

Master's Degree Dissertation

# The Canda Incident

Does commercialization matter in gift-giving and how does  
it affect authenticity and value?

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# Abstract

Authenticity is not a new concept, but it is becoming an increasingly important subject of study for marketers, psychologists, sociologists and the general public alike. It has been demonstrated its positive link with consumer value and wellbeing more than once, so this area of research is relevant to comprehend and use the authenticity construct to achieve better managerial performance, consumer-brand relationship and general consumer well-being.

Many implications of commercialization nowadays seem to go against the classic authenticity definitions (meaningfulness, uniqueness, doing something for mere enjoyment and not for an external reward, etc.). Brand distrust is increasing, and consumers find content generated by brands inauthentic.

The aim of this study is to test empirically the dynamics between authenticity, value and commercialization in the context of gift-giving. We start with a theoretical approach by proposing a theory as of why commercialization may reduce authenticity, according to current literature review. We suggest three frames that could explain the cause: loss of identityexpression, loss of uniqueness and lack of emotions from producers. An experimental approach follows to test if, in the context of gift-giving, there actually exists an effect in perceived authenticity and value if certain commercialization cues are manipulated, such as mass commercialization, longevity and commercial context (product being made by a person or by a company). We discover that the proposed commercialization cues indeed affect authenticity perceptions in gift-giving. Mass commercialization and longevity, concretely, also influence brand attitude, expected quality and willingness to pay. Commercialization context has the reverse effect in these items, and possible explanations for this phenomenon are proposed.

We demonstrate that commercialization leads to a penalization in authenticity perceptions when receiving gifts and, in some cases, also in the perceived value of the product and in the attitude towards the brand.

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# 1. Introduction: Goal and motivation of the research project

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## People seek for authenticity

“What will make us happy is spending our time and our money satisfying the desire for authenticity” – Joseph Pine<sup>1</sup>.

Joseph Pine made a savvy observation back in 2007. And as the years go by, the truer his statement seems to become. Is the world becoming increasingly *unreal*? Are our preferences and priorities as consumers shifting to make what is *real* and *genuine* the real value-holder? As Pine and Gilmore said: “people increasingly see the world in terms of real and fake, and want to buy the real from the genuine, not the fake from some phony” (B. J. Pine & Gilmore, 2013). However, what are exactly *inauthentic* things? Despite the apparent difficulty for grasping the full meaning of authenticity, with plenty of fuzzy boundaries, its importance cannot be denied:

In 2017, Stackla surveyed more than 2,000 adults from USA, UK and Australia to elaborate its Consumer Content Report<sup>2</sup>. They found that 86% of respondents considered authenticity as an important criterion when deciding brand preferences (Stackla, 2017). A most recent study<sup>3</sup> gave even more striking results: for the same question, 90% of respondents deemed authenticity as important (Stackla, 2019). This also works the other way around: inauthenticity can suppose a great cost for brands (Deibert, 2017). Moreover, millennials are the age group that care the most for the authentic, which reaffirms that the trend is not going to die any time soon (Daneshkhu, 2018; Stackla, 2017).

The quest for authenticity is abundantly explored in academics as well (Arnould & Price, 2000; M. B. Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Cohen, 1988; Lewis & Bridger, 2000; Liao & Ma, 2009; Zavestoski, 2002). It has been stated that “consumers' search for authenticity is one of

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Pine (2007). “What consumers really want”. Ted Talk: [https://www.ted.com/talks/joseph\\_pine\\_on\\_what\\_consumers\\_want](https://www.ted.com/talks/joseph_pine_on_what_consumers_want)

<sup>2</sup> There were 1,007 respondents from USA, 501 from UK and 500 from Australia. The sample was provided by the research panel Market Cube.

<sup>3</sup> There were 1,590 survey respondents. 1,002 from the U.S, 295 from the UK and 293 from Australia.

the cornerstones of contemporary marketing, notwithstanding the "inauthenticity" of today's consumer culture" (Brown, Kozinets, & Sherry, 2003). This quest for authenticity influences both consumers' attitudes and their behavior in consumption (Liao & Ma, 2009).

Some authors studied the role of authenticity and their positive influence in consumer choice and satisfaction (or the negative effects due to the lack of it) in specific industries, as in the luxury wine industry (M. Beverland, 2006), the Frontline Service (Arnold, Hall, & Baker, 2016), tourism (Cohen, 1988; Cole, 2007) and in the production and commodification of Western Culture (Peñaloza, 2000).

Many research streams have tried to form an effective conceptualization (M. Beverland, 2006; M. B. Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Lehman, O'Connor, Kovacs, & Newman, 2018; Liao & Ma, 2009; Morhart, Malär, Guèvremont, Girardin, & Grohmann, 2013) and most authors agree that it plays an active role in creating consumer value.

Even though a negative relationship between commercialization and authenticity have been suggested more than once (M. Beverland, 2006; M. B. Beverland, Lindgreen, & Vink, 2008; Cohen, 1988; Liao & Ma, 2009; Morhart et al., 2013; Moulard, Raggio, & Folse, 2016), there is not clear nor specific research about it nor about the nature that surrounds it.

Despite of that, we know as a fact that more than half of consumers believe that the majority of brands create inauthentic content. Most of them trust the opinion of their friends and family more than those of celebrities and influencers when making purchase decisions and find the content of other consumers more authentic and reliable than the ones generated by brands (Stackla, 2017). Other studies have reported similar findings (Johnson, n.d.; Liao & Ma, 2009).

Are brands framed as inauthentic due to their failure to convey authenticity cues? Or is it something else, something as deep rooted and irrevocable as commercial context itself?

It is not new that consumers reject money-seeking in the art industry. People look down on artists that are perceived as *too* commercial, deeming them as inauthentic and *sell outs* (Bhattacharjee, Berman, Dana, & Mellers, 2014; Moulard, Rice, Garrity, & Mangus, 2014). People want *real* passion, *real* feelings, *real* experiences. And commercialization may just stand in the way in making things feel truly genuine. Brands can also be perceived, under some circumstances, as *too* commercial and inauthentic (M. Beverland, 2006; Moulard et al., 2016) and, in consequence, as less valuable or trustful. Is the world becoming fake because more and more things are being commercialized? After all, there is an extended social belief that money can't buy happiness. Materialism in fact is closely related to commercialization

and money and has been frequently linked with unhappiness (Srikant, 2013). What is clear is that authenticity is craved and valued because nowadays it is scarce.

Being authenticity such an important attribute in consumer and brand culture, we believe that studying theoretically and empirically the effects that commercialization causes on it, as well as on consumer value and, ultimately, on happiness, could open a new path for future lines of research and could bring interesting and new insights about consumer behavior and psychology.

## 2. Theoretical Background

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### What is authenticity?

From the Greek word *authentikos*, it means "original, genuine and principal". Its modern definition is ambiguous. Many studies agree that authenticity relates to what is "genuine, real and/or true" (M. B. Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Lehman et al., 2018; Morhart et al., 2013). Other words that have been used to define it are *pristine, primitive, natural, human, ethical, original, sincere* or "that which is as yet untouched by modernity" (Cohen, 1988; Liao & Ma, 2009).

