

# MASTERARBEIT

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“The Impact of Authentic Brand Stories on Brand  
Perceptions and Consumer Behavior”

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**Eidesstattliche Erklärung**

Ich versichere, dass ich diese Masterarbeit selbständig verfasst und nur die angeführten Quellen und Hilfsmittel verwendet habe. Die Masterarbeit wurde von mir an keiner anderen Universität weder im In- noch im Ausland in irgendeiner Form als Prüfungsarbeit vorgelegt.

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**(Gergana Konstantinova)**

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*“The very foundation of science is to keep the door open to doubt.*

*Precisely because we keep questioning everything, especially our own premises,  
we are always ready to improve our knowledge.”*

*(Carlo Rovelli)*

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## Abstract

Brand authenticity has been called the new business imperative of the 21st century and one of the cornerstones of contemporary marketing. It has been postulated that only brands, which manage to create and sustain an “authentic aura” will be successful on the market in long term. However up to today, little is known about whether and how companies can actually benefit from authentic positioning.

Against this background, the purpose of this master thesis is to empirically examine consumer reactions to authenticating mass-market global brands. The focus is set on how a company can benefit from communicating an authentic brand story projecting the three dimensions of brand authenticity from consumers’ point of view based on Napoli et al. (2013): quality commitment, sincerity and heritage.

A large-scale experimental research design is applied to investigate the influence of perceived authenticity of real world brands on consumers behavior and attitude, while controlling for brand- and product specific, as well as socio-demographic effects.

The empirical study confirms that perceived authenticity positively influences consumer reactions and perceptions as assumed in conceptual literature. The results demonstrate that perceived authenticity leads to higher intention to recommend the brand and to more favorable brand attitude for two tested product categories.

From a managerial perspective, the results of the study suggest that perceived authenticity can be used to signal quality for products associated with high perceived purchase risk. Furthermore, brands can enhance their perceived uniqueness and gain competitive advantage when positioned as authentic.

**Keywords:** authenticity, brand authenticity, brand narratives, consumer behavior, brand positioning

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## List of Abbreviations

|          |                    |
|----------|--------------------|
| BA.....  | Brand Attitude     |
| n.s..... | not significant    |
| PI.....  | Purchase Intention |
| SD.....  | Standard Deviation |
| WOM..... | Word-of-Mouth      |

# 1. Introduction

For many years, consumers have enjoyed the benefits of consumption in a material world, where most of the products are mass-produced in standardized production processes (Liao and Ma 2009; Zavetovsky 2002). However, lately consumers have become tired of consumption experiences which lack depth, originality and soul (e.g. Baudrillard 1983; Frosh 2001; Leigh et al. 2006; Moore 2001). Many authors argue that the current historical period of postmodernity, which is characterized by a growing homogenization of cultures and nations, technological advances, as well as commercialization of market offerings, has led to new problems for the individual and the collective identity (e.g. Arnould and Price 2000; Thompson et al. 2006). As a response, consumers have started to search for their true self and want to add meaning to the contrived reality that surrounds them. Thus, they have been gravitating towards brands which are perceived as genuine, real and authentic and enable them to achieve a sense of community, tradition, expression of their desired identity and escape from the artificial, industrial world (Arnould and Price 2000; Postrel 2003).

In a response to this quest for the real and true, brand managers have begun to use authenticity as a positioning strategy. Brand authenticity has been even referred to as the new business imperative of the 21st century (Gilmore and Pine 2007) and one of the cornerstones of contemporary marketing (Brown et al. 2003). It has been postulated that only brands which manage to create and sustain an “authentic aura” will be successful on the market in long term (Alexander 2009; Beverland 2009) and can win consumers’ loyalty and trust (Eggers et al. 2012). Some researchers state that brand authenticity is more than just a positioning strategy and will be *“the new benchmark against which all brands will be judged”* (Grant 1999, p. 98). Thus, authenticity appears to be highly relevant and important for brands today.

Although highly desired by consumers, brand authenticity as a concept was for long time not well understood in its market manifestation (Penaloza 2000) and as Beverland (2005, p. 1003) states *“confusion surrounds the nature and use of authenticity in the brand arena”*.

Authenticity in general is a very elusive concept and its meaning depends on the context, situation and observer (Chronis and Hampton 2008; Grayson and Martinec 2004). It has gained much attention in sociological studies, mostly in studies of tourists experiences, and has been connoted as original, traditional, genuine, real and true (e.g. MacCannell 1973; Peterson 2005; Wang 1999). There is a widespread agreement that it is a socially constructed concept and thus “in the eye of the beholder” (e.g. Cohen 1988; Wang 1999). This subjective nature of the concept has allowed the term to be used in different ways with different meanings (e.g. Grayson and Martinec 2004; Leigh et al. 2006).

Brand authenticity as concept has its roots in consumer culture theory (e.g. Beverland 2005; Holt 2002). Consumers, who seek to satisfy their need for authenticity in their consumption, make subjective evaluation on the authentic value of the products and services (Leigh et al. 2006; Liao and Ma 2009). It has been suggested that consumers confer authenticity to brands via selective and creative use of brand-relevant information (Beverland and Farrelly 2010). Each individual has some idea what authentic should be like and thus different brands are authenticated. Authenticity is assigned to brands, which have clarity of purpose that is sincerely followed (Authentic Brand Index 2008) or heritage and strong connection with traditional cultures and customs, or offer some innovative, one of its kind products and features (e.g. Beverland 2005; Brown et al. 2003; Penaloza 2000). It was only recently when research has identified three essential dimensions as drivers of brand authenticity from consumers’ point of view beyond the boundaries of specific brand and product category, namely: *sincerity, heritage and quality commitment* (Napoli et al. 2013).

To date, the preponderance of brand authenticity research consists mostly of qualitative studies, which focused exclusively on examining the determinants of authentic brands. Besides that, little is known about whether and how companies can actually benefit from authentic positioning. Literature suggests that brand authenticity would lead to positive evaluation of critical drivers for the long term profitability of the company, such as perceived product quality and higher purchase intentions (e.g. Gilmore and Pine 2007; Postrel 2003). However, there is little empirical evidence supporting this postulation (Authentic Brand Index Survey 2008; Coary 2013; Sie 2011; Zwinger 2013). Quantitative research, which assesses the efficacy of authentic positioning and

relates the concept to other marketing relevant constructs, is still in its initial phase (Napoli et al. 2013). Presumably, this is due to the fact that until recently the concept was not clearly defined and no established measurement scales existed, which has led researcher to first have to develop and apply an ad hoc conceptualization of the concept (e.g. Eggers et al. 2012, Coary 2013).

## **1.1. Research Objectives**

Against this background, this master thesis aims at examining consumer reactions to authenticating mass-market global brands, using a large-scale experimental study design. The focus is on investigating how a real world brand can benefit from communicating an authentic brand story projecting the three drivers of brand authenticity from a consumer's perspective based on Napoli et al. (2013): sincerity, heritage and quality commitment.

A wide set of variables capturing different brand attributes is investigated and their subsequent influence on behavioral and attitudinal measures. More precisely, the potential mediating effect of perceived *brand quality, uniqueness, trust and identification* is analyzed on consumer's *attitude and intentions to purchase and recommend* the brand.

Furthermore, it is intended to explore whether brand authenticity show the same effect across different product categories. Specifically, two product categories with high and low category involvemen respectively are investigated: laptops and skincare.

In sum, this thesis aims to contribute to marketing literature by providing valuable insights for managers how to create a competitive advantage and enhance a unique brand image by positioning their brands as authentic.

This master thesis is part of a large research project, which investigates how authentic positioning cues can help global brands overcome negative consumer associations, such as homogenization and lack of commitment. It contributes by broadening the understanding with regard to the process through which brand authenticity affects consumer assessments.

## **1.2. Structure of the Thesis**

This master thesis consists of eight main chapters. After introducing the reader to the topic, the second chapter concentrates on the theoretical background regarding the concept of authenticity. First, the meaning of the term is presented and the resulting definitions are summarized. Afterwards the focus is set on brand authenticity, more precisely on its assessment and core determinants, because for marketers it is of a great importance to understand how and why consumers attribute authenticity. Finally, the role of brand stories in projecting authenticity is discussed and ten core themes common for authentic brand narratives are described.

The third chapter presents the conceptual framework of the research study. An overview of existing literature and the current status of research is outlined. This forms the basis for the development of research hypotheses.

The fourth chapter first illustrates the methodology of the empirical investigation. It gives information about the research design, sampling method, objects of investigation, brands selection, measurement scales used and reports relevant data collection statistics. Afterwards, in the fifth chapter the manipulation checks and the results of the quantitative study are briefly reported and the data analysis methods applied.

The six part summarizes and discusses the empirical results. Finally, in the last two parts theoretical and managerial implications are addressed, followed by limitations and directions for future research.

## **2. Theoretical Background**

In this first part of the literature review, authenticity is discussed in its general meaning. As this concept is relatively new for marketers and there is still not enough research done, the meaning of authenticity is first examined in different scientific areas, more specifically in consumer research in sociological studies. The purpose is thereby to increase the understanding of brand authenticity in the subsequent chapter. In the final part of the theoretical background brand stories around which authenticity can be build are discussed.

### **2.1. Authenticity**

Philosophers, anthropologists and sociologists have been examining the concept of authenticity for decades (e.g. Benjamin 1973; MacCannell 1973; Thrilling 1972). According to Grayson and Martinec (2004), the quest for the authentic has existed for a long time, dating back to the ninth century and is still persistent today. Others state that authenticity drew the attention of scholars first in the 1970s and a real interest for the concept has emerged in various disciplines since then (Derbaix and Decrop 2007). This is explained by growing nostalgia of the past, unification of cultures, quest for references, meanings and truth (Baudrillard 1983). According to Belk (1990, p. 672) *“it is the very shallowness and artificiality of our lives that causes us to seek authenticity”*

Although the quest for the authentic is not new and despite its wide-spread use, the term remains problematic and there is still not one generally acceptable definition (e.g. Beverland 2005; Botterill 2007; Chalmers and Price 2009). However, according to Chalmers (2008), despite the lack of one precise denotation, authenticity has been conceptualized in consistent ways across different disciplines and comprises notions like: historically grounded, rooted in tradition, being separate from the commercial sphere, or being true to the self. In tourism literature, connotations of authenticity as traditional culture and origin have been stressed (Wang 1999), whereas in arts the connection to uniqueness and creativity is emphasized (Derbaix and Decrop 2007).

### 2.1.1. Definition of Authenticity

The word authentic is derived from the Latin “*authenticus*” and the Greek “*authentikos*” and means “*authoritative, trustworthy, conforming to an original*” (Cappannelli and Cappannelli 2004). In everyday language use, authentic means two different things – on the one hand it refers to something as being the original, and on the other hand it refers to something or someone as being true, not false or counterfeit (Derbaix and Decrop 2007). The Oxford English Dictionary (1989) defines the word as reliable, original, firsthand, and not copied.

According to Benjamin (1973), notions of original and genuine are central to the concept of authenticity. They are most often referred to in the different approaches investigating the term (Derbaix and Decrop 2007). However, they can be interpreted differently depending on the frame of reference. Authentic could be understood as a means of being the original object, i.e. set against the copy and the imitation (e.g. MacCannell 1973). For instance, authentic will be the original paintings of famous artists. However, in a broader view, authenticity would refer to everything which “*is to be transmitted, from its origin, material and historical testimony*” (Benjamin 1973, p. 214). According to Jamal and Hill (2002) authenticity refers to the accurately placement of an object in original time setting and materials of its era. The authentic objects will be distinguished from others if it is believed to be characterized by features and elements for which is known to be from the particular culture or time period (Cantwell 1996; Chhabra 2005). This meaning of authenticity corresponds to the term indexical authenticity introduced by Grayson and Martinec (2004). In this sense authentic is considered everything for which is believed to have a spatio-temporal link with something else. This reference can be to a historical period, tradition, culture or place (Cohen 1995). For instance, to determine whether a building is an original renaissance architecture, there must be some verification that it was indeed built during this time period. Likewise, local food or clothes will be judged authentic if made by local people in accordance to the local techniques and traditions (Chhabra 2005; Wang 1999).

Originality as a means of creativity is claimed to be another core determinant of authenticity (Derbaix and Decrop 2007; Peterson 2005). This criterion involves a more extensive definition of the term and goes beyond its connection to history and culture. The emphasis here is on the distinctive and clearly recognizable characteristic of an object (Peterson 2005). This can be achieved through singularity, creativity, specific skills and innovative appeal (Benjamin 1973; Brown et al. 2003; Frosh 2001; Peterson 2005). Authenticity is related to unique and one-of-its art and is opposed to standardized and commercially produced items. According to Frosh (2001), the “killers” of an artwork’s authentic appeal are the uniform generic formats, the impersonal industrial systems, the instrumental rationality, and obvious simulation. For example, an artist is said to be authentic if his or her performance is perceived to be distinctive, original, and clearly recognizable (Peterson 2005). Others who have copied the original work and presented it as their own version were in contrast, considered without originality and thus inauthentic.

Philosophers on the other hand explore the problem of human authentication (Benjamin 1973; Taylor 2001; Thrilling 1972) and state that every individual is unique, i.e. authentic. Thrilling (1972) relates the concept of authenticity to sincerity. According to him, both concepts are closely tied. Whereas sincerity captures the idea of representing oneself truly to others, authenticity is the measure of one being true to himself (e.g. Steiner and Reisinger 2006). An individual is authentic if he is acting according to his own beliefs and perceptions, independent of others’ opinion and social convention (Thrilling 1972). Society is seen as a constraint for the true and authentic self. People who defend their positions and hold on their views are considered authentic (Botterill 2007; Wang 1999). For example, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, artists with strong personalities, true to their visions and rebelling against prevailing puritan norms have become a symbol of authenticity (Thrilling 1972).

Furthermore, authenticity can be understood as “*sincere, innocent and unaffected, distinct from strategic and pragmatic self-presentation*” (Fine 2003, p. 155). Something which is built without some hidden strategic purpose and is not driven by monetary goal is considered authentic (Derbaix and Decrop 2007; Fine 2003; Hughes 2002). This definition links authenticity to the moral authority and intentions of the creator. According to Fine (2003), authenticity is assigned when it is believed that an artist is led

by honest and sincere motivation and has no commercial intention while creating his works. In this sense, authenticity does not refer to presence of original, but is associated with the “character” of the object as an expression of its creator, his/her values and motivation (Derbaix and Decrop 2007; Molleda 2009). In this context, authentic objects are not mechanically produced for high profit, but made by hand and heart (e.g. Peterson 2005).

Several other authors indicate that authenticity implies a distance from the commercial sphere (e.g. Chalmers 2008; Wherry 2006). In their view authenticity is driven by “*aristocratic measure of value*” (Baudrillard 1983, p. 113) and “*spiritual value*” (Frosh 2001, p. 550). According to Wherry (2006), once objects are traded on the market and have become economic objects, they lose their social, i.e. authentic meaning. Moreover, mass production techniques and industrialization have been often pointed out as processes, which diminish authenticity, due to lack of referentiality and sophistication. In contrast, authentic objects include artifacts’ properties such as handmade, natural material, and not manufacture for a large market (Chhabra 2005; Cohen 1988; Reisinger and Steiner 2006; Revilla and Dodd 2003). However, according to Cohen (1995) even if the objects suffer significant degree of standardization and commodification, authenticity can be sustained by the maintenance of original designs, features or traditional manufacturing procedures.

Few authors (see e.g. Alexander 2009; Peterson 2005; Dickinson 2011; Wang 1999) have denoted that authenticity is an evolving concept, following social development and habits. This implies that new dimensions and meanings may be added over time and existing may become obsolete. So for instance, until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, authenticity was mostly associated with the aura of scarcity and singularity (Benjamin 1973; Chhabra 2005). Authentic objects were hard to find and could have been created in only limited amounts. Authenticity was understood as the search for the originals. Reproductions were usually considered unable to transmit the essential features, i.e. the “aura” of the authentic (Baudrillard 1983; Benjamin 1973). However, in the industrial era, technologies have made possible that everything can be well reproduced, made look like anything else and even sometime be perceived as more authentic (e.g. Molleda 2009; Wang 1999).

*“Authenticity and originality are, above all, matters of technique...reality depends on how convincing the presentation is...”* (McCrone et al. 1995, p.46). Thus authenticity can be found in the reproduction and recreation, depending how well it reveals an impression and approximation to the original or some idea of the original (Peterson 2005). Sometimes the original was not even pursued, but rather its adapted presentation was preferred. So for example, Bardhi et al. (2010) illustrate in their study that the original Chinese food was not well accepted in terms of taste by Western tourists. However, the *“inauthentic, the genuine faked version”* from back home was more cherished. Cohen (1995) states that authenticity in postmodern society is understood and demanded as *“aesthetic enjoyment of surfaces and search for enjoyment”* (Wang 1999, p. 358). Thus, it can be stated that authenticity of originals has been substituted by authenticity of pleasure and charm (Hartmann and Ostberg 2012).

In this context, Grayson and Martinec (2004) speak of iconic authenticity which refers to authentic reproduction or recreation and means that something resembles something else which is thought to be indexically authentic (i.e. believed to be the original). For instance, a Victorian chair can be considered authentic independent of the period it was manufactured as long as it looks similar to the chairs made during the Victorian era.

Furthermore, Grayson and Martinec (2004) associate authenticity with iconicity of old things, antique, and old-fashioned look. Their study showed that items are viewed authentic if they in certain way resembled the past in general and were sustained without alteration by modern culture (Williams 2006). When something appeared to be new, people were more confused and felt harder to associate it with authenticity. This is explained by the fact that it is more difficult to imagine that authentic things were not looking old at first place (Peterson 2005). Authenticity in this context can be characterized as the nostalgic feeling and idealization of the times back then or as MacCannell (1973, p. 3) argues *“for moderns, reality and authenticity are thought to be elsewhere; in other historical periods and other cultures, in purer, simpler lifestyles”*.

Based on the above discussion, four main authentic descriptions can be summarized: representation of tradition, history and culture; creativity and originality; sincerity and moral authority; true-to-oneself.

### **2.1.2. Types of Authenticity**

The complex and elusive nature of authenticity is also reflected by the fact that it can be measured and assigned differently depending not only on the context but also on the observer (e.g. Arnould and Price 2000; Chronis and Hampton 2008; Cohen 1988; Peterson 2005). In general, there are three different types of authenticity: objective, symbolic and existential. They are subsequently explained in more detail.

#### **2.1.2.1 Objective Authenticity**

In consumer research, the term authenticity has been investigated most often in the sociological studies, firstly introduced in studies of tourist motivations by MacCannell (1973). According to him, authenticity is a characteristic inherent to an object and can be assessed according to certain standards. This type of authenticity is called “objective authenticity” and refers to the quest for authenticity of originals. For example, specific artwork will be considered authentic, i.e. original, based on the independent judgment of experts and authorities. Furthermore, based on this view, authentic objects are considered to be rare and have specific status. In this sense, mass produced objects could not be authentic, since they are common and thus not special (Beverland 2009; Leight et al. 2006; MacCannell 1973; Wang 1999).

However this perspective has several limitations. First, one might put into question the real objectivity of the judgment of experts and professionals, which has to lack any form of self-interest and influence in order to be objective (Brunner 1994; Beverland 2009). Moreover, what is judged as inauthentic by experts might be assessed as authentic by the individual, i.e.: *„authenticity is not a matter of black and white and involves a much wider spectrum, rich in ambiguous colors”* (Wang 1999, p. 353).

#### **2.1.2.2 Constructive Authenticity**

This traditional view has been advanced to incorporate the complex and constructive nature of authenticity. Cohen (1988) states that authenticity can be perceived differently by individuals based on their own personal vision and knowledge. This suggests that authenticity is socially constructed and in “the eye of the beholder”. If we think of the

example in the beginning, a specific artwork's authenticity will be judged differently by every single individual. Simply because no one really knows how the original object looks like, we would base our evaluation on assumptions. And these assumptions are projection of one's fantasies, stereotypes, knowledge, even wishes, and expectations onto this object (e.g. Bruner 2004; Grayson and Martinec 2004). What can be implied is that something, which is per se not authentic, can be perceived as such by some individuals. Literature refers to this type of authenticity as symbolic or constructive (Culler 1981). Something is authentic not because it is inherently authentic, but because it is constructed as such. This is in line with the essential premise of constructivism, namely that the world is viewed as a result of human interpretation. Thus according to this paradigm, authenticity is an assessment made by a particular evaluator in a specific context (Bruner 1994; Cohen 1988; Grayson and Martinec 2004; Silver 1993). The social nature of the construct implies that any conceptualization of authenticity may to certain extent contain elements of fakery designed to transmit the idea of authenticity. Individual's imagination of the how authentic object looks like might be also viewed as a social construction of unreality, i.e. "fabricated authenticity" (Belk 1990; Grayson and Martinec 2004).

### ***2.1.2.3 Existential Authenticity and Self-Authentication***

More recent research goes one step further and postulates that authenticity is not always to be found in the object but rather lies in the experience with this object and the beholder (Belhasen et al. 2008). This view considers authenticity as a feeling and state of being. It refers to the search of the individuals to their authentic selves, suggesting that people may have authentic experience from totally inauthentic objects (Arnould and Price 2000; Baudrillard 1983; Rose and Wood 2005; Wang 1999). What is actually implied is that people relate personal experiences and feelings to certain items and in this way they authenticate these items. With reference to the above example, the artwork will be judged authentic in case that the individual associates some personal experience with it. Thus authenticity could be assigned to totally "fake" or mass produced items (Chhabra 2005; Wang 1999). Existential authenticity implies a positive perception of the authentic and is to be understood as a positive and good experience (Wang 1999). Brown (1996) refers to it as "authentically good times".

Self-authentication refers more to the integration of the personal authentic experience and the self-development. In this regard, authenticity can be viewed as a subjective feeling that has to be real to the individual (Arnould and Price 2000; Rose and Wood 2005; Wang 1999). It has less to do with conforming to and resembling an original. It is the quest for the true self. Objects and experiences can only serve as a tool to reinforce this self-authentication (Leigh et al. 2006; Wang 1999). The individuals relate to objects some of their own authentic qualities or link them to a self-narrative. Rose and Wood (2005, p. 290) speak about “*hyperauthenticity - consumption of an individualized blend of fantasy with the real*”. In their study of reality television, they report that inauthentic, not real events and objects may inspire people’s imagination and make them engage in the so called acts of self – authentication. What happens is that people see themselves in these situations and relate to them, assigning them personal meaning and create a personal narrative around.

### **2.1.3. Assessment of Authenticity**

In the light of the above, it can be distinguished between attribution of authenticity to an object, self-authentication, and authenticity as an experience (Beverland et al. 2008; Eco 1990; Grayson and Martinec 2004). When attributing authenticity to an object, in general two types of cues are used: indexical and iconical (Beverland et al. 2008; Grayson and Martinec 2004). Indexical cues are seen as the objective sources of information representing a factual or spatio-temporal connection to something. When individuals confer indexical authenticity, they base their judgment on objective verifications and testimonies. *Iconic* cues give an approximation to an original and represent a picture, idea and belief of how things ought to be. This type of cue is more abstract, and gives consumer the feeling, the image for authenticity. Individuals can draw on their knowledge and imagination to form their evaluation. Both cues are interrelated and can be drawn at the same time when conferring authenticity (Beverland et al. 2008; Grayson and Martinec 2004).

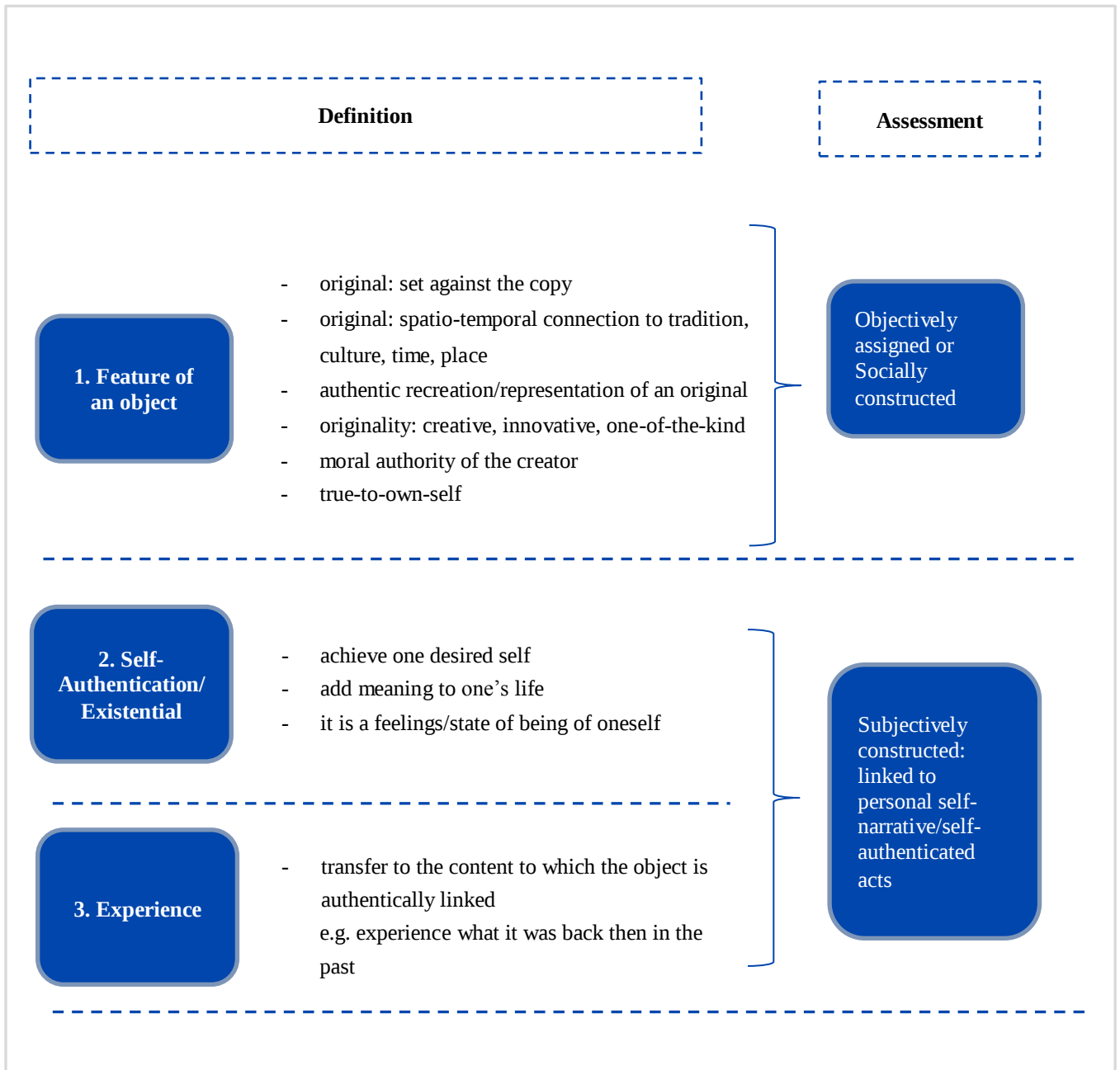
Individuals can also engage in the so called self-referential acts to produce meaning and reinforce their desired sense of self (Arnould and Price 2000; Beverland and Farrelly 2010; Rose and Wood 2005). So for instance, any object, independent of its features and appearance can be authenticated when the individual link to is some personal self-

narrative (Arnould and Price 2000). In this context, individuals are seen as a co-producer of authenticity in their search of what is real and true (Beverland 2009; Chalmers 2008; Chhabra 2005). Authenticity can be found practically in every item and object, as long as it contributes to the authentication of the self.

Figure 1 summarizes the different types and assessment forms of authenticity. Based on the discussion in Chapter 2.1.1, authenticity as a feature of an object captures meaning like original, linked to tradition and culture and creativity. These characteristics can be assigned objectively (e.g. when there is an objective source of verification for the historical accuracy of certain item) or can be socially constructed (based on the individual idea, knowledge, and interpretation). According to Belhassen et al. (2008), objective authenticity - despite being often referred to as an unachievable ideal (e.g. Wang 1999) - will always be there and serve as ground based on which socially constructed meanings will be added.

Further on, authenticity can be assigned to the self and understood as a feeling, state of being, and self-discovery (Wang 1999). It is subjectively constructed and related to very personal experience and associations. According to Wang (1999, p. 352) existential authenticity “*can have nothing to do with the authenticity of the object*”. Arnould and Price (2000) state that it is the personal narrative, which drives authenticity. Objects might be assigned with personal relevant meaning, associations and significance and thus be authenticated.

Finally, object authenticity can be seen as “*a vehicle*” through which individuals can have authentic experience. For example, perceived authenticity of the object is the mediator through which individuals can experience the narrative of the past, of different culture or events (Chronis and Hampton 2008; Munoz et al. 2006), i.e. “*authentically transfer the people to some other reality*” (Chronis and Hampton 2008, pp.112-113). Individuals can also have authentic experiences from inauthentic objects (Wang 1999), if again personal meaning and predilections are forming the authentic perception of the item.



