentic brands are related to many facets of his self and his life story: "Let's now talk about John Deere. This green (referring to the logo), it's the John Deere green... I am a rural person. I grew up in a construction company, 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... I learned how to drive an excavator before driving a car. For me, it's a toy. So if I had to buy a lawnmower for example, it would be a John Deere, the renowned brand. And I like the logo. When I go back to the West, many people display the John Deere logo and plate in front of their trucks. People identify with this product. I do too. It's my family, the way I was raised." Based on these considerations, symbolism is conceptualized as the brand's potential to service as a resource for identity construction by providing self-referential cues such as values, roles, and relationships. 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 has similarities to the connection benefit of authentic brands (Beverland and Farrelly 2010).

2.2.3 Discussion

This study suggests four dimensions of authentic brands: longevity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism. Results further reveal initial insights in terms of the relationship between the dimensions and the three perspectives (i.e., objectivist, constructivist, and existentialist) regarding how perceptions are created. First, consumers ascribe authenticity using objective cues, one example being a brand's founding date (e.g., Alexandre: Coca-Cola in 1916; Denis: Ford Mustang in 1964), a cue that relates to the longevity dimension. Second, although consumers use factual properties of a brand to infer authenticity, results suggest that brand authenticity perceptions also lie in consumers' subjective construction of the brand's essence as communicated through its marketing cues. Denis talks about Remington firearms: "I like a product that conveys a form of nobleness, something of an earlier date. This advertisement, although it is a recent one […] they were able to bring the traditional aspect, with the ducks, the colors." Third, the existentialist perspective also emerged from participants' discussion. Many participants perceived authenticity in a brand for identity motivations. This is what happened for Denis and brands such as John Deere (a brand that connects him with his family and his childhood), Penaten cream (a brand that reflects his role as a father), or Remington (a brand that represents his passion for hunting). This provides initial insights in terms of the relation between indexical and iconic cues highlighted in the literature (Beverland et al. 2008; Grayson and Martinec 2004). Results suggest that the four brand authenticity dimensions are evaluated through a complex perceptual process involving evidence-based, impression-based, and self-referential cues. This proposition will be tested further in the nomological study (study 7). The next studies focus on the brand authenticity dimensions through scale development procedures.

2.3 Scale Construction and Validation

Although the qualitative study provides insights regarding the dimensions of brand authenticity, the operationalization and validation of these dimensions across different brands, product categories, and groups of consumers requires additional studies. The purpose of the following seven studies is to develop and validate a measure of brand authenticity. Study 1 focuses on item generation and content validity. Studies 2a, 2b, and 3 test and refine the scale using different brands and consumers, and result in a second-order four-dimensional scale (longevity, credibility, integrity, symbolism) with 17 items. Study 4 focuses on discriminant

validity between the overall construct of brand authenticity as well as its single dimensions and related constructs. Studies 5 and 6 investigate predictive validity. Study 7 proposes an integrative framework of brand authenticity and empirically tests its nomological validity. Study 8 builds on the previous results and looks at the role of brand authenticity when a scandal occurs.

2.3.1 Study 1: Item Generation and Content Validity

Item generation. An initial set of items was developed in order to capture the concept of brand authenticity with regard to each dimension identified in the interview phase. Items related to each dimension (longevity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism) were developed using the content generated in the interviews and were enriched using previous literature on authenticity, in line with established procedures (e.g., Grohmann 2009). The initial set comprised 194 statements (e.g., "This is a timeless brand," anchored strongly disagree/strongly agree).

Content validity. Four experts were asked to judge the items. They were informed that the purpose of the research was to develop a measure of brand authenticity, and that a list of items that are potential indicators of brand authenticity had been developed. The experts' task was to indicate how representative these items are of authenticity as it relates to brands. 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 experts or more rated the item as fair. This process resulted in the removal of 119 items and a final list of 75 items.

2.3.2 Study 2a: Initial Administration

Sample, procedures and measures. Two hundred and fifty-four adults from a North American online consumer panel (52% female: average age: 48.8 years) participated in the first study. Participants rated one of five brands (Coca-Cola, Harley-Davidson, McDonald's, Starbucks, Levi's) on each of the 75 items. These brands were selected considering expected variations with regards to brand authenticity, with Coca-Cola and Harley-Davidson being perceived as more authentic brands compared to McDonald's and Starbucks, based on the interviews and literature (Beverland and Farrelly 2010; Thompson and Arsel 2004). Participants indicated their level of agreement with each item. Those who were very 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, α = .93) were removed from the sample prior to analysis, resulting in a final sample size of 246.

Exploratory factor analysis. In a principal component exploratory factor analysis, a four-factor solution emerged. The pattern matrix showed a number of items with loadings below .4 on their main dimension. These items, as well as items with high cross-loadings (i.e., greater than .3) were eliminated from the item set. A set of 35 items remained for further analysis.

Confirmatory factor analysis. A four-factor confirmatory factor analysis (CFA; AMOS 20) with items related to longevity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism loading on their respective dimension resulted in acceptable fit statistics (Bollen 1989): normed fit index (NFI) = .88, nonnormed fit index (NNFI) = .91, comparative fit index (CFI) = .92, goodness-of-fit index (GFI) = .76, adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) = .89, root mean square residual (RMR) = .11, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = .05, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .08, χ^2 (554) = 1487.95, p < .001.

Model refinement and model comparisons. The four-factor model was refined by removing items based on modification indices (> 3.84; Bagozzi and Yi 1998). Items were removed one at a time. To improve the model further, items with the lowest item-to-total correlations were removed and chi-square results were examined. A chi-square difference test was conducted between the two models; the reduced model was kept if the chi-square statistic improved significantly and if the adjusted GFI increased (Voss, Spangenberg, and Grohmann 2003). The final model consisted of a four-factor model with 17 items. This model indicated good fit: NFI = .96, NNFI = .98, CFI = .98, GFI = .91, AGFI = .88, RMR = .07, SRMR = .03, RMSEA = .06. The chi-square value was significant (χ^2 (113) = 214.14, p < .001) but did not exceed three times its degrees of freedom (Bollen 1989). A series of confirmatory factor models was evaluated to find the best representation of the data. The models included: (a) a one-factor model in which all 17 items loaded on a single factor; (b) a two-factor uncorrelated model in which the items related to credibility, symbolism and integrity were forced to load on one factor and the items related to longevity composed the other factor; (c) a two-factor correlated model with the same structure as the two-factor uncorrelated model; (d) a four-factor uncorrelated in which the items related to longevity, credibility, integrity and symbolism loaded on their respective factors; (e) a four-factor correlated model with the same structure as the four-factor uncorrelated; and (f) a four-factor model with one second-order factor. Although model (e)

provided best results, model (f) was preferred due to the theoretical structure of the brand authenticity construct (Iacobucci 2010): NFI = .95, NNFI = .97, CFI = .97, GFI = .89, AGFI = .85, RMR = .10, SRMR = .04, RMSEA = .07, χ^2 (116) = 258.03, $p < .001$. Average variance extracted (AVE) was greater than .50 for each dimension ($AVE_{longevity}$ = .80, $AVE_{credibility}$ = .74, $AVE_{integrity}$ = .77, $AVE_{symbolism}$ = .78), indicating that the concepts are unidimensional (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Composite reliabilities and coefficient alpha for each dimension were satisfactory. Table 4 summarizes scale characteristics.

Table 4

Scale Characteristics: Studies 2a, 2b, 3, and 4

Factors and Items	Study 2a					Study 2b					Study 3					Study 4				
	Factor Loadings	Corrected Item-to-Total Correlation	Coefficient Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Factor Loadings	Corrected Item-to-Total Correlation	Coefficient Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Factor Loadings	Corrected Item-to-Total Correlation	Coefficient Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Factor Loadings	Corrected Item-to-Total Correlation	Coefficient Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Longevity	.76		.96	.95	.8	.92		.96	.94	.75	.78		.94	.94	.76	.76		.94	.94	.76
A longstanding brand	.9	.88				.83	.85				.84	.82				.87	.85			
A brand with a history	.85	.83				.79	.8				.84	.82				.83	.81			
A timeless brand	.91	.88				.91	.86				.87	.83				.86	.83			
A brand that survives times	.9	.88				.86	.8				.92	.89				.9	.87			
A brand that survives trends	.92	.89				.93	.87				.89	.84				.89	.85			
Credibility	.97		.92	.92	.74	.99		.94	.94	.8	.97		.92	.92	.74	.98		.94	.92	.75
A brand that will not betray you	.87	.81				.95	.91				.87	.81				.89	.84			
A brand that accomplishes its value promise	.9	.84				.92	.87				.87	.83				.82	.82			
A brand that does not hide anything	.73	.72				.75	.74				.81	.79				.87	.79			
An honest brand	.93	.87				.93	.9				.89	.83				.89	.85			
Integrity	.99		.93	.93	.77	.99		.95	.95	.82	.99		.94	.94	.79	.99		.92	.93	.76
A brand that gives back to its consumers	.83	.8				.91	.87				.87	.83				.82	.78			
A brand with moral principles	.89	.85				.89	.85				.9	.87				.86	.83			
A brand true to a set of moral values	.89	.85				.91	.88				.88	.83				.91	.86			
A brand that cares about its consumers	.89	.83				.91	.88				.9	.86				.89	.82			
Symbolism	.95		.93	.93	.78	.96		.96	.96	.86	.92		.95	.93	.77	.93		.93	.93	.77
A brand that adds meaning to people's lives	.88	.85				.92	.9				.88	.86				.86	.84			
A brand that reflects important values people care about	.9	.83				.93	.89				.93	.89				.9	.83			
A brand that connects people with their real selves	.87	.84				.93	.92				.9	.86				.85	.83			
A brand that connects people with what is really important	.88	.86				.94	.92				.91	.89				.89	.85			

Discriminant validity between brand authenticity dimensions. Confidence interval around the correlation between each pair of dimensions did not include $|\pm1|$, supporting discriminant validity (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). Average variance extracted from each dimension was compared with the squared correlation between this dimension and each other dimension taken separately (Fornell and Larcker 1981). This comparison did not support discriminant validity between credibility and integrity ($AVE_{credibility}$ (.74) $< r^2$ (.94); $AVE_{integrity}$ (.77) $< r^2$ (.94)), between credibility and symbolism ($AVE_{credibility}$ (.74) $< r^2$ (.82); $AVE_{symbolism}$ (.78) $< r^2$ (.82)) and between symbolism and integrity ($AVE_{symbolism}$ (.78) $< r^2$ (.93); $AVE_{integrity}$ (.77) $< r^2$ (.93)). A four-factor correlated model was compared to a constrained model in which the covariance between two dimensions was fixed to one, resulting in six different comparisons. The constrained models reduced fit significantly in each case, supporting discriminant validity between the dimensions (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). The four-factor solution was compared to a model in which the items related to brand symbolism, credibility and integrity loaded on one factor (i.e., covariances between these factors was set to one). The constrained model decreased model fit ($\chi^2 \Delta$ (4) $= 714$, $p < .001$; $AGFI_{four\ factor\ model} = .72$, $AGFI_{two\ factor\ model} = .69$), supporting discriminant validity.

Predictive validity of the scale. The five brands used in this study were chosen considering their expected variations in brand authenticity. Subsequent analysis using the brand authenticity scale confirmed the expected results in terms of perceived authenticity for the authentic (Coca-Cola, Harley-Davidson and Levi's) versus the non-authentic brands (McDonald's and Starbucks) (longevity: $Mean_{authentic} = 6.12$, $Mean_{non-authentic} = 5.28$, $t(252) = 5.11$, $p < .001$, credibility: $Mean_{authentic} = 5.33$, $Mean_{non-authentic} = 4.53$, $t(252) = 4.43$, $p < .001$), integrity: $Mean_{authentic} = 5.06$, $Mean_{non-authentic} = 4.33$, $t(252) = 3.94$, $p < .001$, symbolism: $Mean_{authentic} = 4.93$, $Mean_{non-authentic} = 4.01$, $t(252) = 4.69$, $p < .001$). This provided initial insights regarding the predictive validity of the scale.

2.3.3 Study 2b: Validation Sample

Sample, procedures and measures. In line with the procedure of Thomson, MacInnis and Park (2005, p. 70), 71 adults from a North American consumer panel (54% female, average age: 49.2 years) were asked to think about a brand that they considered authentic and rated the brand on the brand authenticity scale (e.g., "This brand connects people with what is really important,"

anchored strongly disagree/strongly agree).

Confirmatory factor analysis. Results of the validation sample indicated acceptable fit for the four-factor model with one second-order factor: NFI = .86, NNFI = .91, CFI = .92, GFI = .73, AGFI = .65, RMR = .15, SRMR = .04, RMSEA = .13. The chi-square value was significant (χ^2 (116) = 247.95, $p < .001$) but did not exceed three times its degrees of freedom. Psychometric properties of the scale were satisfactory and are reported in Table 4.

2.3.4 Study 3: Second Administration

Sample, procedures and measures. The objective of this study was to test the psychometric properties with a modified set of brands. Four hundred and sixty-three adults from a Canadian online panel (52% female, average age: 48.3 years) participated in this study. Participants rated one of 18 brands (Apple, Microsoft, Canadian Tire, Wal-Mart, Tim Hortons, Starbucks, Lululemon, Nike, Coca-Cola, Red Bull, Molson, Budweiser, Levi's, Guess, Toyota, Ford, Dove, Axe) on the 17-item brand authenticity scale. Data of participants who were totally unfamiliar with the brand was removed prior to analysis.

Confirmatory factor analysis. Results indicated good fit for the four-factor model with one second-order factor: NFI = .96, NNFI = .97, CFI = .98, GFI = .92, AGFI = .89, RMR = .10, SRMR =.04, RMSEA = .06, χ^2 (116) = 341.70, $p < .001$. Average variance extracted (AVE) was greater than .50 for each dimension ($AVE_{longevity}$ = .76, $AVE_{credibility}$ = .74, $AVE_{integrity}$ = .79, $AVE_{symbolism}$ = .77). Composite reliabilities and coefficient alpha were satisfactory for each dimension (see Table 4).

Predictive validity. Three pairs of brands in the same category were chosen because they were expected to represent brands that are high and low on authenticity (beverages: Coca-Cola (high) and Red Bull (low), coffee: Tim Hortons (high) and Starbucks (low), jeans: Levi's (high) and Guess (low)). Mean comparisons on each dimension supported the variations in authenticity (Coffee: longevity: $M_{TimHortons}$ = 5.70, $M_{Starbucks}$ = 4.68, $t(49)$ = 2.97, $p < .05$, credibility: $M_{TimHortons}$ = 5.14, $M_{Starbucks}$ = 4.44, $t(49)$ = 1.98, $p = .05$, symbolism: $M_{TimHortons}$ = 4.90, $M_{Starbucks}$ = 3.72, $t(49)$ = 2.75, $p < .05$, integrity: $M_{TimHortons}$ = 5.23, $M_{Starbucks}$ = 4.15, $t(49)$ = 2.91, $p < .05$ / Beverages: longevity: $M_{Coca-Cola}$ = 5.72, $M_{RedBull}$ = 3.75, $t(51)$ = -5.07, $p < .001$, credibility: $M_{Coca-Cola}$ = 4.37, $M_{RedBull}$ = 3.43, $t(51)$ = -2.32, $p < .05$, symbolism: $M_{Coca-Cola}$ = 3.71, $M_{RedBull}$ = 2.55, $t(51)$ = -2.589, $p < .05$, integrity: $M_{Coca-Cola}$ = 4.18, $M_{RedBull}$ = 2.81, $t(51)$ = 3.15, $p < .05$ / Jeans:

longevity: $M_{Levi's} = 6.13$, $M_{Guess} = 4.49$, $t(51) = 5.37$, $p < .001$, credibility: $M_{Levi's} = 5.04$, $M_{Guess} = 4.10$, $t(51) = 2.75$, $p < .05$, symbolism: $M_{Levi's} = 4.61$, $M_{Guess} = 3.88$, $t(51) = 1.80$, $p < .10$, integrity: $M_{Levi's} = 4.95$, $M_{Guess} = 4.11$, $t(51) = 2.51$, $p < .05$). This provides support for predictive validity in three product categories (beverages, coffee and jeans).

2.3.5 Study 4: Discriminant Validity

Sample, procedures and measures. Six hundred adults from a Canadian online panel (57% female, average age: 40.3 years) participated in an online study. Participants rated one of twenty brands selected to cover different product and service categories and to generate variations in brand authenticity (Levi's, L'Oréal, Coca Cola, Red Bull, Nespresso, Microsoft, Apple, Swatch, Victorinox, IBM, McDonald's, Burger King, Starbucks, United Airlines, J.P. Morgan, Ikea, The Body Shop, H&M, Zara, Amazon) on the following scales: brand authenticity (17-item scale), brand trust (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001), brand trustworthiness (Erdem and Swait 2004), brand heritage (Wiedmann et al. 2011), partner quality (Fournier 1998), integrity (Venable et al. 2005), brand attachment (Park et al. 2010), brand attitude (Nan and Heo 2007) and brand quality (Frazier and Lassar 1996). Participants who were totally unfamiliar with the brand were eliminated. Appendix 3 presents the measures used in this study.

Confirmatory factor analysis. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of a second-order factor model, with brand authenticity as the higher-order factor and longevity, credibility, integrity and symbolism as the four first-order dimensions, indicated good fit: NFI = .96, NNFI = .96, CFI = .97, GFI = .91, RMR = .08, SRMR = .03, RMSEA = .07, $\chi^2 (116) = 478.26$, $p < .001$. Average variance extracted (AVE) was greater than .50 for each dimension ($AVE_{longevity} = .76$, $AVE_{credibility} = .75$, $AVE_{integrity} = .76$, $AVE_{symbolism} = .77$). Composite reliabilities and coefficient alpha for each dimension were satisfactory (see Table 4).

Discriminant validity of the dimension longevity. Discriminant validity between longevity and brand heritage (Wiedmann et al. 2011) was tested. The confidence interval around the correlation between longevity and brand heritage did not include $|\pm 1|$, supporting discriminant validity. Average variance extracted was compared with the squared correlation between longevity and brand heritage. This comparison supported discriminant validity: $AVE_{longevity}$ (.76) $> r^2$ (.63) and $AVE_{heritage}$ (.67) $> r^2$ (.63). Model comparisons were further conducted in which the covariance between longevity and brand heritage was constrained to 1. The constrained model

reduced fit significantly, supporting discriminant validity between longevity and brand heritage ($\chi^2 \Delta (1) = 211.55$, $p < .001$).

Discriminant validity of the dimension credibility. Discriminant validity between credibility and two related constructs was tested: brand trust ($\alpha = .91$; Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001) and brand trustworthiness (Erdem and Swait 2004). The confidence interval around the correlation between brand credibility and each construct did not include $|\pm1|$, supporting discriminant validity (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). Average variance extracted was compared with the squared correlation between each pair of construct. This comparison did not provide support for discriminant validity for the two comparisons: credibility and brand trust ($AVE_{credibility} (.75) < r^2 (.89)$; $AVE_{trust} (.74) < r^2 (.89)$) and credibility and brand trustworthiness ($AVE_{credibility} (.75) < r^2 (.83)$; $AVE_{trustworthiness} (.82) < r^2 (.83)$). Model comparisons were further conducted in which the covariance between brand credibility and each construct taken separately was constrained to 1. The constrained models reduced fit significantly in each case, supporting discriminant validity (brand trust: $\chi^2 \Delta (1) = 100.73$, $p < .001$, brand trustworthiness: $\chi^2 \Delta (1) = 235.14$, $p < .001$). Overall, there is thus some evidence for discriminant validity at the credibility dimension level.

Discriminant validity of the dimension integrity. Discriminant validity between integrity and two related constructs was tested: partner quality (Fournier 1998) and integrity dimension of brand personality (Venable et al. 2005). The confidence interval around the correlation between integrity and each construct did not include $|\pm1|$, supporting discriminant validity (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). Average variance extracted was compared with the squared correlation between each pair of construct. This comparison confirmed discriminant validity between integrity and partner quality ($AVE_{integrity} (.76) > r^2 (.69)$; $AVE_{partnerquality} (.79) > r^2 (.69)$) and between integrity and integrity dimension of brand personality ($AVE_{integrity} (.76) > r^2 (.68)$; $AVE_{integrityBP} (.76) > r^2 (.68)$). Model comparisons were further conducted in which the covariance between integrity and each construct separately was constrained to 1. The constrained models reduced fit significantly, supporting discriminant validity (integrity: $\chi^2 \Delta (1) = 597.88$, $p < .001$, partner quality: $\chi^2 \Delta (1) = 518.29$, $p < .001$).

Discriminant validity of the dimension symbolism. Discriminant validity between symbolism and brand attachment (Park et al. 2010) was tested. Confidence interval around the correlation between symbolism and brand attachment did not include $|\pm1|$, supporting

discriminant validity (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). Average variance extracted was compared with the squared correlation between symbolism and brand attachment. This comparison supported discriminant validity: $AVE_{symbolism}$ (.77) > r^2 (.58) and $AVE_{attachment}$ (.87) > r^2 (.58). Model comparisons were conducted in which the covariance between symbolism and brand attachment was constrained to 1. The constrained model reduced fit significantly, supporting discriminant validity between symbolism and brand attachment ($\chi^2 \Delta$ (1) = 419.63, $p < .001$).

Discriminant validity between brand authenticity dimensions. Discriminant validity between each dimension (longevity, credibility, integrity, symbolism) was assessed by computing the confidence interval around the correlation between each pair of dimensions. These confidence intervals did not include $|\pm 1|$, supporting discriminant validity (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). Average variance extracted from each dimension was compared with the squared correlation between this dimension and each other dimension taken separately. This comparison did not support discriminant validity between credibility and integrity ($AVE_{credibility}$ (.75) < r^2 (.96); $AVE_{integrity}$ (.76) < r^2(.96)), between credibility and symbolism ($AVE_{credibility}$ (.75) < r^2(.79); $AVE_{symbolism}$ (.77) < r^2(.79)) and between symbolism and integrity ($AVE_{symbolism}$ (.77) < r^2(.89); $AVE_{integrity}$ (.76) < r^2(.89)). A four-factor correlated model was compared to a constrained model in which the covariance between two dimensions was fixed to one, resulting in six different comparisons. The constrained models reduced fit significantly in each case, supporting discriminant validity between the dimensions (longevity and credibility: $\chi^2 \Delta$ (1) = 714.00, $p < .001$; longevity and integrity: $\chi^2 \Delta$ (1) = 792.14, $p < .001$; longevity and symbolism: $\chi^2 \Delta$ (1) = 917.83, $p < .001$; credibility and integrity: $\chi^2 \Delta$ (1) = 11.09, $p < .001$; credibility and symbolism: $\chi^2 \Delta$ (1) = 238.65, $p < .001$; integrity and symbolism: $\chi^2 \Delta$ (1) = 73.48, $p < .001$).

