

# **Authenticity in Online Communication: A Literature Review**

**Bachelors Thesis**



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## **Abstract**

Many articles have already revealed the importance and topicality of the phenomenon of authenticity as one of the core issues of today's marketing and have examined the construct in-depth from various perspectives. Current studies are mainly concerned with possible frameworks of authenticity measurement and the effects which authenticity can have on both individuals and companies. However, its complexity raises new questions, especially in connection with the continually developing field of online communication. This thesis intends to provide an overview of the present state in the field of authenticity research and shall examine in more detail which possibilities authenticity opens up and which potential problems might occur. A particular focus is on authenticity in the business context and on how companies can use it to their advantage. In addition to the theoretical principles and definitions on the subject, this paper compares various measurement approaches, explains the resulting recommendations for action and establishes a reference to online communication in each chapter. Moreover, this thesis identifies research gaps in the existing literature and provides input for future investigation.

## 1. Introduction

“[I]n a world increasingly filled with deliberately and sensationally staged experiences – an increasingly unreal world – consumers choose to buy or not to buy based on how real they perceive an offering to be. Business today, therefore, is all about being real. Original. Genuine. Sincere. *Authentic*.” (Gilmore and Pine, 2007, p. 1)

We are living in a fast-moving world which is often associated with a loss of culture and self-identity and a feeling of superficiality through current trends such as globalization, mass production or standardization (Beverland and Farrelly 2010, p. 839). Additionally, there is a vast number of stimuli and commercial messages that overwhelm people. Together with events like financial crises and global warming as well as the growing skepticism against media, businesses and politics, those factors contribute to an ever-increasing feeling of uncertainty in our society (Bruhn et al. 2012, p. 567; Faust and Householder 2009, p. 46). To counteract this problem, people are actively looking for a constant to guide them and give them security – authenticity (Bruhn et al. 2012, p. 567; Fritz, Schoenmueller and Bruhn 2017, p. 325; Turner and Manning 1988, p. 138). Therefore, as stated in the opening quote, authenticity has become a decision-making criterion that influences consumer choice as quality no longer differentiates products, but authenticity does (Gilmore and Pine 2007, p. 23; Liao and Ma 2009, p. 90, 91).

In many examples (in-)effectively controlled authenticity has had huge impacts on a firm's success or on the success of campaigns and brands which is why the considerable influence that authenticity has on the perception of a company and its products is a significant source of competitive advantage (Faust and Householder 2009, p. 49). The less time consumers have to evaluate different companies and to decide on specific products, the more critical it becomes that they get a signal of authenticity and trustworthiness since they rely on brands and their messages (Gustafsson 2006, p. 525, 526; Holt 2002, p. 82). To do so, companies must

understand the construct of authenticity and how to transfer this authenticity to consumers. They need to learn how to manage methodically and render their authenticity (Gilmore and Pine 2007, p. 45). As customers recognize fast if promises made by companies are only empty words, companies should try to keep their word when claiming to be authentic (Gilmore and Pine 2007, p. 43). The challenge here is to understand what defines an authentic company and what that company does differently than others which people perceive as inauthentic.

This thesis intends to provide a comprehensive overview of existing literature on the topic of authenticity with special consideration of the field of online communication. The primary focus will be on the area of corporate authenticity and the thesis will be structured as follows: The first part examines the definitions and theoretical background of the concept of authenticity in more detail. Subsequently, this thesis relates the concept to the context of online communication and why authenticity is of great importance, especially in this area. The second part discusses thoroughly how to measure brand authenticity in the business context. Concrete actions and principles on how a company can be authentic accompany this part. Next, an examination of the effects and advantages of corporate authenticity, as well as the downsides, follows. Finally, the last part deals with a critical evaluation, managerial implications, limitations and possible future research.

## **2. Authenticity in Theoretical Context**

This chapter examines the theoretical background of the concept of authenticity in two parts. The first part illustrates the origin of the term authenticity and explains different forms of authenticity. The second part draws a connection from authenticity to online communication and points out what makes it especially important in this context.

## 2.1 The Concept of Authenticity

„Authenticity is one of the cornerstones of contemporary marketing” (Brown, Kozinets and Sherry Jr. 2003, p. 21). Many existing research papers that cover the topic of authenticity use this statement to highlight its importance in today’s marketing activities. Nevertheless, only a few of them attempt to give a precise definition of what the term authenticity means and even these definitions vary widely. Not only is the notion defined from a multidisciplinary outlook, as researchers with various professional backgrounds, including communication studies, psychology, marketing and public relations, write about this topic, but it is also used in different contexts and with different interpretations as well (Molleda 2010, p. 223). One attempt to derive its meaning is from the Latin word *authenticus*, meaning “worthy of acceptance, authoritative, trustworthy, not imaginary, false or imitation and conforming to an original” (Cappanelli and Cappanelli 2004, p. 1). Fine (2003, p. 155) uses synonyms like sincerity, innocence and originality to describe the term and another common definition is that authenticity refers to something real, actual and genuine (Kennick, 1985, p. 4).

In addition to those various definitions, the construct of authenticity becomes increasingly complex, since it can refer to different contexts. Authenticity can refer to an individual attribute owned by a person, to an attribute ascribed to an object, or to a company respectively its brand in the market (Beverland 2006; Grayson and Martinec 2004; Grieve and Watkinson 2016; Morhart et al. 2015; Napoli et al. 2014; Reinecke and Trepte 2014).

*Individual Authenticity.* Authenticity as an individual attribute builds on the theory of the true self, which assumes that a person’s identity, which is their true self, is defined by different, not necessarily favorable personal qualities the person possesses (Grieve and Watkinson 2016, p. 420). Authentic individuals openly communicate their personal qualities, act consistently to their feelings and thoughts, which express their true inner self and thus, reveal this self to others (Liao and Ma 2009, p. 92; Grieve and Watkinson 2016, p. 424). In



summary, individuals are authentic when they know who they are, which values they would like to live by and act accordingly.

An interesting finding about individual authenticity highlighted is that authentic customers also tend to seek products or services they perceive as authentic, as it helps them to express their authentic self (Beverland and Farrelly 2010, p. 854; Liao and Ma 2009, p. 108). Liao and Ma (2009, p. 108) describe this fact as “kind of a psychological urge or force that directs consumers to seek and consume authentic products as a means of exhibiting their true self, actualizing their ideal self, and minimizing the gap between the two”. This finding is especially significant from the marketing perspective as it implicates that companies need to be authentic to satisfy authentic customers. That is why the following explains the meaning and importance of authenticity in the company context in detail.

*Brand Authenticity.* When relating to authenticity from the company’s perspective it is necessary to mention, that there is a historical development concerning perceived authenticity over time (Yuan et al. p. 344). So, when years ago something was viewed as authentic it is possible that it lacks authenticity today (Molleda 2010, p. 226). Holt (2002, p. 86) for example argues that it is of great importance that the brand image today is consistent with the actions of the company behind the brand. Consequently, while in the past a company and its products, that is its brand, were judged as independent factors, consumers today attach importance to a holistic image and assess the company and the brand together (Holt 2002, p. 86). For this reason, in the following the term brand authenticity is used when referring to the authenticity of objects, e.g. a company’s products. It also refers to the authenticity of the company itself, since a company needs to sell authentic products, respectively products need to be sold by an authentic firm to appear authentic (Beverland 2006, p. 257; Fritz, Schoenmueller and Bruhn 2012, p. 326).

Brand authenticity consists of the categories true, stylized and false (Beverland 2006, p. 257). A company can already be genuinely authentic by itself or try to build authenticity by

using slightly modified, respectively freely invented facts to capitalize their identity in the market strategically and use authenticity as an instrument to reach certain ends (Carroll and Swaminathan 2000, p. 730). However, the latter does not necessarily mean that consumers reject this type of authenticity (Beverland and Farrelly 2010 p. 853, 854; Ewing, Allen and Ewing 2012, p. 381). Possible explanations for this are on the one hand, the prevailing opinion that authenticity is perceived subjectively and on the other hand, the different existing frameworks to categorize authenticity (Beverland 2006; Gilpin, Palazzolo and Brody 2010; Morhart et al. 2015; Grayson and Martinec 2004; Wang 1999).

Regarding the first point, researchers agree that authenticity is not purely objective. For instance, Grayson and Martinec (2004, p. 299) say that “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.” They find, that the homes of Sherlock Holmes and William Shakespeare, which people can visit in England, are both perceived as authentic although Holmes is a fictional character while Shakespeare was a real person. Thus, brand authenticity can be a source of evidence on the one side but also a social construction based on the perception of different indicators of consumers on the other side and therefore contains both objective and subjective elements (Beverland 2006, p. 257). Grayson and Martinec (2004, p. 297) continue that this implies various meanings of brand authenticity for different customers in different situations. Since researchers try to distinguish different forms of authenticity to explain this phenomenon, the following provides an overview over two commonly used approaches.

*The First Classification Approach.* Grayson and Martinec (2004, p. 296) describe authenticity of marketing offerings in the form of indexical and iconic authenticity. In their view, indexical authenticity relates to “the real thing” or “the original”. People’s or company’s actions are authentic when they reveal who a person or a company indeed is, and statements are not just given to make money, to imitate or to meet social conventions (Grayson and Martinec

2004, p. 297). Indexical authenticity distinguishes real things from their copies and needs a valid and spatiotemporal link – an index – to history which shows that the person or company and the claimed characteristics and statements are consistent (Grayson and Martinec 2004, p. 298). Alternatively, iconic authenticity describes authentic reproductions that display the original's physicality and presumes that the consumers already have pre-existing expectations or knowledge about an object (Grayson and Martinec 2004, p. 298). It is essential that both types are neither necessarily mutually exclusive nor inherent in an object (Grayson and Martinec 2004, p. 298). Moreover, it should be noted that Grayson and Martinec only examine market offerings and do not refer to the authenticity of the self (Leigh, Peters and Shelton 2006, p. 482).

*The Second Classification Approach.* Wang (1999, p. 349) proposes the second approach to categorize authenticity which bases on the subdivision into objective, constructive and existential authenticity using the tourism sector as an example. Leigh, Peters and Shelton (2006) and Lu, Gursoy and Lu (2015) additionally take up and support this approach. According to Wang's understanding, objective authenticity refers to the fact that people only perceive objects and experiences that are original as authentic, and that it thus rests upon an evidence-based reality which they judge on objective standards (Morhart et al. 2015, p. 201; Wang 1999, p. 353). However, as described above, authenticity is not only black or white, which means that things that are not the original can be perceived as authentic as well (Wang 1999, p. 353). Therefore, constructive authenticity refers to symbolic authenticity projected onto objects or experiences, and as Wang states (1999, p. 355), it is a result of social construction as "[r]eality is rather best seen as the results of the versions of our interpretations and constructions. [...] [T]hings can be constructed from different perspectives, and people may adopt different constructed meanings dependent on the particular contextual situation" (Wang 1999, p. 354). It is about sent signs or contained symbols that consumers perceive as authentic and about the

projection of one's own beliefs rather than about things being the original (Morhart et al. 2015, p. 201). Accordingly, different versions of authenticity can exist for the same object dependent on how consumers interpret and perceive what they see (Lu, Gursoy and Lu 2015, p. 37; Wang 1999, p. 352). In this view, objective and constructive authenticity can be understood as object-related notions (Wang 1999, p. 352). According to Wang (1999, p. 350), however, these are insufficient to explain the feeling of authenticity of consumers. Thus, there is a third, activity-related form of authenticity – existential authenticity (Wang 1999, p. 352). This form of authenticity is not about whether things are real. It rather “refers to a potential existential state of Being that is to be activated” (Wang 1999, p. 352) and that is judged based on emotional experiences (Lu, Gursoy and Lu 2015, p. 37). It is about to be true to one's self and achievable through individual brand-related experiences of creative and cathartic nature (Leigh, Peters and Shelton 2006, p. 490; Morhart et al. 2015, p. 202).