**Figure 1: Types and Assessments of Authenticity**

### 2.1.4. Summary

Based on these various views on authenticity, it can be summarized that authenticity is:

- demanded due to increasing commercialization, standardization and homogenization of culture and tradition (e.g. Arnould and Price 2000; Baudriallard 1983)
- a very elusive concept, which still lack one commonly used definition in literature (e.g. Botterill 2007; Bruner 2004; Chalmers 2008; Chronis and Hampton 2008)
- highly context specific – in different situations different types of authenticity would apply (Grayson and Martinec 2004)
- dynamic process, possibly created, imagined and invented (Beverland 2009; Wang 1999)
- the main dimensions are: representation of tradition, history and culture; creativity and originality; sincerity and moral authority; true-to-oneself (e.g. Benjamin 1973; Fine 2003; Frosh 2001; Peterson 2005; Wang 1999)
- subjective and socially constructed, meaning that everyone understands authenticity differently and assigns it to objects differently (e.g. Cohen 1988; Leigh et al. 2006)
- can be found in the object per se, in its authentic “aura” or in the authentic experience with it (Brown et al. 2003; Leigh et al. 2006; Wang 1999)
- can be found in range of mass-produced items, ironically in faked contrived and staged events and objects (Rose and Wood 2005)

## 2.2. Brand Authenticity

*“Mass advertising can help build brands, but authenticity is what makes them last”.*

Howard Schultz, CEO Starbucks

The desire for authenticity has crossed into the branding paradigm as more consumers are searching for alternatives to the overly commercialized companies (Beverland 2005; Gilmore and Pine 2007). Authenticity in its market manifestation is understood in different ways, depending on what is being evaluated and in which context, making the task of defining it a difficult one (Chalmers and Price 2009; Grayson 2002; Jamal and Hill 2004; Penaloza 2000). Due to lack of one common definition, researchers have used the term in different ways, implying different meanings. Holt (2004) states that in branding paradigm the construct authenticity captures many different aspects such as sincerity, longevity, and trust. In general, research on brand authenticity has undergone several phases and directions. Each of the stages has contributed to a better understanding of the concept.

Initially, authentic offerings were associated with scarcity (Holt 2002; Liao and Ma 2009; Wherry 2006). Authenticity was found in brands from the cool and unexploited subcultures (Beverland 2009; Gustaffson 2006; Holt 2002). This is because these brands are usually perceived to offer alternatives to the mass-market products. If a product is not marketed everywhere and even hard to find then it is perceived to be special and authentic. Furthermore, people believe that these brands have a deep understanding of the point of view they are articulating and are committed to this view (Holt 2004). Thompson et al. (2006) state that niche coffee shops would be perceived as more authentic compared to their bigger and more famous rivals such as Starbucks. However, consumers and marketers understand now more under authenticity. It is not only to be “ghetto chic” in order to be perceived as authentic (Gustaffson 2006).

Authenticity can be seen as the manifestation of consumers’ search for what is real and true (Berger 1973; Beverland 2005). Thus authenticity is assigned to brands, which are perceived to be created from the heart and regard profit making only as a “by-product of a much larger purpose” (Breen 2007; Chronis and Hampton 2008; Faust and Householder 2009; Fine 2003; Frosh, 2001; Kozinets 2002). Although nowadays there

is plenty of choice and more of everything, what market offerings have lost is their “soul” (Moore 2001).

Recent studies have identified that even mass-market products and brands can be perceived as authentic (Beverland and Farrelly 2010; Chhabra 2005; Rose and Wood 2005). According to the Authentic Brand Index (2008), consumers find brands such as Nike, Coca-Cola, Microsoft, Google, and The Body Shop to be authentic. It has been suggested that consumers confer authenticity to brands via selective and creative use of brand-relevant information (Beverland and Farrelly 2010). Each individual has some idea of what authentic should be like. And based on this notion that consumers are seeking to find authenticity as a mean of expressing self-identity, depending on their identity benefits, different brands will be authenticated and different types of authenticity will be found (Beverland and Farrelly 2010). Consumers seek the same thing – authenticity, but for different reasons and driven by their personal goals.

In general, research on brand authenticity can be classified in two major categories. The first stream has concentrated on the multidimensionality of the construct and has analyzed the core attributes of brand authenticity and consumer’s perception of them (e.g. Alexander 2009; Beverland 2005, 2006; Liao and Ma 2009). For example, this literature suggests that sincerity, quality commitment, tradition and heritage are conducive to perceptions of brand authenticity. The second stream has focused on analyzing how authenticity is rendered and constructed in a social context (Beverland et al. 2008; Brown et al. 2003; Leigh et al. 2006; Hartmann and Ostberg 2012). The latter views authenticity usually as realness and originality of the brand/product, e.g. original Irish beer producer, original Mexican restaurant, original Italian gelato etc. or connection to the past. It builds on the framework of Grayson and Martinec (2004) which differentiates between indexical and iconic attribution of authenticity to an object (see Chapter 2.1.3.). However, it appears to threat the definition of brand authenticity a bit loosely and due to the elusive nature of the term is not always clear what exactly is meant. Both streams of research are interdependent, but the second one is more comprehensive. It can be said that there is also a third stream of research, which draws on the socio-psychological identity concept and states that brands are authentic if they act in accordance with their core identity, principles, and strategies (Schallehn 2011; Eggers et al. 2012). However, it can be stated, that this idea has been captured in

the two others research flows and thus is not considered separately (e.g. Napoli et al. 2013).

In the following, first the assessment process of brand authenticity according to the second stream of research is examined. Afterwards the core attributes of brands critical to consumers' judgment of authenticity are presented. In the final part, the nature and elements of authentic brand stories are discussed as a tool to build authenticity.

### **2.2.1. Building Brand Authenticity**

*“There is something about this brand that makes it appear authentic”*  
(Consumer about brand authenticity, in Hartmann and Ostberg 2012, p. 12)

Brand authenticity as a concept has its roots in consumer culture theory. According to this school of thought, brand meanings are not only created by marketers but are shaped in much wider context where also consumers and culture play a major role (Arnould and Thompson 2005; Beverland 2009; Holt 2002). Brand authenticity is viewed as a cultural construct, which is context- and goal dependent social construction (Arnould and Price 2000; Beverland and Farrelly 2010). It is under a constant creation and re-creation among the diverse market players and their understanding of it (e.g. Hartmann and Ostberg 2012). Since it is socially defined, authenticity cannot simply be embedded into brands, but it is actively constructed and assigned by various audiences. Brand authenticity can be considered as a negotiable concept between marketers and consumers, where the latter are seen as co-producers of brand authenticity in their search for what is real and true (Beverland et al. 2008; Grayson 2002; Peterson 2005). By interpreting brand relevant information, while adding their own personal story, consumers continually explore and define brand authenticity (Brown et al. 2003).

#### **2.2.1.1. Forms of Brand Authenticity**

Beverland et al. (2008) identify three general forms of brand authenticity: literal, approximate and moral, based on the process and mechanism via which consumers make their judgments about the originality and genuineness of the brand and its products. Their findings indicate that consumers use indexical and iconical cues (see

Chapter 2.1.3.) also in attributing authenticity to brands. When consumers have to make on spot decision about brand authenticity, they draw on objective source of information and verification, i.e. indexical cues (cues that suggest spatio-temporal connection with something) to prove that the product is accurately resembling the original it refers to. This is called pure or literal authenticity. In the context of the study of Beverland et al. (2008), the indexical authenticity of a brand offering traditional Belgium beer, was based on the historical accuracy of the design and appearance of the beer.

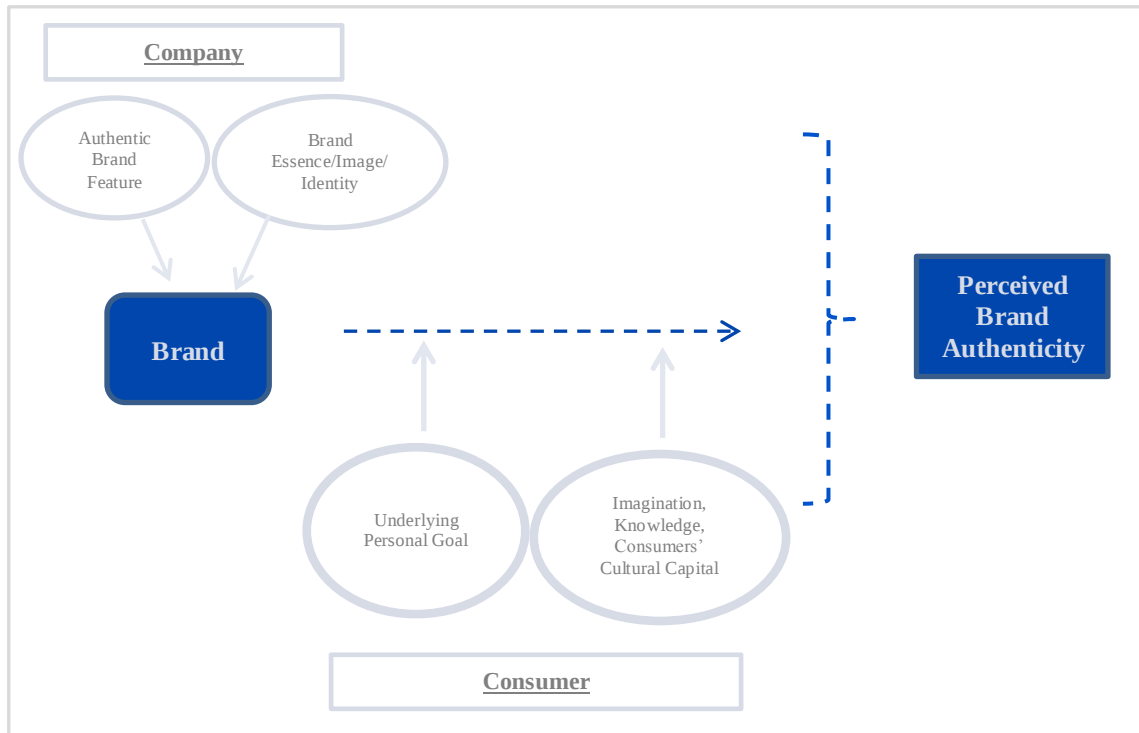
Consumers also focus on symbolic and abstract impressions, which create an idea that the brand is original and connected to the past. This is called approximate authenticity and judgments are based on the idea of how things ought to be as a part of self-referential acts, which allow consumers to connect to time and tradition and their real selves. Beverland et al. (2008) demonstrate how a mainstream beer brand, which has built its authentic positioning on pure fantasy, has been authenticated by respondents, because it conformed to their mental picture of how things should be. Likewise, Munoz et al. (2006) analyzed Irish pubs authenticity outside of Ireland and concluded that the authentic perception depends on the individuals' expectations and fantasies how original Irish pubs should look like. It is further suggested that authenticity can be conferred also based on personal predilections and liking (e.g. Grayson and Martinec 2004; Lewis and Bridger 2001). Thus, brands do not necessarily have to achieve literal authenticity, but conveying the sense, the feeling of originality could be sufficient. It is further suggested that "*consumers apply normative standards to form what for them are objective judgments of authenticity*" (Beverland et al. 2008, p. 14). Marketer projections and consumer understanding of authenticity may consist of both objective (real) and subjective (i.e. stylized or fictional) factors (Forden 2001). Consumers can draw from brand's identity, principle, images, stories, narrative myths, advertisement, and physical characteristics to form their authentic evaluation (e.g. Beverland 2005; Brown et al. 2003; Leigh et al. 2006). Brand authenticity can be reinforced by verified originality of physical characteristics, but also enhanced through the brand essence, aura, and derived pleasure from the consumption (Leigh et al. 2006). Likewise, Brown et al. (2003) illustrate that retro brands are authenticated via brand stories, myths, sense of idealized past, and symbolic narrative. Similar, Hartmann and Ostberg (2012) state that brands are authenticated via enchantment and mystification, pleasure of consumption, as well as projection of myths and romance.

The last form of authenticity is called moral authenticity for which sincerity and devotion of the people behind the brand are stressed and opposed to that of an impersonally created mass-market product. In an ethnographic study exploring the meaning of authenticity within the MG brand owners, Leigh et al. (2006) indicate that owners overlooked the use of indexical cues such as original parts of the cars but rather focused on cues that signaled sincerity of the brand's intention to maintain the authentic aura of the car. Likewise, in a study on self-taught artists, Fine (2003) identifies that authentic perception was not reinforced by esthetical characteristics of the artwork *per se*, but by the sincere personal story of the creators of the artwork.

Furthermore, Gilmore and Pine (2007) propose that brands have to be very careful how they render their authenticity. One of their five axioms for successfully building brand authenticity is that it is better for brands not to state directly that they are authentic, unless they can endorse and acknowledge it. As Breen (2007) states, if brands project authenticity in a clumsy way, they will become very quickly symbol of distrust. It is better to try to project it indirectly with cues than to directly claim it. What marketers need to do is to keep the authentic myth around their brands alive.

In the light of the above it can be concluded that when assigning authenticity to brands, consumers can be quite creative drawing on their imagination, knowledge, and personal stories (Arnould and Price 2000; Beverland 2009). Because of that authenticity can be found in mass-market, mainstream, brands (Beverland 2009; Rose and Wood 2005; Thompson et al. 2006). Further on consumers may suspend disbeliefs and negotiate paradoxes (Napoli et al. 2013; Rose and Wood 2005).

Figure 2 depicts the process of brand authentication graphically. In general, authenticity can be projected by marketers through specific physical characteristics, images, and stories. Whether these cues will be perceived as authentic depends on the knowledge, imagination, cultural capital, and self-referential behavior of the consumers (Beverland et al. 2008; Chronis and Hampton 2008; Leigh et al. 2006). The latter refers to the underlying goals of the individual to achieve self-authentication based on which brand authenticity is assigned (Beverland and Farrelly 2010). The identity benefits, i.e. the underlying goals, will be elaborated in the next chapter.



**Figure 2: Assessment of Brand Authenticity**

#### ***2.2.1.2. Diminishing Brand Authenticity***

In addition to building authenticity, in literature has also been widely discussed, how brands can dilute it. In general, two major determinants have emerged: commercial motivation and size and scope of the company. They are discussed in more details in the following.

##### Brand Authenticity and Commercial Motivation

According to Holt (2002), postmodern consumer culture has adopted the notion that downplaying commercial motivation and intention are in the core of brand authenticity. In his article he describes brand authenticity from the viewpoint of postmodernisms as: *“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.”* (Holt 2002, p. 83)

However, this seems a bit controversial for brands which usually measure their success by how well they can satisfy and adapt to consumers’ needs as well as their expenditures for advertising and promotion (Beverland 2005; Keller 1993). To be authentic, brands have to show that they are disinterested in economic profits but

motivated by their fundamental values. They have to convince consumers that all their actions are consistent and led by their core standards (Alexander 2009; Beverland 2006; Beverland et al. 2008).

In a qualitative study investigating brand authenticity in the wine sector (Beverland 2006), respondents stated that an independent wine producer's authenticity was diminished once it was overly commercialized. Words as "*sold his soul in exchange for money*" (Beverland 2006, p. 256) have been used by consumers to emphasize why authenticity is lost. Producers have also anticipated that commercialization might be toxic to their authenticity and have started to downplay their market prowess and emphasized that they create products that best express their own vision and do not change to suit particular segment (Beverland 2005).

However, according to Holt (2002) it is not the commercialization of the brand which is directly responsible for the dilution of authenticity. It is rather the fact that in last years, brands have exploited the possibility to make profit by creating mass-market, faceless, and nondurable products. Moreover, brands have been perceived as insincere and one whose claims do not match their actions. This has led consumers to demand real and honest brands, which are not governed by the only ulterior motive to make profit at every price (Frosh 2001; Thompson et al. 2006). As Holt (2002) states, brands are actually perceived as inauthentic because they are lacking an original point of view they can articulate and stand behind and because their espoused ideals and principles are not in line with their actual activities. Whether they will use mass-market production technique or engage in different marketing activities will not on its own make them inauthentic.

In a qualitative study investigating how consumers assign authenticity to brands, Beverland et al. (2008) also conclude that tensions between commercial motivations and authenticity may be overplayed. The authors stated that respondents accurately recognized the commercial motivation of some of the brands but even though contributed authenticity to them because "*producers did not hide their contemporary practice*" (p.11).

### Brand Authenticity and Brand Growth

Another brand feature for which is stated to diminish authenticity is the growth and international expansion of companies (Arnould and Price 2000; Breen 2007; Schallehn 2011).

The idea that size diminishes brand authenticity is based on the notion that large multinational companies are perceived to be more profit-oriented, offer standardized mass-market products and are more likely to engage in some “hidden practices” to boost their sales (Holt et al. 2004).

Starbucks CEO Howard Shultz comments: *“the company’s rapid growth has led to the watering down of the Starbucks experience and the stores no longer have the authentic soul of the past”* (in Breen 2007). Before Starbucks has offered a place where people meet, stay and feel transferred to the world of the past. Now, the stores are not seen as this cozy place anymore, but rather as a retail space.

Furthermore literature suggests that smaller authentic brands that have been acquired by big multinational companies have lost some of their “authentic soul” (Breen 2007; Beverland 2009). Claudia Kotchka<sup>1</sup> (2006) refers to this effect as the *“P&G effect”*. When a big multinational company takes over the management of an authentic brand, they can easily destroy its authentic features. For example, the materials which are used for the production of authentic product are usually more expensive and difficult for transportation. Thus they would be immediately substituted with something more practical that decreases costs and increases profit. Big corporations are interested in having nice brand portfolios and be efficient while offering the best possible quality. Whereas authentic brands present themselves as passionate artisans that are deeply committed to their products (Beverland 2009). According to some authors, Ben and Jerry’s ice cream and Tom of Mine toothpaste have lost part of their authentic aura as they have been acquired by big enterprises like Unilever and Colgate-Palmolive (Breen 2007).

However, it does not have to be this way for all brands. Some brands have still managed to sustain its authenticity despite size. This is because they have soon realized the reason why they are perceived as authentic and manage to sustain it and keep it alive

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<sup>1</sup> P&G’s VP Design and Innovation in Beverland (2009)

despite ubiquity (Breen 2007). A pioneer example would be Nike. They have taken “deep dives” into various sports tribes and have used the insights to become even more relevant and authentic (Breen 2007).

Global multinational companies have also once been start-ups driven by passion and conviction for the product. They just need to tell and keep reminding of their real stories.<sup>2</sup>

What is more recent empirical studies (e.g. Schallehn 2011; Zwinger 2013) have demonstrated that consumers assign authenticity to brands, which have also been perceived as global. Thus, it appears that being large does not have to diminish brand authenticity. However, how brands create, understand and project authenticity is what poses a threat for its dilution.

### **2.2.2. Dimensions of Brand Authenticity**

Literature has also extensively investigated which are the brand attributes critical to consumers’ judgment of authenticity (e.g. Brown et al. 2003; Gilmore and Pine 2007; Napoli et al. 2013). In general, based on discussion in other disciplines, there are four prominent dimensions, which embrace the concept of authenticity (see chapter 2.1.1), namely: *representation of tradition, history and culture, originality and creativity, sincerity and moral authority, and true-to-oneself* (Benjamin 1973; Chhabra 2005; Chronis and Hampton 2008; Grayson and Martinec 2004; Fine 2003; Frosh 2001; Wang 1999). Based on the notion that authenticity is in “the eye of the consumers” and its assignment includes a conscious production of meaning, which involves the use of brand cues, a number of researchers have undertaken a bottom up approach to identify core dimensions of the concept from consumer’s perspective in real-world settings (e.g. Alexander 2009; Authentic Brand Index 2008; Beverland 2006; Beverland et al. 2008; Beverland and Farrelly 2010; Brown et al. 2003; Chalmers and Price 2009; Groves 2001; Hartmann and Ostberg 2012; Leight et al. 2006; Liao and Ma 2009; Visconti 2010).

The findings of these qualitative studies indicate that consumers’ interpretations of brand authenticity are very diverse. So they consider brands which are: *original and*

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<sup>2</sup> Steve Osborne 2012, for designweek.co.uk

*innovative; grounded on ethical beliefs; committed to maintain tradition and heritage; committed to deliver the best product quality; style consistent; organic and bio; coming from certain place and region; honest and trustworthy; scarce and hard to find; interestingly also highly familiar and presented everywhere.*

However, it appears that although some dimensions are labelled differently, their meanings are similar. Furthermore, also the demarcation between some of the cues seems to be blurred. For example, the idea that authentic brands are associated with stylistic consistency, meaning that brands remain true to their original design and evolve slowly to reflect modern times but not to follow fashion, is captured in some studies under the definition of the category tradition and heritage (Beverland 2006; Liao and Ma 2009; Napoli et al. 2013). Like for example “...*Those authentic products won't change their characteristics, no matter what happens. They have tradition*” (Participant, Liao and Ma (2009), p. 102) is categorized in the study of Liao and Ma (2009) under tradition and history, whereas statement like that are captured in the category stylistic consistency in the study of Beverland (2006). Likewise, the connection of the brand to particular place or culture is included in some studies in the broader category brand originality, because links to certain regions also evoke perception of uniqueness and thus authenticity (Authentic Brand Index 2008; Liao and Ma 2009).

Based on the above discussion, six consistent brand attributes could have been deduced. They are summarized in Figure 3. In line with theory, the four authentic dimensions, which have emerged from theoretical discussions in other disciplines are also covered within the six brand attributes pointed by consumers.

Consistent with the conceptualization of authenticity in performing arts and tourism research (e.g. Benjamin 1973; Chronis and Hampton 2008; MacCannell 1973; Wang 1999), brand authenticity is related by consumers in all qualitative studies with tradition, heritage and connection to place and culture. History is not equated to being old, but is seen rather as a reflection of consumers' perception that the brand has roots and story. Consumers also associated brands strongly rooted to certain place of origin or production as authentic.

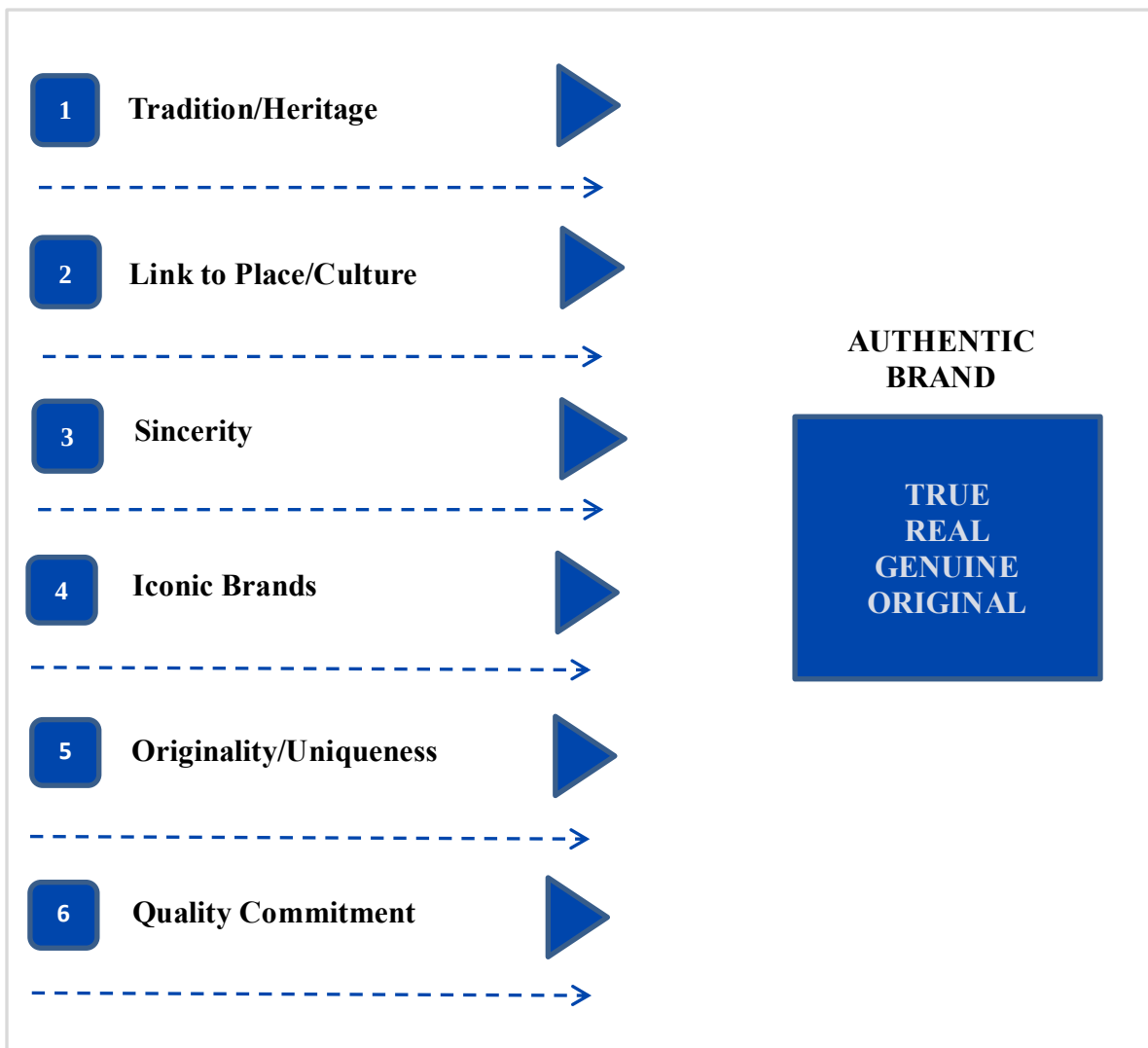
According to consumers, sincerity and honesty are brand attributes, which also make a brand appear authentic. Participants in the “The Authentic Brand Index Survey” (2008) state that authentic brands are sincere and “*are grounded in a promise to do what they*

say”. They are beliefs-driven and can be either socially altruistic or behave according to an internal moral system that is about more than just making money. The participants in the study of Liao and Ma (2009) also emphasize that brands’ honesty is related to perception of authenticity. In the study of Beverland (2006), sincerity was also associated with the lack of commercial intentions and *“it’s about integrity and it’s about congruence between how it sells itself and how it actually is.”* (Respondent, p. 257)

Interestingly, consumers find iconic brand such as Nike, Coca-Cola and Vespa as authentic. They were perceived as *“pioneers in their category, to be everywhere, known by everyone, part of our society, if they have been here forever”* (Liao and Ma 2009, p.101; Beverland and Farrelly 2010, p. 844). Although what consumers directly state is that brand which are familiar are authentic, what presumably might be unconsciously perceived is that all of these brands are iconic brands, established on and embedding an archetypal myth, which make them a cultural symbol in the society (e.g. Tsai 2006). According to Holt (2002), one of the core principle to build an iconic brand is to make consumers believe that the brand is committed to its view rather than playing tricks of impersonation for commercial gains, i.e. being authentic (Holt 2004). Thus in this sense reaching iconicity is closely related to being perceived as authentic and the other way around (Beverland 2009; Holt 2002). Whether iconicity of a brand can be considered as an authentic dimension is another question. However, this consumer perception provides evidence that authentic brands are not only small niche brands, but that also big multinational companies can be authenticated.

Brand authenticity is further understood by consumers as *“brand that stands out by thinking and acting differently within its sector.”* (Authentic Brand Index Survey 2008, p. 12) and *“having features which cannot be imitated and are unique”* (Liao and Ma 2009, p.100). Thus, according to consumers brand uniqueness is closely related to perceptions of authenticity.

Finally, consumers view authentic brands as those establishing commitment and devotion to producing the finest products (Beverland 2006; Hartmann and Ostberg 2012). Consumers’ associations critical to judgment of brand authenticity include; *“the idea that it is handmade with natural ingredients, using traditional old recipe, the idea of craftsmanship and artisan skills involved”* (Groves 2001, p. 251; Liao and Ma 2009, p. 100, Hartmann and Ostberg 2012, p. 18).



**Figure 3: Dimensions of Brand Authenticity from Consumer Perspective**

### **2.2.3. Purposive Choice of Authentic Cues**

Brands do not necessarily need to capture all dimensions in order to be perceived authentic. Some brands build their authenticity around perceptions of tradition and method of production, others around its originality and innovativeness. Some of the dimensions will be more appropriate for certain product categories (Alexander 2009; Gilmore and Pine 2007; Visconti 2010). Indisputably, when authenticity of a champagne or other product in a luxury category is evaluated, different authentic dimension would be more relevant if in contrast the authenticity of a brand in technology industry is examined. In the first case projection of heritage might be extremely important whereas in the second case originality would be stressed.

Gilmore and Pine (2007) identify that market offerings can be distinguished based on the economic value they are generating and can be classified as: commodities, goods, services, experiences, and transformations. Further, they propose that there are five genres of authenticity and each of them apply to one of the offering types. So for example, for companies producing commodities, i.e. products extracted from the earth or harvested as animals, minerals, and vegetables, natural authenticity will be relevant. It is characterized by the fact that the product is not contaminated by human intervention and is in its organic state. When experiences need to be authenticated, referentiality to certain place, culture or time would be necessary, e.g. authentic English tea ceremony.

Visconti (2010) applying the five authentic dimensions proposed by Gilmore and Pine (2007) in an ethnographic study examining authentic brand narrative, states that authenticity is not always achieved by projecting all dimensions. Each brand can build its authentic narrative by taking into accounts its resources, story and goal. Compared to chords of strings, where each string sounds differently and can be used in a group or separately, so can each of the authentic dimensions be projected individually or together with others.

On the other hand, Beverland and Farrelly (2010) indicate that different authentic dimensions will be more important for some people depending on their underlying personal goal and cultural capital. This is based on the assumption that consumers actively seek authenticity to find meaning in their everyday lives and reinforce their desired identity. Hence consumers might tend to gravitate to certain cues and downplay or ignore others that are not consisted with their identify benefit. Three consistent relevant consumer benefits have been determined: control, connection, and virtue based on which different authentic cues are pursued.