Overall comparison of PBA with related constructs. In an overall test of discriminant validity, brand attitude (Nan and Heo 2007), brand trustworthiness (Erdem and Swait 2004), and brand quality (Frazier and Lassar 1996) were each tested against the second-order factor model of brand authenticity. Confidence intervals around the correlations between the pairs of constructs did not include $|\pm 1|$, supporting discriminant validity. Model comparisons revealed that constraining the covariance between the pairs of constructs to 1 reduced fit significantly (brand attitude: $\chi^2 \Delta$ (1) = 640.89, $p < .001$; brand trustworthiness: $\chi^2 \Delta$ (1) = 443.32, $p < .001$; brand quality: $\chi^2 \Delta$ (1) = 373.26, $p < .001$). A comparison of average variance extracted with the squared correlation between each pair of constructs confirmed discriminant validity between

brand authenticity and brand attitude (AVE_{BA} (.86) > r^2 (.77); $AVE_{attitude}$ (.90) > r^2 (.77)), between brand authenticity and brand trustworthiness (AVE_{BA} (.86) > r^2 (.80); $AVE_{trustworthiness}$ (.82) > r^2 (.80), as well as between brand authenticity and brand quality (AVE_{BA} (.86) > r^2 (.73); $AVE_{quality}$ (.79) > r^2 (.73).

2.3.6 Scale Development Summary

The 17-item brand authenticity scale consistently and reliably captures four dimensions of brand authenticity (longevity, credibility, integrity and symbolism). Moreover, the scale measures consumers' overall perception of a brand's authenticity in terms of a single higher-order factor. The scale is reliable across different brands and consumers, and is distinct from conceptually related scales (as are most of its sub-dimensions). Results could not fully establish discriminant validity between three dimensions of the scale (credibility, integrity, and symbolism) on all of the discriminant validity criteria. However, considering the results of the qualitative study (i.e., participants referred to different brand's attributes when talking about each dimension), as well as support from the literature (i.e., credibility (Erdem and Swait 2004), integrity (Venable et al. 2005), and symbolism (Belk 1988) are distinct concepts), a four-factor second-order scale seems to accurately represent brand authenticity. Further, discriminant validity between the credibility dimension and brand trust and brand trustworthiness was not established for all of the discriminant validity criteria. However, as these concepts all capture the dependability and the ability of a brand to deliver on its promise (e.g., brand trust: "I rely on this brand", brand trustworthiness: "This brand delivers what it promises", credibility: "A brand that will not betray you"), credibility may not be totally distinct from brand trust and brand trustworthiness. The next studies (study 5 and 6) examine the predictive validity of the scale.

2.3.7 Study 5: Predictive Validity

The main objective of the study is to test the ability of the scale to reflect differences in brand authenticity that are communicated through an advertisement.

Sample, procedure and stimuli. Ninety-three students (56.5% female, average age: 25.2 years) participated in an online study in exchange for course credit. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (authentic advertisement, control advertisement). Each participant viewed an advertisement from a fictitious jeans brand ("Foley Jeans") and then

expressed their opinion about the advertised brand. To create an overall image of authenticity, in terms of the four main dimensions (longevity, credibility, integrity, symbolism), the authentic advertisement presented the following sentences: "We offer you high quality jeans that reflect your personality", "We stand behind our product and live up to our principles" and "Since 1950". The authentic advertisement was compared to a control advertisement, which presented only the brand name and no other information. Appendix 4 presents the two advertisements.

Measures. Authenticity served as the main dependent variable and was measured with the 17-item scale. Participants indicated their opinion regarding the relevance, believability, and appeal of the ads (see Appendix 5). To explore the role of consumer skepticism in relation to authenticity (Brown et al. 2003), participants answered the skepticism towards advertising scale (Obermiller and Spangenberg 1998), as well as an open question regarding the claims presented in the advertisement ("Are there some specific claims in the advertisement that you believed were untrue?"). Appendix 5 presents the measures and items used for this study.

Control variables. Results confirm that the ads did not differ in terms of relevance, believability, and appeal (relevance: $Mean_{authentic} = 4.58$, $Mean_{control} = 4.40$, $t(91) = .57$, $p = .57$, believability: $Mean_{authentic} = 4.24$, $Mean_{control} = 4.15$, $t(91) = .30$, $p = .77$, appeal: $Mean_{authentic} = 3.69$, $Mean_{control} = 3.31$, $t(91) = .97$, $p = .33$).

Results. The objective of this study is to test the impact of the advertisement on overall brand authenticity perceptions. A structural model was developed, in which the variable advertisement (0 = control, 1 = authentic) served as the antecedent to brand authenticity (second-order factor). Results indicate satisfactory fit: NFI = .82, NNFI = .90, CFI = .91, GFI = .79, RMR = .14, SRMR = .06, RMSEA = .09, χ^2 (132) = 228.249, $p < .001$. The relation between advertisement and brand authenticity was significant ($\gamma = .23$, $p < .05$), providing initial insights regarding the ability of the advertisement positioned around authenticity to induce a change in overall brand authenticity perceptions. To gain insights regarding the impact on brand authenticity at the dimension level, mean comparisons were performed for each brand authenticity dimension. Results revealed that the brand authenticity scale captured variations (in some cases marginally) for each dimension (longevity: $Mean_{authentic} = 4.62$, $Mean_{control} = 3.68$, $t(91) = 3.40$, $p < .001$, credibility: $Mean_{authentic} = 4.09$, $Mean_{control} = 3.50$, $t(91) = 2.36$, $p < .05$, integrity: $Mean_{authentic} = 4.06$, $Mean_{control} = 3.58$, $t(91) = 1.80$, $p = .08$, symbolism: $Mean_{authentic} = 3.81$, $Mean_{control} = 3.27$, $t(91) = 1.84$, $p = .08$). Results further show that highly skeptical

consumers doubt authenticity claims to a greater extent than less skeptical consumers (Proportion of "claims found to be untrue: Yes": low skepticism = 21.7%, high skepticism = 47.0%, χ^2 (1) = 6.9, $p < .01$). Claims related to integrity and symbolism were associated with high levels of doubt (e.g., participants' answers such as "Live up to principles; the purpose of a company is to make money" and "Reflection of personality; these are just jeans...").

Discussion. These results show that the brand authenticity scale reflects variations in brand authenticity in response to an advertisement at a global level and to some extent at a dimension level, supporting predictive validity. The advertisement presenting an overall image of authenticity was perceived as being more authentic globally and for each dimension taken separately (with differences reaching marginal significance for integrity and symbolism). Results further highlight that consumers are active interpreters of authenticity cues, in line with previous studies (e.g., Beverland et al. 2008; Brown et al. 2003). This supports the proposition that building an authentic image through advertising remains challenging (Gilmore and Pine 2007). Study 7 will explore further the role of consumer skepticism.

2.3.8 Study 6: Predictive Validity

Study 6 further extends the predictive validity of the brand authenticity scale in an advertising context. It examines the role of a quest for profits in influencing brand authenticity perceptions and predicts a negative impact of such an avowal on brand authenticity.

Theoretical background. In general, research supports that objects tainted by market interests or motivated by commercial considerations, lack authenticity (e.g., Beverland 2006; Beverland et al. 2008; Thompson and Arsel 2004). Kozinets (2002), for example, highlights the opposition between what is authentic, real, and genuine, and what is associated with commerce, that is impersonal transactions and egoistic motives. Holt (2002) proposes that brands too commercial or too effective at exploiting their value risk being perceived as inauthentic. Brands aiming to be perceived as authentic while openly pursuing commercial objectives face a major challenge: Will the brand's commercial objectives pose a threat to authenticity perceptions? The current study tests the impact of the avowal of a quest for profits on brand authenticity perceptions. Although honesty in terms of a firm's intentions has been related to positive consumer reactions (Forehand and Grier 2003), considering the essence of authenticity, and its

opposition to commercial motives, it is expected that a quest for profits decreases authenticity perceptions.

H1: The presence of a quest for profits (compared to the absence) relates negatively to brand authenticity perceptions.

Sample, procedure and stimuli. One hundred and forty-three students (51.9% female, average age: 23.4 years) participated in an online study in exchange for course credit. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions in a one-factor (profit quest: present, absent) between-participants design. Each participant viewed an advertisement from a fictitious winery (a relevant product category for the study of authenticity; Beverland 2006), and expressed their opinion about the advertised wine brand. In order to express an overall image of authenticity, in terms of the four main dimensions, the advertisement presented sentences such as "Pyra Wines is renowned for consistent, exceptional quality wines, vintage after vintage, since 1907" and "We are motivated by a genuine passion for wine; this is what drives us every day to do the best". Visual elements of the advertisement were used to support an authentic positioning (e.g., natural colors). Profit quest was made salient by adding a sentence to the advertisement: "We also strive for commercial success and continued growth by increasing Pyra Wines' sales, profits and markets, year after year." Half of participants saw this sentence while viewing the advertisement (profit quest: present), whereas the sentence was removed for the other half of participants (profit quest: absent). Appendix 6 presents the two advertisements used for the study.

Measures. The main dependent variable was brand authenticity, measured with the 17-item scale. Participants rated the advertisements in terms of brand attitude (Nan and Heo 2007), believability, appeal, and relevance (see Appendix 7). To test the profit quest manipulation, participants expressed their level of agreement regarding two affirmations related to Pyra Wines' objectives (e.g., "According to the advertisement, commercial success is an important goal for Pyra Wines," anchored strongly disagree/strongly agree). A profit quest index was created. Lastly, participants were asked to answer a question regarding the firm's motivations ("Pyra Wines is doing business for the right reasons," anchored strongly disagree/strongly agree). Appendix 7 presents the measures and their respective items.

Manipulation checks and control variables. The profit quest index was used to test whether the profit quest manipulation was successful. An ANOVA with one fixed factor (profit: absent/present) and profit quest index as the dependent variable, resulted in a significant effect ($F(1,141) = 14.31$, $p < .001$). Mean comparisons confirmed the effectiveness of the profit quest manipulation (Profits quest: Mean$_{present}$ = 5.66, Mean$_{absent}$ = 4.81, $t(141) = -3.78$, $p < .001$). Further, the advertisements did not differ in terms of brand attitude, believability, appeal, and relevance (all $ps > .23$).

Results. The impact of admitting a quest for profits on authenticity perceptions (H1) was tested in a structural model in which the variable profit quest (0 = absent, 1 = present) predicted brand authenticity as a second-order factor. Results revealed good fit: NFI = .87, NNFI = .92, CFI = .93, GFI = .90, AGFI = .86, RMR = .11, SRMR = .04, RMSEA = .06, $\chi^2 (131) = 282.16$, $p < .001$. The relation between profit quest and brand authenticity was significant ($\gamma = -.18$, $p < .05$). The presence of a profit quest was negatively associated with authenticity perceptions. To gain insights at the dimension level, mean comparisons were performed. The presence of a profit quest decreased perceptions of integrity (Mean$_{absent}$ = 4.53, Mean$_{present}$ = 4.16, $t(141) = 1.96$, $p = .05$) and symbolism (Mean$_{absent}$ = 3.70, Mean$_{present}$ = 3.19, $t(141) = 2.44$, $p < .05$). Perceptions of longevity and credibility were not affected by the presence of a profit quest (longevity: Mean$_{absent}$ = 5.02, Mean$_{present}$ = 4.93, $t(141) = .49$, $p > .62$; credibility: Mean$_{absent}$ = 4.47, Mean$_{present}$ = 4.31, $t(141) = .93$, $p > .36$). These results support H1 and confirm the negative association between commercial considerations and authenticity perceptions (globally and with regard to two dimensions). To explore the reasons underlying this effect, perceptions of the brand's motivations were analyzed. When profit quest was present, the brand was perceived as doing business for the right reasons to a lesser extent than when profit quest was absent (Mean$_{absent}$ = 4.85, Mean$_{present}$ = 4.27, $t(134) = 2.40$, $p < .05$). This suggests that consumers may have attributed self-serving motives (i.e., "motives that focus on the potential benefit to the firm itself", Forehand and Grier 2003, p. 35) to the firm, and may have found that such motives contradict the essence of authenticity.

Discussion. This study extends the predictive validity of the brand authenticity scale, by showing the scale's responsiveness with regards to a theoretical prediction about the relation between commercial objectives and brand authenticity. Results show that a brand's association with commercial motivations is negatively related to its overall perceived authenticity. At the

dimension level, perceptions of integrity and symbolism were affected by a quest for profits; consumers perceived the brand as having less moral qualities (i.e., integrity) as well less suitable for reflecting consumers' identities (i.e., symbolism). Longevity and credibility were not affected by a quest for profits. This can be explained by the fact that longevity refers to an objective dimension of authenticity (i.e., not associated with the firm's intentions), and that a firm's profitability has been related to credibility perceptions (Posavac et al. 2010). Results further suggest that a quest for profits could impact consumers' perceptions of the brand's intentions, and that firm-serving motivations could hurt a brand's perceived authenticity.

In the next study, brand authenticity is embedded in a network of antecedents and consequences to demonstrate its contribution to the understanding of consumers' brand-related responses.

2.4 Study 7: Nomological Validity

This study examines the drivers of brand authenticity and its impact on brand-related consumer responses contingent upon consumer characteristics. Based on the three perspectives of authenticity (i.e., objectivist, constructivist, and existentialist), the following conceptual framework of the emergence and consequences of brand authenticity is proposed (see Figure 1, p. 34).

2.4.1 Theoretical Background

Brand authenticity antecedents. An important question in the context of brand authenticity is how consumers form their impressions of authenticity. Three views on authenticity (objectivist, constructivist and existential) provide insights regarding brand authenticity antecedents. The next paragraphs discuss each perspective and the corresponding antecedents.

Indexical cues. The objectivist perspective views authenticity as a quality inherent to an object. Indexical cues are used to confer authenticity from an objectivist perspective. Indexicality is primarily associated with the realness and the originality of an object or a person, and provides verification for what an object claims to be (Grayson and Martinec 2004). In a branding context, this perspective posits that objective brand characteristics—or brand characteristics that consumers perceive as objective—are used to judge the authenticity of a brand. Consumer thus

use verifiable information about the brand (e.g., age, country, labels of origin) to form a judgment of that brand. Three indexical cues influencing brand authenticity perceptions are proposed.

Verifiable and objective information about a brand is not always available for consumers. In this context, consumers might rely on the brand's actual performance as a source of information. One such performance indicator is a brand's quality. Thus, brand quality is treated as an indexical cue. This is consistent with Beverland et al.'s (2008) discussions. They argue that consumers look for verifiable evidence about the authenticity of the product through brand quality and brand attributes. Further, in the qualitative study, participants referred to a brand's quality as a form of guarantee about the product's authenticity. Perceived brand quality reflects the extent to which a brand has the ability to perform its functions according to consumers' expectations (Bharadwaj, Tuli, and Bonfrer 2011; Frazier and Lassar 1996). Consumers are more likely to perceive a brand as being authentic if they feel that it is able to create products which deliver the value promised to consumers.

> **H2a**: Perceived brand quality relates positively to consumers' perceived brand authenticity.

The ability for a brand to deliver on its promise is essential in shaping authenticity perceptions. Conversely, failure to do so will negatively affect such perceptions. In this context, brand scandals reflect the inability of a brand to meet consumers' expectations. Gilmore and Pine (2007) explain why scandals—from financial scandals to more common business practices, like increasing outsourcing and plant closings—contribute to the perception of business being untrustworthy: "These actions inevitably tarnish the reputation of all in business, making it more difficult for anyone to render authenticity" (p. 24). Beverland and Farrelly (2010) agree, and discuss brands such as Nike and their inability to live up to their promises. In the qualitative study, participants talked about Nike's controversy (i.e., its use of sweatshops) and discussed how it damaged the brand's authenticity. In sum, a brand scandal involves a mismatch between what the brand should be in the eyes of consumers and its actual behavior and poses a threat to authenticity perceptions.

H2b: Brand scandals relate negatively to consumers' perceived brand authenticity

A brand's performance is made tangible by its employees delivering on the brand's promise (i.e., indexical cue). Punjaisri and Wilson (2007) highlight the importance of employees in attaining a brand's desired identity, creating a coherent brand image, and delivering the brand's promise. Eggers et al. (2012) propose that a brand-congruent employee behavior relates positively to consumers' perception of brand authenticity. In the interviews, Geneviève explained how the sales representative of the brand Clinique contributed to her positive (and authentic) impression about the brand. The employee was simple, not pretentious, "telling it like it is", in line with the overall brand image of Clinique, in Geneviève's opinion. It is thus proposed that employees behaving line with the brand's promise positively affect brand authenticity perceptions.

H2c: Brand-congruent employee behavior relates positively to consumers' perceived brand authenticity.

Iconic antecedents. The constructivist perspective views authenticity as a social construction. Iconic cues are qualities that suggest a schematic fit with a person's mental picture of how an authentic object should look like (Grayson and Martinec 2004). In a branding context, this type of authenticity refers to the ability of a brand to create an image of authenticity in consumers' minds. Previous studies have highlighted the role of a brand's communication efforts in creating authenticity perceptions (Beverland 2006; Beverland et al. 2008).

Beverland et al. (2008) propose that featuring historicity, heritage, locality, tradition, and pedigree of the brand contributes to authenticity perceptions. In the interviews, Denis talked about those iconic attributes: "I like a product that conveys a form of nobleness, something that reflects the old days. This advertisement, although it is a recent one... they were able to bring the traditional aspect, with the ducks, the colors, ... I like that". It is proposed that a brand's communication activities that focus on heritage, locality, tradition, and country of origin (referred to as "made-in" communication style) increases consumers' brand authenticity perceptions.

H3a: A brand's "made-in" communication style relates positively to consumers' perceived brand authenticity.

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 values, dedication in execution, the human factor and social responsibility, and aims to convey a sense of "moral authenticity" in consumers' minds (Beverland et al. 2008). In the interviews, Michèle talked about Desjardins: "It's a cooperative. It's more human. There are values behind it". It is proposed that a brand's communication activities that focus on delivering the promise, consumer orientation, and the brand's values (referred to as "moral" communication style) increases consumers' brand authenticity perceptions.

H3b: A brand's "moral" communication style relates positively to consumers' perceived brand authenticity.

Existential antecedents. The existential perspective posits that consumers are in search of their true selves through consumption (Arnould and Price 2000; Leigh et al. 2006). In authenticating acts, consumers attend to self-referential information that reveals or helps construct their identity. Rose and Wood (2004) stress the importance of the human aspects of reality shows, as they provide viewers with existential cues that resonate with their self-concepts. In a branding context, existential brand cues refer to self-referential aspects of a brand that connect to consumers' self-concepts. A brand's personality ("the set of human characteristics associated with the brand", Aaker 1997, p. 347) is seen as a self-referential aspect. Further, brand personality strength denotes the degree of animism, humanization, and personification of a brand or the extent to which consumers can imagine the brand as a person (Aaker and Fournier 1995). Strong brand personalities thus provide vivid self-referential cues that can support them in testing, refining, and constructing their identity, providing in turn authenticity in their brand experience (Rose and Wood 2005).

H4: Brand personality strength relates positively to consumers' perceived brand authenticity.

Consequences of brand authenticity. As a response to threats of inauthenticity inherent in postmodernism, consumers look actively for authenticity in their consumption acts (Arnould and Price 2000; Beverland and Farrelly 2010). In this context, consumers will likely respond positively to brands that they perceive as being authentic (Rose and Wood 2005). Emotional brand attachment refers to a strong emotional connection between a consumer and a brand. In particular, the consumer's self-concept must be involved for an emotional brand attachment to occur (Chaplin and Roedder John 2005; Park et al. 2010). The symbolic quality of authentic brands is instrumental in creating strong self-related bonds (Arnould and Price 2000). By helping consumers being true to themselves (i.e., the existential perspective), brand authenticity should play an important role in creating emotional brand attachment. Moreover, apart from this symbolic aspect, brand authenticity is associated with a number of positively loaded traits such as credibility, integrity, and longevity. Consumers are likely to reciprocate in terms of increased emotional attachment to the brands. In the interviews, Geneviève confirms this relation with her MAC products ("I couldn't live without them, I love them so much").

H5: Brand authenticity positively relates to consumers' emotional brand attachment.

Moderating effect. The social constructivist perspective posits that authenticity perceptions are socially constructed (Beverland and Farrelly 2010). Accordingly, a person's expectations, motivations, and personality traits might influence the strength of some of the hypothesized effects. One moderating variable pertaining to the effect of iconic cues on brand authenticity is proposed (H5; marketing skepticism).

Consumer skepticism is defined as the tendency to disbelieve the information claims of advertising (Obermiller and Spangenberg 1998). Research shows the influence skepticism on consumer responses to advertising: "more skeptical consumers like advertising less, rely on it less, attend to it less, and respond more positively to emotional appeals than to informational appeals" (Obermiller, Spangenberg, and MacLachlan 2005, p. 7). In the authenticity literature, studies point out how skepticism plays a role in consumers' assessment of brand authenticity (Beverland et al. 2008; Brown et al. 2003). Brown et al. (2003), for example, discuss how some consumers are subtle interpreters of marketing cues. The authors note how "bitter skeptics" (p. 24) reject marketing claims intended to increase perceived authenticity. Skeptics should therefore

rely less on a brand's communication style (i.e., iconic cues) than non-skeptics in forming brand authenticity impressions.

