

# ***Make it Mean***

## ***The Fine Art of Authenticity***

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## **Executive Summary**

The people want something real. In an increasingly frenetic culture, marketers operate in smaller attention windows, whilst consumers disregard perceived fakery with little thought. Contrived branding and methodologies do not work. But what does? This paper examines the marketing of authenticity, and the practice and application of making brands meaningful.

The researcher reviewed multiple ideologies aimed at meaning creation and authenticity, including cultural branding, framing, and self-expansion theory. Were the theories useful to practitioners? Five senior advertising professionals interviewed independently advised in-concert that the theories discussed are not practical and too-conceptual. An expansive survey, designed to identify key authenticity components, was then distributed to build on nascent research into authenticity. What mattered most? The researcher confirmed that credibility and integrity mattered more, and symbolism and continuity mattered less.

In the end, the researcher found meaning and authenticity in simplicity, straight answers and Occam's razor.

*There are a few pitfalls involved in the manufacture of authenticity—the main one being that, on the whole, people aren't idiots. - Boyd Farrow, 2015*

## **Introduction and Background**

Amidst gathering cognitive clutter and ever-esoteric communities, effective brands must speak to realities that resonant. Cultural branding and other authenticity theories promise salvation by positioning brands as meaningful. Even iconic. Are those promising redemption providing meaningful cues, or are they simply adding to the marketing malaise?

Young adults and teens have a tendency to exaggerate and dramatize all things life, especially authenticity. This hyperbole will serve as a germane introduction into the temporal nature of authenticity and cultural meaning.

It's mid-80's Minneapolis and the protagonist sits in the adolescent phase nucleus. In the hormonal sea of anxiety, shifting social allegiances, and dumb confusion, an authentic identity brings salvation. It brings confidence and clarity. It means stability, belonging to a like-minded group, and separating the genuine "us" from the artificial "them." Authenticity is a box the teen can open, insert identity, and neutralize self-doubt. Authenticity brings confidence and peace.

*"...One is Hip or one is Square...one is a rebel or one conforms, one is a frontiersman in the Wild West of American night life, or else a Square cell..." -*

Norman Mailer, 1957

In Grayson's and Martine's work (2004), they define two types of authenticity, *Indexical* and *Iconic*. Indexical authenticity is thought to have a "*factual and spatio-temporal link with something else. In the case of authentic market offerings, this link can be physical (as with the link between an actor and his handprints) or psychic (as with the link between a guide and his behavior... Indexicality distinguishes "the real thing" from its copies...* Indexical authenticity is a real Rolex watch, not one bought on Canal Street or a Mexican border town.

Grayson and Martine define *iconic* authenticity as an "*authentic reproduction*" or an "*authentic recreation.*" For example, "*a participant at a mountain-man rendezvous is authentic (or is creating an authentic reenactment) to the extent that his actions and speech are believed to mimic the behavior of someone attending a real rendezvous in the nineteenth century...*" Iconic authenticity is a fake Rolex watch, but identical to the fake Rolex watch worn by John Wayne. Importantly, for Grayson and Martine, iconic and indexical authenticity are not mutually exclusive.

Morhart et. al (2015) developed an authenticity scale based in part on Grayson's and Martine's work. The scale, which will be examined more thoroughly herein, was designed and tested around indexical, iconic, and experiential cues.

*"It's because it was real."* - Eugene Mirman

Meanwhile, our 1980's high school hero had three available identity options. Each included a built-in social network and a defined ideology: 'preppy,' 'metal,' or

'punker.' A preppy had to spend a lot of money on clothes and get dropped off in a German car. Out. A *metal*er must have long hair, no sleeves, and bad grades. Out. A teen punk had to look cool, like an *individual*, but he must also sacrifice *un-punk* relationships, dedicate to the *cause*, and make a lasting commitment.

Punk was more all-encompassing than the others, and more aligned with an adoption of core values. In this vein, our protagonist set up an ad-hoc self-concept continuum, with nationalism, religion and politics near the top, and Mountain Dew, Apple computers and Harley Davidson closer to the bottom. A *punk rock* identity would be in the top side of that continuum, closer to a National Rifle Association membership. The other two options aligned lower, akin to smoking Marlboro cigarettes.



Due to desperation and aspiration, our hero opted for the punk rock identity. To him, the adoption was transcendental. The off-the-shelf identity relieved the anxiety of being out there alone. While living in *opposition to the mainstream*, he disarmed external cultural expectations and judgements. Punk addressed deep-seated anxieties by disempowering the *conformists*. The protagonist adopted this perceived authentic and independent ethos, lived in the populist punk world, and he did it for the *scene*.

In this populist world, those perceived as lacking authenticity, either by failing to make the necessary sacrifices by listening to the music and going to concerts, or just being superficial and trendy (not true), were labeled posers or sell-outs. Once identified as fraudulent, an unauthentic poser must leave the comfortable world. From afar, the consequences seem trivial, but to the teen poser they were very real. And damaging.

In this world, a lack of authenticity meant ostracism. One's personal and cultural worth hinged on being true.

Teens have not changed. They just have different authenticity choices, and they take extraordinary measures to achieve that authenticity. Cecilia A. Cutler (1999) documented *Prep school gangsters*, rich New York city white kids in private schools who speak with an *African American vernacular english* affect, denounce wealth, and wear *baggy jeans* to achieve a rebellious identity. Cutler's work aligns nicely with Norman Mailer's 1957 essay "The White Negro," in which white's adopt black culture and cut ties with *conformity*.

In Jamie Mullaney's (2012) work with the *Straight-Edge Music Scene*, he described how those true to the straight edge ethos (no drinking/no drugs/no sex) discriminated and measured personal worth by one's level of commitment to the movement.

Teens buy-in, believe, and act on that belief. Marketers desire to impart a fraction of this exaggerated teen commitment and perceived authenticity to consumers. It's not easy to impart a high faith level and meaning into dispensable products, but many theorists have tried.

*I honestly believe that people of my generation despise authenticity, mostly because they're all so envious of it.* - Chuck Klosterman, 2006

## **Literature Review**

Before conducting interviews, and prior to survey design, this work centered on Douglas Holt's 2004 book "How Brands Become Icons: The Principles of Cultural Branding." Holt's work introduced salient ground in meaning creation, and provided a framework to introduce and review a multitude of related theories.

Holt focused on icon creation. He laid out six axioms critical to transforming a brand into an authentic icon. The axioms, based in sociocultural theory, fulfill Holt's overarching brand strategy: 1) Immerse a *brand narrative* into the center of a populist story; 2) Upon immersion, nourish that brand story until it evolves into an *authentic* myth; 3) To the consumer, the myth will come alive; 4) Thereafter, the faithful will bestow lasting meaning to the brand.

In the first foundational piece, Holt advised that a successful brand narrative should develop through a simple, well-told story. In the Harvard Business Review, he explained it as "...a single coherent story where the components work together in a synergistic fashion...." (p. 7). The brand narrative, preferably attending to identity is-

sues, shall be set in an authentic, populist world. The brand narrative must be consistent; it acts as the basis for the brand story and myth.

Holt's first tenet can be readily linked and juxtaposed against the mind share model. Charles Madden explained mind share as (1991):

*The new idea, known as mind share, is based on the supposition that a person's short-term memory has limited capacity and that therefore the marketer must reach and keep his brand or product in shares of the consumer's mind...just as the total amount of a product sold is 100 percent of its market share, marketers can also capture percentage shares of a person's short-term memory. The idea translates as 'the more mind share that a product holds in a potential buyer, the better the chance that he or she will buy the product. Conversely, the less mind share held, the less chance for the product's sale. (p.8)*

O'Barr took it further, linking the branding approach to unique selling propositions (2007):

*The mind-share approach to branding owes its origins to the hard-selling advertising of the 1950s, when it was customary for most ads to offer unique selling propositions (known as USPs). In this context, advertising's role was to inform consumers about a particular benefit of the advertised brand and to continue "on strategy," repeating this point over and over again until consumers internalized the information. Take, as examples, the USPs used by Crest toothpaste (dentists' recommendations and the brand's distinctive cavity-fighting ability) and Dove soap (the claim that its gentleness is based on the fact that cleansing cream accounts for one quarter of its formula). Both brands gave consumers strong reasons-why they should purchase the advertised brand rather than some other.*

Holt's second axiom asserted that the brand narrative (or *myth*) must address deep-seated, and widely shared, desires and anxieties. Desires and anxieties embedded in a specific time and place. The narrative shall work as a mechanism to soothe the anxiety between the target's true and aspired identity. When a consumer experiences the brand, he should experience the myth. Brand interaction becomes a ritual and an *embodiment* of the myth.



If effective, the narrative transforms the product into a badge to express one's symbolic self. The badge alleviates identity burdens. A tight, meaningful connection to the brand is formed through repeated ritual.