Consumers who express their authentic self by the need for moral and sincerity, central to the motive of virtue, will detect and prove mostly brand's purity of motives and notion of honesty. *"I put them in an inauthentic category just because although they became the market leader and did a lot of creative stuff, I think that they've exploited their reputation in the meanwhile by general employment practices, they are paying low wages and they do a lot of exploitation."* (Participant, qualitative research study, Beverland and Farrelly 2010, p. 845)

Consumers who want to feel connected to other like-minded people or certain place and culture will be more prone to authenticate brands with large member community base or related to time and space. “...*I knew that by buying those it would be something that I would wear all the time and it will remind me of London*” (Participant, Beverland and Farrelly 2010, p. 845)

Last, consumers seeking to achieve self-improvement, self-reliance and to be in control over their surroundings will see those brands as authentic which give them the feeling that they are improving and advancing their ability and knowledge. “*This authenticates our ability to retain and develop our knowledge. It gives us a greater view of the world. Apple has been able to allow us to achieve things that we would have never been able to.*” (Participant, Beverland and Farrelly 2010, p. 845)

Several researchers state that there might be different sources through which a company can achieve authenticity, but what is essential for brand authenticity is purity and sincerity in the motives (Gilmore and Pine 2007; Molleda 2009; Schallehn 2011). To be authentic, brands have to show that they are disinterested in economic profits but motivated by their fundamental values. They have to convince consumers that all their actions are consistent and led by their core standards. What authenticity means is that beyond generating profit, the company is really giving a value to the consumers in exchange for their money. It is the belief that the brand is honest, sincere and committed to manufacturing high quality products. And this can be achieved through different brand cues and attributes which create the narrative of authenticity. Although marketers play a significant role in shaping what is authentic, it is in the end all social actors who determine what will remain authentic.

In the light of the above, it can be said that brand authenticity is an elusive concept which can be manifested and assigned in different ways for the different products and by consumers with different underlying goals.

## 2.2.4. Measuring Consumer-Based Brand Authenticity

Recently, Napoli et al. (2013) developed brand authenticity scale. Initially, seven dimensions were conceptually considered as relevant, i.e. *quality commitment*, *craftsmanship*, *cultural symbolism*, *sincerity*, *nostalgia*, *heritage* and *design consistency*. Within the scale development process, four of them were dropped. The final scale is three-dimensional and comprises 14 items. The authors argue that these three dimensions (see Figure 4) are the most important drivers that reflect brand's ability to include important for individuals themes that builds the core of authenticity and are beyond the boundaries of specific brand and product category.

Based on this conceptualization, these three dimensions will be discussed in the following.

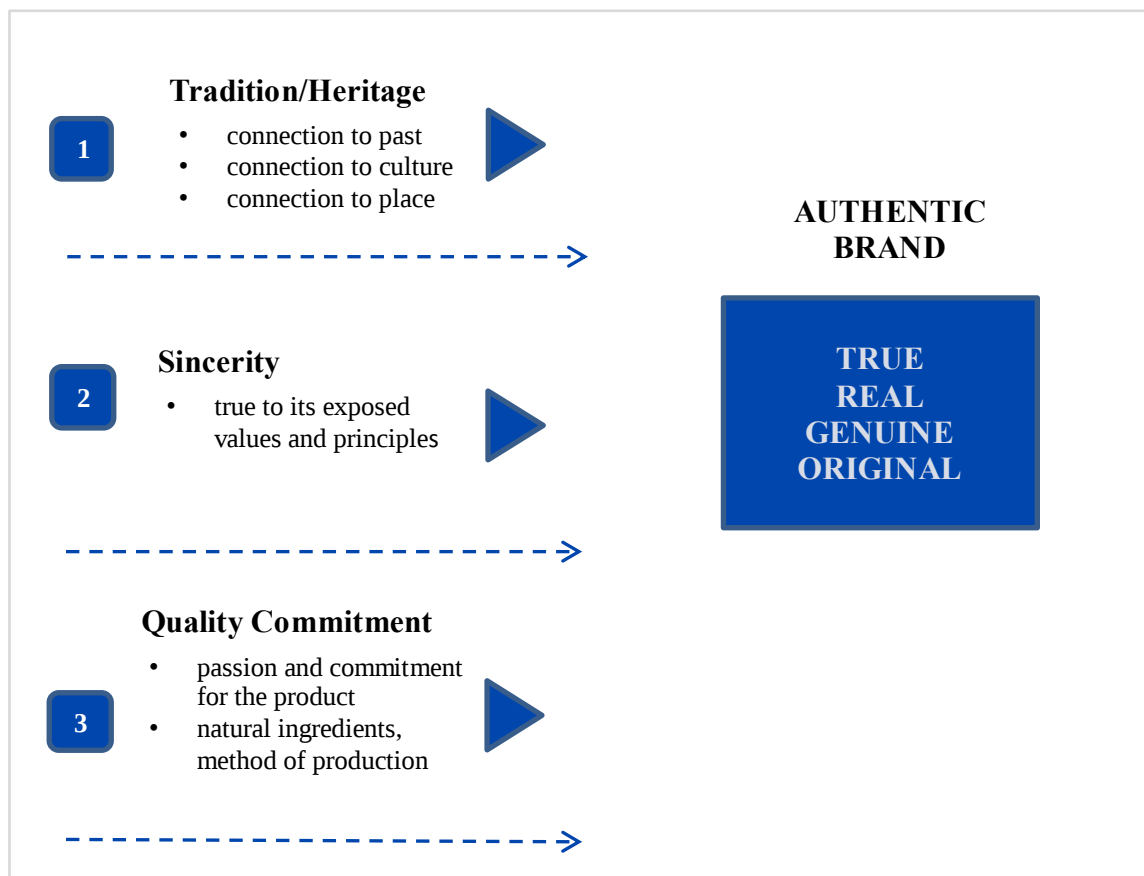


Figure 4: Dimensions of Brand Authenticity based on Napoli et al. (2013)

#### **2.2.4.1. *Heritage and Tradition***

Assessments of authenticity are for the most part denoted by a perceived link to time, place and culture (Alexander 2009; Beverland 2005; Grayson and Martinec 2004; Liao and Ma 2009). These cues signal the heritage and tradition of the brand and pursue to transfer the consumer to a different world (Beverland 2009; Chronis and Hampton 2008; Handler and Saxton 1988). They appear to be one very important criterion to judge whether brand or product is true-born (Liao and Ma 2009).

Links to time connect consumers with the aura of the past (Belk 1990). Past is seen as a period when everything used to be better. Compared to postmodern society, which is associated with fake objects and cheesy imitations, in the past everything is seen as real (Belk 1990). Even though this might not be true, consumers' memories and imagination reinforce such perceptions and thus objects that resembles part of this past are usually authenticated (Postrel 2003).

To illustrate the magic of the old time, Walter (1988) depicts how perceptions towards an ordinary cup changes once its heritage has been revealed. When it is known that the cup is made from amber and maybe older than 1000 years, the "energy changes". Suddenly it becomes a rare, one-of-its art object that is regarded as special and real and hence becomes authentic. The cup is still the same, its design has not changed, the information given alone changes the perception.

Connection to time has been used frequently by brands. Heinz Ketchup states on its products that the brand has been established since 1896. Levis Strauss reminds us that it is on the market since 1873. Heineken claims to be "unchanged since 1864". These claims pursue to enhance the long tradition, history, and experience of the brand and to convey a connection to the past (Beverland 2009; Chronis and Hampton 2008; Liao and Ma 2009). When brands put their long history forward, they give customer the feeling that they possess some special ancient skills, which are still followed at the firm. Heritage signals that the firm has long experience in what it is doing. It does not mean that production technologies and product design might not have changed over time but it implies that the company has roots and tradition (Beverland 2009). This makes the brand real and authentic.

Links to a certain region or culture also reinforce perception of authenticity. Associations with a certain place give consumers the idea that the brand has roots and connects to national traditions and identity especially nowadays, when globalization blurs that fact. Furthermore, consumers feel transported to the context to which the brand is authentically linked (Grayson and Martinec 2004). Brands also use the place from which they emanate to boost the perception that their product is the original, the traditional one. One example is the skincare brand L'Occitane en Provence which is strongly rooted to the Provence region in the south of France, well-known for its herbals and plants. The whole decoration of the shops and design of the products transfer their customers in the Mediterranean province (Visconti 2010).

#### **2.2.4.2. Sincerity**

Sincerity and genuineness of brand's intentions and behavior are another important dimension of authenticity. Sincerity is the belief that the brand lives up to its espoused values and commitments. *"It's about speaking truthfully; doing what you say, saying what you do and not exaggerating who you are."*<sup>3</sup> Most of the brands nowadays are perceived to be insincere, not created from the heart and to constantly overstate product performance (Breen 2007; Holt 2002). Consumers think that companies are usually hiding production processes and the actual ingredients used in products in order to increase their profit. In an ethnographic study of self-taught artists, Fine (2003) identifies how commercial motives diminish the authentic perception of the artworks by giving the impression that the artists were pursuing only profit and were not sincere in their intentions anymore. Likewise, wine consumers judge products perceived to be untainted by commercial motives as more authentic (Beverland 2005). Steve Osborne states for [designweek.co.uk](http://designweek.co.uk) that imperfection has become the new code for brand sincerity and honesty<sup>4</sup>.

Authentic brands are not deceitful, act in a moral and honest way, they love what they are doing and are genuine and real (Beverland 2009). An authentic brand can convince consumers that profit-making is only a by-product of a much larger purpose (Breen 2007). In a qualitative study conducted by Beverland and Farrelly (2010), consumers

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/224977-10>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.designweek.co.uk/industry-voice/authenticity-in-branding-how-real-can-you-fake-it/3034923.article>

associate an authentic brand with one that does not change its core values because of fashion or management:

*“For me authentic behavior is behavior that is worthwhile and moral and honest. . . Nike have been implicated in some pretty awful things and child labor and making shoes at low cost and then selling them for an exorbitant price, so I would think that they are an inauthentic brand.”* (C., 54 years old, Beverland and Farrelly (2010), p. 84)

#### **2.2.4.3. Quality Commitment**

Quality commitment is another dimension critical to claims of brand authenticity (Beverland 2006; Carroll and Swaminathan 2000; Gilmore and Pine 2007; Liao and Ma 2009; Peterson 2005). Authentic brands are brands committed to deliver the best quality. They do this by using the best natural ingredients, best traditional production methods and by employing passionate workers inspired by their jobs.

##### Natural Ingredients

People tend to perceive something as authentic, which is in its natural state, untouched by human hands and not artificial (Gilmore and Pine 2007). This is because in modern world, most of the ingredients and materials used for making food, cosmetic, clothes etc. are synthetic, cheap and not natural.

Many brands such as Starbucks, Aveda, Ben and Jerry's, The Body Shop or L'Occitane have built their authenticity by committing to quality using natural ingredients (Gilmore and Pine 2007; Visconti 2010). Starbucks even poetically reinforces the naturalness of its materials: *“The equatorial sunlight, and the rain forest and the mineral water...have made you an exotic cup of coffee”*.

In the qualitative research study of Liao and Ma (2009, p. 100), participants state that *“authentic products are made from natural materials rather than chemical ones”*. Also the hand-made production methods are perceived as indicators of authenticity. Authentic brand are in utopian way perceived to be handmade.

### Passion and Commitment for the Product

Love for the product is another core element of an authentic brand. It enhances the perception that the brand applies highest quality standards because the founder and the employees want to create excellent products out of passion. Thus, strong brands that are managed by leaders with strong natural propensity for the product are perceived as authentic. Examples are Apple and Steve Jobs, Estee Lauder and Coco Chanel (Beverland 2009; Breen 2007). The founder is seen as a quality guarantee. Consumers have the feeling that this person controls the whole manufacturing process and allows only the best ingredient, technologies and techniques to be used. How many CEOs actually know how to make the product, how to produce it? (Beverland 2009)

## **2.3. Authentic Brand Stories**

Authenticity could be projected in different ways. It might for example be embedded in the design of the product, transmitted with simple cues, integrated in the advertisement (Beverland et al. 2008; Brown et al. 2003; Holt 2004; Stern 1994). However, building brand authenticity requires more than just employing the right cues. Marketers should craft a rich brand story and myth narratives to frame and sustain authenticity (Beverland 2009; Visconti 2010).

Research has found that when brand values and promised benefits are presented simply as separate statements and cues such as for example: *“produced with the finest ingredients”*, this does not affect consumers with the same emotional power. These statements do not create the same images in the consumers’ imagination, as stories would do (Brown and Petterson 2010).

*“Values in themselves are just words, devoid of any real content. They speak to the mind, but not to the heart. When you tell them in a story, these terms come to life through powerful images. Values communicated through a story are what triggers people imagination and drives the bonds between the company and its consumers ”* (Fog et al. 2005, p. 23, p. 68). People would buy the product to consume the story and build a connection to the author, i.e. the brand (Holt 2004). Research also indicates that brand narratives are highly enjoyed by consumers and can enhance the self-brand connection

when they are perceived as real and authentic (e.g. Holt 2004, Keller 1998, Visconti 2010).

Authentic brands could be seen as a collection of stories, which evoke strong emotional connection with consumers. However, the authentic story is not made up. It incorporates all the truth about the brand and has stood the test of the experience. It does not hide the failure and struggles. Just the opposite, brands tell about them to project sincerity and honesty to consumers. Authentic stories can be about brand heroes, tradition and heritage, founder's personality, uniqueness of products or methods of production, places and cultures (Beverland 2009).

People buy and authenticate the products because of their stories. Simon (2009) states in his book *"Everything but the coffee"*, that the authenticity of Starbucks is not inherited in the coffee itself. It tastes authentic because of the authentic story and values of Starbucks that go with it.

Ethnographic research (Fine 2003) about self-taught artists shows that the life stories and personalities of the artists are as important as the formal features of the created objects to be judged authentic. The biography of an artist is what creates the authentic aura of its work and becomes its market asset.

Different authors suggest various story topics around which authenticity can be build (see e.g. Holt 2004; Fog et al. 2005; Woodside et al. 2008). Beverland (2009) summarizes ten consistent themes that authentic brands include in their stories (Table 1). Each of these themes relates to some of the three dimensions of brand authenticity captured in the consumer based measurement scale by Napoli et al. (2013).

| Authentic Dimensions:  | Projected through Story Themes:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tradition and Heritage | <i>Founding (how companies were established)</i><br><i>Family (family-owned business)</i><br><i>Creators (personality &amp; vision of the founder)</i><br><i>Place (where does the company come from)</i><br><i>History (longevity of the company)</i>                      |
| Quality Commitment     | <i>Creator (personality &amp; vision of the founder)</i><br><i>Place (where does the company come from)</i><br><i>History (longevity of the company)</i><br><i>Product/Service (Iconic products, pioneers)</i><br><i>Consumers (consumers' interactions with the brand)</i> |
| Sincerity              | <i>Conflict &amp; Struggle (difficult periods in brand's history)</i><br><i>Triumph &amp; Strategy (success and failure)</i><br><i>Community (e.g. Harley-Davidson)</i>                                                                                                     |

**Table 1: Authentic Brand Stories - Ten Themes (Beverland 2009)**

**Founding** stories tell how companies were established, their challenges in the beginning and which events have shaped the further course of development. Every brand has a founding myth which can be used to enhance authenticity.

Brand stories about the **family** enhance the heritage of the brand and emphasize the tradition. They provide a real connection between the people behind the brand and the consumer.

Stories of **creation** enhance the quality commitment – the belief that there is someone behind the brand devoted and passionate about the product. They reinforce sincerity, because it creates the idea that the people behind the brand are driven by the motive to meliorate the product and not only to use standardize techniques to increase short-term profit. For example, companies such as Apple and Chanel would be perceived as authentic because of the strong personalities of their founders. Steve Jobs and Coco Chanel are the creative genius behind these profitable companies.

When brands tell about their **struggles and conflicts** they appear even more real, true and close to the “not so perfect” consumer. In contrast to common practice by managers to hide and cover not so lucrative times of the brands, the authentic brand reveals its difficult times.

Stories of **triumph and tragedies** capture themes about products’ success and failure, strategic missteps and other obstacles along the way. They illustrate the devotion of the brand to stand behind its own values and principles. These stories inspire consumers to fight for their beliefs and goals. The history of Coco Chanel is one example for a brand leader who did not give up and succeeded to establish her vision of the market. Coco Chanel overcame prejudices against her background as well as many personal tragedies to completely reshape the notions of women’s fashion.

**Stories about company’s history** connect the brand to time and place and thereby enhance authenticity. They reveal the heritage and longevity of the company. Some brands refer to some historic period related to their establishment or such which has shaped their product vision.

Stories that link the brand to a **geographical place** enhance the perception of quality commitment and heritage. This assigns the product unique characteristics, specific for the region or culture. Examples are L’Occitane en Provence and Twinings Tea of London, but also Tullamore Dew an Irish Whiskey and wine from the vineyards in the Burgundy region.

Consumers form **communities** around brands they love. In this way they communicate with each other and share their passion for the products. Examples for brands with strong communities are Harley-Davidson, Morgan, and BMW. Communities are a strong indicator for authenticity because they reinforce the uniqueness and excellence of the products.

Finally, stories about the **product** and service depict the innovativeness and the iconic status of the products. Iconic products of iconic brands are Zippo, Vespa, Xerox and Coca-Cola.

### **3. Research Model and Hypotheses**

Research has advanced our knowledge about brand authenticity as a multidimensional construct from the viewpoint of marketers and consumers (Beverland 2005; Napoli et al. 2013). Different benefits for companies positioned as authentic have also been proposed. For instance, it has been assumed that authenticity might be used as a competitive advantage and is regarded as essential driver for brand success in long term (see e.g. Brown et al. 2003; Grant 1999; Peterson 2005). However, empirical confirmation of its positive effects is still scarce.

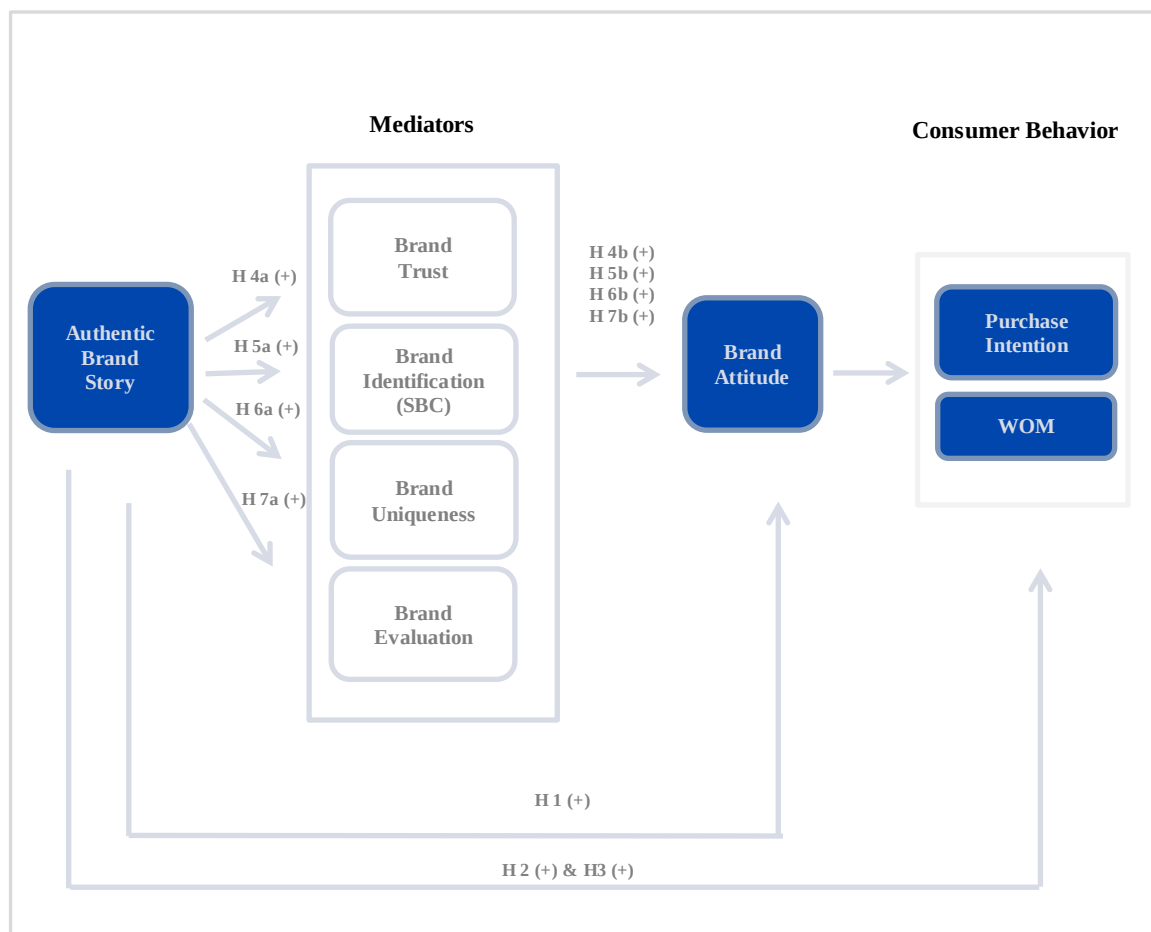
To date, most of the evidences about the positive effects from authenticity are derived from qualitative research studies, which are however mostly focused on capturing and clarifying the dimensions of the construct (see e.g. Beverland 2005; Fine 2003; Leigh et al. 2006). For example ethnographic research about self-taught artists shows that the characteristics of the artists and their life stories are as important as the formal features of the created objects to be judged authentic. Furthermore, respondents indicate that they are willing to purchase an artwork because of its perceived authenticity and assign it a higher value (Fine 2003). In interviews with consumers and marketers of luxury wines, Beverland (2006) suggests that perceived authenticity makes consumers feel higher satisfaction towards the brand. In addition, Lewis and Bridger (2001) provide support for the positive relation between perceived authenticity and brand liking based on results from non-formal experiment.

Evidence about the positive outcomes from authenticity is found also in the field of advertising. Botterill's (2007) interpretive analysis of jeans and sneakers ads reveals that brands which project authentic motives and myths in their advertising were rewarded with higher sales and consumer loyalty. In the same context, Chalmers and Price (2009) investigate consumer perceptions and reactions to ads and show that increased perceived ads authenticity has been further associated to higher ad liking.

The purpose of the present master thesis is to address this research gap and examine consumer reactions and evaluation to authenticating mass-market global brands using experimental research. First, the direct effects of authentic positioning on consumer

attitude and behavioral intentions are examined. To capture consumer behavior, two outcomes have been taken into account: purchase intentions and willingness to recommend the brand, both representing the least level of effortful behavior according to Park et al. (2010). After that the influence on diverse brand attributes is examined. The latter are considered also potential mediators between authenticity and subsequent behavioral intentions.

Figure 5 depicts the research model, which will be discussed in details in the following.



**Figure 5: Research Model**

### **3.1. Main effects**

According to consumer culture theory, consumers are actively seeking for authenticity in brands for various reasons - to find meaning in their lives or as a way to express their true selves (Arnould and Price 2000; Boyle 2003; Holt 2002; Zavestoski 2002). It has been stated that consumers have more favorable attitude towards products which are perceived to have authentic characteristics than items thought to be some kind of imitation and overly commercial (Frosh 2001; Liao and Ma 2009). Moreover, it has been postulated that in the recent era of abundant choice and over traded markets, consumers are more willing to reach for brands which have tradition and heritage and are regarded to be sincere in their actions and claims (Authentic Brand Index 2008; Gilmore and Pine 2007). Hence, from a theoretical standpoint brands which are perceived to be authentic should benefit from a more favorable consumer attitude and higher purchase intentions.

There are already a couple of quantitative surveys analyzing the effect of authentic cues on brand success factors (Eggers et al. 2012; Napoli et al. 2013). Their findings confirm the strategic relevance of brand authenticity and indicate positive influence on purchase intentions and overall brand attitude (Coary 2013; Napoli et al. 2013; Sie 2011; Zwinger 2013). The Authentic Brand Index Survey (2008) finds a positive correlation between perceived brand authenticity and consumers' willingness to recommend brands to others.

In the light of the above it can be expected that authentic positioning will lead to higher consumer behavioral intentions and a more favorable attitude towards the brand. This leads to our first three hypotheses:

***Hypothesis 1: Brand authenticity is positively related to brand attitude.***

***Hypothesis 2: Brand authenticity leads to higher purchase intention.***

***Hypothesis 3: Brand Authenticity is positively related to word-of-mouth intentions.***

## 3.2. Mediators

### 3.2.1. Brand Trust and Authenticity

*“I believe authentic brands are honest about their products.*

*The products work the way company says they will”*

*(37 years old consumer’s vision of authentic brand)<sup>5</sup>*

Brand trust means that consumers are willing to rely on brand’s statement that it is able and willing to perform what it has promised and they are feeling safe and secure that the company will meet their expectations (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001; Delgado-Ballester 2004). As defined by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001, p. 82), brand trust means *“the willingness of the average consumers to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function”*. Trust is attributed to benevolent brands which act in the best interest of their customers based on shared values and goals (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001).

It has become extremely difficult for brand managers to build trust, especially in times when companies are perceived to be built on trickery and deception (Holt 2002). More than fifty percent of the consumers in Austria, France, Germany, and the UK indicate that they have lost their trust in big multinational companies.<sup>6</sup> Consumers are tired of false promises and conflicting marketing claims<sup>7</sup>. They do not believe in organizations because their communications do not match their actions (Eggers et al. 2012).

Brand authenticity has been increasingly viewed as one means to bring back consumer’s trust in brands (Arthur 2007). It has been stated that trust and authenticity share a symbolic connection because consumers will trust those companies that they believe are sincere, honest and real (Blackschaw 2008). Authenticity embodies the idea that the brand is built not only for making profit, but also that behind it stand passionate workers who design products out of love and care for the customer (Beverland 2009). Brands which remain true to their espoused values and are consistent in their orientation for

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<sup>5</sup> Pretest survey based on 35 answers to open-ended question regarding brand authenticity

<sup>6</sup> [www.rdtrustedbrands.com](http://www.rdtrustedbrands.com), in 14 GEM Markendialog, Prof.Dr.Ingo Balderjahn

<sup>7</sup> [www.entrepreneur.com/article/224977-10](http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/224977-10)

business actions and goals are regarded as more trustworthy and credible (Schallehn 2011; Eggers et al. 2012; Liao and Ma 2009).

Furthermore, brand authenticity increases the perception of company's predictability, competence and reliability, which are critical factors for attributing trust. Antecedents of brand authenticity such as tradition and heritage give consumer the feeling of safety. They signal that the company has stood the test of time and has proved its qualities on the market. Established track records affirm that the brand is able to deliver what it has promised and is viewed as risk-reducer, because consumers know what to expect (Beverland 2006). Likewise companies that build their authenticity around relationship to place can enhance trust perception. From one side the product is perceived to have a traceable origin. On the other hand people may have certain associations with that place. So for example some regions and culture have established positive images for providing materials and ingredients with outstanding quality. Thus when consumers perceive that the product comes from particular region, they feel more secure in their purchase (Beverland 2005, Beverland 2006; Gilmore and Pine 2007; Liao and Ma 2009).

Empirical support for the positive relation between authenticity and brand trust is provided also by quantitative studies (Eggers et al. 2012; Napoli et al. 2013). Although all these studies measure authenticity in different ways, their results indicate that perceived authenticity is a significant predictor for brand trust.

Besides, brand trust is also regarded to be an important driver for the long-term success of the company and loyalty of its customers (Akbar and Parvez 2009). Moreover it has been shown that brand trust enhances positive attitude and positively influences key brand measure such as willingness to purchase and recommend the products (Morgan and Hunt 1994; Tran and Cox 2009).

Hence, it is expected that:

***Hypothesis 4: Brand authenticity positively relates to brand trust.***

***Hypothesis 4b: Brand trust mediates the relationship between authenticity and consumer attitudinal and behavioral variables, i.e. purchase intentions and willingness to recommend the brand.***

### 3.2.2. Brand Identification and Authenticity

Brand identification is defined as “*the connection between a brand and an individual's aspect of self, which can be made in a variety of ways, as consumers appropriate brand associations to meet self-motivated goals*” (Escalas 2004, p. 170). Escalas (2004, p. 170) measures brand identification with the degree of self-brand connection, which is defined as “*the extent to which individuals have incorporated brands into their self-concept (actual, ideal self, etc.)*”.

In marketing, the antecedents of brand identification can be broadly captured in three categories: instrumental drivers, symbolic and psychological drivers, and social influences. Organizational and product characteristics can be seen as a major source to customer-company identification, which is built around identity similarity, identity uniqueness, and identity prestige (Bhattacharya and Sen 2003).

Lately, research has considered that consumers may form self-brand connection by processing a given information in a narrative mode of thought (Escalas 2004). In this context, brand stories have been considered a powerful tool used by companies to connect with consumers. It has been shown that when information about products or brands is presented in form of a story, narrative process thinking is activated which enhances a self-brand connection (Escalas 2004). A brand story leads to identification of the consumers with the story and thus with the brand, by transforming it into a personal story. In addition, the brand is assigned a special and unique role (Brown and Petterson 2010).

Furthermore, authentic stories are seen to be related to the three core desires by individuals for self-continuity, self-distinctiveness and self-enhancement, which are considered to correspond to the antecedents of consumer brand identification (Lam 2012). Consumers would be more willing to bond with authentic brands because they help them fulfill their dreams and desires (Fournier 1998).

Authentic brand stories reveal the culture, heritage of the brand and the personality of the founder. In this way, they present the values they are built on and thereby create a bridge between the brand and the consumers. Authentic brand stories tell about the creation of the company and the people behind by which the company's leaders become

real. They are not just some unknown, far distant managers receiving large bonuses, who concentrate more on justifying them in the public rather than meliorating the performance of their products (Beverland 2009). The leaders of authentic brands are not afraid to confess their mistakes, are honest about their achievements and act in a moral way. Thus consumers build a connection with them, relate to their values and actions. Authentic brand stories inspire consumers because they relate to their ideals and goals, which enhances the attractiveness of the company's identity and the self-identification with the brand (Thompson et al. 2006).

