

ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF BRAND AUTHENTICITY

By

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A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2011

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To my parents – thank you for valuing and encouraging my education

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my chair, Robyn LeBoeuf, who has tirelessly guided me through the last five years with patience, encouragement and optimism. Without her willingness to advise, mentor, and meet frequently to discuss minutiae, I may not have been able to complete this journey. I would also like to thank my committee members, Richard Lutz, Alan Cooke, Chris Janiszewski and James Shepperd, for their advice, support of my work, and inspiration during my first years of the program. I also thank Joel Cohen for his interest in my success, and for suggesting graduate school in the first place.

I also thank my friends for the less formal support I have received during the PhD program. I would particularly like to thank my Florida elders, who guided me through life as a PhD student, dispensing wisdom as we grew together: Dan Rice, Juliano Laran, Julia Bayuk, Jesse and Jen Itzkowitz. I also thank my cohort, Jeremy Lim, who has always been available for airing grievances and concerns.

I would especially like to thank my parents and family for their encouragement and support. I thank my parents for placing an emphasis on education in my life, and for accepting graduate school as a viable alternative to getting a job. I thank my new extended family for thinking it is “cool” that I am getting a PhD. Most of all, I thank my husband, Michael Cinelli, for placing my wants above his own and tolerating me, even when stress made me more irrational than usual.

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
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Antecedents and Consequences of Brand Authenticity

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August 2011

Chair: Robyn LeBoeuf
Major: Business Administration

Researchers in marketing, psychology and sociology have identified a desire for authenticity both in personal and consumption contexts. However, in marketing, research on authenticity is still generally considered exploratory, and much of the literature uses a qualitative approach to define the construct and its effects on consumer behavior. Whereas previous work has focused on how consumers authenticate products, services and experiences, this work will examine the role of *brand* authenticity in consumer decision making. In a set of nine experiments, I show that perceived brand authenticity affects brand-related cognitions such as perceived quality and willingness to pay and suggest a mechanism through which this effect occurs. Additionally, I investigate whether authenticity is uniformly beneficial for the brand.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

“The longing for authenticity...has been, with ups and downs, an important impulse in twentieth- and early twenty-first-century culture (Heynen 2006).” Consumers today crave authenticity. Both Martin Seligman and Dr. Phil have written New York Times Bestsellers on the topics of finding happiness and life-fulfillment through identifying your “authentic self” and, in 2004, Stephen Covey appended his seven habits of highly effective people to include an eighth: “be[ing] your authentic self.” Consumers also seek authenticity in the marketplace, demanding authentic travel experiences (Thompson and Tambyah 1999; Caruana, Crane and Fitchett 2008), souvenirs (Costa and Bamossy 1995; Chhabra 2005), retail settings (Penaloza 2001; Wallendorf, Lindsey-Mullikin, and Pimentel 1998) and brands (Holt 2002).

Consumer demand has translated into immense interest in the topic of authenticity among the popular business press. The buzz surrounding authenticity in the marketplace has led some authors to make rather grandiose claims about its importance for marketers, such as John Grant, who writes in *The New Marketing Manifesto* that “authenticity is the benchmark against which all brands are now judged,” and TIME Magazine, which claims that authenticity is “one of the ten ideas that are changing the world.”

While the consumer *desire* for authenticity seems well-established, there has been rather little empirical research on the underpinnings and consequences of authenticity. Authenticity in the marketing literature takes many forms, reflecting the myriad colloquial understandings of the term. The existing literature on authenticity addresses how consumers authenticate products (Costa and Bamossy 1995; Chhabra 2005), travel

experiences (Thompson and Tambyah 1999; Caruana, Crane and Fitchett 2008), services (Hoschild 1983; Grayson and Shulman 2000), and advertisements (Chalmers 2007). The common finding is that consumers prefer authenticity. What is missing is a discussion of what makes a brand authentic or inauthentic and what consequences this might have for the brand. While there are several theoretical accounts of its importance (Holt 1998, Pine & Gilmore 2008), little is known about the precise factors that make a brand seem authentic (vs. inauthentic) and about the myriad ways in which the presence (vs. absence) of authenticity might affect consumer perceptions. An understanding of these factors is, obviously, important for understanding the impact of authenticity on the brand and on the firm. This research will demonstrate that authenticity is a facet of the brand that can be manipulated and will show that consumer perceptions of a brand's authenticity affect other brand-related cognitions such as quality perceptions and willingness to pay. Additionally, this research will suggest a mechanism by which authenticity affects consumers' perceptions. This research will also explore potentially ironic consequences of fostering authenticity, suggesting that brands that make authenticity claims may be penalized especially harshly following transgressions and may not be rewarded after pro-social actions.

CHAPTER 2 CONSUMER DESIRE FOR AUTHENTICITY

Consumer demand for authenticity is hypothesized to stem from two primary sources: industrialization and the hyperreality of postmodernity.

Industrialization

Holt (1998) found that authenticity was associated with distance from the commodified nature of mass markets and mass consumption, in particular for highly educated consumers. In addition to creating a stark sameness, industrialization and mass production also made it easier for products (and their symbolism) to be recreated (Benjamin 1969). Peterson (2005) says that “only with the mass reproduction of symbols does ... authenticity ... emerge as a quality to be prized (p. 1094).”

Both “individuality” and “originality” are key aspects of the colloquial understanding of authenticity and feature prominently in marketing and sociological theories. “Individualism is a key component of the discourse that surrounds claims of authenticity that, within the social-psychological dimension, is played against the negative symbols of ‘the masses’ or ‘mass trends’ and aligned with ‘staying true to yourself’ and ‘representing who you are’ (McLeod 1999, p.140).” When asked to provide a definition for the word “authentic,” consumers use words like genuine, original and unique (Munoz, Wood and Solomon 2006).

Hyperreality

Despite the popularity of mass production as an argument for the increased attention paid to authenticity, some researchers attribute the surge to a more temporally proximal cause: hyperreality. Hyperreality refers to the modern inability to distinguish between what is real and what is fake, often thanks to technology and the media

(Baudrillard 1994, Eco 1976). The postmodern problem of hyperreality reflects a second colloquial understanding of the term “authenticity”: real or natural.

Hyperreality as an argument for the advent of authenticity reflects not only a growing disdain for the unreal, but also a growing wariness of market over-saturation and abundance. “If the mass market of the 1950s caused anxiety because it threatened authentic identity formation, the postmodern market is threatening because of its expansive choice and promotional density...The advertisement mocks an over-stylized, hypercommercialized world gone ‘pretty’, in which nothing is any longer ‘real’, ‘simple’ or authentic (Botterill 2007, p.118).” In stark opposition to the mass production of products following World War II, consumers now find themselves in a market that is stocked to the brim with subtle variations of thousands of offerings. Coupled with the use of “puffery” in advertisements, the sheer volume of available products leaves consumers unsure as to which brands they should trust, which model they want, and whether or not they even *need* the product in question. The result is a nostalgic conception of authenticity and a desire for the real, genuine and simple. “Heritage brands like Converse are some of the rare symbols and objects that appear to endure the rapid changes of modernity, [and] thus take on the aura of authenticity providing a romantic escape, because in a postmodern marketplace glutted with choice, nostalgia for the ‘good old’, one-size-fits-all mass market can excite a certain appeal of authenticity (p. 122; Botterill 2007).” Indeed, the popularity of classic black Converse™ sneakers (Lucky Chuck) is ironic given researchers’ focus on the first impetus for the need for authenticity: the threat of the mass market.

The fact that a yearning for the “reality” of mass production, viewed nostalgically, reflects a desire for authenticity also highlights the existence of multiple, and sometimes paradoxical, definitions and conceptions of authenticity —both for consumers and marketers. Much of the marketing literature on the topic of authenticity attempts to define exactly what it means for a market offering to be authentic. I will review this literature in Chapter 3 and then distinguish brand authenticity from product authenticity.

CHAPTER 3 WHAT IS AUTHENTIC?

Products, Services and Experiences

Although the importance of authenticity for modern *branding* has been suggested in the popular business press, academic work primarily focuses on how consumers determine whether or not an *object* is authentic. For example, previous work has examined how consumers authenticate souvenirs (Costa and Bamossy 1995), wine (Beverland 2005), beer (Beverland, Lindgreen and Vink 2008) and food products (Groves 2001). In general, this work follows the traditional meaning of authenticity, in that it asks about the provenance of the product, specifically asking who made the product as well as when, where and how it was made.

This dissertation focuses on brand authenticity, but I will first briefly review the literature on authenticating product offerings to provide context. I will then discuss how ideas of authenticity are relevant for brands, and distinguish brand authenticity from the existing literature on object authenticity.

Following a strict interpretation of the term, Grayson and Martinec (2004) identify two types of authenticity: indexical and iconic authenticity. An object is indexically authentic if it is believed to be “the original” or “real” thing. For example, a Picasso painting is considered authentic if it can be demonstrated that Picasso did indeed paint it, and that the painting is the original, and not a reproduction. Objects gain indexical authenticity through a spatio-temporal link with the world (Peirce 1998). According to Grayson and Martinec (2004), “even if two things appear exactly alike, the authentic object is one that is believed to have particularly valued or important physical encounters with the world (p. 298).”

In contrast, an object is iconically authentic if it resembles something that is indexically authentic. For example, a reproduction of a Picasso painting could be deemed iconically authentic if it accurately replicates the original painting. Interestingly, this definition of authenticity enables consumers to perceive as authentic that which is inherently unreal. Visitors to “Sherlock Holmes’ home,” designed based on clues from the books by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, judged it as authentic or inauthentic based on whether or not it matched the image they had formed in their head of what his home should look like (Grayson and Martinec 2004). In a similar, experience-based, situation, Munoz, Wood and Solomon (2006) found that some consumers assessed the authenticity of Irish-themed bars by comparing their experience with the image they had in their mind of what an Irish bar *should* look like.

Although Grayson and Martinec (2004) identify two clear paths by which objects may gain authenticity, the literature suggests a number of additional ways in which consumers authenticate products. Specifically, offerings are considered authentic if they are produced using traditional methods (Beverland 2005, Peterson 2005), if they live up to marketers’ promises (Gilmore and Pine 2007) or if they are perceived as original (not mainstream; McLeod 1999; Munoz, Woods, and Solomon 2006). These additional “types” of object authenticity reflect a more abstract perspective on Grayson and Martinec’s “iconic” authenticity.

Past research has found that consumers consider natural products to be authentic (Groves 2001; Boyle 2003; Munoz, Wood and Solomon 2006; Beverland 2005; Potter 2008). According to Potter (2008), authenticity “these days appears to have something to do with ideas like ‘organic’ and ‘natural’ and ‘artisanal’ and ‘local.’

Whatever authenticity actually refers to, it has nothing to do with the technological, the mass produced and the commercialized (p. 13).” This conceptualization of authenticity reflects consumers’ distaste for the mass produced and hyperreal but also stems from our understanding of iconic authenticity. Many consumers are now nostalgic for how they picture things used to be—an imagined simplistic time when people and products were of the earth, wholesome, and natural. In Groves’ (2001) study of authenticity perceptions of British foodstuffs, she found that products with a handmade appearance were perceived to be more authentically British because their appearance made them seem like they were made locally by “real” British people. In other words, the products met consumers’ expectations of what British food products *should be*.

Many times, consumers’ expectations for what a product should be are determined by the marketer. When products meet the standards set by their own marketing communications, consumers perceive these products to be authentic (Gilmore and Pine 2007). This conceptualization is what Beverland, Lingreen and Vink (2008) call “pure authenticity” and is the type of authenticity that Gilmore and Pine (2007) suggest marketers are most concerned with. “Being what you say you are” means that a beverage that calls itself “fruit juice” should actually be made from fruit to be deemed authentic. However, products do not actually *have* to be what they say they are. Instead, they can be deemed authentic by merely appearing to be what they claim to be. Beverland, Lindgreen and Vink (2008) conducted a study of consumers’ perceptions of a variety of beer brands and their packaging and advertisements. All beers purported to be a “Trappist” beer, that is, made by Trappist monks and following their traditions. Consumers in the study used cues from the advertising and product

labeling to determine whether or not they believed the beer brand actually was a Trappist beer or if they thought the brand was just trying to use the Trappist label to gain popularity in the market. Beers considered to be real Trappist beers were deemed authentic, even if they were not, in fact, actual trappist beers. Similarly, Chhabra (2005) found that consumers used cues such as country of origin and adherence to the country's traditions when determining the authenticity of tourist souvenirs. These findings reinforce the assertion that authenticity is constructed, not inherent in the object (Grayson and Martinec 2004; Cohen 1988).

Finally, the perception that a market offering is original or not mainstream has been found to boost perceptions of authenticity (McLeod 1999). Rooted in the colloquial phrase "selling out," McLeod (1999) found that members of the Australian hip-hop subculture felt that products were no longer authentic when they perceived that these products were being assimilated into the mainstream. Positioning oneself against the mainstream and being original reflect consumers' wariness of mass-production. Authentic offerings are frequently contrasted with commodified offerings, which Cohen (1988) says lack depth and originality. According to Joseph Pine, "people tend to perceive as authentic that which is one-of-a-kind or new-to-the-world design, not a copy or imitation" (quoted in Brown 2008), reflecting Grayson and Martinec's (2004) "indexical" authenticity.

Brands

While the popular marketing press extols the virtues of authenticity in branding, there is a marked lack of empirical research on the topic. Whereas object authenticity focuses on the provenance of the product, brand authenticity asks the more abstract

question, “Why?” Specifically, to determine whether a brand is authentic or not, the consumer must evaluate the motives of the brand.

Like object authenticity, brand authenticity can be described as indexical or iconic. However, unlike authenticating products or experiences, determining whether a brand is authentic or not reflects a motivational judgment that is more akin to the evaluation of authentic behavior in people, and as such, finds its meaning in psychological theories of personal authenticity. This perspective is appropriate for brands given their status as entities with personalities (Aaker 1997) and relationships (Fournier 1998).

Although the definition of authentic functioning in humans has been debated for centuries, recent psychological theories of authenticity suggest that “people are authentic when their actions reflect their true- or core-self (Self-Determination Theory; Deci and Ryan 1985, 2002; Ryan and Deci 2000).” Kernis and Goldman’s (2006) multicomponent conceptualization of authenticity stems from these theories and has four components: awareness, unbiased processing, behavior and relational orientation. More specifically, Kernis and Goldman claim that to be authentic, an individual must know himself (e.g., his motives, feelings, desires, etc.), must process self-relevant information in an unbiased manner, and must value openness and truthfulness in close relationships. As for authentic behavior, Kernis and Goldman (2006) say that “authenticity reflects acting in accord with one’s values, preferences and needs as opposed to acting merely to please others or attain rewards...authentic behavior involves behavior that reflects self-determination, that is, autonomy and choice, as opposed to controlled behavior that is contingent upon meeting introjected or external goals (p. 19).”