This connection asserted by Holt, between the product and the self, ties neatly with self-expansion theory. The model, originally posited to describe "...*how people think, feel, and act in the context of close relationships...*," (Reimann and Aron, page 66) was adapted by several researchers to branding. Reimann and Aron (2009) explained it this way on pages 74 and 75 in "Self-expansion motivation and inclusion of brands in self":

*...brands serve as resources, which consumers include in the self. First, for brands having reached the level of status symbol, such as the famous Polo Ralph Lauren polo player embroidered on the shirts, or the Montblanc Meisterstück fountain pen, consumers draw from these materialistic resources and eventually include them in the self once they own the branded product. Observational evidence suggests that consumers that include those brands in the self literally wear the brands with pride and show them to others. Typing on a slim Apple MacBook, quickly responding to an e-mail via the latest Blackberry model, or noting appointments in a leather bound Filofax in a meeting signals to others that the brand and its user have bonded...*

*Further, we argue that consumers tend to consciously or unconsciously experience their world from the perspective of the brands they possess (and have included in the self)...For example, the BMW brand has been positioned as "The Ultimate Driving Machine" for many years. Correspondingly, BMW owners have been reported to drive more aggressively than owners of other automobile brands....(p. 74-75)*

Although self-expansion theory does not address the myth paradigm espoused by Holt, it does align with the donning and ownership of a "badge" to express identity. The self-expansion theory, as related to branding, has not withstood any known, significant scientific testing.

Holt's third axiom stated that a brand must "address [an] *active contradiction in society*." Holt used this 1980 example to illustrate a pertinent contradiction:

1. Ronald Reagan was elected President; a "*frontier*" ethic was installed
2. Reagan inspired *real men* to *work hard* and make America great again
3. At the same time, the economy was in decline
4. Blue collar jobs disappeared, and real men couldn't find real jobs
5. Authentic men felt anxiety between their true identity and aspired identity

This contradiction, and the accompanying anxiety surrounding failing to be a real man, was answered by Budweiser's "This Bud's For You" campaign. The campaign celebrated the hard-working, blue collar American man; behind-the-scenes workers *who got it done*. Drinking a Bud allowed these men to celebrate their identity, and helped alleviate anxiety. And it was a ritual, an embodiment of the *blue-collar real man* myth.

Holt's fourth axiom reasserted that the brand narratives must be removed from everyday life and *elite control*. They must be set in populist worlds like preppy, *metal*, and punker. The populist mythology must inform everything within the brand's culture, a culture that may hold great power due to consumer shorthand. Holt advised that the shorthand was critical because consumers were *cognitive misers*.

The shorthand evoked by Holt is reminiscent of Framing theory. Framing was advanced by Robert Entman in the early 1990's. He identified frames as specific words, short phrases, or stereotyped images that influenced thinking. Entman wrote:

*...to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation....(p. 52)*

In a practical sense, framing suggests that the use of a particular word, or a short turn-of-phrase, will alter perception, and the requisite action, considerably. For example, Sniderman and Theriault (2004) found that prefacing a hate group rally with “free speech” concerns altered public opinion profoundly. Chong and Druckman (2007) explained it this way:

*What is particularly vexing in public opinion research is a phenomenon known as “framing effects.” These occur when (often small) changes in the presentation of an issue or an event produce (sometimes large) changes of opinion. For example, when asked whether they would favor or oppose allowing a hate group to hold a political rally, 85% of respondents answered in favor if the question was prefaced with the suggestion, “Given the importance of free speech,” whereas only 45% were in favor when the question was prefaced with the phrase, “Given the risk of violence...” (p.104)*

Framing studies often involve the creation of dictionaries, aligning specific words with specific attitudes, followed by extensive content analysis. In an evaluation of Framing theory, Vliegenthart and van Zoonen (2011) found that current research required further refinement:

*...participants drew from a limited pattern of religious, moral, legal and personal discourses to discuss the issue, regardless of the frame to which they were exposed. The effect of a particular frame appeared to be contingent on the ideological make-up of the group, and even then the authors found ample evidence that individual respondents in the groups referred to alternative frames... The inevitable result is that the field is adrift theoretically, seldom looking back to see where foundational modern theory needs to be adapted and, in some cases, overthrown, in order to keep pace with the orientations of late modern audiences....(p.110-111)*

Holt’s work focused on distilling distinct cultural communities into frames; essentially packaging a known culture (e.g. “rodeo”) into an icon, word, or short phrase. He argued to bottle a big idea into an easy-to-digest piece for recall. Holt’s work here

aligns with framing and the mind-share marketing approach to keep it simple and consistent.

Holt's fifth tenet asserted that true iconic brands lead the way, and teach people to alter their self-perception through the product. This aspect would require continuous cultural engagement and examination of what's new and impactful to a brand's constituency. Almquist and Roberts characterized it this way: "...*Systematically try to anticipate their brand's future relevance with tomorrow's most valuable customers*" (p.20).

Holt's sixth axiom emphasized stand-out ad campaigns versus consistency. Here, Holt deviated importantly from the discussed mind share approach. Holt surmised that operating bold, creative advertising campaigns was far more critical than maintaining a constant "mind share" presence.

Holt's last axiom posited that iconic brands enjoy a "*cultural halo*" effect. Everything associated with the brand felt better, tasted better, and looked better. The brand acted to provide distinctive benefits (similar to USP's), including a strengthened reputation and emboldened status.

Holt limited his cultural branding philosophy to self-expression categories; he acknowledged that the domain featured steep profit margins and stiff competition.

Holt's strategic cultural branding application began with identifying a specific target and creating a cultural brief (similar to a positioning statement). Instead of focusing on product benefits and quality, Holt focused on a creative strategic direction. Holt outlined three key components:

1. Myth treatment: Develop a plot, characters, and setting

2. Populist authenticity: One must create “*authentic ties*” by establishing “*literacy and fidelity*.” Literacy involved deeply understanding the nuanced populist world. Fidelity meant sacrificing “*broad based popularity*” to identify with, and “*stand up for*,” the marginalized populist world.

3. Charismatic aesthetic: Develop an organic, charismatic appeal (i.e. *Be cool*). The cultural brief was the story that made the myth work.

Upon cultural brief completion, a brand must then establish equity. Equity arises from the brands’ “cultural and political authority.” A brand must own unique mythic “turf,” and stay true to the pertinent values over time. Holt described equity:

*...The brand’s equity derives from people’s historic dependency on the brand’s myth. If a brands stories have provided identity value before, then the people grant the brand authority to tell similar stories later on....(p.111)*

After Holt established equity, while remaining *semper fidelis* to the populist value system, he leveraged brand loyalty. Iconic brands act as “identity magnets.” Dedication to the brand, which answers an acute anxiety, becomes a passionate pursuit for hardcore fans. Unlike mind-share, which works to increase loyalty by stretching the message to a wider appeal, meaningful iconic loyalty works to “*enhance the devotion of the core customers situated at the brand’s nucleus*.” Loyalty from the devoted will increase the magnet for all.

This tenet of Holt’s work can be compared readily to Thomas Franks’ 1998 work “The conquest of cool: Business culture, counterculture, and the rise of hip consumerism.” Frank espoused a belief in the dominance of a comparative preference structure. Within this structure, modern consumers buy things that convey distinction

and “cool.” A hierarchy of cool is constructed, wherein the cool becomes uncool if too many others like it. Mass appeal conveys a lack of distinction. This philosophy aligns neatly with Holt’s emphasis on a distinct, core customer.

Our examination of Holt’s work will conclude with a discussion of an adjacent tool, *marketing archetypes*. Archetypes have a natural and meaningful link to Holt’s model. They are used to infuse myths, and deep rooted meaning, into products. Archetypes work as centralized shared thoughts. At their best, they act as marketing shorthand for the essence of a product. Young & Rubicam (Y&R) describe archetypes as:

*Archetypes are deeply-rooted dispositions of common symbolic patterns that are anchored in our subconscious. Brands that manage to communicate along these dispositions, will not only be understood more intuitively, they also seem more trustworthy and meaningful. (p.1)*

With archetypes, marketers’ align products with single-minded and established cultural personalities. Archetype variations are readily employed by different advertising agencies. Y&R uses this model:



Archetypes, cultural branding and the rest effort to infuse meaning into ready consumables; but, does any of this work?

Our exhaustive analysis of cultural branding, and the extensive crossover with related marketing theories, led to the preparation and design of research to illuminate the elements that resonated with practicing professionals, journalism students, and consumers. The theories discussed herein are designed to make a product more meaningful and authentic. Are the theories useful to practitioners? Can marketing student's recall Holt's work? When consumers consider authenticity, what matters most?

## **Research Studies**

### **Study 1: In-depth professional interviews**

Five marketing professionals were interviewed in May 2015 to determine their thoughts on meaning creation and the theories linked to culture and authenticity.