Comparing both approaches, it gets evident that they agree on the fact that it is possible to describe authenticity in terms of originality (objective/ indexical authenticity) and that they recognize that consumers subjectively project authenticity onto objects (constructive/ iconic authenticity). Besides, as already mentioned, both serve to explain that objects or companies can be perceived as authentic by consumers even if their basis is not authenticity as "the original," but they find other ways to radiate authenticity. The only difference is the extension of the model by existential authenticity proposed by Wang (1999). Beverland, Lindgreen and Vink (2008, p. 5) suggest a similar distinction concerning content but with different terms and subdivide authenticity in pure, approximate and moral authenticity, using the example of beer brands, as table 1 displays (“Insert table 1 about here”). Additionally, this table illustrates a potential combination of both approaches as it is possible, for example, to express pure authenticity in indexical cues, which influence the assessment of authenticity.

To sum up the previous findings, perceived brand authenticity can be defined as the result of an interplay between objective facts and subjective mental associations that individuals connect to a brand (Morhart et al. 2015, p. 202). To take on the aspect of individual self-authentication again, Morhart et al. (2015, p. 202) propose that brand authenticity “emerges to the extent to which consumers perceive a brand to be faithful and true toward itself and its consumers, and to support consumers being true to themselves.”

## ***2.2 Relevance of Authenticity in Online Communication***

The change from offline to online communication is evident in almost every area nowadays. This trend, which is already progressing rapidly, is even further accelerated by events such as globalization and digitalization. Far more people are communicating online, for example via social networks, than offline and 1.55 billion people alone visit the social network Facebook regularly (Grieve and Watkinson 2016, p. 424). Like O'Connor (2010, p. 754) claims, the Internet is evolving from a push marketing medium to a medium where data sharing and peer-to-peer collaboration between different parties are the norms. This form of communication and new media leads to new opportunities and challenges concerning the development of authentic relationships between individuals as well as between individuals and companies (Gilpin, Palazzolo and Brody 2010, p. 274). On the one hand, online communication enables fast, uncomplicated interaction independent of time and space and almost unlimited access to information. On the other hand, the anonymous and open nature of the Internet and the possibility to freely invent things that others cannot track provide the opportunity to easily adulterate information (O'Connor 2010, p. 759). The following summarizes what has already been figured out in the field of authenticity in online communication.

*Individual Authenticity.* For individuals, the use of online communication can have different outcomes. It can either motivate them to deviate from their true inner self by

pretending to be someone they are not, or it can enhance them in showing their true self (Grieve and Watkinson 2016, p. 420). For instance, Grieve and Watkinson (2016, p. 420) argue that people who do not feel comfortable in face-to-face interactions, can raise their opinion and communicate with others through social networking sites. Online communication provides people with the opportunity to gain better control over their self-presentation as they can take time when thinking about how to share which information compared to face-to-face conversations where the counterpart expects responses within a short time frame (Grieve and Watkinson 2016, p. 420). Grieve and Watkinson (2016, p. 420) suggest, that people are usually intrinsically motivated to seek recognition for their real self from other people and thus try to present their true self in social media. This could be, among other things, because it requires more emotional work of people to deviate from their true self, which also results in a higher stress level (Grieve and Watkinson 2016, p. 423). Conversely, a stronger connection between real self and online self leads to less stress and a better social network (Grieve and Watkinson 2016, p. 420).

*Brand Authenticity.* For companies, online communication offers the possibility to combine personal interaction and mass media, which can reach many people simultaneously (Gilpin, Palazzolo and Brody 2010, p. 258). Therefore, media like blogs, social media or websites are popular measures to market companies and their products or services, to recruit potential new employees and to engage with the network community (Henderson and Bowley 2010; Sandlin and Peña 2014). Here it is important to pay attention to the type of marketing activities and to the content communicated via online channels, as consumers create a particular image and expectation towards the company and its practices or corporate culture immediately (Sandlin and Peña, p. 334). Since readers are less likely to engage in blogs or social media with companies they find inauthentic, companies should be anxious about meeting these expectations (Gilpin, Palazzolo and Brody 2010, p. 259). The biggest challenge here is to create

something online that holds true for the company and the core of the brand and that is engaging customers at the same time (Faust and Householder 2009, p. 46).

The importance of this topic can also be pointed out by a statistic that presents the answers to the query how likely it is that US consumers question the authenticity of different online contents (“Insert figure 1 about here”). A full 60% said that they would challenge whether someone paid the author of a review or whether someone altered a picture in an advertisement. Thus, this finding shows the presence of authenticity judgments of content in online communication and demonstrates the necessity for companies to understand the concept of authenticity and how it can be used in the right way, what the following chapter illustrates.

### **3. The Construct and Implications of Authenticity in Corporate Context**

This chapter analyzes several methods to measure brand authenticity in the business context in more detail. Concrete actions and principles on how a company can be authentic accompany this analysis. Subsequently, the paper scrutinizes effects and advantages of corporate authenticity, as well as possible problems that might emerge in this context.

#### ***3.1 Brand Authenticity Measurement and Guidance for Authentic Communication***

The phenomenon of brand authenticity is multifaceted and many different research approaches exist which analyze this topic. In addition to the classification methods in the theoretical foundation, researchers define various measurement methods by investigating attributes of authenticity (Beverland 2006, p. 251), forms of authenticity (Beverland, Lindgreen and Vink 2008, p. 5), brand authenticity factors (Eggers et al. 2012, p. 340; Napoli et al. 2014, p. 1090), dimensions of brand authenticity (Bruhn et al. 2012, p. 567; Morhart et al. 2015, p. 200; Gilpin, Palazzolo and Brody 2010, p. 262) and several more. The three general brand authenticity

measurement frameworks that the following will focus on are proposed by Beverland (2006, p. 251), Morhart et al. (2015, p. 200) and Napoli et al. (2014, p. 1090). An overview of frameworks, including those that this thesis does not closely explore, is provided in table 2 (“Insert table 2 about here”).

Finally, since it does not make a company successful to only claim its authenticity, it is crucial for managers and employees who are responsible for internal or external communication to understand how consumers measure authenticity (Napoli et al. 2014, p. 1096). Authenticity should rather be transferred implicitly than mentioned directly (Eggers et al. 2012, p. 346). Thus, with reference to the mentioned frameworks, this part explains where companies need to pay attention and what they need to consider to be perceived authentic in their communication. The last section addresses individual aspects of the online context that researchers maintain in the existing literature.

Before discussing the first framework, a brief explanation of the methodological structure is necessary. Most researchers build their models like the example in figure 2 by Bruhn et al. (2012, p. 572) (“Insert figure 2 about here”). The development of a final brand authenticity scale grounds on several interviews involving different brands. The result is a set of items, here consisting of 15 items, that are different statements evaluating the perception and appearance of a brand. These items are assigned to certain main categories, called dimensions, which are determinants that influence the perceived brand authenticity (Burmman et al. 2012, p. 136). Based on the assessment of the individual items, it can be dedicated whether the different dimensions fulfill the authenticity claims. In all measurement frameworks, authenticity is therefore determined by how well the company or brand accomplishes the individual items respectively by how consumers perceive the individual items. This perception can be different due to personal or social construction and builds on the consumers’ subjective evaluation of indexical/objective, iconic/constructive and existential cues, which are used to judge the



authenticity of products or brands (Grayson and Martinec 2004; Lu, Gursoy and Lu 2015, Napoli et al. 2014; Wang 1999). In this context, for example, indexical cues can be brand scandals, iconic cues can be marketing efforts on brand heritage and existential cues can be the humanization of non-human entities (Beverland 2006, p. 257; Lu, Gursoy and Lu 2015, p. 38). As Ewing, Allen and Ewing (2012, p. 388) state, “[i]n isolation, any one cue may have potential to affect an authenticity judgment; but when several cues are deployed together subtly but systematically, their combined influence is likely to be more pronounced.”

*The First Measurement Framework.* Beverland (2006, p. 251) uses the example of the wine industry for his construct, which consists of six authenticity attributes: heritage and pedigree, stylistic consistency, quality commitments, relationship to place, the method of production and downplaying commercial motives. Thus, to build up authenticity, companies should take the following points into account: First, it is necessary to build links between the brand and its past to make use of individual histories and heritage (Beverland 2006, p. 253). Chhabra, Healy and Sills (2003, p. 715) and Napoli, Dickinson-Delaporte and Beverland (2016, p. 1204) support this finding as heritage shows a brand’s connection with cultures and customs and reflects its sense of history. Likewise, Fritz, Schoenmueller and Bruhn (2017, p. 331) agree, that heritage's communication leads to a brand that seems more durable and consistent, which makes it more reliable to consumers. Second, they should maintain stylistic consistency in everything they do, which implies that a brand should be built from inside out, not the other way around and that style must evolve slowly over time rather than adapting it to every emerging market trend (Beverland 2006, p. 254). Fritz, Schoenmueller and Bruhn (2017, p. 340) continue this thought and emphasize the need to implement a corporate policy that represents an enduring and unchanging brand identity. According to them, this policy should cover the company’s mission, values and norms on the one hand and its communication activities on the other hand to be perceived as authentic. Additionally, companies have to invest

in areas that do improve quality and communicate this commitment in marketing activities to commit quality (Beverland 2006, p. 254). Fourth, through the use of country or region of origin, relationships to a place can either be used to reduce perceived purchase risk or to establish positive connections to values or symbols relating to that country (Beverland 2006, p. 255). As Alexander (2009, p. 552) notes, like every good story needs a setting and a time through which they can seek distinction, brand stories do as well. Moreover, transparency concerning the method of production and a link between the creative process and the final product is necessary since people want to know what went into the assembly of the final product (Beverland 2006, p. 256). Finally, companies should downplay commercial motives as mass products that are over commercialized are valued way less than custom-made products (Beverland 2006, p. 256). Several researchers like Fritz, Schoenmueller and Bruhn (2017, p. 340), who advise keeping a distance from short-termed marketing activities as incredible testimonials, short-time price campaigns and communication instruments conflicting with the brand identity, highlight the importance of this factor. Also, Beverland, Lindgreen and Vink (2008, p. 14) assume a threshold effect that advertisements that do not exaggerate are more likely to display authenticity. Beverland (2006, p. 1025) carries this idea further by emphasizing the relevance of decoupling a company's day-to-day work activities and marketing strategy from the outward projection of the company through images of heritage and tradition and thereby maintaining moral legitimacy (Napoli et al. 2014, p. 1091).

*The Second Measurement Framework.* Morhart et al. (2015, p. 200) identifies the four dimensions credibility, integrity, symbolism and continuity as the primary criteria for whether something is perceived as authentic. For the first dimension, credibility, it is crucial that companies take transparency seriously and that they are honest and willing to fulfill their assertions (Morhart et al. 2015, p. 202). Companies must be consistent in their offerings, claims and actions while at the same time acting in line with their brand values to be trustworthy

(Molleda 2010, p. 233). For this purpose, it is important for a company to know its values to be able to build and fall back on them and to ensure employee behavior that is congruent with the brand's values (Edwards et al. 2012, p. 203; Morhart et al. 2015, p. 211). The dimension integrity is about the responsibility of the brand regarding acting ethically correct, about moral purity and that it reflects virtue in its communicated values and intentions while having no solely instrumental economic agenda (Holt 2002, p. 80; Gustafsson 2006, p. 527; Morhart et al. 2015, p. 203). Events like brand scandals can decrease perceived integrity (Morhart et al. 2015, p. 206). One aspect that Morhart et al. (2015, p. 200) do not explicitly mention at this point, but which is emphasized by other researchers, is the activity as a member of the community (Beverland 2005b, p. 460; Leigh, Peters and Shelton 2006, p. 490). To be authentic, to build trust and to be accepted by consumers, a company should act as a corporate citizen and maintain its legitimacy as part of the community, for example, by supporting long-term projects that are of local importance and by not exploiting their workforce (Gustafsson 2006, p. 524). Symbolism is the third dimension, and it is essential for corporate identity construction as it helps to emphasize its roots and might provide self-referential cues that represent relationships, values and roles (Fritz, Schoenmueller and Bruhn 2017, p. 340; Morhart et al. 2015, p. 203). The final dimension is continuity which is about a brand's timelessness and historicity and underlines the necessity for a brand to be able to overcome trends (Morhart et al. 2015, p. 202). It is important that brands do not just adapt to current market trends thoughtlessly because the consumers ask for it but reflect whether the company's values match the respective trend or not (Beverland 2006, p. 258).