Prior research has demonstrated that identification with the brand is an important driver for both in-role (such as purchase intentions, e.g. Escalas 2004; Homburg et al. 2009; Kuenzel and Halliday 2008) and extra-role behavior (word-of-mouth, company supported charity, see e.g. Brown et al. 2005). Identity theory proposes that brand identification consists of elements of cognitive, affective and evaluative components. Behavior literature suggests that affect, i.e. emotional influence plays an important role in inducing consumers to engage in more active behavior that goes beyond the call of duty, such as word-of-mouth (Eisenberg and Miller 1987). In addition brands that are perceived to help consumer in achieving and enhancing their self-identity goals, would be evaluated more favorably (Escalas 2004).

Thus, it can be stated that:

***Hypothesis 5a: Brand authenticity positively relates to self-brand connection (SBC).***

***Hypothesis 5b: Self-brand connection (SBC) mediates the relationship between brand authenticity and consumer attitudinal and behavioral variables, i.e. purchase intention and willingness to recommend the brand.***

### **3.2.3. Brand Uniqueness and Authenticity**

Brand managers are continually reminded that very important factors for long-term success are product differentiation and creation, and enhancement of a unique brand image (Aaker 1996). Brand uniqueness is among the strongest predictors for purchase intentions (Keller 1993) and is seen as a simplifier for choosing among alternatives

(Tversky 1972). It is defined as “*the degree to which customers feel the brand is different from competing brands — how distinct it is relative to competitors*” (Netemeyer et al. 2004, p. 211)

Authenticity is often associated with uniqueness, since both concepts include the idea of being-one of its kind and “stand out” from the others (e.g. Beverland 2005; Brown et al. 2003; Netemeyer et al. 2004). Frosh (2001) for example states that authenticity which is seen as “true-to-oneself” emphasizes the formal and expressive uniqueness of an artwork. Brands positioned as authentic are said to form part of the unique brand identity (e.g. Aaker 1996; Beverland 2005). Moreover, authentic brands are associated with breakthrough innovations and are seen as challenging conventional thinking. Authentic products are often considered unique and different from other offerings (Authentic Brand Index 2008, Beverland 2009).

Brand uniqueness is derived from company’s values that have evolved around its tradition and history (Holt 2002). Thus when brands reveal their history, struggles and values, they reinforce a perception of being one-of-a-kind, because every story is inimitable and unique in its very core (Brown and Petterson 2010). Relation to a particular place also reinforces perception of uniqueness, since culture and regions can be per se only and exclusive.

Research evidence also postulates that brand perceived uniqueness affects attitude towards the brand, purchase intention and willingness to pay a price premium. Thus, brand uniqueness is considered as another potential mediator of the relationship between brand authenticity and consumer behavioral intentions. To the best of my knowledge, the relation between authenticity and brand uniqueness has not yet been addressed empirically.

***Hypothesis 6a: Brand authenticity positively relates to perceived brand uniqueness.***

***Hypothesis 6b: Brand uniqueness mediates the relationship between authenticity and consumer attitudinal and behavioral variables, i.e. purchase intention and willingness to recommend the brand.***

### **3.2.4. Brand Evaluation and Authenticity**

From qualitative research becomes apparent that authentic brands are often associated with superior quality (Beverland 2006; Lewis and Bridger 2001; Liao and Ma 2009). Authenticity can be built on the idea and perception that the products are handmade manufactured with only the finest ingredients and materials, and that devoted artisans are involved in the design and production (Beverland 2009). Peterson (2005) as well as Carroll and Swaminathan (2000) indicate further that higher quality is assigned to authentic traditional methods of production, because consumers perceive the techniques applied by mass-producers as imperfect and of lower quality. The long heritage and history of brands can also be seen as quality signal because it demonstrates a consistent track record of performance.

In a qualitative study on British food authenticity, Groves (2001) finds that food perceived as authentic was also associated with higher quality. Authenticity creates an impression that the food is fresh and healthy. Quantitative support for the relation between perceived authenticity and quality is provided by Sie (2011). According to this empirical study, authentic brand perception fosters increased overall brand evaluation for cars based on the evaluation of 236 Dutch respondents in experimental settings. Zwinger (2013) also demonstrates a positive link between authenticity and quality in a BDM lottery based experiment using low involvement product and including 182 Austrian citizens.

Contrary to these findings are the results of another experimental quantitative study conducted by Coary (2013), including 82 U.S. participants, revealing no significant effect of perceived authenticity on product quality. The author brings forward the argument that the provided information regarding brand quality has been kept constant in both conditions (high and low authentic cues manipulation) and recommends further investigation on this relation.

Finally, following the functional model of attitude formation of Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), perceived product quality should precede the formation of favorable brand attitude, which in turn would lead to higher behavioral intentions. Hence it is expected that perceived brand quality mediates the relationship between perceived brand

authentic positioning and brand attitude, purchase intention and willingness to recommend the brand.

***Hypothesis 7a: Brand authenticity positively relates to brand evaluation.***

***Hypothesis 7b: Brand evaluation mediates the relationship between authenticity and consumer attitudinal and behavioral variables, i.e. purchase intention and willingness to recommend the brand.***

### **3.3. Product Category Effects**

In general, products can be classified based on many different criteria. Traditionally, they have been categorized based on their durability (e.g. toothpaste vs. consumer electronics), tangibility (e.g. automobiles vs. health insurance), and use (e.g. laptops used for private purposes vs. used at the office) (e.g. Keller 1993). Products have also been quite frequently categorized based on the degree of consumers' involvement. The concept of product involvement was first introduced by Zaichowsky (1985, 1994) and is defined as the individual perception of the relevance of an object with regard to individual need, values and interests. Although each consumer may be differently involved in a particular product category, in general it can be distinguished between high and low involvement product categories (Koufaris 2002). Product category involvement can influence the way purchase decisions are taken (for example decision about the purchase of low-involvement products are usually taken faster than for high-involvement) as well as the information processing (such as receptivity and response to certain type of advertising). Product category involvement is also known to be an important moderator for various brand positioning strategies (see e.g. Martin 1998).

Furthermore, products can be distinguished along utilitarian and hedonic dimensions (Holbrook and Hirschmann 1982). Purchase of utilitarian products is considered to be more cognitive driven and aims to fulfill functional and practical goals. By contrast, hedonic consumption is characterized by more emotional experience and fulfills the need for pleasure and fun (Dhar and Wertenbroch 2000). Consumption driven by necessity would have different determinants than if it is done for enjoyment (Batra and

Ahtola 1990). According to the Dhar and Wertenbroch (2000), both hedonic and functional goods are expected to deliver different positive outcomes to the individuals.

Research has shown that also for different product categories different positioning and advertising strategies tend to be effective (Dhar and Wertenbroch 2000). For example, utilitarian products require more informational advertising whereas hedonic products would be more successfully advertised using sensory appeal.

Therefore it is worth investigating whether the product type would alter the process through which authentic positioning influences consumers' perceptions. It is generally proposed that consumers seek authenticity in market offering for different reasons, such as expressing their true selves and adding value to their consumption (Postrel 2003). Furthermore, authentic cues are said to be used by consumers as signal for quality and guarantee for the reliability of the product (e.g. Beverland 2006; Groves 2001). But this might be relevant only for particular products. In the present study, two product categories will be investigated which differ once regarding category involvement and on the other hand regarding hedonic and utilitarian characteristics.

Table 2 summarizes the main results of three empirical experiments (Coary 2013; Sie 2011; Zwinger 2013), which so far have investigated the effects of perceived authenticity on different consumers' evaluations and intentions. Although direct conclusions and references for specific product categories cannot be made, it appears that authentic positioning might similarly impact consumer behaviors and perceptions independent of product types.

| Outcome                       | Zwinger 2013<br>Juices                | Coary 2013<br>Shoes | Coary 2013<br>Clothes | Sie 2011<br>Auto mobiles | Coary 2013<br>Services |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
|                               | →<br>Low-Involvement High-Involvement |                     |                       |                          |                        |
| Word-of-Mouth                 | not measured                          | ✓                   | ✓                     | not measured.            | ✓                      |
| Purchase Intention            | not measured                          | ✓                   | ✓                     | ✓                        | ✓                      |
| Brand Attitude                | -                                     | ✓                   | ✓                     | ✓                        | ✓                      |
| Brand Evaluation<br>(Quality) | ✓                                     | not measured.       | X                     | not measured             | not measured           |
| Brand Trust                   | -                                     | ✓                   | ✓                     | not measured             | ✓                      |

**Table 2: Overview of Previous Findings**

### **3.4. Covariates**

Furthermore, the study accounts for potential influence of three sets of control variables. The first set captures product involvement effects which are likely to moderate brand evaluations (Johar and Sirgy 1991). The second set incorporates brand-specific effects and includes brand familiarity, brand usage, and brand attitude. Prior research has shown that the latter variables have an influence on brand perceptions and consumers behavioral intentions (e.g. Keller 1998). Brand familiarity aims to control for existing associations with the brand (e.g. Dube and Schmidt 1999). With regard to brand usage it is known that attitudes which have been formed from direct experiences are more stable, than those formed from an indirect experience with a brand (e.g. Fazio and Zanna 1981). Another set of control variables consists of demographic characteristics, namely: age, income and gender. Finally, perceived credibility of the stories is measured, for which is also expected to impact brand perceptions. Researchers have found that advertising texts having more of the credibility dimensions induce greater attitude change than do sources having less of these dimensions (Schulman and Worrall 1970). Furthermore story based ads which are evaluated as more credible might induce higher credibility and trust towards the advertiser, i.e. the brand (MacKenzie and Lutz 1989).

## 4. Research Design

In order to test the research hypotheses, a 2 (*Authenticity: authentic vs. neutral*)  $\times$  2 (*Product Category Involvement: low vs. high*) between-subject experimental design was applied (see Table 3). Brand authenticity was manipulated by creating two brand stories – one neutral and one including authentic cues.

| Treatment 1               | Treatment 2                         | Treatment 3                 | Treatment 4                         |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Authentic Brand Story     | Neutral Brand Story (Control Group) | Authentic Brand Story       | Neutral Brand Story (Control Group) |
| High-Involvement Purchase |                                     | Low-Involvement Purchase    |                                     |
| Brands: HP and DELL       |                                     | Brands: Neutrogena and Olay |                                     |

**Table 3: Research Design**

The potential confounding influence of a sequence effect is eliminated by exposing respondents to only one type of brand story for one of the two product categories (see e.g. Christensen 1988).

### 4.1. Stimuli

#### 4.1.1. Product Categories

Laptops and skincare were selected to represent product categories with respectively high and low involvement. The degree of involvement depends on different factors such as personal perceived importance, symbolic meaning assigned to the product and perceived risk associated with the purchase (Laurent and Kapferer 1985). In general, technology products, such as personal computers and laptops, are considered as a high-involvement category, because they are usually bought less frequently, require more research efforts and are more expensive. It is also expected that a laptop purchase would be driven by both hedonic and utilitarian motives (see Voss et al. 2003). Skincare product purchase on the other hand is associated with less perceived purchase risk due to low price and short usage period (Laurent and Kapferer 1985; Martin 1998;

Zaichowsky 1985). Their purchase is considered to be mainly driven by more utilitarian motives (see Dhar and Wertenbroch 2000; Voss et al. 2003).

Furthermore, in both product categories there are variety of large, multinational, mainstream brands which can be used in the present study.

#### **4.1.2. Brands**

For the purpose of this study four well-established brands were selected: HP and DELL for the laptops, and Olay and Neutrogena for the skincare products. One of the major difficulties for conducting experiments using real world brands is the potential confounding effect of the existing brand associations (see e.g. Low and Lamb 2002). By investigating two brands for each product category, it was aimed to reduce potential brand specific effects and to increase the external validity of the study, i.e. the transferability of the results in real settings.

The above brands were selected based on the results from a pretest study, including 9 laptop and 15 skincare brands. In this pre-test each brand was evaluated on its familiarity on the U.S. market, perceived globalness and authenticity, as well as the associated country-of-origin. It was pursued to select brands with relative similar scores on these indicators, so they can be directly compared. HP, DELL, Olay and Neutrogena were highly familiar to the U.S. respondents and perceived as global in reach (see Table 4 below). Furthermore, it was pursued to select brands which are perceived to be of a local, U.S. origin, as COO might have an influence on consumer brand evaluations i.e. skincare brands perceived to be from France might further benefit from country image associations (e.g. Koschate-Fischer et al. 2012). Appendix A shows the pre-test result for all tested brands.

| Brand           | Brand Familiarity |      | Perceived Globalness |      | Perceived Authenticity |      | Perceived COO                   |
|-----------------|-------------------|------|----------------------|------|------------------------|------|---------------------------------|
|                 | MEAN              | SD   | MEAN                 | SD   | MEAN                   | SD   | Mentions                        |
| <b>Laptops</b>  |                   |      |                      |      |                        |      |                                 |
| DELL            | 4.2               | .91  | 3.7                  | 1.43 | 3.9                    | 1.21 | 29 correct U.S. origin mentions |
| HP              | 4.3               | .86  | 4.3                  | .90  | 4.1                    | 1.23 | 26 correct U.S. origin mentions |
| <b>Skincare</b> |                   |      |                      |      |                        |      |                                 |
| Neutrogena      | 3.81              | 1.13 | 3.66                 | 1.13 | 4.39                   | .77  | 27 correct U.S. origin mentions |
| Olay            | 3.93              | 1.02 | 4.0                  | 1.01 | 4.31                   | .94  | 22 correct U.S. origin mentions |

Scale: Likert Scale 1-5; 1 = lowest, 5 = highest

**Table 4: Pretest Results: Brand Selection**

In addition, two fictitious brands, ARPOS laptop and Rose La skincare, were created to further control for possible brand specific effects. The fictitious companies were introduced also as large U.S. manufacturers. Overall for the main study six brands, three for each product categories, were used.

#### 4.1.3. Brand Stories

In order to manipulate brand authenticity, two brand stories were created for each brand. In the neutral condition, the text contained general information about the company, while in authentic, authentic cues were included. The stories were written in the style of a newspaper article and are based on real facts.

The authentic stories were constructed based on the ten topics found by Beverland (2009) in the narratives of authentic brands (see chapter 2.3). The focus was set on three of them: founding, triumph and struggles. They were chosen in order to best project the three antecedents of authenticity: quality commitment, sincerity in intentions and brand heritage (see Napoli et al. 2013).

The authentic brand stories (see Appendix B) follow identical structure for all six brands. The first passage reveals information about the creation of the company. It focuses on the personality of the founders and put forward their passion and love for the product, as well as their skills, competencies, visions and values. After that the text gives information about some of the competitive advantages of the companies which

have been gained over the years. So for example for HP and DELL the emphasis is put on the development and introduction of technical innovations which have inspired generations of engineers and entrepreneurs. For both skincare brands the stories stress the efficacy of the products and their increasing popularity among consumers. In the last paragraph the firms are presented in their difficult times, struggling for their survival due to external and internal circumstances such as fierce competition and strategic missteps. However, in the final part, a positive outcome of the events follows and the companies are being able to solve the problems and take the right actions.

The neutral brand stories contain general information about the companies such as product range, distribution channels, organizational structure etc. The text is written in a factual based style and superlatives and adjectives are not used. Furthermore no information about the establishment and the founder is provided.

The information in both authentic and neutral stories for all four brands is gathered from the official webpages, renowned business magazines, newspapers and journals.

#### **4.1.4. Pretests**

A series of pre-tests were conducted to check for readability, credibility, perceived authenticity and stylistic quality of the stories. In total, 245 participants took part in the evaluation of the authentic and neutral story of all six brands. The respondents were recruited via the same panel as the one used for the main survey.

Initially, the aim was to include only real world brands in the research study. A pre-test was conducted to check the stories of HP, DELL, Olay and Neutrogena on the above mentioned criteria. However, there were no differences in the perceived authenticity of the authentic and neutral story, measured on a 5-point scale for DELL, Olay and Neutrogena ( $\text{Mean(SD)}_{\text{Authentic/Neutral(DEL)}} = 3.8(.93)/3.7(.96)$ ;  $\text{Mean(SD)}_{\text{Authentic/Neutral(Olay)}} = 4.0(.69)/4.0(.75)$  and  $\text{Mean(SD)}_{\text{Authentic/Neutral(Neutrogena)}} = 3.77(.67)/3.72(.92)$ ). For HP the difference was a bit higher,  $\text{Mean(SD)}_{\text{Authentic/Neutral(HP)}} = 4.3(.95)/4.1(.91)$ .

After the stories were edited and rewritten, a second pretest was conducted. Perceived authenticity was measured on a currently published scale by Napoli et al. (2013). Furthermore in order to account for some potential brand specific effects, which might

have impacted the assessment of authenticity, the two fictitious brands were created. As mentioned above the style and content of their stories was the same as for the real world brands.

On average, respondents indicated for all 12 texts, that they were easy to follow (Authentic Story<sub>laptops</sub> = 5.80(1.2); Neutral Story<sub>laptops</sub> = 5.65(1.5); Authentic Story<sub>skincare</sub> = 5.90(1.3); Neutral Story<sub>skincare</sub> = 5.75(1.4)) and were perceived as credible (Authentic Story<sub>laptops</sub> = 5.80(1.2); Neutral Story<sub>laptops</sub> = 5.65(1.5); Authentic Story<sub>skincare</sub> = 5.90(1.3); Neutral Story<sub>skincare</sub> = 5.75(1.4))<sup>8</sup>.

With regard to perceived authenticity, there were satisfying difference between the neutral and authentic treatments for all brands and on average they amounted to Authentic/Neutral Story = 5.13(1.2) / 4.46(1.1).

## 4.2. Measures

The questionnaire consisted in general of three parts. The first one incorporated the control variables used in the analysis: product category involvement, perceived hedonic vs. utilitarian characteristics of the product, brand familiarity, brand usage and brand attitude before exposure. These questions were positioned before the brand stories in order to eliminate a subsequent evaluation effect and were also considered appropriate for an introduction part.

The second part captured measurements of the focal constructs. After reading the brand stories, participants were asked about their attitude and intention to purchase and recommend the brand. After the main constructs, measurement of perceived authenticity was placed in order to account for possible item priming effects. Perceived authenticity was evaluated based on the scale developed by Napoli et al. (2013) and consists of three dimensions: quality commitment, sincerity and heritage. In the end of this part, the potential mediators were assessed: brand trust, brand uniqueness, brand evaluation *and* brand identification. The latter was measured with two different scales. The first captures the aspect of self-image congruence and is developed by Sirgy et al. (1997). The second one is based on Escalas (2004) and focuses on the both cognitive and affective parts of brand identification.

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<sup>8</sup> Measure on a 7-point likert scale

The third part included measurement for the hypothesized moderators need for uniqueness and cosmopolitanism. Socio-demographic characteristics such as age, educational background, income and gender were asked in the very end of the questionnaire.

All constructs were measured with either Likert or semantic differentials scales in order to provide some diversity in the scales format for which is said to decrease artificial covariance between constructs (e.g. Tourangeau et al. 2000; Podsakoff et al. 2003). For comparability reasons all items were measured on a seven point scales.

Appendix C lists all scales used. A pre-test of 12 respondents ensured that all items and instructions were comprehensible and there were no difficulties in answering.

Cronbach's alpha was calculated to measure the internal consistency of the scales (see Table 5 below). All scales yielded Cronbach's alpha higher than .70. Most of them had value higher than .90 and thus can be referred to as highly reliable.

| Scale                                | Based on:                                                                            | Cronbach's alpha |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Perceived Brand Authenticity</b>  | Napoli et al. 2013 (14 Items)                                                        | <b>.953</b>      |
| <b>Brand Identification (SBC)</b>    | Escalas 2004 (5 Items)                                                               | <b>.917</b>      |
| <b>Self-Image Congruence</b>         | Sirgy et al. 1997 (5 Items)                                                          | <b>.939</b>      |
| <b>Brand Trust</b>                   | Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001 (4 Items)                                                | <b>.921</b>      |
| <b>Brand Uniqueness</b>              | Netemayer et al 2004 (3 Items)                                                       | <b>.917</b>      |
| <b>Global Brand Evaluation</b>       | Parameswaran and Pisharodi 1994 (3Items)                                             | <b>.837</b>      |
| <b>Brand Attitude</b>                | Yan Li and Hongwei He 2013 (4 Items)                                                 | <b>.972</b>      |
| <b>Purchase Intention</b>            | As applied by Riefler 2012 based on Petrevu & Lord 1994, Dodds et al. 1991 (3 Items) | <b>.911</b>      |
| <b>Word-of-Mouth</b>                 | Kuenzel and Halliday 2008 (3 Items)                                                  | <b>.938</b>      |
| <b>Product Category Involvement</b>  | Mittal/Lee 1988/1989 (1 Item)                                                        | one item scale   |
| <b>Brand Familiarity/Knowledge</b>   | Chaudhuri 2002 and Algesheimer et al. 2005 (3 Items)                                 | <b>.764</b>      |
| <b>Perceived Stimuli Credibility</b> | Williams and Drolet 2005 (2 Items)                                                   | <b>.916</b>      |
| <b>Hed/Util Product</b>              | Voss et al. 2003 (4 Items)                                                           | <b>.884/.733</b> |

**Table 5: Cronbach's Alpha**

### **4.3. Data Collection**

The online questionnaire was constructed and designed in a way to control for some of the specific common method biases summarized in Podsakoff et al. (2003) such as e.g. influence on evaluation induced by positioning of related constructs. In order to increase the quality and validity of the responses a content-based, text-read-check question, was integrated into the survey questionnaire. The purpose was to screen out all participants who had not read the experimental task (the brand stories) carefully and to encourage a higher attention of the respondents (Kittur et al. 2008). Each participant was randomly assigned to fill out one of the 12 treatments. The final questionnaire can be found in Appendix D.

#### **4.3.1. Sampling Procedure**

The study was conducted online. The widespread use of internet has provided researchers with an additional tool to collect data. The advantage and disadvantages of conducting online experiments have been examined intensively (Kraut et al. 2004). Although they enable data collection at low cost and in fast manner compared to other collection methods, the access to enough appropriate subjects is not always easy and does not come at a reasonable price. Thus, very common among researchers is the use of undergraduate student samples (Buhrmester et al. 2011). Whereas these samples indeed help to understand different aspects of human behavior (Greenberg 1987), they represent a rather homogenous group and the relationships found may not be transferable for example to older population. In the last couple of years, a web platform managed by Amazon (Amazon Mechanical Turk) has been considered a promising alternative for experimental subject recruitment, offering access to diverse participants from which data can be obtained rapidly and inexpensively (Berinsky et al. 2011). In the section below, the mechanism of Amazon Mechanical Turk will be described and the benefits and drawbacks compared to traditional data collection methods will be outlined.

### 4.3.2. Amazon Mechanical Turk

Amazon Mechanical Turk (referred to as M-Turk)<sup>9</sup> is an online labor market for work that requires human intelligence. M-Turk service gives businesses access to diverse workforces and gives workers the possibility to choose among thousands of different tasks to perform. The type of task can vary from audio transcription, object categorization, searching for key phrases in internet to counting words. The minimum payment for a quick assignment is 0.01\$ and can reach up to few dollars for more difficult ones. Launched in year 2005, Amazon reports that until 2010, there have been more than 200,000 workers registered and more than 100,000 HITs<sup>10</sup> have been published daily.

Amazon M Turk has become increasingly popular also among researchers lately (Mason and Suri 2011; Ross et al. 2010). The platform has already gained importance as an online tool for participants' recruitment for diverse research surveys and experiments (Eriksson and Simpson 2010; Suri and Watts 2011).

The key advantage of Amazon M Turk for researchers is that it gives them the fast access to large pool of diverse respondents who are willing to participate at surveys at low pay. M Turk workers represent wide range of age groups, different educational background, culture and income. With regard to the latter however, it is observed that 50% of the workers earn an income in the lowest range and 12% are unemployed and are using the platform as a primary source of incomes (Ipeirotis 2010; Ross et al. 2010). Nevertheless, M Turk sample can broaden the validity of research studies beyond the undergraduate student population but no claims of generalization for a certain country can be made (Berinsky et al. 2012; Ross et al. 2010; Mason and Suri 2012).

Major concern of researchers is about the quality and validity of the responses acquired via M Turk. The study of Rand (2011) tests the credibility of the answers given by Amazon workers, indicating that more than 97% of the responses are accurate, based on agreement for demographic variables reported by the same subject across two different studies. Additionally, Paolacci et al. (2010) have conducted replication of decision-making experiments carried out with student sample, with participants recruited through

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<sup>9</sup> [www.mturk.com](http://www.mturk.com)

<sup>10</sup> HIT (Human Intelligent Task) – is a single self-contained task that a worker can work on, complete and receive an award for.

online discussion boards and on M Turk. They report only very slight differences of the results across the samples. Horton et al. (2012) and Paolacci et al. (2010) demonstrate that the behavior of the M Turk workers is identical with that of laboratory subjects. Other studies (e.g. Suri and Watts 2011) have also shown that there is comparability between the performance of M Turk workers and other online recruiting tools. Thus, the validity and quality of the responses seem to be comparable and susceptible to similar biases as those from other samples (Buhrmester et al. 2011). Furthermore, M Turk pool is not yet excessively overused for research purposes and habitual responding should be a minor concern (Berinsky et al. 2012).

Payments for participants recruited via M Turk are not high and are up to the researcher. Generally, the reward rate depends on the length of the study and what other requesters are paying at that time for similar task. So for example for a short survey which can be filled out in less than 5 minutes, the market pool reward would be between 10 and 50 Dollar cents. Chilton et al. (2010) demonstrate that the least amount for which a worker would complete a task is 1.30 \$ per hour or 10 dollar cents for 5 minutes. A general presumption would be that the quality of task performance, i.e. the data collected, would increase with the rewarded amount. Interestingly, several studies (Merge et al. 2010; Mason and Suri 2012) indicate that against this assumption payment does not influence the quality of the work for certain types of tasks, but however impacts the participation rate.

With regard to the motivation for participating at the Amazon pool, Ross et al. (2010) finds that 73% of the workers are performing tasks as a way to pay for nice extras and do not consider M Turk earnings as a main source of income. Many workers also indicated that they would participate in studies due to non-monetary reasons such as for example entertainment 41% (Paolacci et al. 2010). In another study (Ipeirotis 2010), 69% of the workers considered Mechanical Turk to be a fruitful way to spend free time and get additional money.

In the light of the above, Amazon M Turk can be considered an appropriate online platform for surveys which aim to investigate interdependencies and form basis for future research based on indicative data. However, the online platform is characterized by a rather low external generalizability of the whole population of a certain country or a region. Some research studies however state that data can be generalizable to the

internet population of some countries (e.g. Ross et al. 2010). Nevertheless, the online platform provides more diversity on demographic characteristics compared to other frequently used samples, such as undergraduate students (e.g. Paolacci et al. 2010).

The purpose of this master thesis is explorative in its nature and thus the crowdsourcing web page can be regarded as a useful tool for collecting reliable data. Furthermore, for experimental research design with test theory objective, increasing internal validity, i.e. “whether the manipulation of the independent variable actually causes the effects on the dependent variable” is of a great importance (Crano and Brewer 2008). If internal validity is threatened, then the relationship between the independent and dependent variable cannot be properly interpreted, which is a central feature and the focus of such experiment (Reynolds et al. 2003). Internal validity is increased when homogenous samples are drawn, so extraneous variables can be eliminated, and when each participant is randomly assigned to a treatment. Thus, recruiting respondents via panels is said to increase internal validity as Amazon M Turk allows participation to be restricted with regard to their so-called qualifications, e.g. workers from only specific countries and regions, which allows researchers to have homogenous population despite the heterogeneity of the workers (Paolacci et al. 2010).

### **4.3.3. Sample Description**

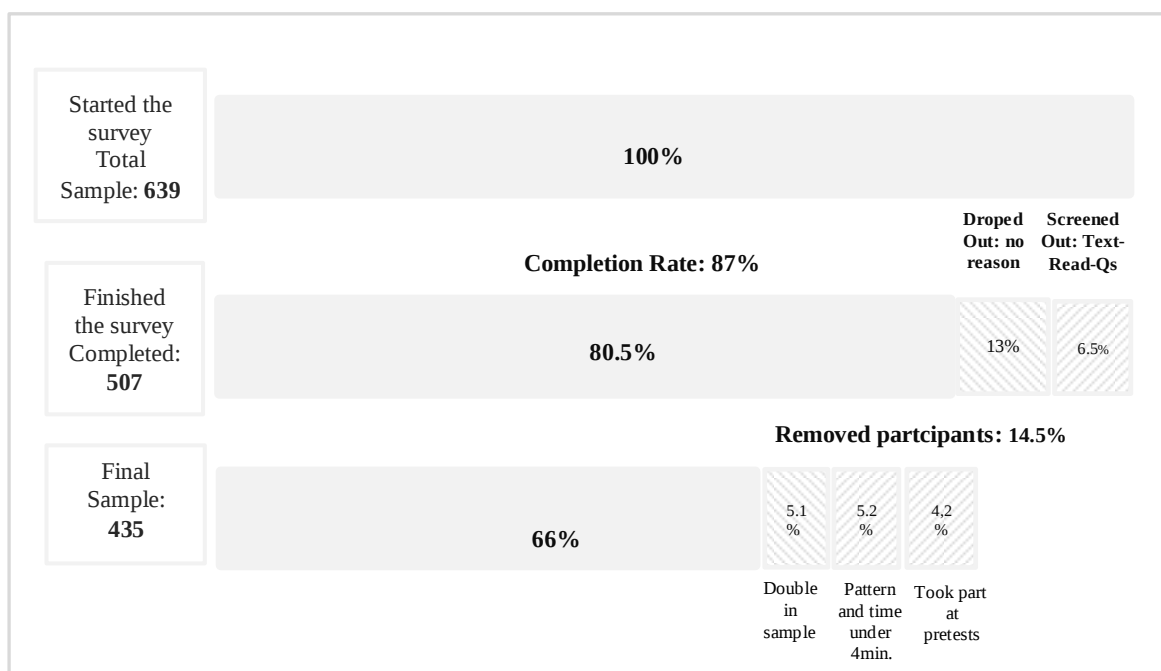
The data collection took part between 07<sup>th</sup> August and 02<sup>th</sup> September 2013. A task (see Appendix E) was posted on Amazon M Turk, which required workers to complete an externally hosted survey link (via unipark.de) in exchange for 20 dollar cents. The task was reposted every week day after 17.30 p.m. CEST (9.30 a.m. MDT) and was paused each evening. The (overestimated) time needed for completion was indicated in the HIT’s description so respondents were able to calculate an effective payment ratio. The average actual ratio was 1.6 \$/hour, which is above the minimum amount of 1.3 \$/hour (Chilton et al. 2010). The HIT was visible only for workers, residing in the U.S. The approval rate<sup>11</sup> was above 85 percent.