Even though some real, objective qualities have been attributed to what is authentic (such as indexical proprieties<sup>4</sup>), there is general consensus that authenticity is a consumer perception rather than an inherent quality, and that it comes from a social construction (Arnould & Price, 2000; M. Beverland, 2006; M. B. Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Cohen, 1988; Lehman et al., 2018). This means that there is not a universal definition of authenticity nor a universal interpretation. This theory is supported by Joseph Pine, who claimed that there is actually no such thing as "inauthentic experiences" (J. Pine, 2007). Authenticity is subjective and due to this subjectivity, it can have a wide range of interpretations that are tied to the context and the individual (M. B. Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). There are some basic agreements among authors about some dimensions of authenticity, however "there is much less agreement below the surface" about its meaning (Lehman et al., 2018).

An practical example of this is that in a study conducted by Beverland, Lindgreen & Vink (2008), participants could not tell apart real from fake. Even those who sought authenticity could not tell apart "authentic" brands from emulating brands when observing Trappist beer bottles and brand logos. Instead, they judged the beers according to their subjective idea of authenticity, or what they believed something authentic should look like.

Authenticity is related to the act of expressing one's identity (Lewis & Bridger, 2000), as consumers seek authenticity as a mean to express their "true self", who they are, what they think and feel (Arnould & Price, 2000; Lehman et al., 2018). Thus, authenticity enhances the *value-expression* function of goods. Authenticity is also sought by consumers that wish to

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<sup>4</sup> "Indexicality refers to a perceiver's experience of physical or behavioral fact that provides some verification of what is claimed to be delivered" (Morhart et al., 2013)(Morhart et al., 2013)

become closer to their ideal self (Arnould & Price, 2000; M. B. Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Liao & Ma, 2009) and to express one's morals (M. B. Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Morhart et al., 2013).

Many studies related authenticity with uniqueness and scarceness (Arnold et al., 2016; Arnould & Price, 2000; M. Beverland, 2006; Brown et al., 2003; Lewis & Bridger, 2000; Liao & Ma, 2009). Uniqueness is considered both a trait that conforms authenticity and a trait that enhances it. Scarceness is related to uniqueness, as unique things are also scarce, but it also relies on the notion of having to spend high efforts in achieving something that is scarce. Liao & Ma (2009) found an interesting insight about it: "Authenticity implies scarceness because it is hard-to-achieve property. In other words, people have to spend more time, money, or effort to achieve and maintain authenticity [...]. Participants with a high need for authenticity indicated that they might consider a product unique because of its scarcity rather than its ability to exhibit uniqueness".

Authenticity is also associated to heritage, quality commitment, style consistency, originality and origin (M. Beverland, 2006; Liao & Ma, 2009; Morhart et al., 2013).

Some authors have expressed authenticity as the opposite from what is mass-produced (Arnould & Price, 2000; Lewis & Bridger, 2000). It has even been suggested that "we most often seek authenticity because it is the very thing that seems to be lacking in our lives and in the world around us" (Lehman et al., 2018).

Authenticity is also associated with handmade traits (Liao & Ma, 2009) since handcrafted commodities are often perceived by consumers as more unique and authentic (Fuchs, Schreier, & van Osselaer, 2015).

A study exploring the handmade effect concluded that there is a consumer preference for handmade products above machine crafted products due to the first ones containing the "love", "essence", "effort" and "emotional investment" of the producer for the product and for the production process. Consumers perceive that producers transfer their "being" to the goods by contagion effect and this "essence", "love" or "emotion" can be transferred again to consumers through consumption (Lehman et al., 2018) or conveyed to others through gift-giving (Fuchs et al., 2015). This contagion perception is another dimension of authenticity.

In Liao & Ma's study (2009), they explained that one of the dimensions of authenticity is sacredness, or a "high personal identification, high personal involvement and nostalgia/past memory", and the transfer of meaning from the commodities to consumers. When consumers purchase and use authentic goods, the "producer's spirit" is transferred to them through the goods. Some participants in this study also prioritized authentic products for gift giving,

coinciding with the handmade effect findings where consumers preferred handmade effects for gift giving to convey “love” (Fuchs et al., 2015).

Authenticity is connected thus to emotions and essence. Studies on the contagion effect of authenticity show that “objects perceived as authentic generate value not because they are of higher quality, per se, but, rather, because they contain the “essence” of their source”. An object can be considered authentic due to its connection with a person, place or time (Lehman et al., 2018).

Emotions of authenticity come from both consumer emotions (special connections to personal meanings and life narratives that are imbued to commodities (Arnould & Price, 2000)) and producer emotions (love, passion and genuine interest for the product (Fuchs et al., 2015; Moulard et al., 2016)). In the measurement scale of Perceived Brand Authenticity elaborated by Morhart et al. (2013), one of the dimensions that formed Perceived Brand Authenticity was integrity, related to the brand’s intentions, values and morals; another one was symbolism, related to those values of the brand that consumers could feel identified with.

Finally, the last two dimensions of the PBA measurement scale were credibility (“consumers associate authentic brands with a high level of credibility—the brands ‘willingness and ability to deliver on their promises’) and continuity, to be timeless and remain true to its origins. In the end, this is in accordance to “acting true to oneself”, or what one proclaims to be to others. In summary, it is difficult to set a clear line around the definition of authenticity since it is more subjective than objective. The wide amount of perspectives in its meanings implies a wide amount of perspectives of why commercialization may undermine it.

We tentatively propose three possible perspectives as of why commercialization may harm authenticity, that will be explained later on:

1. Reduction of identity expression
2. Reduction of uniqueness and scarceness
3. Threat on emotions, passion and values.

However, in the bottom line we have to take into account that they are connected to each other and are just different dimensions of one same thing.

### **Authenticity adds value**

Authenticity has been positively linked with consumer well-being and self-esteem (Lehman et al., 2018).

Lewis and Bridger (2000) stated that “manufacturers and service providers in the New Economy should endow their brands with authenticity to capture the attention and win the trust of demanding New Consumers”. Consumers are willing to spend time and effort, even put themselves to “inconvenience”, in order to obtain authenticity in the commodities they purchase (Lewis & Bridger, 2000). They are also willing to pay a higher price for it (Liao & Ma, 2009), since consumers with high need of authenticity are more insensible to price. In an experiment conducted by Fuchs et al. (2015), it was found that participants were willing to pay 17% more for a bar of French soap when the soap was presented as handmade.

Perceptions on brand authenticity and on brand managers’ passion about their products have positive outcomes on consumers’ brand trust and expectations of quality (Moulard et al., 2016). These are based on perceptions that a brand follows a product orientation (intrinsic interest for the product) in opposite to a customer orientation (extrinsic interest for satisfying the customer’s desires), which can be compared to the findings of another study where perceptions of an artist satisfying their own desires in an artwork increased perceived value and quality expectation (Bhattacharjee et al., 2014). The perceived brand authenticity also has positive effects on brand attachment, word-of-mouth, brand choice likelihood, and brand consumption (Morhart et al., 2013).

Brands use authenticity traits in their communication, as promoting handmade traits in their products (e.g. Rolls Royce) and value commitments (e.g. Body Shop, Toms) (M. Beverland, 2006). Consumers perceive authenticity from brand strategies that appeal to emotional connection and identification, such as storytelling (Lehman et al., 2018). Some have addressed the success of Starbucks in creating a brand authenticity perception and its effects on inferring positive sentiments towards the brand (Pine, 2007; Shirdastian, Laroche, & Richard, 2017).