Implicit in this discussion of operating according to one's true self is the notion that in doing so, one is not involved in pretense. Hughes (2000) says that being authentic means being "not fraudulent, manufactured for ulterior purpose or contrived" and for Trilling (1972) it is "the absence of dissimulation or feigning or pretense." According to Self-Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan 1985, 2002; Ryan and Deci 2000) people are authentic when they are autonomous and self-determining—when their behaviors reflect their true self. This perspective informs speculation about two different authenticity judgments: whether the actor perceives himself to be acting authentically and whether the audience perceives the actor to be authentic. For the actor, authenticity is experienced as self-determination and autonomy (Deci and Ryan 2002). For the audience, the attribution of the actor's behavior to internal or external sources may be key in judging the actor's authenticity. Importantly, authentic self-expression appears to be the absence of impression management. Handler (1986) says that the true self is "our individual existence, not as we might present it to others, but as it 'really is,' apart from any roles we play (p. 2)."

Recently, several authors have given attention to the role of impression management in the services context. In his book *The Managed Heart*, Hochschild introduces the term "emotional labor" to describe how service providers receive a wage for managing their feelings to create desired impressions on customers. This behavior is inherently inauthentic, and while Hochschild investigates the effects of such inauthenticity on the service provider herself, other researchers have speculated as to how such inauthentic performances affect consumer perceptions of the service encounter (Grayson and Shulman 2000). Grandey et al. (2005) found that authenticity

is important in service encounters, even when a consumer would otherwise be satisfied with the encounter. In an experimental setting, the authors found that hotel patrons who had a positive encounter with the front-desk staff were significantly more satisfied with the interaction when they believed the staff member's emotions were genuine. Similarly, Winsted (1999) found that Americans want their waitresses to be more authentic and Parvez (2006) found that women enjoyed pornography more when they felt the actress was authentically enjoying the sex act. Ultimately, according to Khalsa (1999), American consumers use a "built in authenticity detector" when dealing with salespeople, likely to defend ourselves against "emotional labor."

The conceptualization of authenticity as intrinsically versus extrinsically motivated behavior is readily applied to branding. According to Hughes (2000), an offering is authentic if it is "not fraudulent, manufactured for ulterior purposes or contrived...a sincere, real, true and original expression of its creator (p. 190)." Here, a brand is "true to self" when it provides a product or service that is not manufactured solely for the ulterior purpose of making money. According to Holt (2002):

to be authentic, brands must be disinterested; they must be perceived as invented and disseminated by parties without an instrumental economic agenda, by people who are intrinsically motivated by their inherent value. Postmodern consumers perceive modern branding efforts to be inauthentic because they ooze with the commercial intent of their sponsors (p. 83).

Many of the brands that consumers generally consider to be authentic, such as Harley Davidson and Apple, also promote their passion for what they do.

In addition to being true to the underlying ethos or identity of the company (reflecting indexical authenticity), a brand can be true to what Peterson (2005) calls "Authenticity to Constructed Self," whereby one remains true to the presentation of self one claims (reflecting iconic authenticity; Goffman 1959). This judgment requires

multiple interactions with a person or brand, and suggests that the consumer expects behavioral consistency from the brand. However, it is not enough to consistently deliver on specific product claims. Instead, the brand must deliver on the image its projects to its customers, or as Chris Hardison explains, “the story that the brand tells through its actions [must align] with the story it tells through its communications (quoted in Breen 2007, p. 2).” Some brands have had their authenticity called into question when they claim to be one thing but then fail to deliver on the promises implicit in their image. For example, McDonald’s projects an image of being a family-friendly restaurant, utilizing the slogan, ‘We Love to See You Smile.’ However, many consumers do not smile in the restaurants because of the bad attitudes of the servers, the disheveled appearance of the restaurant, and problems with the food. The disconnect between saying and doing projects inauthenticity onto the brand.

From a managerial perspective, the importance of actual or perceived authenticity lies in its effects on consumer decision making and behavior. Although almost all research on the subject has been qualitative in nature, there is some evidence that judgments of authenticity have the potential to have a direct impact on consumers’ search for information, consideration set formation, and, ultimately, choice.

Benefits of Authenticity to the Firm

In their study of consumers’ perceptions of authenticity in Irish themed bars, Munoz, Woods, and Solomon (2006) directly asked consumers about the importance of authenticity during the decision making process. They found that US consumers thought authenticity, per se, was important and that it was also important when deciding which bar to patronize. Studying running advertisements, Chalmers (2007) found that perceptions of authenticity affected consumers’ other perceptions of the product.

Specifically, she found that “assessments of authenticity serve as a filter through which product and brand information is evaluated: without a positive authenticity assessment, the informational benefits of the advertisement are not successfully communicated (p. 15).” This suggests that consumers first make a judgment about how authentic the brand or advertisement is and then use this judgment to guide their further search for information. If the product is deemed inauthentic, the consumer may decide to pass on it completely, regardless of what other benefits it offers. Similarly, Groves (2001) discovered through depth interviews that “authenticity was used to reduce the complexity of a purchase decision as consumers used it as an indicator of the sensory and production characteristics they considered desirable.” In other words, consumers assumed that products they considered to be authentic would also have other characteristics they wanted, and therefore they could limit their search and decision making to products they considered authentic.

There is also evidence that perceptions of authenticity have an effect on consumers’ willingness to pay for a good, and that this relationship between price and authenticity is bidirectional. Groves (2001) found that British consumers perceived more expensive grocery items to be more authentic and suggested that this relationship was moderated by perceived product quality. However, her case studies also suggested that the respondents were willing to pay more money for products they deemed authentic because they were also believed to be of higher quality.

Whereas evaluating the authenticity of a product offering involves evaluating the culmination of a set of behaviors (the resulting product), the evaluation of brand authenticity involves evaluating the behaviors that lead to a product’s creation. As a

behavioral judgment, the brand authenticity judgment is more closely related to the judgment of authentic behavior among people, and involves assessing the motivators behind a brand's behavior. Brands whose behaviors are perceived to be intrinsically motivated are believed to be more authentic than brands whose behaviors are perceived to be extrinsically motivated. This dissertation will investigate cues consumers use to evaluate a brand's motivations, as well as the outcome of making an authenticity judgment.

CHAPTER 4 OVERVIEW OF EXPERIMENTS

In *The Managed Heart*, Hochschild compares the work experience of the service provider (e.g., flight attendant) and the laborer (e.g., worker in a wallpaper factory). He suggests that “in the case of the flight attendant, the emotional style of offering the service is part of the service itself, in a way that loving or hating wallpaper is not a part of producing wallpaper.” I suspect that this is no longer true. As consumers become savvier about the role of marketing in shaping the brands and products they consume, they develop an appreciation for that which is honest, simple and “unspun.” For brands, this means that consumers are looking for brands with substance: brands with a genuine interest in the products they are producing and that live up to their own hype.

Although there is some evidence that being authentic provides benefits to the firm, most, if not all, of these conclusions have been drawn from depth interviews or other qualitative work. What is missing is experimental evidence regarding (a) what can make a brand seem authentic (vs. inauthentic), (b) the types of inferences that consumers make when confronted with an authentic brand, and (c) the precise types of benefits that authenticity provides to the firm.

This dissertation examines factors that make a brand seem more versus less authentic. I also examine how authenticity perceptions affect other brand-related cognitions such as perceived product quality, willingness to pay, and consumer confidence. Based on the research reviewed above, I hypothesize that consumers will infer that more authentic brands are higher in quality and that consumers will be willing to pay more for products from an authentic brand. Additionally, to the extent that consumers believe that authentic brands are more transparent than inauthentic brands,

I hypothesize that consumers will be more confident in the inferences they make about authentic brands (vs. inauthentic brands). I also examine the process through which consumers use brand authenticity judgments to make inferences about a product's quality. I hypothesize that product quality inferences are the result of a deliberative process during which consumers evaluate the likelihood that an authentic (vs. inauthentic) brand possesses desirable characteristics. Finally, I examine potential negative consequences of authenticity, examining how consumers respond to transgressions and charitable acts performed by authentic (vs. inauthentic) brands. I predict that, because consumers have higher expectations for authentic brands, those brands will be penalized more harshly for transgressions and will benefit less from charitable acts than will inauthentic brands.

CHAPTER 5 EXPERIMENT 1

Experiment 1 examines whether perceptions of brand authenticity positively influence other brand cognitions, such as perceptions of quality and willingness to pay.

My main hypothesis is thus:

- H1:** When consumers perceive a brand to be authentic, they will also perceive it to be of higher quality, be willing to pay more for it, and be more confident in their attitudes toward it.

Study 1a

Study 1a introduces a procedure for manipulating consumers' perceptions of authenticity. Whereas other research has examined differences in perceptions between brands differing in authenticity, study 1a manipulates authenticity perceptions within a single brand. Specifically, I manipulate perceived authenticity by informing participants that ostensibly authentic brands are actually owned by large corporations.

I predict that this information will affect perceptions of authenticity because the discrepancy between the images and motives of the focal brands and those of their parent corporations should cast doubt on whether the focal brands truly are who they say they are, a key component in perceptions of authenticity. I further predict that, as the information about the corporate parents casts doubt on perceptions on brand authenticity, these effects on authenticity will lead to lowered perceived quality, lower willingness to pay, and lower confidence. Thus:

- H2:** Learning that an (otherwise authentic) brand has a corporate parent will lower perceptions of authenticity, quality, confidence and willingness to pay, but the changes in quality, confidence, and willingness to pay will be mediated by changes in perceived authenticity.

However, I hypothesize that learning about a corporate parent will only be detrimental to authentic brands. Brands that are not perceived as intrinsically authentic should not be harmed by an affiliation with a parent corporation (as any discrepancy between the motives of the corporation and the motives of such brands should be small). If anything, the connection to a large, respected corporation may bolster consumers' attitudes towards these brands.

H3: Learning about a brand's corporate parent will undermine brands that are typically perceived as authentic, but will not be detrimental for brands that are not typically perceived as authentic.

Method

Participants. Participants were 77 undergraduate students at a large, southeastern university who received course credit in exchange for participation.

Stimuli. Participants evaluated two generally authentic brands and two generally inauthentic brands. The authentic brands were Burt's Bees™ (personal care products) and Naked™ (juice). Both of these brands meet the criteria of existing authenticity definitions in the literature, in that both claim to be passionate about making their products and deliver a product that consistently reflects the image of the brand (Holt 2002; Potter 2008). These particular brands were chosen because despite their images, both brands are owned by larger, parent corporations. Burt's Bees™ is owned by Clorox™ and Naked™ is owned by Pepsi™.

The inauthentic brands were Amp Energy™ (energy drink) and Fresh Step™ (kitty litter). These brands were chosen for two reasons. First, they make no authenticity claims in their advertising and therefore should not be considered highly authentic.

Second, these brands are owned by the same corporations as Burt's Bees™ and Naked™, respectively: Pepsi™ owns Amp Energy™ and Clorox™ owns Fresh Step™.

Procedure. Participants were informed that the experimenters were interested in how consumers form judgments about brands. They were informed that they would receive new information about several brands over the course of the experiment and that, after receiving each new piece of information, they would be asked to evaluate the brand. Participants received information about each brand (Burt's Bees™, Naked™, Amp Energy™, and Fresh Step™) in two stages, hereafter referred to as "Time 1" and "Time 2."

At Time 1, participants were presented with an image of the brand's product, a current print advertisement for the brand and a mission statement taken from the brand's website. For example, Burt's Bees'™ mission statement read: "With Burt's Bees™, what you see is what you get. To us, the word 'natural' means only one thing. It means 'harvested from nature'. And that is what we are."

After participants reviewed this information, they were asked a series of questions about the brand, including measures of authenticity, quality, attitude confidence and willingness to pay (see Appendix A). The authenticity and quality questions were randomly ordered and were followed by the judgments of attitude confidence and willingness to pay. To measure authenticity, participants evaluated the brand's authenticity, naturalness, motives, and ability to meet its promises. To measure quality, participants were asked to evaluate the brand's quality, to rate how good it seemed, to predict their satisfaction with the product, and to give an overall attitude. After answering these questions, participants rated how confident they were in the opinions

they had expressed about the brand. Finally, participants were asked to indicate how much they would be willing to pay for a product manufactured by the brand. After evaluating the first brand, participants completed the procedure again for each of the three other brands, with brand order randomized.

After making their initial evaluations, participants completed two unrelated filler tasks. Then, at Time 2, participants were presented with the brand's logo as well as the logo of the brand's parent company and were informed that the brand is owned by this parent company. (For example, they learned that Burt's Bees™ is owned by Clorox™.) While accurate, this information was generally unknown to our participants. After receiving this information, participants were again asked to evaluate the brand on the same dimensions as before. This procedure was repeated for all brands, with brand order again randomized.

Results

Preliminary Analyses. Because the specific brand used (i.e., Burt's Bees™ vs. Naked™ for authentic brands; Amp Energy™ vs. Fresh Step™ for inauthentic brands) did not interact with the other factors for any dependent measures (all $ps > .29$), the data were collapsed across the specific brands into "authentic" and "inauthentic" brand composites.

Next, the four measures of authenticity were averaged into a single authenticity composite measure. Each authenticity composite (Brand 1, Time 1; Brand 1, Time 2; etc.) had a Cronbach's α ranging from .74 to .85. Participants indeed perceived the authentic brands to be more authentic than the inauthentic brands on this composite measure at Time 1 ($M_s = 5.43$ vs. 3.67 , respectively; $t(76) = 18.55$, $p < .01$), supporting our categorization of these brands as authentic and inauthentic.

For the main analyses, responses were analyzed using a repeated-measures ANOVA with brand authenticity and time (before vs. after the corporate information was revealed) as within-subjects factors.

Authenticity. The analysis revealed significant main effects of time ($F(1, 76) = 11.86, p < .01$) and brand type ($F(1, 76) = 11.86, p < .01$) on authenticity perceptions, but, as hypothesized, these factors interacted ($F(1, 76) = 28.46, p < .01$). As predicted, participants perceived the authentic brands to be significantly less authentic after learning of their corporate affiliations ($M_{\text{Time}2} = 4.93$) than before ($M_{\text{Time}1} = 5.43; F(1, 76) = 25.17, p < .01$). However, among the inauthentic brands, knowledge of the corporate affiliation had no effect on perceptions of authenticity ($M_{\text{Time}1} = 3.67$ vs. $M_{\text{Time}2} = 3.73; F(1, 76) = 1.03, p = .31$).