H6: Skepticism towards marketing weakens the relationship between iconic cues (i.e., communication style) and perceived brand authenticity.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework
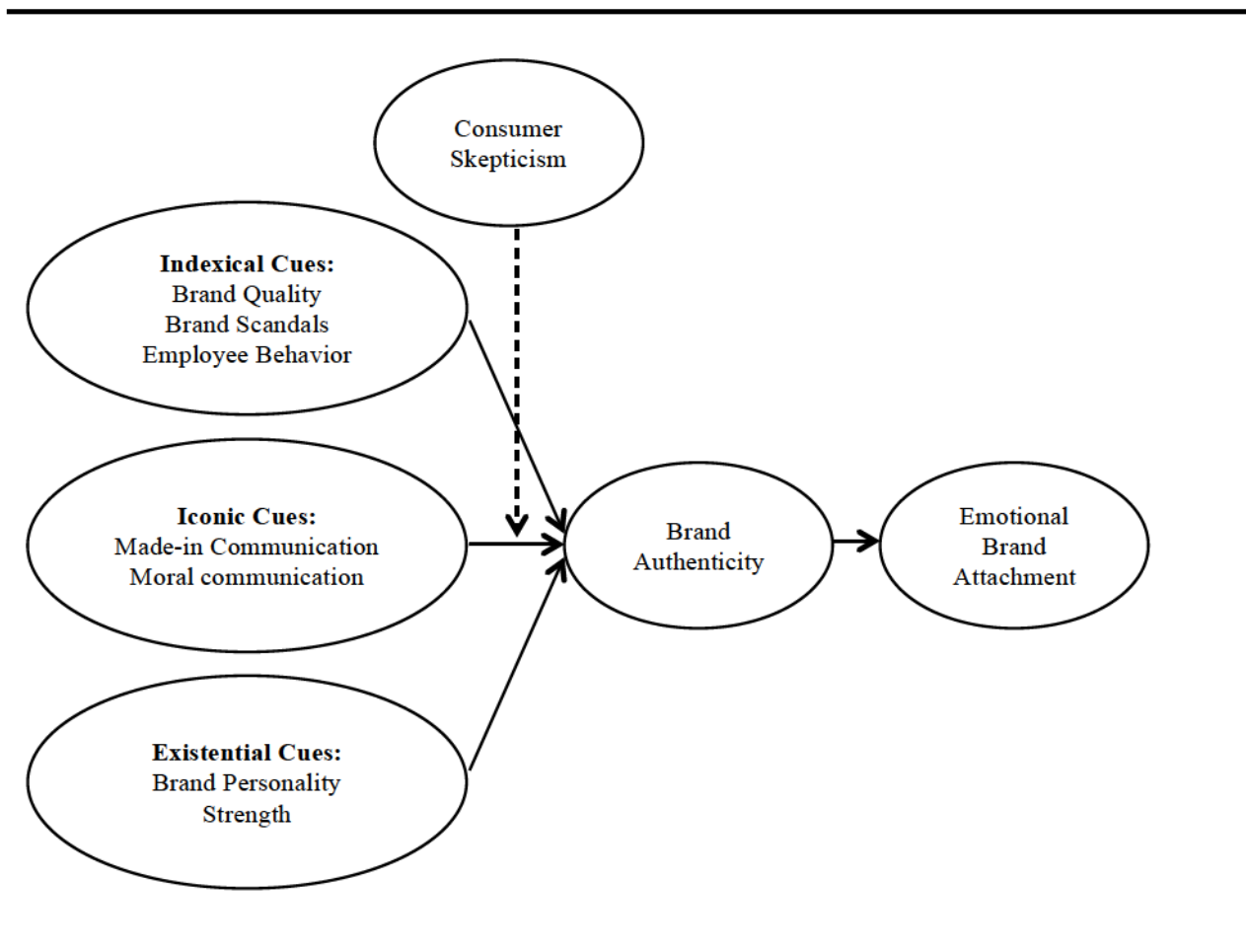
2.4.2 Method

Sample, procedures and measures. Nine hundred and thirty-two consumers from North America and Europe (51% female, average age: 38.8 years) participated in this study and completed the questions about one randomly assigned brand (Abercrombie & Fitch, Apple, Beeline, Burton, Canadian Tire, Coca-Cola, Emmi, Harley Davidson, IKEA, Krasnii Oktyabr, Lululemon, Mammut, Microsoft, Molson Canadian, Rivella, Sberbank, Swisscom, Tim Hortons, UBS, and Unzija). Participants had to answer questions regarding brand personality strength (Aaker and Fournier 1995), brand-congruent employee behavior (Morhart, Herzog, and Tomczak 2009), brand quality (Frazier and Lassar 1996), brand scandals (Wagner, Lutz, and Weitz 2009), made-in communication style (new, see Appendix 8), moral communication style (new, see Appendix 8), emotional brand attachment (Thomson, MacInnis, and Park 2005), and skepticism towards advertising (Obermiller and Spangenberg 1998). The measurement scales showed sufficient reliability and validity. Composite reliabilities exceeded .6 (Bagozzi and Yi 1988), coefficient alphas exceeded the recommended threshold value of .7 (Nunnally 1978), and all factor loadings were significant ($p < .01$; Bagozzi, Yi, and Phillips 1991). Discriminant validity for all constructs was supported in that average variance extracted exceeded the squared correlations between all pairs of constructs (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Appendix 8 presents the measures used in this study and their respective items.

2.4.3 Results

AMOS 21 was used to model the structural relationships posited by the conceptual framework. Measures of overall fit suggest that the proposed model fits the data acceptably well (NNFI = .93, CFI = .95, GFI = .94, SRMR = .05, RMSEA = .09, $\chi^2(209) = 1194.25$, $p < .001$). All path coefficients in the model are significant ($p < .01$). As hypothesized, brand authenticity is affected by indexical, iconic, and existential cues. The results provide empirical evidence for the hypothesized impacts of (H2a) brand quality ($\gamma = .23$; $p < .05$), (H2b) brand scandals ($\gamma = -.14$; $p < .01$), (H2c) brand-congruent employee behavior ($\gamma = .15$; $p < .01$), (H3a) "made-in" communication style ($\gamma = .24$; $p < .01$), (H3b) "moral" communication style ($\gamma = .26$; $p < .01$), and (H4) brand personality strength ($\gamma = .15$; $p < .01$) on brand authenticity. Hypotheses 2 to 4 are thus supported. Further, the results confirm a strong positive relation between brand authenticity and emotional brand attachment ($\gamma = .70$; $p < .01$), supporting H5.

The moderating role of skepticism toward marketing with regard to the relationship between iconic cues and brand authenticity (H6) was examined through multiple group analyses. A median split was performed to create two subsamples for the moderator (i.e., consumers low and high in skepticism) and the basic model implied by the theoretical framework was analyzed simultaneously for the two subsamples. The results confirm a negative moderating effect of skepticism towards marketing on the relationship between "made-in" communication style and brand authenticity. While a communication style that focuses on "made-in" aspects has a positive effect on brand authenticity among consumers low in skepticism towards marketing, this effect becomes weaker among highly skeptical consumers (low: $\gamma = .26$; $p < .01$; high: $\gamma = .22$; $p < .05$; $\chi^2(1) = 5.1$, $p < .05$). However, contrary to predictions, the results did not show a significant moderating effect of skepticism towards marketing when it comes to the relationship between a "moral" communication style and brand authenticity. This communication style has a similar effect among consumers showing low and levels of skepticism (low: $\gamma = .26$; $p < .01$; high: $\gamma = .25$; $p < .01$; $\chi^2(1) = 2.0$, $p = .14$). Thus, skepticism towards marketing has a negative moderating effect only when it comes to the relationship between a "made-in" communication style and brand authenticity. As a robustness check for the moderating effect of skepticism on the brand's "made-in" communication style, a three-way split along the values of the moderator was performed. Results showed that authenticity perceptions in response to the "made-in" communication style only weaken for consumers scoring high (compared to low) in skepticism toward marketing (low: $\gamma = .29$; $p < .01$; high: $\gamma = .19$; $p < .01$; $\chi^2(1) = 4.7$, $p < .05$). Other comparisons (i.e., low vs. medium and medium vs. high) were not significant ($ps > .27$).

2.4.4 Discussion

This study embedded brand authenticity in a nomological network. Results suggest that brand authenticity is driven by iconic (e.g., communication style), indexical (e.g., quality), and existential (e.g., brand personality) cues, contributing to emerging work on the importance of indexical and iconic forms of authenticity (e.g., Beverland et al. 2008; Grayson and Martinec 2004). Further, results reveal that the degree of the effect of a brand's communication style on brand authenticity perceptions depends on consumers' skepticism towards marketing, specifically in terms of a "made-in" communication style. This confirms that, as suggested by Brown et al. (2003), consumers are active interpreters of authenticity cues. Results also show

that brand authenticity increases emotional brand attachment, a worthwhile contribution, considering that consumers develop strong emotional bonds with a limited number of brands (Park et al. 2010). In sum, these findings support predictions derived from theory and demonstrate the usefulness of the brand authenticity construct in predicting important brand outcomes.

2.5 Study 8: Brand Authenticity and Consumer Responses to a Scandal

Results of the previous study highlight the negative influence of a scandal on consumers' perceptions of the authenticity of a brand. The current study examines the possibility that existing brand authenticity perceptions may cushion or exacerbate the impact of scandals on consumer responses to the brand. It investigates the influence of a scandal on consumer responses towards the brand depending on the level of authenticity associated with the brand before the scandal occurred. In doing so, this research addresses conflicting theoretical predictions about the role of authenticity in understanding consumers' reactions to a scandal.

2.5.1 Theoretical Background

The influence of scandals. Companies and their brands do not always behave according to consumers' expectations. Brands are often involved in incidents of misconducts, crises, and scandals (Ahluwalia, Burnkrant, and Unnava 2000; Roehm and Brady 2007). Research shows that these incidents disappoint consumers' expectations of the brand and entail detrimental consequences, such as negative consumer responses and deterioration of public image (Huber et al. 2009). Different types of scandals have been studied in the literature. Performance and product-related scandals relate to the ability of the brand to deliver functional benefits (Dawar and Pillutla 2000; Pullig et al. 2006; Roehm and Brady 2007). The case of defective products (e.g., Toyota's faulty brakes leading to massive recalls) illustrates this type of scandal. Values-related scandals relate to social and ethical issues pertaining to brand values (Huber et al. 2009; Trump 2013). An example of a value-related scandal is Nike's use of child labour in the brand's factories. This type of scandal does not involve the product directly.

This research focuses on an ethical (i.e., values-related) brand scandal. Previous research has examined such scandals, including the moderating effects of variables such as consumer commitment, self-relevance of the issue, and duration of the relationship (Huber et al. 2009;

Trump 2013). Trump (2013) finds that highly committed consumers are not so forgiving of a brand transgression, particularly when the issue the transgression relates to is highly relevant for them (e.g., a brand accused of discriminating against women is more relevant for women). Huber et al. (2009) demonstrate that brand relationship quality does not diminish the negative effects of an ethical scandal. Consumers reacted negatively regardless of the strength and the duration of the relationship with the brand. The role of the brand positioning (e.g., brand authenticity) in understanding consumers' reactions to a scandal has not been investigated, however. Two streams of literature guide the development of predictions regarding the effects of scandals in the context of authentic brands.

The role of brand authenticity: protective effect. The first perspective suggests that an authentic brand benefits from protection against the detrimental effects of a scandal. This view is rooted in the relationship perspective (Fournier 1998) in which brand commitment plays a critical role in inducing consumer resistance to negative information about the brand or brand transgressions (Aaker et al. 2004). Research shows that consumers who have formed a stronger relationship with brands are isolated from the impact of negative information and are therefore more forgiving (Ahluwalia et al. 2000; Ahluwalia, Unnava, and Burnkrant 2001; Hegner et al. 2014). Highly committed consumers counterargue brand-related negative information to a greater extent to maintain their positive attitude toward the brand. Authentic brands are particularly interesting from this point of view considering their potential to create strong connections with consumers. According to the existential perspective of authenticity, authentic brands help consumers construct and reveal their true selves (Arnould and Price 2000; Beverland and Farrelly 2010). The symbolism of authentic brands and their potential to serve as a resource for identity construction is likely to increase consumers' connections with such brands, considering that the self-concept must be involved for the development of strong relations (Park et al. 2010). Authentic brands are further associated with integrity and sincerity (Beverland 2005; Beverland et al. 2008; Napoli et al. 2014). As these traits represent the foundation of an enduring relationship (Aaker et al. 2004), consumers may be motivated to develop committed relations with authentic brands. In sum, the perspective that authentic brands create strong and enduring bonds with consumers that lead to a protection effect in the presence of a scandal (compared to non-authentic brands) leads to the following hypothesis:

H7a: In the presence of a scandal, consumers will respond more favourably to an authentic brand (compared to a non-authentic brand).

The role of brand authenticity: detrimental effect. The second perspective proposes that high levels of brand authenticity may backfire when a brand scandal occurs. Although there is evidence that high consumer commitment protects the brand from negative reactions (Ahluwalia et al. 2000), research in this area remains equivocal. Several studies support the view that relationship strength aggravates consumer reactions to a brand's failure in a service context (Aaker et al. 2004; Aggarwal 2004; Grégoire and Fisher 2008). For example, it has been established that consumers with the strongest relationships are likely to respond highly unfavourably on a long-term basis and hold a desire for revenge over time (Grégoire and Fisher 2008; Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009). Further, the disconfirmation of expectations framework suggests that authentic brands may be particularly vulnerable to brand transgressions. Considering that authentic brands promote an image of trust and dependability (Beverland and Farrelly 2010; Napoli et al. 2014), the involvement of such brands in a scandal is likely to interfere with consumers' expectations (Aaker et al. 2004). As perceptions of brand authenticity are based on a high level of transparency on the part of the brand as well as a match between its public positioning and its inner values (Eggers et al. 2012), a scandal inevitably contradicts this perception and hurts the promise embedded in the brand's positioning. As Gilmore and Pine (2007) put it: "If you *say* you're authentic, then you'd better *be* authentic" (p. 44). In sum, an authentic brand involved in a scandal reveals disconfirming evidence of the brand's ability to behave in line with its associated trustworthiness (Aaker et al. 2004), aggravating consumer responses. The possibility that authentic brands (compared to non-authentic brands) involved in a scandal disconfirm consumers' expectations and result in an amplification of the effects of a scandal leads to the following hypothesis:

H7b: In the presence of a scandal, consumers will respond less favourably to an authentic brand (compared to a non-authentic brand).

In sum, the prior literature leads to two competing hypotheses regarding the interactive effect of brand scandals and brand authenticity.

The role of consumer skepticism. Consumers vary in terms of their tendency to disbelieve the claims presented in advertising. Consumer skepticism towards advertising captures this general disposition (Obermiller and Spangenberg 1998). Highly skeptical consumers like advertising less, trust it less, and prefer to rely on personal sources of information (Obermiller et al. 2005). In the literature, studies point out how skepticism plays a role in consumers' assessment of brand authenticity. Brown et al. (2003) indicate that skeptical consumers actively scrutinize the cues used by brands to appear authenticity. As claims of authenticity are often stylized and created purposely by marketers, highly skeptical consumers are more likely to reject those claims (Beverland et al. 2008).

H7a proposes that consumers will respond more favourably to an authentic brand than to a non-authentic brand in the presence of a scandal. As highly skeptical consumers are more likely to doubt the authenticity claims, the advantageous position of an authentic brand (in terms of more favourable consumer responses) is likely to be weaker for such consumers.

H8a: The interactive effect of brand authenticity and scandal proposed in H7a will be moderated by skepticism towards marketing, such that it will be weaker for highly skeptical consumers (compared to less skeptical consumers).

Alternatively, H7b predicts that consumers will respond less favourably to an authentic brand than to a non-authentic brand in the presence of a scandal. Considering that highly skeptical consumers already express some doubts towards authentic brands, the drawback associated with such brands (in terms of less favourable consumer responses) is likely to be stronger for such consumers.

H8b: The interactive effect of brand authenticity and scandal proposed in H7b will be moderated by skepticism towards marketing, such that it will be stronger for highly skeptical consumers (compared to less skeptical consumers).

2.5.2 Method

Pretest. One hundred and fourteen adult consumers (60% female, average age: 51.6 years) from a Canadian panel participated in an online study. Participants were exposed to a

fictitious advertisement for a brand of sports apparel (authentic or non-authentic brand). Two advertisements were developed (i.e., one reflecting an authentic and one reflecting a non-authentic brand) in line with previous research and brand authenticity dimensions. The authentic advertisement presented claims such as "We are passionate about our products and care about our customers" and "Providing sports apparel since 1950", whereas statements like "We offer our customers a variety of styles, fabrics, and colors" and "Providing sports apparel since 2012" were used in the non-authentic advertisement. Special care was taken to ensure that the overall design as well as the amount of information presented to consumers was similar in both ads (see Appendix 9). After viewing the advertisements, participants completed a series of scales about the brand featured in the advertisement: brand authenticity ("Please indicate how authentic you perceive the brand Liva to be," anchored not authentic at all/very authentic), brand attitude (Nan and Heo 2007), brand quality (Frazier and Lassar 1996), emotional and informational tone of the advertisement (Jourdan 1999), advertisement believability, and appeal. Results confirmed the effectiveness of the manipulations. The authentic ad was perceived as more authentic than the non-authentic ad ($Mean_{authentic} = 4.49$, $Mean_{non-authentic} = 3.90$, $t(112) = 1.95$, $p = .05$). The two advertisements did not differ in terms of brand attitude ($Mean_{authentic} = 4.29$, $Mean_{non-authentic} = 3.92$, $t(112) = 1.26$, $p = .21$), brand quality ($Mean_{authentic} = 4.21$, $Mean_{non-authentic} = 4.03$, $t(112) = .67$, $p = .50$), informational tone of the ad ($Mean_{authentic} = 3.54$, $Mean_{non-authentic} = 3.68$, $t(112) = -.50$, $p = .62$), emotional tone of the ad ($Mean_{authentic} = 3.81$, $Mean_{non-authentic} = 3.67$, $t(112) = .48$, $p = .64$), believability ($Mean_{authentic} = 4.25$, $Mean_{non-authentic} = 4.03$, $t(112) = .69$, $p = .50$), and appeal ($Mean_{authentic} = 3.60$, $Mean_{non-authentic} = 3.41$, $t(112) = .58$, $p = .56$).

Sample, procedure and measures. Two hundred thirty-eight adult consumers (59% female, average age: 49.6 years) from a Canadian consumer panel participated in an online study. Participants were randomly assigned to a condition in a 2 (scandal: presence, absence) x 2 (brand: authentic, non-authentic) between-participants design. Participants first viewed the advertisement for the brand Liva (authentic or non-authentic) and were exposed to the scandal manipulation. Participants in the "scandal present" were exposed to this additional information about the brand: "The brand Liva has always promoted the importance of its workers' rights. However, the brand has recently made headlines because most of Liva's sports apparel are made in sweatshop factories using child labour and providing poor working conditions." Participants in the "scandal absent" were exposed to this additional information about the brand: "The brand

Liva is launching a new advertising campaign. The advertising campaign includes print advertising, television spots and digital executions." Participants were then asked to indicate their willingness to pay for the sweater presented in the ad ("How much would you be willing to pay for the sweated depicted in the ad?"). Willingness to pay was used as the dependent variable as it relates to consumers' attitudes (Ward and Dahl 2014) while offering concrete managerial contributions. In addition, it extends the range of consumer responses to brand authenticity considered in the current research. Other measures included self-brand connection (Edson Escalas and Bettman 2005), perceived hypocrisy (Wagner, Lutz, and Weitz 2009), and perceived responsibility of the brand ("How accountable is the brand Liva of this situation?" not accountable at all/very accountable; "How responsible is the brand Liva of this situation?" not responsible at all/very responsible), as well as manipulation checks for the scandal ("Please indicate how important/relevant/favourable the additional information was in your evaluation of the brand Liva"). Participants then completed the skepticism towards advertising scale (Obermiller and Spangenberg 1998), and demographic questions. Appendix 10 presents the measures used in the study and their respective list of items.

Manipulation checks. The scandal scenario was perceived as more important, more relevant, and less favourable than the no scandal scenario (Important: $Mean_{scandal} = 5.79$, $Mean_{noscandal} = 3.78$, $t(235) = 8.48$, $p < .001$; Relevant: $Mean_{scandal} = 5.67$, $Mean_{noscandal} = 3.71$, $t(235) = 8.29$, $p < .001$; Favourable: $Mean_{scandal} = 2.30$, $Mean_{noscandal} = 4.37$, $t(235) = -9.16$, $p < .001$). Brand authenticity did not interact with the presence/absence of scandals to influence these perceptions (all $ps > .20$).

2.5.3 Results

An ANOVA with two factors (scandal: absence/presence, brand: authentic/non-authentic), and willingness to pay (in dollars) as the dependent variable revealed a main effect of scandal ($F(1, 234) = 27.49$, $p < .001$). Willingness to pay was lower for participants exposed to a scandal compared to participants not exposed to a scandal ($Mean_{scandal} = 13.43$, $Mean_{noscandal} = 24.45$, $t(236) = -5.24$, $p < .001$). Other effects were not significant ($ps > .23$). The hypotheses were tested directly through planned comparisons (Winer 1971). In the absence of a scandal, willingness to pay was equivalent for participants exposed to the authentic and to the non-authentic brand ($Mean_{authentic} = 24.17$, $Mean_{non-authentic} = 24.73$, $t(114) = -.16$, $p = .87$).

Considering the positive responses associated with brand authenticity (Beverland 2006; Napoli et al. 2014), a higher willingness to pay would have been expected for the authentic brand. It is however possible that a brief exposure to a fictitious brand was not strong enough to create such differences in behavioral intentions toward the brand. Regarding the competing predictions proposed in H7a and H7b, results indicate, however, that in the presence of a scandal, participants are willing to pay more for an authentic brand than for a non-authentic brand (Mean$_{authentic}$ = 15.67, Mean$_{non\text{-}authentic}$ = 11.19, $t(120) = 1.91$, $p = .06$). This result provides some support for the protection effect proposed in H7a, whereas the prediction that scandals would harm authentic brands to a greater extent (H7b) was not supported. In addition, although the decrease in price consumers were willing to pay was smaller for the authentic brand than for the non-authentic brand, results indicate authentic brands are nonetheless hurt by the occurrence of a scandal (Authentic brand: Mean$_{no\ scandal}$ = 24.17, Mean$_{scandal}$ = 15.67, $t(116) = -3.06$, $p < .01$; Non-authentic brand: Mean$_{no\ scandal}$ = 24.73, Mean$_{scandal}$ = 11.19, $t(118) = -4.30$, $p < .001$).

Figure 2

The Interactive Effect of Scandal and Brand Authenticity on Willingness to Pay (H7a)
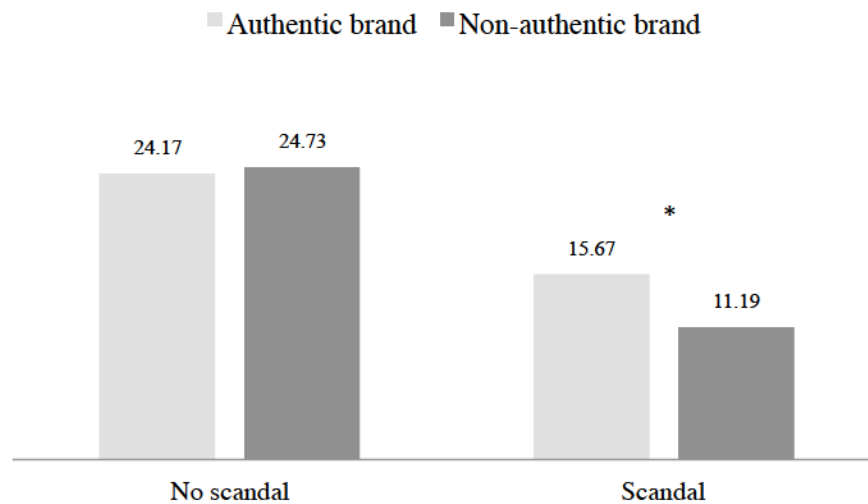
* Difference marginally significant (.10 level)

To test the role of consumer skepticism as proposed in H8a and H8b, two regressions were executed. In the presence of a scandal, a regression of consumers' willingness to pay on brand condition (0 = non-authentic, 1 = authentic), skepticism (continuous, mean-centered), and the interaction term was conducted. The effect of the brand was marginally significant ($b = 4.42$, $t = 1.91$, $p = .06$), but the effects of skepticism ($b = -1.03$, $t = -.77$, $p = .44$) and of the interaction ($b = -2.15$, $t = -1.03$, $p = .31$) were not significant. In the absence of a scandal, a regression of consumers' willingness to pay on brand condition, skepticism, and the interaction term was conducted. The effects of brand ($b = -.32$, $t = -.09$, $p = .92$), skepticism ($b = -1.72$, $t = -.74$, $p = .46$) and of the interaction ($b = 1.13$, $t = .38$, $p = .71$) were not significant. Overall, these results do not support the role of consumer skepticism in understanding consumer reactions to a brand scandal. H8a and H8b are not supported.