### **Does commercialization undermine authenticity?**

“Money and authenticity are inextricably linked, as we will see, even as one of the most common forms of authenticity-seeking is an attempted flight from the contamination of money.” – Sarah Perry<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Sarah Perry (2016). “The Origin of Authenticity in the Breakdown of the Illusion of the Real”: <https://www.ribbonfarm.com/2016/09/01/the-origin-of-authenticity-in-the-breakdown-of-the-illusion-of-the-real/>

As explained above, producers' motives influence consumer perceptions on their works' quality. It was demonstrated that consumer focus (satisfying consumers' desires) and commercial motives undermined expected quality of the artwork of artists and increased the perception of "selling out" (Bhattacharjee et al., 2014). However, while commercial motives harmed value perceptions in art, in their study commercial motives and consumer focus improved quality and value expectations in commercial goods, setting a clear distinction between artistic and commercial commodities.

Another recent study seems to contradict this notion. It stated that "brand authenticity is analogous to the consumer perception that an organization (or brand) employs a product orientation" (Moulard et al., 2016), where product orientation is defined as genuine interest and passion for the product, opposed to customer orientation. Producers' motives that rely on intrinsic motivation or passion for the product enhance brand perceived authenticity whereas "consumers may judge a brand as inauthentic when the brand is perceived to be directed by individuals who are externally or customer driven and are overly commercial and profit focused" (Moulard et al., 2016).

In the study of authenticity in the luxury wine industry (M. Beverland, 2006), one of the attributes of authenticity found was "downplaying commercial motives". Consumers valued more products that were not as mass marketed or overly commercialized. According to the study, many brands "deliberately downplay their commercial motives to differentiate themselves from mainstream brands".

Another evidence is the study conducted by Fuchs et al. (2015) about the production of Spanish guitars, where they found that a preference for handmade guitars was only present if consumers knew producers were motivated by intrinsic motives as "enjoying building guitars". When consumers learned they were motivated by economic incentives, handmade preference was not significant anymore.

All this suggests a negative relationship between commercial orientation and authenticity perception.

Many have also mentioned a sense of distrust in marketers. As stated in the introduction, when seeking for authenticity, consumers trust more in the word-of-mouth of other consumers and their own product knowledge rather than the claims made by experts and marketers about the product's authenticity. Consumers are loyal to the commodities they consider authentic, but not to the brands that offer them (Liao & Ma, 2009). In fact, consumers outright distrust and react cynically to authenticity claims from marketers (M. B. Beverland et al., 2008).

Since credibility was an important factor of perceived authenticity, distrust in brands or the belief that they are moved purely by commercial motives may undermine authenticity.

In the tourism industry, it has been said that commoditization of cultures destroys its authenticity to lead to a “staged authenticity” that is not genuine (Cohen, 1988). As commoditized cultures and destinations appear less authentic to tourists, they also perceive them as less valuable (Cole, 2007). Thus, an absence of commercialization is needed in order to perceive true authenticity (Cohen, 1988).

Some have stated that the quest for authenticity is driven due to a culture of mass commercialization that lacks any sense of identity and meaning (Liao & Ma, 2009; Morhart et al., 2013). Consumers expressed spiritualism and genuineness (attributes of authenticity) as opposite to materialism (M. B. Beverland & Farrelly, 2010), which is associated to mass consumption (Zavestoski, 2002).

Zavestoski (2002) explained, in a modified Maslows’ pyramid, that the need of self-actualization is divided between efficacy and authenticity. According to the author, in modern mass-consumption culture people sought to satisfy their need for authenticity, the last stage of the hierarchy of needs, through consumption. However, some can’t fulfill an authentic feeling of self through consumption of commodities and switched to anticonsumption behaviors to satisfy their need of self-fulfillment.

If authenticity is sought as a resistance of the consumption and materialism culture, it seems logical to put authenticity as an opposition of commercialization.

### **Why may commercialization undermine authenticity?**

Postmodernity, which according to Arnould & Price (2000) can be divided into globalization, deterritorialization<sup>6</sup> and hyperreality<sup>7</sup>, brings a sense of “meaninglessness” in the perception of identity and the “self” of consumers. This sense of loss of the meaning, the identity and the

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<sup>6</sup> Becoming territory-less, following “a process of spatial and temporal dislocation”.

<sup>7</sup> Broadly studied concept about the inability to distinguish between reality and imagery, or what could be referred as “simulation of reality”.

“self” from postmodern society and overconsumption culture brings people to search for what is authentic (Arnould & Price, 2000; Zavestoski, 2002).

There is not a unique goal in the quest for authenticity, as even the different interpretations of the word are results of the different goals and context in which individuals seek for authenticity (M. B. Beverland & Farrelly, 2010).

Thus, we would like to propose three perspectives linked to three different dimensions of authenticity that could explain why commoditization reduces it.

1. Being true to oneself, identity expression and self-actualization
2. Uniqueness and scarceness
3. Emotions, passion and values.

### **1. Being true to oneself, identity expression and self-actualization**

According to Liao & Ma (2009), “consumers with a need for authenticity intend to conform personal true self to ideal self and aim to live an ideal life by acquiring authentic products”.

Commercial products may not be effective for consumers that seek for authenticity to express and reinforce their own identity. If many copies of a same commodity are distributed among consumers and many individuals consume the same product, they are just obtaining the “same” identity and self. We would like to use personal odor, due to the intimate nature of it, as an example to explain this point. By buying a commercial perfume, the scent of a person not only pertains to them, it will be the same as the other individuals that have bought the same colony. If someone buys a T-shirt in a commercial store, there may be hundreds of persons in the same city wearing the same garment. If consumers seek authenticity to express their identity and their “inner self”, commercialization may negate it by reproducing the same products for everyone.

Consumers’ quest for the authentic to express individuality through the innovative, the original and different (Lewis & Bridger, 2000) is the opposition of the mainstream, of the mass-commercialized (as Arnould & Price (2000) stated, mass-commercialization negates identity) and the non-customized objects and experiences. Economy fails to allow individuals to feel authentic and genuine about themselves (Zavestoski, 2002). Consumers “transform commodities or experiences into highly individuated icons of personal meaning” (Arnould & Price, 2000). They seek for authentic goods because they are meaningful and are able to

represent them (Liao & Ma, 2009), and commercialization, as stated above, sometimes fails to accomplish it.

Consumers not only seek authenticity in order to express their true self, they also want to get closer to their ideal self (Liao & Ma, 2009). They view authenticity in terms of how things ought to be (M. Beverland, 2006). Peñaloza (2000) explained that in the commoditization of Western Culture, authenticity was constructed by marketers partly with the romance of the Wild West culture from the mind of consumers, based on how consumers idealized and imagined the West to be.

This would explain why some authentic products are regarded as “more” genuine when they are not commercialized, especially when they have a high personal meaning for individuals. Turning meaningful events into commodities may be seen in a negative view when the “ideal” conception of those is to come off as natural and not as commercial products. We can use touristic destinations as an example: the expected authenticity of foreign cultures and places is for them not to be commoditized to the tourist, but to be as “natural” as possible (Cohen, 1988). In a more radical case, there is the commoditization of friendship. If friendship is not expected in a consumer’s mind to be a commodity but to come “naturally”, commoditization of friendship could make the experience much less valuable for the individual than the “real” or the non-commoditized thing. This idea works when commodities’ “ideal conception” is for them not to be commercialized but to be “natural”, or when in consumers’ minds, commercialization make commodities stop being “meaningful”.