#### **Method**

All five interviews were conducted separately, in physically disparate places. Each interviewee was advised to keep the conversation confidential. The researcher previously knew two of the interviewees, and the other three were introduced. Two interviews were held in person, in public spaces, and the others were handled telephonically. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes. Detailed typed notes were taken real-time during the interviews (the notes are available in Appendix A).

All five interviewees have over 15 years experience in the advertising field. All five work for different agencies. Interviewee one (Hojo) is currently a senior writer and has held numerous *creative* positions. Interviewee two (Jeff) is a CEO for a small advertising firm focused on brand strategy. Interviewee three (Matt) owns a digital technology company focused on “*strategy, big picture thinking*’ and digital ‘*tactical elements*.” Interviewee four (Jordan) is the founder and CEO of a digital advertising firm that specializes in travel and sports. Interviewee five (Chris) is an account executive with extensive *big firm* experience.

All five work in the Twin Cities.

To preserve anonymity, the results are written as if all interviewees are male, although that is not the case.

## **Results**

### **Hojo**

Hojo advised that those interested in creating meaning and authenticity, including iconic motorcycle brands, typically brief creatives via a “*here’s how we talk*” and “*here’s how we do it*” presentation. The creatives digest the presentation and the campaign goal, and then write copy. Hojo has not experienced clients discuss myth creation, or archetype affiliation, or even laddering, as part of a conversation to convey meaning. He was not aware of Holt or his theories prior to the interview. He was nominally aware of framing and archetypes.



Hojo stated that many companies are risk adverse. They just want consistency. Some roll out the same campaigns year-after-year, absent any dialogue concerning authenticity or meaning. Hojo has not witnessed many, if any, companies that wanted to adopt original work based on the current cultural climate. Cutting edge is not what these companies pay for. They are paying for mind share. Clients base campaigns on the standard product benefits angle; “*better, cheaper and smaller.*”

The broadest thinking brands chose a theme to convey meaning, like “*Challenge thinking to lead change.*” The team then bases a campaign around that theme. There is no discussion of creating frames, or addressing archetypes, or subconscious motives.

He added that the philosophies espoused by Holt and others would be impossible to effectively convey in a pitch. He felt that the clients, and the multiple layers of people one had to convince, would not understand or buy-in. Hojo felt that expressing a myth vision that clearly was “*rare,*” and the people making decisions were too practical and risk-adverse to accept that argument.

Hojo said that some strategists do develop big picture guidance from archetypes. However, in his experience, teams more often use qualitative research and small focus groups to guide campaigns.

### **Jeff**

Jeff emphasized that to project authenticity, one must “*mine key relationships*” and “*respond with an empathetic understanding.*” His firm worked diligently to completely understand the client and consumer first; to create a real symbiotic relationship.

He advised that many of his clients, especially the non-profit foundations, had limited research budgets. They did not have the resources to conduct extensive ladder-ing interviews, or mind-map brand meaning and the current cultural landscape. Further, clients did not typically seek that type of high-level insight.

Jeff's team primarily uses small qualitative focus groups to understand the target. Focus groups allow the firm to understand what the product means to the consumer directly. Focus groups get to the "*heart and minds of customers.*"

Jeff often focuses on the traditional advertising tenet '*differentiation*' to infuse meaning. His team looks at product price, brand voice, authority, and expertise. As an example, Jeff mentioned his work with a leading cosmetic brand. His strategy team, along with brand executives, conveyed meaning by emphasizing that the brand was unique because it was "*developed by dermatologists.*" This differentiation conveyed expertise, which added gravity to the cosmetic line.

Jeff has used archetypes in high level discussion with colleagues, but rarely, if ever, with clients. He was not aware of Holt or his theories prior to the interview. Some of the ideas expressed by Holt, archetypes, and even framing inform a general direction, all in a very vague way, "*It may inspire my guidance.*"

Jeff reaffirmed that meaning and authenticity was critical, however the theories discussed herein were not useful to his team. His team focused primarily on qualitative feedback from interviews and small groups. He advised that building relationships was the key. Jeff ended with "*people are smart, they know bullshit.*"

**Matt**

Matt advised that his job was to build a team to execute a strategic idea. He does not care if the idea is authentic or not. In his words, “*I don’t give a damn.*” Matt believes that most advertising lacks forethought into meaning. Ad campaigns are often simple and derivative:

*If you go into any advertising agency, creatives sit around and look at each other’s work. They are constantly reviewing advertising magazines and picking up, stealing ideas. Very little, if any, advertising is original or thought provoking.*

The primary advertising element that concerns Matt is Internet traffic, page views, and sales conversions. He feels that since those attributes can be directly measured, they convey true impact.

Matt has discussed archetypes, meaning, and authenticity with creatives, but he does not remember any of that talk leading to important marketing. Matt was not aware of Holt or his theories prior to the interview. He had no comment regarding brand narratives et al.

### **Jordan**

Jordan described his field, which specializes in travel and sports marketing, as the “*velvet ghetto.*”

Similar to the others, Jordan believed that most current advertising work lacks the insight implied in cultural branding and linked theories. He felt that most current work was ripped directly from related work. To illustrate, Jordan described a previous

job redesigning a booksellers website. A top marketing executive for the bookseller asked Jordan to “*make our website look like Apple’s site.*” Never mind the two shared different targets, sold very different products, and served different needs. The executive simply wanted the bookseller to be “*cool*” like Apple. Jordan had to redirect, or “*pivot*” the executive otherwise. Jordan’s story encapsulates his struggle with getting high minded concepts across to clients.

Jordan cited a few large clients, including General Electric (GE), as more interested in conveying meaning. GE has used archetypal theory, and deep seated goals to inform campaigns. Jordan felt that large businesses had enough resources to generate some “deeper” work. Although, the same large businesses often suffered from overly burdensome, and watering-down, approval processes. Good ideas, based on established theories, often did not make it to production. Executives fear a misstep most of all.

Ultimately, Jordan felt that a brand’s meaning was dictated by the customer. He advised that in 2000, a brand could tell a customer what it was. By 2010, the customer told the brand what it was. To Jordan, authenticity was all about “voice and tone,” and maintaining consistency. The more specialized the brand, the easier to maintain an authentic, meaningful identity. His ideas melded more with the mind share model.

Earlier in his career, Jordan specialized in research. He found that the most effective way to know the customer, and to achieve authenticity, was through in-store intercept interviews. Jordan believed that simple interviews were the best source for target, and brand, data.

Jordan was not aware of Holt or his theories prior to the interview. In the end, He felt that the theories outlaid herein were imaginative tools, but not practical, and rarely used.

### **Chris**

Chris works extensively on brand strategies and incorporating meaning into the message. Upon meeting a client, he works to understand the brand “*purpose, mission, values, tone, and personality.*” Chris is looking for complete understanding.

After hearing from company executives and staff, Chris conducts extensive qualitative research. This research includes interviewing customers and conducting focus groups. He will prepare for the interviews by developing a discussion guide; a series of questions to provide general “*guard rails.*” His team did not normally consider self-expansion theory or framing.

The conversations with customers inform the brand’s identity and meaning. The brand meaning must align authentically and “*connect*” with customers. If not, the brand must undergo extensive repositioning.

Chris advised that the firm’s overall repositioning methodology was “*connect - design - create.*” That methodology is advanced through a seven step process:

- |                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1. Proposal:          | What’s the goal?                               |
| 2. Connect:           | Review discussion guide / Qualitative Research |
| 3. Learning document: | Findings / Positioning territories             |
| 4. Creative brief:    | The strategic idea                             |

5. Creative concepts: Create two or three strategic positioning ideas
6. Final Concept: This is the one we believe in
7. Execution: To market

Chris' firm uses a methodical, iterative process to ensure that the client is on-board with each step. The process ensures that the firm is creating an authentic message.

Chris has used archetypes to inform the brand message. For example, he recently worked with a law school to reposition their institution. His team organized a half-day workshop, with hands-on exercises that included archetypes. To describe the school, the law school staff created a new archetype, a rabbi. They envisioned the rabbi as a wise leader, teacher, and listener. The archetype exercise proved useful in this case, and in several others.

Chris believed that envisioning brands as people, using archetypes or similar tools, was an effective tool to get “*underneath the surface*” and find authenticity. To accomplish this, he sometimes used lines of questioning like: “*If your brand was at a cocktail party, how would they dress? Who would be the loudest? What would they talk about?*” This type of identity-linking worked well to create dialogue surrounding the brand.

Chris was not readily familiar with Holt or his methodology. Like the other four interviewees, he had never read, and was not familiar with, the book, or ideas, detailed in “How brands become Icons: The principles of cultural branding.”

## **Study 1**

## **Review and Discussion**

The interviews outlined herein determined that experienced marketers are far more pragmatic, and less conceptual, than the theories reviewed. Advertisers need to satisfy a client base that does not often have the background to readily ascertain concepts like myth creation and frames.

Marketers create meaning and authenticity by conducting and analyzing qualitative research. All of those questioned used interviews, focus groups, or store intercepts to help determine brand meaning. None of the marketing professionals implied that their research dealt significantly with deeply rooted personal values.