To gain additional insights in terms of other consumer reactions following a scandal, a follow-up analysis examined the perceived responsibility of the brand as well as its perceived hypocrisy. An ANOVA with two factors (scandal: absence/presence, brand: authentic/non-authentic) and perceived responsibility as the dependent variable revealed a significant two-way interaction ($F(1,233) = 8.35$, $p < .01$). In the absence of scandal, perceptions of responsibility were similar for both brands ($Mean_{authentic} = 4.54$, $Mean_{non-authentic} = 4.25$, $t(113) = .93$, $p = .36$). However, when a scandal occurred, the authentic brand was perceived as less responsible for it than the non-authentic brand ($Mean_{authentic} = 3.37$, $Mean_{non-authentic} = 4.52$, $t(120) = -2.98$, $p < .01$). Regarding perceived hypocrisy, an ANOVA with two factors (scandal: absence/presence, brand: authentic/non-authentic) and perceived hypocrisy as the dependent variable revealed a significant two-way interaction ($F(1,234) = 5.31$, $p < .05$). In the absence of scandal, perceptions of hypocrisy were similar for both brands ($Mean_{authentic} = 2.88$, $Mean_{non-authentic} = 2.59$, $t(114) = 1.04$, $p = .30$). However, when a scandal occurred, the authentic brand was perceived as less hypocritical than the non-authentic brand ($Mean_{authentic} = 5.20$, $Mean_{non-authentic} = 5.84$, $t(120) = -2.22$, $p < .05$).

2.5.4 Discussion

This research suggests that consumer perceptions of brand authenticity protect the brand from the negative consequences of a scandal. In the presence of a scandal, participants judged the authentic brand more positively than the non-authentic brand. This was observable in terms

of behavioral intentions (higher willingness to pay), brand-related perceptions (lower levels of perceived hypocrisy), and attributions (lower levels of perceived responsibility for the scandal). Further, whereas this suggest that authentic brands are somewhat protected for the negative consequences of a scandal, consumer responses to the authentic brand nonetheless deteriorated when a scandal occurred.

The findings can be interpreted in light of the literature about the positive effects of commitment on consumer reactions to negative brand information (Aaker et al. 2004; Ahluwalia et al. 2000). To gain additional support for this reasoning, levels of self-brand connections were analyzed. Results show that consumers expressed marginally higher levels of self-brand connection with the authentic brand, compared to the non-authentic brand (Mean$_{authentic}$ = 3.49, Mean$_{non-authentic}$ = 2.95, $t(114)$ = 1.69, p = .09). Although this provides initial evidence that authentic brands have the potential to create strong bonds with consumers, it is important to note that participants had limited exposure to an advertisement of a fictitious brand. Replicating this study while allowing multiple interactions with the brand (e.g., using a longitudinal study; Aaker et al. 2004, Grégoire et al. 2009) or using real brands is of interest, as strong connections with brands develop over time and following several interactions (Park et al. 2010). From that perspective, this research represents a conservative test of the commitment hypothesis.

As this study is a first investigation of the interactive effect of brand authenticity and presence of a scandal on consumer reactions to a brand, it opens the door to further research. Whereas this study looked at the impact of a values-related scandal, future research should explore consumer reactions to different types of scandals. A product-related scandal would be particularly interesting considering the high credibility and dependability associated with authentic brands (Beverland 2006; Beverland and Farrelly 2010). Further, looking at the influence of the reaction of the brand following a scandal is worth investigating, as research shows that an open communication policy is important to reduce negative consequences of a brand transgression (Lyon and Cameron 2004). The positive effect of such an open communication strategy might be increased for authentic brands, as consumers expect such brands to be transparent and admit their fault (Gilmore and Pine 2007). Another research area concerns consumers' attribution of the responsibility for a scandal (Folkes 1984; Klein et al. 2004). Although initial insights indicate that consumers blamed the authentic brand to a lesser extent than the non-authentic brand, future research might examine this in greater detail. Lastly,

as it is argued in this research that committed consumers are more likely to develop counterarguments when exposed to information about an authentic brand scandal, it would be worth examining the mediating role of such consumer reactions (i.e., consumers thoughts following the exposure to the scandal; Ahluwalia et al. 2000) in future studies.

General Discussion

Although practitioners have already begun to embrace the notion of brand authenticity in their brand positioning and communication efforts, research is only starting to fully acknowledge the concept's relevance for the brand management domain. This research develops and validates a scale to measure brand authenticity. A multi-phase scale development process results in a 17-item, four-dimensional scale (credibility, integrity, symbolism, and longevity) that captures brand authenticity. This scale is psychometrically sound and is discriminant with regard to related constructs at the overall construct level, and in most cases at the dimensional level as well. Furthermore, brand authenticity is embedded in a nomological network. The findings suggest that brand authenticity is influenced by indexical, existential, and iconic cues, whereby the latter's influence depends on consumers' level of skepticism towards marketing. Lastly, brand authenticity is studied in the context of a scandal. Results show that an authentic image offers some level of protection when a scandal occurs.

2.6.1. Theoretical Implications

This research contributes to the literature in many ways. First, it provides a comprehensive understanding of brand authenticity, through the development of a brand authenticity scale. Although recent efforts have been made to conceptualize brand authenticity (e.g., Eggers et al. 2012; Napoli et al. 2014), some issues remained unresolved. Napoli et al. (2014) failed to identify symbolism as a component of authenticity. However, the connection between authenticity and one's principles and morals (e.g., Kernis and Goldman 2006), as well as the ability of authentic brands to reflect important values, is recognized in the literature (e.g., Arnould and Price 2000; Beverland and Farrelly 2010). The current scale captures this symbolic aspect of brand authenticity, extending Napoli et al.'s (2014) results and addressing their call for future research on that topic. The current study provides a valid, reliable, and parsimonious measure of brand authenticity from a consumer perspective.

Second, this research contributes to the literature by identifying brand authenticity antecedents. Although previous studies provide insights regarding the creation of brand authenticity, these studies remained context-specific (e.g., Beverland 2006; Beverland et al. 2008; Ewing et al. 2012), not connected to brands (e.g., Grayson and Martinec 2004), or difficult to turn into managerially useful guidelines (e.g., Brown et al. 2003). The current study not only identifies brand-related antecedents influencing brand authenticity perceptions, but it argues that brand authenticity is assessed through an interplay between three perspectives (objectivist, constructivist, and existentialist). Results of the nomological study support this idea, as consumers used evidence-based (e.g., brand quality), impression-based (e.g., communication style) and self-referential (e.g., brand personality strength) cues to form brand authenticity perceptions. Such cues are associated with objective, constructive and existential forms of authenticity, respectively. Results further show the importance of brand quality and of a brand's communication activities in the creation of brand authenticity perceptions. This highlights the importance of not only communicating authenticity (through iconic cues), but delivering it (through existential cues), a central component of authenticity (Eggers et al. 2012; Gilmore and Pine 2007).

This research also highlights the importance of avoidance of scandals. This is consistent with Holt's (2002) discussions about the new imperative of today's—authentic—brands: "Corporations must reveal their corporate bodies, warts and all, to public scrutiny" (p. 86). Regarding scandals, results are twofold. Although the nomological validity study indicates that brand scandals can negatively affect brands' perceived authenticity, the last study demonstrates that once a high level of brand authenticity is established, a scandal does not harm a brand as much. In other words, an authentic brand benefits from a form protection against scandals, compared to a non-authentic brand. Although an authentic brand was nonetheless negatively affected by a scandal, the negative impact of the scandal was attenuated. This finding contributes to the understanding of authentic brands through a relationship perspective (e.g., Aaker et al. 2004; Ahluwalia et al. 2000), as it is proposed that the high level of consumer commitment associated with such brands plays a role in this effect. By investigating the interplay between brand authenticity and a brand scandal, this study contributes to the literature on brand misconducts by indicating that the positioning of the brand (i.e., authentic or non-authentic) acts as a potential moderator of the negative consequences of such misconducts.

Third, this research extends previous knowledge by revealing the consequences of brand authenticity. Although the desire for authenticity in consumers' experiences, products, and brands is recognized (Gilmore and Pine 2007), knowledge about the effects of brand authenticity is limited. Past research has shown a positive relation between components of brand authenticity (i.e., brand consistency and congruency) and a firm's growth (Eggers et al. 2012), as well as a relation between brand authenticity and purchase intentions (Naopoli et al. 2014). Though those results are important, testing an affective outcome sheds light on the nature of consumer reactions to authentic brands (beyond the mere purchase intention of the product). Revealing that brand authenticity positively affects consumers' attachment is particularly interesting considering the influence of emotional connections on consumer loyalty (Park et al. 2010).

Fourth, this research proposes a moderator of the relationship between antecedents and consumers' brand authenticity perceptions, a worthwhile contribution from the point of view of social constructivists (e.g., Beverland and Farrelly 2010). Results show that the effectiveness of a brand's communication activities (in terms of a "made-in" communication style) on perception of brand authenticity is contingent upon the level of consumer skepticism. Although the role of consumer skepticism in relation to brand authenticity has been proposed in the literature (Beverland et al. 2008; Brown et al. 2003), this research empirically demonstrates that highly skeptical consumers doubt claims related to heritage, origin, and locality. The predicted moderating impact for a brand's "moral" communication style was not observed. Obermiller, Spangenberg, and MacLachlan (2005) indicate that consumer skepticism react negatively to advertisements presenting information appeals (i.e., ads providing brand facts). It is possible that the "made-in" communication style related to a greater extent to information in consumers' minds, compared to a "moral" communication style.

2.6.2 Managerial Contributions

The current research provides brand managers with a tool to assess consumers' perceptions of brand authenticity. This can be useful in terms of initial positioning as well as in the context of brand's repositioning strategies. For example, in 2012, McDonald's launched its "Our food. Your questions" campaign, promoting transparency and honesty in addressing consumers' questions (Krashinsky 2012). The brand authenticity scale could serve as a way to gauge the brand's variation in perceived authenticity (e.g., before and after the campaign) and

could be useful in the design of future campaigns. The scale could further be used to map consumers' perceptions of competing brands in a product category and obtain an overall portrait of perceived authenticity within a sector.

In light of the research findings presented here, managers could identify specific approaches to effectively contribute to consumers' quest for meaningful consumption. Results indicate that this needs to be managed carefully. Study 7 shows that consumers consider a brand's communication activities in their authenticity assessments, but look for evidence that supports that the brand walks its talk (e.g., absence of scandals involving the brand). Although results of study 8 show that an authentic brand will be judged less severely than a non-authentic brand in the presence of a scandal, results nonetheless indicate that authentic brand are vulnerable to such events. Being aware of the detrimental consequences of scandals and behaving in line with the brand' image and values (Eggers et al. 2012) is therefore essential from a managerial perspective. Further, the symbolic dimension of authenticity indicates that consumers are looking for authenticity to add meaning to their lives (Arnould and Price 2000). Becoming a meaningful brand takes time and has to been understood from a consumer perspective, as consumers ultimately decide if the brand is authentic or not (Gilmore and Pine 2007). Eggers et al. (2012) highlight that "authenticity that is in fact mere marketing will be detected very quickly" (p. 7). In sum, brand managers need to deeply understand the nature, complexity and challenges of brand authenticity.

2.6.3 Limitations and Future Research

In light of the in-depth investigation of brand authenticity presented here, it is important to acknowledge that the nature of brand inauthenticity remains unexplored in this research. It is proposed that brands scoring low on the brand authenticity dimensions (longevity, credibility, integrity and symbolism) would be perceived as not authentic, but not necessarily as inauthentic. The qualitative study provides initial insights in terms of brand inauthenticity. One trigger of brand inauthenticity, for Geneviève, is a brand that openly lies to consumers. For her, brands of bottled water are inauthentic: "Water, in general, you don't get what you pay for. It's bullshit. Sometimes it's not even spring water, like Dasani or Aquafina." Although this suggests that transparency—and potentially scandals—are important components of brand inauthenticity, future research is required to broaden the understanding of brand inauthenticity and its relation to

authenticity. Also, although this research involved many product categories and showed robust results, it does not addresses the concept of product authenticity or how it might relate to brand authenticity. It is possible that characteristics such as traditional product aspects, as well as product originality and uniqueness—elements proposed in the arts (e.g., Benjamin 1973)—contribute to a product-related form of authenticity.

This research revealed an interesting paradox. Many researchers propose that commercialization challenges authenticity perceptions and that objects tainted by the market or motivated by commercial considerations, lack authenticity (e.g., Beverland 2006; Holt 2002; Thompson and Arsel 2004). Study 6 supports this relation (for fictitious brands). However, results of the qualitative study reveal that consumers attribute authenticity to successful, profitable, and mass-market brands (e.g., Coca-Cola, Levi's). This is inconsistent with theoretical considerations regarding the contradictory nature of authenticity and commerce. Beverland and Farrelly (2010) noted the same paradox in their results: "unique to our data on connection is the preference for ubiquitous, mass marketed objects and emphasis on the mainstream as authentic" (p. 850). The inclination of consumers to perceive authenticity in elements paradoxically opposed to the concept echoes Eco's (1986) discussions about the cult of fake (i.e., consumers prefer a hyperreality and see authenticity in it). Understanding consumers' negotiations of paradoxes inherent in brand authenticity, in line with Rose and Wood (2005), would be worth exploring.

This chapter addressed several gaps in the literature and provided researchers and practitioners with a scale measuring brand authenticity. The next chapter looks at consumer responses to brand authenticity in a decision context. More specifically, it investigates the situations that might enhance consumers' interest in authentic brands. Three studies test the influence of uncertainty, exclusion, and self-inauthenticity on consumers' attachment towards authentic brands. By looking at brand authenticity as a relevant brand characteristic in a consumer decision context, the following chapter extends the current knowledge on brand authenticity.

Chapter 3: Brand Authenticity and Consumer Responses

The demand for authenticity in everyday consumption has existed throughout the ages and remains strong today (Grayson and Martinec 2004). Authenticity resonates with consumers who are looking for what is real and genuine (Fine 2003; Rose and Wood 2005). Although authenticity has been studied from many perspectives that converge on the conclusion that consumers seek authenticity (e.g., Beverland and Farrelly 2010; Gilmore and Pine 2007), it can be argued that some oversimplification surrounds this conclusion. Do consumers *always* appreciate authenticity in a brand to the same extent? Alternatively, are there some situations that make the authenticity of a brand more attractive, from a consumer perspective? This chapter examines the impact of brand authenticity on consumer responses. More specifically, it focuses on situations that might increase consumers' interest in authentic brands. Previous research supports the possibility that contextual and individual variables influence the importance placed on brand authenticity. Beverland, Lindgreen and Vonk (2008) argue that indexical authenticity (i.e., authenticity assessed through objective brand characteristics) is important for consumers when they make a quick judgment about the genuineness of a product. Gilmore and Pine (2007) propose that the search for authenticity varies in importance depending on individuals' life stage: "everyone cycles through periods where authenticity matters most" (p. 20). Authenticity is particularly significant in "transformation stages" (p. 20), when individuals examine their identity and look for their real selves. Beverland and Farrelly (2010) argue for a goal-contingent nature of authenticity. For example, when looking for control over their consumption decisions, consumers attribute authenticity to brands that provide them with verifiable information. In sum, there is preliminary evidence that authenticity may be particularly important—and thus influence consumer responses to a greater extent—in some situations. Extending the previous literature, this research proposes that consumer responses towards an authentic brand (compared to a non-authentic brand) will be more positive when consumers seek to satisfy one of the following three individual motivations: certainty, need to belong, and expression of the authentic self.

Prior to testing these predictions, this chapter presents a review of the literature on consumer motivations and their relation to authentic brands. For each motivation (i.e., consumer certainty, need to belong, and expression of the authentic self), it is proposed that consumers value an authentic brand to a greater extent than a non-authentic brand in situations of

uncertainty, exclusion, and self-inauthenticity, respectively. A moderating variable is further proposed for each motivation (risk aversion, brand engagement in self-concept, and personal authenticity). Three studies are conducted to test the hypotheses. Results support in part the effects of two individual motivations: need to belong and expression of the authentic self. First, consumers with a high level of brand engagement in self-concept expressed more emotional attachment (affection, passion, and connection) towards an authentic brand (compared to a non-authentic brand) in a context of exclusion (compared to a context of inclusion). Further, consumers with a high level of personal authenticity expressed more emotional attachment (affection, passion, and connection) towards an authentic brand (compared to a non-authentic brand) in a context of self-inauthenticity (compared to a context of self-authenticity). These findings contribute to the branding and authenticity literature, and highlight the role of brand authenticity in helping consumers satisfy individual motivations. The chapter ends with a discussion of the results as well as theoretical and managerial contributions.

3.1 Consumer Motivations

3.1.1 Certainty

The search for certainty and the need to transform uncertainty into certainty is a central aspect of human behavior (Loewenstein 1994). Research in psychology and economics provides evidence that consumers usually prefer certainty to uncertainty (Laran and Tsiros 2013; Lee and Qiu 2009). Uncertainty is associated with negative affective consequences (e.g., Calvo and Castillo 2001; Loewenstein 1994; for exceptions in the context of promotions, see Goldsmith and Amir 2010 and Lee and Qiu 2009), motivating consumers to resolve this state through various strategies (Driscoll and Lanzetta 1965; Lanzetta and Driscoll 1968).

Previous literature supports the ability of authentic brands to provide certainty to consumers. Authenticity is associated with trust, control, and a "sense of hard evidence and unequivocal verification" (Grayson and Martinec 2004, p. 302). Synonyms of authenticity include being unquestionable and being actually and exactly what is claimed (Grayson and Martinec 2004; Stevenson 2010). Beverland and Farrelly (2010) explain that consumers connect authenticity with the ability to make informed choices (e.g., the brand ING and its transparent claims). They also note that consumers attribute authenticity to brands that deliver what they promise (e.g., McDonald's and its guaranteed consumption experience). Beverland et al. (2008)

indicate that consumers use authenticity cues as a guarantee of the product's origin and history, and that this helps them gain control over their decisions. Lunardo and Guerinet (2007) indicate that perceptions of authenticity decrease perceived risk, as authenticity acts as a signal conveying information about the quality of the product.

It is proposed that the influence of brand authenticity on behavioral (i.e., purchase intentions) and emotional (i.e., emotional brand attachment) outcomes increases in a context of uncertainty. Further, it is predicted that the interactive effect of uncertainty and brand authenticity will be stronger for risk averse consumers. Individuals differ in respect to the amount of risk they are willing to incur in a given situation, a basic predisposition called risk aversion (Mandrik and Bao 2005). This study predicts that the effects of uncertainty will be stronger for consumers with high risk aversion. Considering that such consumers prefer a "guaranteed outcome over a probabilistic one" (Qualls and Puto 1989, p. 180), in uncertain situations, these consumers will be motivated to search for ways to reduce their discomfort. Choosing authentic brands will therefore exert a stronger influence on consumers with high risk aversion. More specifically:

H1a: In a context of uncertainty, consumers will express higher purchase intentions for an authentic brand (compared to a non-authentic brand). This effect of brand authenticity will not hold for consumers in a context of certainty.

H1b: The interactive effect of uncertainty and brand authenticity on purchase intentions for the authentic brand will be moderated by risk aversion, such that it will be stronger for consumers with high risk aversion (compared to consumers with low risk aversion).

H2a: In a context of uncertainty, consumers will express a stronger emotional brand attachment for an authentic brand (compared to a non-authentic brand). This effect of brand authenticity will not hold for consumers in a context of certainty.

H2b: The interactive effect of uncertainty and brand authenticity on emotional brand attachment towards the authentic brand will be moderated by risk aversion, such that it will be stronger for consumers with high risk aversion (compared to consumers with low risk aversion).

3.1.2 Need to belong

The need to belong is a fundamental human motive (Baumeister and Leary 1995; Gardner, Pickett, and Brewer 2000; Leary et al. 1995). Known as a basic drive to connect with others, it motivates human beings to form meaningful and enduring relationships, and to maintain acceptable levels of belongingness (Gardner et al. 2000; Loveland, Smeesters, and Mandel 2010).

The prediction that individuals can satisfy their need to belong through the consumption of authentic brands is rooted in the literature on authentic brands. Authentic brands remain relevant through time (Gilmore and Pine 2007), and induce conversations and connections across generations (Beverland and Farrelly 2010; Gilmore and Pine 2007). Authentic brands also generate a sense of history and a strong heritage (Beverland 2006), providing consumers with a sense of continuity and a connection with previous and future generations (Grayson and Martinec 2004; Markin 1969). Further, authentic brands help consumers feel connected to others through their accepted role in the social world. Beverland and Farrelly (2010) argue that authentic brands have gained cognitive legitimacy and are an inevitable part of social reality. Thus, the common nature and omnipresence of authentic brands induce a sense of belongingness (Beverland and Farrelly 2010; Kates 2004). Lastly, authentic brands provide consumers with a source of common identification and are associated with shared symbolic meaning (Napoli et al. 2014). Similarly to icons (Holt 2002), authentic brands unite people.