Authenticity is not only about staying true to oneself, but also about staying true to what one claims to be (J. Pine, 2007). Credibility mediates authenticity perception. If consumers suspect that producers or commodities are not what they claim or are claimed to be, they may not regard those commodities as authentic anymore, thus losing faith in the brand (Deibert, 2017). Distrust in marketers’ claims about authenticity has already been mentioned above. We will explain this further when talking about emotions, passion and values.

## **2. Uniqueness and scarceness**

Consumers like what is unique, original and scarce, and commoditization in most cases is linked with mass production (with the exception of custom made, handmade and exclusive items) which negates uniqueness. Consumers distinguish between authentic commodities and mass-produced ones (Lewis & Bridger, 2000).

One of the reasons consumers thrive for scarcity is due to the high effort they must spend in obtaining something scarce (Liao & Ma, 2009). We hypothesize that one of the drivers that move consumers to seek for authenticity is that they must spend effort in the process, which would make the achievement more rewarding and meaningful. On the contrary, we hypothesize that obtaining something with low effort, with high availability and achievability, would make the object or experience shallower and less meaningful and valuable. Being able to buy something creates a sensation of control where the consumer is able to get something instantly with a monetary exchange, so commercialization nullifies in some cases the sensation of effort spent in obtaining a good or experience.

Consumers also pursue uniqueness in goods to feel unique, to express personal uniqueness and to feel different from others (Arnold et al., 2016; Lewis & Bridger, 2000). In the same case as expressing individual identity, mass commercialization makes individuals in equal condition to those of others that buy the same thing, negating the differentiation and uniqueness thrived.

### **3. Emotions, passion and values.**

Producer's or seller's motives influence authenticity, as explained above. Consumers care for producers' passion, values and "love" for their work, viewing as more authentic and preferring goods when they knew producers loved or enjoyed producing those goods (Fuchs et al., 2015; Moulard et al., 2016). They value intrinsic motives moving marketers and punish extrinsic ones such as commercial intentions or consumer orientation intentions (doing something because consumers will like it in order to sell more). Consumers care for the brands' roots and values and for the absence of brand scandals when evaluating their authenticity (Morhart et al., 2013).

Commercial motives undermine authenticity and emotions, values and passion enhance it. Consumers could reject commoditization if they suspect that what moves the marketer are commercial motives, especially in the cases where the commodity is an object of high personal meaning and thus "meaningfulness" or integrity inferred into the object is important. Consumers value authenticity as "honesty and lack of ulterior motives" (M. B. Beverland & Farrelly, 2010), so it was shown that skeptical ones distrust brand claims about their values and virtues (Morhart et al., 2013).

Consumers perceive contagion effects into commodities, as of feeling the emotions of marketers transferred into the commodity (Fuchs et al., 2015). This transferred “emotion” or “essence” could be what brings the added value to the good or experience through authenticity, value that would be lost with pure commercialization intentions.

In summary, distrust in marketers’ motives and suspicion of lack of “essence”, “values” or “emotion” in a commodity due to commercial intentions may make commercialization undermine authenticity perceptions.

### **Is authenticity the same for everyone?**

Some people are stricter than others in defining and seeking for authenticity. Not everyone cares as much about authentic traits (Cohen, 1988). Liao & Ma (2009) distinguished participants between higher need of authenticity and lower need of authenticity. The effects of perceived brand authenticity on consumers attitudes also vary among individuals (Morhart et al., 2013) and the goals of consumers when pursuing authenticity also vary (M. B. Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). According to this, we should take into account that commercialization effects on authenticity, if significant, may not be the same for all individuals.

There is also distinction between emotional goods and pure utilitarian goods when studying authenticity (Bhattacharjee et al., 2014; Fuchs et al., 2015). Moulard et al. (2016) stated that more research was needed in order to discern the effects of authenticity in more and less utilitarian types of commodities. We hypothesize that the effects of commercialization on authenticity will vary among commodities.

Lastly, we fear the contraposition of the customer centric strategy (a core marketing principle) with the notion of product orientation (satisfying marketer’s desires instead of consumers’ desires) to create authenticity. We believe *perception* is the key word. An entity can convey authenticity as long as it is *perceived* to hold product orientation motives, passion and sincerity. Authenticity is a construct, subjective and tied to the mind of consumers. Perception is the matter.

### 3. Theoretical framework and hypothesis proposal

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Since authenticity-seeking is related to aspects regarding symbolism, identity and emotions, its consumption is highly personal. We believe that the effects of authenticity perceptions shall be more relevant with a good that satisfies some of those personal dimensions, defined as a “high symbolic good” (as theorized by M. B. Beverland, Lindgreen, & Vink, 2008). According to this reasoning, we propose a gift as an object of this study. Gifts are goods of high symbolic and emotional nature. People try to convey emotions when giving gifts to loved ones, and people like to receive goods that contain the “emotions” of the giver (Fuchs, Schreier, & van Osselaer, 2015). The loss of authenticity through commercial cues, if any, should be more significative in a good of these characteristics.

In order to measure the effect of commercial cues in authenticity and value, we shall study a product that can (relatively) easily be acquired without a commercial transaction, that is to say, a product that can be obtained without having to be purchased. This is required in order for the normativity of its commercialization not to influence significantly the study—for a good that is extremely hard to acquire outside of commercial transactions, a non-commercial acquisition would be regarded as strange. We propose a **handmade scented candle** as an object of study, since it is possible to make it at home, it may offer a certain degree of personalization (the scent or the color shall satisfy individual tastes) that would enhance identity-expression and the gift-giving context would provide emotional and symbolic meanings. It is necessary for the good to be handmade in both commercial and no commercial contexts to nullify the preference for handmade goods (Fuchs et al., 2015).

We should have in mind that commercial cues awaken inauthentic perceptions, according to existing literature, because commercial cues are not viewed as “authentic-like”, not due to objective or inherent inauthenticity. People cannot tell apart real authenticity from inauthenticity, so something that looks more “authentic-like” will probably be perceived as more authentic. For instance, Beverland et al. (2008) did an experiment where they asked participants to discuss 24 different beers (providing them with the bottles) in terms of their

authenticity in being a real Trappist beer. Trappist beers, Abbey beers and global brands were mixed together in the interview. All participants struggled to distinguish the beers that responded to an objective standard of authenticity (as the real Trappist beers). Participants would provide their subjective perception of what an authentic beer is like, for example, beers with brands that are traditional and historical, but then would proceed to choose the non-traditional beer brands, or non-objectively authentic beer brands as the ones they thought were the most authentic because they were the ones that looked more “authentic-like”. In the authors’ words, “informants are making positive judgments about authenticity based on normative views regarding authenticity. That is, indexicality is being achieved via iconicity”. We propose that strong commercial cues undermine the general or normative idea of authenticity, or how authentic a good or a brand seems to be. We propose our first hypotheses:

H1a. Commercial context will reduce authenticity perceptions in a gift

Where we define the commercial context as the scented candles coming from a commercial entity like a brand, and the no-commercial context as the scented candles coming from a non-commercial entity as a person.