Compared to Beverland's (2006, p. 251) authenticity attributes some similarities get apparent as the continuity dimension covers heritage and pedigree as well as stylistic consistency. Moreover, the way how Morhart et al. (2015, p. 200) use integrity shows parallels to Beverland's (2006, p. 256) attribute of downplaying commercial motives as both promote

the commercial disinterestedness and virtuousness of authentic brands. Additionally, other researchers, such as Bruhn et al. (2012, p. 567), who identify the four dimensions continuity, originality, reliability and naturalness as superordinate categories, agree with Morhart et al. (2015, p. 200). Both highlight the importance of consistent corporate internal and external communication regarding different target groups. Furthermore, they promote the determination of brand key facts and symbols, for instance concerning values and traditions, that might influence continuity positively and the creation of a unified, reliable brand perception (Bruhn et al. 2012, p. 573).

*The Third Measurement Framework.* This approach is the result of a close examination of the seven most frequently mentioned authenticity determinants Napoli et al. (2014, p. 1090) find in literature. They are used as a starting point to form more comprehensive categories in the belief that consumers deploy a combination of these cues to evaluate brand authenticity (Napoli et al. 2014, p. 1091). The result of their analysis is that the authenticity construct, which builds on the perception of the seven cues heritage, nostalgia, cultural symbolism, sincerity, craftsmanship, quality commitment and design consistency, can be narrowed down to the three first-order factors quality commitment, sincerity and heritage (Napoli et al. 2014, p. 1090). According to their study the other factors drop out as they are either already captured in those categories or irrelevant for authenticity (Napoli et al. 2014, p. 1096).

This construct also shows similarities with the previous models. For instance, quality commitment and heritage were already discussed in Beverland's (2006, p. 251) framework and are covered by the continuity dimension of Morhart et al. (2015, p. 200). Sincerity in contrast, which Napoli, Dickinson-Delaporte and Beverland (2016, p. 1204) define as the reflection of "an individual's belief that brand owners act with integrity and are driven by an intrinsic love of the product, rather than solely an economic agenda", was dealt with in another article of Beverland (2005a). He claims that it is crucial for companies to develop a sincere story,

exemplary through stylistic consistency, to appear authentic (Beverland 2005a, p. 1003). Based on this definition, sincerity has significant parallels to the attribute downplay commercial motives by Beverland (2006, p. 256) and the integrity dimension (Morhart et al. 2015, p. 211).

In summary, it is particularly important for a company to know itself as well as its strengths and weaknesses and to develop its corporate personality by using authentic features such as stylistic consistency to underline its values (Molleda 2010, p. 225). To convey authenticity, a company must remain true to itself on the one hand and enable its customers to remain faithful to their inner self by consuming the brand's products on the other hand (Molleda 2010, p. 224). By focusing on a limited number of core values, a company can prioritize its resources and focus on the most important messages they want to communicate to convince consumers of this ability (Eggers et al. 2012, p. 346).

*Authenticity Measurement in Online Communication.* To conclude this chapter, the following section highlights some of the unique features that arise in connection with the topic of authenticity in online communication. The challenge here is that many consumers in the online context are particularly skeptical about messages they receive because of the open and untraceable nature of the Internet (Pronschinske, Groza and Walker 2012, p. 224; Schlosser, Barnett White and Lloyd 2006, p. 144). Although no authenticity constructs have been developed specifically for the online context yet, a smaller number of researchers tries to define and measure authenticity within certain fields of activity in a firm. Specifically, there is research concerning authenticity in advertising, communication and public relations (Beverland, Lindgreen and Vink 2008; Bishop 2006; Molleda 2010). Although these models were not designed exclusively for the online perspective, some of the authors explicitly mention that they are used in this context as well (Molleda 2010, p. 232).

For instance, Bishop (2006, p. 215) determines ten corporate principles of authentic communication, which are that communication needs to be relevant, truthful, clear, timely,

comprehensive, accessible, consistent, fundamental, responsive to feedback and caring. Further, Molleda (2010, p. 232, 233) develops a measurement attempt for public relations to assess authenticity. His idea refers to both personal and text messages in the online, print and interactive environment (Molleda 2010, p. 232). Molleda's (2010, p. 232, 233) ten aspects include, amongst others, organizational values, quality of offerings, connection to the original idea and imagery of pleasure or fun.

Generally, researchers identify that the messages and actions in the virtual world must correspond to the actions in the real world as one of the most critical points is to create a unified, authentic identity (Henderson and Bowley 2010, p. 246). It is a mistake to treat corporate identity and brand identity separately by seeking to attract consumers and investors with different or even contradictory promises (Henderson and Bowley 2010, p. 246). Besides, communicated messages must be part of an integrated and long-term communication plan to be perceived authentically (Henderson and Bowley 2010, p. 248). For instance, companies should not understand social media as an undifferentiated mass medium but should communicate consistently on an individual level with consumers to receive feedback and maintain relationships (Burmam et al. 2012, p. 138; Henderson and Bowley 2010, p. 248). Another point that determines a company's authenticity is the right level of control (Henderson and Bowley 2010, p. 250). Especially in online communication, it is difficult for many companies that it is not possible to maintain control because everybody can communicate and express his opinion on the Internet, even if it is negative (Henderson and Bowley 2010, p. 252). Particularly in blogs and social media, companies must learn how to deal with these comments, to accept opposite alternative points of view and above all to respond to this form of feedback to remain authentic (Henderson and Bowley 2010, p. 251). For this purpose, employees who identify with the company and represent its values should be specially trained to build up an official presence on behalf of the company that promotes user interaction and can reduce user skepticism (Gilmore

and Pine 2007, p. 65; Pronschinske, Groza and Walker 2012, p. 224). This is possible, for example, through descriptive writing, the publication of personal stories and honest opinions that help consumers to identify with the company (Sandlin and Peña 2014, p. 339). Differences of opinion must be resolved in a constant dialogue since actions such as censorship by deleting comments or limiting the freedom of communication of company spokespersons cast a negative image on companies and make them lose their authenticity (Henderson and Bowley 2010, p. 247, 248). Therefore, transparency, honesty and openness towards other viewpoints as well as intervention and interaction to engage users should have priority in the online communication of a company (Burmann et al. 2012, p. 142).

### ***3.2 Positive Effects of Authenticity***

To explain the implications of brand authenticity, it is requisite to distinguish two conceptually related constructs first – brand credibility and brand trust (Delgado-Ballester 2004, p. 573; Napoli et al. 2014, p. 1094; Schallehn 2012, p. 49). The concept of brand credibility is that people perceive the intentions that organizations state to be true (Erdem and Swait 2004, p. 192). For brand trust, the focus is on a positive expectation of the recipient towards an object and builds on the recipients believe that a company's activities are in the best interest of society and result of the love for its products (Burmann et al. 2012, p. 136; Delgado-Ballester 2004, p. 586; Napoli et al. 2014, p. 1094). When brand trust exists, consumers rely on a company to deliver its performance as promised and expected, which is why Delgado-Ballester (2004, p. 586) defines it as “[t]he confident expectations of the brand's reliability and intentions in situations entailing risk to the consumer.” However, trust is a critical factor, as it is difficult to win and easy to lose, for example, when corporate dissonance exists and no consistency between a company's values and actions is evident (Eggers 2012, p. 341). Both concepts mentioned influence the recipients' choice and consideration through information costs saved

and through perceived quality and risk (Erdem and Swait 2004, p. 191). They are not to be equated or confused with the concept of authenticity but rather represent sub-dimensions of authenticity (Schallehn 2012, p. 49). The sequence here is that authenticity has a positive effect on and leads to brand credibility and consequently to brand trust (Schallehn 2012, p. 49). It follows the causal relationship that authentic brands are both credible and trustworthy, but conversely, credible or trustworthy brands are not automatically authentic (Schallehn 2012, p. 49; Napoli et al. 2014, p. 1094).

Behavioral consequences of authenticity and thus of credibility and trustworthiness are customer loyalty, repeated purchase intentions and positive recommendations to other consumers (Fritz, Schoenmueller and Bruhn 2017, p. 330; Lu, Gursoy and Lu 2015, p. 42, 43; Morhart et al. 2015, p. 211; Spiggle, Nguyen and Caravella 2012, p. 975). Furthermore, brand authenticity has a positive effect on the consumers emotional brand attachment and leads to a positive word of mouth as it is shown in figure 3 (“Insert figure 3 about here”) (Guèvremont and Grohmann 2016; Morhart et al. 2015, p. 201). Moreover, figure 3 displays the interplay between cues that impact the authenticity dimensions and thereby drive different behavioral outcomes which, in turn, have substantial implications for marketing outcomes such as sales (Ma, Sun and Kekre 2015, p. 628). Lastly, brand authenticity can lead to the willingness to pay a higher price premium and helps to ensure that customers forgive smaller errors on the part of companies more quickly (Fritz, Schoenmueller and Bruhn 2017, p. 330).

Additionally, perceived brand authenticity is a crucial parameter of brand equity and hence a driver of competitive advantage (Lu, Gursoy and Lu 2015, p. 40). Authenticity positively influences the three brand equity determinants, brand awareness, brand image and perceived quality, which, in turn, lead to brand loyalty and therefore influence the consumers brand choice intention (Lu, Gursoy and Lu 2015, p. 40). Eggers (2012, p. 340) even goes one step further and states that authenticity drives small and medium-enterprise growth.



Finally, another consequence of brand authenticity is that consumers feel authentic while consuming the products and their well-being increases (Wood et al. 2008, p. 396). They individually select a brand according to whether it fits their ideal self-concept and thus a brand can support in awakening the positive feeling of authenticity in consumers and thereby offer them the opportunity for self-authentication (Edwards 2010, p. 194; Napoli, Dickinson-Delaporte and Beverland 2016, p. 1204). This opportunity contributes to consumers developing a stronger bond to the brand and increases the brand's reputation (Edwards 2010, p. 198; Napoli, Dickinson-Delaporte and Beverland 2016, p. 1204).

### ***3.3 Problems of Striving for Authenticity***

Despite all the possible positive consequences of authenticity, there are disadvantages which follow this phenomenon and that should be considered by companies. A significant problem is the manipulation of authenticity, which can take place either on the part of the company or on the part of the consumer.

On the consumer side, a possible problem is that companies lose control over communicated messages (Henderson and Bowley 2010, p. 252). Everyone can submit rankings or comments on experiences made with the company on various portals. Here, it cannot be avoided that persons give fake reviews to let the company appear either in an excessively positive or excessively negative light (Henderson and Bowley 2010, p. 250; O'Connor 2010, p. 766). Since this undermines the authenticity of companies and puts considerable pressure on them, the question arises on how to deal with such incidents most effectively (Edwards 2003, p. 203). Some companies try to solve this problem with censorship and the deletion of comments, which is perceived as extremely negative and implausible by consumers (Burmann et al. 2012, p. 142). Others do not react at all to this kind of comments, which is not conducive to their authenticity as well (O'Connor 2010, p. 768). In this context, service intervention and

open interaction are especially important for the consumer's authenticity perception of the company (Ma, Sun and Kekre 2015, p. 642).