In this research, consumers' need to belong is operationalized in terms of social exclusion. Social exclusion is known for activating consumers' need to belong, increasing pro-social behavior and motivating social reconnections attempts (Lee and Shrum 2012; Mead et al. 2011; Loveland et al. 2010; Williams 2007). It is predicted that the influence of brand authenticity on behavioral (i.e., purchase intentions) and emotional (i.e., emotional brand attachment) outcomes increases in a context of social exclusion, and that the interactive effect of exclusion and brand authenticity will be stronger for consumers with high brand engagement in self-concept. Brand engagement in self-concept captures the general strength of consumers' engagement with brands and their inclination to use brands to define their identity (Sprott, Czellar, and Spangenberg 2009). Although brand engagement in self-concept focuses on how brands are part of one's self-concept, it also relates to the extent to which the self-concept is construed with regard to other people. Research shows a positive and significant relation

between consumers' brand engagement in self-concept and consumers' tendency to construe their self around a network of relevant people, such as close friends or relatives (i.e., construct of relational-interdependent self-construal; Cross, Bacon, and Morris 2000). Accordingly, consumers with high brand engagement in self-concept should be affected to a greater extent by exclusion attempts, considering their greater inclination to form relationships with others. Further, such consumers, by possessing to a greater extent brand-related schemas (Sprott et al. 2009), should perceive authentic brands as potential agents that help restore levels of connection, in a context of exclusion. More specifically:

> **H3a**: In a context of exclusion, consumers will express higher purchase intentions for an authentic brand (compared to a non-authentic brand). This effect of brand authenticity will not hold for consumers in a context of inclusion.
>
> **H3b**: The interactive effect of exclusion and brand authenticity on purchase intentions for the authentic brand will be moderated by consumers' brand engagement in self-concept, such that it will be stronger for consumers with high brand engagement in self-concept (compared to consumers with low brand engagement in self-concept).
>
> **H4a**: In a context of exclusion, consumers will express a stronger emotional brand attachment for an authentic brand (compared to a non-authentic brand). This effect of brand authenticity will not hold for consumers in a context of inclusion.
>
> **H4b**: The interactive effect of exclusion and brand authenticity on emotional brand attachment towards the authentic brand will be moderated by brand engagement in self-concept, such that it will be stronger for consumers with high brand engagement in self-concept (compared to consumers with low brand engagement in self-concept).

3.1.3 Expression of the Authentic Self

The search and expression of one's authentic self is a central concern of human beings (Harter 2002). In philosophy, being true to oneself is seen as a quest (Kernis and Goldman 2006). Research in psychology states that people are motivated to express who they really are and that being authentic is a central motivation (Harter 2002; Wood et al. 2008). This need arises in the current consumption world characterized by standardization and commoditization (Arnould and Price 2000; Cohen 1988). Confronted with feelings of inauthenticity (i.e., "the

shallowness of their lives and the inauthenticity of their experiences"; MacCannell 1973, p. 590), individuals are motivated to establish the authenticity of their self-concept.

Previous literature supports the role of authentic brands in helping consumers express their authentic self. Consumers use products to define themselves and express their self-concept (Aaker 1999; Belk 1988). Although one's self-concept can be defined in terms of an actual (i.e., who I really am) and an ideal (i.e., who I want to be) component, the importance for consumers to express their actual—and therefore authentic—self through brands has been highlighted recently (Malär et al. 2011). Consumers are thus looking for affiliation with brands that help express who they really are, in line with the existential perspective of authenticity. The symbolic nature of authentic brands offers consumers potential for identity construction by providing self-referential cues such as values, roles, and relationships (Beverland and Farrelly 2010). Through the consumption of authentic brands, consumers define their own (and authentic) identity (Firat and Venkatesh 1995), express their morals and principles (Beverland and Farrelly 2010) and feel they are true to themselves (Arnould and Price 2000). As summarized by Holt (2002): "to serve as valuable ingredients in producing the self, branded cultural resources must be defined as authentic" (p. 83).

Consumers are sometimes exposed to situations that will make them feel temporarily self-inauthentic or not true to themselves (Gino, Norton, and Ariely 2010). Committing an unethical action such as cheating (Cornelissen et al. 2013), or engaging in a behaviour that is not good for the environment (especially for individuals for whom environmental issues are important; Peloza, White, and Shang 2013), are some examples of situations leading to a feeling of self-inauthenticity. This research proposes that if confronted with a feeling of self-inauthenticity, consumers prefer authentic brands to restore their authentic conception of self, in line with self-consistency theory. This theory posits that people engage in behaviors consistent with the beliefs they hold about themselves (Sirgy 1982; Swann, Stein-Seroussi, and Giesler 1992) and that in situations of inconsistency, individuals act in ways to restore a coherent sense of self. Authentic brands, through their symbolic value and their potential connection to consumers' actual self, should help maintain consistency in a context of self-inauthenticity. More specifically, it is predicted that the influence of brand authenticity on behavioral (i.e., purchase intentions) and emotional (i.e., emotional brand attachment) outcomes increases in a context of induced self-inauthenticity, and that the interactive effect of situational feelings of self-

inauthenticity and brand authenticity will vary depending on consumers' personal authenticity. Personal authenticity is an enduring trait which involves knowing and accepting oneself, being true to oneself in most situations, and living in accordance with one's values and beliefs (Wood et al. 2008). Research on self-standards and self-discrepancy indicates that individuals hold standards for their own behaviors and that falling short of those standards (e.g., acting against one's principles) creates dissonance, which motivates a coping mechanism (Peloza, White, and Shang 2013; Thibodeau and Aronson 1992). In the current context, people with high levels of personal authenticity consider living in an authentic way as an important self-standard. Making salient a situation of self-inauthenticity will increase, for this segment of consumers, the desire to live up to their self-standard. Authentic brands—and their potential to serve as a resource for identity construction—are therefore expected to resonate to a greater extent to consumers with high levels of personal authenticity, compared to consumers with lower levels of personal authenticity, in a context of induced self-inauthenticity.

H5a: In a context of situational self-inauthenticity, consumers will express higher purchase intentions for an authentic brand (compared to a non-authentic brand). This effect of brand authenticity will not hold for consumers in a context of self-authenticity.

H5b: The interactive effect of situational self-inauthenticity and brand authenticity on purchase intentions for the authentic brand will be moderated by personal authenticity, such that it will be stronger for consumers with relatively high personal authenticity (compared to consumers with relatively lower personal authenticity).

H6a: In a context of situational self-inauthenticity, consumers will express higher emotional brand connection for an authentic brand (compared to a non-authentic brand). This effect of brand authenticity will not hold for consumers in a context of self-authenticity.

H6b: The interactive effect of situational self-inauthenticity and brand authenticity on emotional brand attachment towards the authentic brand will be moderated by personal authenticity, such that it will be stronger for consumers with relatively high personal authenticity (compared to consumers with relatively lower personal authenticity).

The remainder of the chapter is organized as follows. A pretest establishes that advertisements created for a fictitious brand reflect different levels of brand authenticity, while being similar in terms of brand attitude and other brand-related variables. The three studies developed to test the hypotheses related to the impact of uncertainty (Study 9), exclusion (Study 10), and self-inauthenticity (Study 11) on consumer responses towards authentic brands follow. The chapter ends with a discussion of theoretical and managerial implications, as well as limitations and directions for future research.

3.2 Pretests

Stimuli. Three advertisements (authentic, non-authentic, control) for a fictitious brand of sports apparel ("Liva") were created. To create an overall image of authenticity while referring to the four main dimensions (longevity, credibility, integrity, symbolism), the authentic advertisement presented the following sentences: "High quality sports apparel that reflects who you are", "We are passionate about our products and care about our customers", "Providing sports apparel since 1950", and "The authentic choice you can count on". The non-authentic advertisement presented the following sentences: "High quality sports apparel for all your activities", "We offer our customers a variety of styles, fabrics, and colors", "Providing sports apparel since 2012", and "The athletic choice for your activities". The control advertisement presented only the brand name. Appendix 11 presents the advertisements.

Sample and procedures. Fifty students (45.9% female, average age: 23.9 years) participated in an online study in exchange for course credits. Participants were randomly assigned to one condition (authentic advertisement, non-authentic advertisement, control advertisement). Each participant viewed the advertisement for the fictitious sports apparel brand and then expressed their opinion about the advertised brand.

Measures. Perceived brand authenticity served as the main dependent variable and was measured with 17-item scale (longevity, credibility, integrity, symbolism). Other measures included brand attitude (Nan and Heo 2007), brand quality ("How would you evaluate the quality of the brand Liva?" low quality/high quality), abstractness of the information presented (Aggarwal and Law 2005) and brand familiarity ("What is your level of familiarity with the brand Liva?" not at all familiar/very familiar). Appendix 12 presents the measures used in this study and their list of items.

Results. The authentic ad was perceived as more authentic than the non-authentic ad. Results on the longevity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism dimensions confirmed the success of the manipulations (Longevity: $Mean_{authentic}$ = 4.81, $Mean_{non-authentic}$ = 2.82, $t(48)$ = 6.06, p < .01; Credibility: $Mean_{authentic}$ = 4.80, $Mean_{non-authentic}$ = 4.04, $t(48)$ = 2.02, p < .05; Integrity: $Mean_{authentic}$ = 4.52, $Mean_{non-authentic}$ = 3.46, $t(48)$ = 2.98, p < .01; Symbolism: $Mean_{authentic}$ = 4.26, $Mean_{non-authentic}$ = 3.32, $t(48)$ = 2.31, p < .05). Further, the authentic ad scored higher on each dimension compared to the control ad (Longevity: $Mean_{authentic}$ = 4.81, $Mean_{control}$ = 3.29, $t(48)$ = 4.65, p < .001; Credibility: $Mean_{authentic}$ = 4.80, $Mean_{control}$ = 3.91, $t(48)$ = 2.58, p < .05; Integrity: $Mean_{authentic}$ = 4.52, $Mean_{control}$ = 3.62, $t(48)$ = 3.62, p < .05; Symbolism: $Mean_{authentic}$ = 4.28, $Mean_{control}$ = 3.25, $t(48)$ = 2.92, p < .01), whereas ratings on each authenticity dimension were similar for the non-authentic and the control ad (Longevity: $Mean_{non-authentic}$ = 2.82, $Mean_{control}$ = 3.29, $t(48)$ = -1.31, p = .20; Credibility: $Mean_{non-authentic}$ = 4.04, $Mean_{control}$ = 3.91, $t(48)$ = -.42, p = .72; Integrity: $Mean_{non-authentic}$ = 3.46, $Mean_{control}$ = 3.62, $t(48)$ = -.43, p = .67; Symbolism: $Mean_{non-authentic}$ = 3.32, $Mean_{control}$ = 3.25, $t(48)$ = .17, p = .86). Regarding the control variables, the authentic and the non-authentic ads did not differ in terms of brand attitude ($Mean_{authentic}$ = 4.25, $Mean_{non-authentic}$ = 3.63, $t(48)$ = 1.38, p > .18), abstractness of the information ($Mean_{authentic}$ = 3.50, $Mean_{non-authentic}$ = 3.03, $t(48)$ = 1.07, p = .29), and familiarity ($Mean_{authentic}$ = 1.56, $Mean_{non-authentic}$ = 1.76, $t(48)$ = -5.45, p = .58). The authentic advertisement was associated with a higher level of quality ($Mean_{authentic}$ = 4.48, $Mean_{non-authentic}$ = 3.56, $t(48)$ = 2.04, p < .05). Compared to the control ad, the authentic ad was perceived as less abstract (p < .05) and as having a higher level of quality (p < .05), but was similar in terms of brand attitude (p = .15) and familiarity (p = .27). The non-authentic ad and the control ad did not differ for all the control variables (ps > .12). Overall, these results were judged satisfactory.

3.3 Study 9: The Impact of Uncertainty

3.3.1 Method

Sample, procedures and measures. One hundred and twenty-six adult consumers (52.1% female, average age: 53.1 years) from a Canadian panel participated in an online study. Participants were randomly assigned to a condition in a 2 (manipulation: uncertainty, certainty) x 2 (advertisement: authentic, non-authentic) between-participants design. Certainty and uncertainty were manipulated by asking participants to rate their certainty about their ability to

perform a list of tasks (Grant and Tybout 2008). In the certainty condition, participants rated seven tasks for which they were likely to express a high level of certainty (e.g., "How certain are you of your ability to drive a car?" very uncertain/very certain), and in the uncertainty condition, they rated seven tasks for which they were likely to express a high level of uncertainty (e.g, "How uncertain are you of your ability to ride a unicycle?" very uncertain/very certain). Following the priming procedure, participants were asked to express their overall level of certainty (Grant and Tybout 2008). They were then exposed to the authentic or the non-authentic advertisement ("You will now see an advertisement for a brand of sports apparel. Please consider this advertisement as we will be asking questions about the brand featured in it.") and were asked to indicate their purchase intentions (Peloza, White, and Shang 2013) and their level of emotional brand attachment (Thomson, MacInnis, and Park 2005) towards the brand featured in the advertisement. The advertisements were the same as the authentic and inauthentic ad in the pretest (see Appendix 11). Participants indicated their current mood (Wan and Rucker 2013) and completed the following scales: brand authenticity ("Please indicate how authentic you perceive the brand Liva to be," not authentic at all/very authentic), brand attitude (Nan and Heo 2007), brand quality (Frazier and Lassar 1996), emotional and informational tone of the advertisement (Jourdan 1999), advertisement believability, and appeal. Participants then completed the risk aversion scale (Mandrik and Bao 2005), and demographic questions. Appendix 13 and 14 presents the manipulations and measures used in the study.

   Manipulation checks. An ANOVA with one fixed factor (uncertainty/certainty) and level of certainty as the dependent variable, resulted in a significant effect ($F(1,124) = 43.79$, $p < .001$). Mean comparisons confirmed the effectiveness of the uncertainty manipulation: participants in the uncertainty condition felt less certainty following the priming procedure, compared to participants in the certainty condition ($Mean_{uncertainty} = 4.66$, $Mean_{certainty} = 6.26$, $t(124) = -6.12$, $p < .001$). The manipulation did not affect mood ($Mean_{uncertainty} = 5.20$, $Mean_{certainty} = 5.38$, $t(124) = -.80$, $p > .40$). Regarding the advertisements, the difference in perceived brand authenticity between the authentic and the non-authentic advertisement was marginally significant ($Mean_{authentic} = 4.32$, $Mean_{non-authentic} = 3.90$, $t(124) = 1.57$, one-tailed $p = .06$). Considering that the pretest results as well as the results obtained for the following studies showed consistent and significant authenticity differences for the same advertisements, these results were judged as the basis of a conservative test of brand authenticity effects. The two

advertisements did not differ in terms of brand attitude ($\text{Mean}_{\text{authentic}} = 4.41$, $\text{Mean}_{\text{non-authentic}} = 4.06$, $t(124) = 1.37$, $p = .17$), brand quality ($\text{Mean}_{\text{authentic}} = 4.37$, $\text{Mean}_{\text{non-authentic}} = 4.01$, $t(124) = 1.41$, $p = .16$), informational tone of the ad ($\text{Mean}_{\text{authentic}} = 3.59$, $\text{Mean}_{\text{non-authentic}} = 3.28$, $t(124) = 1.11$, $p = .27$), believability ($\text{Mean}_{\text{authentic}} = 3.27$, $\text{Mean}_{\text{non-authentic}} = 3.95$, $t(124) = 1.15$, $p = .25$) and appeal ($\text{Mean}_{\text{authentic}} = 3.82$, $\text{Mean}_{\text{non-authentic}} = 3.50$, $t(124) = 1.03$, $p = .31$). The emotional tone of the ad was higher for authentic ad compared to non-authentic ad ($\text{Mean}_{\text{authentic}} = 3.96$, $\text{Mean}_{\text{non-authentic}} = 3.39$, $t(124) = 2.06$, $p < .05$). As states of certainty and uncertainty might influence how consumers process information (e.g., Wan and Rucker 2013; Weary and Jacobson 1997), all previous measures (brand authenticity, brand attitude, brand quality, emotional and informational tone of the ad, believability, appeal) were compared for the two certainty conditions. Results showed no difference due to the certainty manipulation ($ps > .41$).

3.3.2 Results

An ANOVA with two factors (uncertainty manipulation: uncertainty/certainty, brand: authentic/non-authentic) and purchase intentions as the dependent variable revealed no significant effects ($ps > .32$). H1a was not supported.

To test the moderating effect of risk aversion on the interactive effect of uncertainty and brand authenticity on purchase intentions proposed in H1b, two regressions were executed. In a context of uncertainty, purchase intentions were regressed on brand (0 = non-authentic, 1 = authentic), risk aversion (continuous, mean-centered), and their interaction. The effects of brand ($b = -.31$, $t = -.86$, $p = .39$), risk aversion ($b = -.09$, $t = -.38$, $p = .71$), as well as the interaction ($b = -.50$, $t = -1.44$, $p = .15$) were not significant. The same regression was conducted in a context of certainty. The effects of brand ($b = .07$, $t = .19$, $p = .85$), risk aversion ($b = -.09$, $t = -.33$, $p = .74$), as well as the interaction ($b = .48$, $t = 1.28$, $p = .20$) were not significant. H1b was not supported.

To test H2a, a MANOVA with two factors (uncertainty manipulation: uncertainty/certainty, brand: authentic/non-authentic), affection (friendly, affectionate, loved), passion (delighted, captivated, passionate), and connection (connected, bonded, attached) as the dependent variables revealed a significant effect of the uncertainty manipulation ($F(2,120) = 2.92$, $p < .05$). All other effects were not significant ($ps > .39$). At the univariate level, the effect of the uncertainty manipulation was significant on connection ($F(1,122) = 4.32$, $p < .05$).

Overall, participants expressed higher connection towards the brand in a context of certainty, compared to a context of uncertainty (Mean$_{certainty}$ = 3.33, Mean$_{certainty}$ = 2.68, $t(124)$ = -2.14, $p <$ .05). These results do not provide support for H2a.

To test the moderating effect of risk aversion on the interactive effect of uncertainty and brand authenticity on emotional brand attachment as proposed in H2b, a series of regressions were executed. For each condition (uncertainty and certainty), the components of emotional brand attachment (affection, passion, connection) were regressed individually on brand (0 = non-authentic, 1 = authentic), risk aversion (continuous, mean-centered), and their interaction. In a context of uncertainty, a regression of affection on the brand condition, risk aversion, and the interaction term was conducted. The effects of brand (b = -.39, t = -1.11, p = .27), of risk aversion (b = -.18, t = -.81, p = .42), and of the interaction (b = -.26, t = -.87, p = .39) were not significant. For passion, the effects of brand (b = -.17, t = -.47, p = .67), of risk aversion (b = -.06, t = -.24, p = .81), and of the interaction (b = -.45, t = -1.34, p = .18) were not significant. For connection, the effects of brand (b = -.31, t = -.73, p = .47), of risk aversion (b = -.01, t = -.04, p = .97), and of the interaction (b = -.35, t = -.98, p = .33) were not significant. In a context of certainty, a regression of affection on the brand condition, risk aversion, and the interaction term was conducted. The effects of brand (b = .29, t = .74, p = .46), of risk aversion (b = -.12, t = -.41, p = .68), and of the interaction (b = .60, t = 1.59, p = .12) were not significant. For passion, the effects of brand (b = .21, t = .49, p = .63), of risk aversion (b = -.01, t = -.04, p = .97), and of the interaction (b = .57, t = 1.42, p = .16) were not significant. For connection, the effects of brand (b = .19, t = -.26, p = .79), of risk aversion (b = -.08, t = -.26, p = .79), and of the interaction (b = .64, t = 1.62, p = .12) were not significant. These results do not provide support for H2b.

3.3.3 Discussion

This study tested whether the influence of brand authenticity on purchase intentions and emotional brand attachment increases in a context of uncertainty (H1a and H2a), as well as if these effects are stronger for highly risk averse consumers (H1b and H2b). Results do not support the predictions. Consumers did not express more positive reactions towards an authentic brand, compared to a non-authentic brand, in a context of uncertainty. The next study examines the impact of exclusion on consumers' reactions towards authentic brands.

3.4 Study 10: The Impact of Exclusion

3.4.1 Method

Sample, procedures and measures. One hundred and fourteen adult consumers (60% female, average age: 51.6 years) from a Canadian panel participated in an online study. Participants were randomly assigned to a condition in a 2 (manipulation: exclusion, inclusion) x 2 (advertisement: authentic, non-authentic) between-participants design. Exclusion and inclusion were manipulated similarly to Maner et al. (2007). Participants in the social exclusion condition were asked to think and write about a time they felt rejected or excluded by others, whereas participants in the social inclusion condition were asked to think and write about a time they felt accepted by others. Following the priming procedure, participants were asked how they felt when describing their previous experience (rejected/accepted, alone/included; Maner et al. 2007). Participants were then exposed to the authentic or the non-authentic advertisement and were asked to indicate their purchase intentions (Peloza et al. 2013) and their level of emotional brand attachment (Thomson et al. 2005) towards the brand featured in the advertisement. The advertisements were the same as the authentic and inauthentic ad in the pretest (see Appendix 11). Participants reported their mood (Wan and Rucker 2013) and completed a series of scales about the brand featured in the advertisement: brand authenticity ("Please indicate how authentic you perceive the brand Liva to be," not authentic at all/very authentic), brand attitude (Nan and Heo 2007), brand quality (Frazier and Lassar 1996), emotional and informational tone of the advertisement (Jourdan 1999), advertisement believability, and appeal. Participants then completed the brand engagement in self-concept scale (BESC; Sprott et al. 2009) and demographic questions. Appendix 15 and 16 presents the manipulations and measures used in the study.

Manipulation checks. An ANOVA with one fixed factor (exclusion/inclusion) and feeling of exclusion as the dependent variable, resulted in a significant effect ($F(1,112) = 60.62$, $p < .001$). Mean comparisons confirmed the effectiveness of the manipulation ($Mean_{exclusion} = 2.81$, $Mean_{inclusion} = 5.27$, $t(112) = -7.79$, $p < .001$). The manipulation affected mood ($Mean_{exclusion} = 4.18$, $Mean_{inclusion} = 5.23$, $t(112) = -3.43$, $p < .01$). The authentic ad was perceived as more authentic than the non-authentic ad ($Mean_{authentic} = 4.49$, $Mean_{non-authentic} = 3.90$, $t(112) = 1.95$, $p = .05$). The two advertisements did not differ in terms of brand attitude ($Mean_{authentic} = 4.29$, $Mean_{non-authentic} = 3.92$, $t(112) = 1.26$, $p = .21$), brand quality ($Mean_{authentic} = 4.21$, $Mean_{non-authentic}$

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= 4.03, $t(112) = .67$, $p = .50$), informational tone of the ad (Mean$_{authentic}$ = 3.54, Mean$_{non-authentic}$ = 3.68, $t(112) = -.50$, $p = .62$), emotional tone of the ad (Mean$_{authentic}$ = 3.81, Mean$_{non-authentic}$ = 3.67, $t(112) = .48$, $p = .64$), believability (Mean$_{authentic}$ = 4.25, Mean$_{non-authentic}$ = 4.03, $t(112) = .69$, $p = .50$), and appeal (Mean$_{authentic}$ = 3.60, Mean$_{non-authentic}$ = 3.41, $t(112) = .58$, $p = .56$).

3.4.2 Results

An ANOVA with two factors (exclusion manipulation: exclusion/inclusion, brand: authentic/non-authentic), purchase intentions as the dependent variable, and mood as a covariate revealed a significant main effect of mood ($F(1,109) = 6.53$, $p < .01$). Participants in a good mood were more likely to state that they would purchase the brand (Mean$_{good\ mood}$ = 3.36, Mean$_{bad\ mood}$ = 4.29, $t(103) = -3.27$, $p < .01$). Other effects were not significant ($ps > .20$). H3a was not supported.