However, authenticity is vague and difficult to determine for both researchers and consumers. For a concept as ambiguous as authenticity, it has been suggested that in-depth exploratory interviews may be more suitable to determine the individual and subjective notions of authenticity of participants (M. B. Beverland et al., 2008). Since the question “Is this gift authentic to you?” or “How authentic is this gift to you?” may be difficult to answer, we propose to extend the authenticity scale by asking about traits that compose it, such as uniqueness, meaningfulness, genuineness of emotions or originality.

On another note, commercialization is also a broad concept. While we do not intend to fully decompose the complex construct of commercialization, we are interested in further examining one dimension that has been repeatedly related with inauthenticity through literature: commercial orientation. To define commercial orientation we may borrow the concept of moral authenticity proposed by M. B. Beverland et al. (2008): “[moral authenticity] comes from the sense that a passionate creator is involved in making products, and is motivated primarily by their love of craft, rather than the possibility of financial reward”. We could also relate commercial orientation with another very famous dichotomy in social

psychology: that of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Intrinsic motivation can be defined as “doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable”, while external motivation is defined as “doing something in order to attain some separable outcome”, that is to say, not for the inherent satisfaction that the activity brings, but for its instrumental value, such as obtaining an external reward —money, for example (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

We want to catalogue commercial orientation as that behavior motivated primarily by extrinsic reasons, as the possibility to obtain sales and commercial profit. Producers motivated primarily by external profits have been shown to be commonly perceived as “too commercial” and inauthentic (Moulard et al., 2014). Producers are punished when consumers believe they follow a commercial orientation, although most of the research of this phenomenon has focused up until now on producers of artistic and hedonic goods (Bhattacharjee et al., 2014; Fuchs et al., 2015; Moulard et al., 2016, 2014). Since it is difficult for the consumers to know the real motivations, thoughts and feelings of marketers, as they are unobservable, we would like to replicate the theory used by Moulard et al. (2016), using attribution theory to make people attribute external behavioral cues to the producer’s internal motivations. When people observe rare and stable behavior in someone, they will think that they are motivated by intrinsic reasons (Moulard et al., 2016). Rare behavior refers of behavior that is uncommon and non-conforming to the norm, as originality and scarcity. Moulard and colleagues (2016) explain stable behavior as: “The managers of stable brands are perceived to concentrate on what they love to do and do not waver; they are solid and steady and, thus, likely are perceived as committed to their calling”. It can be measured in two ways: with longevity (how long a brand has existed) and longitudinal consistency (the brand stays the same). In our research, we will partially replicate their model and apply scarcity as the rare behavior feature and longevity as the stable behavior feature and use them as manipulations of commercial orientation.

*Mass commercialization.* We have chosen scarcity in great measure due to its connection to mass commercialization and the relevance of this concept in authenticity literature. Mass commercialization has been repeatedly portrayed as a cue for commercial orientation and detrimental to moral authenticity (M. Beverland, 2006; M. B. Beverland et al., 2008). Fuchs et al. (2015) stated: “mass production may sever the perceptions that artisans are intrinsically motivated to craft the product and, consequently, that handmade products are made with love” while M. B. Beverland et al., (2008) said: “moral authenticity involves iconicity because

consumers desired a sense or impression of the love of craft, as opposed to an impersonal mass-produced product”. In the study of M. Beverland (2006), consumers perceived wine brands that appealed to the mass market as less valuable than brands with a smaller scope. Scarcity is commonly used in the luxury market too: Ferrari limited in 2013 its annual car sales to 7,000 units in order to preserve exclusivity (Sanderson, 2013).

*Longevity.* Longevity has also been discussed previously as a relevant indicator of authenticity (M. Beverland, 2006; Liao & Ma, 2009; Morhart et al., 2013), frequently described inseparably of longitudinal consistency in the form of traits as heritage (M. Beverland, 2006; Liao & Ma, 2009), historicity (M. B. Beverland et al., 2008) or continuity (Morhart et al., 2013); since they refer to the idea of being timeless, or having remained *the same for a long time*. Moulard et al. (2016), however, tested longevity and longitudinal consistency separately in two different studies and both traits associated positively with intrinsic motivation perceptions. Since their independent effects have been demonstrated, we choose to only measure longevity as a stable behavior in our research.

Thus, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1b. Mass commercialization will reduce authenticity perceptions in a gift

H1c. Longevity of producer will increase authenticity perceptions in a gift

Additionally, as the original study of Moulard et. al. (2016) consisted in testing the authenticity perceptions of a hedonic brand such as a coffee shop brand with the manipulation of stable and rare behavior traits, we are interested in seeing if the effect replicates with the producer of a gift (that is to say, whether such manipulations actually cause the producer to be perceived as more or less commercially oriented). For that goal, we propose the construct of *producer's authenticity*, defining it as the extent to which the producer is primarily motivated by intrinsic reasons, that is to say, for its passion and devotion for the craft, against the idea of the producer being primarily motivated by the possibility of making money. This relates with the classic definition of authenticity of “acting according to one’s true feelings”, and is similar to the construct of brand authenticity proposed by Moulard et al., (2016) (but, while they build the construct purely in terms of intrinsic motivations, such as how passionate the producer feels; we also emphasize the commercial orientation part, as desire of making money) and the construct of perceived integrity proposed by Bhattacharjee et al., (2014)

(however, while they emphasize the “integrity” part, such as how “sell out” a producer is, we also emphasize the feelings of love and enjoyment for the craft). Furthermore, we are interested in studying more deeply the role that commercialization plays on producer’s authenticity perceptions and their motivations, so we hypothesize that not only the proposed commercial orientation cues, but also the commercial context in itself will cause an effect on it.

H2a. Commercial context will reduce perceptions of producer’s authenticity

H2b. Mass commercialization will reduce perceptions of producer’s authenticity

H2c. Longevity of producer will increase perceptions of producer’s authenticity

As argued previously, one of the main objectives of this research is to study the decrease in value caused by commercialization. In the literature review we found that authenticity is positively related to diverse value constructs such as expected quality, trust, positive sentiments, happiness, willingness to pay and brand attachment (Bhattacharjee et al., 2014; Lehman et al., 2018; Lewis & Bridger, 2000; Liao & Ma, 2009; Morhart et al., 2013; Moulard et al., 2016; Shirdastian et al., 2017). Since the findings throughout literature are diverse, we wanted to conduct more of an exploratory experiment studying many different possible effects on value that commercialization could cause from reduction of authenticity. Hence, we propose the following hypotheses:

H3a. Commercial context will undermine the gift’s perceived value

H3b. Mass commercialization will undermine the gift’s perceived value

H3c. Longevity of producer will improve the gift’s perceived value

H4a. Commercial context will undermine the expected quality of a gift

H4b. Mass commercialization will undermine the expected quality of a gift

H4c. Longevity of producer will improve the expected quality of a gift

H5a. Commercial context will undermine willingness to pay in recovering a lost gift

H5b. Mass commercialization will undermine willingness to pay in recovering a lost gift

H5c. Longevity of producer will increase willingness to pay in recovering a lost gift