On the corporate side, it is possible that companies deceive their customers because they want to achieve authenticity at all costs to hold out against the competition (Ewing, Allen and Ewing 2012, p. 388). For instance, as Ewing, Allen and Ewing (2012, p. 388) describe, marketers simply invented environmental certificates, which should serve as indexical cues, to symbolize authenticity. Besides, they explicitly selected representatives for blogs or recruitment campaigns with values that the company would like to present to the outside world but which the company does not represent internally (Henderson and Bowley 2010, p. 244; Sandlin and Peña 2014, p. 343). Even if this kind of manipulation is not initially recognized, since it can sometimes be complicated for consumers to distinguish true authenticity from staged one, these deceptions become apparent at the latest after purchase and fall back on the company (Lu, Gursoy and Lu 2015, P. 37). Therefore, the pursuit of authenticity should be taken seriously and not exclusively for sales reasons, but out of conviction based on actual circumstances. This means to become aware of one's weaknesses and limitations and to compensate them in other ways than by overriding (Kernis and Goldman 2006, p. 340).

#### **4. Discussion**

This last chapter provides a summary of findings and the resulting managerial implications. Furthermore, it highlights some limitations of the current research results and proposes possible directions for future investigation.

### ***4.1 Critical Evaluation***

This literature review intends to give an overview of authenticity in online communication. It examines the construct of authenticity and the possible forms of differentiating authenticity in more detail in the theoretical part. It also emphasizes the importance of authenticity in the online context. The central part deals with the possible approaches of how authenticity can be measured, what companies should pay attention to in order to be authentic and what consequences and disadvantages authenticity can bring with itself.

In the course of this paper, it became apparent, how difficult it is to define, measure and control a social construct (Edwards 2010, p. 202). It is very complicated to break down a complex topic like authenticity to one definition because analysts use the term in many different contexts with different meanings (Edwards 2010, p. 192). The same applies to the approaches to measure authenticity. Much research has already been done in this area and concerning possible cues that might indicate authenticity, but no uniform construct for measuring authenticity has been found so far. Although there is some overlap in most frameworks, many have been developed in a different context, so caution is needed when applying them in other contexts (Napoli, Dickinson-Delaporte and Beverland 2016, p. 1203).

Figure 4 illustrates the frequency with which the authenticity cues already listed in table 2 are used in the different measurement models ("Insert figure 4 about here"). It is striking that despite the multitude of models and a total number of 37 cues, the same cue is used synonymously in a maximum of three models while 21 cues only appear in one of the respective frameworks. The lack of agreement between the terms and the uncertainty about whether two authors with different terms could mean the same regarding content makes it even more difficult to compare the different models.

## ***4.2 Managerial Implications***

The phenomenon of authenticity raises many new questions that managers have to deal with to remain competitive in today's markets. In the introduction, the importance of the topic in times of increasing uncertainty and the fact that authenticity must be managed correctly to benefit the company are highlighted (Gilmore and Pine 2007, p. 45). Although it is not a guarantee that a company is successful or has particularly good relationships with its customers, or something that a company inheres, authenticity is likely to have a severe impact on company's esteem and on consumer acknowledgment (Edwards 2010, p. 203). For this purpose, managers must succeed in communicating the authenticity of their company to the customer what requires the understanding that authenticity is not only produced by the company to achieve its goals (Edwards 2010, p. 202). Instead, it is the result of discourse with consumers who process and subjectively interpret the information given by the company (Edwards 2010, p. 202). Authenticity needs to be considered as a continually evolving idea (Yuan et al. 2014, p. 351). Thus, managers should communicate with their target consumer segments and identify how they perceive or define authenticity to focus on the respective cues afterwards and to become part of the community (Beverland, Lindgreen and Vink 2008, p. 14). The ability of the brand to fulfill the needs of consumers by supporting them in their self-authentication process should be stressed (Guèvremont and Grohmann 2016, p. 615). Managers must become clear about the values and the heritage of their company, what they want to stand for and consistently live these values both within and outside the company and offline as well as online (Beverland 2006, p. 257). Additionally, a company's already existing image must be understood by managers (Pine and Gilmore 2008, p. 35, 36). Here, authenticity could be of great interest, for instance concerning a successful brand extension accompanied by customer acceptance (Spiggle, Nguyen and Caravella 2012, p. 967).

This thesis points out, there are many reasons why managers should pay a lot of attention to the topic of authenticity. Hence, the distinctions mentioned above between the different types of authenticity and the various measurement approaches, including their implications from chapter 3.1, might support managers in their understanding of authenticity and can serve as a guide to which aspects they should pay particular attention.

### ***4.3 Limitations and Future Research***

This thesis aims to introduce the existing literature on the subject of authenticity in the specific context of online communication. Since there are many different definitions and approaches in this area, this paper could not discuss all of them.

One limitation might be the research method with which the results are achieved as these are almost always interviews and surveys with different consumers what might lead to a one-sided view on authenticity. As the representativeness of samples might vary, and authenticity is subjectively felt as already mentioned repeatedly, interviews with different study participants additionally reflect subjective opinions and can lead to different results.

Another significant limitation of the classification methods proposed is that many are researched in relation with specific industries, for example tourism and the beverage industry, which questions whether their results can be used in other industries as well (Napoli, Dickinson-Delaporte and Beverland 2016, p. 1203). Future research could also be carried out to see whether it is possible to integrate existing approaches into a superordinate framework which is valid across industries and contexts and if further authenticity attributes are necessary for it.

Moreover, it becomes apparent that research has only paid little attention to the topic of authenticity in connection with online communication so far. For future studies, it would be interesting to place a stronger focus on this relationship and to analyze more precisely, whether

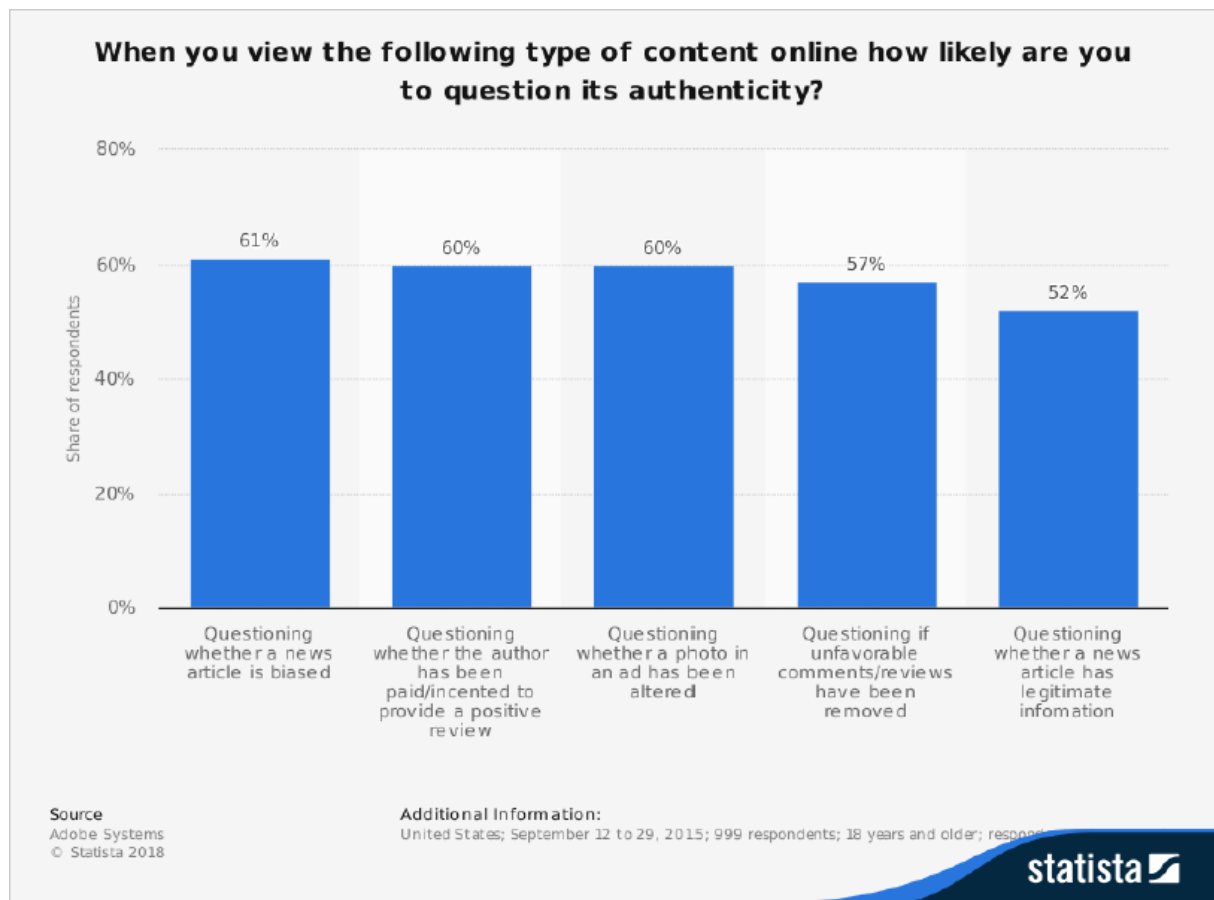
the previous frameworks are transferable to the online context or whether specific additional parameters would be required and therefore new models have to be established and analyzed.

Next, a more in-depth investigation of authenticity constructs in different cultures or countries would be necessary to provide further insight into their applicability in different contexts. For example, can international companies assume that customers of any culture or socio-economic background perceive authenticity equally and have the same need for authenticity?

In general, due to the omnipresence of the topic of authenticity already emphasized repeatedly, future research in this direction is unavoidable and of great importance for both companies and consumers.

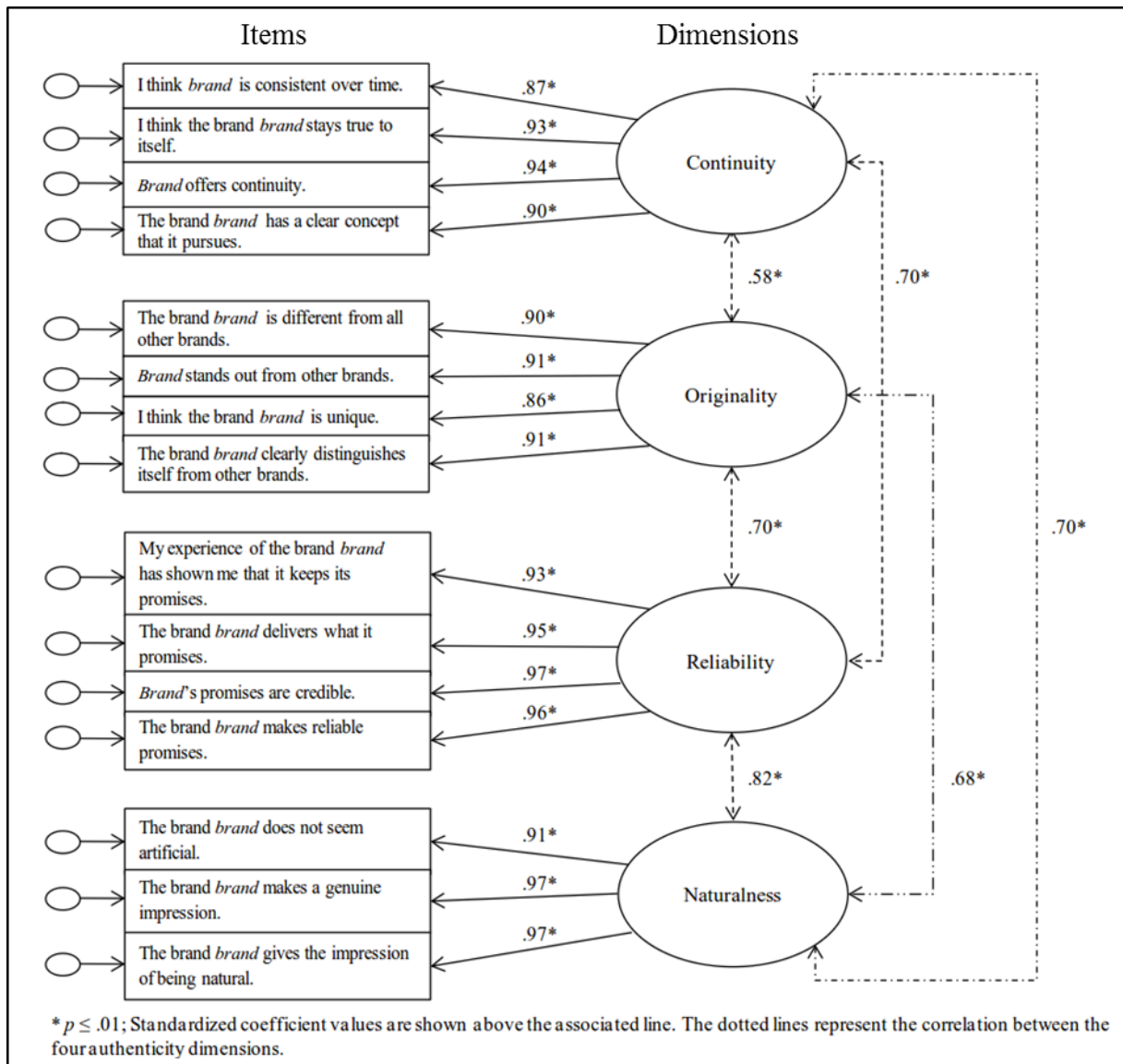
## Figures

Figure 1: U.S. Consumers Perception of Online Content Authenticity 2015



Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/623693/consumer-perception-content-authenticity/>  
(accessed: 29.05.2018)