To test the moderating effect of brand engagement in self-concept on the interactive effect of exclusion and brand authenticity on purchase intentions proposed in H3b, two regressions were executed. In a context of exclusion, purchase intentions were regressed on brand (0 = non-authentic, 1 = authentic), BESC (continuous, mean-centered), and their interaction. The effects of brand ($b = .67$, $t = 1.65$, $p = .10$), BESC ($b = .25$, $t = 1.25$, $p = .22$), and their interaction ($b = .35$, $t = 1.25$, $p = .23$) were not significant. In a context of inclusion, the same regression was executed. The effects of brand ($b = =.01$, $t = -.01$, $p = .90$), BESC ($b = .41$, $t = 1.51$, $p =.18$), and their interaction ($b = -.09$, $t = -.35$, $p = .73$) were not significant. H3b was not supported.

To test H4a, a MANOVA with two factors (exclusion manipulation: exclusion/inclusion, brand: authentic/non-authentic), affection (friendly, affectionate, loved), passion (delighted, captivated, passionate), and connection (connected, bonded, attached) as dependent variables, and mood as a covariate, revealed a significant effect of mood ($F(3,107) = 4.55$, $p < .05$) and a marginally significant effect of the interaction between the exclusion manipulation and the brand ($F(3,107) = 2.41$, $p = .07$). All other effects were not significant ($ps > .30$). At the univariate level, the interaction effect was significant on affection ($F(1,109) = 5.99$, $p < .05$), and marginally significant on passion ($F(1,109) = 3.71$, $p = .06$) and connection ($F(1,109) = 3.15$, $p = .07$). Overall, participants expressed directionally more affection (Mean$_{authentic}$ = 3.64, Mean$_{non-authentic}$ = 3.03, $t(63) = -1.69$, $p = .10$), passion (Mean$_{authentic}$ = 3.31, Mean$_{non-authentic}$ = 2.76, $t(63) = -$

1.30, $p = .19$), and connection (Mean$_\text{authentic}$ = 3.04, Mean$_\text{non-authentic}$= 2.77, $t(63) = -.68$, $p = .49$), towards the authentic brand, compared to the non-authentic brand, in a context of exclusion, as well as directionally more affection (Mean$_\text{authentic}$ = 3.13, Mean$_\text{non-authentic}$= 3.95, $t(47) = 1.75$, $p =$ .09), passion (Mean$_\text{authentic}$ = 2.83, Mean$_\text{non-authentic}$= 3.55, $t(47) = 1.48$, $p = .15$), and connection (Mean$_\text{authentic}$ = 2.59, Mean$_\text{non-authentic}$= 3.47, $t(47) = 1.78$, $p = .08$), towards the non-authentic brand, compared to the authentic brand, in a context of inclusion. These results provide some support for H4a.

To test the moderating effect of BESC on the interactive effect of exclusion and brand authenticity on emotional brand attachment as proposed in H4b, a series of regressions were executed. For each condition (exclusion and inclusion), the components of emotional brand attachment (affection, passion, connection) were regressed individually on brand (0 = non-authentic, 1 = authentic), BESC (continuous, mean-centered), and their interaction. In a context of inclusion, a regression of affection on the brand condition, BESC, and the interaction term was conducted. The effects of brand ($b = -.39$, $t = -1.01$, $p = .32$) and of the interaction ($b = -.01$, $t = -.02$, $p = .98$) were not significant. The effect of BESC ($b = .56$, $t = 4.02$, $p < .001$) was significant. For passion, the effects of brand ($b = -.26$, $t = -.65$, $p = .52$) and of the interaction ($b = -.20$, $t = -.23$, $p = .36$) were not significant. The effect of BESC ($b = .66$, $t = 4.56$, $p < .001$) was significant. For connection, the effects of brand ($b = -.44$, $t = -1.03$, $p = .31$) and of the interaction ($b = -.18$, $t = -.80$, $p = .43$) were not significant. The effect of BESC ($b = .63$, $t = 4.07$, $p < .001$) was significant. In a context of exclusion, a regression of affection on the brand condition, BESC, and the interaction term was conducted. The effects of brand ($b = .72$, $t = 2.62$, $p < .05$) and BESC ($b = .41$, $t = 2.56$, $p = .013$) were significant, but the interaction ($b = .18$, $t = .81$, $p = .42$) was not significant. For passion, the effects of brand ($b = .67$, $t = .1.97$, $p = .05$) and of BESC ($b = .50$, $t = 2.86$, $p < .01$) were significant, but the interaction ($b = .33$, $t = 1.33$, $p = .19$) was not significant. For connection, the effect of brand ($b = .41$, $t = 1.24$, $p = .22$) was not significant. The effect of BESC ($b = .42$, $t = 2.55$, $p < .05$) was significant, and the effect of the interaction ($b = .43$, $t = 1.88$, $p = .06$) was marginally significant. To explore the interaction between the brand condition and BESC on connection in a context of exclusion, spotlight analyses were conducted at higher and lower levels of BESC. For individuals high in BESC (+ 1SD), the effect of the brand was significant, such that these individuals expressed higher connection towards the authentic brand than the non-authentic brand ($b = 1.71$, $t = 2.69$, $p < .05$).

For individuals low in BESC (- 1SD), the effect of the brand was not significant ($b = -.52$, $t = -.54$, $p = .60$). Overall, H4b is supported for the connection component of emotional brand attachment. This pattern of results is illustrated in figure 3.

Figure 3

Consumers with High Brand Engagement in Self-Concept: The Interactive Effect of Exclusion/Inclusion and Brand Authenticity on Connection (H4b)

3.4.3 Discussion

This study tested whether the influence of brand authenticity on purchase intentions and emotional brand attachment increases in a context of exclusion (H3a and H4a), and if these effects are stronger for high brand engagement consumers (H3b and H4b). Results provide some support for H4a and H4b. Overall, participants expressed marginally more emotional brand attachment towards an authentic brand, compared to a non-authentic brand, in a context of exclusion. Further, participants with high levels of brand engagement in self-concept in a context of exclusion showed more connection towards an authentic brand, compared to a non-authentic brand. These patterns were not observed in a context of inclusion. This provides preliminary evidence for the role of authentic brands in helping consumers feel connected. The next study looks at the impact of self-inauthenticity on consumers' reactions towards authentic brands.

3.5. Study 11: The Impact of Self-Inauthenticity

3.5.1 Method

Sample, procedures and measures. One hundred and five adult consumers (60% female, average age: 50.5 years) from a Canadian panel participated in an online study. Participants were randomly assigned to a condition in a 2 (self-inauthenticity manipulation: self-inauthenticity, self-authenticity) x 2 (advertisement: authentic, non-authentic) between-participants design. Self-inauthenticity and self-authenticity were manipulated similarly to Kifer et al.'s (2013) study. Participants in the self-inauthenticity condition were asked to think and write about a time when they felt inauthentic (i.e., not true to themselves). Participants in the self-authenticity condition were asked to think and write about a time they felt authentic (i.e., true to themselves). After this priming procedure, participants were asked to express how authentic they felt ("How did you feel while thinking about your experience?" inauthentic/authentic, not at all like myself/very much like myself). The exposure to the authentic or the non-authentic advertisement followed. The advertisements were the same as in the pretest (i.e., fictitious advertisement for the brand of sports apparel "Liva"). Purchase intentions (Peloza et al. 2013) and emotional brand connection (Thomson et al. 2005) towards the brand featured in the advertisement were measured first. To verify whether that the induced self-inauthenticity and self-authenticity affected mood, participants indicated their mood (Wan and Rucker 2013). They then answered questions regarding the advertisements and brand (brand authenticity, brand attitude (Nan and Heo 2007), brand quality (Frazier and Lassar 1996), emotional and informational tone of the advertisement (Jourdan 1999), advertisement believability, and appeal). Lastly, participants were asked to complete the personal authenticity scale (Wood et al. 2008), which captures authenticity as an enduring trait (i.e., to what extent an individual lives in a way that is consistent with his or her inner values and beliefs), as opposed to situationally induced feeling of self-inauthenticity and self-authenticity created by the manipulation. Demographic questions ended the study. Appendix 17 and 18 presents the manipulations and measures used in the study.

Manipulation checks. An ANOVA with one fixed factor (self-inauthenticity/self-authenticity) and feeling of self-authenticity as the dependent variable, resulted in a significant effect ($F(1,103) = 31.23, p < .001$). Mean comparisons confirmed the effectiveness of the manipulation (Mean$_{\text{self-inauthenticity}}$ = 3.90, Mean$_{\text{self-authenticity}}$ = 5.76, $t(103) = -5.59, p < .001$). The manipulation affected mood (Mean$_{\text{self-inauthenticity}}$ = 4.24, Mean$_{\text{self-authenticity}}$ = 4.88, $t(103) = -2.27, p$

< .05). These results confirm that priming self-inauthenticity or self-authenticity affected how authentic participants felt (i.e., answers to: feeling inauthentic/authentic, feeling not at all like myself/very much like myself). To verify that this priming procedure did not influence authenticity as an enduring trait (i.e., answers to the personal authenticity scale; Wood et al. 2008), levels of personal authenticity were compared across both levels of the manipulation. Results confirmed that personal authenticity did not differ between the self-inauthenticity and self-authenticity conditions (Personal authenticity: $Mean_{self-inauthenticity} = 5.58$, $Mean_{self-authenticity} = 5.71$, $t(103) = -.75$, $p = 46$). Regarding the brand-related manipulations, the authentic ad was perceived as more authentic than the non-authentic ad ($Mean_{authentic} = 4.38$, $Mean_{non-authentic} = 3.81$, $t(103) = 1.78$, $p = .06$). The two advertisements did not differ in terms of brand attitude ($Mean_{authentic} = 4.29$, $Mean_{non-authentic} = 3.96$, $t(103) = 1.05$, $p = .30$), brand quality ($Mean_{authentic} = 4.31$, $Mean_{non-authentic} = 3.97$, $t(103) = 1.09$, $p = .28$), informational ($Mean_{authentic} = 3.22$, $Mean_{non-authentic} = 3.15$, $t(103) = .27$, $p = .79$) and emotional tone of the ad ($Mean_{authentic} = 3.62$, $Mean_{non-authentic} = 3.39$, $t(103) = .67$, $p = .51$), as well as believability ($Mean_{authentic} = 3.98$, $Mean_{non-authentic} = 4.07$, $t(103) = -.28$, $p = .78$), and appeal of the ad ($Mean_{authentic} = 3.68$, $Mean_{non-authentic} = 3.29$, $t(103) = 1.04$, $p = .30$).
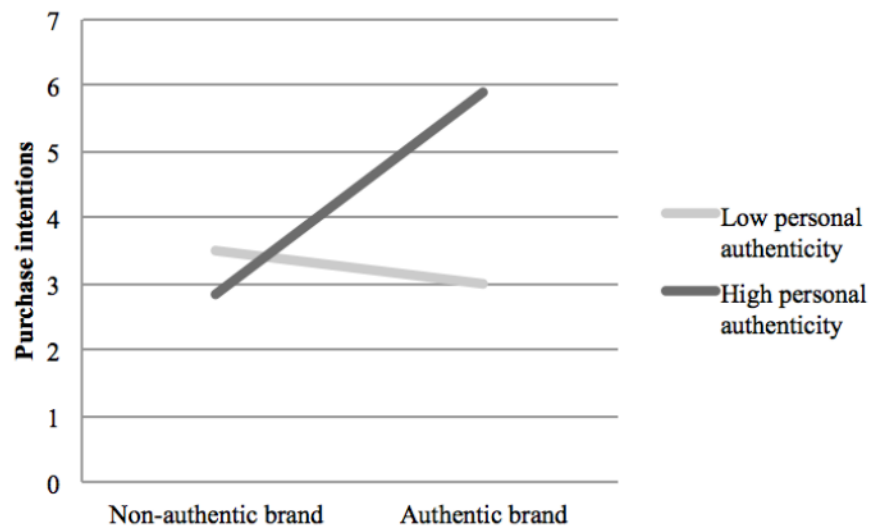
3.5.2 Results

An ANOVA with two factors (self-inauthenticity manipulation: self-inauthenticity/self-authenticity, brand: authentic/non-authentic), purchase intentions as the dependent variable, and mood as a covariate revealed a significant main effect of mood ($F(1,100) = 15.09$, $p < .01$). Participants in a good mood were more likely to state that they would purchase the brand ($Mean_{good\ mood} = 3.36$, $Mean_{bad\ mood} = 4.29$, $t(103) = -3.27$, $p < .01$). Other effects were not significant ($ps > .34$). H5a was not supported.

To test the moderating effect of personal authenticity on the interactive effect of self-inauthenticity and brand authenticity on purchase intentions proposed in H5b, two regressions were executed. In a context of self-inauthenticity, purchase intentions were regressed on brand (0 = non-authentic, 1 = authentic), personal authenticity (continuous, mean-centered), and their interaction. The effects of brand ($b = -.21$, $t = -.47$, $p = .64$) and personal authenticity ($b = -.25$, $t = -.84$, $p = .41$) were not significant. The interaction between brand and personal authenticity ($b = 1.67$, $t = 3.08$, $p < .01$) was significant. The same regression was conducted in a context of self-

authenticity. The effects of brand (b = -.58, t = -1.47, p = .15), personal authenticity (b = .09, t = .33, p = .74), as well as the interaction (b = .10, t = .23, p = .82) were not significant. To explore the interaction between brand and personal authenticity in a context of induced self-inauthenticity, spotlight analyses were conducted at higher and lower levels of personal authenticity. For individuals high in personal authenticity (+ 1SD), the effect of the brand was significant, such that these individuals expressed higher purchase intentions towards the authentic brand than the non-authentic brand (b = 3.04, t = 3.28, p < .05). For individuals low in personal authenticity (- 1SD), the effect of the brand was not significant (purchase intentions: b = -.5, t = -.18, p = .87). Overall, H5b is supported. This pattern of results is illustrated in figure 4.

Figure 4

Consumers with High Personal Authenticity: The Interactive Effect of Self-Inauthenticity/Self-Authenticity and Brand Authenticity on Purchase Intentions (H5b)

To test H6a, a MANOVA with two factors (self-inauthenticity manipulation: self-inauthenticity/self-authenticity, brand: authentic/non-authentic), affection (friendly, affectionate, loved), passion (delighted, captivated, passionate), and connection (connected, bonded, attached) as dependent variables, and mood as a covariate, revealed a significant effect of mood ($F(3,94)$ = 2.82, p < .05). All other effects were not significant (ps > .21). H6a was not supported.

To test the moderating effect of personal authenticity on the interactive effect of self-inauthenticity and brand authenticity on emotional brand attachment as proposed in H6b, a series of regressions were executed. For each condition (self-authenticity and self-inauthenticity), the components of emotional brand attachment (affection, passion, connection) were regressed individually on brand (0 = non-authentic, 1 = authentic), personal authenticity (continuous, mean-centered), and their interaction. In a context of self-authenticity, a regression of affection on the brand condition, personal authenticity, and the interaction term was conducted. The effects of brand ($b = -.64$, $t = -1.75$, $p = .09$), personal authenticity ($b = .28$, $t = 1.11$, $p = .27$) and of the interaction ($b = -.15$, $t = -.40$, $p = .69$) were not significant. For passion, the effects of brand ($b = -.29$, $t = -.71$, $p = .49$), personal authenticity ($b = -.14$, $t = -.51$, $p = .61$) and of the interaction ($b = .15$, $t = .35$, $p = .73$) were not significant. For connection, the effects of brand ($b = -.56$, $t = -1.27$, $p = .21$), personal authenticity ($b = -.28$, $t = -.94$, $p = .35$) and of the interaction ($b = .36$, $t = .79$, $p = .43$) were not significant. In a context of self-inauthenticity, a regression of affection on the brand condition, personal authenticity, and the interaction term was conducted. The effects of brand ($b = .10$, $t = .22$, $p = .83$) and personal authenticity ($b = -.48$, $t = -1.52$, $p = .14$) were not significant. The interaction ($b = 1.46$, $t = 2.51$, $p < .02$) was significant. For passion, the effect of brand ($b = .22$, $t = .46$, $p = .65$) was not significant. The effects of personal authenticity ($b = -.65$, $t = -1.99$, $p = .05$) and of the interaction ($b = 1.78$, $t = 2.96$, $p < .05$) were significant. For connection, the effect of brand ($b = .29$, $t = .57$, $p = .57$) was not significant. The effects of personal authenticity ($b = -.72$, $t = -2.09$, $p < .05$) and of the interaction ($b = 1.78$, $t = 2.80$, $p < .05$) were significant. To explore the interaction between the brand condition and personal authenticity in a context of induced self-inauthenticity, spotlight analyses were conducted at higher and lower levels of personal authenticity. For individuals high in personal authenticity (+ 1SD), the effect of the brand was significant, such that these individuals expressed more affection, passion, and connection towards the authentic brand versus the non-authentic brand (affection: $b = 2.62$, $t = 4.07$, $p < .05$, passion: $b = 3.11$, $t = 4.39$, $p = .07$, connection: $b = 3.68$, $t = 5.88$, $p < .01$). For individuals low in personal authenticity (- 1SD), the effect of the brand was not significant (affection: $b = -.65$, $t = -.12$, $p = .83$, passion: $b = -.60$, $t = -.23$, $p = .83$, connection: $b = .13$, $t = .06$, $p = .93$). Overall, H6b is supported. This pattern of results is illustrated in figures 5, 6, and 7.

Figure 5

Consumers with High Personal Authenticity: The Interactive Effect of Self-Inauthenticity/Self-Authenticity and Brand Authenticity on Affection (H6b)

Figure 6

Consumers with High Personal Authenticity: The Interactive Effect of Self-Inauthenticity/Self-Authenticity and Brand Authenticity on Passion (H6b)

Figure 7

Consumers with High Personal Authenticity: The Interactive Effect of Self-Inauthenticity/Self-Authenticity and Brand Authenticity on Connection (H6b)
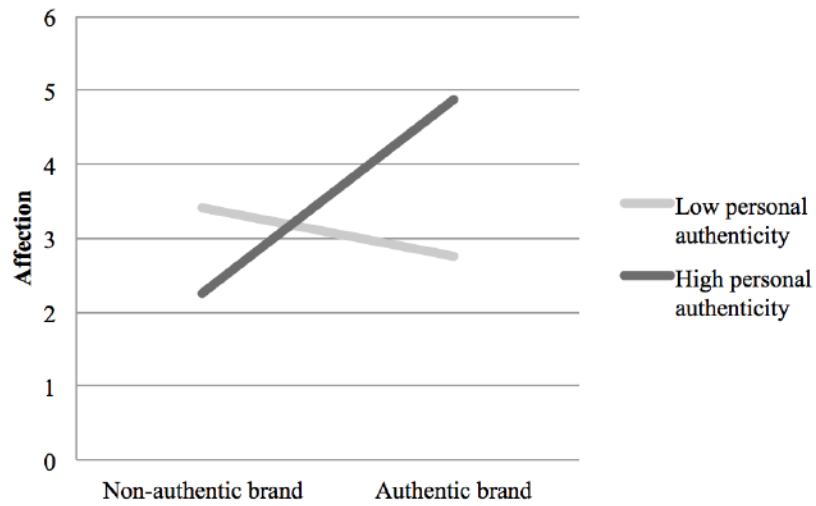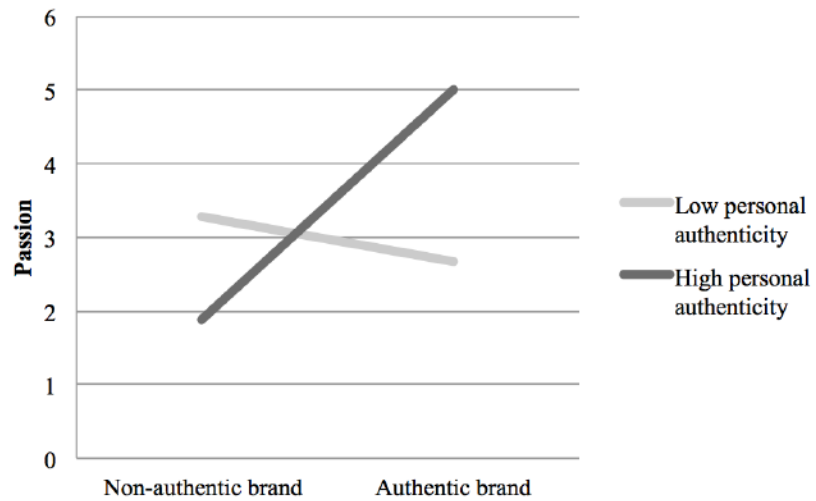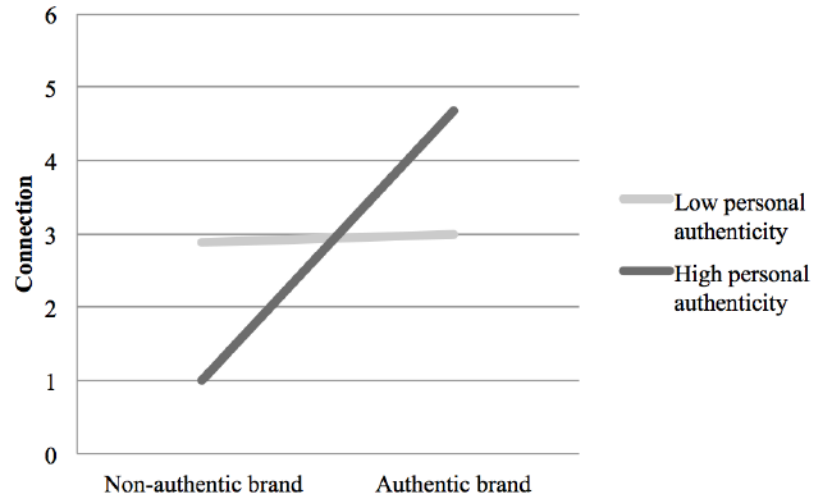

3.5.3 Discussion

This study tested whether the influence of brand authenticity on purchase intentions and emotional brand attachment increases in a context of situational self-inauthenticity (H5a and H6a), and if these effects are stronger for consumers with high levels of enduring personal authenticity (H5b and H6b). Results provide support for H5b and H6b. Participants with high levels of personal authenticity in a context of self-inauthenticity showed higher purchase intentions, as well as more affection, passion, and connection towards an authentic brand, compared to a non-authentic brand. This pattern was not observed in a context of self-authenticity. This provides preliminary evidence for the role of authentic brands in helping consumers express their authentic self.