None of the professionals interviewed used quantitative surveys or *big data* to ascertain perceived brand authenticity (or similar).

Holt's work was completely unknown and not utilized by any interviewed practitioners. Although no one had read the book, they felt his work *sounded interesting*, but not practical. A few advised that, if they ever did experiment with Holt's methodology, they would have to shield the client from that work. Any talk of creating myths to fulfill a cultural contradiction would likely confuse and upset brand representatives.

A few interviewees suggested that Holt's work may have relied more on revisionist story telling than measured intent. For example, Budweiser sales may have skyrocketed in the early 1980's, but not because of the Reagan myth, the blue-collar cultural contradiction, and the "This Bud's For You" campaign. The sales may have increased because people were broke, and Budweiser was the cheapest beer available. One likened Holt's work to Malcolm Gladwell's books; nice stories that cherry-picked

facts to make a point; no solid proof, just anecdotal evidence leading to a pre-determined end.

A few interviewed professionals found archetypal theory, and alike approaches, useful. Clients can readily understand and utilize archetypes to address the meanings hidden inside the brand. Archetypal theory was the only theory herein used by the interviewees. The others were deemed impractical or too-conceptual.

This study implied that meaning creation and authenticity can be derived from interviewing a small sample of employees, consumers and/or stakeholders. Advertisers do not rely on theoretical techniques to infuse meaning, they rely on what customers say. When it comes to authenticity, what do customers find most important? When consumers weigh a low-involvement purchase, how important is credibility vice continuity? Are customers swayed by clever origin stories? Do consumers care about the brand promise? Does it matter if the product is made locally? Does it matter who owns the business? Is it more about reputation? Marketers seem to agree that authenticity is important, but what's most important about authenticity?

Study one was limited to a small sample size of five. This study cannot be extrapolated to an entire industry. Two of the interviewees knew the researcher, and the other three were referred by those two. Although the researcher asked the respondents to keep the interview confidential, it is possible that cross-talk prior to the interviews biased results.

The researcher did not provide any guidance, or any concrete details, to the respondents prior to the interview. The researcher did not ask the interviewees to read Holt's book, or excerpts, prior to the interview.



## **Study 2: Pop Quiz to Journalism Graduate Students**

The objective with this study was to determine if the professionals interviewed simply had not been exposed to Holt's methodology, and thereby did not understand its effectiveness and relevance. Study 2 was highly targeted to determine if those trained in a multitude of advertising theories understood, grasped, and/or related to Holt's model. The researcher expected the graduate students questioned herein to readily understand, and be able to apply, Holt's work.

### **Method**

The researcher asked 15 Journalism graduate students, all with at least 21 credits in the study of advertising theory and related marketing courses, to take a surprise quiz. The students were asked to match four historic brands to their corresponding anxieties. All had received at least cursory instruction regarding cultural branding and Holt in particular. All of the elements included in the survey were pulled directly from Holt's 2004 book.

Limited instruction was provided; the students were advised that this study centered on the marketing book "How Brands become Icons" and provided a one page handout. The students were asked to match the brand on the left side to the corresponding alleviated anxiety on the right. A short discussion ensued, and the theory was explained broadly. The handout:

**Item**

**Anxiety**



Ratrace



Conformity erases the individual



Ross Perot to the 80's elites



War and racial discord

**Study 2**

**Results, Review and Discussion**

Six students matched all four brands to the anxiety they addressed:

- Coke: War and Racial Discord
- Corona: Ratrace
- Snapple: Ross Perot to the '80's elite's
- Mountain Dew: Conformity erases the individual

Nine students missed at least two correlations.

Sixty-percent of students with extensive training in advertising theory could not readily diagnose the links argued by Holt.

This study was conducted with students whom had all attended marketing courses with the researcher. The study included a small sample size, and was conducted once. The quiz was not held adjacent to the instruction covering Holt's work. All of the alleviated anxieties were from a different era; the Coke example was from the 60's, Corona and Snapple were the 90's, and Mountain Dew from the 80's. It is possible that some students missed the class, or classes, that covered cultural branding. This study cannot be considered pure science, and the results cannot be extrapolated to a broader audience.

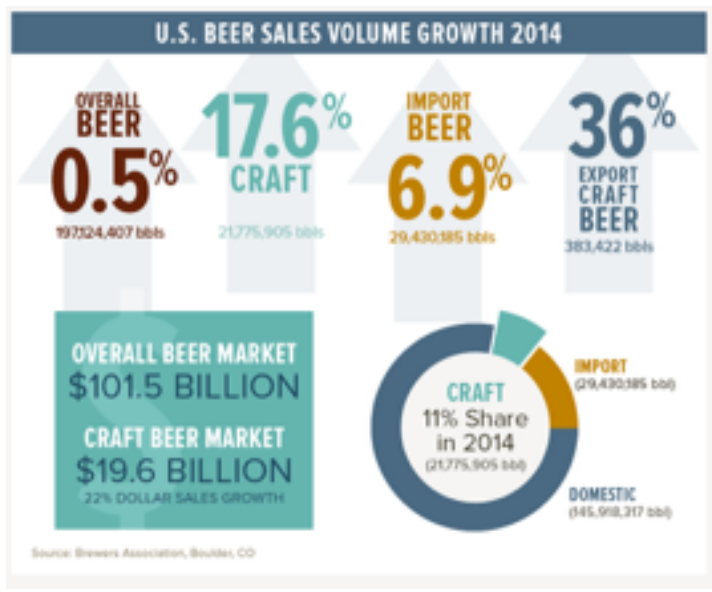
The quiz results do suggest that Holt's model cannot be recalled, or recognized intuitively, by the majority of Journalism students studying advertising methodologies. This study does provide limited latent support for the notion that cultural branding is a highly specialized, and potentially marginally employed technique.

### **Study 3: Authenticity Survey**

Although cultural branding and many of the related theories did not immediately prove constructive or critical to the advertising professionals interviewed, one element common to the techniques discussed did resonant, authenticity. Authenticity is a characteristic that the interviewees gave great weight. Authenticity has also attracted increased attention in academic and consumer sectors. It has even been adopted as a gauge to measure everything from leadership to election campaigns.

As our world becomes increasingly global and complex, individuals want to support, believe-in, and consume authenticity.

Current literature and related studies cover authenticity broadly, and often in the abstract. This study will adopt a previously established authenticity framework and project that framework onto a very specific product. A low-involvement product within the self-expression category, and one widely consumed; over \$100 billion in US 2014 sales alone. A product that can be created and launched with limited start-up costs. A product with scaleable, regional production and a high profit margin. A product in a competition rich sector that features extensive advertising. The product beer.



Beer consumers represent a large, broad segment of the adult population. Does authenticity matter to them, and, if so, what element of authenticity are most important? When a purchasing decision is made, does it have anything to do with product authenticity?

And, if so, what element of authenticity is most critical: Continuity, credibility, integrity or symbolism (Morhart et. al (2015)).

The strength of pinning the study to a specific category lies in the requirement for the survey-taker to apply the abstract idea, authenticity, to a familiar purchase. The re-

spondent is thereby encouraged to think about the idea concretely and in a relatable context.

A spotlight on one category will allow us to create clear results that can be tested against a broad spectrum of related categories. This study will create a solid foothold whereby inductive reasoning can not only be assumed, but tested directly against other categories.

## **Methods**

An online survey was conducted over the course of three days in July 2015. The survey was created on Qualtrics and designed to measure key authenticity constructs. The survey was designed to get the survey taker to initially think about the importance of beer in detail, and then, within that paradigm, account for authenticity and the elements of authenticity. The 20 question survey was designed in five parts. See Appendix B for the complete survey and results.

Fourteen of the survey questions were positioned on a seven point Likert scale. Respondents were asked to weigh questions or characteristics from a one, which meant not important/unimportant, completely false, or not authentic at all, to a seven, which was deemed most important, completely true, or 100% authentic. The scale remained consistent throughout the survey.

The first survey section covered demographics, age, sex and residence location (urban/suburban/rural). The researcher hypothesized that younger men in an urban setting would rate authenticity constructs higher than the out-group. (Hypothesis 1).

The second set of questions focused on how often survey-takers purchased beer, and how they weighed different product elements when making a purchasing decision. The elements included everything from price and taste, to reputation, brand story, and to authenticity directly. This section was designed to gauge how one prioritized beer purchases. The researcher hypothesized that those whom purchased beer more frequently would care more about the authenticity constructs surrounding the product (Hypothesis 2).