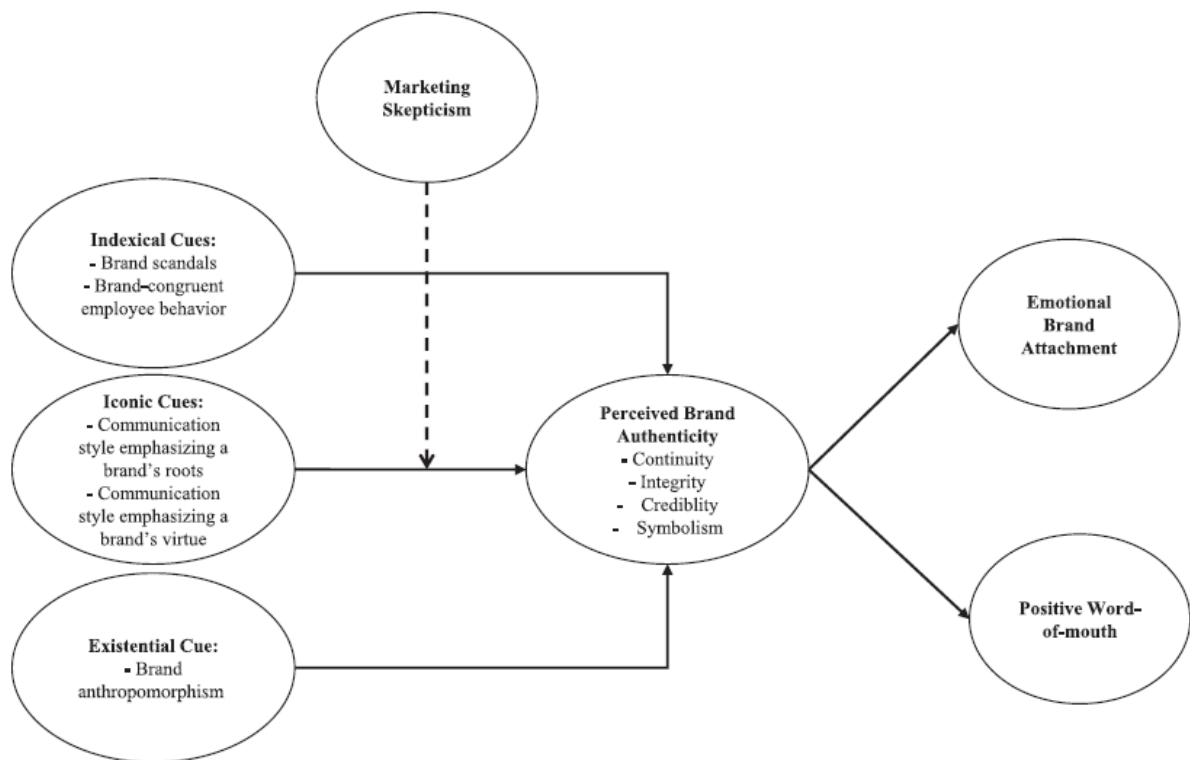
Figure 2: The Brand Authenticity Construct



Source: Following Bruhn et al. (2012, p. 572)

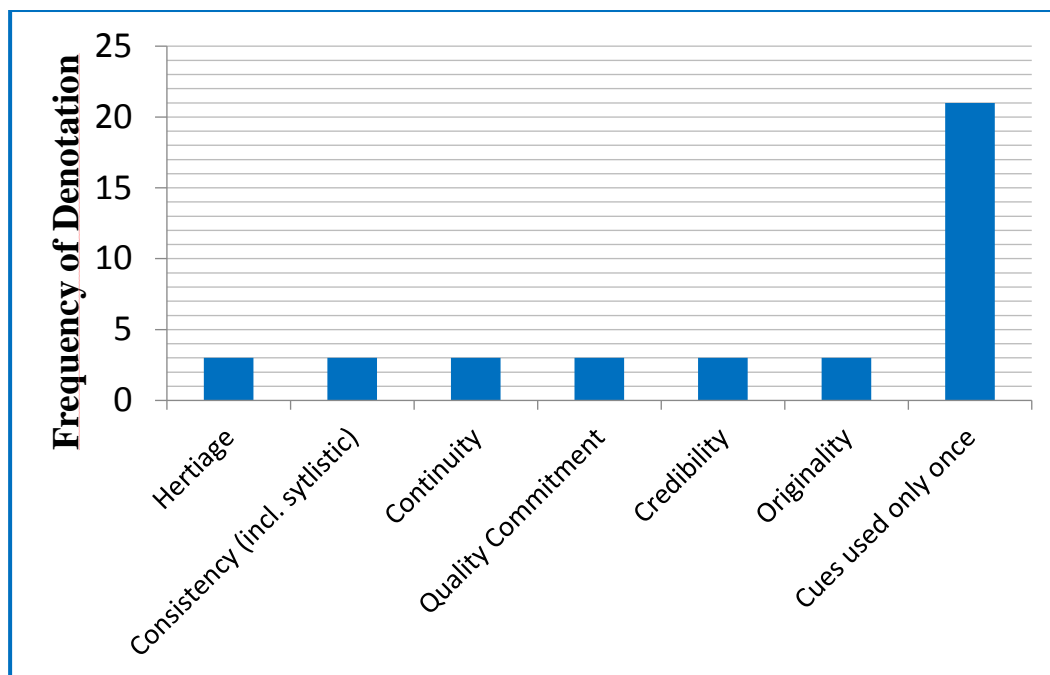


Figure 3: Conceptual Framework of Perceived Brand Authenticity



Source: Morhart et al. (2015, p. 206)

Figure 4: Overview of the Frequency of Used Authenticity Cues (self-provided)



Source: Following the authenticity cues of table 2

## Tables

Table 1: Overview of Pure, Approximate and Moral Authenticity

Authenticity	Purpose of cues	Exemplar cues
Pure (literal) authenticity	Provide consumer with in situ guarantee of the genuine article.	Indexical cues involving the brand and— <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pictures of craftspeople actively engaged in the production process, and</li> <li>2. Cues that indicate the active use of traditional practices, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Pictures of beer being produced with traditional equipment</li> <li>b. Images of beer being stored in cellars</li> <li>c. Pictures of service staff in traditional clothes serving beer</li> <li>d. Historically accurate colors, font, and typesetting</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
Approximate authenticity	Provide consumer with a feeling that this brand will help achieve self-authentication through connecting with place and time.	Iconic cues that create an impression that the brand is connected to “the past.” For example: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stylized links to place of production (religious abbeys)</li> <li>2. Stylized connections between creators and the product (monks)</li> <li>3. Use of traditional product identifiers (“Triple,” “Double,” etc.), and</li> <li>4. Cues that clearly differentiate the brand from “gaudy” and complex mass-market alternatives via: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Simple color schemes</li> <li>b. Simple typeface</li> <li>c. Simple labeling and packaging</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
Moral authenticity	Provide consumer with a feeling that this brand will help achieve self-authentication through connecting with personal moral values.	Indexical or iconic images of— <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Involvement of individual creators in the production process</li> <li>2. Small batch or craft production methods and processes</li> <li>3. Love of the craft process</li> </ol>

Source: Beverland, Lindgreen and Vink (2008, p. 8)

Table 2: Overview of Measurement Frameworks (self-provided)

Author name	Number of Citations (based on Google Scholar)	Findings	Publisher
<b>Perceived authenticity forms</b>			
Beverland, Lindgreen and Vink (2008)	228	pure, approximate, moral	<i>Journal of Advertising</i>
Gilmore and Pine (2007)	880	natural, original, exceptional, referential, influential	Authenticity (book)
Grayson and Martinec (2006)	713	indexical, iconic	<i>Journal of Consumer Research</i>
Wang (1999)	2594	objective, constructive, existential	<i>Anal. of Tourism Research</i>
<b>Authenticity determinants</b>			
Fritz, Schoenmueller and Bruhn (2017)	12	brand's past, virtuousness, consumers' self-identification with the brand, employees representing the brand	<i>European Journal of Marketing</i>
Morhart et al. (2014)	98	credibility, integrity, symbolism, continuity	<i>Journal of Consumer Psychology</i>
Napoli et al. (2014)	180	quality commitment, sincerity, heritage	<i>Journal of Business Research</i>
Schallehn (2012)	29	consistency, continuity, individuality*	Marken-Authentizität (book)
Bruhn et al. (2012)	66	continuity, originality, reliability, naturalness	<i>Advances in Consumer Research</i>
Eggers et al. (2012)	94	brand consistency, brand customer orientation and brand congruency	<i>Journal of World Business</i>
Gilpin, Palazzolo and Brody (2010)	51	authority, identity, transparency, engagement	<i>Journal of Communication</i>
Liao and Ma (2009)	32	originality, quality commitment and credibility, heritage and style persistence, scarceness, sacredness, purity	<i>International Journal of Business and Information</i>
Beverland (2006)	353	heritage and pedigree, stylistic consistency, quality commitment, relationship to place, method of production, downplaying commercial motives	<i>Journal of Business Research</i>

\* translated from German into English (original: Konsistenz, Kontinuität, Individualität)

## Appendix

### Comparative Literature Table

Citation	Content									Context*	
	Authenticity Construct		Focus			Perceived Authenticity				Online	Offline
	Definition of Authenticity	Forms of Authenticity	Authenticity of an individual	Authenticity of brand/ object	Authenticity in general	Determinants to measure brand authenticity	Suggestions for Action	Positive Effects of Authenticity	Possible Problems of Authenticity		
This thesis	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Alexander (2009)		X		X		X	X				X
Beverland (2005a)	X	X		X		X	X	X			X
Beverland (2005b)				X			X				X
Beverland (2006)				X		X	X				X
Beverland and Farrelly (2010)	X				X			X			X
Beverland, Lindgreen and Vink (2008)		X		X			X				X
Bishop (2006)				X			X	X			X
Brown, Kozinets and Sherry Jr. (2003)						X					X
Bruhn et al. (2012)	X			X		X	X				X
Burmann et al. (2012)				X		X	X	X	X	X	
Cappannelli and Cappannelli (2004)	X		X				X	X			X
Carroll and Swaminathan (2000)				X			X				X
Chhabra, Healy and Sils (2003)		X		X		X	X	X			X
Delgado-Ballester (2004)								X			X
Edwards (2010)	X	X		X			X	X			X
Eggers et al. (2012)	X			X		X	X	X			X
Erdem and Swait (2004)								X			X
Ewing, Allen and Ewing (2012)		X		X					X		X
Faust and Householder (2009)	X			X			X			X	
Fine (2003)	X			X							X
Fritz, Schoenmueller and Bruhn (2017)	X	X		X		X	X	X			X
Gilmore and Pine (2007)		X		X		X	X	X			X
Gilpin, Palazzolo and Brody (2010)	X			X		X	X			X	
Grayson and Martinec (2004)	X	X		X		X					X
Grieve and Watkinson (2016)			X					X		X	
Guèvremont and Grohmann (2016)	X			X			X	X			X
Gustafsson (2006)	X			X			X	X			X
Henderson and Bowley (2010)		X		X			X	X	X	X	
Holt (2002)				X			X	X			X
Kennick (1985)				X							X
Kernis and Goldman (2006)			X						X		
Leigh, Peters and Shelton (2006)		X	X	X			X				X