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<sup>11</sup> HIT Approval Rate – an approval rating is calculated for each worker and is the percentage of approved submissions divided by the worker’s total submissions. So if a worker has 3 approved submissions but 1 rejected submission, he/she would have a rating of 75%.

In total, **639** workers initiated the survey link. From this number, 13% dropped out before the end for unknown reasons and 6.5% were screened out after the text-read-check question. The data from these participants was not further analyzed. Furthermore, the Worker ID<sup>12</sup> was checked to ensure that each unique account participated in the task only once. Questionnaires were also checked for response patterns. According to McCreddie et al. (2010) some of the Amazon M Turk workers can be described as spammer, who attempt to make as much money as they can, completing tasks without reading any instructions or questions. To identify such behavior responses were checked carefully. Finally, respondents with response time below 4 minutes (average completion time 7.40 min.) were also removed from the sample. In order to ensure that any of the participants had equal knowledge about the purpose of this experiment and increase the internal validity, all workers who took part at any of the pretests (regarding the brand familiarity and the manipulation checks) were pulled out of the sample as well (Campbell and Stanely 1963).

The final sample for analysis consists of **435** respondents. Detailed sample statistics are provided in Figure 6. The completion rate is 87% (only the drop-outs are taken into account), which is consistent with those in the studies of Crump et al. (2013) and Paolacci et al. (2010).



**Figure 6: Sample Statistics**

<sup>12</sup> Worker ID – a unique number assigned by Amazon M Turk to each worker

The sample sizes per treatment are presented in the Table 6.

| Brand                                          | Treatment  |            | Total      |
|------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
|                                                | Authentic  | Neutral    |            |
| HP                                             | 40         | 37         | 77         |
| DELL                                           | 39         | 38         | 77         |
| ARPOS (fictitious brand)                       | 36         | 38         | 74         |
| <b>Laptop Brands<br/>(HP + DELL)</b>           | <b>79</b>  | <b>75</b>  | <b>154</b> |
| Neutrogena                                     | 32         | 33         | 65         |
| Olay                                           | 33         | 33         | 66         |
| Rose La (fictitious brand)                     | 39         | 37         | 76         |
| <b>Skincare Brands<br/>(Olay + Neutrogena)</b> | <b>65</b>  | <b>66</b>  | <b>131</b> |
| <b>Total</b>                                   | <b>219</b> | <b>216</b> | <b>435</b> |

**Table 6: Sample Distribution**

In Appendix F the initial number of participants assigned in each treatment can be seen.

Among the 435 participants, there are more female (59.5%) than male (40.5%). The average age is 34 years (ranging from 18 to 69 years). The respondents also differed on their educational level, with majority (43%) having a bachelor degree and 36% holding 8-12 years high school secondary leaving certificate. With regard to the income level, 40% have indicated a net income below 30.000\$ a year, whereas only 7% earn more than 80.000\$ a year and 4% did not give an answer.

## 5. Results

### 5.1. Manipulation Checks

For the four real world brands, respondents exposed to the authentic brand story rated brand authenticity significantly higher compared to those who read the neutral story,  $t(152)_{\text{laptops}} = 5.122, p < .01$ ;  $t(129)_{\text{skincare}} = 3.625, p < .01$ . With regard to the two fictitious brands, there were no significant differences in the evaluation of perceived authenticity for the neutral and authentic story of the fictitious skincare producer Rose La,  $t(74)_{\text{Rose La}} = .617, p > .10$ . For the laptop brand ARPOS the difference was highly significant,  $t(75)_{\text{Arpos}} = 4.514, p < .01$ .

Tables 7 and 8 depict the means and standard deviations for the three dimensions capturing perceived authenticity for the six brands.

|                              | HP                           |           | DELL                         |           | Neutrogena                   |           | Olay                         |           |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------|-----------|
|                              | Authentic                    | Neutral   | Authentic                    | Neutral   | Authentic                    | Neutral   | Authentic                    | Neutral   |
| Perceived Quality            | 5.0 (1.2)                    | 4.4 (1.3) | 4.8 (1.3)                    | 4.1 (1.4) | 5.2 (1.0)                    | 5.0 (1.0) | 5.2 (1.1)                    | 4.8 (1.0) |
| Perceived Sincerity          | 5.1 (1.3)                    | 4.2 (1.5) | 5.0 (1.3)                    | 3.9 (1.5) | 5.4 (1.1)                    | 4.8 (1.0) | 5.3 (1.1)                    | 4.8 (1.1) |
| Perceived Heritage           | 5.1 (1.2)                    | 3.9 (1.5) | 4.4 (1.3)                    | 3.1 (1.3) | 4.9 (1.1)                    | 4.0 (1.3) | 5.1 (1.4)                    | 4.3 (1.1) |
| Perceived Authenticity (All) | 5.0 (1.0)                    | 4.2 (1.2) | 4.8 (1.2)                    | 3.7 (1.2) | 5.2 (1.0)                    | 4.6 (0.9) | 5.2 (1.1)                    | 4.6 (0.9) |
| t-Test                       | $t(75) = 3.473$<br>$p < .01$ |           | $t(75) = 3.776$<br>$p < .01$ |           | $t(63) = 2.587$<br>$p < .05$ |           | $t(64) = 2.540$<br>$p < .05$ |           |

Table 7: Manipulation Check - Real World Brands

|                              | ARPOS                    |           | ROSE LA                 |           |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------|-------------------------|-----------|
|                              | Authentic                | Neutral   | Authentic               | Neutral   |
| Perceived Quality            | 5.0 (1.1)                | 4.0 (1.3) | 4.6 (1.2)               | 4.5 (1.2) |
| Perceived Sincerity          | 5.2 (1.3)                | 3.8 (1.6) | 4.4 (1.5)               | 4.5 (1.3) |
| Perceived Heritage           | 4.2 (1.3)                | 3.0 (1.5) | 4.4 (1.4)               | 3.9 (1.3) |
| Perceived Authenticity (All) | 4.8 (1.0)                | 3.8 (1.3) | 4.5 (1.2)               | 4.3 (1.2) |
| t-Test                       | t(72) = 4.514<br>p < .01 |           | t(74) = .617<br>p > .10 |           |

**Table 8: Manipulation Check - Fictitious Brands**

For the further analysis both fictitious brands are excluded. Although the manipulation was successful for ARPOS, including it in the sample for laptops without a fictitious brand equivalent for the skincare products, will lead to incomparable results between the both product categories.

Furthermore, as expected, respondents were significantly less involved in the purchase of a skincare product compared to a laptop, ( $M(SD)_{\text{skincare}} = 4.89 (1.70)$ ,  $M(SD)_{\text{laptops}} = 5.8 (1.23)$ ,  $t (283) = 5.897$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Female consumers were more interested in cosmetics compared to males ( $M(SD)_{\text{female}} = 5.56 (1.3)$  and  $M(SD)_{\text{male}} = 3.64 (1.7)$ ,  $t (205) = 9.068$ ,  $p < .01$ ). For laptops, involvement was not influenced by gender ( $t (152) = -1.059$ ,  $p > .10$ ).

With regard to the nature of the products, laptops were perceived to have both high utilitarian and high hedonic appeal ( $M(SD)_{\text{laptop}} = 6.03 (.89)$  and  $M(SD)_{\text{laptop}} = 5.89 (1.11)$ , whereas skincare products were considered to be rather driven by functional motives ( $M(SD)_{\text{skincare}} = 5.56 (1.35)$  and  $M(SD)_{\text{skincare}} = 4.78 (2.56)$ ).

Table 9 illustrates the differences between laptop and skincare products with regard to the above mentioned product category characteristics.

|                              | Laptops     | Skincare    |                          |
|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| Product Category Involvement | 5.88 (1.23) | 4.89 (1.70) | t (283) = 5.897, p < .01 |
| Hedonic                      | 5.89 (1.11) | 4.78 (2.56) | t (283) = 6.444, p < .01 |
| Utilitarian                  | 6.03 (.89)  | 5.56 (1.35) | t (283) = 3.507, p < .01 |

**Table 9: Product Category Characteristics**

Finally, the authentic and neutral brand stories were evaluated in terms of perceived information credibility and believability. For the skincare brands there was no significant difference observed. However, for both laptop manufacturers the text containing authentic cues was systematically evaluated as more credible. Table 10 depicts the differences in the mean values for all four brands.

| Perceived Text Credibility | Authentic  | Neutral    | t – Test                |
|----------------------------|------------|------------|-------------------------|
| HP                         | 5.6 (.60)  | 4.9 (1.51) | t(75) = 2.458<br>p<.05  |
| DELL                       | 5.4 (1.11) | 4.8 (1.45) | t(75) = 2.282,<br>p<.05 |
| OLAY                       | 5.7 (1.11) | 5.3 (1.10) | t(63) = 1.659, n.s.     |
| NEUTROGENA                 | 5.8 (1.32) | 5.2 (1.61) | t(64) = 1.465, n.s.     |

**Table 10: Perceived Stimuli Credibility**

## 5.2. Choice of Covariates

In order to investigate the hypothesized relations in the research model presented in section 3, an analysis strategy appropriate for between subject experimental study design was adopted. More specifically, to capture the impact of authenticity, independent of confounding variables for which is known to have an influence on the outcome variables, analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was carried out. It was run separately for the laptop brands (HP and DELL pooled together) and skincare brands

(Neutrogena and Olay pooled together) representing respectively high and low involvement product categories.

Due to random assignment of participants to treatment groups, the investigated covariates are expected not to differ systematically between the authentic and neutral treatment that is to be independent from the manipulated effect. To check for these variations, one-way ANOVAs were carried out. For the nominal and ordinal measures Chi-Squared tests were used. All of the covariates were equal for the two treatments (see Table 11) and were used in the further analysis. The only exception was perceived stimuli credibility, as indicated in the section before, is significantly different for the neutral and authentic brand story for the laptops and thus is excluded as a covariate from the further analysis.

| Covariates                        | HP & DELL               |                        | F-Ratio                         | Olay & Neutrogena       |                        | F-Ratio                         |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|
|                                   | Authentic<br>(MEAN(SD)) | Neutral<br>(MEAN(SD))  |                                 | Authentic<br>(MEAN(SD)) | Neutral<br>(MEAN(SD))  |                                 |
| Product Category Involvement      | 5.86 (1.27)             | 5.89 (1.04)            | F(1,152) = .30, n.s.            | 5.02(1.56)              | 4.76(1.74)             | F(1,129) = .791, n.s.           |
| Brand Familiarity                 | 5.42 (1.61)             | 5.55 (1.47)            | F(1,152) = .26, n.s.            | 5.42(1.69)              | 5.0(1.62)              | F(1,129) = 1.761, n.s.          |
| Brand Usage                       | 4.27 (1.91)             | 4.12 (2.11)            | F(1,152) = .19, n.s.            | 4.09(2.1)               | 3.56(1.9)              | F(1,129) = 2.272, n.s.          |
| Brand Attitude (before treatment) | 5.25 (1.48)             | 5.15 (1.34)            | F(1,152) = .21, n.s.            | 5.58(1.29)              | 5.32(1.30)             | F(1,129) = 1.375, n.s.          |
| Age                               | 35.31 (13.4)            | 31.75 (10.5)           | F(1,152) = 3.336, n.s.          | 35.8 (13.3)             | 31.9 (11.8)            | F(1,129) = 3.131, n.s.          |
| Gender                            | 53% female              | 56% female             | $\chi^2$ (2,N=154) = .125, n.s. | 63% female              | 60% female             | $\chi^2$ (2,N=131) = .85, n.s.  |
| Net Income                        | 40% less than 30.000\$  | 37% less than 30.000\$ | $\chi^2$ (2,N=154) = 3.19, n.s. | 32% less than 30.000\$  | 47% less than 30.000\$ | $\chi^2$ (2,N=131) = 12.6, n.s. |

**Table 11: Covariates**

Furthermore, in order to reduce error variance, covariates must have a significant correlation with the outcome variables in the model and its strength should be between  $r = .20$  and  $r = .90$  (see e.g. Field 2009). For the laptops, product category involvement, net income and gender were not significantly correlated with any of the dependent variables or had low correlation coefficients (see Appendix G). Thus they were dropped from further analysis. For the skincare, all correlations were significant and above

$r = .20$ . This is also consistent with the nature of this product type. Cosmetics are more interesting for and more frequently used by females, which lead to higher variance with regard to brand familiarity, brand usage rate and product involvement.

The analysis is structured as follow: first, the main effects, including the influence of authenticity on brand attitude and consumer behavioral intentions (purchase and word-of-mouth), are investigated. Second, the hypothesized mediations are tested following Zhao et al. (2010).

### **5.3. Main Effects**

First the direct impact of authentic brand story is investigated for each outcome variable (brand attitude, purchase intention and word-of-mouth) independently.

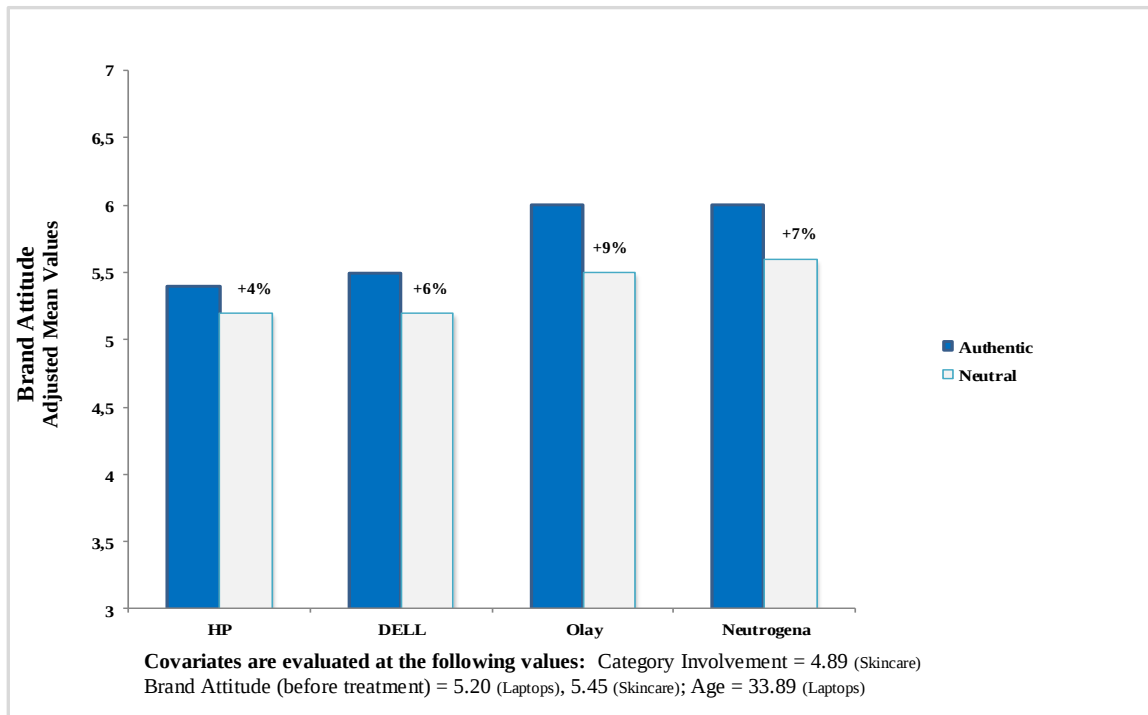
#### **5.3.1. Authentic Brand Story and Brand Attitude**

An ANCOVA revealed a significant positive effect of authenticity on brand attitude for both laptops ( $F(1,150) = 3.345, p < .10$ ) and skincare brands ( $F(1,127) = 11.522, p < .01$ )<sup>13</sup>. The effect size in terms of partial eta squared, is 2% and 7% respectively and can be considered as rather low (e.g. Cohen 1988). With respect to the covariates, for the laptops brands, brand attitude measured before treatment and age had significant influence on consumers' attitude. They explained 55.4% of the variance. For skincare brands, as expected, involvement with the product, brand usage and brand attitude measured before treatment had significant impact on the dependent variable. However due to high correlation between brand attitude before treatment and brand usage rate ( $r = .75^{**}$ ), the latter was dropped<sup>14</sup>. The explained variance by the two covariates together is 45%. Figure 7 illustrates the differences in terms of adjusted mean values between authentic and neutral brand story for each brand. Table 12 summarizes the results for the two product categories.

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<sup>13</sup> Assumption for homogeneity of regression slope is met

<sup>14</sup> ANCOVA is sensitive to multicollinearity and covariates which are highly correlated with one another remove much of the same variance from the dependent variable and reduce the statistical power of the model (Stevenson 1996).



**Figure 7: Main Effects: Brand Attitude and Authenticity for each Brand**

|                          | Brand Attitude               |            |                            |            |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|------------|----------------------------|------------|
|                          | Laptops                      |            | Skincare                   |            |
| Treatment                | Authentic                    | Neutral    | Authentic                  | Neutral    |
| MEAN <sub>adj</sub> (SD) | 5.45 (.11 )                  | 5.17 (.11) | 6.05 (.10)                 | 5.55 (.10) |
| F- Ratio                 | F(1,150) = 3.342, p<.10      |            | F(1,127) = 11.522, p<.01   |            |
| Effect Size $\eta^2$     | 2%                           |            | 7%                         |            |
| Covariates               |                              |            |                            |            |
| Brand Attitude (Before)  | F (1,150) = 168.330, p < .01 |            | F (1,127) = 98.332 p < .01 |            |
| Product Involvement      | n.s.                         |            | F (1,127) = 3.279, p < .10 |            |
| Age                      | F (1,150) = 4.682, p < .05   |            | n.s.                       |            |
| R <sup>2</sup>           | 59%                          |            | 59%                        |            |

**Table 12: ANCOVA: Brand Attitude and Authenticity**

In the light of the above, the first research hypothesis H1 can be supported and stated that authentic positioning leads to more favorable brand attitude.

### 5.3.2. Authentic Brand Story and Purchase Intention

With regard to the purchase intention, an ANCOVA reveals that consumers are significantly more willing to buy a laptop brand after reading an authentic brand story than neutral information about the company ( $F(1,151) = 4.987, p < .05$ ) with effect size in terms of partial eta squared equals 3%. However, for the skincare brands there is no significant effect of authenticity on purchase intention ( $F(1,123) = .275, p > .10$ ).<sup>15</sup> This effect is however not consistent for the two brands. For Neutrogena the authentic text was significantly related to the willingness to buy the product ( $F(1,67) = 5.773, p < .05$ ) and partial eta squared 8%. On the contrary purchase intention was not affected by the manipulation for Olay ( $F(1,66) = .735, p > .10$ )

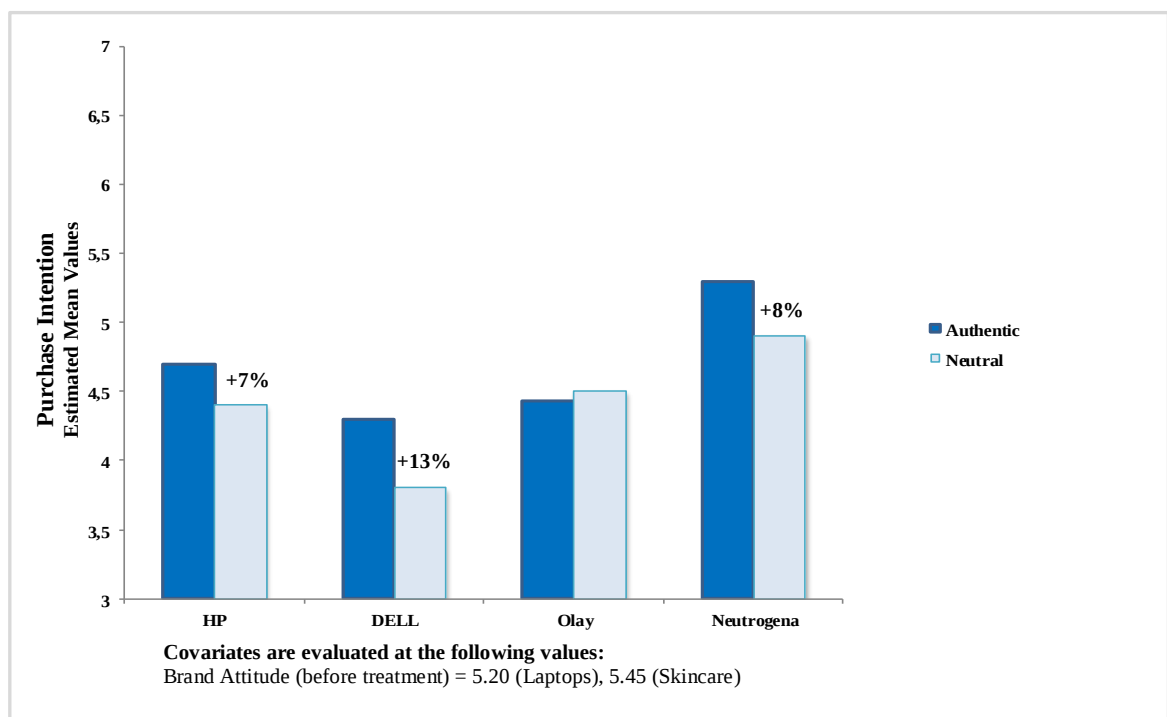


Figure 8: Main Effects: Purchase Intention and Authenticity for each Brand

<sup>15</sup> Assumption for homogeneity of regression slope is met

|                          | Purchase Intention         |            |                                   |            |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------|-----------------------------------|------------|
|                          | Laptops                    |            | Skincare                          |            |
| Treatment                | Authentic                  | Neutral    | Authentic                         | Neutral    |
| MEAN <sub>adj</sub> (SD) | 4.48 (.12)                 | 4.09 (.13) | 4.88 (.13)                        | 4.66 (.13) |
| F- Ratio                 | F(1,151) = 4.987, p<.01    |            | F(1,123) = 1.423, <b>p&gt;.10</b> |            |
| Effect Size $\eta^2$     | 3%                         |            | -                                 |            |
| Covariates               |                            |            |                                   |            |
| Brand Attitude (Before)  | F (1,151) = 139.274, p<.01 |            | F (1,123) = 91.332 p<.01          |            |
| R <sup>2</sup>           | 49%                        |            | 43%                               |            |

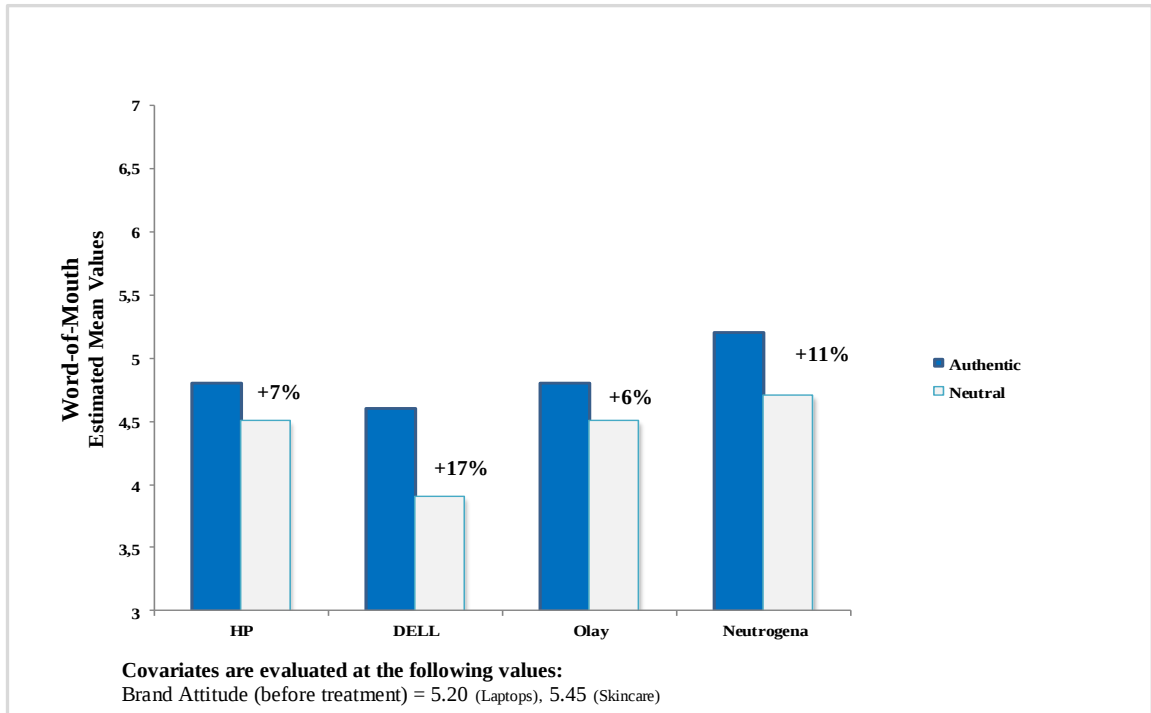
**Table 13: ANCOVA: Purchase Intention and Authenticity**

Thus, there is only partial support for the hypothesis H2. In particular, perceived authenticity is a positive predictor for the purchase intention of a laptop but not necessarily for the purchase of a skincare product.

### 5.3.3. Authentic Brand Story and Word-of-Mouth-Intentions

Participants in the authentic treatments for both product categories are significantly more likely to recommend the brands to others compared to the neutral treatment: laptops  $F(1,151) = 11.201$ ,  $p < .05$  and skincare  $F(1,123) = 5.938$ ,  $p < .05$ , with effect sizes 7% and 5% respectively.<sup>16</sup> This effect is consistent for all brands, whereas it is highest for DELL with partial eta squared of 12%. With regard to the covariates only brand attitude before treatment and brand usage for the cosmetics significantly influenced word-of-mouth intention. The latter was not included in the ANCOVA following the previous argumentations. The overall explained variance on the model was again high - R-Squared for laptops was 54% and skincare 49%.

<sup>16</sup> Assumption for homogeneity of regression slope is met



**Figure 9: Main Effects: Word-of-Mouth and Authenticity for each Brand**

|                          | Word-of-Mouth              |            |                           |            |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|------------|
|                          | Laptops                    |            | Skincare                  |            |
| Treatment                | Authentic                  | Neutral    | Authentic                 | Neutral    |
| MEAN <sub>adj</sub> (SD) | 4.72 (.12 )                | 4.15 (.12) | 5.01 (.13)                | 4.52 (.13) |
| F- Ratio                 | F(1,151) = 11.201, p<.01   |            | F(1,123) = 6.924, p<.05   |            |
| Effect Size $\eta^2$     | 7%                         |            | 5%                        |            |
| Covariates               |                            |            |                           |            |
| Brand Attitude (Before)  | F (1,151) = 162.331, p<.01 |            | F (1,123) = 102.613 p<.01 |            |
| R <sup>2</sup>           | 54%                        |            | 48%                       |            |

**Table 14: ANCOVA: Word-of-Mouth and Authenticity**

This provides empirical evidence for the hypothesis H3 and can be concluded that word-of mouth intention are positively influenced by brand authenticity independent of product category.

## 5.4. Mediated Effects

In the second part of the analysis potential indirect effect of authentic brand story through brand trust, identification and uniqueness on purchase intention, word-of-mouth and brand attitude are tested. Figure 10 gives a clear overview of the tested relationships.

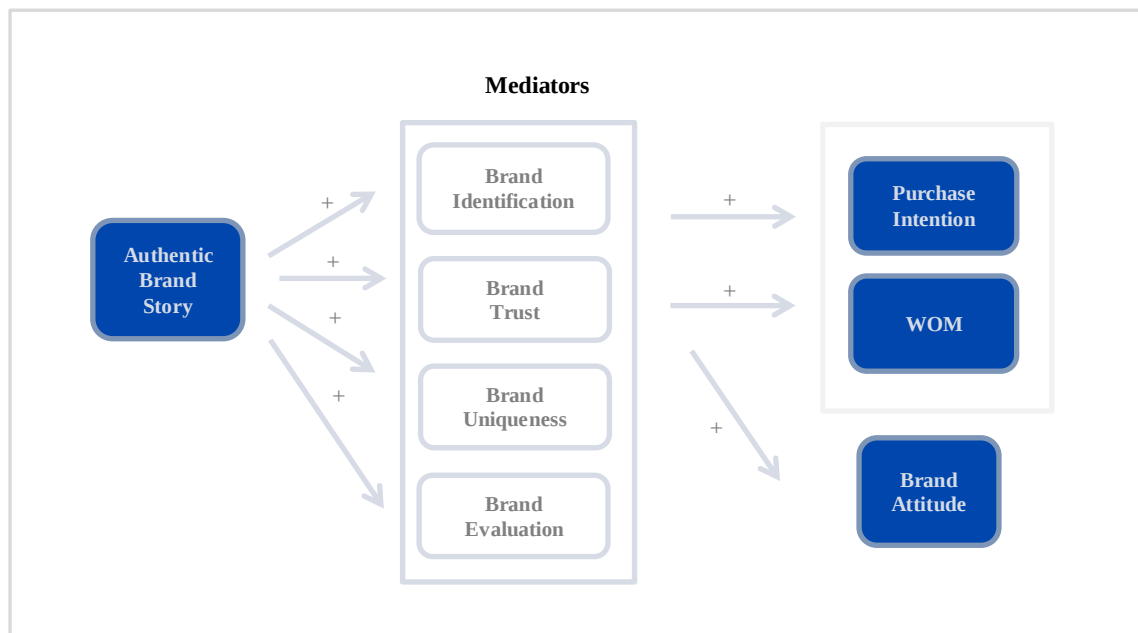


Figure 10: Mediators

### 5.4.1. Choice of Mediating Variables

A variable potentially mediates the relationship between the predictor and the outcomes if the predictor, in our case the authentic treatment, first has an effect on the potential mediator. Therefore, it first needs to be analyzed whether the perceived brand authenticity significantly influences the four potential mediating variables. Table 15 summarizes the results of the ANCOVA test again carried out separately for both product categories. Appendix H gives an overview of the results for each brand separately.