3.6 General Discussion

Building on literature that characterizes authenticity as a generally valuable brand characteristic (e.g., Beverland 2006; Gilmore and Pine 2007), this research investigated whether contextual factors increase or decrease the appeal of authentic brands to consumers. Three studies investigate the influence of uncertainty, social exclusion, and induced self-inauthenticity

on consumers' reactions towards an authentic brand. Results show that an authentic brand is particularly valued when consumers feel excluded and inauthentic, providing support for the role of two individual motivations (need to belong and expression of the authentic self) in influencing the value of authentic brands. The effects were observed for specific consumer segments, such as consumers with high levels of brand engagement in self-concept (for the connection dimension of emotional brand attachment) and consumers with high levels of personal authenticity (for purchase intentions and emotional brand attachment), respectively.

In study 9, consumers expressed similar reactions towards an authentic and a non-authentic brand regardless of the situation of uncertainty or certainty. The predictions were not confirmed. In study 10, consumers with high brand engagement in self-concept expressed more connection towards an authentic brand (compared to a non-authentic brand) when they felt excluded, whereas this effect did not occur when they felt included. In study 11, consumers with high levels of enduring personal authenticity expressed higher purchase intentions and showed more affection, passion, and connection towards an authentic brand (compared to a non-authentic brand) when they felt temporarily inauthentic (i.e., in a context of situational self-inauthenticity), whereas this effect was not observed in a context of situational self-authenticity. In sum, this research demonstrates conditions under which an authentic brand is more effective in influencing consumer reactions than a non-authentic brand.

3.6.1 Contributions

This research contributes to the branding and authenticity literatures. Results broaden the understanding of the role of authentic brands by connecting brand authenticity with individual motivations. Results support the proposition that authentic brands serve social integration (study 10) and self-identification (study 11) purposes. Whereas prior research has demonstrated that brands are tools for constructing one's individual and social identity (e.g., Edson Escalas and Bettman 2005), the current research reveals that the authenticity of the brand plays a role in this equation. This research further contributes to the literature about consumers' use of brands for identity purposes (e.g., Aaker 1999; Belk 1988). The finding that people feeling temporarily self-inauthentic value an authentic brand to a greater extent than a non-authentic brand provides support not only for the existential view of self-authenticity as a quest for one's true self

proposed in the philosophical and psychological discourses (e.g., Ferrara 2009; Franzese 2009), but connects it with the ability of brands to serve identity functions (e.g., Edson Escalas 2004).

The results of this research further contribute to the literature by identifying two moderating variables in the interplay between consumer motivations and their attachment towards authentic brands. It shows that consumers' brand engagement in self-concept and consumers' personal authenticity play a role in understanding the effects of social exclusion and induced self-inauthenticity on consumers' reactions towards authentic brands. This supports the personally constructed view of authenticity proposed by many authors (e.g., Grayson and Martinec 2004; Leigh et al. 2006). For constructivists, authenticity is not a quality inherent in an object, but a projection of one's own beliefs, expectations, and perspectives (Wang 1999). The finding that specific consumer segments perceived differently the potential of authentic brands in particular situations (i.e., in contexts of exclusion and self-inauthenticity) supports the constructivist view.

The experimental approach taken in this research contributes to a body of literature characterized by a lack of studies empirically testing the influence of brand authenticity in a consumption context (Ewing et al. 2012). Although earlier research suggests that consumers are looking for authenticity to cope with contextual factors (e.g., the search for authenticity as a response to the inauthenticity of contemporary life; Arnould and Price 2000; Cohen 1988), this research is one of the first to directly test the influence of situational factors and individual differences in consumers' reactions to an authentic brand. In doing so, it addresses Napoli et al.'s concern (2014): "research needs to explore the benefits that consumers experience when they consume something authentic, […] as well as the use of brand authenticity as a positioning device" (p. 1096). This research further contributes to a mostly interpretative stream of research (e.g., Beverland and Farrelly 2010; Grayson and Martinec 2004; Rose and Wood 2005) by investigating brand authenticity questions in a series of experiments.

From a managerial perspective, this research suggests that focusing on the authenticity of the brand provides opportunities for building strong relationships. As strong emotional bonds between consumers and brands are central in increasing loyalty and other positive responses (Park et al. 2010), the contribution of authentic brands in the creation of such bonds is noteworthy. More concretely, results of two studies demonstrate that authentic brands have the ability to help consumers satisfy their need to belong (increased connection towards an authentic

brand in a situation of exclusion; study 10) and express their authentic self (increased purchase intentions and emotional brand attachment towards an authentic brand in a situation of induced self-inauthenticity; study 11). In light of this, managers of authentic brands could develop communication strategies that specifically propose how their brand can help satisfy these motivations. For example, Coca-Cola and its "Share a Coke" campaign taps into consumers' need to belong. This campaign focuses on the role of the brand in creating connections between consumers (i.e., a Coke should not be drank alone, it should be shared with a friend). In doing so, the brand might appeal to consumers who have a strong need to belong, but, as this research supposes, it seizes the opportunity to become even more relevant for individuals feeling temporarily excluded. The "Campaign for Real Beauty" by Dove is also worth mentioning, as it relates to consumers' motivation to express their authentic self. By promoting the importance of the brand in the process of being true to oneself, Dove can resonate with consumers looking to re-connect with their authentic self (i.e., individuals temporarily feeling self-inauthentic). In sum, positioning an authentic brand in light of consumers' motivations is promising from a managerial perspective. Further, the role of risk aversion in the influence of brand authenticity on purchase intentions is worth considering from a managerial perspective. Results indicate that highly risk averse consumers value the authenticity of the brand to a greater extent than consumers less sensitive to risk, in terms of higher purchase intentions. Managers of authentic brands may therefore be interested in promoting how their brand is reliable and dependable, therefore providing highly risk averse consumers with a secure brand choice (Lunardo and Guerinet 2007).

3.6.2 Limitations and Future Research

The current research was a first investigation of situational and individual difference factors influencing consumer responses to authentic and non-authentic brands. Although the findings provide initial evidence for the role and interaction of these factors, several limitations of this research should be acknowledged. First, the result that excluded consumers feel a higher connection with an authentic brand (compared to a non-authentic brand) requires additional investigation. Of particular interest is the mechanism underlying this effect. Although it was hypothesized that social exclusion activates consumers' need to belong and that this increased need would explain their emotional attachment towards authentic brands, the activation of the need to belong was not measured following the manipulation of social exclusion. To better

document the process triggered, future studies should measure the need to belong following the exclusion manipulation (as in Loveland et al. 2010) and examine its mediating role. Further, brand-related inferences should be considered. It was proposed that excluded participants would prefer authentic brands because of their omnipresence and their accepted role in securing social belonging. Testing such beliefs (e.g., authentic brand's perceived popularity or equity; Roehm and Brady 2007) would provide initial insights in terms of consumers' inferences regarding authentic brands. Moreover, the influence of the consumption of authentic brands on satisfying consumers' need to belong is worth exploring. For example, when consumers use an authentic brand (e.g., drink Coca-Cola), do they indeed feel less excluded afterwards?

In addition, future research might look at the mechanism underlying the effect of self-inauthenticity on consumers' attachment towards an authentic brand. This research proposes that in contexts of induced self-inauthenticity, authentic brands offer consumers the potential to re-connect with their true self. To shed light on this process, future research could examine the mediating role of consumers' self-brand connection with the authentic brand (Edson Escalas and Bettman 2005) in more detail. As self-brand connection taps into the ability of a brand to connect with consumers' identity, values, and goals (e.g., "This brand reflects who I am"), consumers feeling inauthentic and aiming to restore an authentic sense of self should feel an increased connection to the brand. Further, future research should explore authenticity issues related to the self through self-congruency theory (Sirgy 1982). Self-congruence approaches to consumer-brand relationships posit that consumers prefer brands associated with a set of personality traits congruent with their own (e.g., Aaker 1999; Grohmann 2009). In the current context, consumers living an authentic life (i.e., high personal authenticity) should perceive congruence between themselves and a brand they perceived as authentic. Future studies should test whether this match between consumers' personal authenticity and the perceived authenticity of a brand results in positive consumer responses (Aaker 1999). In sum, it is worth exploring further the mechanisms of self-congruence applied to consumer and brand authenticity perceptions.

Some limitations related to the research design need to be acknowledged. Only one product category (sports apparel) was used across the studies. Future research should investigate consumers' reactions across different product categories. Of particular interest is the distinction between symbolic and utilitarian product categories (Aaker 1997; Park et al. 1986). It is possible that consumer motivations interact with product categories, such that, for example, the influence

of consumers' state of uncertainty on preference for authentic brand increases when the product category is mostly utilitarian (e.g., medication). Considering that some studies support the classification of sports apparel into symbolic products (e.g. Aaker 1997), this could explain why this research only found supportive results when consumers' self-concept was involved (i.e., exclusion in study 10 and self-inauthenticity in study 11) and a symbolic product category provided increased affiliation potential (Edson Escalas and Bettman 2005). In sum, future research should replicate the effects across different product categories varying on the symbolic and utilitarian dimensions.

Although the use of fictitious brands might be seen as a limitation, it was judged necessary and appropriate in the current context. Fictitious brands were used as they offered a controlled context to manipulate the brand image (authentic vs. non-authentic) while eliminating other sources of influence. The fictitious advertisements were created by carefully manipulating the authenticity of the brand while maintaining similar levels of brand familiarity, attitude, and quality. Special care was taken to present advertisements visually similar, in terms of overall design (e.g., colors and brand name), amount of information, and general tone (i.e., information vs. emotional tone of the ad). The use of fictitious brands also served as a conservative test of the effects of brand authenticity on emotional brand attachment. As prior research argues that brand attachment develops over time and following interactions with a brand (Park et al. 2010), this research suggests that the effect is strong enough to emerge in the context of unknown brands. Although the current research design offers greater experimental control, future research should nonetheless demonstrate the findings in a real-world context. For example, examining actual purchases of products in response to authentic appeals in different situations (e.g., exclusion by a salesperson) would be worth further studying. Such measures (i.e., actual purchases) would offer concrete managerial insights and could be extended to actual consumption in some categories (e.g., consumption of an authentic beverage brand, actual use of an authentic skin cream brand, etc.). Studies could also examine the evolution of consumer responses towards authentic brands in different life events characterized by feeling of exclusion or self-inauthenticity (e.g., lying, being rejected by coworkers, etc.). Longitudinal approaches could be appropriate for this type of approach (e.g., Aaker et al. 2004). In addition, as emotional attachment to brands is maximized following multiples interactions (Park et al. 2010), longitudinal studies would provide a deeper understanding of consumers' connection to brands in the longer term.

Lastly, the current studies manipulated the four dimensions of brand authenticity simultaneously (longevity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism). This leaves questions regarding the interaction of authenticity dimensions with consumer motivations unanswered. For example, are some brand authenticity dimensions more important for consumers depending on the situation (i.e., uncertainty, exclusion, self-inauthenticity)? It is possible consumers particularly value the credibility dimension in a context of uncertainty, considering the signal of trustworthiness communicated by this dimension (Beverland 2006). Alternatively, when consumers feel inauthentic, they could be attracted towards an authentic brand because of its symbolic aspect, as this dimension reflects consumers' identity and self-concept (Beverland and Farrelly 2010). As authentic brands present some variations in terms of their main dimension (e.g., Victorinox emphasizes its credibility, whereas Lululemon focuses on its symbolic potential), this question appears relevant to consider. In sum, by exploring if different brand-related cues are used differently depending on consumer motivations, future research could contribute to the goal-contingent literature on the construction of authenticity (e.g., Beverland and Farrelly 2010) and extend the understanding of the negotiation of this complex construct from a consumer point of view.

Chapter 4: General Discussion

Today's consumers are dealing with an overflow or the fake, the contrived, and the unreal (Boyle 2004). Globalized, virtual, commercialized, and hypermaterialistic experiences are an important part of consumers' reality (Arnould and Price 2000). In this context, consumers increasingly search for real, genuine, and authentic experiences to find their true selves (Arnould and Price 2000). Because brands play an important role in consumers' identity construction (e.g., Edson Escalas 2004), consumers search for authenticity in brands (Beverland 2006; Brown et al. 2003). Brown et al. (2003) confirm: "consumers' search for authenticity is one of the cornerstones of contemporary marketing" (Brown et al. 2003 p. 21). For this reason, it is imperative for marketers to understand the nature of the authenticity of their branded products and services, as well as its drivers and consequences in order to be able to engage in meaningful branding efforts. This dissertation addresses these questions.

The first objective of this dissertation was to develop and validate a reliable and parsimonious scale measuring consumer perceptions of brand authenticity (chapter 2). A second-order four-dimensional scale (longevity, credibility, integrity, symbolism) with 17 items is proposed and validated across brands, product categories, and consumers. Results confirm the scale discriminant and predictive validity. The scale is embedded in a nomological framework to understand antecedents, consequences, and moderators. Results show, among others, the importance of indexical, iconic, and existential cues in creating brand authenticity perceptions and the positive influence of brand authenticity on emotional brand attachment. The relation between brand authenticity and scandals is further investigated. Results support the perspective upon which brand authenticity protects the brand from negative information.

The second objective of this dissertation was to examine the conditions under which consumers experience an increased preference for authentic brands (chapter 3). Results indicate that authentic brands help satisfy two individual motivations: need to belong and expression of the authentic self. Authentic brands were more appealing for consumers placed in a context of exclusion, as well as in a situation of self-inauthenticity. These effects were particularly strong for specific consumer segments, namely consumers with high brand engagement in self-concept and consumers with high levels of personal authenticity.

This research contributes to the emerging marketing literature on authenticity. It provides

a comprehensive understanding of brand authenticity and develops a scale to measure this construct. Although academics and practitioners agree on the importance of the topic (e.g., Beverland and Farrelly 2010; Gilmore and Pine 2007), a comprehensive, consumer-based conceptualization and operationalization of brand authenticity was lacking. Further, brand authenticity is positioned against a vast body of literature from multiple domains. This is a worthwhile contribution, especially in terms of the identification of indexical, iconic, and existential antecedents to authenticity. Although previous work proposed that consumers use indexical and iconic cues in their authenticity perceptions (Beverland and Farrelly 2010; Grayson and Martinec 2004), this research also shows the importance of existential antecedents, and provides an integrative framework for the emergence of brand authenticity. Further, this research is one of the first to directly test the influence of situational and individual difference factors on consumer reactions to an authentic brand. It builds on Beverland and Farrelly's (2010) view upon which individual traits, beliefs, or predispositions influence the importance of brand authenticity. Overall, the current research improves the state of knowledge on authenticity and brand authenticity.

In this research, the role of authentic brands in supporting consumers' identity and self-concept is highlighted. This is an important contribution considering that previous attempts to conceptualize brand authenticity failed to identify symbolism as a component of brand authenticity (Napoli et al. 2014). However, the role of authentic brands in helping consumers define their real self is acknowledged (e.g., Arnould and Price 2000; Beverland and Farrelly 2010). This research confirms the connection between authenticity and consumers' identity on various levels. First, consumers connected authentic brands to narratives of the self extensively during the interviews (Belk 1988). Second, the symbolism component of authenticity emerged as a dimension of brand authenticity (with items such as "A brand that connects people with their real selves" or "A brand that connects people with what is really important"). Third, the investigation of consumer motivations (chapter 3) shows that authentic brands are more valued when consumers are in a situation of self-inauthenticity. In line with consistency theory (Sirgy 1982; Swann et al. 1992) it is proposed here that such interest in authentic brands occurs as an attempt to restore a positive—and authentic—sense of self. Although it is recognized that consumers choose brands for self-construction projects (e.g., Aaker 1999; Belk 1998) as well as for identity purposes (e.g., Edson Escalas 2004), this research highlights that authenticity of the

brand is an important variable to consider. The role of authenticity could further be related to the self-expansion theory (Aron et al. 2005), which posits that people possess an inherent motivation to incorporate others (in this context: brands) into their conception of self. It is possible, in light of the current results, that such an incorporation be contingent upon a brand's perceived authenticity.

This research has practical implications for marketers who intend to track authenticity perceptions among consumers. As marketing managers seemingly have started to invest resources in conveying an authentic brand image, they can use the brand authenticity scale for evaluation and tracking purposes. Further, results of the nomological study may help managers identify specific approaches to develop a brand authenticity positioning. However, as noted by previous authors (Beverland 2006; Beverland et al. 2008; Holt 2002), there is a fine line between being accepted as an authentic brand and being criticized and rejected by consumers. Results of three studies (study 5, 7, and 8; chapter 2) show that highly skeptical consumers do not accept authentic claims at face value. To be perceived as authentic, brands must not only communicate authenticity, but behave in ways that reflect their core values and principles (Eggers et al. 2012). The negative impact of scandals on brand authenticity also needs to be considered from a managerial perspective. This is even more important in the current context, as a simple incident between a consumer and a brand, shared publicly on social networks, can soon become a debacle (Bashford 2007). Although this research provides preliminary evidence that authentic brands are less affected than non-authentic brands when they are involved in a scandal, results nonetheless indicate a detrimental effect of such incidents. Numerous questions remain and open avenues for future research.

Across studies, advertising was instrumental in creating images of authenticity, as fictitious brands were positioned as authentic—and perceived as such by consumers. Future research could address the most efficient ways to communicate authenticity through advertising, a question raised by many researchers (e.g., Beverland et al. 2008; Botterill 2007). In study 5 (chapter 2), consumers doubted some authenticity claims presented in the advertisements (e.g., "I don't know what their principles are"), especially in terms of integrity and symbolism. It would be worth considering evoking authenticity more subtlety, as suggested by Beverland et al. (2008): "an advertisement that doesn't 'scream too loudly' is more likely to be judged authentic" (p. 14). Studies could further compare alternative advertising approaches, such as the use of

emotional appeals in creating an authentic positioning (Aaker and Williams 1998). Symbolism, for example, may not be well served by the inclusion of self-related claims (e.g., "We reflect your personality"). The "Share a Coke" campaign, in which the usual Coca-Cola bottle branding was replaced with popular names, illustrates how to induce symbolism effectively (Grimes 2013), by providing a means of self-appropriation through the recognition of one's own name. Further, it is worth exploring the creation of an authentic image from an advertising perspective and its interrelation with consumers' preferences (chapter 3). Results of the nomological study show that brand authenticity can be built through indexical (e.g., label of origin), iconic cues (e.g., communication efforts), or existential cues (e.g., brand personality). It is possible that brand authenticity created through indexical—and thus objective—cues exerts a stronger influence when consumers lack certainty, whereas animated and vivid authentic brands— therefore with strong personalities—offer greater identification potential, and resonate more with consumers in situations of self-inauthenticity. Overall, this dissertation aimed at highlighting the importance of brand authenticity and stimulating future inquiries in this domain.

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Appendix 1 - Interview Guide

Preparation task:
"Think about what is an authentic brand from your point of view. Bring 7 brands or more to the interview. These brands have to represent, in any way, what is an authentic brand for you. You can bring brand names, pictures, objects, logos, etc.."

Step 1: General discussion of brand authenticity
Without referring to any brand, how would you define brand authenticity?

Step 2: Presentation of the brands
I would like you to discuss each brand in the order of your choice.
Talk to me about this brand? Why did you select it? What does it evoke, to you?
How would you explain the authenticity of this brand?
How can you summarize in a few words the authenticity of this brand?

Step 3: Selection of a brand
Is there a brand that represents more than others the concept of authenticity? Why?

Step 4: Categorization of the brands
I would like you to classify the brands in different groups. You decide how to group the brands, and then explain to me why the brands belong together, in your opinion. A brand can be alone, and you can have as much groups as you want.
How would you call this group?
How do these brands (the brands in a group) relate to each other in terms of authenticity?
How do these groups are different from each other in terms of authenticity?

Step 5: Exploration of other themes (depending on the time available)
What brands come to your mind if you think of inauthentic brands? Can you talk to me about those brands?
Can you talk to me about authenticity and profits? What comes to your mind?

Appendix 2 – Study 2a: Model Comparisons

	χ^2	df	*p*	CFI	NNFI	RMSEA	SRMR
(a) One-factor (CILS)	996.64	119	.001	.82	.79	.17	.09
(b) Two-factor uncorrelated (CIS; L)	528.45	119	.001	.91	.90	.12	.36
(c) Two-factor correlated (CIS; L)	341.37	118	.001	.95	.95	.09	.04
(d) Three-factor correlated (CI; S; L)	259.65	116	.001	.97	.96	.07	.04
(e) Four-factor uncorrelated (C; I; S; L)	1290.23	119	.001	.76	.73	.20	.54
(f) Four-factor correlated (C; I; S; L)	214.14	113	.001	.98	.98	.07	.03
(g) Four-factor second-order (C; I; S; L)	258.45	116	.001	.97	.97	.07	.04
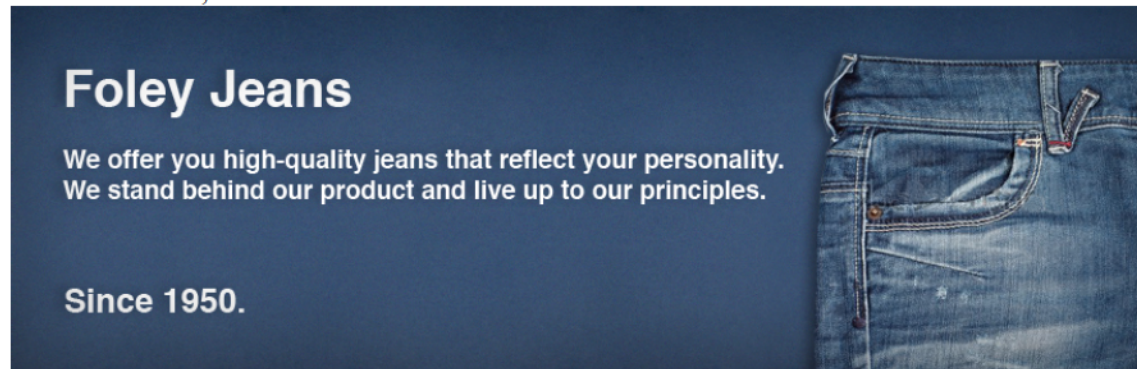
Appendix 3 - Study 4: Measures

Construct (Source)	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Brand authenticity	All items.	Longevity: α = .96 Credibility: α = .94 Integrity: α = .95 Symbolism: α = .93
Brand heritage (Wiedmann et al. 2011)	This brand is very continuous. The products of this brand are part of national treasure. This brand has a strong cultural meaning.	α = .86
Brand trust (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001)	I trust this brand. I rely on this brand. This is an honest brand. This brand is safe.	α = .91
Brand trustworthiness (Erdem and Swait 2004)	This brand delivers what it promises. This brand's product claims are believable. Over time, my experiences with this brand have led me to expect it to keep its promises, no more and no less. This brand has a name you can trust. This brand doesn't pretend to be something it isn't.	α = .96
Partner quality (Fournier 1998)	This brand takes good care of me. This brand treats me like an important and valuable customer. This brand shows a continuing interest in me. This brand has always been good to me. This brand is reliable and dependable.	α = .95
Integrity (Venable, Rose, Bush and Gilbert 2005)	This brand is honest. This brand has a positive influence. This brand is committed to the public good. This brand is reputable.	α = .96
Brand attachment (Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich and Iacobucci 2010)	This brand is part of me and who I am. I feel I am personally connected to this brand.	α = .93
Brand attitude (Nan and Heo 2007)	What is your global evaluation of this brand? Negative/Positive. Dislike/Like. Unfavourable/Favourable.	α = .96

Brand quality	How do you position the brand on the	
(Frazier and Lassar 1996)	following product characteristics? Low end/High end	
	Prestige or image of the brand.	$\alpha = .96$
	Product performance.	
	Overall product quality.	