Citation	Content									Context*	
	Authenticity Construct		Focus			Perceived Authenticity				Online	Offline
	Definition of Authenticity	Forms of Authenticity	Authenticity of an individual	Authenticity of brand/ object	Authenticity in general	Determinants to measure brand authenticity	Suggestions for Action	Positive Effects of Authenticity	Possible Problems of Authenticity		
This thesis	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Liao and Ma (2009)	X	X		X		X	X	X			X
Lu, Gursoy and Lu (2015)		X		X			X	X	X		X
Ma, Sun and Kekre (2015)					X		X	X		X	
Molleda (2010)	X	X		X		X	X			X	X
Morhart et al. (2015)	X	X		X		X	X	X	X		X
Napoli et al. (2014)	X			X		X	X	X			X
Napoli, Dickinson-Delaporte and Beverland (2016)	X			X			X	X	X		X
O'Connor (2010)				X			X	X	X	X	
Pine and Gilmore (2008)				X			X	X			X
Pronschinske, Groza and Walker (2012)				X			X	X		X	
Reineke and Trepte (2014)			X			X	X	X		X	X
Sandlin and Peña (2014)				X			X		X	X	
Schallehn (2012)	X	X		X		X	X	X			X
Schlosser, Barnett White, and Lloyd (2006)										X	
Spiggle, Nguyen and Caravella (2012)	X			X			X	X			X
Turner and Manning (1988)				X							X
Wang (1999)	X	X			X						X
Wood et al. (2008)			X					X			X
Yuan et al. (2014)	X	X			X		X				X

\* if online context is not explicitly mentioned, the article is classified as belonging to the offline context

Literature Review Tables <sup>1</sup>

Author/s (Year) [Journal]	Research Focus	Theoretical Background	Sample	Method/Analysis	Main Findings
Beverland (2005a) [ <i>Journal of Management Studies</i> ]	Brand authenticity in the wine trade industry	Nature of Authenticity	(1) n = 53 employees (from 26 wine firms)  (2) n = 200 reviewed sources covering a period of 600 years	Case study design:  (1) Each case was conducted via e-mail, interviews with case respondents were conducted at their working place (average time per case: 4,85 h)  Analysis of cases through within-case and cross-case analysis  (2) Secondary data from the news and books was included  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct variable(s) (DV): Brand authenticity</li> <li>• Indirect variable(s) (IV): Protecting status, sincerity of story</li> </ul>	Authenticity is important to reinforce a company's status, to command price premiums and to ward off competitors  Authenticity is reached by developing a sincere story (essential for maintaining quality and relevance and for appearing above commercial considerations)

<sup>1</sup> The literature review tables (p. 35 – 62) may contain direct citations from the respective sources stated in the first column

Author/s (Year) [Journal]	Research Focus	Theoretical Background	Sample	Method/Analysis	Main Findings
Beverland (2006) <i>[Journal of Business Research]</i>	Brand authenticity in the wine trade industry	Authenticity as positioning device  Brand authenticity	n = 20 wine producers  n = 39 wine makers  n = 30 wine consumers (chosen from a mailing list of a wine seller)	Development of case studies of established premium wine producers  Interviews with wine makers were conducted in English at the participants' place of business (~ 3 h length) and taped/transcribed  Interviews with regular wine consumers (~ 1 h length)  Analysis of case studies and consumer transcripts by within- and cross-case analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989)	Six attributes of authenticity:  - Heritage and pedigree - Stylistic consistency - Quality commitments - Relationship to place - Method of production - Downplaying commercial motives  Authenticity can be true, stylized or false  All authenticity attributes represent objective as well as subjective sources of authenticity



Author/s (Year) [Journal]	Research Focus	Theoretical Background	Sample	Method/Analysis	Main Findings
Beverland and Farrelly (2010) [ <i>Journal of consumer research</i> ]	Authenticity in consumption  Consumers choice of authentic cues to reach specific goals	Authenticity  Consumer goals	n = 21 informants (identified by a recruitment agency)	Image-elicited semi-structured depth interviews  Both authors analyzed the transcripts separately before they discussed them together	Consumers focus on cues in objects that convey authenticity for them  Inseparable link between personal consumer goals and determinants of authenticity: Consumer decision-making process is based on the desire for identity benefits (control, connection, virtue)  Consumers seek the same thing in objects/brands but for different reasons
Beverland, Lindgreen and Vink (2008) [ <i>Journal of Advertising</i> ]	Authenticity in advertising using the example of the trappist beer industry	Concept of authenticity  Trappist brewing	Data collection from three sources: marketers, consumers and business buyers  n = 12 respondents (2 female, 10 male; 20 - 54 years)	Interpretative approach (qualitative)  Semi-structured depth interviews  Methods to improve research quality: Triangulated data from various sources, feedback provision independent interpretations of findings	Identification of three forms of authenticity:  - Pure authenticity - Approximate authenticity - Moral authenticity  Indexicality is achieved via iconicity  Authenticity should be suggested indirectly by advertisers using cues

Author/s (Year) [Journal]	Research Focus	Theoretical Background	Sample	Method/Analysis	Main Findings
Bishop (2006) [ <i>Corporate Communications: An international journal</i> ]	Principles for authentic communication  Correlation of authentic communication and success	Communication literature	n = 175 US water utilities which are members of the American Water Works Association (18,2 % response rate to questionnaire)	<p>Review of professional and academic literature</p> <p>Survey was mailed to US water utilities (24 question, 4-page questionnaire with open- and closed-ended, checklist and Likert-type questions)</p> <p>SPSS was used to conduct analyses of quantitative data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DV: Communication success</li> <li>• IV: Truthful, core issues, full story, consistent, made relevant to audience, clear, show care, accessible, feedback, timely, audience itself, topic itself</li> </ul>	<p>Ten principles of authentic communication are correlated with communication success:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clear</li> <li>- Relevant</li> <li>- Timely</li> <li>- Consistent</li> <li>- Truthful</li> <li>- Fundamental</li> <li>- Comprehensive</li> <li>- Accessible</li> <li>- Caring</li> <li>- Responsive to feedback</li> </ul>

Author/s (Year) [Journal]	Research Focus	Theoretical Background	Sample	Method/Analysis	Main Findings
Bruhn et al. (2012) [ <i>Advances in Consumer Research</i> ]	Conceptualization and measurement of brand authenticity	<p>Concept of brand authenticity</p> <p>Distinction between brand authenticity and further brand-related constructs</p> <p>Authenticity in scientific disciplines</p>	<p>Study 1: (1) n = 17 people (2) n = 3 raters assigning descriptions</p> <p>Study 2: n = 10 students to check items n = 20 students to purify items</p> <p>Study 3: (1) n = 60 students (2) n = 288 students</p> <p>Study 4: (1) n = 27 respondents (2) n = 857 participants (aged 34 - 69 years)</p> <p>Study 5: n = 115 participants</p>	<p>Review of peer-relevant literature on the topic of authenticity</p> <p><u>Study 1</u>: (1) Open-ended questions; (2) assignation of descriptions to each brand → result: four overall brand categories</p> <p><u>Study 2</u>: Generation and selection of items by concepts identified in a literature review → 24 applicable items</p> <p><u>Study 3</u>: (1) Reduction of items and (2) assessment of the dimensionality of the scale → 15 items left</p> <p><u>Study 4</u>: Validation of dimensions by exploratory and confirmatory analyses → four factor model fits IV: continuity, originality, reliability, naturalness</p> <p><u>Study 5</u>: Test discriminant validity of scale with 15 item Likert scale (1 to 7)</p>	<p>Four brand authenticity dimensions (consisting of 15 items):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continuity</li> <li>- Originality</li> <li>- Reliability</li> <li>- Naturalness</li> </ul>

Author/s (Year) [Journal]	Research Focus	Theoretical Background	Sample	Method/Analysis	Main Findings
Burmann et al. (2012) [Book: <i>Social Branding</i> ]	Authenticity in interaction as factor for successful branding	Relevance of social media for brand introduction  Meaning of authenticity  Authenticity in brand and consumer interaction	Literature on authenticity, social media and communication  Real-world examples of Domino's Pizza and Pril	Review of relevant peer-reviewed literature	Perceived authenticity is dependent on the customer perception that the brand tries to present itself not different than by its identity  Trust and credibility must not be confused with authenticity
Chhabra, Healy and Sills (2003) [Annals of Tourism Research]	Staged authenticity in heritage tourism  Perceived authenticity as a measure of product quality and tourist satisfaction	Meaning and importance of authenticity  Staged authenticity  Invention of tradition	Studied event: Flora Macdonald Scottish Highland Games in North Carolina  n = 120 respondents	Survey sheets (five-point Likert scale)  OLS regression models (effect of heritage variables on perceived authenticity) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IV: Log age, nights spent, local, gender, clan member, visited Scotland, revived memories</li> </ul> ANOVA via SAS (control for differences in the mean perceived authenticity) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DV: Perceived authenticity</li> <li>• IV: Revived memories, clan member, visited Scotland</li> </ul>	Authenticity perception can be high although an event is staged far away from the original source of cultural tradition  Perceived level of authenticity: Controlled by media and people themselves

Author/s (Year) [Journal]	Research Focus	Theoretical Background	Sample	Method/Analysis	Main Findings
Edwards (2010) [ <i>Journal of communication management</i> ]	Authenticity as an individual attribute  Problems of authenticity as an organizational or brand characteristic	Authenticity as the "true" self in social context  Authenticity in the commercial world  Authenticity as sales tool  Authenticity in fields of production	Literature and research on authenticity	Conceptual analysis of authenticity literature	Several problems arise from inappropriate authenticity claims:  - Authenticity is only useful when it can be communicated successfully  - Source of authenticity (social context) must not be confused with the target of authenticity  - Authenticity is not a guarantee for successful marketing
Eggers et al. (2012) [ <i>Journal of World Business</i> ]	Impact of brand authenticity on brand trust and SME growth	Brand authenticity	n = 285 randomly selected German SMEs (2,85% response rate to questionnaire)	Literature review for brand authenticity measures  Questionnaire (Likert scale) to German SMEs  SPSS to conduct the exploratory factor analyses (using maximum likelihood > 0.4)  • DV: SME growth • IV: Brand consistency, brand customer orientation, brand congruency, brand trust	Measures of brand authenticity:  - Brand consistency - Brand customer orientation - Brand congruency  Brand authenticity fosters brand trust which in turn drives SME growth

Author/s (Year) [Journal]	Research Focus	Theoretical Background	Sample	Method/Analysis	Main Findings
Erdem and Swait (2004) [ <i>Journal of consumer research</i> ]	Impact of brand credibility on brand choice and consideration	<p>Brand credibility</p> <p>Brand credibility's impact on choice processes and product-category specific factors</p>	<p>n = 166 respondents</p> <p>Six product classes are used for data collection</p>	<p>Survey at a North American university with eight different versions</p> <p>Each version covered three of six product classes; each product class covered five brands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DV: Brand consideration, brand choice</li> <li>• IV: Brand credibility, trustworthiness, expertise, perceived quality, perceived risk and information costs saved</li> </ul>	Credibility impacts consumer choices through perceived risk, perceived quality and information costs saved in most categories