H6a. Commercial context will undermine the attitude towards the producer

H6b. Mass commercialization will undermine the attitude towards the producer

H6c. Longevity of producer will improve the attitude towards the producer

H7a. Commercial context will undermine perceived closeness with the producer

H7b. Mass commercialization will undermine perceived closeness with the producer

H7c. Longevity of producer will improve perceived closeness with the producer

# 4. Study

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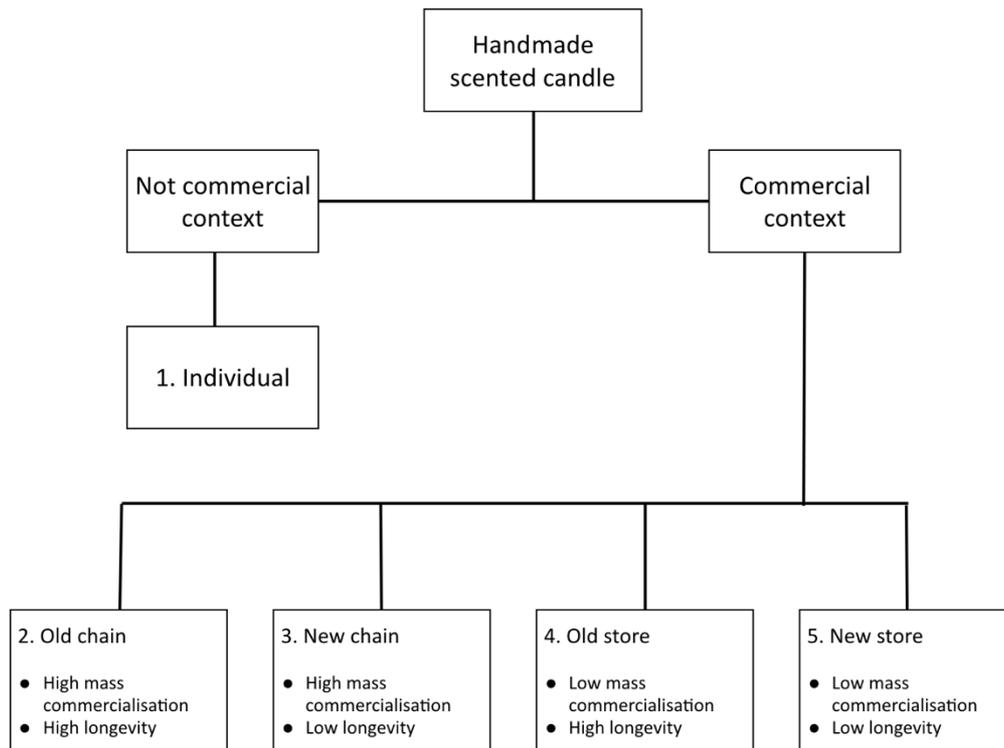
## Methodology

### *Proposal*

We propose to carry a study with five different conditions. They are firstly divided in two major contexts: the not commercial and the commercial context. The not commercial context will portray the gift as being made by an individual. The commercial context will portray the gift as being made by a brand. This last condition will be at the same time divided in four sub-conditions that will manipulate mass commercialization and longevity of the brand. Mass commercialization will be manipulated presenting two types of commerce: a chain and a unique store. Longevity will be manipulated presenting also two types of brand: a new and an old brand.

The conditions should be designed as depicted in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Structure of conditions proposed for the study**



### *Participants*

333 participants from the recruiting platform Amazon Mechanical Turk and other two online survey-sharing platforms (SurveyCircle and SurveySwap) took part in the survey. Amazon Mechanical Turk participants that completed the survey were rewarded with a small fee of 0.5 dollars. SurveyCircle and SurveySwap participants did not receive any monetary payment, as their incentive consisted in either reciprocity (agreeing to participate in studies in exchange of getting participants for their own surveys) or pure intrinsic motives (enjoyment, curiosity, etc.). 162 participants were excluded from the study due to incomplete answers, failing attention checks (there were two placed throughout the survey, and it was programmed so that if any attention check was failed, the survey would close automatically before the participant could finish it. See **Appendix A**) or, in the case of Amazon Mechanical Turk, due to having duplicated IP Address or GPS location. We set this criteria for the participants that came from the latter recruiting platform following the advice of Hui Bai, who recommended excluding not only in the basis of IP Address, but also in the basis of duplicated Geolocation due to the recent scandal of massive low quality responses detected in Amazon Mechanical Turk since

August 2018 (Bai, 2018). An effective sample of 171 participants remained (56.1% female; Ages 15-66, M = 29.83; Education level 15.8% highschool, 29.8% university, 19.3% professional degree, 31.6% master degree, 3.5% doctorate; for more detail see **Appendix B**).

### *Procedure*

Participants started the survey by reading a common introduction:

*Please imagine that someone with whom you have a close relationship (e.g. a close familiar, a dear friend, a significant other, etc.) has given you a set of four handmade candles with your favourite scent as a gift for your birthday.*

Afterwards, participants were randomly distributed among five conditions, following an 2x2x1 design. Depending on which condition the participant was assigned to, the origin of the candles varied. In the individual condition, the candles come from a person named Canda. In the rest of conditions Canda is presented as a company, where longevity and type of commerce are manipulated.

*Longevity manipulation.* In the high longevity condition, Canda was described as an old brand and it is stated that it will soon celebrate its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. When longevity is low, Canda is presented as a new brand and the participant is informed that Canda first opened three years ago.

*Mass commercialization manipulation.* When mass commercialization is high, Canda is a chain and it is stated that it has stores in many countries. When mass commercialization is low, Canda is a local chandlery that only has one store.

The information was presented in each condition as depicted in the table 1:

**Table 1. Information about Canda by condition**

Condition	Information presented
Condition 1 Individual	<i>They tell you they have asked Canda, an acquaintance that makes candles in her spare time, to make them. It has taken Canda one week to finish them.</i>

Condition 2 Old chain	<i>They tell you they have ordered it from an <b>old chandlery chain</b> called Canda and it has taken them one week to finish them. Canda <b>has stores in many countries and will soon celebrate its 100th anniversary.</b></i>
Condition 3 New chain	<i>They tell you they have ordered it from a <b>new chandlery chain</b> called Canda and it has taken them one week to finish them. Canda <b>has stores in many countries and opened its first store three years ago.</b></i>
Condition 4 Old store	<i>They tell you they have ordered it from an <b>old local chandlery</b> called Canda and it has taken them one week to finish them. Canda <b>only has one store and will soon celebrate its 100th anniversary.</b></i>
Condition 5 New store	<i>They tell you they have ordered it from a <b>new local chandlery</b> called Canda and it has taken them one week to finish them. Canda <b>only has one store and it opened three years ago.</b></i>

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Moreover, to maintain similarity between conditions, the same picture was shown in all of them (**Appendix A**). The number of participants distributed to each condition is depicted in Table 2. This distribution was done randomly.

**Table 2. Number of participants per condition**

	<b>C1*</b>	<b>C2*</b>	<b>C3*</b>	<b>C4*</b>	<b>C5*</b>	<b>Total</b>
	Individual	Old chain	New chain	Old store	New store	
Number of participants	35	35	33	37	31	171

\*C[n] = Condition [number]

In order to enhance the comprehension and memory of the information provided, participants were shown four statements about the recently depicted information and had to indicate whether they were true or false (see in **Appendix A**). They were not allowed to continue the survey until they answered all statements correctly. This served to ensure participants interpreted the information correctly, as they had to answer very straightforward statements as:

- Canda is a new brand (true or false?)
- The giver bought the gift from a chain (true or false?)
- An acquaintance of the giver made the gift (true or false?)