Appendix 4 - Study 5: Advertisements

Advertisement, authentic brand

Advertisement, control

Appendix 5 - Study 5: Measures

Construct (Source)	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Brand authenticity	All items.	Longevity: α = .86 Credibility: α = .78 Integrity: α = .84 Symbolism: α = .86
Skepticism towards advertising (Obermiller and Spangenberg 1998)	We can depend on getting the truth in most advertising. Advertising's aim is to inform the consumer. I believe advertising is informative. Advertising is generally truthful. Advertising is a reliable source of information about the quality and performance of products. Advertising is truth well told. In general, advertising presents a true picture of the product being advertised. I feel I've been accurately informed after viewing most advertisements. Most advertising provides consumers with essential information.	α = .91
Relevance of the brand image	The brand image is relevant in the jeans category. The brand image makes sense in the jeans category.	α = .88
Advertisement appeal	The advertisement is appealing.	-
Advertisement believability	The advertisement is believable. The advertisement is credible.	α = .89

Appendix 6 - Study 6: Advertisements
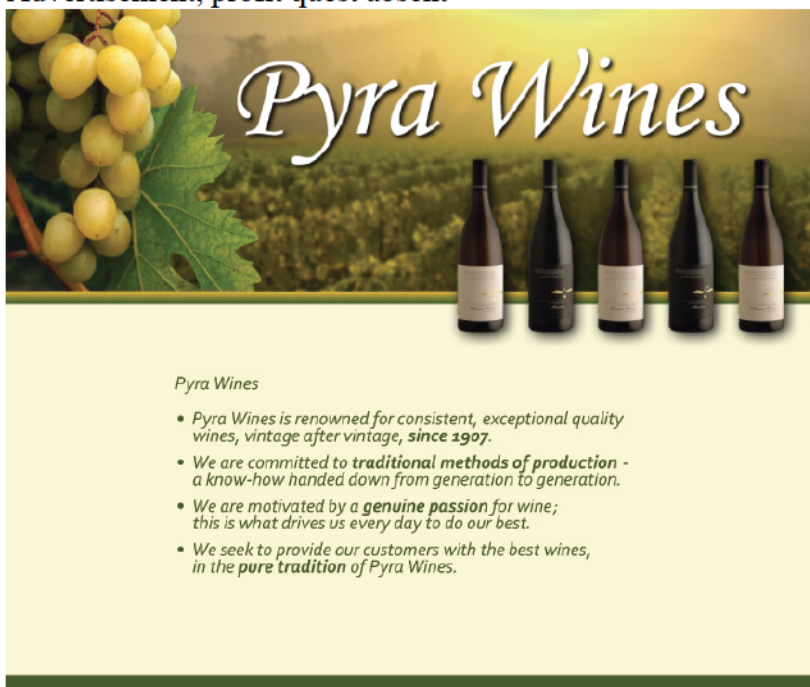
Advertisement, profit quest present

Advertisement, profit quest absent

Appendix 7 – Study 6: Measures

Construct (Source)	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Brand authenticity	All items.	Longevity: α = .85 Credibility: α = .84 Integrity: α = .85 Symbolism: α = .88
Relevance of the brand image	The brand image is relevant for a winery. The brand image makes sense for a winery.	α = .85
Advertisement appeal	The advertisement is appealing.	-
Advertisement believability	The advertisement is believable. The advertisement is credible.	α = .89
Brand attitude (Nan and Heo 2007)	What is your global evaluation of this brand? Negative/Positive. Dislike/Like. Unfavourable/Favourable.	α = .94
Pyra Wines objectives	According to the advertisement, commercial success is an important goal for Pyra Wines. According to the advertisement, increasing profits and sales is an important goal for Pyra Wines.	α = .90

Appendix 8 - Study 7: Measures

Construct (Source)	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Brand authenticity	All items.	Longevity: α = .96 Credibility: α = .91 Integrity: α = .92 Symbolism: α = .93
Brand personality strength (based on Aaker and Fournier 1995)	I can easily imagine this brand as a person. I have no difficulties in imagining this brand as a person.	α = .89
Brand-congruent employee behavior (Morhart, Herzog, and Tomczak 2009)	The personal appearance of the employees of this brand is in line with the appearance of the brand. The actions of the employees of this brand are not at odds with what the brand promises. The employees of this brand show brandcongruent behavior	α = .89
Brand quality (Frazier and Lassar 1996)	How do you position the brand on the following product characteristics? Low end/High end Prestige or image of the brand. Product performance. Overall product quality.	α = .89
Brand scandals (Wagner, Lutz, and Weitz 2009)	How often have you heard/read about scandals pertaining to this brand? Never/Very often	-
Made-in communication style (new)	The communication activities of this brand focus on: Tradition Heritage Locality Country of origin	α = .83
Moral communication style (new)	The communication activities of this brand focus on: Delivering its promise to consumers The values of the brand Connection with consumers	α = .82
Emotional brand attachment (Thomson, MacInnis, and Park 2005	The following words describe my typical feelings to this brand: Affectionate, friendly, loved, peaceful (Affection) Passionate, delighted, captivated	Affection: α = .89 Passion: α = .92 Connection: α = .93

	(Passion) Connected, bonded, attached (Connection)	
Self-authenticity (Wood et al. 2008)	I think it is better to be yourself, than to be popular. I always stand by what I believe in. I am true to myself in most situations. I live in accordance with my values and beliefs.	α = .85
Skepticism towards advertising (Obermiller and Spangenberg 1998)	We can depend on getting the truth in most advertising. Advertising's aim is to inform the consumer. I believe advertising is informative. Advertising is generally truthful. Advertising is a reliable source of information about the quality and performance of products. Advertising is truth well told. In general, advertising presents a true picture of the product being advertised. I feel I've been accurately informed after viewing most advertisements. Most advertising provides consumers with essential information.	α = .83

Appendix 9 – Study 8: Advertisements
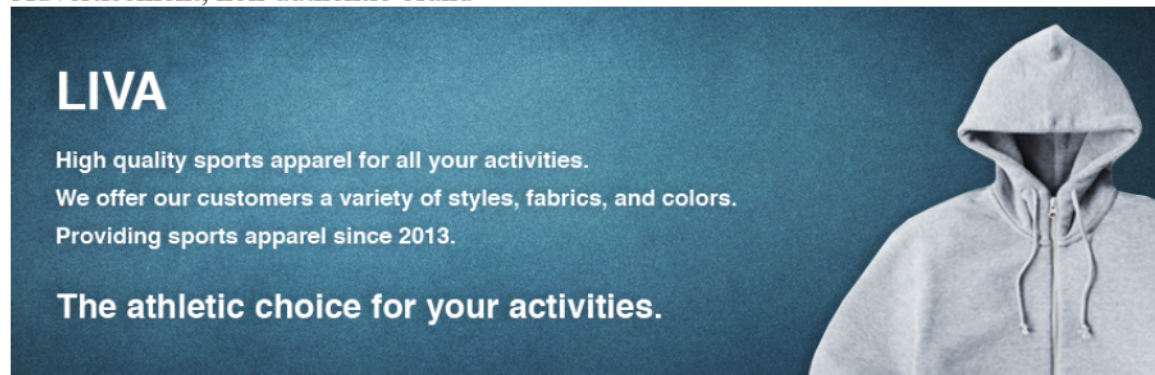
Advertisement, authentic brand

LIVA

High quality sports apparel that reflects who you are.
We are passionate about our products and care about our customers.
Providing sports apparel since 1950.

The authentic choice you can count on.

Advertisement, non-authentic brand

LIVA

High quality sports apparel for all your activities.
We offer our customers a variety of styles, fabrics, and colors.
Providing sports apparel since 2013.

The athletic choice for your activities.

Appendix 10 - Study 8: Measures

Construct (Source)	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Willingness to pay (Ward and Dahl 2014)	How much would you be willing to pay for the sweated depicted in the ad? Open response of dollar value.	-
Self-brand connection (Edson Escalas and Bettman 2005	This brand reflects who I am. I can identify with this brand. I feel a personal connection to this brand. I can use this brand to communicate who I am to other people. I think this brand could help me become the type of person I want to be. I consider this brand to be "me" (it reflects who I consider myself to be or the way that I want to present myself to others).	$\alpha = .96$
Perceived hypocrisy (Wagner, Lutz and Weitz 2009)	The brand Liva acts hypocritically. The brand Liva says and does two different things. The brand Liva pretends to be something that it is not.	$\alpha = .94$
Perceived responsibility	How accountable is the brand Liva of this situation? (Not accountable at all/very accountable) How responsible is the brand Liva of this situation? (Not responsible at all/very responsible)	$\alpha = .98$
Scandal: manipulation checks	Please indicate how important the additional information was in your evaluation of the brand Liva: Not important at all/very important Please indicate how relevant the additional information was in your evaluation of the brand Liva: Not relevant at all/Very relevant Please indicate how favourable the additional information is from the brand's perspective: Not favourable at all/Very favourable	-

Skepticism towards advertising (Obermiller and Spangenberg 1998)	We can depend on getting the truth in most advertising. Advertising's aim is to inform the consumer. I believe advertising is informative. Advertising is generally truthful. Advertising is a reliable source of information about the quality and performance of products. Advertising is truth well told. In general, advertising presents a true picture of the product being advertised. I feel I've been accurately informed after viewing most advertisements. Most advertising provides consumers with essential information.	$\alpha = .83$

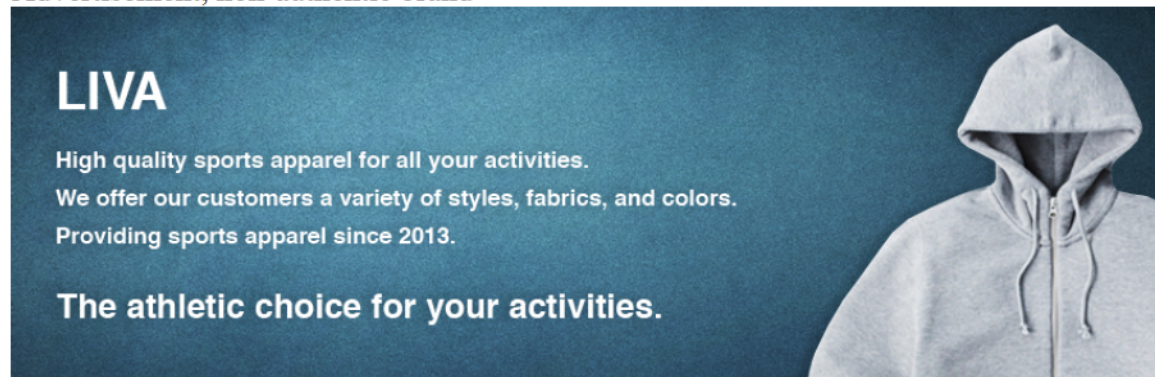**Appendix 11 – Pretests: Advertisements**

Advertisement, authentic brand

Advertisement, non-authentic brand

Advertisement, control condition

Appendix 12 – Pretests: Measures

Construct (Source)	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Brand authenticity	All items.	Longevity: α = .89 Credibility: α = .84 Integrity: α = .84 Symbolism: α = .87
Brand attitude (Nan and Heo 2007)	What is your global evaluation of this brand? Negative/Positive. Dislike/Like. Unfavourable/Favourable.	α = .94
Brand quality	How would you evaluate the quality of the brand Liva? Low quality/High quality	-
Abstractness of the information (Aggarwal and Law 2005)	The information is: Abstract/Concrete Broad/Detailed General/Specific	α = .87
Brand familiarity	What is your level of familiarity with the brand Liva? Not at all familiar/Very familiar	-

Appendix 13 – Study 9: Manipulations

Certainty condition
For the first section of the study, we would like you to indicate your level of certainty with regards to different events or tasks.

Please indicate your level of certainty about these life events or tasks (Very uncertain/Very certain)
- How certain are you of your ability to walk 1 kilometer?
- How certain are you of the name of the prime minister of Canada?
- How certain are you of your ability to cook an egg?
- How certain are you of your ability to drive a car?
- How certain are you that you can hold your breath for 5 seconds?
- How certain are you that you will sleep tonight?
- How certain are you of your ability to use a phone?

Uncertainty condition
For the first section of the study, we would like you to indicate your level of uncertainty with regards to different events or tasks.

Please indicate your level of uncertainty about these life events or tasks (Very uncertain/Very certain)
- How uncertain are you of the name of the 33rd president of the United States?
- How uncertain are you of your ability to ride a unicycle?
- How uncertain are you of winning the lottery this year?
- How uncertain are you of your ability to learn to speak Russian?
- How uncertain are you that you will receive a phone call from a politician today?
- How uncertain are you of your ability to explain the Central Limit Theorem?
- How uncertain are you of your ability to start a dairy farm at some point in your life?

Appendix 14 – Study 9: Measures

Construct (Source)	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Level of certainty (Grant and Tybout 2008)	Please indicate your overall level of certainty right now. Very uncertain/Very certain	-
Purchase intentions (Peloza, White, and Shang 2013)	If you were in the market for sports apparel, how likely/willing would you be to purchase the brand Liva? Not likely at all/Very likely Not willing at all/Very willing	$\alpha = .96$
Emotional brand attachment (Thomson, MacInnis, and Park 2005	The following words describe my typical feelings to this brand: Affectionate, friendly, loved (Affection) Passionate, delighted, captivated (Passion) Connected, bonded, attached (Connection)	Affection: $\alpha = .92$ Passion: $\alpha = .95$ Connection: $\alpha = .96$
Mood (Wan and Rucker 2013)	How are you feeling at the moment? Irritable/Pleased Depressed/Cheerful Upset/Joyful	$\alpha = .96$
Brand authenticity	Please indicate how authentic you perceive the brand Liva to be. Not authentic at all/Very authentic	-
Brand attitude (Nan and Heo 2007)	What is your global evaluation of this brand? Negative/Positive. Dislike/Like. Unfavourable/Favourable.	$\alpha = .97$
Brand quality (Frazier and Lassar 1996)	How do you position the brand on the following product characteristics? Low end/High end Prestige or image of the brand. Product performance. Overall product quality.	$\alpha = .96$
Emotional tone of the advertisement (Jourdan 1999)	The ad for Liva is the type of ad that calms you down and brings you enjoyment. In the ad, there is a mood and an atmosphere which aim to make the brand more likeable and closer to me. The objective of the ad is to tell you a	$\alpha = .92$

	pleasant story in an attempt to make you prefer the brand Liva. "A visually pleasing ad helps sell because it gives a good image of the brand" is a statement entirely suitable for this ad.	
Informational tone of the advertisement (Jourdan 1999)	Thanks to this ad, I have learned something new about Liva. After having seen this ad, I know what is important to look for when buying sports apparel. This ad speaks of choice criteria for sports apparel, which I find important. I feel more capable and more competent to choose and evaluate sports apparel after having seen this ad.	$\alpha = .92$
Advertisement believability	The advertisement is believable.	-
Advertisement appeal	The advertisement is appealing.	-
Risk aversion (Mandrik and Bao 2005)	I do not feel comfortable about taking chances. I prefer situations that have foreseeable outcomes. Before I make a decision, I like to be absolutely sure how things will turn out. I avoid situations that have uncertain outcomes. I feel comfortable improvising in new situations (r). I feel nervous when I have to make decisions in uncertain situations.	$\alpha = .83$

Appendix 15 – Study 10: Manipulations

Exclusion condition
We are developing a life-event inventory and different life experiences are needed. We would like to relive in your mind and write about a previous experience from your life.

Think about a time when you felt rejected or excluded by others.

Take time to relive the situation in your mind and think about what happened to make you feel rejected or excluded by others.

Provide a detailed written description of the situation. Please describe the situation and how it made you feel rejected or excluded by others.

Take your time to provide as many details as possible.

Inclusion condition
We are developing a life-event inventory and different life experiences are needed. We would like to relive in your mind and write about a previous experience from your life.

Think about a time when you felt accepted by others.

Take time to relive the situation in your mind and think about what happened to make you feel accepted by others.

Provide a detailed written description of the situation. Please describe the situation and how it made you feel accepted by others.

Take your time to provide as many details as possible.

Appendix 16 – Study 10: Measures

Construct (Source)	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Feeling of exclusion	How did you feel while thinking about your previous experience? Rejected/Accepted Alone/Included	$\alpha = .92$
Purchase intentions (Peloza, White, and Shang 2013)	If you were in the market for sports apparel, how likely/willing would you be to purchase the brand Liva? Not likely at all/Very likely Not willing at all/Very willing	$\alpha = .96$
Emotional brand attachment (Thomson, MacInnis, and Park 2005	The following words describe my typical feelings to this brand: Affectionate, friendly, loved (Affection) Passionate, delighted, captivated (Passion) Connected, bonded, attached (Connection)	Affection: $\alpha = .92$ Passion: $\alpha = .92$ Connection: $\alpha = .97$
Mood (Wan and Rucker 2013)	How are you feeling at the moment? Irritable/Pleased Depressed/Cheerful Upset/Joyful	$\alpha = .94$
Brand authenticity	Please indicate how authentic you perceive the brand Liva to be. Not authentic at all/Very authentic	-
Brand attitude (Nan and Heo 2007)	What is your global evaluation of this brand? Negative/Positive. Dislike/Like. Unfavourable/Favourable.	$\alpha = .96$
Brand quality (Frazier and Lassar 1996)	How do you position the brand on the following product characteristics? Low end/High end Prestige or image of the brand. Product performance. Overall product quality.	$\alpha = .95$
Emotional tone of the advertisement (Jourdan 1999)	The ad for Liva is the type of ad that calms you down and brings you enjoyment. In the ad, there is a mood and an atmosphere which aim to make the brand more likeable and closer to me.	$\alpha = .91$

	The objective of the ad is to tell you a pleasant story in an attempt to make you prefer the brand Liva. "A visually pleasing ad helps sell because it gives a good image of the brand" is a statement entirely suitable for this ad.	
Informational tone of the advertisement (Jourdan 1999)	Thanks to this ad, I have learned something new about Liva. After having seen this ad, I know what is important to look for when buying sports apparel. This ad speaks of choice criteria for sports apparel, which I find important. I feel more capable and more competent to choose and evaluate sports apparel after having seen this ad.	$\alpha = .91$
Advertisement believability	The advertisement is believable.	-
Advertisement appeal	The advertisement is appealing.	-
Brand engagement in self-concept (Sprott, Czellar, and Spangenberg 2009)	I have a special bond with the brands that I like. I consider my favorite brands to be a part of myself. I often feel a personal connection between my brands and me. Part of me is defined by important brands in my life. I feel as if I have a close personal connection with the brands I most prefer. I can identify with important brands in my life. There are links between the brands that I prefer and how I view myself. My favorite brands are an important indication of who I am.	$\alpha = .95$

Appendix 17 – Study 11: Manipulations

Self-inauthenticity condition
We are developing a life-event inventory and different life experiences are needed. We would like to relive in your mind and write about a previous experience from your life.

Please recall a particular incident in which you felt inauthentic.

By inauthentic, we mean a situation in which you were not true to yourself and experienced yourself as not behaving in accordance with your true thoughts, beliefs, personality, or values.

Try to relive this situation in your imagination.

Please describe this situation in which you felt inauthentic—what happened, how you felt, etc.

Self-authenticity condition
Please recall a particular incident in which you felt authentic.

By authentic, we mean a situation in which you were true to yourself and experienced yourself as behaving in accordance with your true thoughts, beliefs, personality, or values.

Try to relive this situation in your imagination.

Please describe this situation in which you felt authentic—what happened, how you felt, etc.

Appendix 18 – Study 11: Measures

Construct (Source)	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Feeling of authenticity	How did you feel while thinking about your previous experience? Inauthentic/Authentic Not at all like myself/Very much like myself	$\alpha = .86$
Purchase intentions (Peloza, White, and Shang 2013)	If you were in the market for sports apparel, how likely/willing would you be to purchase the brand Liva? Not likely at all/Very likely Not willing at all/Very willing	$\alpha = .96$
Emotional brand attachment (Thomson, MacInnis, and Park 2005	The following words describe my typical feelings to this brand: Affectionate, friendly, loved (Affection) Passionate, delighted, captivated (Passion) Connected, bonded, attached (Connection)	Affection: $\alpha = .92$ Passion: $\alpha = .93$ Connection: $\alpha = 94.$
Mood (Wan and Rucker 2013)	How are you feeling at the moment? Irritable/Pleased Depressed/Cheerful Upset/Joyful	$\alpha = .96$
Brand authenticity	Please indicate how authentic you perceive the brand Liva to be. Not authentic at all/Very authentic	-
Brand attitude (Nan and Heo 2007)	What is your global evaluation of this brand? Negative/Positive. Dislike/Like. Unfavourable/Favourable.	$\alpha = .97$
Brand quality (Frazier and Lassar 1996)	How do you position the brand on the following product characteristics? Low end/High end Prestige or image of the brand. Product performance. Overall product quality.	$\alpha = .95$
Emotional tone of the advertisement (Jourdan 1999)	The ad for Liva is the type of ad that calms you down and brings you enjoyment. In the ad, there is a mood and an atmosphere which aim to make the brand more likeable and closer to me.	$\alpha = .92$

	The objective of the ad is to tell you a pleasant story in an attempt to make you prefer the brand Liva. "A visually pleasing ad helps sell because it gives a good image of the brand" is a statement entirely suitable for this ad.	
Informational tone of the advertisement (Jourdan 1999)	Thanks to this ad, I have learned something new about Liva. After having seen this ad, I know what is important to look for when buying sports apparel. This ad speaks of choice criteria for sports apparel, which I find important. I feel more capable and more competent to choose and evaluate sports apparel after having seen this ad.	$\alpha = .92$
Advertisement believability	The advertisement is believable.	-
Advertisement appeal	The advertisement is appealing.	-
Personal authenticity (Wood et al. 2008)	I think it is better to be yourself, than to be popular. I always stand by what I believe in. I am true to myself in most situations. I live in accordance with my values and beliefs. I am strongly influenced by the opinions of others. (r) I usually do what other people tell me to do. (r) I always feel I need to do what others expect me to do. (r) Other people influence me greatly. (r) I don't know how I really feel inside. (r) I feel as if I don't know myself very well. (r) I feel out of touch with the 'real me'. (r) I feel alienated from myself. (r)	$\alpha = .88$