It can be reported that there are significant differences of the perceived brand uniqueness between authentic and neutral treatment for the high-involvement product. Furthermore, brand authenticity led to more positive brand evaluation of the two laptops brands. For skincare products, there is no effect of authentic stories on any of the four

outcomes. Hence, for the further analysis only two variables are considered as potential mediators: perceived brand uniqueness and brand evaluations.

| Potential Mediators:                                   |          | Adjusted Means | F-Ratio                            | Effect Size $\eta^2$ | Covariates                                                                       | R <sup>2</sup> |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Brand Identification</b>                            | Laptops  | 3.47/3.14      | F(1,151) = 2.475, <b>n.s.</b>      | -                    | BA (before): F (1,151) = 29.253<br>p < .01                                       | 33%            |
|                                                        | Skincare | 3.62/3.32      | F(1,127) = 1.605, <b>n.s.</b>      | -                    | BA (before): F (1,127) = 43.359<br>p < .01                                       | 27%            |
| <b>Brand Trust</b>                                     | Laptops  | 4.96/4.69      | F(1,151) = 2.622, <b>n.s.</b>      | -                    | BA (before): F (1,127) = 129.635,<br>p < .01; Age: F (1,127) = 3.793<br>p < .05; | 52%            |
|                                                        | Skincare | 5.44/5.21      | F(1,127) = 2.339, <b>n.s.</b>      | -                    | BA (before): F (1,127) = 160.150<br>p < .01                                      | 57%            |
| <b>Brand Uniqueness</b>                                | Laptops  | 4.25/3.5       | F(1,151) = 12.058, <b>p&lt;.05</b> | 7%                   | BA (before): F (1,150) = 168.331<br>p < .01                                      | 25%            |
|                                                        | Skincare | 4.65 /4.45     | F(1,127) = 1.447, <b>n.s.</b>      | -                    | BA (before): F (1,127) = 26.355<br>p < .01                                       | 19%            |
| <b>Brand Evaluation</b>                                | Laptops  | 5.28/4.83      | F(1,150) = 4.446, <b>p&lt;.05</b>  | 3%                   | BA (before): F (1,150) = 168.331<br>p < .01, Age: F (1,150) = 168.33<br>p < .01  | 43%            |
|                                                        | Skincare | 5.41/5.32      | F(1,127) = 1.111, <b>n.s.</b>      | -                    | BA (before): F (1,127) = 59.491<br>p < .01, Age: F (1,127) = 4.915<br>p < .05    | 40%            |
| *Assumption for homogeneity of regression slope is met |          |                |                                    |                      |                                                                                  |                |

**Table 15: Summary of Findings – Mediators**

### 5.4.2. Multiple Mediation Model

The hypothesized mediated relationships are tested following Zhao et al.'s (2010) recommended approach using bootstrapping (based on 1,000 bootstrap resamples) to investigate the significance of indirect effects. According to this approach, an indirect effect is significant, and mediation is established, if the bootstrap confidence interval of an indirect effect does not include 0 (Preacher and Hayes 2008; Zhao et al. 2010). Compared to the widely used SOBEL-Z-Test for indirect effects based on p-value estimation, estimating confidence intervals using bootstrapping is said to be more accurate for smaller sample sizes (see Preacher and Hayes 2004).

As the effect of two potential mediators will be tested, a multiple mediation approach is adopted. When more than one potential mediator variable is hypothesized, it is recommended to choose multiple over simple mediation. First, it is possible to state to what extent certain variable mediates the relationship between the predictor and the outcome, conditional of the existence of other variables in the model. Second, is that it allows for reducing the bias resulting from potential omitted variables. Third, in this way a contrast between all indirect effects can be estimated and stated whether some of the mediators contributes significantly more for the mediation (Preacher and Hayes 2004).

The estimation for the specific indirect effect depends on the ability of a certain variable to mediate the hypothesized relationship in the presence of other potential mediators. As a result, problems may arise due to high correlations among mediators that means significance levels might be under- or overestimated. In the research model there are two potential mediators: brand evaluation and brand uniqueness correlating significantly with each other ( $r = .63, p < .05$ ).

According to Zhao et al. (2010) there are five types of mediation. The first one is a *complementary mediation*, which corresponds to the partial mediation according to Baron and Kenny (1986) classification. In this case the influence of the predictor on the dependent variable is only partially explained by the mediator and there is a significant direct effect despite mediation. The *Indirect-only mediation* overlaps with the full mediation where the direct effect is not significant. The next three types have usually been classified in literature as either no mediation or models with inconsistency. *Competitive mediation* occurs when both direct and indirect effects are significant but

they are in the opposite directions. *Direct only mediation* refers to the classical no mediation and here the indirect effect is not significant. *Non-effect no mediation* is when there neither direct nor direct effect can be observed. The more thorough classification allows for more accurate conclusion regarding the existence of the hypothesized or other omitted mediators.

#### 5.4.2.1. Mediation: Authenticity and Brand Attitude

Figure 11 presents the results of the bootstrapping test for indirect effect.

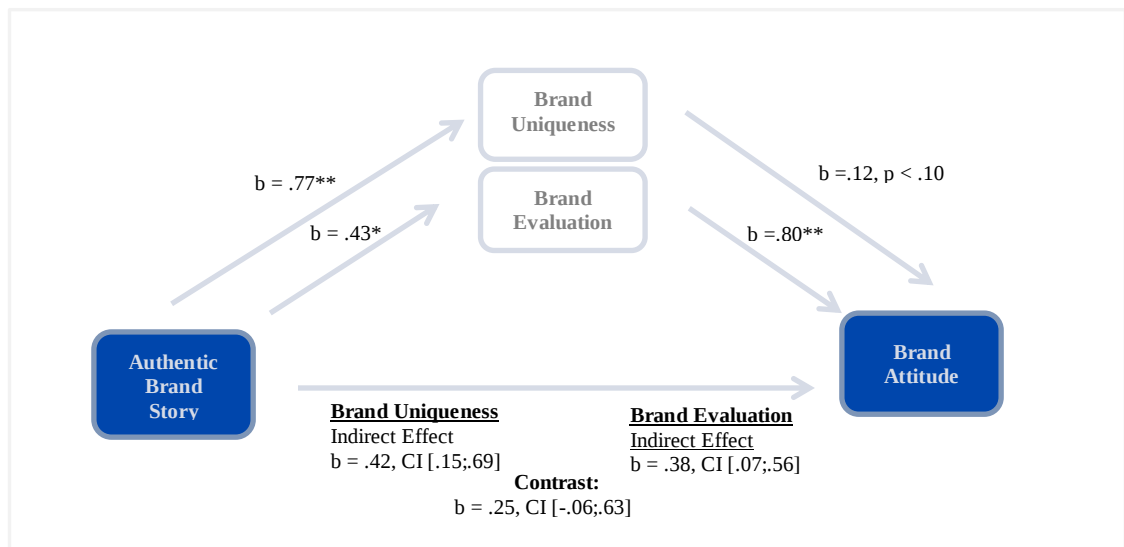


Figure 11: Multiple Mediation: Authenticity and Brand Attitude (Laptops)

Preacher and Hayes (2004) recommend following a two steps approach for interpretation of the output gained using PROCESS MODE in SPSS. First, the total indirect effect has to be examined. In the current example, the indirect effect of brand uniqueness and evaluation together is  $b = .43, CI [.08; .83]$ . This implies that in 95% of the cases the true values of the parameter  $b$  will fall between .08 and .83. Since the interval does not contain zero, we can infer that this indirect effect is significant.

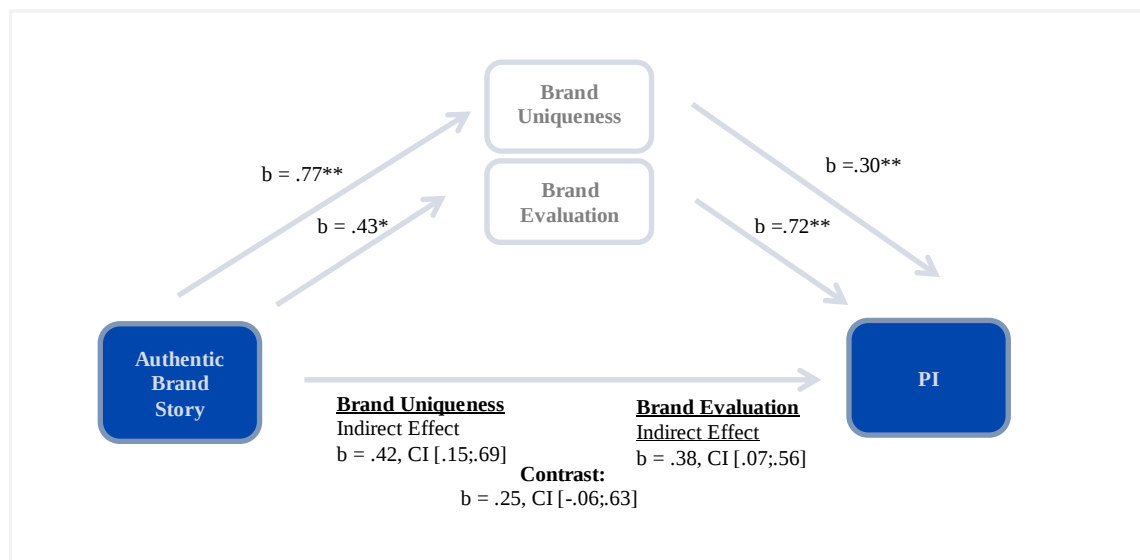
Second, the individual indirect effects of both mediators can be examined. The indirect effect of brand evaluation on brand attitude, when the impact of brand uniqueness is simultaneously taken into account is  $b = .34, CI [.02; .71]$ . The one of brand uniqueness following the same logic is  $b = .09, CI [.002; .22]$ . Thus we can state that both variables are mediating the relationship of authenticity and brand attitude.

The direct effect of authenticity on brand attitude  $c'$  is not significant. Based on the mediation type classification proposed by Zhao et al. (2010), it can be stated that there is indirect-only mediation or full mediation based on Baron and Kenny (1986).

Finally, we can compare the pairwise contrast between both mediators and examine whether one of them have a significantly stronger impact. The 95% confidence interval for the comparison coefficient  $c = .25$ , CI  $[-.04; .67]$  includes 0, so we cannot distinguish between the magnitudes of both effects.

#### 5.4.2.2. Mediation: Authenticity and Purchase Intentions

Further on it is investigated whether brand evaluation and uniqueness are also mediating the relationship of authenticity and the two measures for consumer behavior: purchase intentions and willingness to recommend.

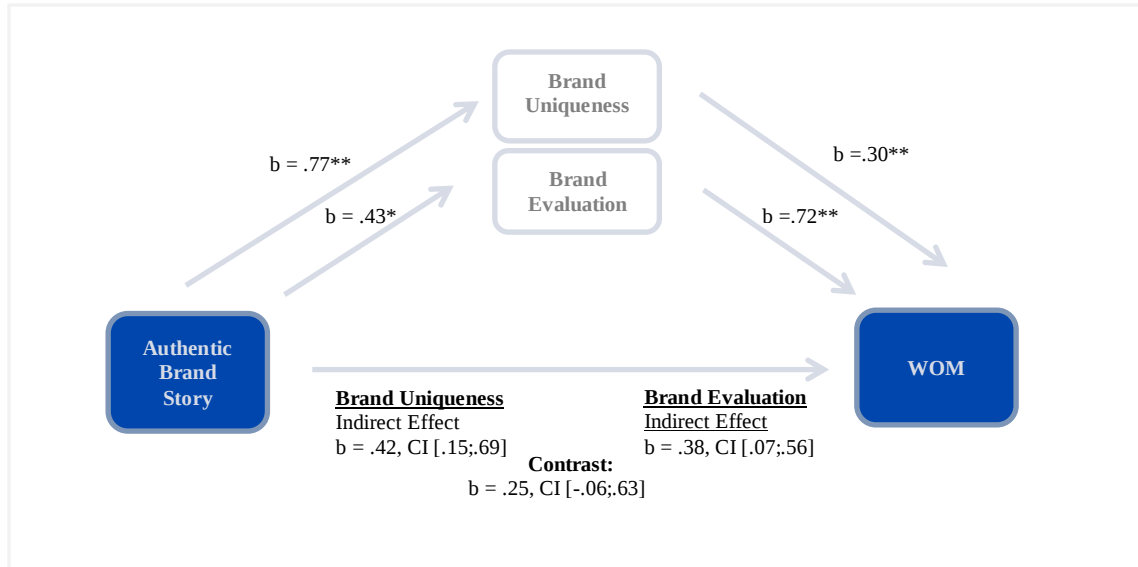


**Figure 12: Multiple Mediation: Authenticity and Purchase Intentions (Laptops)**

In this case, there is significant total indirect effect fully mediating the impact of authentic brand story on purchase intention through brand evaluation and uniqueness,  $b = .48$ , with CI  $[.15; .89]$ . The individual effects for each mediators estimated in the presence of the other are significant,  $b_{(brand\ evaluation)} = .31$ , CI  $[.06; .67]$  and  $b_{(brand\ uniqueness)} = .17$ , CI  $[.06; .35]$ . The strength of both effects against each other is not significant because there is zero in the 95% CI  $[-.13; .52]$ .

#### 5.4.2.3. Mediation: Authenticity and Word-of-Mouth

Finally, the mediated relationship between authenticity and consumers intention to recommend the brand is tested.



**Figure 13: Multiple Mediation: Authenticity and Word-of-Mouth (Laptops)**

The total indirect effect for both brand evaluation and uniqueness is  $b = .56$ , with CI [.17; .96] excluding zero, implying that the mediation is significant. The specific effects for each of the mediators are also significant and respectively  $b_{(\text{brand evaluation})} = .31$ , CI [.02; .64] and  $b_{(\text{brand uniqueness})} = .24$ , CI [.10; .43]. The direct effect of authentic brand story on WOM Intentions is not significant CI [-.20; .41] and we can conclude that also in this case there is indirect-only mediation or full mediation. The contrast of both mediators is insignificant  $c = -.07$ , CI [-.36; .20] and the two indirect effects cannot be distinguished in terms of magnitude.

In the light of the above, it can be concluded that the both brand evaluation and uniqueness are fully mediating the relationship between authentic brand story and brand attitude, and consumer behavioral intentions. Hence, Hypothesis 6, 6a and 7, 7a are supported. However, there is only partial support as this effect is observed only for laptop brands. Furthermore based on the results Hypothesis 4, 4a, and 5, 5a are not supported and can be stated that in the present research settings authentic story does not increase brand trust and does not lead to higher consumer identification with the brand for any of the two product types.

## 5.5. Summary of Findings

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Laptops                        | Skincare                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>H1:</b> Brand authenticity is positively related to brand attitude.                                                                                                                                          | supported                      | supported                      |
| <b>H2:</b> Brand authenticity leads to higher purchase intentions.                                                                                                                                              | supported                      | not supported                  |
| <b>H3:</b> Brand authenticity is positively related to word-of-mouth intentions.                                                                                                                                | supported                      | supported                      |
| <b>H4:</b> Brand authenticity positively relates to brand trust.<br><b>H4a:</b> Brand trust mediates the relationship between authenticity, brand attitude and consumer behavior intentions.                    | not supported<br>not supported | not supported<br>not supported |
| <b>H5:</b> Brand authenticity positively relates to self-brand-connection.<br><b>H5a:</b> Self-brand connection mediates the relationship between authenticity, brand attitude and consumer behavior intentions | not supported<br>not supported | not supported<br>not supported |
| <b>H6:</b> Brand authenticity positively relates to brand uniqueness.<br><b>H6a:</b> Brand uniqueness mediates the relationship between authenticity, brand attitude and consumer behavior intentions           | supported<br>supported         | not supported<br>not supported |
| <b>H7:</b> Brand authenticity positively relates to brand evaluations.<br><b>H7a:</b> Brand evaluations mediate the relationship between authenticity, brand attitude and consumer behavior intentions          | supported<br>supported         | not supported<br>not supported |

Table 16: Summary of Hypotheses

## 6. Discussion

The present study has focused on the direct and indirect effects of authentic brand stories on various brand perceptions and behavioral intentions. Two product categories and four real-world mainstream brands were used as objects of investigation. The product categories were differentiated based on the level of involvement and hedonic/utilitarian appeal.

The experiment conducted demonstrated that perceived authenticity leads to positive extra role consumer behavior, i.e. to recommend the brand and to more favorable brand attitude independent of product category. In addition, increased willingness to purchase the products was observed for both laptop brands and only one of the two skincare brands. Besides the latter exception, it appears that authenticity induces positive attitude and behavior independent of product category. These findings substantiate the results of the empirical studies of Sie (2011) and Coary (2013), which demonstrate positive effects of perceived authenticity on attitude and purchase intentions for apparel products and automobiles.

The results of the present study suggest however that the process through which authenticity influences consumers might be driven by product type. Taking into account the functional model of belief-attitude-behavior formation of Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), the findings indicate that for high involvement products, authenticity first enhances brand evaluations and perceptions (captured by perceived brand uniqueness) which then lead to more active consumer behavior as a consequence. On the other hand, none of the four tested potential mediators have significant impact on the effect of brand authenticity on consumer behavior and intentions for the skincare products, characterized by lower involvement and utilitarian appeal. This outcome is only partially supported by existing empirical research, which has demonstrated that trust is an important mediator on the effect of authenticity on behavioral and attitudinal measures for clothing and shoes (e.g. Coary 2013). Interestingly, against this empirical support and the strong theoretical link between brand trust and authenticity, in the present study no significant effect for neither of the two product categories was found. One possible explanation is that real-world brands were investigated, whereas Coary (2013) used fictitious brands. Although it is accounted for pre-existing brand specific

effects, the fact that HP, DELL, Neutrogena and Olay have been already for long time presented on the market and have well established images and practices, might have led to strongly anchored consumers' perceptions. Thus, it could be stated that authentic brand stories might not be enough to increase and amplify existing brands trust level. Furthermore, in comparison to consumers' attitude alteration, for strengthening brand trust is known to require more time and effort (e.g. Delgado-Ballester 2004; Ha 2004)<sup>17</sup>. Thus, the effect of one time exposure of authentic cues might be insufficient to increase trust in companies.

Moreover, for perceived brand evaluation in terms of product quality, previous quantitative studies (Coary 2013; Zwinger 2013) provided results which seem to be also not entirely consistent. Overall, it appears that further empirical investigations are needed to clarify the influence of authenticity on important brand attributes for different products and real world brands. However, what can be cautiously precluded is that product category involvement does not appear to be the decisive factor for the observed differences considering also findings from the other empirical studies (see Chapter 3.3, Table 2).

Laurent and Kapferer (1985) propose that product involvement is a vague concept and it does not systematically lead to the differences in brand attribute evaluations and consumer behavior. They are driven rather by the antecedents of involvement such as risk perception, personal utility, significance, symbolic value, pleasure, facilitation and necessity (see also Martin 1998). Thus, if other disruptive factors (such as specific study characteristics) are excluded as possible reasons for the variations then there might be some product specific characteristic such as tangibility, visibility, complexity of production, duration, quality variance and other attributes that moderate the effect of authentic positioning.

Literature postulates that purchase decision is taken based on risk minimization (e.g. Wernerfelt 1988). In general, risks are divided into functional, financial and social (Dowling and Stealin 1994). These risks are associated with the likelihood that some negative consequences from the purchase might be experienced. So for example a negative consequence is seen as low quality of the product which can result from bad

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<sup>17</sup> See also: <http://sagemedia.ca/articles/building-a-brand-based-on-trust-and-authenticity/>

functional performance or low social image of the product. DelVecchio (2001) suggests that once consumers perceive that products in a certain category do not vary much in quality, are not seen as status symbols and are relatively frequently purchased, then consumers would evaluate offerings from different brands relatively similar in terms of quality and would prefer rather the cheapest alternative in order to minimize financial expenses. This would imply that authentic positioning might be less relevant for some product categories for which no specific production techniques are necessary and rather cheap alternatives are pursued. Furthermore, according to the study of Beverland (2006), authentic positioning cues appeared indeed to be used by consumers in order to reduce the complexity of purchase decision and were used as indicator for product characteristics they consider desirable.

Moreover, a recent empirical study (see Zwinger 2013) has shown that consumers are willing to pay more for authentic products. This would also imply that consumers would expect these products to be positioned in a more premium price segment. Thus for some product categories this might not be necessary and even though consumers will be willing to pay more, it does not mean they would want to purchase the products.

In addition, in the present study skincare are perceived by the respondents as products high in utilitarian appeal whereas laptops have scored high on both utilitarian and hedonic dimensions. Thus, the results suggest that authentic positioning might be more beneficial for goods associated with sensation derived from the experience of using them. Furthermore juice (see Zwinger 2013) is also a product perceived to be more hedonic and consumed for pleasure and enjoyment. Hence authentic brand story may associate product more with emotional and symbolic connotations but not act as a cognitive quality cue.

It is worth mentioning in this context that according to Hartmann and Ostberg (2012) the meaning and associations of authenticity as something magical, enchanting and unconditionally positive, might be a bit inflated in literature. Authentic product features and experiences could be in the end dull, boring and ordinary and as such need not necessarily be perceived by consumers as of extra value or benefit.

The results of this study need to be considered in the light of the fact that the influences of authentic positioning have been investigated on real-world brands. Although specific

brand effects are accounted for by analyzing two brands per product category, it might be possible that authentic positioning can add value for the company if it is in line with the current image and fit of the brand's positioning. In addition it can be presumed that the authentic stories of both HP and DELL are more familiar to the people in the U.S., since both are known to be perceived as iconic brands in the U.S. market. In contrast the founding history of Olay and Neutrogena is not massively communicated. Thus one might think that retelling an established story might have stronger influence than creating a new one.

Finally, as Gilmore and Pine (2007) indicate authenticity may consist of different dimensions and each would refer to a specific product type. Beverland and Farrelly (2010) propose that the different authentic dimensions will be more relevant and pursued by consumers depending on their underlying personal goal. Although telling about the founding of the company and its creator assigns authenticity to a brand it might not influence evaluation of brand attributes for all products equally. Whereas for laptops the technical skills and competence of the founders can lead to higher quality perception of the products, this might not have the same influence for others, like skincare products. As for the latter other aspects would be more relevant such as link to place and naturalness of the ingredients.

The findings of the present study seem to be in line with the theoretical discussion on authenticity: it is in the eye of the beholder, in the context of the situation and may not be desired every time, at every price and at any form. If literature has agreed that for long time confusion has surrounded the nature and definition of brand authenticity then why would literature expect coherence to guide the process by which it affects consumer behavior and perceptions in branding area? Additional empirical research is needed to capture fully and precisely how and under which circumstances brands can profit from authentic positioning.

## **7. Conclusion and Implications**

### **7.1. Theoretical Implications**

The theoretical contribution of the present master thesis is three-fold. First, it shows that mainstream, large multinational brands can be authenticated by communicating stories about their founding, tradition, struggles and achievements, as proposed by Beverland (2009). Thus, it contributes to recent discussion whether authenticity can be assigned to well-known, large mass-market brands (Beverland 2005; Holt 2002). Furthermore, it is the first study to apply and test a recently developed robust brand authenticity scale by Napoli et al. (2013) from consumers' perspective and to investigate the benefits of authentic positioning on real world brands.

Second, this master thesis empirically demonstrates that perceived brand authenticity has positive effects for brands and further investigates its direct and mediated effects. The findings suggest that authentic positioning might have distinct influences across product categories. So for example, for high involvement products, product quality and uniqueness fully mediate the effects of perceived authenticity, whereas for low involvement products none of the proposed mediators has significant effect. Consequently, models intending to explain consumer's responses to authentic offerings should not ignore the impact of the product type and as discussed in the previous chapter, different product characteristic beyond level of involvement might be worth taking into account.

Finally, this study uses real-world brands as object for investigating, aiming to increase external validity. In order to isolate brand-, product- and respondents- specific effects, several control variables are integrated into the research model. The results indicate that incorporation of confounding influences is of paramount importance for the correct interpretations and conclusions.

## **7.2. Managerial Implications**

The findings of the present study suggest that authenticity matters for brand managers as well. Although a positive relationship between authentic positioning and different drivers relevant for the success of the company is confirmed, the assumption that authenticity is equally desired for all product types is not entirely supported. According to the present study authenticity appears to be more beneficial for product with higher level of involvement and both functional and hedonic characteristics. Such brands can enhance their perceived uniqueness and gain competitive advantage by communicating about their history and founder. This provides an additional point for differentiation for large- scale global brands, which cannot be copied easily by competitors.

The results, which are in line with other empirical studies (see e.g. Authentic Brand Index 2008 and Coary 2013), demonstrate that authentic positioning lead to higher willingness to recommend the brand for various product categories. In present days, when consumers have very strong impact on brands through mobile technology and internet, positive word-of-mouth is not only an essential driver for company growth but can also be considered as critical for the image of the brand (Keller 1998; Thompson et al. 2006). Furthermore according to Salzman et al. (2003), consumers rate higher word-of-mouth advice among all other communication, such as for example celebrity endorsement, when making a decision which brand to buy.

Authentic positioning cues can also be used by marketers as a signal for quality. Especially for products which are associated with long usage period and higher perceived risk before purchase. When confronted with this risk, consumers might draw on brand authentic cues to justify their choice. What is more, managers do not need to invest huge amounts in building authenticity as all companies have their own unique story, which they only have to tell to consumers. But the way they tell it will be critical for the success.

## 8. Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations of the present empirical study need to be acknowledged. First, the present study suggests that the effects of authentic brand story might be product category driven. It further implies that there might be some product characteristics, which moderate the effect of authentic positioning beyond level of involvement. Further studies are needed to assess this proposition and explore the moderating effect of different good type, including products, which are perceived to be consumed more out of hedonic reasons.

Second, findings from different empirical studies investigating the influence of authenticity for different products and in different countries are not entirely consistent. Therefore it would be important to focus on identifying which are the potential moderating variables, taking into account also consumer characteristics. In the present study age and respondents' attitude towards the brand were significant covariates, suggesting that maybe social components affect the effectiveness of authenticity or also the existing positioning and image of the brand. Thus prospective studies should focus on analyzing whether different segments of consumers moderate the perceived benefits of authentic positioning. A recently conducted quantitative experiment in Austria demonstrated that global and authentic positioning cues are systematically more desired by more cosmopolitan consumers (see Zwinger 2013).

Third limitation of the study refers to the neutral (control) treatment of the research experiment. Both, neutral and authentic brand stories are as intended differently perceived with regard to brand authenticity. This does not however directly imply that the less authentic story has also less influence on brand perceptions and evaluations. It presents an approximation to capturing existing brand attitudes. Nonetheless without a treatment group that has not been exposed to a stimulus, the size of the effect of the neutral text cannot be determined. Thus, future studies applying this type of experimental design should include a third, control group.

Fourth, consumer behavior is captured only by two measurements representing a low level of consumers' engagement with a brand (Park et al. 2010). It would be also necessary to test the influence of authenticity on other outcomes capturing more

effortful behavior such as for instance brand loyalty. In this sense, it might be worth examining whether and how brand authenticity enhancement and reinforcement over time would influence brand prosperity. In the present study brand authenticity was investigated as one time exposure to the participants. Although this has led to successfully authenticating the brands, companies can use variety of sources to create authenticity, which in turn might have stronger effect on consumers' product evaluations and behavior.

Finally, it has been demonstrated that when fictitious brand advertisements used as stimuli in a research experiment differ in terms of perceived credibility, subsequent brand evaluations and perceptions might be thereby impacted (e.g. MacKenzie and Lutz 1989). Thus stimuli credibility appears to be another variable which influence need to be accounted for. Comparison of both (authentic and neutral) brand stories' credibility in the present study reveals that for the laptop brands there were significant differences between them for both HP and DELL. For the skincare brands both stories did not differ. When perceived text credibility was further used as covariate in the ANCOVA, the effect of authenticity on purchase intention, brand evaluation and brand attitude for the laptop brands was not significant anymore, suggesting that the differences in stimulus credibility might have caused them. For skincare brands however no differences with regard to the impact of authenticity have occurred.

However, Campbell and Stanley (1963) and Elashoff (1969) indicate that analysis of covariance can be best applied when manipulated groups do not differ significantly on a covariate. Miller and Chapman (2001) state, that when covariates are not independent from the manipulation, the regression adjustment may remove part of the treatment effect or produce a false one. This implies that the impact of perceived stimuli credibility might not be separated from those of authenticity and only shared effect can be reported. If the treatment affects the covariates scores, then ANOCVA would remove part of the manipulation effect which we want to be included. Then, the residual which is left to capture the independent variable might not be a valid representation of the construct intended to be measured (Maxwell and Delaney 1990). Following this logic, including text credibility as covariate would lead to underestimating the effect of authentic brand story rather than overstating it or a higher bias towards Type I error.