The third section, questions 10-13, offered a series of questions that positioned the beer element within a perceived brand authenticity (PBA) scale developed and tested by Morhart et. al (2015). The scale was designed around the “...*evidence-based (indexical), impression-based (iconic), and self-referential (experiential) cues..central to the formation of consumers' brand authenticity perceptions...*” The practical survey questions are broken down into four distinct constructs of authenticity (PBA; Morhart et al (2015)): *Continuity (i.e. a timeless brand); credibility (i.e. a brand that will not betray you); integrity (i.e. a brand that gives back to its consumers); and symbolism (i.e. a brand that adds meaning to people's lives)*. This section was meant to measure one’s affinity to authenticity within a specific product segment. The researcher hypothesized that the results herein would be consistent with Morhart et al;s findings, and credibility would rate the highest of the four constructs (Hypothesis 3).

The fourth section expanded on section three by asking the respondents direct questions about the importance of honesty, authenticity, and identity. This line of questioning was meant to engage the respondent surrounding similar ideas, but in a different

context. The importance of section four lies partly in the ability to align it with section three; it allows for an internal check to measure, and help to ensure, that miscommunication or misunderstanding did not affect the answers in section three. Another, added component in section four was the inclusion of two questions tied directly to identity, namely:

*My purchasing behavior acts as self-expression*

*I identify with the brands I consume*

The inclusion of the identity questions was designed to provide a window into the importance and acknowledgement of self when making a low-involvement purchase. Simply, this was an effort to determine if the ego-elements hinted herein were evident to the end user. The researcher hypothesized that frequent beer purchasers would score significantly higher on both (Hypothesis 4).

The fifth set of questions requested an authenticity measure for three different national, widely consumed beer brands, and a text box for explanation of the rating. This section was included to allow the respondent to expound on their beliefs, and for the researcher to hear from the survey taker directly. The researcher hypothesized that frequent purchasers would likely score Budweiser, Stella Artois, and Miller Lite less authentic than their counterparts (Hypothesis 5).

Upon survey construction, a link to the study was then made available to “Master” human intelligence task workers on Amazon’s Mechanical Turk site (Mturk.com). Every Mturk worker whom completed the survey was paid \$1.25.

In an effort to ensure that those whom took the quiz purchased beer, the survey was titled “Beer: A Survey for Purchasers.”

### **Study 3**

#### **Results and Discussion**

Three-hundred and sixty-one (361) people took the survey. Three-hundred and twenty-two respondents completed the survey. Fifty-eight percent of the respondents were male, and all except one was over 21 years-old. The age mean was 31-35, with 94 respondents aged 26-30.

Sixty four percent of respondents lived in a suburban or rural area, and the rest lived in a city.

Fifty-five percent of respondents whom completed the survey claimed to purchase beer on a daily or weekly basis. For our purposes, this group, totaling 195 respondents, will be designated frequent purchasers (FP’s). All others will be labeled casual purchasers (CP’s).

The majority of people whom took the survey felt that the brand of beer they purchased was fairly important (average value (AV) 5.16, with a standard deviation (SD) of 1.39). The most important beverage characteristic cited by survey takers was taste (AV 6.27 / SD 0.97). Price was a distant second to taste (AV 4.99 / SD 1.51), followed closely by familiarity (AV 4.62/SD 1.56) and reputation (AV 4.57/SD 1.73). The least important characteristics cited were brand story (AV 2.24/SD 1.49), calories (AV 2.42/



SD 1.61) and region produced (AV 2.55/SD 1.62). Over 50% of the respondents purchased import, domestic, and/or craft beer. Only 27% purchased light beer.

### **PBA Elements Continuity, Credibility, Integrity, and Symbolism Grouped**

In an effort to simplify analysis and help determine which overall dimension of authenticity was most important, the researcher combined PBA returns into one variable. The researcher took each PBA element individually (questions 10-13), factored the mean for all the Likert questions within that element, and assigned the result a single variable. The end result was four elements, continuity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism, instead of 15 individual questions. For example, the researcher took the PBA continuity results for; 1) A brand with a story, 2) A timeless brand, 3) A brand that survives times and 4) A brand that survives trends, and combined the overall mean into the single variable "Continuity." Thereby, age and other characteristics could be measured directly against continuity and the other PBA categories. The mean results for each category confirmed that the authenticity elements credibility and integrity were scored significantly higher than continuity and symbolism.

### **Hypothesis 3: Credibility will rate the highest of the four PBA constructs.**

**Finding: True**

Upon combining and comparing the four PBA category means, the researcher confirmed that the construct credibility was confirmed as the most important:

Continuity:	3.51
Credibility:	4.69

Integrity: 4.45  
Symbolism: 3.65

**Hypothesis 1: Younger men in an urban setting rate the four authenticity constructs higher than older individuals**

**Finding: False.**

Those aged 40 and under and residing in the city (YoungCity), totaling 110 respondents (40.6%), did not value any of the constructs significantly higher than the out-group (OldSuburb). In fact, the mean results were almost identical for both groups:

Continuity:	YoungCity 3.5	OldSuburb 3.5
Credibility:	YoungCity 4.7	OldSuburb 4.68
Integrity:	YoungCity 4.4	OldSuburb 4.45
Symbolism:	YoungCity 3.7	OldSuburb 3.6

Further investigation determined there were no significant differences between those aged 21-40 and those over 41 regardless of residence. Both groups rated the PBA element credibility as the most critical. The most distinct difference between the two groups, with a t-test significance of 0.158, was the answer to “I often identify with brands I consume.” Younger respondents scored that statement with a mean of 4.09, and those over 41 rated it 3.77. The two groups scored the question 9, “How important is authenticity when purchasing beer” almost exactly the same; the younger respondents mean was 3.73 and 41+ was 3.7.

The differences between urban respondents and those located outside the city were not meaningful. No significant differences were found in any of the PBA elements, and the questions surrounding self-expression and brand identification were almost identical.

**Hypothesis 2: Those whom purchase beer more frequently rate authenticity constructs surrounding the product higher.**

**Finding: True**

FP's (daily and weekly purchasers) scored higher on all PBA elements, although not significantly. Within the PBA categories, credibility showed the greatest discrepancy, with an FP mean of 4.8, and a CP mean of 4.5 (t-test .104 / not significant).

The researcher then reviewed the highest scoring elements in all PBA's categories to determine if any anomalies persisted. None did. For this series of tests, those whom rated an item of low-to-moderate importance (1-4:var L), were compared against those whom rated it more-to-most important (5-7:var M).

Within the continuity construct, neither the "A brand that survives trends" (CP's 44%M / FP 47.1%M) nor "A brand that "survives times" (CP 34.5% M/ FP 35.4%M) scored significant differences between the two groups. Within the credibility construct, 66.7% of CP's and 72.6% of FP's scored an "An honest brand" M. Similar results accompanied "A brand that accomplishes its value promise", whereby 62.7% of CP's and 71.7% of FP's scored it M.

Within the integrity construct, a “Brand that cares about its customers,” CP’s again scored that characteristic well, with 68.7% rating it M. FP’s gave that facet an ever higher ranking, 73.7%. “A brand with moral principles” followed the same trend, with 47.3% of CP.s ranking it M and 53.1% of FP’s. Within the symbolism construct, “A brand that reflects important values” scored a 42.6% M for CP’s and a 44.8% M for FP’s. “A brand that connects people with what is really important” scored a 33.3% M for CP’s and a 38.6% for FP’s.

Other factors showed more significant differences between the groups. FP’s felt that understanding the brewing process and brewery location were significantly more important than CP’s. FP’s also differed from their counterparts in rating the product elements alcohol content, brand story, and loyalty significantly higher.

FP’s felt significantly stronger about the statement “I often identify with brands I consume.” CP’s and FP’s response to “The driving force for my purchasing decisions is authenticity” rated a t-test of .088; with a CP mean of 3.5 and an FP mean of 3.88.

The entirety of the results support the theory that those whom purchase beer more frequently consider authenticity, and related traits more important than CP’s.

Further, the respondents who felt that authenticity was more-to-most important (M) when purchasing beer (question 9) scored all PBA elements significantly higher than their counterparts. All PBA elements tested within this category rated a t-test of less than 0.05.

**PBA means for those whom rated authenticity L:**

Continuity	2.94
Credibility	4.2
Integrity	4.01
Symbolism	3.11

**PBA means for those whom rated authenticity M:**

Continuity	4.43
Credibility	5.51
Integrity	5.17
Symbolism	4.5

**Hypothesis 4. Frequent beer purchasers will rate “My purchasing behavior acts as self-expression” and “I identify with the brands I consume” as significantly more important than casual purchasers.**

**Finding: False**

Although FP’s scored scored both questions with a higher degree of importance, only one finding was significant.

FP’s rated “My purchasing behavior acts as self-expression” at an importance mean of 4.3, and CP’s scored it 4.00, for a t-test of 1.54 (not significant). The “I identify with the brands I consume” question, FP”s scored that significantly higher than CP’s (4.22 v. 3.75 / t-test 0.17).

Although this hypothesis was not proven, it does provide support for the notion that those whom purchase a low-involvement product more frequently are more likely to invest in, and identify with, that product. This element likely warrants further review, and demonstrates latent support for self-expansion theory.