Quality. The four measures of quality were averaged into a single composite score. Each composite (Brand 1, Time 1; Brand 1, Time 2; etc.) had a Cronbach's α ranging from .85 to .94. Cronbach's α 's were in a similar range for authenticity and quality composites in all studies and will not be reported further.

For the quality measures, similar results emerged. There was a main effect of brand type ($F(1, 76) = 66.99, p < .01$) and a marginally reliable main effect of time ($F(1, 76) = 3.83, p < .06$), but, as hypothesized, time and brand type interacted to influence quality perceptions ($F(1, 76) = 19.73, p < .01$). Consistent with our hypotheses, quality perceptions were lower among authentic brands after learning about the corporate parents than before ($M_{\text{Time}1} = 5.66$ vs. $M_{\text{Time}2} = 5.34; F(1, 76) = 15.45, p < .01$). However, among the inauthentic brands, affiliation with a corporate entity actually improved participants' perceptions. Inauthentic brands were perceived to be of *higher*

quality after their corporate owners were revealed ($M_{\text{Time1}} = 4.45$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = 4.58$; $F(1, 76) = 5.47, p < .05$).

Confidence. There was also a significant interaction between time and brand type on participants' confidence in their judgments ($F(1, 76) = 5.10, p < .05$) as well as a main effect of brand type ($F(1, 76) = 13.88, p < .01$) but no main effect of time ($F(1, 76) = 1.72, p = .19$). Revealing the authentic brands' corporate parents resulted in participants having lower overall confidence in their evaluations of the brand ($M_{\text{Time1}} = 5.66$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = 5.45$; $F(1, 76) = 5.79, p < .05$). Among inauthentic brands, corporate affiliation had no effect on participants' confidence in their ratings ($M_{\text{Time1}} = 5.16$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = 5.19$; $p < 1$).

Willingness to Pay. Time and brand type reliably interacted to influence willingness to pay ($F(1, 76) = 12.54, p < .01$). There was also a main effect of brand type ($F(1, 76) = 124.15, p < .01$) but no effect of time ($F(1, 76) = 1.17, p = .28$). Participants reported a lower willingness to pay for the authentic brands after learning of their corporate affiliations ($M_{\text{Time1}} = \$2.36$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = \$2.20$; $F(1, 76) = 8.00, p < .01$). In contrast, participants' willingness to pay for the inauthentic brands was not changed by the corporate ownership information ($M_{\text{Time1}} = \$5.52$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = \$5.58$; $F(1, 76) = 1.06, p = .31$).

Mediation Analysis. We next examined whether the effects of revealing the corporate parents on the quality, confidence, and willingness to pay measures were mediated by changes in authenticity perceptions. For the purposes of this analysis, we combined the quality, confidence, and willingness to pay measures into a single composite measure of "overall favorability." To create this composite, participants'

responses to each dependent measure were standardized across Time 1 and Time 2. These standardized measures were then averaged into a single composite measure of favorability for each time period. Authenticity composite scores (the proposed mediator) were also standardized. (The mediation analysis was only conducted for the authentic brands because perceptions of the inauthentic brands were not affected by learning about their corporate owners.)

The authentic brands' standardized authenticity scores significantly predicted their standardized favorability composite scores ($\beta_{\text{Time1}} = .64$, $t(75) = 7.82$, $p < .01$; $\beta_{\text{Time2}} = .52$, $t(75) = 8.19$, $p < .01$). Following Judd et al.'s (2001) guidelines, authenticity perceptions can be said to mediate the favorability composite scores if two conditions are met. First, the difference in the favorability measures (Time 1 vs. Time 2) should be significant and in the predicted direction. Indeed, following the corporate ownership manipulation, favorability scores were lower than before ($M_{\text{Time1}} = .10$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = -.14$; $t(76) = 4.38$, $p < .01$). Second, regressing the difference in the favorability measures on the difference in the standardized authenticity measures (Time 1 vs. Time 2) and on the centered sum of these standardized authenticity measures should yield a statistically significant parameter estimate for the difference in authenticity measures (which it did, $\beta = .43$, $t(76) = 8.12$, $p < .01$) and should yield a nonsignificant parameter estimate for the centered sum of the authenticity measures (which it did, $\beta = .05$, $t(76) = 1.61$, $p = .11$). These findings indicate that participants' lowered favorability towards the authentic brands after learning of their corporate parentage is fully mediated by their decreased perceptions of the brands' authenticity.

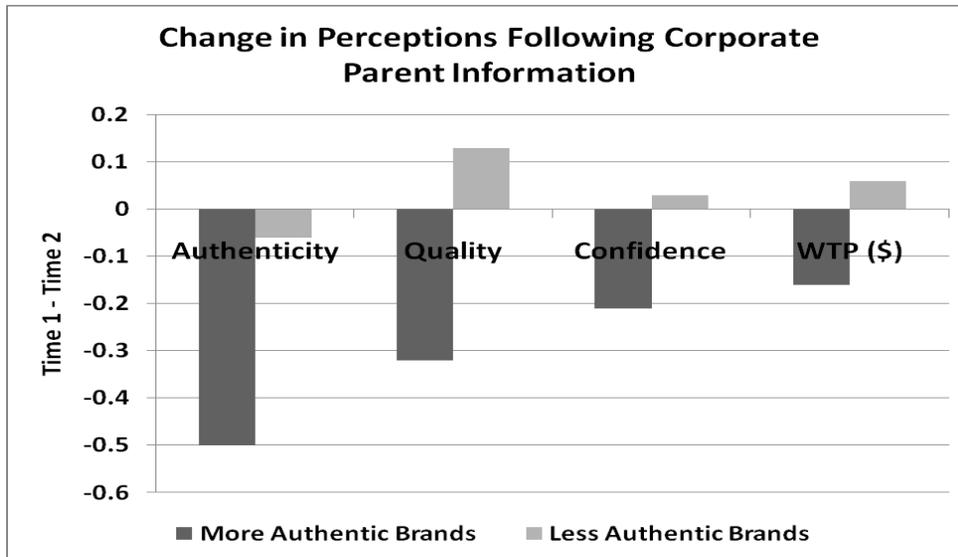


Figure 6-1. Change in beliefs following revelation of corporate ownership.

Discussion

Experiment 1a demonstrated that the perceived authenticity of a brand can be manipulated and illustrated some of the consequences of such a manipulation. Supporting my hypotheses, the authenticity of Burt's Bees™ and Naked™ was undermined by revealing that the two brands are owned by large corporations, and this revelation also lowered perceptions of quality, reduced confidence in those perceptions, and lowered willingness to pay. These findings are particularly intriguing because one might have expected that, for the average brand, having a connection to a large, familiar corporation might *bolster* consumer attitudes toward the brand (because the backing of a large corporation might be a quality signal). However, we find that for brands that are considered to be authentic, having a corporate parent is a negative, not a positive, factor.

Of note, the manipulation's effect on perceptions of the authentic brands was mediated by its effects on authenticity perceptions, suggesting that learning that an authentic brand has a corporate parent is detrimental precisely because that affiliation

undermines the brand's authenticity claims. Consistent with this conclusion is the fact that learning about a corporate affiliation is not detrimental to *all* brands. Among inauthentic brands, association with a corporate parent even increased quality perceptions, suggesting that the negative consequences for authentic brands were not an artifact of the manipulation or design.

Study 1b

Study 1a demonstrated that consumer perceptions of authenticity affect quality perceptions, willingness to pay, and confidence. Study 1a also demonstrated one way in which the authenticity of a single product can be manipulated. However, whereas study 1a demonstrated a way to *decrease* authenticity perceptions, it is important to consider ways in which authenticity perceptions may be *increased*.

Following Holt's (2002) discussion of the importance to authentic brands of being "true to self," in study 1b I manipulated perceived authenticity by varying a fictional company's motivation for making a product, specifically by varying whether it is passionate about its products (i.e., has a noncommercial motivation). I hypothesized that a passion-motivated company would be perceived as more authentic than a profit-motivated company and that the company's products would thus seem to be of higher quality, would inspire more confidence, and would seem to be worth more.

Method

Participants. Participants were 56 students at a large southeastern university who received course credit in exchange for their participation.

Procedure. As in study 1a, participants received information about the target brand in two stages (Time 1 and Time 2) and were asked to evaluate the brand after each stage. The fictional brand was "Sweet Things" and the product was granola.

At Time 1, participants were presented with an image of a bag of granola bearing the Sweet Things label as well as a blurb describing the product in neutral language. After participants reviewed this information, they were asked to complete the authenticity, quality, confidence and willingness to pay measures used in study 1a. To generalize our conceptualization of authenticity, in study 1b the “natural” component of the authenticity composite measure was replaced with a question asking how much participants trusted the brand.

Next, participants completed two unrelated filler tasks. Then, at Time 2, participants were presented with the same product image and a second blurb giving a brief explanation of why the brand (Sweet Things) began producing granola. Participants who were randomly assigned to the “passion” condition read that the owner of Sweet Things was known in college for her granola and decided to try to make a living doing what she loves. Participants in the “profit” condition read that Sweet Things began in the gourmet popcorn market and then branched into granola to expand their customer base. After receiving this information, participants were again asked to evaluate Sweet Things on the same dimensions as Time 1.

Results

For each dependent measure, participants’ responses were analyzed using a repeated-measures ANOVA with time (before/after motive information) as a within-subjects factor and motive (passion vs. profit) as a between-subjects factor.

Authenticity. The four measures of authenticity were again averaged into a single authenticity composite. As predicted, there was a significant interaction between time (before vs. after motive information) and motive (passion vs. profit) on authenticity perceptions ($F(1, 54) = 19.99, p < .01$); there was also a significant main effect of time

($F(1, 54) = 7.02, p < .05$). Participants perceived Sweet Things to be more authentic after reading that the company owner was motivated by her passion for granola than before ($M_{\text{Time1}} = 4.23$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = 5.24; F(1, 25) = 25.92, p < .01$). However, learning that Sweet Things was motivated by profit had no effect on authenticity perceptions ($M_{\text{Time1}} = 4.44$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = 4.18; F(1, 29) = 1.66, p = .21$).

Quality. There was a significant interaction between time and motive on quality perceptions ($F(1, 54) = 12.09, p < .01$) and a marginally reliable main effect of time ($F(1, 54) = 3.93, p < .06$). Learning of Sweet Things' passion for its product increased participants' perceptions of product quality ($M_{\text{Time1}} = 4.28$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = 5.19; F(1, 25) = 21.17, p < .01$). However, quality perceptions were not affected among participants who learned that Sweet Things had prior experience with a similar product and was motivated by profit ($M_{\text{Time1}} = 4.73$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = 4.48; F(1, 29) = 0.93, p = .34$).

Confidence. There was a significant interaction between time and motive on participants' judgment confidence ($F(1, 54) = 4.37, p < .05$) as well as a main effect of time ($F(1, 54) = 5.71, p < .05$). After learning that Sweet Things was motivated by passion, participants had greater confidence in their judgments of the brand ($M_{\text{Time1}} = 5.12$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = 5.62; F(1, 25) = 7.22, p < .05$). Confidence was not affected by learning that Sweet Things was motivated by profit ($M_{\text{Time1}} = 5.63$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = 5.67; F(1, 29) = 0.07, p = .80$).

Willingness to Pay. The analysis revealed a significant time by motive interaction on participants' willingness to pay for Sweet Things granola ($F(1, 54) = 10.55, p < .01$) as well as a main effect of time ($F(1, 54) = 4.40, p < .05$). Participants who learned that Sweet Things was motivated by passion for the product were willing to pay 34% more

for the granola than before ($M_{\text{Time1}} = \$3.29$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = \$4.41$; $F(1, 25) = 8.18$, $p < .01$).

Participants who learned that Sweet Things was motivated by profit did not change their willingness to pay ($M_{\text{Time1}} = \$3.44$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = \$3.19$; $F(1, 29) = 1.56$, $p = .22$).

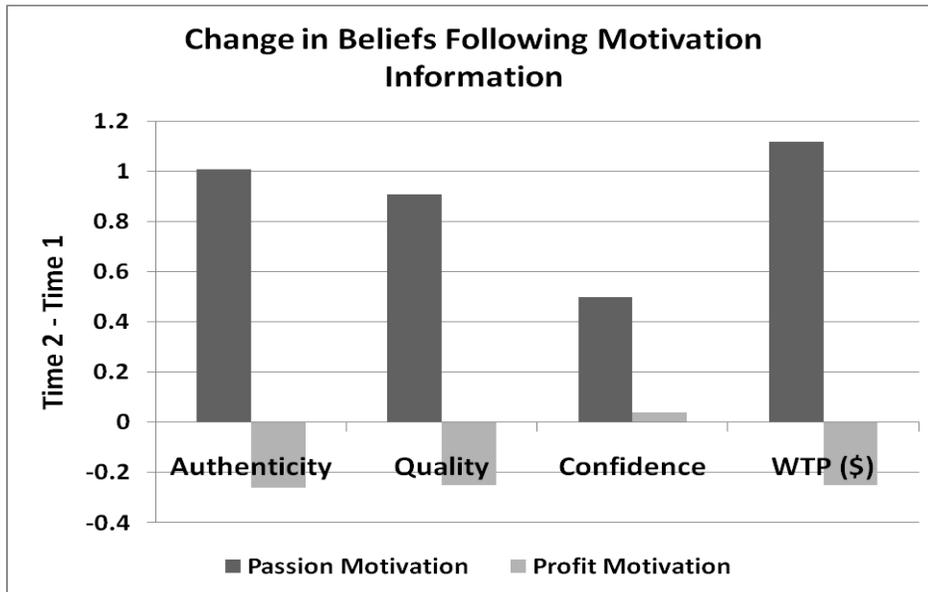


Figure 6-2. Change in beliefs after learning brand's motivation.

Mediation Analysis. We next analyzed whether increased authenticity perceptions following the passion motive story mediated the effect of that story on participants' quality perceptions, confidence, and willingness to pay. The mediation was performed only for the passion motive condition because the profit motive did not affect participants' evaluations of the brand. As in study 1a, I created an overall favorability score that consisted of a composite of the standardized quality, confidence, and willingness to pay measures.