Author/s (Year) [Journal]	Research Focus	Theoretical Background	Sample	Method/Analysis	Main Findings
Ewing, Allen and Ewing (2012) [ <i>Journal of consumer behavior</i> ]	Effects of iconic and indexical cues on the authenticity of green products	Indexical and iconic cues  Consumer research	n = 140 students	<p>Test of hypotheses via laboratory methods: 2 x 2 x 2 within-subjects design to investigate the effect on authenticity assessment (DV) IV: indexical cues, iconic cues, product types</p> <p>2 indexical cues: Green / nongreen 2 iconic cues: Green / nongreen 2 product types: Consumable / durable</p> <p>ANOVA (brand attitude)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IV: Brands</li> <li>• DV: Liking</li> </ul> <p>Linear mixed models (SPSS 16.0) using maximum likelihood estimation were employed Measure of fit: -2LL and BIC</p> <p>Answers were provided via a seven-point semantic differential scale</p>	<p>Effects of authenticity cues can be used in a controlled manner based on cue arrangements</p> <p>Both cues influence brand belief and attitude</p> <p>Consumers seem to value even proactively rendered genuineness by marketers</p>

Author/s (Year) [Journal]	Research Focus	Theoretical Background	Sample	Method/Analysis	Main Findings
Fritz, Schoenmueller and Bruhn (2017) [ <i>European Journal of Marketing</i> ]	Antecedents and consequences of brand authenticity  Understanding of authenticity influencing factors	Brand authenticity concept  Antecedents of brand authenticity relevant to marketing	n = 15 respondents to determine brands used in survey (aged 25-64 years, 53% female)  n = 509 datasets created by online surveys (58% female)	Extensive literature review  Test for moderator effects with an online survey via social networking sites and forums including 18 brands (brand determination via semi-structured interviews)  Structural equation modelling (MPlus 7.11.; maximum likelihood)  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DV: Brand authenticity</li> <li>• IV: Brand heritage, brand nostalgia, brand clarity, brand's social commitment, brand commercialization, brand legitimacy, actual self-congruence, employee's passion</li> <li>• DV: Brand relationship quality</li> <li>• IV: Brand authenticity</li> <li>• DV: Purchase intention, price premium, willingness to pay</li> <li>• IV: Brand relationship quality</li> </ul>	Brand authenticity is influenced by variables connected to:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Brand's past</li> <li>- Brand's virtuousness</li> <li>- Employees representing the brand</li> <li>- Consumers' self-identification with the brand</li> </ul> Brand authenticity helps to establish emotional bonds between the brand and the consumer  Perceived cultural fit between the consumer and the brand exerts the strongest effect on BA (cultural proximity)



Author/s (Year) [Journal]	Research Focus	Theoretical Background	Sample	Method/Analysis	Main Findings
<p>Gilpin, Palazzolo and Brody (2010) <i>[Journal of Communication Management]</i></p>	<p>Development of a framework to investigate how authenticity is constructed in online public affairs communication</p> <p>Negotiation of questions of accountability and public debate by government agencies</p>	<p>Approaches to authenticity</p> <p>Social media and the public sphere</p>	<p>Blog comments from the US State Department blog DipNote from 2007 until 2009</p> <p>n = 89 blog entries</p> <p>n = 852 selected comments</p>	<p>Qualitative development of a theoretical model of authenticity based on existing literature</p> <p>This model is used to analyze content of blog comments in a structural-functional approach</p> <p>Coding through creation of nine categories concerning the objective of the commentator/ blog author</p> <p>Reliability check with Krippendorff's Alpha</p>	<p>Four dimensions of authenticity which are interdependent with fuzzy boundaries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Authority</li> <li>- Identity</li> <li>- Transparency</li> <li>- Engagement</li> </ul> <p>Most comments were not intended as interactions with the blog authors (commenters just wanted to publicly express their opinion on the topic)</p> <p>Top three categories of answers: comment to public, comment to author, comment to commenter</p> <p>Asymmetric structure of blogs limits their transparency</p>

Author/s (Year) [Journal]	Research Focus	Theoretical Background	Sample	Method/Analysis	Main Findings
Grayson and Martinec (2004) [ <i>Journal of consumer research</i> ]	Consumer perception of indexicality and iconicity  Influence of indexicality and iconicity on the authenticity assessment of market offerings	Concept of authentic marketing offering  Indexical authenticity  Iconic authenticity	Pre-test: n=47 consumers interviewed (aged 16-68 years, 51% female and from 18 different countries)  Main study: n=77 respondents tested survey  n=218 respondents took part in the main study	Pre-test:  - Data collection from two tourist attractions sites - Open-ended interview questions near the site's exit  Main study: • DV: Authenticity assessment • IV: Iconicity, indexicality  Data collection through pen- and paper surveys (adapted with exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation)  Measurement: Confirmatory factor analysis (LISREL 8.30) and chi-square statistic comparison to test discriminant validity  ANOVA to compare ratings of authentic and inauthentic site features  MANOVA to compare difference score of iconic and indexical cues	Perception of authenticity is not limited to market offerings that are historically or factually true  The more site features are perceived as actually iconic or indexical, the more the site features are assessed as authentic  Iconic cues are more strongly associated with perceived connection with the past  Indexical cues are more strongly associated with perceived evidence  Distinction between authentic and inauthentic can be constructed (personally or socially)

Author/s (Year) [Journal]	Research Focus	Theoretical Background	Sample	Method/Analysis	Main Findings
Grieve and Watkinson (2016) [Cyber-psychology]	Psychological benefits of being authentic on Facebook	Expressing the true self  Outcomes of presenting the true self online	n = 164 participants (33 males, 131 females; aged between 18 and 55, Facebook users)	<p>60 item personality questionnaires (HEXACO-60) to measure participants true self</p> <p>Adapted version of HEXACO-60 to measure Facebook self</p> <p>Social Connectedness Scale-Revised to measure participant's feelings</p> <p>Satisfaction with Life Scale for subjective well-being</p> <p>21-item version of the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale</p> <p>Calculation of Euclidean distances between true self and Facebook self (sum of squared distance between vectors)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DV: Subjective well-being, social connectedness, level of depression, anxiety and stress, satisfaction with life</li> <li>IV: Degree of congruence between true self and Facebook self, true self, Facebook self</li> </ul>	<p>The larger the difference between true and Facebook self, the less socially connected and the more stressed people are</p> <p>Less emotional labor is required when people present themselves authentically</p>

Author/s (Year) [Journal]	Research Focus	Theoretical Background	Sample	Method/Analysis	Main Findings
Guèvremont and Grohmann (2016) [European Journal of Marketing]	Individual-level and situational moderators of brand authenticity  When do consumers build emotional attachment towards a brand	Definition, outcomes and moderating variables of brand authenticity  Brand engagement and the need to belong in self-concept	(1) n = 50 undergraduate students (45,9 % female, average age: 23,9 years)  (2) n = 114 consumers (61,4 % female, average age: 51,6 years)  (3) n = 105 consumers (61,9 % female, average age: 50,5 years)	(1) Online pre-test based on Morhart et al. (2015)  Impact of brand authenticity on emotional brand attachment:  (2) Brand engagement in self-concept and social exclusion Online study: 2x2 between-participants design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 social exclusion conditions (IV): exclusion vs. inclusion</li> <li>• 2 brand conditions (IV): authentic vs. non-authentic</li> <li>• DV: Feeling of exclusion</li> </ul> Manipulation check: ANOVA  (3) Situationally induced feelings of inauthenticity Online study: 2x2 between-participants design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 situational self-inauthenticity conditions (IV): self-inauthenticity vs. self-authenticity</li> <li>• 2 brands conditions (IV): authentic cs. non-authentic</li> <li>• DV: Feeling of self-inauthenticity</li> </ul> Manipulation check: ANOVA	Higher emotional brand attachment to authentic brands is shown by consumers with a high level  - of brand engagement in self-concept if they feel socially excluded - of enduring personal authenticity when they feel inauthentic in certain situations  Authentic brands support consumers to satisfy their individual-level or contextually evoked motivations

Author/s (Year) [Journal]	Research Focus	Theoretical Background	Sample	Method/Analysis	Main Findings
Gustafsson (2006) [ <i>European Advances in Consumer Research</i> ]	Link between brand trust and the role of the consumer in the market	Authenticity, consumer culture and branding paradigms  Trust as authenticity  Brand trust and consumer sovereignty		Review of peer-relevant literature (mainly Holt (2002))	Necessary steps towards becoming a trustworthy firm:  - Align brand values with corporate values - Make corporate actions transparent - Communicate that the brand is a good citizen  Those steps need to be carried out in all areas of an organization and are the way towards authenticity
Henderson and Bowley (2010) [ <i>Journal of Communication Management</i> ]	The role of authenticity in recruitment via social media campaigns  Effectiveness of using social networking sites for PR and organizational communication	Social media  Current organizational uses of social networking sites  Relationship management, dialogue and authenticity  Dialogic communication and the internet	Two different types of participants:  n = 6 organizational members involved in campaign planning  n = 5 spokespeople used as the "faces" of the campaign	Use of multiple data sources (including interview transcripts and social media profiles)  Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model and van Dijk's (2001) model of critical discourse analysis of semi-structured interviews  In-house interviews: Face-to-face External interviews: Telephone Length: 20 min - 1 h	Loss of control over messages is perceived as difficult  Young people use social media rather to maintain existing friendships  Authenticity and engagement are undermined by a lack of strategy, fake comments and control over comments (a long-term strategy is needed)

Author/s (Year) [Journal]	Research Focus	Theoretical Background	Sample	Method/Analysis	Main Findings
Leigh, Peters and Shelton (2006) <i>[Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science]</i>	Authenticity in the consumption context using the example of the MG brand	<p>Theoretical perspectives on authenticity</p> <p>Types of authenticity</p> <p>Subcultural capital and authenticity</p>	<p>(1) n=24 respondents</p> <p>(2) Two married couples, three married men and four single men (30-55 years old)</p> <p>3. n = 58 MG owners (35-60 years old, married)</p>	<p>Ethnographic approach (Wolcott 1994) guided data collection, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participant observation in car clubs</li> <li>- Photo and document reviews</li> <li>- Informal conversations</li> <li>- Formal in-depth interviews independently conducted by researchers</li> </ul> <p>(1) Open-ended questions posted to an MG chat room</p> <p>(2) In-depth interviews</p> <p>(3) 12 unstructured interviews (1 h – 4 h length)</p>	<p>Authenticity has multiple meanings</p> <p>MG owners gain authenticity in the consumption context through objective, constructive and existential cues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The object and its ownership (broach ideal standard and preserve heritage)</li> <li>- Consumer experiences (interaction with the car through driving)</li> <li>- Identity construction and confirmation (be part of the community)</li> </ul>

Author/s (Year) [Journal]	Research Focus	Theoretical Background	Sample	Method/Analysis	Main Findings
Liao and Ma (2009) [ <i>International Journal of Business and Information</i> ]	<p>Characteristics of product authenticity</p> <p>Propensities of consumers who need authenticity</p>	<p>Types and characteristics of authenticity</p> <p>Consumer need for authenticity</p> <p>Characteristics of consumers with authentic consumption</p>	<p>(1) n = 10 consumers (20-60 years, different professions, snowballing sample method used for recruiting)</p> <p>(2) n = 17 consumers (snowballing sample method used for recruiting)</p>	<p>Two-stage, multi-method approach</p> <p>Stage 1: Personal in-depth interviews that allow consumers to freely express their opinion</p> <p>Stage 2: Audiotaped focus group interviews to validate the findings of stage 1 (50 - 90 min length)</p>	<p>Six characteristics/ properties of authenticity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Originality</li> <li>- Quality commitment and credibility</li> <li>- Heritage and style persistence</li> <li>- Scarceness</li> <li>- Sacredness</li> <li>- Purity</li> </ul> <p>Consumers will expend higher acquisition efforts to buy authentic products with one or more of those characteristics</p> <p>Consumers with a high need for authenticity are loyal to authentic products and consume them deliberately</p>