As they were only allowed to continue the survey once the statements were answered correctly, we ensured that the manipulations effectively conveyed the right information and perceptions (Canda being a person or a brand, Canda being a store or a chain, Canda being new or old). Other non-important statements were mingled in the true or false questions to avoid participants to learn the intention of the survey (such as “the candles are machine made (true or false?)”).

Afterwards, participants were asked to rate a series of elements:

Firstly, they were asked about **how valuable was the gift for them**. This was carried on by having participants rate four items (“I like this gift.”; “Receiving this gift makes me happy.”; “I would have preferred to receive another gift” (reverse coded); “I consider this gift very valuable to me.”; items were reverse coded so it would be 1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree). These items were averaged to create a measure of **gift attitude** ( $\alpha = .85$ ).

Additionally, they were asked the questions “If you lost this gift, how much are you willing to pay in dollars to have it back?” in order for them to provide an exact number as their **willingness to pay** and “overall, what is the level of quality you would expect from the candles you received?” in order to obtain a measure of **expected quality**.

Secondly, they were asked to rate the **authenticity of the candles** on six items (“This gift is unique.”; This gift is meaningful.”; This gift is original.”; “These candles are authentic.”; These candles were made with love.” and “This gift shows that the giver holds me dear”; all items were reverse coded so it would be 1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree). These items were averaged to create a measure of **gift authenticity** ( $\alpha = .89$ ).

Next, they were asked to evaluate the **motivations of Canda**. Concretely, they had to evaluate to which extent Canda was intrinsically motivated or, in contrast, to which extent Canda was commercially oriented. They did so by rating six items (“Canda genuinely enjoys making

candles.”; “Canda only wants to make money.” (reverse coded); “Canda wants to make something meaningful.”; “Canda has a true passion for making candles.” (adapted from Moulard et al., 2016); “Canda wants to give her best when making candles.” (adapted from Moulard et al., 2016) and “Canda enjoyed making your gift.”; all items were reverse coded so it would be 1 = Definitely not, 5 = Definitely yes). These items were averaged to create a measure of **Canda authenticity** ( $\alpha = .84$ ).

Participants also evaluated their **attitude towards Canda**. They did so by rating on three items (“How much do you agree with the statement “I like Canda?”” (reverse coded), 1=Strongly disagree, 7=Strongly agree; “How grateful do you feel towards Canda?” (reverse coded), 1 = None at all, 5=A great deal; and “How much do you agree with the statement “I trust Canda?”” (reverse coded), 1=Strongly disagree, 7=Strongly agree). These items were averaged to create a measure of **Canda attitude** ( $\alpha = .82$ ).

Finally, we measured **how close participants felt with Canda** by including the *Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) Scale* in the survey (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992). In this scale, two pair of circles are depicted in different positions in a series of seven images. In the first image the two circles appear next to each other without touching. They gradually become closer in every new image, and in the seventh image they almost completely overlap. For this study, we used an adaptation of the IOS Scale proposed by Gächter, Starmer, & Tufano, 2015 (see **Appendix A**) and asked participants to “Please select the picture that best describes your relationship with Canda. (“You” refers to yourself and “X” refers to Canda).”.

Additionally, *Type of Commerce* and *Longevity* variables were created to examine the marginal effects of these manipulations (where Type of Commerce = 0 in the “Unique store” conditions (N = 68) and Type of Commerce = 1 in the “Chain” conditions (N = 68); and Longevity = 0 in the “New brand” conditions (N = 64) and Longevity = 1 in the “Old brand” conditions (N = 72)).

**Table 3. Type of commerce and Longevity variables**

Type of commerce			Longevity		
Unique store	Chain	Total	New	Old	Total
C4+C5*	C2+C3*		C3+C5*	C2+C4*	

	Old store + New store Type of commerce = 0	Old chain + New chain Type of commerce = 1		New chain + New store Longevity = 0	Old chain + Old store Longevity = 1	
Number of participants	68	68	171	64	72	171

\*C[n] = Condition [number]

Similarly, an *Individual* variable was created to measure the marginal effect of Individual vs. Brand (where Individual = 0 in the conditions where Canda is a brand (N = 136) when fitting, and Individual = 1 in the conditions where Canda is a person (N = 35)).

**Table 4. Individual and Brand variables**

	<b>Brand</b>	<b>Individual</b>	<b>Total</b>
	C2+C3+C4+C5*	C1*	
	Old chain, New chain, Old store, New store Individual = 0	Individual Individual = 1	
Number of participants	136	35	171

\*C[n] = Condition [number]

## Results and discussion

### *Gift authenticity.*

A one-way between subjects MANOVA was conducted across conditions. The difference between means on gift authenticity scores was not significant ( $F(4, 166) = 1.513$ ;  $p = 0.201$ ). Additionally, a one-way between subjects MANOVA was conducted only across *brand* conditions to test the effects of type of commerce and longevity on gift authenticity. The difference between means was not significant either across only *brand* conditions ( $F(3, 132) = 1.003$ ;  $p = 0.394$ ). Neither was the difference in the scores for the variables *Type of commerce* ( $M_{\text{unique store}} = 5.45$ ,  $SD = 1.07$  vs.  $M_{\text{chain}} = 5.3$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ;  $t(134) = 0.771$ ,  $p = 0.442$ ), *Longevity* ( $M_{\text{new}} = 5.41$ ,  $SD = 1.13$  vs.  $M_{\text{old}} = 5.34$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ;  $t(134) = 0.360$ ,  $p = 0.719$ ) or their interaction (tested with a two-way MANOVA;  $F(1, 132) = 2.264$ ;  $p = 0.135$ ). Finally, a t-test was conducted to examine the difference between means of individual and

brand conditions. The mean of the individual condition was higher than the mean of the brand condition in a marginally significant way ( $M_{\text{individual}} = 5.71$ ,  $SD = 0.85$  vs.  $M_{\text{brand}} = 5.37$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ;  $t(67) = -1.944$ ,  $p = 0.056$ ).

**Figure 2. Mean scores of gift authenticity for Individual and Brand conditions**



These results suggest that, while neither type of commerce nor longevity seem to have a significant effect on gift authenticity, participant's perceptions of the gift's authenticity is marginally higher when Canda is a person than when Canda is a brand. Although this difference is not large enough as to be captured by the one-way MANOVA across conditions, the t-test suggest that an effect produced by commercial context, despite subtle, still exists.

#### *Gift value.*

A one-way between subjects MANOVA was conducted across conditions. The difference between means on gift value scores was not statistically significant ( $F(4, 166) = 0.386$ ;  $p = 0.819$ ). Neither was the difference between means across *brand* conditions ( $F(3, 132) = 0.458$ ;  $p = 0.712$ ) nor across *Type of commerce* ( $M_{\text{unique store}} = 5.15$ ,  $SD = 1.5$  vs.  $M_{\text{chain}} = 5.06$ ,  $SD = 1.21$ ;  $t(128) = 0.345$ ,  $p = 0.731$ ), *Longevity* ( $M_{\text{new}} = 5.18$ ,  $SD = 1.38$  vs.  $M_{\text{old}} = 5.04$ ,  $SD = 1.35$ ;  $t(134) = 0.620$ ,  $p = 0.536$ ) and their interaction ( $F(1, 132) = 0.860$ ;  $p = 0.356$ ). Finally, we did not find any statistical difference on gift value when Canda is an individual from when

Canda is a brand ( $M_{\text{individual}} = 5.13$ ,  $SD = 0.97$  vs.  $M_{\text{brand}} = 5.11$ ,  $SD = 1.36$ ;  $t(73) = -0.145$ ,  $p = 0.885$ ).