The standardized authenticity score significantly predicted the overall favorability score in both time periods ($\beta_{\text{Time1}} = .49$, $t(24) = 7.24$, $p < .05$; $\beta_{\text{Time2}} = .70$, $t(24) = 7.16$, $p < .01$). Furthermore, the difference between the overall favorability measures (Time 1 vs. Time 2) was significant and in the predicted direction ($M_{\text{Time1}} = -.28$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = .34$;

$t(25) = 4.47, p < .01$). Finally, regressing the difference in the favorability measures on the difference in the standardized authenticity measures and on the centered sum of these measures yielded a statistically significant parameter estimate for the difference ($\beta = .61, t(25) = 6.07, p < .01$) and a nonsignificant parameter estimate for the sum ($\beta = .004, t(25) = .06, p < 1$). Thus, participants' increased favorability toward Sweet Things after learning of its founder's passion is fully mediated by their increased perceptions of the brand's authenticity.

Discussion

Study 1b replicates the findings of study 1a, again showing that perceptions of authenticity are tied to other brand perceptions such as quality, confidence, and willingness to pay. Additionally, while study 1a demonstrated that perceptions of authenticity can be undermined, study 1b demonstrates one way in which a brand's perceived authenticity can be increased. Information that a brand's owner is passionate about her product increased perceptions of the brand's authenticity as well as perceptions of a product's quality, attitude confidence and willingness to pay. Information that a brand's owner succeeded in a related industry and is motivated by profit had no effect on product perceptions.

Study 1c

Study 1b demonstrated that being true to oneself and making a product about which one is passionate is an important component of brand authenticity. When participants believed that Sweet Things' owner was passionate about making granola, participants perceived the brand to be more authentic and higher quality. Indeed, today, many brands proclaim passion for their product: Toyota is passionate about quality control, Kashi is passionate about all-natural ingredients and Johnson and Johnson is

passionate about making family friendly products. Noticeably absent is a company passionate about something negative: a product that has harmful effects, has a negative image, or is generally disliked. Although not part of any formalized definitions, “goodness” may be an inherent component of authenticity; after all, many authentic brands (e.g., Burt’s Bees and Kashi) are motivated by a greater good (e.g., protecting the planet and consumers by being all-natural). Would a brand that is passionate about making a negatively regarded product also be perceived to be authentic? If so, would such an authentic brand receive the benefits that other authentic brands receive, or would having an authentic motivation for making a “bad” product be even worse than having a profit-oriented reason for making it?

Study 1c uses a fictional brand of cigarettes to test whether passion for the product increases perceptions of authenticity even when a product is generally disliked. I hypothesize that being intrinsically motivated, operationalized here as being passionate about one’s product, should always be perceived as being authentic, even if it means being passionate about a product that has a negative image. However, a priori, it seems possible that an “authentic” brand of a negatively regarded product either could receive the benefits observed in studies 1a and 1b (e.g., and be seen as higher quality than an inauthentic product), or could be perceived even more negatively than before: perhaps authenticity serves to polarize, rather than inflate, product judgments.

Method

Participants. Participants were 63 undergraduate students at a large southeastern university who participated in exchange for course credit.

Procedure. Study 1c utilized a 2 (time: before vs. after motive information) X 2 (motive: passion vs. profit) mixed design. As in study 1b, study 1c utilized a fictitious brand whose creator was described as being motivated either by passion for the product or by a general profit motive. At Time 1, participants were presented with an image of a pack of York brand cigarettes and a neutral description of the product and brand, and were asked to evaluate the brand and product on the authenticity, quality, confidence and willingness to pay measures used in studies 1a and 1b. Participants then completed two unrelated filler tasks.

At Time 2, participants again saw the product image. Participants also read about why the company owner entered the cigarette business. In the passion motivation condition, participants were informed that the owner of York cigarettes had long been hand rolling cigarettes using unique tobacco blends for himself and had decided to start a business selling these cigarettes. In the profit motivation condition, participants were informed that the owner of York cigarettes also owned several bars, where he noticed that blended cigarettes were becoming more popular, and decided to capitalize on this market knowledge by starting a cigarette business. After reviewing this new information, participants reevaluated the brand on the measures used at Time 1. Participants' global attitudes toward cigarettes were also measured by asking participants their attitudes toward cigarettes and the cigarette industry, whether they believed cigarettes were a good or bad product, and whether the cigarette industry as a whole was harmful to society, using 9-point scales. Finally, participants were asked to indicate how frequently they smoke cigarettes, ranging from 1 (never) to 9 (every day).

Results

Participants' responses to the cigarette attitude measures were averaged into a single cigarette attitude score. Participants did hold a negative attitude toward cigarettes and the cigarette industry ($M = 1.5$). The specific motive story that participants read did not affect their global attitudes towards cigarettes ($M_{\text{passion}} = 1.52$, $M_{\text{profit}} = 1.58$; $F(1, 62) = .09$, $p = .76$).

For each dependent measure, participants' responses were analyzed using a repeated-measures ANOVA with time (before/after motive story) as a within-subjects factor and motive story (passion vs. profit) as a between-subjects factor.

Authenticity. An authenticity composite score was created by averaging the four authenticity measures. As predicted, the ANOVA yielded a significant time (before vs. after motive information) by motive (passion vs. profit) interaction on this composite ($F(1, 61) = 7.48$, $p < .01$), as well as a main effect of time ($F(1, 61) = 6.04$, $p < .05$). Participants believed York cigarettes to be more authentic after learning that the owner was motivated by his passion for cigarettes ($M_{\text{Time1}} = 3.27$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = 3.88$; $F(1, 31) = 8.92$, $p < .01$). Learning that York was motivated by profit had no effect on participants' perceptions of the brand's authenticity ($M_{\text{Time1}} = 3.35$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = 3.31$; $F(1, 30) = .09$, $p < 1$).

Quality. A quality composite score was created by averaging the four quality measures. The ANOVA yielded a significant time by motive story interaction ($F(1, 61) = 5.24$, $p < .05$) as well as a main effect of time ($F(1, 61) = 8.98$, $p < .01$). Participants believed York cigarettes to be of higher quality after learning that the owner was motivated by passion ($M_{\text{Time1}} = 2.94$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = 3.54$; $F(1, 31) = 10.76$, $p < .01$), but not

after learning that he was motivated by profit ($M_{\text{Time1}} = 2.39$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = 2.37$; $F(1, 30) = .37$, $p = .55$).

Willingness to Pay. The ANOVA also yielded a marginally reliable time by motive story interaction on participants' willingness to pay for York cigarettes ($F(1, 61) = 3.17$, $p = .08$), but no main effect of time ($F(1, 61) = 2.32$, $p = .13$). Participants were willing to pay more for York cigarettes after learning that the owner was motivated by passion ($M_{\text{Time1}} = 2.79$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = 2.99$; $F(1, 31) = 4.89$, $p < .05$). Learning that York was motivated by profit had no effect on willingness to pay ($M_{\text{Time1}} = 2.39$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = 2.37$; $F(1, 30) = .04$, $p < 1$).

Confidence. No reliable effects emerged in the ANOVA for participants' confidence ratings (all p 's $> .17$). Overall, participants reported being very confident in their attitudes ($M = 5.64$), a result which is not wholly unexpected given consumers' strong negative attitudes toward consuming cigarettes.

Discussion

Study 1c demonstrated that consumers perceive greater authenticity in brands motivated by passion, even if the passion is directed towards a product for which consumers have negative attitudes. Despite participants' beliefs that cigarettes are harmful to consumers and that the cigarette industry harms society as a whole, learning that a cigarette brand owner was passionate about making cigarettes increased perceptions of brand authenticity and, in turn, perceptions of quality and willingness to pay. This finding underscores the importance of "being true to yourself" in conveying authenticity, even if it means being true to a generally undesirable self.

CHAPTER 6 EXPERIMENT 2

Study 2

Studies 1a-1c manipulate perceived brand authenticity by calling into question the brand's motives. In study 1a, the authentic brand's motives were undermined when they were associated with a larger corporation. Learning that Burt's Bees™, which promotes itself as an environmentally-friendly, natural brand, is owned by Clorox™ calls into question the genuineness of that brand's image. Consumers may come to question whether Burt's Bees'™ image actually reflects the ethos of the people behind the brand, or if it is merely a sales pitch. Similarly, learning that a brand was created organically (due to the interests of its founder) rather than for economic gain suggests that the brand's communications accurately reflect the interests of the people behind it.

The conceptualization of brand authenticity as a judgment of the genuineness of a brand's image suggests that any brand image (or personality) could be perceived as authentic: a brand could be authentically exciting, authentically rugged, authentically cosmopolitan, etc. As such, it is important to distinguish brand authenticity as a judgment about a brand's image, and not the brand image itself. This is especially important when considering the possibility of an authentically sincere brand. Although the terms authenticity and sincerity are often used interchangeably in standard speech, they are distinct concepts as applied to branding.

In the branding literature, brand sincerity refers to the sincerity dimension of Aaker's (1997) Brand Personality Inventory. Although the dimension is named Sincerity, the traits actually point to a brand with a "small town" or quaint brand image: down-to-earth, family-oriented, small-town, honest, sincere, real, wholesome, original,

cheerful, sentimental and friendly. Although I will concede that several of these traits may contribute to perceptions of authenticity (e.g., sincere, real, honest, original), the conceptualization of brand authenticity as intrinsic motivation suggests that brand authenticity and sincerity (as measured by Aaker 1997) are unique constructs.

Experiment 2 distinguishes the concepts of brand authenticity and sincerity (the brand personality construct). Because brand authenticity is a judgment made about the brand's image or personality, a brand with any type of personality (not just sincere) should be able to be perceived as authentic. Additionally, an action that undermines the authenticity of that brand's image should not have an effect on the perceived sincerity of the brand (unless the brand has a sincere image).

Experiment 2 used a brand that was anticipated to be perceived as authentic, but not sincere: Under Armour. To manipulate the perceived authenticity of Under Armour's image, participants were given a fictional back story for the brand that conflicted with the brand's current image. Experiment 2 distinguishes authenticity from sincerity in two ways. First, it demonstrates that a brand can be perceived as authentic without being perceived as sincere. Second, it demonstrates that perceived brand authenticity can be manipulated independently of perceived sincerity.

Method

Stimuli. Under Armour™ markets itself as performance athletic apparel for the serious athlete, and has a tough image. The inventor of Under Armour™ was a captain on a prominent college football team who developed the product to solve problems he experienced himself on the team. The brand's image reflects the image not only of its founder, but also of its loyal customers, and as such, is perceived as authentic by many

consumers. However, many consumers (including our participants) are not familiar with the brand's origin story.

Participants. Participants were 30 undergraduate students at a large, southeastern university who received course credit in exchange for participation.

Procedure. Participants were informed that the experimenters were interested in how consumers form judgments about brands. Participants were informed that they would receive new information about the brand over the course of the experiment and that, after receiving each new piece of information, they would be asked to evaluate the brand. Participants received information about Under Armour™ in two stages, hereafter referred to as “Time 1” and “Time 2.”

At Time 1, participants were presented with a current print advertisement for Under Armour, a brief description of the brand's core product offering, and a mission statement adapted from the brand's website. The mission statement read: “Under Armour's mission is to provide the tough, hard-working athlete with technically advanced products engineered with superior fabric construction, exclusive moisture management, and proven innovation.” After participants reviewed this information, they were asked a series of questions about the brand, including measures of brand authenticity and Aaker's brand personality scale (1997).

After making their initial evaluations, participants completed an unrelated filler task. At Time 2, participants were again presented with the brand's advertisement and a brief blurb detailing a fictional history of the company. Participants read the following:

Under Armour™ was founded by Kevin Plank, a clothing designer for the Gap™ Group. Originally a designer within Gap's™ athletic apparel division, Plank recognized the growing popularity of performance sports apparel and pitched Under Armour™ to the Gap™ Group as a way to enter this new

market. Under Armour™ was subsequently positioned by the Gap™ Group as a competitor for traditional sportswear brands such as Nike™ and Adidas™.

This fictional history was designed to undermine the authenticity of Under Armour's™ brand authenticity in two ways. First, because the image of the focal brand (Under Armour™) and its purported parent brand (Gap™) are not congruent, the degree to which the Under Armour™ brand reflects the ethos of its company is drawn into question. Second, because the fictional history specifically refers to a meeting about how to position the product, any belief about the degree to which the brand's image naturally flows from the people behind it is also undermined.

After reading the brand history information, participants were again asked to evaluate the brand on the authenticity and brand personality measures used at Time 1.

Results

The four measures of authenticity were averaged into a single composite authenticity measure at time 1 and time 2. The brand personality measures were averaged to form the 5 brand personality measures identified by Aaker (1997): Sincerity, Sophistication, Ruggedness, Competence and Excitement.

Time 1. Participants' evaluations at Time 1 reveal Under Armour's™ image as well as the perceived authenticity of that image. Means on each of the brand personality factors, as well as the authenticity scale, are presented in the table below.

These descriptive statistics suggest that respondents saw Under Armour™ as a rugged, competent brand—descriptors that accurately match Under Armour's™ marketing communications (means greater than the scalar midpoint, $p < .05$). Under Armour was not perceived to be particularly sincere, exciting or sophisticated (means lower than the scalar midpoint, $p < .05$). Additionally, respondents perceived Under

Armour's image to be authentic (greater than the scalar midpoint, $p < .05$). Importantly, Under Armour was perceived to be more authentic than sincere ($t(29) = 12.58$, $p < .001$), suggesting that brand authenticity and the sincerity dimension of brand personality are in fact two separate constructs.

Time 2. For the main analysis, a within-subjects ANOVA was conducted with time as the within-subjects factor. As predicted, after participants read that Under Armour was created by the Gap™ Group to compete against existing sportswear brands, the brand was perceived to be less authentic ($M_{\text{Time1}} = 4.98$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = 4.71$; $F(1,29) = 5.69$, $p < .05$). However, this information did not affect participants' perceptions of the brand's sincerity ($M_{\text{Time1}} = 3.12$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = 2.99$; $F(1,29) = 1.30$, $p > .25$).

Discussion

Combined, the results of the analyses performed at time 1 and time 2 suggest that brand authenticity and Aaker's (1997) sincerity dimension of brand personality are not the same construct. Using a real brand as an example, it was demonstrated that a brand can be perceived to be authentic without being perceived to be sincere.

Additionally, it was demonstrated that authenticity can be manipulated independently of sincerity.

Table 6-1. Brand personality and authenticity scale means.