Author/s (Year) [Journal]	Research Focus	Theoretical Background	Sample	Method/Analysis	Main Findings
Lu, Gursoy and Lu (2015) [ <i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i> ]	Authenticity perception, brand equity and brand choice intention using the example of ethnic restaurants	Brand equity and authenticity	n = 228 student responses in a three-week survey period	<p>Literature review</p> <p>Online and in-class survey using a self-administered questionnaire</p> <p>SPSS to analyze the respondent's profiles and Cronbach's Alpha reliability scores</p> <p>Test of hypotheses with structural equation modelling (SEM) approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DV: Brand loyalty</li> <li>• IV: Consumer's authenticity perception, brand awareness, brand image, perceived quality,</li> <li>• DV: Brand choice intention</li> <li>• IV: Brand loyalty</li> </ul>	<p>Four brand equity dimensions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Brand awareness</li> <li>- Brand association</li> <li>- Perceived quality</li> <li>- Brand loyalty</li> </ul> <p>Perception of authenticity by consumers is an essential determinant of brand equity, which in turn has critical impact on brand choice</p>



Author/s (Year) [Journal]	Research Focus	Theoretical Background	Sample	Method/Analysis	Main Findings
Molleda (2010) <i>[Journal of Communication Management]</i>	<p>Definitions of the authenticity construct</p> <p>Approaches how to measure the authenticity of organizational messages</p> <p>Authenticity from stakeholder perspective</p>	<p>Authenticity construct</p> <p>History in communication studies</p> <p>Strategic communication studies</p>	Literature from 1973 until 2008	Comprehensive review of literature with focus on authenticity in advertising, marketing and public relations	<p>Idea of how to measure authenticity in organizational messages with the help of ten questions (p. 232, 233)</p> <p>Consistency between nature of offerings and their communication is essential to reach stakeholders</p>

Author/s (Year) [Journal]	Research Focus	Theoretical Background	Sample	Method/Analysis	Main Findings
Morhart et al. (2015) [ <i>Journal of Consumer Psychology</i> ]	Development of a framework and measurement scale for brand authenticity	Perceived brand authenticity (PBA) conceptualization  Objectivist, constructivist and existentialist perspective	(1) n = 14 consumers  (2) Study 1: judgement of items by n = 4 experts  Study 2a: n = 254 adults  Study 2b: n = 71 adults from North America  Study 3: pre-test n = 109 main study n = 463 adults from North America  Study 4: n = 810 European students  Study 5: n = 932 consumers  Study 6: n = 204 European students	(1) First research objective: Interviews to uncover the dimensions of PBA  (2) Second research objective: Validation of the PBA dimensions across categories  <u>Study 1</u> : Item generation and content validity (final set of 75) <u>Study 2a</u> : Online study, principal component exploratory factor analysis <u>Study 2b</u> : Validation of PBA scale (7 point- Likert scale) <u>Study 3</u> : Rating of brands on PBA scale (7 point-Likert scale) <u>Study 4</u> : Online study (7 point-Likert scale) <u>Study 5</u> : Online questionnaire about randomly assigned brands  • DV: Emotional brand attachment, positive word-of-mouth • IV: Continuity, integrity, credibility, symbolism  <u>Study 6</u> : Lab experiment, single between participants factor design; variables: self-authenticity and self-congruence	Dimensions of perceived brand authenticity based on a 15-item scale:  - Continuity - Credibility - Integrity - Symbolism

Author/s (Year) [Journal]	Research Focus	Theoretical Background	Sample	Method/Analysis	Main Findings
Napoli et al. (2014) [ <i>Journal of Business Research</i> ]	Consumer-based brand authenticity  Development of a psychometrically robust framework of brand authenticity  Tool for the evaluation of strategic decisions	Nature of brand authenticity	Study 1: n = 5 marketing academics (round 1)  n = 4 marketing academics (round 2)  Study 2: n = 252 university students  Study 3: n = 203 university students  Study 4: n = 206 adult customers	Identification of seven cues as basis for generating scale items by a literature review  <u>Study 1</u> : Item generation with use of Churchill's (1979) scale development paradigm and reduction → sample of 33 items  <u>Study 2</u> : Determination of an underlying factor structure of brand authenticity via a questionnaire (1 to 7 Likert scale) → final set of 19 items  <u>Study 3</u> : Confirmation of underlying factor structure by confirmatory factor models using structural equation modelling → Three factor model showed best fit with data  • DV: Brand authenticity • IV: Quality commitment, sincerity, heritage  <u>Study 4</u> : Test for validity of the scale using online surveys	14 items represent three first order factors for measuring authenticity that are interrelated:  - Quality commitment - Sincerity - Heritage

Author/s (Year) [Journal]	Research Focus	Theoretical Background	Sample	Method/Analysis	Main Findings
Napoli, Dickinson-Delaporte and Beverland (2016) [ <i>Journal of Marketing Management</i> ]	Value derived by consumers during the consumption of authentic brands	Conceptualization of brand authenticity  Effects of brand authenticity on value (consumer-derived value vs. brand-derived value)	(1) n = 4 academics  (2) n = 40 undergraduate students  (3) n = 312 consumers (even split of male and female, median age: 31 years)	(1) Content validity assessment (2) Pilot test of Likert scale (3) Online survey  K-means cluster analysis ANOVA  One-way ANOVA (brand clusters across consumer- and brand-derived value)  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IV: Brand derived value, consumer derived value</li> <li>• DV: Performance value, utility value, self-authentication, brand love, brand trust, brand reputation, brand equity</li> </ul>	Highly authentic brands support an individual's self-authentication and establish stronger emotional connections to it  Four strategies for building value in the brand authenticity continuum:  Internally driven <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Germination</li> <li>2. Cultivation</li> <li>3. Consolidation</li> </ol> Acknowledgement of external stakeholder roles <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Preservation</li> </ol>

Author/s (Year) [Journal]	Research Focus	Theoretical Background	Sample	Method/Analysis	Main Findings
O'Connor (2010) [ <i>Journal of Hospitality Marketing &amp; Management</i> ]	Management of a hotel's image on TripAdvisor	<p>Social networks</p> <p>User generated content</p> <p>Travel</p> <p>TripAdvisor</p> <p>Electronic word-of-mouth</p>	n = 100 hotels (randomly selected)	<p>Each hotel was analyzed and selected characteristics were noted; five most recent reviews were recorded</p> <p>Content analysis to identify common reasons for dis-/satisfaction among reviewers (software tool Nvivo 7)</p> <p>Reviews were examined and coded and then combined into broader categories related to characteristics of the hotel (frequency of words, most common themes)</p> <p>Search for fake reviews using the following indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reviewed score varies greatly from average</li> <li>- Mentioning of nearby hotels as superior</li> <li>- Commentator only reviewed one hotel</li> </ul>	<p>Only a few hotels actively manage their reputation on TripAdvisor</p> <p>The facility to respond to critics is rarely used although the management of user-generated content is so important</p> <p>The belief that sites with user-generated content have been compromised by fake reviews is unfounded</p>

Author/s (Year) [Journal]	Research Focus	Theoretical Background	Sample	Method/Analysis	Main Findings
Pronschinske, Groza and Walker (2012) <i>[Sport Marketing Quarterly]</i>	Importance of authenticity in the social networking strategy of a professional sports team	Authenticity and engagement in social media  Relationship marketing	n = 114 sport teams from the four main leagues football, basketball, baseball and hockey	<p>Development of an econometric model to determine the effect of page attributes on the number of Facebook 'fans'</p> <p>Qualitative content analysis approach to code each team's Facebook account based on a 22-item codebook</p> <p>Regression models to estimate the relationship between number of fans on Facebook and page attributes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DV: Number of fans on social network sites</li> <li>• IV: Page authenticity, engagement, information dissemination</li> </ul> <p>Controls: Team success, market size, length of time</p>	<p>Page attributes indicating engagement and authenticity have the greatest effect on maintaining and attracting fans</p> <p>The official presence should be able to evoke involvement and to reduce user skepticism</p>

Author/s (Year) [Journal]	Research Focus	Theoretical Background	Sample	Method/Analysis	Main Findings
Reinecke and Trepte (2014) <i>[Computers in Human Behavior]</i>	Effects of online authenticity in social network sites communication  Positivity bias in social network sites communication	Effects of authentic online self-presentation on psychological well-being	n = 374 participants	<p>Two-wave longitudinal study</p> <p>(1) Positive/ negative affect schedule consisting of 20 items</p> <p>(2) Five-item satisfaction with life scale</p> <p>(3) Adapted version of integrated self-discrepancy index to assess authenticity in the SNS context</p> <p>Hypotheses tested with path models (AMOS 21.0) using maximum likelihood method</p> <p><u>First path model</u>: Reciprocal effects of authenticity and positive effect</p> <p><u>Second path model</u>: Longitudinal relationship between authenticity and negative effect</p> <p><u>Third path model</u>: Reciprocal effects of authenticity and satisfaction with life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DV: Subjective well-being</li> <li>• IV: Authenticity, positive affect, negative affect, satisfaction with life</li> </ul>	<p>Online authenticity has a positive effect on indicators of subjective well-being</p> <p>Participants with a low level of well-being are less likely to feel authentic on SNSs (positivity bias in SNS communication)</p>

Author/s (Year) [Journal]	Research Focus	Theoretical Background	Sample	Method/Analysis	Main Findings
Sandlin and Peña (2014) [ <i>Springer Science and Business</i> ]	How to build authenticity in social media tools for recruiting	Social Media  Recruitment	Purposeful sample using Hossler's and Gallagher's (1987) three- phase model as a guide  (1) n = 16 college bound juniors from a high school in California  (2) n = 165 entries completed by 11 students over three months  (3) n = 8 students	Qualitative data resulting from:  (1) 16 in-depth interviews (audio-recorded one-to-one interviews in front of a computer)  (2) 165 completed journal entries (responses to open-ended prompts while reviewing blogs)  (3) Group interview  Moustaka's (1994) four-step phenomenological model was used to analyze data	Blogs were perceived as authentic when bloggers disclosed feelings and personal details (disclosure as the most prevalent contributor to authenticity perception)  Authenticity occurs through identification with the blogger and internalization of experiences described in blog posts



Author/s (Year) [Journal]	Research Focus	Theoretical Background	Sample	Method/Analysis	Main Findings
Schallehn (2012) [Book: Marken-Authentizität]	Brand authenticity	Brand authenticity construct  Determinants of brand authenticity  Brand introduction		Several research methods including literature review, factor analyses and others	Brand credibility and brand trust must not be confused with brand authenticity  Brand authenticity leads to credibility and thus to trust
Wang (1999) [Annals of Tourism Research]	Authenticity in tourism experience  Conceptual clarification of authenticity meanings	Concept of authenticity  Authenticity in tourism		Literature review of existing literature on authenticity	Three types of authenticity:  - Objective authenticity - Constructive authenticity - Existential authenticity  Existential authenticity can be further classified: Intra-personal (bodily feelings) and inter-personal (family ties)

Author/s (Year) [ <i>Journal</i> ]	Research Focus	Theoretical Background	Sample	Method/Analysis	Main Findings
Yuan et al. (2014) [ <i>Economics and Management</i> ]	Authenticity in marketing theory  Authenticity in marketing-related decision-making process	Construct of authenticity  Origin and development of authenticity through history		Review of peer-relevant literature on the concept of authenticity and its development	Authenticity is an attribute-oriented idea  Authenticity is a sign of maturing theoretical concept  Consumer-based authenticity evolves and adapts with focus on symbolism and social identity

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