**Hypothesis 5: Frequent purchasers (FP's) will score Budweiser, Stella Artois, and Miller Lite less authentic than their counterparts.**

**Finding: False**

BUDWEISER: CP 4.26 / FP 4.67 / t-test .056

STELLA: CP 3.9 / FP 4.16 / t-test .202

Miller LITE: CP 3.82 / FP 4.08 / t-test .198

The researcher believed that FP's would score these brands less authentic, as they are mass produced and widely consumed by the outside group. In particular, the belief was that they would align more closely with Thomas Franks' "conquest of cool"; whereby "...A hierarchy of cool is constructed, wherein the cool becomes uncool if too many others like it. Mass appeal conveys a lack of distinction."

**Male vs. Female**

The researcher thereafter compared results between male and female respondents to determine if the data contained any additional significant findings. The PBA numbers between the sexes were nearly identical. The only differences of significance surrounded beer characteristics: taste (men 6.09 / women 6.5 / t-test .00), calories (men 2.24/ women 2.64 / t-test .024) and alcohol content (men 4.16 / women 3.68 / t-test .007) . These differences between the sexes, conveying attachment, may warrant additional study:

A. "My purchasing behavior acts as self expression" - men 4.06 / women 4.33 / t-test .166

B. "I often identify with brands I consume" - men 3.8 / women: 4.22 / t-test .065

Respondent comments at the end of the survey elicited a lot of insight into the beer brand preference results. Consumers felt that Budweiser was classic, popular, and American. Forty-six respondents cited America when discussing Budweiser's authenticity, including:

*The brand name is a symbol of America, and that in and of itself does mean a lot whether people think so or not. That being said, it is foreign owned, it does essentially thrive off a fascist economy(as all big businesses do mainly), and survives by having the capital to buy other people's ideas.*

*The brand of beer I choose to drink is Budweiser, it's the United States beer and cares about the American people. I'm proud to say I drink Budweiser!*

The comments for Stella Artois were more measured. Over 30 respondents advised that they were not familiar with the brand. Others considered authenticity in widely varying ways:

*It has a rich long history which is interesting. I also think that they have kept making a beer which has lasted over time and is still respected up until today.*

*Stella Artois puts itself out there as a fancy, high-end beer.*

*When I see advertisements for this company, I feel like it's not authentic. It's just telling consumers what they think we want to hear. I don't connect to this company, and don't buy their messages.*

The comments surrounding Miller Lite, which scored the lowest authenticity ratings, also raised several questions as to the respondents interpretation of authenticity:

*Miller lite is very authentic, but I cannot give it a 7. Although Miller the brand is authentic, I personally do not consider a ""lite"" beer as truly authentic.*

*..dunno I have found the commercials pretty shallow and that's the only thing I have to go on.*

*ugh, again, another really crappy American beer, but they have stayed rather true, strayed a bit with some concepts, but not too badly.*

*Miller Lite is a classic light beer. It's certainly not the greatest or most prestigious [sp] beer in the world, but it's drinkable and I know what I'm getting when I buy it. I know Miller sold out a number of years ago, but it still is a classic Americans light beer.*

*They are a fun party beer and that is exactly what they advertise themselves as.,*

*Miller Lite seems to me is the kid that keeps trying to be popular when the newest fad changes. They seem to constantly try to re-invent themselves.,*

## **Conclusion**

This study sought to review, analyze and expound on existing theories surrounding authenticity and the practice and application of making brands meaningful. We made some interesting discoveries, and identified several new questions.

The only authenticity adjacent theory discussed herein that resonated with advertising professionals was archetypes. Relatively complex and nuanced concepts like cultural branding and framing were deemed either unfit for client consumption, or too far removed from getting-the-job-done. For practitioners, the simplest route, often involving a small subset of qualitative interviews and clear conversations with clients, was the best route.



High-minded theories like cultural branding read well, but suffer translation to the street. Even well-studied Journalism graduate students could not readily comprehend the concept.

The disconnect between academia and practice deserves further scrutiny here. Perhaps those interviewed did not have the formal training or background to digest Holt. Maybe they attempted to incorporate frames or self-expansion theory early in their careers, and the attempts were met with derision and thereafter abandoned. Perhaps the demands of the job, and a relentless pace to produce copy, prevent deeper work. It may be that the client culture does not allow for big ideas.

The solution may lie in the creation of a small, more “experimental,” subgroup in agencies. The subgroup, probably with a cryptic name like “DarkLabor,” would consist of those with the requisite training in advertising theory and the resources to conduct more impactful surveys and/or deeper interviews. This would require financial backing, and a CEO willing to invest in, and commit to, the *art of it*. For smaller agencies, DarkLabor may consist of one person.

DarkLabor would initially be assigned parallel cases to the more standard advertising team (Standard). DarkLabor would incorporate cultural branding, frames, archetypes and even broader theories like self-expansion into the work.

The client would then be presented, without any prompting or undue explanation, both DarkLabor and Standard’s take on satisfying the marketing endgame. The client would decide, over the short term, if the theories resonant. If the client consistently

opts for Standard and dismisses DarkLabor, the academic theories will rarely meet the street. However, over time, with more evenly distributed client choices, and proper oversight and measurement tools, consumer practices would dictate if DarkLabor matters.

The DarkLabor solution would be most effective if spread across multiple agencies in multiple markets. A catalyst to the *movement* may be an “intervention” presentation at a large advertising convention geared toward executives. As DarkLabor would not initially be cost effective, upper-management, and other stakeholders, would have to be convinced that, long-term, these theories separate the great from the good.

The authenticity survey led to many important conclusions. When it comes to purchasing the low-involvement product beer, age and location have no bearing on authenticity perception. This finding conflicts with the notion that younger people, and especially those in advertising-rich urban centers, are more influenced by beer campaigns. This finding may act as a catalyst for deeper analysis into message delivery and consumption.

Importantly, this beer study confirmed and was consistent with Morhart’s et al finding that credibility was the most important construct within authenticity perception. The two studies also agreed on the least important tenet, continuity, and the ranking of integrity as second and symbolism as third. If these findings hold true over multiple additional studies, it will likely mean that advertising emphasizing continuity (e.g. “*We’ve been doing this for over 30 years*” - Jenny Craig) will be discarded by those in-the-know.

The finding that those who purchase a product more frequently consider that product more authentic matters. It matters because it strongly supports the belief that people invest more than money in the things they buy. People want to believe-in the things they buy. Frequent beer purchasers, the most sought after contingent within that category, identified more strongly with the product.

In crowded shelves in a crowded category, every edge matters, and these authenticity edges are evident. Emphasize taste and credibility, waste little time on continuity, and pitch these tenets to those who show-up, presumably in-store, to buy the product frequently. These buyers, whom identify more strongly with the product, will support your product because it reflects their *authentic* self.

## **Recommendations**

The survey comment section raised multiple questions as to the mindset of the respondents. It is probable that a more lengthy survey, and one that featured additional controls, would better convey the full range of authenticity elements perceived by consumers. It appeared that some beer purchasers confused authenticity with taste or a tie to their homeland, America.

Social media, due to the expansiveness of the field, was avoided in this study. The breadth and impact of the medium, in particular it's influence on authenticity (and PBA), must be researched thoroughly. Social media studies may identify authenticity shortcuts that can be effectively leveraged by advertisers. The questions here are numerous; the most pointed one being: Do consumers, especially millennials, give ex-

tra weight to PBA input when engaged on social media? Is social media the *authenticity* panacea?

The survey results deserve additional examination. Pointedly, are age and location really of no import? And, if frequent purchasers link their identify more strongly to the product (self-expansion), would it make sense to focus advertising dollars in-store at the point-of-purchase? Is honesty (credibility tenet) really the purpose of creating a brand story (rated least important)?

The survey overlap with Morhart et al's work also would benefit from more extensive review. A similar study, with a different low-involvement product, would further cement the work.

Differences identified between the sexes, touched on here, merit further consideration too. The finding that women identify more with the brands they consume was interesting and useful. It would be more useful to know if those findings held true over multiple related questions and additional product categories.

Ultimately, the findings herein bring the community closer to understanding what matters about authenticity. *And what does not.*

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## **Appendix A**

### Interview notes

#### **1**

Hojo 17 years

Concept - Problem

Audience solve a problem- persuasion - more sales

Graphic Design work 1/2 / Internal communications

Website/Brand book

-->> Directly - who use this --> Fallon for three years —> Subconscious stuff

Interpretive -- layers of what's going on --->No this isn't part of what I do.