Image Measure	Mean	S.D.
Sincerity	3.12	0.67
Excitement	3.00	0.55
Competence	4.40	0.87
Sophistication	2.93	0.73
Ruggedness	4.58	0.60
Authenticity	4.98	0.84

CHAPTER 7 EXPERIMENT 3

Study 3a

Studies 1a-1c provide evidence that brand authenticity increases consumers' perceptions of product quality, willingness to pay, and attitude confidence. An important question is whether all consumers react similarly to changes in perceived brand authenticity. Study 3a investigates how different consumers respond to perceptions of brand authenticity. Especially relevant is how the extent to which consumers value *personal* authenticity affects the importance they place on brand authenticity in their decision making. Kernis and Goldman's (2006) Authenticity Inventory measures individual differences in the importance of personal authenticity. The Inventory assesses awareness of one's true self (the "awareness" factor), objectivity and acceptance of one's strengths and weaknesses ("unbiased processing" factor), the extent to which one's behaviors reflect the true self ("behavior" factor) and openness and truthfulness in close, personal relationships ("relational orientation" factor).

I hypothesize that individuals who place more importance on being personally authentic will also value a brand's authenticity more. I argue that individuals who value being authentic themselves should value authenticity in others. To the extent that the brand is considered to be its own entity (with an identity), I argue that these individuals should also be more likely to value authenticity in the brand. Specifically, these individuals should be more likely to use brand authenticity perceptions to make inferences about the brand's product quality and their willingness to pay for the product. Alternatively, individuals who do not value personal authenticity should be less likely to

value brand authenticity and, in turn, should be less likely to use that information to make inferences about the brand.

Procedure

Participants. Participants were 53 students at a large southeastern university who received extra credit in exchange for their participation.

Procedure. At Time 1, participants were presented with an image of a bag of granola bearing the Sweet Things label as well as a blurb describing the product in neutral language. After participants reviewed this information, they were asked to complete the authenticity and quality measures used in study 1b. Next, participants completed two unrelated filler tasks.

At Time 2, participants were presented with the same product image and a second blurb giving a brief explanation of why the brand (Sweet Things) began producing granola. Participants who were randomly assigned to the “passion” condition read that the owner of Sweet Things was known in college for her granola and decided to try to make a living doing what she loves. Participants in the “profit” condition read that Sweet Things began in the gourmet popcorn market and then branched into granola to expand their customer base. After receiving this information, participants were again asked to evaluate Sweet Things on the authenticity and quality measures used at Time 1. Following these evaluations, all participants completed the Authenticity Inventory (Kernis and Goldman 2006; Appendix B).

Results

Participants’ responses were analyzed using a repeated-measures ANOVA with time (before/after motive story) as a within-subjects factor and motive story (passion vs. profit) and personal authenticity importance (low vs. high) as between subjects factors.

Authenticity Inventory. Participants' responses to the Authenticity Inventory were subjected to a median split, creating two groups: Low Authenticity Importance ($M_{\text{low}}=139.3$) and High Authenticity Importance ($M_{\text{high}}=171.2$). The brand motive manipulation (passion vs. profit) did not affect participants' responses to the Authenticity Inventory ($M_{\text{passion}} = 152.5$ vs. $M_{\text{profit}} = 155.0$; $F(1, 51) = .859$, $p = .36$).

Authenticity. As in experiment 1, the four measures of authenticity were averaged into a single authenticity composite measure. Consistent with our hypotheses, there was a significant interaction between time (before vs. after motive information) and motive (passion vs. profit) on authenticity perceptions ($F(1, 49) = 10.0$, $p < .01$) but no main effect of time ($F(1, 49) = .58$, $p = .45$). Participants perceived Sweet Things to be more authentic after reading that the company owner was motivated by her passion for granola ($M_{\text{Time1}} = 4.73$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = 5.17$; $F(1, 23) = 6.67$, $p < .05$). Learning that Sweet Things was motivated by profit had a marginally negative effect on participants' perceptions of the brand's authenticity ($M_{\text{Time1}} = 4.71$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = 4.44$; $F(1, 26) = 3.33$, $p = .08$).

Importantly, the interaction between time and motive story was not moderated by participants' personal authenticity importance (motive x time x importance interaction: $F(1, 49) = 1.39$, $p = .25$). Participants perceived the Sweet Things brand to be more authentic after learning the owner was motivated by passion for the product, regardless of how important personal authenticity was to them.

Quality. As in experiment 1, the four measures of quality were averaged into a single quality composite measure. The analysis revealed a significant three-way interaction between time, motive and authenticity importance on perceived product

quality ($F(1, 49) = 5.11, p < .05$), but no other effects were reliable. Among participants for whom personal authenticity was highly important, there was a significant interaction between time and motive on perceptions of product quality ($F(1, 24) = 9.74, p < .01$). These participants believed the product to be of higher quality after reading the passion motive story than before ($M_{\text{Time1}} = 4.71$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = 5.46; F(1, 11) = 8.05, p < .05$), but believed the product to be of marginally lower quality after reading the profit story than before ($M_{\text{Time1}} = 4.89$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = 4.64; F(1, 13) = 3.58, p = .08$). However, for participants who reported low personal authenticity importance, motive and time did not interact to affect perceived quality ($F(1, 25) = .09, p = .76$).

Discussion

Interestingly, personal authenticity importance had no effect on participants' perceptions of brand authenticity. After reading that Sweet Things' entrance into the granola market was motivated by passion, participants believed that the brand was more authentic, regardless of whether or not they valued personal authenticity.

However, the effect of personal authenticity importance was to prevent or promote inference-making on the basis of the brand authenticity judgments. Participants who reported valuing authenticity in their personal lives seemed to use their brand authenticity judgment as a cue that affected their subsequent judgments of product quality. These participants' behaviors reflect Groves' (2001) conclusion that consumers use authenticity "as an indicator of the sensory and production characteristics they considered desirable." While Groves' examined perceived *product* authenticity, I extend her finding by suggesting that the more abstract judgment of brand authenticity may also serve as an indicator of that brand's product quality and desirability, but only for individuals who value personal authenticity.

Participants who did not value authenticity in their personal lives did not draw product inferences on the basis of their brand authenticity judgments. Although these consumers believed the passion-motivated brand to be more authentic, this positive assessment did not affect their judgments of product quality or willingness to pay.

Study 3b

The results of study 3a suggest that brand authenticity and product quality are not associated for all consumers. As in studies 1a-1c, consumers who value personal authenticity appeared to use their brand authenticity judgments to inform their evaluations of the brand's product quality. However, consumers who do not value authenticity in their personal lives did not use their perceived brand authenticity to inform their judgments about the brand's product quality. This suggests that the connection between perceived authenticity and product quality may not be automatic.

Previous research has suggested that authenticity may serve as a filter, a cue, or a heuristic in guiding consumers' judgments. Study 3b investigates whether judgments of authenticity affect other brand-related cognitions through an automatic or deliberative process. It is possible that perceptions of brand authenticity automatically trigger associations with higher quality. Alternatively, the process may be deliberative, with brand authenticity being one product attribute that consumers use to make inferences about the product.

Method

Participants. Participants were 69 undergraduates at a large southeastern university who participated in exchange for course credit.

Procedure. Study 3b utilized a 2 (time: before vs. after motive information) X 2 (motive: passion vs. profit) X 2 (cognitive load: high vs. low) mixed design. Participants

were randomly assigned to conditions and were informed that the experimenters were interested in how consumers form impressions and evaluations of brands. Participants were informed that over the course of the experimental session they would receive a variety of information about a brand and would then be asked to evaluate the brand. As before, information was provided in two stages (Time 1 and Time 2).

At Time 1, participants were presented with an image of a fictional brand (Sweet Things granola) as well as a description of the product in neutral language. Participants were asked to evaluate the brand's authenticity and product quality using the measures previously described. Participants then completed an unrelated filler task.

During the filler task, participants were informed that the experimenters were interested in studying the effects of eye blinking on information processing (Fitzsimons and Williams 2000). Participants were asked to count the number of times they blinked their eyes during the course of the experiment and to report this number when asked. All participants then completed a second, unrelated filler task. Cognitive load was manipulated by varying when participants reported their number of eye blinks. Participants in the low cognitive load condition reported their eye blinks after the second filler task but before Time 2. Participants in the high cognitive load condition reported their eye blinks after Time 2; that is, after reading Sweet Things' motive story and reevaluating the brand.

At Time 2, participants were presented with the same product image and a second blurb giving an explanation of why the brand (Sweet Things) began producing granola. Participants who were randomly assigned to the "passion" condition read that the owner of Sweet Things granola was known in college for granola and decided to try

to make a living doing what she loves. Participants in the “profit” condition read that Sweet Things began in the gourmet popcorn market and then branched into granola to expand their consumer base. After receiving this information, participants were again asked to evaluate Sweet Things on the authenticity and quality measures used at Time 1.

Results

Participants’ responses were analyzed using a repeated-measures ANOVA with time (before vs. after motive story) as a within-subjects variable and motive story (passion vs. profit) and cognitive load (high vs. low) as between-subjects variables.

Cognitive Load. Participants in the high cognitive load condition reported more eye blinks than participants in the low cognitive load condition ($M_{\text{high}} = 43.4$ vs. $M_{\text{low}} = 25.4$; $F(1, 67) = 13.23, p < .01$).

Authenticity. The four measures of authenticity were combined into a single composite. As predicted, all participants believed Sweet Things to be more authentic following the passion motivation story than after the profit motivation story ($F(1, 65) = 9.63, p < .01$). Regardless of cognitive load, participants perceived Sweet Things to be more authentic after reading that the company owner was motivated by her passion for granola ($M_{\text{Time1}} = 4.78$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = 5.47$; $F(1, 33) = 18.66, p < .001$). Learning that Sweet Things was motivated by profit had no effect on perceptions of the brand’s authenticity ($M_{\text{Time1}} = 4.26$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = 4.23$; $F(1, 32) = .01, p = .92$).

Quality. The four measures of product quality were combined into a single composite measure. The analysis revealed a significant interaction between time and motive story ($F(1, 65) = 6.14, p < .05$), but this interaction was qualified by a significant three-way interaction between time, motive story and cognitive load ($F(1, 65) = 6.14, p <$

.05). Among participants in the low cognitive load condition, there was a significant interaction between time and motive story ($F(1, 37) = 13.40, p < .001$). These participants perceived Sweet Things to be of higher quality after reading that the company owner was motivated by her passion for granola ($M_{\text{Time1}} = 4.99$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = 5.64$; $F(1, 20) = 9.70, p < .01$). Learning that Sweet Things was motivated by profit had a negative effect on perceptions of the brand's quality ($M_{\text{Time1}} = 5.03$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = 4.59$; $F(1, 17) = 4.37, p = .05$).

Among participants in the high cognitive load condition, however, there was no effect of the motive story manipulation on perceptions of Sweet Things' quality ($F(1, 28) = .002, p = .97$).

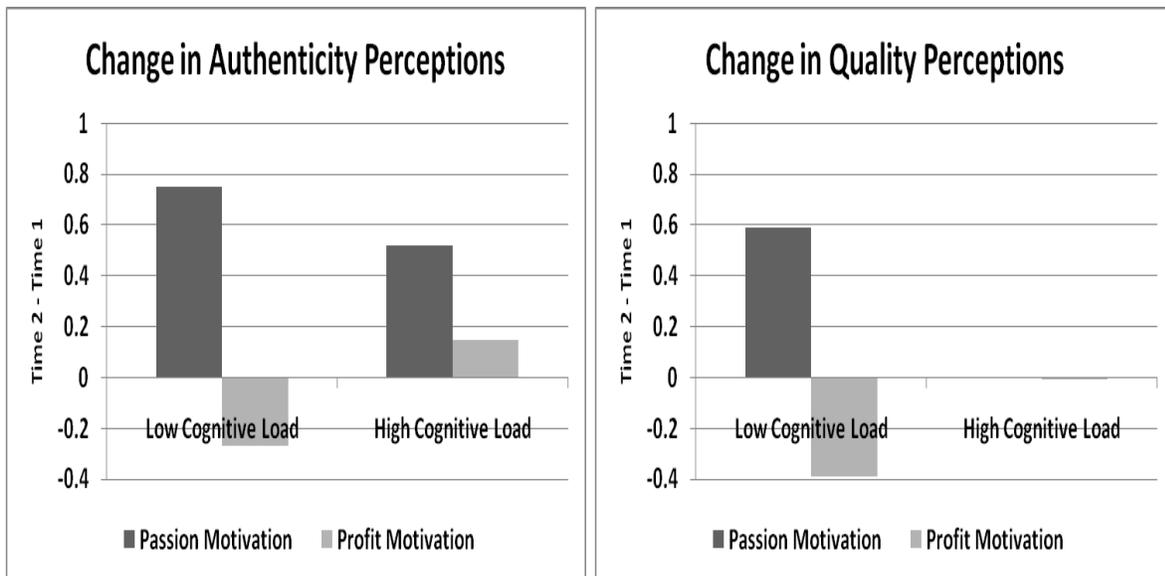


Figure 8-1. Changes in authenticity and quality perceptions among participants with low and high cognitive load.

Discussion

After learning that Sweet Things' entrance into the granola market was motivated by a passion for the product, all participants believed that the brand was more authentic, regardless of cognitive load. However, as with the personal authenticity individual

difference variable in study 3a, cognitive load served to prevent or promote inference-making on the basis of the brand authenticity judgments. Participants in the low cognitive load condition, who presumably had sufficient mental resources, appeared to use their brand authenticity judgments to inform their subsequent judgment of product quality. Participants in the high cognitive load condition, who presumably had depleted mental resources, were not able to draw product quality inferences on the basis of their authenticity judgments. Although these participants believed the passion-motivated brand to be more authentic, this positive assessment did not affect their judgments of product quality.

Combined, these results suggest that brand authenticity is an attribute of the product that must be deliberately processed when making inferences about the product's quality. The results also suggest an intermediary process that is interrupted when participants have insufficient mental resources to draw on their authenticity perceptions to make additional product-related inferences.

Study 3c

Study 3b provides initial evidence that authenticity information is not automatically associated with perceptions of product quality. Instead, there is initial evidence that the authenticity information is used in a deliberative process to inform decisions about product quality. What is unclear, however, is what deliberative step is being interrupted for participants with diminished cognitive resources.

To explore the possible process interrupted in study 3b, study 3c examines a potential intermediary step in the deliberative process suggested by study 3b. In her study of the authenticity of British foodstuffs, Groves (2001) found that consumers used their perceptions of the product's authenticity to infer that the product would possess

attributes that were desirable to them. I propose that perceptions of brand authenticity may also affect attribute-level inferences that consumers make about the product which, in turn, affect global perceptions of product quality.

Study 3c looks at the effect of authenticity perceptions on two types of attribute level inferences: the perceived believability of specific attribute-level claims made by the brand and the perceived believability that a brand possesses desirable attributes not explicitly claimed but implied by the brand's image. I hypothesize that one or both of these types of product beliefs are affected by perceptions of brand authenticity, and that these beliefs, in turn, affect perceptions of product quality.