Literature suggests several remedies to overcome this problem, such as for example performing mediation analysis (e.g. Huitema 1980; Miller and Chapman 2001; Yzerbyt et al. 2004, p. 429). However, in the settings of the present study, it cannot be distinguished whether the higher perceived authenticity has led to higher information credibility or vice versa. Perceived stimuli credibility was measured in the very end of the questionnaire, so it might be that the overall more positive evaluations in the authentic treatment has induced higher credibility perceptions as a spill-over effect.

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## 10. Appendices

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## Appendix A: Brand Selection – Pretest Results

### Laptop brands

(sorted by brand familiarity)

| Brand     | Familiarity |      | n  | Brand     | Perceived Globalness |      | Perceived Authenticity |      | n  |
|-----------|-------------|------|----|-----------|----------------------|------|------------------------|------|----|
|           | MEAN        | SD   |    |           | MEAN                 | SD   | MEAN                   | SD   |    |
| Apple     | 4.3         | .94  | 31 | Apple     | 4.8                  | .51  | 4.4                    | .96  | 31 |
| HP        | 4.3         | .86  | 31 | HP        | 4.3                  | .92  | 4.1                    | 1.23 | 29 |
| Dell      | 4.2         | .9   | 32 | Dell      | 3.7                  | 1.43 | 3.9                    | 1.20 | 32 |
| Samsung   | 3.9         | .98  | 32 | Samsung   | 4.4                  | .91  | 4.0                    | .86  | 32 |
| Sony VAIO | 3.4         | 1.26 | 31 | Sony VAIO | 4.4                  | .67  | 4.0                    | .82  | 31 |
| Toshiba   | 3.4         | 1.13 | 32 | Toshiba   | 4.3                  | .97  | 3.7                    | 1.20 | 32 |
| Acer      | 3.3         | 1.2  | 32 | Acer      | 3.6                  | 1.22 | 3.1                    | 1.09 | 30 |
| Asus      | 3.2         | 1.47 | 31 | Asus      | 3.8                  | 1.30 | 3.6                    | 1.27 | 26 |
| Lenovo    | 2.6         | 1.29 | 32 | Lenovo    | 3.6                  | 1.22 | 3.2                    | 1.25 | 25 |

| Perceived COO |             |     |       |            |              |       |    |
|---------------|-------------|-----|-------|------------|--------------|-------|----|
|               | Correct COO | USA | China | Don't know | Others       | Japan | N  |
| Apple         | 29          | 29  | 1     | 0          | 0            | 1     | 32 |
| HP            | 26          | 26  | 2     | 2          |              | 1     | 30 |
| Dell          | 29          | 29  | 2     | 0          | 0            | 1     | 32 |
| Samsung       | 8           | 4   | 7     | 0          | 9 (8 Korea)  | 12    | 32 |
| Sony VAIO     | 20          | 4   | 2     | 3          | 0            | 20    | 32 |
| Toshiba       | 25          | 0   | 4     | 1          | 2            | 25    | 32 |
| Acer          | 2           | 14  | 5     | 3          | 5 (2 Taiwan) | 3     | 30 |
| Asus          | 3           | 4   | 4     | 7          | 6 (3 Taiwan) | 5     | 27 |
| Lenovo        | 3           | 9   | 3     | 6          | 4            | 3     | 25 |

## Skincare Brands

(sorted by brand familiarity)

| Brand         | Familiarity |      | n  | Brand         | Perceived Globalness |      | Perceived Authenticity |      | n  |
|---------------|-------------|------|----|---------------|----------------------|------|------------------------|------|----|
|               | MEAN        | SD   |    |               | MEAN                 | SD   | MEAN                   | SD   |    |
| DOVE          | 4.17        | 0.82 | 42 | DOVE          | 3.52                 | 1.21 | 4.26                   | 0.77 | 42 |
| OLAY          | 3.93        | 1.02 | 42 | OLAY          | 4.01                 | 1.25 | 4.31                   | 0.94 | 42 |
| L'OREAL       | 3.86        | 1.17 | 42 | L'OREAL       | 4.05                 | 0.94 | 4.19                   | 1.04 | 42 |
| NEUTROGENA    | 3.81        | 1.13 | 42 | NEUTROGENA    | 3.66                 | 1.13 | 4.39                   | 0.77 | 41 |
| NIVEA         | 3.64        | 1.21 | 42 | NIVEA         | 3.97                 | 1.05 | 4.26                   | 1.02 | 39 |
| GARNIER       | 3.52        | 1.27 | 42 | GARNIER       | 3.73                 | 1.06 | 4.13                   | 1.01 | 40 |
| CLINIQUE      | 3.32        | 1.34 | 34 | CLINIQUE      | 4.07                 | 1.01 | 3.71                   | 1.21 | 30 |
| ESTEE LAUEDER | 3.31        | 1.29 | 34 | ESTEE LAUEDER | 4.24                 | 0.85 | 3.80                   | 1.11 | 30 |
| MARY KAY      | 3.28        | 1.17 | 64 | MARY KAY      | 3.16                 | 1.53 | 3.26                   | 1.33 | 61 |
| BAREMINERALS  | 3.12        | 1.39 | 34 | BAREMINERALS  | 3.41                 | 1.15 | 3.86                   | 1.06 | 29 |
| THE BODY SHOP | 2.84        | 1.33 | 64 | THE BODY SHOP | 2.78                 | 1.32 | 3.27                   | 1.25 | 51 |
| LUSH          | 2.14        | 1.36 | 30 | LUSH*         | 3.08                 | 1.04 | 3.92                   | 1.19 | 13 |
| ORIGINS       | 1.83        | 1.30 | 30 | ORIGINS*      | 3.62                 | 1.04 | 4.15                   | 0.98 | 13 |
| L'OCCITANE    | 1.72        | 1.15 | 30 | L'OCCITANE*   | 4.30                 | 0.82 | 4.31                   | 0.82 | 10 |
| AHAVA         | 1.57        | 1.17 | 30 | AHAVA*        | 3.61                 | 1.34 | 3.22                   | 1.64 | 7  |

| Perceived COO |             |     |         |            |          |        |    |
|---------------|-------------|-----|---------|------------|----------|--------|----|
|               | Correct COO | USA | Germany | Don't know | Others   | France | N  |
| DOVE          | 1           | 35  | 1       | 3          | 3 (1 UK) | 0      | 42 |
| OLAY          | 22          | 22  | 1       | 4          | 7        | 8      | 42 |
| L'OREAL       | 26          | 8   | 0       | 3          | 5        | 26     | 42 |
| NEUTROGENA    | 27          | 27  | 3       | 4          | 5        | 2      | 41 |
| NIVEA         | 5           | 17  | 5       | 7          | 7        | 3      | 39 |
| GARNIER       | 13          | 18  | 1       | 5          | 3        | 13     | 40 |
| CLINIQUE      | 14          | 14  | 0       | 2          | 1        | 13     | 30 |
| ESTEE LAUDER  | 5           | 5   | 0       | 2          |          | 23     | 30 |
| MARY KAY      | 57          | 57  | 0       | 3          | 1        | 0      | 61 |
| BAREMINERALS  | 23          | 23  | 0       | 3          | 3        | 0      | 29 |
| THE BODY SHOP | 3           | 38  | 0       | 7          | 4 (3 UK) | 2      | 51 |
| LUSH          | 3           | 7   | 1       | 1          | 1        | 3(UK)  | 13 |
| ORIGINS       | 9           | 9   | 0       | 2          | 1        | 1      | 13 |
| L'OCCITANE    | 9           | 0   | 0       | 1          | 0        | 9      | 10 |
| AHAVA         | 0           | 1   | 0       | 3          | 2        | 1      | 7  |

## Appendix B: Experiment Stimuli: Brand Stories

### HP: Authentic Brand Story

#### The Story of Two Innovators

In 1939, two engineering students and close friends, started a company in a Palo Alto garage. Having no more than \$538 in start-up capital and many ideas seeking realization, David Packard and Bill Hewlett laid the foundation of one of the most successful company in modern business history. The company known under the name HP became indelibly linked to digital age touchstones such as the pocket calculator or the desktop laser printer.

Even though Hewlett and Packard's technological inventions have inspired generations of engineer-entrepreneurs, their true contribution was in creating a corporate culture, called the "HP Way". They came up with an approach that respected employee's personal autonomy and was not merely focused on making money. They systematically nurtured employee satisfaction and morale, which led to a steady stream of leading-edge products.

*"I think many people assume, wrongly, that a company exists simply to make money." Packard told an HP management training session in 1960s. "While this is an important result of a company's existence, we have to go deeper to find our real reason for being. A group of people get together and exist as an institution that we call a company, to do something worthwhile - a contribution to society...The real reason for our existence is that we provide something which is unique."*

While HP had enjoyed constant sales growth and impressive profits, the company has suffered his fair share of flaws and struggles. In the late 1970s, HP was hit by a strong recession. This was compounded by a strategic misstep, which left the company in a difficult situation. However, layoffs were avoided by ordering an across-the-board 10 percent pay cut and requiring employees to take every other Friday off. HP managed to survive because of its organizational culture, designed to boost innovations. Today, the company is one of the largest computer and printer manufacturer.

As for that garage, it now bears a bronze plaque proclaiming it the "Birthplace of Silicon Valley."



David Packard Bill Hewlett



### HP: Neutral Brand Story

HP is an information technology company, that specializes in developing and manufacturing of computing, networking hardware, designing software and delivering services. From its inception, HP has made various developments in home, small business and enterprise computing. It provides also various devices for the government, health and education sectors. Major product lines include personal computers, enterprise servers, related storage devices. The company is well-known for producing color printers such as DeskJet 500C. The development of the computer lines Pavillion PC has conquered the home computing market. HP also offers managed services where they provide complete IT-support solutions for other companies and organizations and also warranty support across its product lines.

HP delivers cost – effective solutions, that meet today's customer expectations, work in existing environments as well as with other products. It employs a collaborative approach to product design. Company's engineers are using direct customer input to develop and integrate technologies, corresponding to either business or consumer needs. In addition, the company has built regional research and development centers to collect information and adapt products according to the different needs. These departments are managed centrally. However production takes place in only one location.



## DELL: Authentic Brand Story

### A Story of a Visionary

In 1985, at the age of 19, the pre-med freshman Michael Dell founded DELL PC's Ltd. with \$1,000 and a world-changing vision for how technology should be designed, manufactured and sold. DELL Ltd. became indelibly linked to digital age touchstones such as the fastest performing computer in the 1980s, unveiled only one year after the company's inception.

DELL Ltd. also gained its advantage in the industry by several innovations. One such was how highly customizable the computers were made. Michael Dell believed that direct contact with customers was key to better understand their unique needs and provide the most appropriate solutions and services. Even though this was remarkable for the PC business at that time, this was not the true highlight of Michael's new ideas. The most innovative venture undertaken in the company history is the next-day, at home product assistance for all devices. Furthermore, Dell was always held strongly on his high standards for his business, especially regarding the configuration of the computers and the quality of the workmanship.

While DELL PC's had enjoyed constant sales growth and impressive profits, the company has suffered its fair share of flaws and struggles. In the 2000s, DELL started to encounter strong competition. This was compounded by a strategic misstep, which left the company in a difficult situation. However, Michael Dell did not give up easily. A large R&D team of engineers was set up and supply chain was optimized. After a short time, the company managed to introduce various improvements in its computer systems. The strong position of the brand were re-established and DELL is still held as one of the leaders of the computer industry to this very day.



Michael Dell

## DELL: Neutral Brand Story

Dell Inc. is an information technology company, offering personal computers, servers, software, computer peripherals and also electronics built by other manufacturers. Since its inception, Dell has made various developments in home, small business and enterprise computing. It also provides different devices for the government, health and education sectors, as well as financial services to its commercial and home user clients.

Dell delivers cost – effective solutions, that meet today's customer expectations and work in existing environments as well as with other products. It employs a collaborative approach to product design. The company's engineers are using direct input to develop and integrate technologies, corresponding to either business or consumer needs. In addition, the company has been investing in centrally managed research and development facilities, dedicated to collecting information and to adapting the product line to specific needs. These departments are managed centrally.

The company applies a direct-sales model and "build-to-order" approach to manufacturing—delivering individual PCs configured to certain specifications. Dell production takes place in different locations, so the time between order and delivery can be minimized. The manufacturing covers everything from parts assembly to shipment.



## Neutrogena: Authentic Brand Story

### The Story of Neutrogena

Neutrogena began its story in 1930 when founder, Emanuel Stolaroff started a small specialty cosmetic company. He believed that women can feel beautiful and feminine only if their skin is healthy. He was focused mainly on developing products which improved the vitality of the skin.

In 1950 Stolaroff heard of an unusual soap developed by renowned cosmetic pharmacist Dr. Edmond Fromont. His patented formula produced a mild, clear soap that rinsed quickly and easily, leaving essentially no soap residue and enhancing the natural glow of the skin. Stolaroff bought Fromont's patent and started to distribute the product under the name Neutrogena.

However achieving market success was no easy task. At first, people did not believe in the soap's regenerating effect on the skin. This led to warehouse full of unsold products. But Stolaroff did not give up on the soap. In 1963, he decided to present it to the society of dermatologists, so they can test the qualities of the product. As a result, the healing properties of the soap were officially recognized and accepted by the medical profession. As of then, interest for the product increased and orders began to rise. The huge success led to the creation of the Neutrogena line of mild, premium quality skincare products. Even though Stolaroff retired soon, his philosophy has remained just as relevant as ever: "Healthy skin is beautiful skin".

# Neutrogena®



## Neutrogena: Neutral Brand Story

Neutrogena is a skincare brand, offering a wide range of products for face and the body, designed to treat different problems.

The first Neutrogena product was a mild clear soap that rinsed quickly and easily from the skin, leaving no soap residue. Since then, the brand has created a line of safe, mild, premium quality skincare products, that has been constantly enriched. Moisturizers contain in addition sunscreen protection and face cleansers are made without parabens and are designed to be pH neutral.

Neutrogena's cosmetic line has been developed to improve the health and appearance of the skin. For every skin need, the brand provides a suitable skincare solution. However, the emphasis is put on oil-free facial cleansers. One example is the fresh foaming cleanser, which today is one of the best-selling product of Neutrogena. New product formulations are developed constantly.

In addition, the company has been investing in centrally managed research and development facilities, dedicated to collecting information and to adapting the product line to specific needs. These departments are managed centrally. However production takes place in only one location.

# Neutrogena®



## Olay: Authentic Brand Story

### The Story of Olay

Olay is a product truly born from love, as it was created by a man as a gift for his wife. In 1952, chemist Graham Wulff saw his wife Dinah's frustration with the thick, waxy beauty creams. They left her skin looking greasy, and they certainly didn't fit with her feminine sensibility. Graham wanted to create a new beauty product for her—one that would not only moisturize her skin, but also leave her feeling beautiful and feminine.

Together, Graham and wife Dinah fine-tuned everything from absorption and texture to the delicate pink shade and instantly recognizable fragrance. At last, the legendary Oil of Olay Beauty Fluid was born. Dinah and her friends loved the fluid. Soon word got around and suddenly Graham faced so many orders which he could not handle on his own anymore.

In 1954, Graham decided to quit his job and look for investors to set up a company to produce and market the face moisturizer. But this turned out to be a harder task than expected. For many years, Graham could not find a business partner. Most were not convinced by the fluid and thought of it as just the next cream to be launched. Finally, in 1963, Graham met the entrepreneur Jack Lowe. Together they established a company, named after the fluid, Oil of Olay. Today, Olay is one of the best-selling cosmetic brands. Even though Graham retired soon, his philosophy has remained just as relevant as ever: "Help women look and feel beautiful".

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Graham & Dinah



## Olay: Neutral Brand Story

Olay is a cosmetic brand, which offers a wide range of products for face and body, designed to improve women's skin.

The first Olay product was a pink fluid, packaged in a heavy glass bottle, leaving the skin moisturized and fresh. Since then, the product line has been expanded to include a full range of hypoallergenic variants, cleansers and creams with the aim of meeting the full range of skincare needs, whatever the user's age or skin type. However, the emphasis is put on anti-aging face fluids. One example is the Regenerist Micro-Sculpting Cream, which today is one of the best-selling anti-aging product of Olay. New product formulations are developed constantly.

The brand also produces soaps and body wash. Moisturizers and face cleansers do not contain parabens and are designed to be pH neutral. All products can be found in stores or ordered online.

In addition, the company has been investing in centrally managed research and development facilities, dedicated to collecting information and to adapting the product line to specific needs. These departments are managed centrally. However production takes place in only one location.

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## ARPOS: Authentic Brand Story

### A Story of a Visionary

In 1980, the second year engineering student, Edward Arpos founded ARPOS PC's Ltd. with \$1,000 and a world-changing vision for how technology should be designed, manufactured and sold. ARPOS Ltd. became indelibly linked to digital age touchstones such as the fastest performing computer in the 1980s, unveiled only one year after the inception of the company.

ARPOS Ltd. gained its advantage in the industry by several innovations. One such was how highly customizable the computers were made. Even though this was remarkable for the PC business at that time, this was not the true highlight of Edward's ideas. Edward was held strongly on his high standards for his business, especially regarding the configuration of the computers and the quality of the workmanship. Most parts of the computer systems are still built in-house, which includes much craftsmanship in the production process. Moreover, Edward trusts his products so much, that a free of charge return policy is offered. If customers are not satisfied with the performance of the computer, they are able to return it and get their money back.

While ARPOS PC had almost instantaneous success and enjoyed constant sales growth for many years, the company has also suffered its fair share of flaws and struggles. In the late 1990s, for example, the firm started to encounter strong competition. This was compounded by a strategic misstep, which left the company in a difficult situation. But Edward did not give up easily. Large R&D team of engineers was set up. After a short time, ARPOS PC managed to adapt its computer systems and re-establish the strong position of the brand.

...It seems that ARPOS will stay bright for many years.

# ARPOS



Edward Arpos

## ARPOS: Neutral Brand Story

ARPOS Inc. is an information technology company, offering personal computers, servers, software, computer peripherals, and also electronics built by other manufacturers. Since its inception, ARPOS has made various developments in home, small business and enterprise computing. It also provides various devices for the government, health and education sectors as well as financial services to its commercial and home user clients.

ARPOS delivers cost – effective solutions, that meet today's customer expectations and work in existing environments as well as with other products. It employs a collaborative approach to product design. The company's engineers are using direct input to develop and integrate technologies, corresponding to either business or consumer needs. In addition, the company has been investing in centrally managed research and development facilities, dedicated to collecting information and to adapting the product line.

The company applies a direct-sales model and "configure to order" approach to manufacturing—delivering individual PCs configured to certain specifications. ARPOS production takes place in different locations, so the time between order and delivery can be minimized. The manufacturing covers everything from parts assembly to shipment.

# ARPOS



## Rose La: Authentic Brand Story

### The Story of Rose La

Rose La is a product truly born from love, as it was created by a man as a gift for his wife. In 1952, chemist Eliot Norman saw his wife's frustration with the thick, waxy beauty creams. They left her skin looking greasy, and they certainly didn't fit with her feminine sensibility. Eliot wanted to create a new beauty product for her—one that could not only moisturize her skin, but also leave her feeling beautiful and feminine.

Together, Eliot and wife Mary, fine-tuned everything from absorption and texture to the essential oils enhancing the natural glow of the skin. At last the Rose La beauty fluid was born. Mary and her friends loved the fluid. Soon word got around and suddenly Eliot faced so many orders which he could not handle on his own anymore.

In 1954, Eliot decided to quit his job and look for investors to set up a company to produce and market the face moisturizer. But this turned out to be a harder task than expected. For many years, Eliot could not find a business partner. Most were not convinced by the fluid and thought of it as just the next cream to be launched. Finally, in 1963, Eliot met the entrepreneur Michael Lonerburgh. Together they established a company, named after the fluid, Rose La. Even though Eliot retired soon, his philosophy has remained just as relevant as ever: "Help women look and feel beautiful".

...it seems, that Rose La will stay bright for many years.

# Rose La®



Eliot & Mary

## Rose La: Neutral Brand Story

Rose La is a cosmetic brand, which offers a wide range of products for face and body, designed to improve women's skin.

The first Rose La product was a fluid, packaged in a heavy glass bottle, leaving the skin moisturized and fresh. Since then, the product line has been expanded to include a full range of hypoallergenic variants, cleansers and creams with the aim of meeting the full range of skincare needs, whatever the user's age or skin type. However, the emphasis is put on anti-aging face fluids. One example is the Energize Sculpting Cream, which today is one of the best-selling anti-aging product of Rose La. New product formulations are developed constantly.

The brand also produces soaps and body wash. Moisturizers and face cleansers do not contain parabens and are designed to be pH neutral. All products can be found in stores or ordered online.

In addition, the company has been investing in centrally managed research and development facilities, dedicated to collecting information and to adapting the product line to specific needs. These departments are managed centrally. However production takes place in only one location.

# Rose La®



## Appendix C: Measurement Scales

### **Brand Credibility (Expertise & Trustworthiness Dimensions, by Erdem and Swait 2004)**

| How do you agree with the following statements?         | Do not agree at all |   |   |   |   |   | Fully agree |
|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------|
| This brand delivers what it promises.                   | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦           |
| Product claims from this brand are believable.          | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦           |
| This brand reminds me of someone who is                 | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦           |
| This brand has the ability to deliver what it promises. | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦           |

### **Brand Trust (Chaudhuri & Holbrook 2001)**

| How do you agree with the following statements? | Do not agree at all |   |   |   |   |   | Fully agree |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------|
| I trust this brand.                             | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦           |
| I rely on this brand.                           | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦           |
| This is an honest brand.                        | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦           |
| This brand is safe.                             | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦           |

### **Self-Image Congruence (based on Sirgy et al. 1997)**

| How do you agree with the following statements?             | Do not agree at all |   |   |   |   |   | Fully agree |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------|
| The corporate-brand image is consistent with my self-image. | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦           |
| The corporate-brand image reflects who I am.                | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦           |
| People similar to me use such a corporate brand.            | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦           |
| Users of the brand are very much like me.                   | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦           |

### **Self-Brand Connection (based on Escalas 2004)**

| How do you agree with the following statements?        | Do not agree at all |   |   |   |   |   | Fully agree |
|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------|
| Brand X reflects who I am.                             | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦           |
| I can identify with Brand X.                           | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦           |
| I feel a personal connection to Brand X.               | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦           |
| I use Brand X to communicate who I am to other people. | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦           |
| Brand X suits me well.                                 | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦           |

**Word-of-Mouth (Kuenzel & Halliday 2008)**

| How do you agree with the following statements?           | Do not agree at all |   |   |   | Fully agree |   |   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---|---|---|-------------|---|---|
| I would recommend Brand X brand to friends and relatives. | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤           | ⑥ | ⑦ |
| I will speak positively about Brand X.                    | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤           | ⑥ | ⑦ |
| I intend to encourage other people to buy Brand X.        | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤           | ⑥ | ⑦ |

**Brand Attitude (as applied by Yan Li & Hongwei He 2013)**

|                |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |           |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| Bad            | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ | Good      |
| Dislike        | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ | Like      |
| Negative       | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ | Positive  |
| Not favourable | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ | Favorable |

**Purchase Intention (as used by Riefler 2012, based on Petrevu & Lord, 1994 & Dodds et al. 1991)**

| How do you agree with the following statements?                     | Strongly disagree |   |   |   | Strongly agree |   |   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---|---|---|----------------|---|---|
| The next time that I buy [product category], I will choose [brand]. | ①                 | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤              | ⑥ | ⑦ |
| I will consider [brand] for my next purchase.                       | ①                 | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤              | ⑥ | ⑦ |
| It is very likely that I will buy [brand] in the future.            | ①                 | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤              | ⑥ | ⑦ |

**Brand Uniqueness (based on Netemayer et al. 2004)**

| How do you agree with the following statements?                | Strongly disagree |   |   |   | Strongly agree |   |   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---|---|---|----------------|---|---|
| Brand name really “stands out” from other brands of (product). | ①                 | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤              | ⑥ | ⑦ |
| Brand name is very different from other brands of (product).   | ①                 | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤              | ⑥ | ⑦ |
| Brand name is “unique” from other brands of (product).         | ①                 | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤              | ⑥ | ⑦ |

**Brand Evaluation (Parameswaran & Pisharodi, 1994)**

| How do you agree with the following statements? | 1-poor |   |   |   | 7-excellent |   |   |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------|---|---|---|-------------|---|---|
| Quality                                         | ①      | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤           | ⑥ | ⑦ |
| Image                                           | ①      | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤           | ⑥ | ⑦ |
| Value for money                                 | ①      | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤           | ⑥ | ⑦ |

**Need for Uniqueness (based on Ruvio et al. 2007)**

| How do you agree with the following statements?                                                             | Do not agree at all |   |   |   |   |   |   | Fully agree |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| I often combine possessions in such a way that I create a personal image that cannot be duplicated.         | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I often try to find a more interesting version of run-of-the-mill products because I enjoy being original . | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I actively seek to develop my personal uniqueness by buying special products or brands.                     | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Having an eye for products that are interesting and unusual assists me in establishing a distinctive image  | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Brand Authenticity (Napoli et al. 2013)**

| How do you agree with the following statements?                                                                         | Do not agree at all |   |   |   |   |   |   | Fully agree |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Quality is central to the brand.                                                                                        | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| The brand is made to the most exacting standards, where everything the firm does is aimed at improving quality.         | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| The brand is manufactured to the most stringent quality standards.                                                      | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| The brand is a potent symbol of continued quality.                                                                      | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| The firm is committed to retaining long-held quality standards for the brand.                                           | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Only the finest ingredients/materials are used in the manufacture of the brand                                          | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| The brand is made by a master craftsman who pays attention to detail and is involved throughout the production process. | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| The brand has a strong connection to an historical period in time.                                                      | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| The brand has a strong link to the past, which is still perpetuated and celebrated to this day.                         | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| The brand reminds me of a golden age.                                                                                   | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| The brand reflects a timeless design.                                                                                   | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| The brand exudes a sense of tradition.                                                                                  | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| The brand refuses to compromise the values upon which it was founded.                                                   | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| The brand has stuck to its principles.                                                                                  | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Hedonic vs. Utilitarian Product (based on Voss et al. 2003)**

|                |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |            |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------|
| not functional | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ | functional |
| Unnecessary    | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ | necessary  |
| not enjoyable  | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ | enjoyable  |
| not delightful | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ | delightful |

**Cosmopolitanism, C-Cosmo Scale (Riefler et al., 2012)**

| How do you agree with the following statements?                                                  | Do not agree at all |   |   |   |   |   |   | Fully agree |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| When traveling, I make a conscious effort to get in touch with the local culture and traditions. | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I like having the opportunity to meet people from many different countries.                      | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I have got a real interest in other countries.                                                   | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Having access to products coming from many different countries is valuable to me.                | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| The availability of foreign products in the domestic market provides valuable diversity.         | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I enjoy being offered a wide range of products coming from various countries.                    | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Always buying the same local products becomes boring over time.                                  | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I like watching movies from different countries.                                                 | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I like listening to music of other cultures.                                                     | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I like trying original dishes from other countries.                                              | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I like trying out things that are consumed elsewhere in the world.                               | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I like to have contact with people from different cultures.                                      | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Product Category Involvement (based on Mittal/Lee 1988/1989)**

| Are you interested in this product category | Not interested at all |   |   |   |   |   |   | Strongly interested |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|                                             | ①                     | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |                     |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Brand Familiarity (based on Chaudhuri, 2002)**

|                               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |                                          |
|-------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------------------------------------|
| I am familiar with this brand | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ | I am not familiar with this brand at all |
| I use this brand a lot        | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ | I do not use this brand a lot            |

**Brand Knowledge (based Algesheimer et al. 2005)**

|                                                               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |                                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| When compared to other people, I know a lot about this brand. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ | When compared to other people, I do not know anything about this brand. |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**Credibility of the Stimulus use (based on Williams and Drolet 2005)**

| How do you agree with the following statements? | Do not agree at all |   |   |   |   |   |   | Fully agree |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| This advertisement is credible.                 | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| This advertisement is realistic                 | ①                   | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |             |  |  |  |  |  |  |

## Appendix D: Questionnaire

### Fragebogen

#### 1 Einleitungstext

The following survey is part of a Master's Thesis project conducted at the University of Vienna. The purpose of this study is [solely academic](#) and no data will be given away for commercial purposes.

All answers are treated [anonymously](#) and an identification of individual participants is not possible.

There are no right or wrong answers. [We ask for your personal evaluation](#). It is important, however, that you answer all questions even if you are not sure of your answer. An approximate answer is more valuable for us than a questionnaire that has not been completely filled out.

You will need no more than [10 minutes](#) to fill out the questionnaire!

Thank you very much for your participation and your time!

#### 2.1 Product Category Involvement NEUTROGENA NEUTRAL

Are you interested in skin care products?

|  | 1 - Not<br>interested at<br>all | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7 - Strongly<br>interested |
|--|---------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
|  | <input type="radio"/>           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      |

##### 2.1.1 HED-UT

When thinking about skin care products do you consider them to be:

|                | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     |            |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| not functional | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | functional |
| unnecessary    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | necessary  |
| not enjoyable  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | enjoyable  |
| not delightful | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | delightful |

##### 2.1.2 Brand Familiarity Neutrogena

The following questions refer to the skincare brand Neutrogena.