A lot more pragmatic / not that deep

Campaign goals:

1) Brand book for Forrester Research -> website

AN internal brand book to rally people around their PURPOSE

PURPOSE: is the new vision statement --> worked for about a year / developed statement / "Challenge thinking to lead change" Chose a theme

- Coloplast - Denmark-- they do colostomy bags and catheters / wounds

/diabetic sores -> ad campaign targeted to wound nurses / hospital acquisitions

-- Interviewed 10 people / within and customers / the people who bought the products / learn perspective /meetings with client to divulge current status

---> Cover broader spectrum of conditions / better products / reduce costs / fewer ingredients / smaller / clear directions /



--> Strategist: take all the info. LEAD IDEA: Champions of Skin - Archetypes -->

---> Never present it to the client like that

-the number of people it has to go through at agency and through client

7 agency 12 client side- Rare to express true vision - Conflict

Worried about those other people / Point: Practical / make me look good

These company's have HUGE Budgets: / Arbys" Ving Rames ads

McDonald's: Ripped off Arby's ads: / Vision re-routed/ watered down

Harley Davidson: --> To women: we need women to buy Harley stuff, women tag-alongs / women riding clubs / A fixed thing they do every year /

Not an event / Generally women / to new and old riders / video's website

Internet based campaign / [http://www.harley-davidson.com/content/h-d/en\\_US/home/community/women-riders/garage-party.html](http://www.harley-davidson.com/content/h-d/en_US/home/community/women-riders/garage-party.html)

Need to think about target Who your brand is Vegetarian Menu / specific

Fallen / Olson / Periscope / Cole McVoy

Authenticity ---> it comes up all the time /

Harley Davidson: Brand standards -here's how we talk/ -watching what they do /—>

MACK TRUCKS Mack People / Bought out by Volvo / Brand Summit --> Fallen / Olson /

Periscope / Cole McVoy

## 2

Jeff, over 15 years

Mining from key relationships / target audience / every great brand is responding to it's understanding / relationship /Authenticity

Great brands empathy for and understanding of their customer

Relevant to the customer

Must be true/ People are smart / bullshit / Must deliver

Differentiation / unique / Relevant / true /differentiating

--> POLLING ? / We do a lot of qualitative /focus groups

Little research budget / any stakeholders /

Key relationships / Employees KNOW ABOUT THE BRANDS and FUNDERS

Archetypes - too big picture / metaphorical

/not that useful, / Rather use Brand promise / true

WE've encountered those / we are creators

and As a copywriter / it may inspire my guidance

NOT A board room / theory /Not applicable / cultural trends More of academic way /

Understand hearts and minds of customers /

the entire universe of you world

IMMERSION - ReSPONDING TO; People are feeling discounted /

People are looking to connect because they lost their job

We would take it down, to the real day / on a Wednesday /

If you step back - you can

NEVER IN MY EXPERIENCE HAS CREATED A MYTHOLOGY

General MILLS / Betty Crocker / PILLSBURY

/SMITHSONIAN / ESTEE LAUDER / CLINIQUE

--Differentiation -

You do the best you can / --price--voice --execute --authority - ---expertise-SCIENCE -

-Consistent EXECUTION

Estee Lauder vs. Clinique (DERMATOLOGIST developed)

Re-positioning: - Tangential -> brand to repositioning - tell the truth / missed the boat

MISSED THE BOAT / Domino's -- we made our pizza better,

we're going to fix it / Second chance / Tell the truth

MEDIA MIX OF everything relevant // Millennials / decision

VERY Fragmented / targeted WHO not HOW MANY people

Relationships, not customers - media relationship No shotgun

Psychographics

NOT READING FROM THIS PLAYBOOK / Not really - academic exercise

**3**

Matt, 19 years

Duality of a Southern Man -- > Marketing world -

strategists ---> Creatives ---> Doer's --> Executional side / how to build a team

I build a team / execution / I don't give a damn

Authenticity -Get paid - no matter what- ----

If I think it's stupid, it's not my job / executional

Easy side: You get paid no matter what -- Measurements / traffic / all bullshit / it's all  
crap /

High level theory/ They don't do Dick/ off-the-cuff / Sham industry

Does this feel good / Art History /

Theory is a back story / when it does work, they analyze it / It doesn't work that way /

Nobody is fucking saying that

Energy drink company - blow the money / All Derivative /

Creatives sit around looking at each-other's work - constantly - advertising magazines - everybody else is doing - / Derivative - Best Buy, last man standing

Geek Squad - Fired the owner, failed to promote, geek squad warranties - goes to the merchants, not geek squad - geek squad - how to install a kickr in your trunk - no budget for geek squad - Geek Squad -- /Missing the mark - profit margin provided by vendors / Samsung says, put me on the cover, on your home page, get me in your leaflets, and I'll give you a few million /

Reviews? Nominal. It's all bullshit - Measurement: Traffic, views, and conversion rate

Clicks to sales - directly attribute that -

Best buy switched to no ad placements and saw no difference in sales

Traditional ad marketing is dead -- maybe not Television -- Maintaining a foothold in the culture

#### **4**

Jordan, 18 years

Fun Starts Here / Everyday is Friday

Previously worked: Best Buy /Target etc

CSM - Hotel holding company / own residential and -own Marriott / Hiltons

Director of E-commerce / Digital work / travel digital is critical /

-Tanya Marketing Coordinator — Measure results

-ROI on SEM is huge

Focus on Hospitality, Sports and Entertainment

--> Yelp and digital space --> Velvet Ghetto <----

-Backwards companies -conversions - revenue

-email ->subject line changes--Retainer work — Digital tool kits

Email/social media/review sites/SEM

Hotel Holding Companies / Residential homes

Easy Sell / Breweries /

Intercepts /Client side: Strategy / PIVOT / turn them /

Olson: Thomson Reuters -> we want our website to look like Apple's website -

2007/2008 - lawyers don't want white space /

--> three brand templates /

Thought leadership company: GE / Hewlett Packard /

Brand scores --- digital /

--A bad idea: - open rate - Email programs - Bump open rate

re-working copy --> tactical / blocking —> Conversions

Bill Hicks / NRA - The distribute guns >social media plan / NO OVERVIEW /

The hospitality and entertainment - Band or restaurant - yes

Target either - all over the place — >>> No brand

Overt authenticity - >> Tone change / Feel it as a consumer /

The more specialized the brand, the easier it is to maintain identity.

Brand Ding — Targeted Middle aged women

-have you done research — prove that out

Strategy - Extended stay hotel in florida —

SEM? NO - (only during high season)

You have to make them want to go - packages, internal sales,

low season, work with corporations / stealing customers / awareness / percentages off /  
e-mails / real Niche / you need a niche in digital / traction - You need to meet our mis-  
sion

IA Summit / info architecture summit ==> In sum, targeting in digital is easy -

-->These groups are way behind / larger impact / -> different then Zeus/Jones - good

--> Olson is mediocre — Digital foundation / throwing darts? nope. Build your digital  
foundation /

Marriott - still in the 50's

Marriott - verified reviews - gross

5

Chris, 25 years

Account Director / initiatives / on Budget /

Strategies and research surrounding authenticity

We do brand positioning and brand platform

more of a design firm / we do both branding

esthetic and strategic positioning

Target - brand position already done

Understand purpose/mission/values/tone/personality

must completely understand what it means

Project brand--feels like Target / head and heart and guy perspective.

When we are brought in to develop from scratch

or org. bought / Repositioning: Talk to the customers

get smart / -mostly qualitative research / conversations

-Focus groups / phone interviews / timing / financial considerations

identity an authentic brand / someone had to create this

Must understand from the infant stages / what was truly their purpose

Brand identity /For the interviews:

most turnkey, we would have an account planner / more of an expert at representing the consumer / trained and practiced at qualitative research

-Focus groups / intercepts / he will develop a discussion guide - a series of questions to help provide guard rails /

BMW cars / general first / and then onto

Crowded marketplace

LOOK at differentiation / not brain surgery

Discussion guide: to the clients, a week before, to make sure they are on the board

The client -> how much do you share? Authenticity discussion with clients

Coloplast - wounds and skin care - creams and wound creams

they wanted to position in the US marketplace -

reposition the skin business (a DUTCH company)

nurses/ doctors/ consumers (nurses) / and Internal interviews

the leader in the category - "the champions of skin" --

coloplast wants to partner with me / good sales reps /

thorough research / HIGHER level of shared values - not just product benefits s

How / why / business model / Euro company

We had to rework the visuals for the campaign

Developed: CREATIVE BRIEF - photo style/font/colors etc.

Took sales people - profiled them /

"I'm a champion of skin"

Brand guidelines

It all must sound/look/messaging

----> > This isn't us?

It's happened / we work in an iterative fashion / connect - design - create / stay disciplined / and we are in alignment - we wrote proposal -

1. proposal

2. CONNECT PHASE / Discussion guide - research / Key Learnings

3. LEARNING Document - positioning territories / statement /language

4. Creative Brief - what's the assignment /whats the objective / challenge / and what's the strategic IDEA

Now you do the writing /

5. Creative concepts - 2 or 3 directions /

revisions

6. Final Concept

7. Execution



CONNECT - getting smart / competition / et al .

--- >> use of ARCHETYPES

We have used these in the past.