Method

Participants. Participants were 164 students at a large southeastern university who received course credit in exchange for their participation.

Procedure. Study 3c utilized a 2 (motive: passion vs. profit) X 2 (cognitive load: high vs. low) between-subjects design. Participants were randomly assigned to conditions and were informed that the experimenters were interested in how consumers form impressions and evaluations of brands. Participants were informed that over the course of the experimental session they would receive a variety of information about a brand and would then be asked to evaluate the brand. As before, information was provided in two stages (Time 1 and Time 2).

At Time 1, participants were presented with an image of a fictional brand (Sweet Things granola) as well as a description of the product in neutral language. This neutral blurb was rewritten to contain several explicit product claims that were consistent with the image of the brand (e.g., "Sweet Things contains 100% whole grains"). After

learning about Sweet Things granola, participants then completed an unrelated filler task.

During the filler task, participants were informed that the experimenters were interested in studying the effects of eye blinking on information processing (Fitzsimons and Williams 2000). Participants were asked to count the number of times they blinked their eyes during the course of the experiment and to report this number when asked. All participants then completed a second, unrelated filler task. Cognitive load was manipulated by varying when participants reported their number of eye blinks. Participants in the low cognitive load condition reported their eye blinks after the second filler task but before Time 2. Participants in the high cognitive load condition reported their eye blinks after Time 2; that is, after reading Sweet Things' motive story and evaluating the brand.

At Time 2, participants were presented with the same product image and a second blurb giving an explanation of why the brand (Sweet Things) began producing granola. Participants who were randomly assigned to the "passion" condition read that the owner of Sweet Things granola was known in college for granola and decided to try to make a living doing what she loves. Participants in the "profit" condition read that Sweet Things began in the gourmet popcorn market and then branched into granola to expand their consumer base. After receiving this information, participants were asked to evaluate Sweet Things on the authenticity measures used in previous experiments.

Following the authenticity measures, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they believed a series of statements about the product and its benefits. Half of these statements were explicit claims taken from the blurb in time 1 (e.g., "Sweet

Things granola is 100% pure and natural”, “Sweet Things granola is made with REAL whole grains”, “Sweet Things granola is made with all natural ingredients”) and half were attributes or benefits that could reasonably be inferred from the product’s image but were never explicitly claimed (e.g., “Sweet Things’ granolas contain high fructose corn syrup” [reverse coded], “Sweet Things’ granolas contain preservatives” [reverse coded], “Sweet Things granola is vegetarian and kosher friendly”). Finally, participants evaluated the brand’s product quality on the measures used in previous experiences.

Results

Participants’ responses were analyzed using a 2 (motive story: passion vs. profit) by 2 (cognitive load: low vs. high) between-subjects ANOVA.

Authenticity. The analysis revealed a significant main effect of motive story ($F(1, 160) = 24.29, p < .05$), qualified by an significant interaction between motive story and cognitive load ($F(1, 160) = 4.20, p < .05$). While the effect was stronger among participants in the low cognitive load condition ($M_{\text{passion}} = 5.14$ vs. $M_{\text{profit}} = 4.02$; $F(1, 80) = 20.22, p < .01$), participants under high cognitive load also perceived Sweet Things to be more authentic following the passion motive story ($M_{\text{passion}} = 4.92$) than following the profit motive story ($M_{\text{profit}} = 4.46$; $F(1, 80) = 5.20, p < .05$).

Quality. The analysis revealed a significant main effect of motive story on quality perceptions ($F(1, 160) = 7.02, p < .05$), qualified by a significant motive story by cognitive load interaction ($F(1, 60) = 4.30, p < .05$). As in study 3b, participants in the low cognitive load condition used their brand authenticity perceptions to inform their quality judgments. Participants who read that Sweet Things was motivated by passion believed Sweet Things’ product to be of significantly higher quality ($M_{\text{passion}} = 5.23$) than participants who read that Sweet Things was motivated by profit ($M_{\text{profit}} = 4.42$; $F(1, 80) =$

9.19, $p < .01$). However, among participants under high cognitive load, there was no effect of the motive story manipulation on participants' perceptions of the brand's product quality ($F(1,80) = .21, p < 1$).

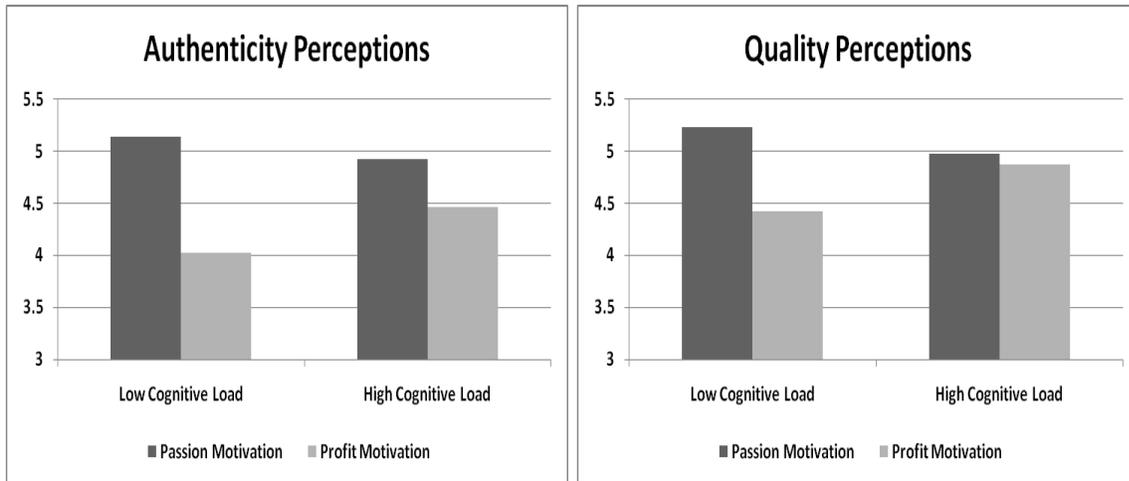


Figure 8-2. Authenticity and quality perceptions among participants with low and high cognitive load.

Claimed Attribute Believability. The three statements assessing the believability of explicit product claims were combined into a single measure. The analysis revealed a main effect of motive story on this composite ($F(1, 160) = 9.87, p < .01$) but no interaction with cognitive load ($F(1, 160) = 1.90, p > .05$). Participants who read that Sweet Things was motivated by passion (and who perceived Sweet Things to be more authentic) believed the brand's explicit product claims more ($M_{\text{passion}} = 5.15$) than participants who read that Sweet Things was motivated by profit (and who perceived Sweet Things to be less authentic; $M_{\text{profit}} = 4.48$).

Inferred Attribute Believability. The three statements assessing the believability of feasible, but not explicitly claimed, product attributes were combined into a single measure. The analysis revealed a main effect of motive story on this composite ($F(1, 160) = 5.08, p < .05$) qualified by a significant interaction between motive story and

cognitive load ($F(1, 160) = 9.47, p < .01$). Participants in the low cognitive load condition found it more believable that Sweet Things' product possessed the inferred attributes after reading the passion motivation story than after reading the profit motivation story ($M_{\text{passion}} = 4.70$ vs. $M_{\text{profit}} = 3.50$; $F(1, 80) = 12.86, p < .01$). However, participants in the high cognitive load condition found it equally believable that Sweet Things' product possessed the inferred attributes, regardless of motive story ($M_{\text{passion}} = 4.10$ vs. $M_{\text{profit}} = 4.28$; $F(1, 80) = .379, p < 1$).

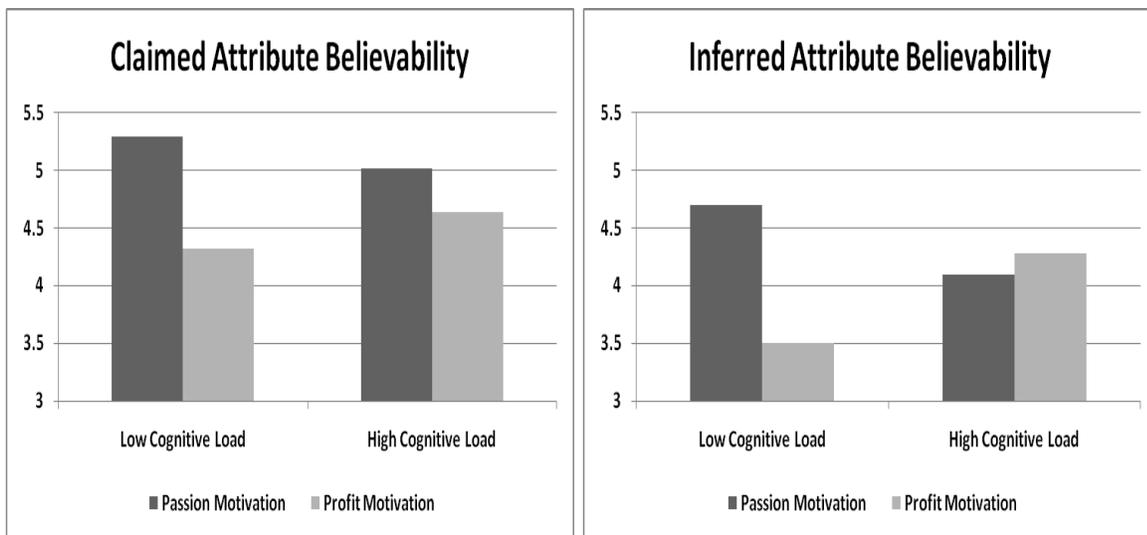


Figure 8-3. Believability of claimed and inferred product attributes among participants with low and high cognitive load.

Discussion

The results of study 3c suggest an additional benefit of being perceived as authentic in the marketplace. Participants who read that Sweet Things was motivated by passion, and who also believed the brand to be more authentic, were also more likely to believe that the product was 100% pure and natural, made with real whole grains, and was made with all natural ingredients—specific claims made by the product. Interestingly, this occurred despite the cognitive load manipulation, suggesting that this link arises without deliberative thought. However, the pattern of results suggests these

beliefs do not directly affect participants' subsequent judgments about the brand's product quality: participants' perceptions of product quality were affected by the cognitive load manipulation while their belief in the brand's overt product claims was not. Instead, it appears that perceptions of brand authenticity affect perceptions of product quality by affecting the extent to which consumers believe that a brand's product possesses attributes that are consistent with its image, but which are not overtly claimed. Here, belief that a brand's "simple" and "natural" brand image was authentic led participants to believe that the product contained no preservatives, contained no high fructose corn syrup and was vegetarian and kosher friendly—attributes that could reasonably be inferred from its image, but which were never overtly claimed by the brand. Participants who read that Sweet Things was motivated by passion for its product were more likely to make these inferences about the brand, but only when they had the cognitive capacity to do so, suggesting that it is this deliberative cognitive step that consumers under cognitive load are unable to make, effectively preventing them from drawing a connection between brand authenticity and product quality.

CHAPTER 8 EXPERIMENT 4

Experiments 1 through 3, as well as previous work on brand authenticity, suggest that increased authenticity is uniformly positive for a brand: products seem to be higher quality, and consumers are willing to pay more for them, when they seem authentic. However, might there be situations in which a brand's authenticity could be detrimental?

Study 4a

That is, consumers may hold authentic brands to very high standards, especially in terms of expecting them to be what they claim to be. Consequently, when an authentic brand commits a transgression that calls into question the basis of its authenticity, consumers may penalize that brand even more harshly than they would penalize a (typically less positively regarded) inauthentic brand for the same transgression.

Study 4a thus examined how authentic brands weather brand transgressions, and whether perceptions of the brand following the transgression are affected by the type of transgression committed. Although all transgressions should be detrimental to any brand, I hypothesize that some transgressions will be especially harmful for authentic brands.

H4: A transgression directly related to the basis of a brand's authenticity will be more damaging for the brand than an equivalent transgression would be for another brand.

Method

Participants. Participants were 108 students at a large southeastern university who participated in exchange for course credit.

Stimuli. The brands used in study 4a were Burt's Bees™ and Maybelline™. Although Maybelline™ is a well-known brand in the cosmetics industry, it has not forged a particularly authentic image for itself, unlike Burt's Bees™.

Transgression stimuli were developed to detail three types of transgressions: moral, generic, and ingredient transgressions. All transgressions were reported to consumers in the form of a brief *Wall Street Journal* news story. In the moral transgression condition, the brand was accused of using children as young as 13 in its domestic manufacturing facilities. In the generic transgression condition, the brand had suffered a manufacturing glitch which resulted in mislabeled products reaching store shelves nationwide. In the ingredient transgression condition, the brand was accused of using petrolatum in their products. Petrolatum is a chemical derived from nonrenewable crude oil and is used in other industries for a variety of applications, including preventing battery corrosion. While each transgression should be damaging to any brand, I hypothesize that the ingredient transgression will be especially damaging to Burt's Bees™ because the transgression undermines the basis for Burt's Bees'™ authenticity. By using petrolatum in their products, Burt's Bees™ is not being who they say are – a company devoted to creating all-natural products that are beneficial not only to the consumer but also to the environment. While the ingredient transgression may damage Maybelline™, I would not expect the damage to be nearly as bad because Maybelline does not foster an especially authentic image.

Procedure. Study 4a utilized a 2 (brand: Burt's Bees™ vs. Maybelline™) X 3 (transgression: generic, moral, ingredient) between-subjects design. Participants were randomly assigned to a condition and were informed that the experimenters were

interested in how consumers form impressions of brands. Participants were informed that they would receive a variety of information about a brand and would then be asked to evaluate the brand. As before, information was provided in two stages (Time 1 and Time 2).

At Time 1, participants were assigned to either the Burt's Bees™ or Maybelline™ brand and were presented with a screen containing the branded product (a high-shine lip-gloss from each brand), a current print advertisement for the brand, and a blurb about the company taken from the brand's website. After reviewing the information, participants were asked to complete the authenticity and quality measures used in previous experiments. Participants next completed an unrelated filler task. After this task, participants read a news story ostensibly from the previous week's *Wall Street Journal*. This story detailed the brand's transgression. Following the news story, participants completed another unrelated task.

Finally, at Time 2, participants were presented with the brand's logo and were asked to evaluate the brand's authenticity and quality again, as in Time 1. Following the experiment, participants were informed that the news story they read was entirely fictional.