#NeutrogenaB#

How familiar are you with this brand?

|                                                                         | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     |                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| I am not familiar at all.                                               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | I am very familiar.                                          |
| I do not use Neutrogena products at all.                                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | I use Neutrogena products a lot.                             |
| When compared to other people, I do not know anything about Neutrogena. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | When compared to other people, I know a lot about Neutrogena |
| Neutrogena products are sold only in the U.S.                           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Neutrogena products are sold everywhere in the world.        |

##### 2.1.3 BRAND ATT VOR

In general, your opinion about Neutrogena is:

|               | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     |           |
|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------|
| not favorable | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | favorable |

##### 2.1.4 OWN Skin Care Product

Have you ever had a skin care product from Neutrogena?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

##### 2.1.5 TEXT VOR TEXT

On the next page, we will tell you more about the company Neutrogena.

Please read the text carefully! After that you will be asked [one content-related question](#).

If you have not read the text, you will be [screened out of the survey](#) and [will not be awarded for this task](#)!

### 2.1.7 Check TEXT

#### Where does Neutrogena production take place?

- ☐ in more than 20 places
- ☐ in 10 different locations
- ☐ in only one location

### 2.1.8.1 PI+WOM

#### How strongly do you agree with the following statements?

|                                                                                | 1 -<br>Strongly<br>disagree | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7 -<br>Strongly<br>agree |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| The next time that I buy skin care products I will choose Neutrogena.          | <input type="radio"/>       | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>    |
| I will consider Neutrogena for my next skin care product purchase.             | <input type="radio"/>       | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>    |
| It is very likely that I will buy Neutrogena skin care products in the future. | <input type="radio"/>       | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>    |

### 2.1.8.2 BRAND ATT NACH

#### How do you feel about the brand Neutrogena?

|               | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     |          |
|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------|
| Bad           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Good     |
| Dislike       | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Like     |
| Negative      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Positive |
| Not favorable | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Favorble |

### 2.1.8.3 WOM

#### Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

|                                                        | 1 - Do not<br>agree at all | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7 - Fully<br>agree    |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| I would recommend Neutrogena to friends and relatives. | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I will speak positively about Neutrogena.              | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I intend to encourage other people to buy Neutrogena.  | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

### 2.1.8.4 BRAND AUTH

#### In the following part we want to know how you evaluate the brand Neutrogena. Please read the following statements carefully.

|                                                                     | 1 - Do not<br>agree at all | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7 - Fully<br>agree    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Neutrogena is manufactured to the most stringent quality standards. | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

|                                                                                                                          |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Neutrogena is made to the most exacting standards, where everything the firm does is aimed at improving quality.         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Only the finest materials and ingredients are used in the manufacture of Neutrogena.                                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Quality is central to Neutrogena.                                                                                        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Neutrogena is potent symbol of continued quality.                                                                        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Neutrogena is committed to retaining long-held quality standards.                                                        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Neutrogena is made by a master craftsman who pays attention to detail and is involved throughout the production process. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

#### 2.1.8.5 Brand AUTH 2

And the last statements...

|                                                                                                  | 1 - Do not agree at all | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7 - Fully agree       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Neutrogena refuses to compromise the values upon which it was founded.                           | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Neutrogena has stuck to its principles.                                                          | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Neutrogena has a strong connection to an historical period in time.                              | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Neutrogena reflects a timeless design.                                                           | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Neutrogena exudes a sense of tradition.                                                          | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Neutrogena has a strong link to the past, which is still perpetuated and celebrated to this day. | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Neutrogena reminds me of a golden age.                                                           | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

#### 2.1.8.6 Brand AUTH 3

According to you, how authentic is the brand Neutrogena:

|  | Not authentic at all  | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     | Very authentic        |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
|  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

#### 2.1.8.7 Brand Credibility

Thinking about Neutrogena, please indicate your agreement with the statements below.

|                                                                            | 1 - Do not agree at all | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7 - Fully agree       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Neutrogena delivers what it promises.                                      | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Product claims from Neutrogena are believable.                             | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Neutrogena reminds me of someone who is competent and knows what is doing. | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Neutrogena has the ability to deliver what it promises.                    | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

#### 2.1.8.8 Brand Trust

According to you:

|                                  | 1 - Do not agree at all | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7 - Fully agree       |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Neutrogena is a brand I trust.   | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Neutrogena is a brand I rely on. | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Neutrogena is an honest brand.   | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Neutrogena is a safe brand.      | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

#### 2.1.8.9 BIC+SBIC

We are now interested to find out how strongly you relate to the brand Neutrogena.

|                                                           | 1 - Do not agree at all | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7 - Fully agree       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Neutrogena's image is consistent with my self-image.      | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Neutrogena's image reflects who I am.                     | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| People similar to me use Neutrogena.                      | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Neutrogena users are very much like me.                   | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I can identify with Neutrogena.                           | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I feel a personal connection to Neutrogena.               | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I use Neutrogena to communicate who I am to other people. | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Neutrogena suits me well.                                 | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

#### 2.1.8.10 Brand Quality

Please rate Neutrogena on the following attributes:

|                 | 1 - poor              | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7 - excellent         |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Quality         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Image           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Value for money | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

#### 2.1.8.11 Brand UNIQ

The next statements refer to Neutrogena compared to other brands offering skin care products. According to you:

|                                                                            | 1 - Do not agree at all | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7 - Fully agree       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Neutrogena stands out from other brands in this product category.          | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Neutrogena is very different from other brands in this product category.   | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Neutrogena is unique compared to other brands offering skin care products. | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

#### 2.1.8.12 TEXT CREDIBILITY COSMETICS

We would also like to know your opinion about the text you have read in the beginning:

|                                         | 1 - Do not agree at all | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7 - Fully agree       |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| The text about Neutrogena is credible.  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The text about Neutrogena is realistic. | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

### 3 COSMO SCALE

This is the last part of the survey, which is an unrelated part about travelling and different cultures. Please indicate how you agree with the statements below.

|                                                                                                  | 1 - Do not agree at all | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7 - Fully agree       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| When traveling, I make a conscious effort to get in touch with the local culture and traditions. | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I like having the opportunity to meet people from many different countries.                      | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I like to have contact with people from different cultures.                                      | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I have got a real interest in other countries.                                                   | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Having access to products coming from many different countries is valuable to me.                | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The availability of foreign products in the domestic market provides valuable diversity.         | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

### 4 COSMO SCALE II

...and with these

|                                                                               | 1 - Do not agree at all | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7 - Fully agree       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| I enjoy being offered a wide range of products coming from various countries. | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Always buying the same local products becomes boring over time.               | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I like watching movies from different countries.                              | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I like listening to music of other cultures.                                  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I like trying original dishes from other countries.                           | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I like trying out things that are consumed elsewhere in the world.            | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

## 5 Need for UNIQUENESS

How strong do the following statements relate to you:

|                                                                                                             | 1 - Do not agree at all | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7 - Fully agree       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| I often combine possessions in such a way that I create a personal image that cannot be duplicated.         | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I often try to find a more interesting version of run-of-the-mill products because I enjoy being original.  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I actively seek to develop my personal uniqueness by buying special products or brands.                     | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Having an eye for products that are interesting and unusual assists me in establishing a distinctive image. | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

## 6 GENDER

Finally, please provide some personal data for statistical use. All data is used anonymously and for academic purposes only.

What is your gender?

- ☐ female  
☐ male

## 7 AGE

What is your age?

## 8 EDUCATION

What is your highest level of education?

- ☐ Less than 8 years  
☐ 8-12 years  
☐ Bachelor level academic education  
☐ Master level academic education  
☐ PhD  
☐ Others

## 9 citizenship

Citizenship:

- ☐ USA

☐ Others:

### 10.1 TIME IN USA

If you do not have the USA citizenship: How long have you been living in the United States?

 years

---

11 **Income**

**Net Income (a year):**

- ☐ Less than 30.000 USD
- ☐ 30.000-39.999 USD
- ☐ 40.000-49.999 USD
- ☐ 50.000-59.999 USD
- ☐ 60.000-69.999 USD
- ☐ 70.000-79.999 USD
- ☐ 80.000-89.999 USD
- ☐ 90.000-99.999 USD
- ☐ 100.000 USD or more
- ☐ no answer

---

12 **Worker ID**

**Please provide your Worker ID in the text box below!**

**Please do not forget to navigate to the next page, where you will be provided with the nine-digit completion code number!**

WORKER ID

---

13 **Endseite**

You have completed the survey.

Thank you very much for your participation!

Survey code to be pasted in the box on the description page, so credits for taking the survey can be received:

**312DELLA645**

---

## Appendix E: Amazon M –Turk Task Description

| HIT Preview                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Research study about brands</b></p> <p><i>Note: This HIT is periodically re-posted. If you've already completed it previously, please do not complete it again. You will not be compensated a second time!</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The following survey is part of a <b>master thesis project conducted at the University of Vienna</b>. The purpose of this study is purely academic and no data will be given away for commercial purposes.</li><li>• You won't be asked any questions that could reveal your personal identity and your responses <b>will stay entirely confidential</b>.</li><li>• You will be offered <b>20 cents</b> for your time and effort. You will need <b>10 minutes</b> to fill out this questionnaire.</li><li>• Please open the survey link below in a new window or tab (since this will allow you to easily navigate back to this page).</li><li>• At the end of the survey you will be provided with a <b>nine-digit completion code number</b>. For us to compensate you, please enter this number in the box below after completing the survey, and then hit SUBMIT.</li><li>• <b>PLEASE NOTE</b> that in the beginning of the survey you need to read a short text. After that you will be asked one-content related question. If you have not read the text, you will be not awarded for completing this task!</li></ul> <p><b>Thank you very much for your participation!</b></p> |

## Appendix F: Initial Sample Overview

|              | Participants<br>who finished<br>the survey | Respondents<br>who were not<br>screened out<br>(passed text<br>check q-s) | Removed<br>participants<br>(double<br>participation or<br>pattern response)* | Total |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| HP A         | 51                                         | 43                                                                        | 3                                                                            | 40    |
| HP N         | 46                                         | 38                                                                        | 1                                                                            | 37    |
| DELL A       | 52                                         | 43                                                                        | 4                                                                            | 39    |
| DELL N       | 49                                         | 44                                                                        | 6                                                                            | 38    |
|              |                                            |                                                                           |                                                                              |       |
|              |                                            |                                                                           |                                                                              |       |
| OLAY A       | 42                                         | 36                                                                        | 3                                                                            | 33    |
| OLAY N       | 43                                         | 35                                                                        | 2                                                                            | 33    |
| NEUTROGENA A | 42                                         | 35                                                                        | 3                                                                            | 32    |
| NEUTROGENA N | 44                                         | 39                                                                        | 6                                                                            | 33    |
|              |                                            |                                                                           |                                                                              |       |
|              |                                            |                                                                           |                                                                              |       |
| ARPOS A      | 46                                         | 41                                                                        | 5                                                                            | 36    |
| ARPOS N      | 45                                         | 39                                                                        | 1                                                                            | 38    |
| Rose LA A    | 50                                         | 44                                                                        | 5                                                                            | 39    |
| Rose LA N    | 48                                         | 43                                                                        | 6                                                                            | 37    |
| Total        | 558                                        | 480                                                                       | 45                                                                           | 435   |

## Appendix G: Covariates

### Laptop Brands

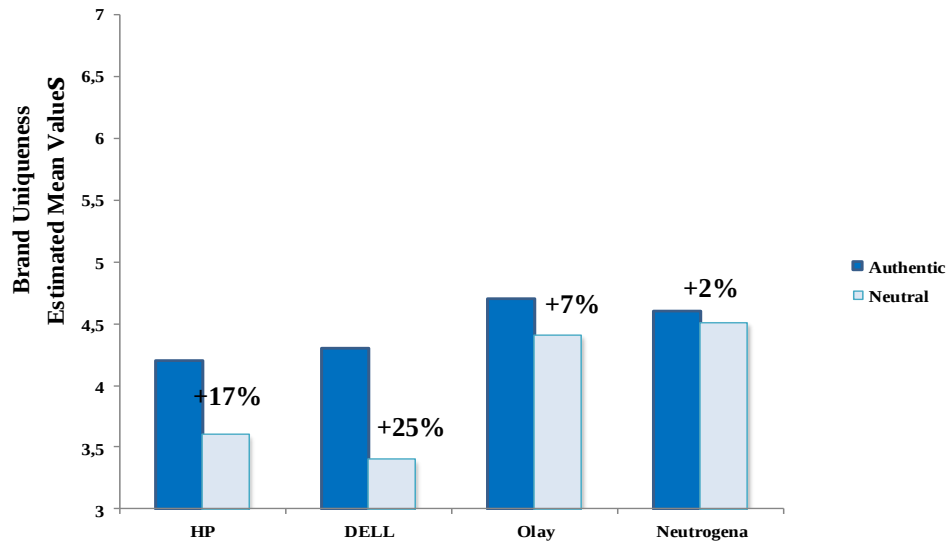
| Correlations                                                 |                                                 |                         |                      |             |                |                    |               |                  |                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------------|--------------------|---------------|------------------|------------------|
|                                                              |                                                 |                         | Brand Identification | Brand Trust | Brand Attitude | Purchase Intention | Word-of-Mouth | Brand Uniqueness | Brand Evaluation |
| Spearman's rho                                               | Product Category Involvement                    | Correlation Coefficient | ,129                 | ,096        | ,211**         | ,117               | ,097          | ,120             | ,168*            |
|                                                              |                                                 | Sig. (2-tailed)         | ,112                 | ,239        | ,009           | ,148               | ,231          | ,139             | ,038             |
|                                                              | I am familiar with the Brand                    | Correlation Coefficient | ,024                 | ,065        | ,145           | ,171*              | ,137          | ,036             | ,124             |
|                                                              |                                                 | Sig. (2-tailed)         | ,764                 | ,424        | ,072           | ,034               | ,090          | ,653             | ,125             |
|                                                              | I use the Brand products a lot                  | Correlation Coefficient | ,348**               | ,464**      | ,446**         | ,477**             | ,477**        | ,320**           | ,349**           |
|                                                              |                                                 | Sig. (2-tailed)         | ,000                 | ,000        | ,000           | ,000               | ,000          | ,000             | ,000             |
|                                                              | Brand Attitude before the treatment - favorable | Correlation Coefficient | ,559**               | ,740**      | ,732**         | ,698**             | ,706**        | ,465**           | ,616**           |
|                                                              |                                                 | Sig. (2-tailed)         | ,000                 | ,000        | ,000           | ,000               | ,000          | ,000             | ,000             |
|                                                              | Age                                             | Correlation Coefficient | ,193*                | ,288**      | ,338**         | ,329**             | ,293**        | ,145             | ,311**           |
|                                                              |                                                 | Sig. (2-tailed)         | ,017                 | ,000        | ,000           | ,000               | ,000          | ,073             | ,000             |
| Kendall's tau_b                                              | Gender                                          | Correlation Coefficient | -,028                | -,019       | -,022          | -,012              | ,006          | -,012            | -,091            |
|                                                              |                                                 | Sig. (2-tailed)         | ,677                 | ,777        | ,747           | ,860               | ,930          | ,860             | ,187             |
|                                                              | Net_Income                                      | Correlation Coefficient | ,056                 | ,093        | ,091           | ,050               | ,093          | -,018            | ,065             |
|                                                              |                                                 | Sig. (2-tailed)         | ,354                 | ,125        | ,140           | ,410               | ,125          | ,761             | ,288             |
| *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).    |                                                 |                         |                      |             |                |                    |               |                  |                  |
| **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). |                                                 |                         |                      |             |                |                    |               |                  |                  |

### Skincare Brands

| Correlations                                                 |                                                 |                         |                      |             |                |                    |               |                  |                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------------|--------------------|---------------|------------------|------------------|
|                                                              |                                                 |                         | Brand Identification | Brand Trust | Brand Attitude | Purchase Intention | Word-of-Mouth | Brand Uniqueness | Brand Evaluation |
| Spearman's rho                                               | Product Category Involvement                    | Correlation Coefficient | ,291**               | ,328**      | ,376**         | ,252**             | ,405**        | ,230**           | ,235**           |
|                                                              |                                                 | Sig. (2-tailed)         | ,001                 | ,000        | ,000           | ,004               | ,000          | ,008             | ,007             |
|                                                              | I am familiar with the Brand                    | Correlation Coefficient | ,405**               | ,495**      | ,482**         | ,512**             | ,551**        | ,194*            | ,436**           |
|                                                              |                                                 | Sig. (2-tailed)         | ,000                 | ,000        | ,000           | ,000               | ,000          | ,026             | ,000             |
|                                                              | I use the Brand products a lot                  | Correlation Coefficient | ,566**               | ,671**      | ,562**         | ,701**             | ,623**        | ,371**           | ,468**           |
|                                                              |                                                 | Sig. (2-tailed)         | ,000                 | ,000        | ,000           | ,000               | ,000          | ,000             | ,000             |
|                                                              | Brand Attitude before the treatment - favorable | Correlation Coefficient | ,510**               | ,744**      | ,718**         | ,672**             | ,685**        | ,435**           | ,618**           |
|                                                              |                                                 | Sig. (2-tailed)         | ,000                 | ,000        | ,000           | ,000               | ,000          | ,000             | ,000             |
|                                                              | Age                                             | Correlation Coefficient | ,202*                | ,250**      | ,266**         | ,189*              | ,269**        | ,384**           | ,315**           |
|                                                              |                                                 | Sig. (2-tailed)         | ,021                 | ,004        | ,002           | ,031               | ,002          | ,000             | ,000             |
| Kendall's tau_b                                              | Gender                                          | Correlation Coefficient | -,256**              | -,297**     | -,249**        | -,314**            | -,313**       | -,120            | -,205**          |
|                                                              |                                                 | Sig. (2-tailed)         | ,000                 | ,000        | ,001           | ,000               | ,000          | ,109             | ,006             |
|                                                              | Net_Income                                      | Correlation Coefficient | ,099                 | ,109        | ,163*          | ,076               | ,089          | ,097             | ,155*            |
|                                                              |                                                 | Sig. (2-tailed)         | ,132                 | ,101        | ,018           | ,257               | ,181          | ,149             | ,021             |
| *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).    |                                                 |                         |                      |             |                |                    |               |                  |                  |
| **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). |                                                 |                         |                      |             |                |                    |               |                  |                  |

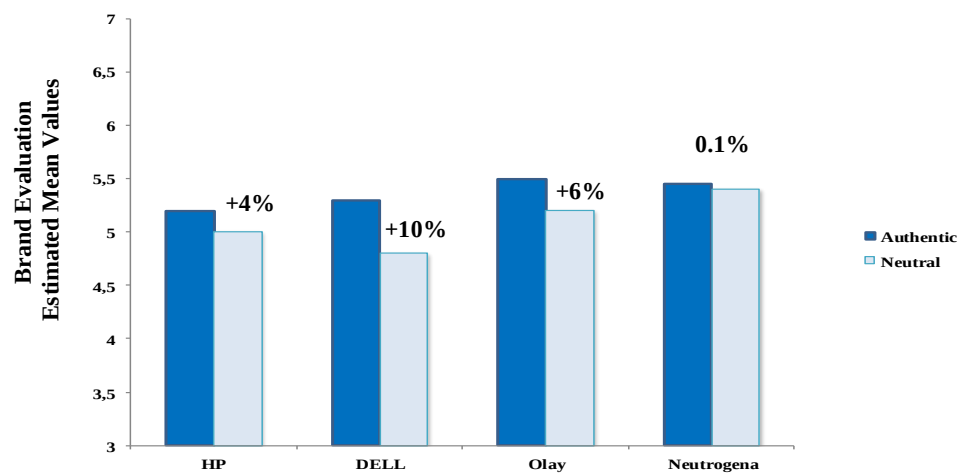
## Appendix H: Mediators – Results for each Brand separately

### Perceived Brand Uniqueness



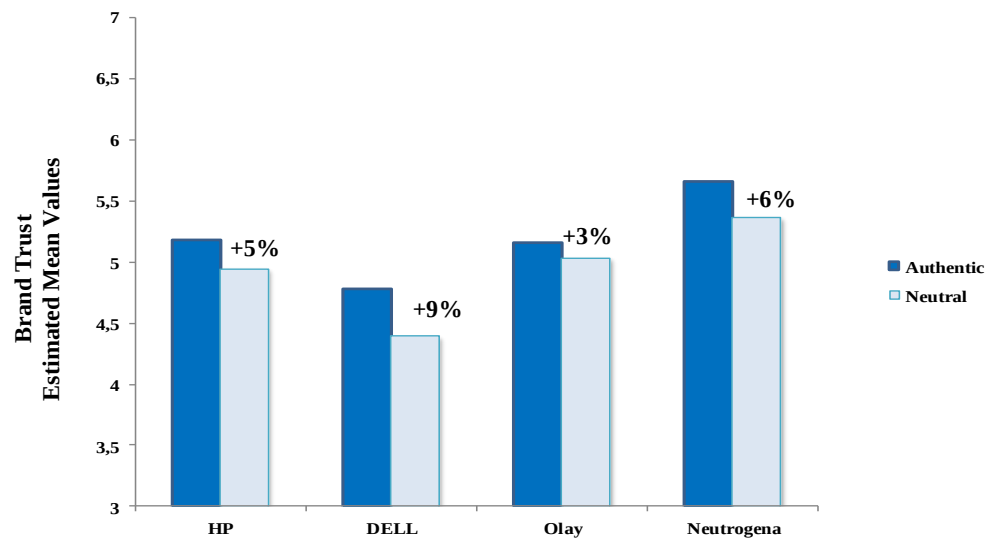
Covariates are evaluated at the following values:  
Brand Attitude (before treatment) = 5.20 (L), 5.45 (S), Age = 33.89

### Brand Evaluation



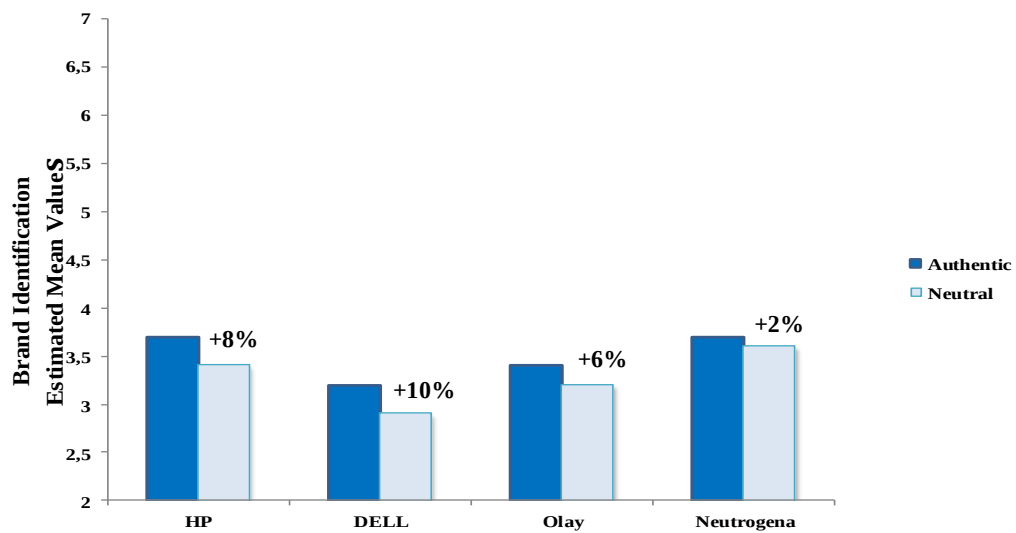
Covariates are evaluated at the following values:  
Brand Attitude (before treatment) = 5.20 (L), 5.45 (S), Age = 33.89

## Brand Trust



Covariates are evaluated at the following values:  
Brand Attitude (before treatment) = 5.20 (L), 5.45 (S),

## Brand Identification



Covariates are evaluated at the following values:  
Brand Attitude (before treatment) = 5.20 (L), 5.45 (S),

## Appendix I: Curriculum Vitae

**Gergana Emilova Konstantinova, B.Sc.**

Egkonstantinova@yahoo.de

**Birthdate & -place:** 28. 12. 1984, Sofia

**Nationality:** Bulgarian

### PROFESSIONAL CAREER

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**02/2011 - present**

**Student Project Assistant**

TNS Infratest, Munich, Germany – Automotive Department

- Providing support in the development of brand positioning and advertising campaign effectiveness reports
- Verifying large quantitative data gained by conducted surveys
- Assessment of monthly status reports

**10/2011 - 02/2013**

**Student Assistant**

Chair of International Marketing

Prof. DDr. A. Diamantopoulos, University of Vienna

- Assistance in research projects
- Organizational support
- Data analysis of extensive studies

**06/2010 - 02/2011**

**Freelancer**

Marketing Research – brand performance monitoring

**12/2009 - 06/2010**

**Internship**

TNS Infratest, Munich, Germany - Automotive Department

- Customer loyalty analysis
- Cooperation in the development of extensive survey result presentations
- Preparation of customer proposals
- Project coordination

**03/2008 - 11/2008**

**Student Project Assistant**

Consline AG, Munich, Germany

- Social media monitoring
- Market entry: country profile reports

**08/2007 - 11/2007**

**Internship**

AdScale GmbH, Munich, Germany

Online Marketing & Key Account Management

- Competitors' and product's analysis (social media)
- Key account management
- Providing support in the strategic customer evaluation

|                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>09/2006 - 03/2007</b>                                                                                            | <b>Student Assistant</b><br>Zooplus AG, Munich, Germany – Customer Service                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>06/2004 - 08/2004</b>                                                                                            | <b>Internship</b><br>Economy Policy Institute, Sofia, Bulgaria                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>EDUCATION</b>                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>2011 – 2013</b>                                                                                                  | <b>Master of Science in International Business Administration</b><br>University of Vienna, Austria<br>International Marketing and Management<br><b>Master Thesis:</b> The Impact of Authenticity on Brand Perceptions and Consumer Behavior |
| <b>SS 2012</b>                                                                                                      | <b>Exchange Student – ERASMUS</b><br>Luiss Guido Carli Univeristy - LUISS, Rome, Italy                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>2005 – 2009</b>                                                                                                  | <b>Bachelor of Science in Business Administration</b><br>Ludwig-Maximilians-University, Munich, Germany<br>Marketing and Strategy<br><b>Bachelor Thesis:</b> Information Content in Print Advertising: A Cross-Cultural Comparison          |
| <b>1998 – 2003</b>                                                                                                  | <b>Final secondary-school examinations</b><br>National Trade and Banking High School, Sofia, Bulgaria                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>AWARDS</b>                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>03/2011 – 07/2011</b>                                                                                            | <b>International Management - Strategy Simulation</b><br>Chair of International Marketing, University of Vienna<br>Winning Team “Best Strategy“                                                                                             |
| <b>10/2008 – 03/2009</b>                                                                                            | <b>FGM Team Award, Marketing Symposium 2009,</b><br>Ludwig-Maximilian-University<br>Winning Team “Customer Relationship - Direct Banking”                                                                                                   |
| <b>10/2006 – 03/2007</b>                                                                                            | <b>Business Planning ODEON Centre for Entrepreneurship,</b> Ludwig-Maximilian-University<br>Best Team “Business Planning“ among 90 participating teams                                                                                      |
| <b>LANGUAGES</b>                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>German &amp; English</b>                                                                                         | Fluent - TOEFL (IBT: 109)                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Italian</b>                                                                                                      | Level B1 – Intermediate                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Russian</b>                                                                                                      | Basics                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Bulgarian</b>                                                                                                    | Mother tongue                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>PC KNOWLEDGE</b>                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| MS Office (Excel, Word, PowerPoint, Access), Visual Basic for Applications<br>SPSS (also syntax) – excellent, STATA |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>HOBBIES &amp; INTERESTS</b>                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Figure Skating (Skating Club “MTT Akademik Sofia”, figure skater in the years 1993-2002), travelling, languages     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

## **Appendix J: German Abstract**

Marken-Authentizität wird in der Literatur häufig als der neue Markenführungsansatz des 21. Jahrhunderts und als Grundpfeiler des modernen Marketings bezeichnet. Es wird postuliert, dass nur solchen Marken, die es schaffen eine "authentische Aura" zu erzeugen, langfristig am Markt erfolgreich sind. Dennoch gibt es bis heute nur wenige empirische Beweise, ob und wie Unternehmen tatsächlich von einer authentischen Positionierung profitieren können.

Vor diesem Hintergrund hat die vorliegende Masterarbeit das Ziel zu untersuchen welche Reaktionen bei Konsumenten hervorgerufen werden, wenn eine globale Massenmarke als authentisch wahrgenommen wird. Der Fokus liegt dabei auf der Frage wie ein Unternehmen durch die Kommunikation einer authentischen Markengeschichte profitieren kann. Die wahrgenommene Marken-Authentizität wird anhand den drei Dimensionen nach Napoli et al. (2013) - Qualität, Ehrlichkeit, Tradition, die das Konstrukt aus Sicht der Konsumenten bilden, gemessen.

Um den möglichen Zusammenhang zwischen wahrgenommene Marken-Authentizität und Einstellung und Verhalten der Konsumenten zu analysieren, wird ein Experiment als Untersuchungsmethode und vier etablierten Marken als Untersuchungsgegenstand gewählt, wobei eine Beeinflussung der Ergebnisse durch marken-und produktspezifische, sowie soziodemografische Faktoren kontrolliert wird.

Die Ergebnisse der Studie zeigen, dass es einen positiven Zusammenhang zwischen Marken-Authentizität und Konsumentenverhalten gibt. Darüber hinaus hat eine hohe wahrgenommene Marken-Authentizität einen positiven Einfluss auf die Einstellung der Konsumenten gegenüber der Marke sowie auf ihre Bereitschaft diese weiterzuempfehlen.

Als Implikation für Manager lässt sich ableiten, dass Marken-Authentizität als Signal für Qualität dienen in Zusammenhang mit Produkten, die einem hohen Kaufrisiko verbunden sind.