We were helping to reposition University of St. Thomas law school - smart people -  
many opinions

No focus groups

Half day workshops instead - hands on exercises . we did the archetype exercise / okay  
- here they are - what is the University of St. Thomas archetypes / you picked it, why?

How would the Sage talk about the law school ?

The account planner would orchestrate that workshop  
for a half day session - take them through the exercises  
to pull information out -

Archetype was very helpful in this case

None of these fits -

The archetype is more of A Rabbi / wise leader teacher listener /

CREATES interesting discussion and tangible

A law school with a higher purpose - PRACTICE WITH PURPOSE -

NOT WILLIE MITCHELL

I've seen it used a few times. been used. but they also do some of this type of thing in  
focus groups - New soft drink - example - a friend or an enemy / an athlete or an actor /

McDonalds example - the Big Mac - the grandfather - the wise one - the quarter  
pounder - the son who's away at college - / the cheeseburger is the baby of the family -

archetypes / Do a cocktail party -

if the different fast food restaurants went to the party how would they dress?

who would be the loudest / what would they talk about

BRANDS AS PEOPLE / get underneath surface / get to authentic

## **Appendix B**

### Authenticity survey and results

**1. What is your age?**

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	0-17		0	0%
2	18-20		1	0%
3	21-25		58	16%
4	26-30		94	26%
5	31-35		61	17%
6	36-40		60	17%
7	41-45		30	8%
8	46-55		43	12%
9	56-65		10	3%
10	66+		4	1%
	Total		361	

**2. What is your gender?**

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Male		208	58%
2	Female		152	42%
	Total		360	

**3. Your current residence is located in an:**

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Urban Area		129	36%
2	Suburban Area		172	48%
3	Rural Area		58	16%
	Total		359	

## Authenticity Survey and results

4. Detail your beer purchasing behavior over the last six months:

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Daily		12	3%
2	Weekly		185	52%
3	Monthly		106	30%
4	Bi-Monthly		22	6%
5	Three times		10	3%
6	Less than three times		8	2%
7	I have not purchased beer within the past six months		11	3%
Total			354	

5. In all scales herein, the number 1 signifies a low value (not important at all), and 7 signifies a high value (very important).





#	Answer	Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Standard Deviation	Responses
1	How important is the brand of beer you purchase?	1.00	7.00	5.18	1.39	347

6. Rate from 1 (not important at all) to 7 (most important). Rate the following in terms of making a beer purchasing decision:

#	Answer	Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Standard Deviation	Responses
1	Price	1.00	7.00	4.99	1.51	344
2	Taste	3.00	7.00	6.27	0.97	346
3	Calories	0.00	7.00	2.42	1.81	345
4	Alcohol Content	1.00	7.00	3.96	1.83	345
5	Region Produced	0.00	7.00	2.55	1.82	345
6	Brand Story	0.00	7.00	2.24	1.49	346
7	Loyalty to the brand	0.00	7.00	3.40	1.87	346
8	Novelty	0.00	7.00	2.84	1.65	346
9	Familiarity	1.00	7.00	4.62	1.56	346
10	Reputation	1.00	7.00	4.57	1.73	345
11	Choice of Peers	1.00	7.00	2.97	1.72	345

## Authenticity Survey and results

7. What types of beer do you prefer? (click all that apply)

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Import		202	58%
2	Domestic		231	67%
3	Craft		189	55%
4	Light		94	27%

8. Rate from 1 (not important at all) to 7 (most important).

#	Answer	Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Standard Deviation	Responses
1	How important is a beer brand's origin story?	0.00	7.00	2.43	1.51	346

9. Rate from 1 (not important at all) to 7 (most important).

#	Answer	Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Standard Deviation	Responses
1	How important is authenticity when purchasing beer?	1.00	7.00	3.85	1.84	344

10. Below is a list of different beer brand characteristics, please rate them 1 (unimportant) to 7 (most important):

#	Answer	Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Standard Deviation	Responses
1	A brand with a history	1.00	7.00	3.01	1.78	346
2	A timeless brand	1.00	7.00	3.27	1.73	346
3	A brand that survives times	1.00	7.00	3.68	1.88	346
4	A brand that survives trends	1.00	7.00	4.10	1.91	345

## Authenticity Survey and results

11. Below is a list of different beer brand characteristics, please rate them 1 (unimportant) to 7 (most important):

#	Answer	Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Standard Deviation	Responses
1	A brand that will not betray you	1.00	7.00	4.03	1.96	344
2	A brand that accomplishes its value promise	1.00	7.00	4.90	1.80	344
3	An honest brand	1.00	7.00	5.17	1.69	344

12. Below is a list of different beer brand characteristics, please rate them 1 (unimportant) to 7 (most important):

#	Answer	Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Standard Deviation	Responses
1	A brand that gives back to its customers	1.00	7.00	4.05	1.89	344
2	A brand with moral principles	1.00	7.00	4.28	1.90	344
3	A brand true to a set of morals	1.00	7.00	4.25	1.89	344
4	A brand that cares about its consumers	1.00	7.00	5.24	1.78	344

13. Below is a list of different beer brand characteristics, please rate them 1 (unimportant) to 7 (most important):

#	Answer	Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Standard Deviation	Responses
1	A brand that adds meaning to peoples lives	1.00	7.00	3.29	1.81	344
2	A brand that reflects important values	1.00	7.00	3.93	1.88	344
3	A brand that connects people with their real selves	1.00	7.00	3.65	1.96	344
4	A brand that connects people with what is really important	1.00	7.00	3.75	1.99	344

## Authenticity Survey and results

14. Please rate the following statements 1 (unimportant) to 7 (most important):

#	Answer	Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Standard Deviation	Responses
1	It is important for me to believe that a product is "real"	1.00	7.00	4.70	1.90	344
2	It is important for me to believe that a product is "true"	1.00	7.00	4.56	1.92	344
3	It is important that brands are honest	1.00	7.00	4.88	1.82	344
4	It is important that I relate to a brand's story	1.00	7.00	2.95	1.86	344

15. Please rate the following statements 1 (unimportant) to 7 (most important):

#	Answer	Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Standard Deviation	Responses
1	It is important to know the process by which things are made	0.00	7.00	4.33	1.81	344
2	It is important to know where things are made	0.00	7.00	4.39	1.88	344
3	It's important that a brand is operated by its founders	0.00	7.00	3.22	1.86	344
4	It is important to understand a brand's origin story	0.00	7.00	2.90	1.80	343
5	It is important that a brand posts, and lives-up to a brand promise	0.00	7.00	4.67	1.86	343

16. Please rate the following statements 1 (completely false) to 7 (completely true):

#	Answer	Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Standard Deviation	Responses
1	My purchasing behavior acts as self-expression	1.00	7.00	4.17	1.78	343
2	I often identify with the brands I consume	1.00	7.00	4.02	1.81	343
3	The driving force for my purchasing decisions is authenticity	1.00	7.00	3.73	1.88	343

## Authenticity Survey and results

17. On a seven point scale, how authentic is Budweiser (1 is not authentic at all, and 7 is 100% authentic)?

#	Answer	Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Standard Deviation	Responses
1	Budweiser authenticity	1.00	7.00	4.50	1.98	340

18. Please explain the reasons for your Budweiser rating:

19. On a seven point scale, how authentic is Stella Artois (1 is not authentic at all, and 7 is 100% authentic)?

#	Answer	Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Standard Deviation	Responses
1	Stella Artois Authenticity	1.00	7.00	4.06	1.66	332

20. Please explain the reasons for your Stella Artois rating:

21. On a seven point scale, how authentic is Miller Lite (1 is not authentic at all, and 7 is 100% authentic)?

#	Answer	Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Standard Deviation	Responses
1	Miller Lite Authenticity	1.00	7.00	3.97	1.62	326

22. Please explain the reasons for your Miller Lite rating:



## Appendix C

### Select Findings

➔ **T-Test**

**Group Statistics**

Detail your beer purchasing behavior over the last six months:		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Please rate the following statements 1 (completely false) to 7 (completely true) - I often identify with the brands I consume	8	149	3.7584	1.85506	.15197
	9	194	4.2268	1.74846	.12553

**Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Please rate the following statements 1 (completely false) to 7 (completely true) - I often identify with the brands I consume	Equal variances assumed	1.059	.304	-2.395	341	.017	-.46841	.19559	-.85312	-.08371
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.376	308.670	.018	-.46841	.19711	-.85627	-.08056

Frequent purchaser's (FP's), coded "9" here, identify significantly more with the brands they consume.

➔ **T-Test**

**Group Statistics**

Detail your beer purchasing behavior over the last six months:		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Credibility	8	150	4.5378	1.69254	.13820
	9	194	4.8213	1.52738	.10966

**Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Credibility	Equal variances assumed	2.389	.123	-1.628	342	.104	-.28353	.17412	-.62600	.05895
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.607	302.976	.109	-.28353	.17642	-.63069	.06363

Frequent purchaser's (FP's), coded "9" here, show considerable variance with CP's when grading the authenticity construct credibility.