Results

Authenticity. Authenticity composite scores were created by averaging participants' responses to the four authenticity measures. Time 1 scores were subtracted from Time 2 scores to measure the change in authenticity perceptions following the transgression. As hypothesized, the "ingredient" transgression resulted in significantly greater changes in authenticity perceptions for Burt's Bees™ than for Maybelline ($F(1, 32) = 5.57, p < .05$): Burt's Bees'™ authenticity was damaged

significantly more than Maybelline's™ following use of an unnatural ingredient ($M_{BB} = -1.35$ vs. $M_M = -.47$). However, the two brands were damaged equally following the generic ($F(1, 33) = .003, p < 1$) and moral ($F(1, 37) = .001, p < 1$) transgressions. A 2 (brand) X 3 (transgression) ANOVA on these difference scores revealed no main effect of transgression ($F(1, 102) = .81, p = .45$), a trend towards a main effect of brand ($F(1, 102) = 2.13, p = .15$), and a trend towards a brand by transgression interaction ($F(1, 102) = 1.84, p = .16$).

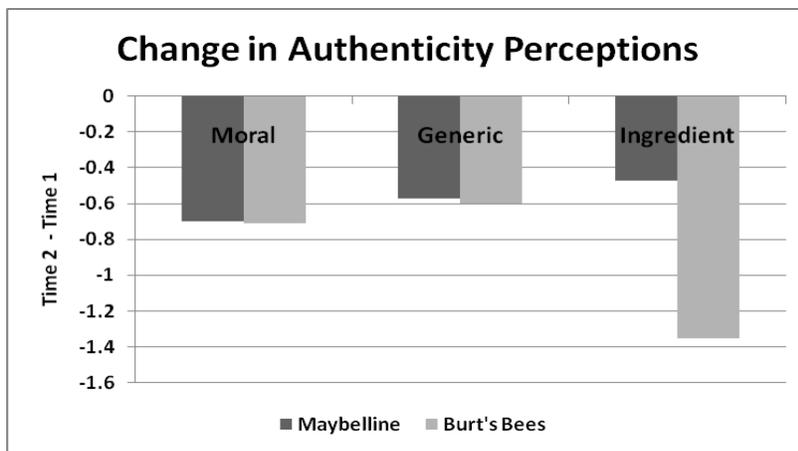


Figure 9-1. Change in authenticity perceptions following a transgression.

Quality. Quality composite scores were created by averaging the four quality measures. Time 1 scores were subtracted from Time 2 scores to measure the change in quality perceptions following the transgression, and a 2 (brand) x 3 (transgression) ANOVA was conducted on the quality change scores. A significant brand by transgression interaction emerged on this difference score ($F(2,102) = 3.10, p < .05$). Following the moral and generic transgressions, Maybelline™ and Burt's Bees'™ quality perceptions were damaged to a similar degree: moral ($F(1, 37) = 1.04, p = .32$) and generic ($F(1, 33) = .88, p = .36$). However, following the ingredient transgression,

Burt's Bees'™ quality perceptions were damaged significantly more than Maybelline's™ ($M_{BB} = -1.35$ vs. $M_M = -.43$; $F(1, 32) = 5.57$, $p < .05$).

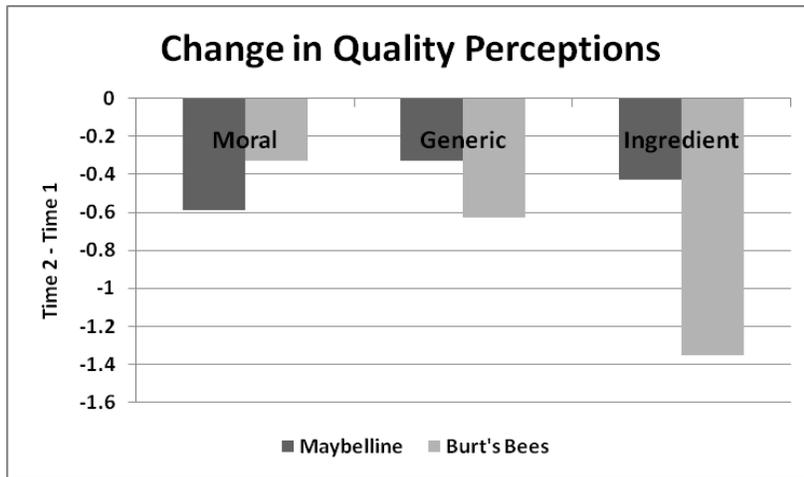


Figure 9-2. Change in quality perceptions following a transgression.

Mediation Analysis. A mediation analysis was conducted in the ingredient-transgression condition to examine whether the decreased perception of Burt's Bees'™ quality following that transgression was due primarily to its perceived decreased authenticity following that transgression. Because quality perceptions were lower at Time 2 than at Time 1 ($t(14) = 4.86$, $p < .01$), and the authenticity measures significantly predicted the quality measures at Time 1 and Time 2 ($\beta_{\text{Time1}} = .79$, $t(14) = 3.04$, $p < .01$; $\beta_{\text{Time2}} = .86$, $t(14) = 4.61$, $p < .01$), the difference in quality perceptions was regressed on the difference in the authenticity composite measures and on the centered sum of the authenticity measures. The beta for the difference term was significant ($\beta = .56$, $t(14) = 2.91$, $p < .05$) while the beta for the summed term was not ($\beta = .13$, $t(14) = .82$, $p < .4$), indicating that the decrease in authenticity perceptions fully mediated the decrease in perceptions of Burt's Bees™ quality following an “ingredient” transgression.

Discussion

Study 4a raises an important new consideration related to brand authenticity: authenticity may not always benefit the brand. Participants' quality perceptions of both Burt's Bees™ and Maybelline™ were affected following all three types of transgression (moral, generic and ingredient). Burt's Bees™ authenticity did not serve as a buffer against the negative effects of the transgressions; indeed while Burt's Bees™ and Maybelline fared similarly following the moral and generic transgressions, Burt's Bees'™ quality perceptions were damaged significantly *more* than Maybelline's™ following a transgression involving the ingredients used in its products. I argue that Burt's Bees™ fared so poorly because the ingredient transgression directly undermined its authenticity (and, in fact, changes in authenticity perceptions mediated the effect of the transgression on perceived brand quality). This finding reiterates the importance of “being what you say you are” in consumers' judgments of authenticity, and it shows that the consequences of failing to live up to an authentic image are especially high.

Study 4b

Study 4a identified one instance in which brand authenticity may actually harm a brand. In particular, the high expectations consumers had for the authentic brand seemed to have backfired when consumers learned that the brand had transgressed in certain ways. Another way in which these expectations could backfire is that an authentic brand may be unable to exceed them. It is possible that authentic brands fare worse not only when they “do bad” but also when they “do good.” In study 4b, I hypothesize that pro-social, or “corporate social responsibility” (CSR) activities, will not benefit authentic brands as much as inauthentic brands because these types of activities are expected from authentic brands. I specifically predict:

H5: Pro-social activities affect perceptions of brand quality, attitude confidence, willingness to pay, and social responsibility, but only for inauthentic brands.

Method

Participants. Participants were 93 students at a large northeastern university who participated in exchange for course credit.

Procedure. Study 4b utilized a 2 (brand: Naked™ or Minute Maid™) X 2 (CSR activity: environmental or employee benefit) between-subjects design. Participants were randomly assigned to a condition and were informed that the experimenters were interested in how consumers form impressions of brands. Participants were informed that they would receive a variety of information about a brand and would then be asked to evaluate it. As before, information was provided in two stages (Time 1 and Time 2).

The brands used for this experiment were Naked™ (authentic brand) and Minute Maid™ (inauthentic brand) fruit juice. A pretest found that our participants perceived Naked™ to be more authentic ($M_{\text{Naked}} = 3.81$) than Minute Maid™ ($M_{\text{MinuteMaid}} = 3.20$; $t(15) = 1.76, p < .05$, one-tailed).

At Time 1, participants were assigned to either the Naked™ or Minute Maid™ brand and viewed a screen containing the branded product (a single-serve bottle of orange juice), a current print advertisement for the brand, and a blurb about the company taken from the brand's website. After reviewing the information, participants completed the authenticity, quality, confidence and willingness to pay measures used in experiment 1. Participants also completed a 4-item CSR scale based on measures used by Wagner, Lutz, and Weitz (2009, see appendix A) rating how virtuous they believed the executives of the brand to be, how socially responsible the brand is, how

concerned the brand is with the well-being of society, and the extent to which the brand follows high ethical standards. Participants next completed an unrelated filler task.

At Time 2, participants read a news story ostensibly from the previous week's *Wall Street Journal*. This story detailed the brand's CSR activity. In the environmental-activity condition, participants were informed that the brand was overhauling their main manufacturing facility to make it more environmentally friendly, by reducing emissions and using sustainable energy. In the employee-benefit condition, participants were informed that upper-level executives accepted pay cuts of up to 25% to prevent laying off employees in their manufacturing facilities. The CEO was said to have taken this action to keep the brand's team together and maintain morale.

Participants then saw the brand's logo and completed the authenticity, quality, confidence, willingness to pay, and CSR measures from Time 1. Participants were also asked to indicate the extent to which the news story they read fit the image they had of the brand. Following the experiment, participants were informed that the news story was entirely fictional.

Results

Responses were analyzed using a repeated-measures ANOVA with time (before/after CSR activity story) as a within-subjects factor and CSR activity story (environmental vs. employee benefit) and brand (Naked™ vs. Minute Maid™) as between-subjects factors.

Authenticity. The analysis revealed a significant main effect of time on authenticity perceptions ($F(1, 88) = 20.55, p < .01$), but this main effect was qualified by a significant interaction between time and brand ($F(1, 88) = 7.14, p < .01$): after reading about Minute Maid's™ CSR activities, participants believed the brand to be significantly

more authentic than before ($M_{\text{Time1}} = 4.37$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = 4.93$; $F(1, 45) = 42.43$, $p < .01$). Naked™, on the other hand, was not perceived to be reliably more authentic after participants read about its CSR activities ($M_{\text{Time1}} = 4.91$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = 5.06$; $F(1, 43) = 1.21$, $p = .28$).

The specific type of CSR activity (environment vs. employee benefit) did not have any effect on changes in authenticity perceptions (activity x time interaction: $F(1, 88) = 1.18$, $p < .3$), or any other dependent variable (all p 's $> .30$), nor were there any significant time by brand by activity interactions for any of the dependent variables (all p 's $> .45$). Thus, this factor will not be discussed further.

Quality. The analysis also revealed a significant interaction between time and brand on participants' quality perceptions ($F(1, 88) = 7.75$, $p < .01$) but no main effect of time ($F(1, 88) = .14$, $p = .71$) or brand ($F(1, 88) = 2.14$, $p = .15$). Participants believed Minute's Maid™ product to be higher in quality after reading about the brand's CSR activities ($M_{\text{Time1}} = 4.92$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = 5.15$; $F(1, 45) = 6.30$, $p < .05$). Naked™ did not receive this benefit. Participants' perceptions of Naked™ were unchanged by reading about its CSR activities ($M_{\text{Time1}} = 5.39$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = 5.23$; $F(1, 43) = 2.36$, $p = .13$).

Confidence. The reported CSR activities did not have any effect on participants' confidence in their evaluations of either brand (all p 's $> .4$).

Willingness to Pay. There was a significant interaction between time and brand on participants' willingness to pay for the products ($F(1, 88) = 6.20$, $p < .05$) as well as a main effect of time ($F(1, 88) = 15.02$, $p < .01$). After reading about Minute Maid's™ CSR activities, participants were willing to pay significantly more for a bottle of the brand's orange juice ($M_{\text{Time1}} = \$3.18$ vs. $M_{\text{Time2}} = \$3.56$; $F(1, 45) = 13.09$, $p < .01$). The

CSR activities had a much smaller, and non-reliable, effect on participants' willingness to pay for a similar bottle of Naked™ orange juice ($M_{Time1} = \$2.60$ vs. $M_{Time2} = \$2.66$; $F(1, 43) = 3.33, p = .12$).

CSR Scale. The four CSR items were combined to form a single CSR scale (Cronbach's alpha = .79). Although reading about each brand's CSR activities resulted in higher CSR evaluations for both brands at Time 2 than Time 1 ($F(1, 88) = 59.15, p < .01$), Minute Maid™ showed a greater positive increase (time x brand interaction: $F(1, 88) = 4.05, p < .05$). Participants believed that Naked™ had greater corporate social responsibility after reading of its CSR activities ($M_{Time1} = 4.65$ vs. $M_{Time2} = 5.26$; $F(1, 43) = 11.63, p < .01$). However, the effect of learning about CSR activities was much larger for Minute Maid™ ($M_{Time1} = 4.10$ vs. $M_{Time2} = 5.11$; $F(1, 45) = 72.32, p < .001$).

Finally, participants indicated that the CSR activities fit the image they had of Naked™ better than that of Minute Maid™ ($M_{Naked} = 4.71$ vs. $M_{MinuteMaid} = 4.23$; $F(1, 90) = 4.05, p < .05$), suggesting that Minute Maid™ exceeded consumers' expectations by performing this activity, but that Naked™ may have only met expectations.

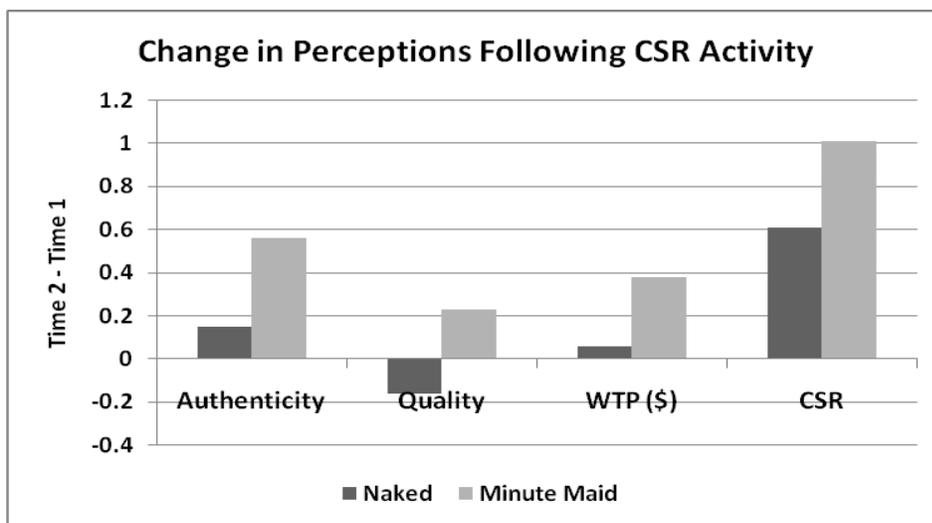


Figure 9-3. Change in perceptions following news of a brand's pro-social behavior.

Discussion

Study 4b presents another ironic consequence of fostering brand authenticity. It seems that because consumers expect authentic brands to “do good,” those brands do not benefit as strongly from CSR activities as similar, inauthentic brands do. Although both brands were perceived as being more socially responsible following the news of CSR activities, Minute Maid™ received the greater benefit. Additionally, following news of a CSR activity, Minute Maid™ was perceived to be more authentic and higher in quality, and participants were willing to pay more for the Minute Maid™ product whereas Naked™ received no such benefits.

In addition to highlighting an ironic downside of being authentic, experiment 4b also suggests that certain types of CSR activities may make an inauthentic brand seem more authentic. Learning that a company’s upper-level management values their wage workers or is willing to invest heavily in “green” practices may make the company seem more human and less like a profit machine. Importantly, the source of this information in experiment 4b was a newspaper, not the company itself. Self-promotion of the CSR activities may result in negative consequences if consumers believe that the CSR activities were performed only for positive publicity.

CHAPTER 9 GENERAL DISCUSSION

This research presents nine studies that demonstrate antecedents and consequences of brand authenticity. I manipulated perceptions of brand authenticity in two ways. First, I demonstrated that revealing information that is inconsistent with an authentic brand's image makes the brand seem less authentic. Associating Burt's Bees™ and Naked™ with their corporate parents resulted in lower authenticity perceptions, but the corporate parent information was not damaging to inauthentic brands (study 1a). Second, I demonstrated that manipulating the degree to which the brand seems true to itself and/or intrinsically motivated affects the brand's perceived authenticity. Claiming that the brand was motivated by passion for the product, rather than by profit, resulted in greater authenticity perceptions (study 1b). I also demonstrated that being true to self is beneficial for the brand even when the brand is passionate about making a product that consumers do not like (study 1c). Importantly, I also demonstrated that the authenticity is a judgment about the genuineness of a brand's image, and not the brand's image itself. Experiment 2 found that authenticity is conceptually distinct from the sincerity dimension of Aaker's (1997) Brand Personality Scale, despite their similar meanings in colloquial use.

I also found that consumers use their brand authenticity perceptions to make other inferences about the brand. Brands were perceived to be higher in quality and to be worth more to the degree that they were perceived as more authentic (studies 1a-1b), and this was true even for products with a negative image (study 1c). Studies 1a and 1b also suggested that consumers' confidence in their opinions about brands is linked to how authentic these brands seem.

I also demonstrated that this link between perceptions of authenticity and perceptions of quality does not exist for all consumers or in all situations. Although consumers who do not value authenticity in their personal interactions recognized that the passion-motivated brand was more authentic, they did not use this information to inform their judgments of the product quality (study 3a). This result suggested that the authenticity and quality judgments were not automatically associated in consumers' minds. This hypothesis was tested in study 3b, which found that perceptions of authenticity are linked to perceptions of quality through a deliberative process which is interrupted when consumers do not have sufficient mental resources. Initial evidence was provided suggesting that perceptions of brand authenticity affect perceptions of product quality by affecting the extent to which consumers believe that a brand's product possesses attributes that are consistent with its image, but which are not overtly claimed (study 3c). Study 3c also provided evidence that perceptions of authenticity increase the believability of overt product claims made by the brand, although the believability of these claims does not appear to affect perceptions of the brand's product quality.

Finally, I also demonstrated that authenticity is not uniformly beneficial for the brand. In particular, following a transgression that undermines its authenticity, an authentic brand is damaged more than an inauthentic brand is after the same transgression (study 4a). Additionally, whereas inauthentic brands benefit from engaging in CSR activities, authentic brands do not (study 4b). These ironic effects seem to happen in part because consumers have such high expectations for authentic

brands, and so it is especially damaging for those brands when they do not meet those expectations, and especially difficult for those brands to exceed them.

Fit With Prior Research

This work contributes to the prior research on authenticity in several ways. First, whereas previous work has relied on existing differences in authenticity perceptions towards brands, I provide two means of manipulating how authentic a brand (fictional or nonfictional) seems. Additionally, whereas much prior work on authenticity was qualitative in nature, I provide experimental evidence that brand authenticity affects other brand-related inferences, namely product quality, willingness to pay and attitude confidence. Furthermore, I suggest a mechanism by which authenticity perceptions affect quality inferences, specifically by affecting the attribute-level inferences consumers draw about brand's products. I also expand upon the prior literature by considering potential drawbacks of cultivating an authentic image.

Furthermore, this dissertation contributes to the existing literature by focusing on the importance of brand authenticity, as opposed to product authenticity. Previous work focused on how consumers authenticate objects (Beverland 2005; Boyle 2003; Groves 2001; Munoz, Wood and Solomon 2006; Potter 2008) and experiences (Caruana et al. 2008; Thompson and Tambyah 1999), but less attention has been given to how consumers authenticate brands (Gilmore and Pine 2007; Holt 2002). Conceptually distinct from product authenticity, brand authenticity refers to the authenticity of a brand's image, not the provenance of its products. Along these lines, Brown, Kozinets and Sherry (2003) found that as long as a brand maintains its core values (its identity), it is able to change the physical features of its product and still be deemed authentic. Our

results similarly show that things that have little or nothing to do with the underlying product can still affect perceived *brand* authenticity.

At its foundation, brand authenticity can be thought of as a judgment of whether a brand is intrinsically or extrinsically motivated (Holt 2002). Intrinsically motivated brands are perceived to be more authentic, and, in turn, are perceived to be of higher quality and worth more, perhaps because consumers believe that authentic brands care more about their products than the bottom line. In fact, experiment 3b found that consumers inferred that authentic brands' products possessed positive attributes over and above those that were explicitly claimed in the brand's marketing communications. Additionally, a judgment that a brand's image is authentic, and not merely marketing, made the brand's overt claims more believable. Experiments 1a and 1b also found that consumers were more confident in their attitudes toward authentic brands, perhaps because they believe their attitudes to be based in fact, and not on puffery.

Of course, just as brands and products can be deemed more or less authentic, so can consumers themselves. In an interesting set of studies, Ferrarro, Kirmani and Matherly (2009) found that consumers evaluate the locus of motivation of other consumers when judging the authenticity of their consumption. They find that consumers who used a brand for its functional superiority were perceived to be more authentic than consumers who used a brand because of its image. It may also be interesting to consider whether consuming an authentic, versus an inauthentic, brand affects how authentic the consumer him- or herself seems to be.

Limitations and Future Research

One limitation of this work is the use of a narrow pool of products as stimuli. With the exception of Under Armour™, all of the products used (real and fictional) were

packaged grocery items. While I do not believe that the results of these studies are limited to products of this type, their use as stimuli does prevent an investigation of potential boundary conditions associated with product type.

Study 3c found that authenticity served as a cue that indicated that a brand possessed both the attributes it claimed as well as additional attributes that were not claimed but that were consistent with the brand's image. In turn, these inferences contribute to consumers' inferences about the brand's product quality. However, when attribute information is known objectively, it is unclear whether authenticity will still be beneficial for the brand. Authenticity may be less important for brands that produce durables or products in which consumers are highly involved (e.g., hobby-related products), because consumers are likely to possess more accurate information about these types of products.

In addition to examining for which types of products brand authenticity is most important, it is also important to consider *when* brand authenticity is most important to consumers. Study 3a found that individuals who value authenticity in their personal lives use brand authenticity to make inferences about the brand. However, individuals who do not value personal authenticity did not use authenticity in this way (even though they can still perceive authenticity in a given brand). Future work should investigate whether consumers can be induced to value brand authenticity more, and to identify situations in which brand authenticity is naturally valued.

A second limitation of this work is the way in which the authenticity manipulation information was conveyed to participants. In the actual marketplace, information that would convey authenticity or inauthenticity (e.g., motivation information, corporate

parent information, etc.) would be delivered by the brand via communications such as commercials, print advertisements, websites and other social media. While I tried to convey realism by informing participants that the information was taken from the brand's website, future research could inject more realism by manipulating authenticity less directly, such as through a print advertisement.

Such research could also address a fundamental dilemma implicit in brand authenticity: claiming authenticity appears inauthentic. Because brand authenticity reflects a lack of (or at least reduced) extrinsic motivation (e.g., commercial interests, popularity, status), using one's authenticity to attempt to sell a product is inherently inauthentic. As such, it is important to determine ways in which brands can convey their authenticity without appearing disingenuous in the process. It is possible that traditionally commercial methods of communication (e.g., television commercials, print advertisements) may be less successful for this purpose than other modes of communication such as blogs, informational websites, and public relations. However, as consumers become more and more knowledgeable about marketers' persuasive methods, more creative (and subversive) means of conveying authenticity may be necessary.

Finally, future work should further investigate the potential drawbacks to brand authenticity identified in studies 4a and 4b. Of primary importance is determining how authentic brands should respond following brand transgressions. Consumers' beliefs about the motives of authentic brands may make traditional responses (e.g., apology, denial or reticence) more or less effective.

Conclusion

In summary, being “true to self” and “true to others” is important not only for individuals, but also for brands. Consumers are wary of advertising and other marketing communications and reward brands that they believe look beyond the bottom line. Perceptions of brand authenticity color the inferences consumers make about a brand, ultimately affecting their willingness to pay for a product. And, while brand authenticity appears to be generally beneficial to the firm, authentic brands may need to be especially adept at managing consumers’ expectations.

APPENDIX A
AUTHENTICITY, QUALITY, CONFIDENCE AND CSR MEASURES

All questions answered on 7-point Likert scales.

Authenticity

1. How authentic do you think brand is?
Not At All Authentic – Very Authentic
2. How natural do you think this product is?
Not At All Natural – Very Natural
3. Do you think this brand is motivated by profit or passion for the product?
Totally by Profit - Totally by Passion
4. Do you believe the product meets the standards set by its advertising?
Does Not Meet Expectations – Completely Meets Expectations

Quality

1. How high in quality do you think this brand is?
Very Low Quality – Very High Quality
2. How satisfied do you think you would be after using this product?
Not At All Satisfied – Very Satisfied
3. How good does this product seem?
Not At All Good – Very Good
4. How positive or negative is your attitude toward this brand?
Very Negative – Very Positive

Confidence (asked after all authenticity and quality measures)

1. How confident are you in the judgments you just made? In other words, how firm are the opinions you just expressed?
Not At All Confident – Very Confident

Corporate Social Responsibility

1. (Brand) has virtuous executives.
Completely Agree – Completely Disagree
2. (Brand) is a socially responsible company.
Completely Agree – Completely Disagree
3. (Brand) is concerned to improve the well-being of society.
Completely Agree – Completely Disagree
4. (Brand) follows high ethical standards.
Completely Agree – Completely Disagree

APPENDIX B
KERNIS AND GOLDMAN'S AUTHENTICITY INVENTORY

The following measure has a series of statements that involve people's perceptions about themselves. There are not right or wrong responses, so please answer honestly. Respond to each statement by writing the number from the scale below, which you feel most accurately characterizes your response to the statement.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. I am often confused about my feelings.
2. I frequently pretend to enjoy something when in actuality I really don't.
3. For better or worse I am aware of who I truly am.
4. I understand why I believe the things I do about myself.
5. I want people with whom I am close to understand my strengths.
6. I actively try to understand which of my self-aspects fit together to form my core- or true-self.
7. I am very uncomfortable objectively considering my limitations and shortcomings.
8. I've often used my silence or head-nodding to convey agreement with someone else's statement or position even though I really disagree.
9. I have a very good understanding of why I do the things I do.
10. I am willing to change myself for others if the reward is desirable enough.
11. I find it easy to pretend to be something other than my true-self.
12. I want people with whom I am close to understand my weaknesses.
13. I find it very difficult to critically assess myself.
14. I am not in touch with my deepest thoughts and feelings.
15. I make it a point to express to close others how much I truly care for them.
16. I tend to have difficulty accepting my personal faults, so I try to cast them in a more positive way.
17. I tend to idealize close others rather than objectively see them as they truly are.
18. If asked, people I am close to can accurately describe what kind of person I am.
19. I prefer to ignore my darkest thoughts and feelings.
20. I am aware of when I am not being my true-self.
21. I am able to distinguish those self-aspects that are important to my core- or true-self from those that are unimportant.
22. People close to me would be shocked or surprised if they discovered what I keep inside me.
23. It is important for me to understand my close others' needs and desires.
24. I want close others to understand the real me rather than just my public persona or "image."
25. I try to act in a manner that is consistent with my personally held values, even if others criticize or reject me for doing so.

26. If a close other and I are in disagreement I would rather ignore the issue than constructively work it out.
27. I've often done things that I don't want to do merely not to disappoint people.
28. I find that my behavior typically expresses my values.
29. I actively attempt to understand myself as best as possible.
30. I'd rather feel good about myself than objectively assess my personal limitations and shortcomings.
31. I find that my behavior typically expresses my personal needs and desires.
32. I rarely if ever, put on a "false face" for others to see.
33. I spend a lot of energy pursuing goals that are very important to other people even though they are unimportant to me.
34. I frequently am not in touch with what's important to me.
35. I try to block out any unpleasant feelings I might have about myself.
36. I often question whether I really know what I want to accomplish in my lifetime.
37. I often find I am overly critical about myself.
38. I am in touch with my motives and desires.
39. I often deny the validity of any compliments I receive.
40. In general, I place a good deal of importance on people I am close to understanding who I truly am.
41. I find it difficult to embrace and feel good about things I have accomplished.
42. If someone points out or focuses on one of my shortcomings I quickly try to block it out of my mind and forget it.
43. The people I am close to can count on me being who I am regardless of what setting we are in.
44. My openness and honesty in close relationships are extremely important to me.
45. I am willing to endure negative consequences by expressing my true beliefs about things.

Subscales

<i>Awareness:</i> 1R, 3, 4, 6, 9, 14R, 20, 21, 29, 34R, 36R, 38 = .79	Alpha
<i>Unbiased Processing:</i> 7R, 13R, 16R, 19R, 30R, 35R, 37R, 39R, 41R, 42R = .64	Alpha
<i>Behavioral:</i> 2, 8R, 10R, 11R, 25, 27R, 28, 31, 32, 33R, 45 = .80	Alpha
<i>Relational Orientation:</i> 5, 12, 15, 17R, 18, 22R, 23, 24, 26R, 40, 43, 44` = .78	Alpha

Composite Scale Alpha = .90

***NOTE: R = Reverse Scored Item

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Melissa Minor earned a bachelor's degree in marketing, with minors in statistics and Italian, from the University of Florida. In 2006, she joined the PhD program in marketing at the University of Florida. She received her PhD from the University of Florida in the summer of 2011. In fall 2011, Melissa began a position as an Assistant Professor of marketing at the University of Mississippi.