Overall, no significant effect from any independent variable was found on gift value scores. That is to say, the candles were equally valuable for the participants in all conditions.

### *Expected quality.*

A one-way between subjects MANOVA revealed a statistical difference across conditions ( $F(4, 166) = 3.575$ ;  $p = 0.008$ ). A post hoc Tukey HSD analysis showed that expected quality of the new store condition ( $M_{\text{new store}} = 4.55$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ) was significantly higher than that of the new chain condition ( $M_{\text{new chain}} = 4.12$ ,  $SD = 0.60$ ;  $p = 0.047$ ). The expected quality of the old store condition ( $M_{\text{old store}} = 4.51$ ,  $SD = 0.60$ ) was marginally higher than that of the new chain condition ( $p = 0.063$ ), and the scores of both the new and old stores were marginally higher than that of the individual condition ( $M_{\text{individual}} = 4.14$ ,  $SD = 0.65$ ;  $p = 0.062$  and  $p = 0.083$  respectively). Only the old chain condition did not have a significant difference in expected quality with any other condition ( $M_{\text{old chain}} = 4.34$ ,  $SD = 0.59$ ). On a closer examination, the one-way MANOVA across only *brand* conditions also revealed a statistical difference ( $F(3, 132) = 3.457$ ;  $p = 0.018$ ). Post hoc Tukey HSD tests showed similar results as before: the new store and old store conditions obtained significantly higher mean scores than the new chain condition ( $p = 0.028$  and  $p = 0.038$ , respectively). Taken together, this reveals that the expected quality of the candles is higher when they come from the unique store conditions than when they come from the new chain and individual conditions.

Furthermore, the t-test analysis on the *Type of commerce* variable revealed that the mean score of unique store conditions is significantly higher than the mean score of chain conditions ( $M_{\text{unique store}} = 4.53$ ,  $SD = 0.61$  vs.  $M_{\text{chain}} = 4.23$ ,  $SD = 0.60$ ;  $t(134) = 2.831$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ). No significant effect was found for *Longevity* ( $M_{\text{new}} = 4.33$ ,  $SD = 0.64$  vs.  $M_{\text{old}} = 4.43$ ,  $SD = 0.60$ ;  $t(134) = -0.959$ ,  $p = 0.339$ ) or their interaction ( $F(1, 132) = 1.521$ ;  $p = 0.220$ ). As significant differences arose between unique store and chain conditions, instead of comparing individual against brand, we decided to run a one-way ANOVA comparing individual against

chain against unique store in hopes of obtaining more detailed insights. As expected from the previous findings, there was significant differences when comparing the three groups ( $F(2, 168) = 6.006$ ;  $p = 0.003$ ). The expected quality of the unique store condition was significantly higher than that of the chain and individual conditions ( $p = 0.016$  and  $p = 0.008$  respectively). There was no difference between the individual and the chain condition, replicating the findings of the one-way MANOVA across all conditions.

**Figure 3. Mean scores of expected quality across conditions**



In sum, these results suggest that expected quality of candles is higher when they come from a unique store than when they come from a new chain or from an individual. Furthermore, participants expect a similar level of quality when they come from a chain as when they come from a person. Whether Canda is a new or an old brand at first glance doesn't seem to cause any difference in quality perceptions. However, we must not forget that, when comparing all conditions together, only when Canda is a new chain the quality perception is significantly lower than that of the old and new store (whereas no such effect is found when Canda is an old chain). These results show that longevity may matter, but only when Canda is a chain. Later results accentuate this intuition. On the other hand, the question of whether the chain/store manipulation alone triggers an effect in expected quality or whether such perceptions only decrease when the condition is that of being a *new chain* (thus, satisfying both the condition of being a chain and being a new brand) remains. We cannot draw conclusions from the *Type of commerce* analysis alone, since we do not know up to which point the lower score of the new chain is dragging down the score of the old chain when

averaging them both. However, from the one-way MANOVA results we would conclude that the fact of being a store (or not being a chain) may matter in expected quality. That is because only the scores of the unique store conditions are significantly higher than the score of the new chain and the individual. That is to say, although the expected quality of the old chain is not statistically inferior than the one from the new and old stores, it is not superior to that of the new chain or the individual either. Looking at it the other way, we could put it as it is not enough to not be a new chain but being a unique store (or not being a chain) is necessary to reach higher expected quality. Similar conclusions will be drawn for further findings and will be more thoroughly discussed below.

#### *Willingness to Pay (WTP).*

For this question, we encountered two extreme values among the responses that were more than 3 standard deviations away from the mean (responses that stated a willingness to pay of 100 dollars for  $M_{WTP} = 12.5$  and  $SD = 15$ ) and altered the statistics of the analysis (see **Appendix C**). Due to such reasons, we have decided to report the results both with and without such outliers.

The one-way MANOVA revealed at first no significant difference across conditions ( $F(4, 166) = 1.777$ ;  $p = 0.136$ ). After excluding the two outliers, a marginally significant difference was found ( $F(4, 164) = 2.243$ ;  $p = 0.067$ ). However, the post hoc Tukey HSD analysis didn't reveal any statistically significant difference between any condition. We may suppose that, although no condition was detected as significantly different from another, a general effect on WTP from the independent variables was found. A one-way MANOVA only across *brand* conditions followed, and no effect was found either ( $F(3, 132) = 1.093$ ;  $p = 0.355$ ). After excluding the two outliers, the test again revealed non-significant results ( $F(3, 130) = 1.759$ ;  $p = 0.158$ ). A marginally significant effect was found on *Type of Commerce* ( $M_{\text{unique store}} = 15.84$ ,  $SD = 17.23$  vs.  $M_{\text{chain}} = 11.18$ ,  $SD = 14.59$ ;  $t(134) = 1.702$ ,  $p = 0.091$ ) but not on *Longevity* ( $M_{\text{new}} = 12.5$ ,  $SD = 12.1$  vs.  $M_{\text{old}} = 14.4$ ,  $SD = 18.97$ ;  $t(134) = -0.687$ ,  $p = 0.493$ ) nor their interaction ( $F(1, 132) = 0.005$ ;  $p = 0.946$ ). After excluding the outliers, the difference of WTP became more evident for *Type of Commerce* ( $M_{\text{unique store}} = 14.58$ ,  $SD = 13.87$ ,  $N =$

67 vs.  $M_{\text{chain}} = 9.85$ ,  $SD = 9.74$ ,  $N = 67$ ;  $t(118) = 2.284$ ,  $p = 0.024$ ) but there was no change for *Longevity* ( $M_{\text{new}} = 12.5$ ,  $SD = 12.1$ ,  $N = 64$  vs.  $M_{\text{old}} = 11.95$ ,  $SD = 12.33$ ,  $N = 70$ ;  $t(132) = -0.257$ ,  $p = 0.798$ ) and their interaction. As significant differences arose between unique store and chain conditions, similarly as with expected quality, we decided to compare the individual condition with the unique store and chain conditions. For this, we ran a one-way ANOVA with three groups: individual, chain and unique store ( $F(2, 168) = 3.340$ ;  $p = 0.038$ ). The WTP of the unique store condition came out as significantly higher than that of the individual condition ( $M_{\text{individual}} = 8.46$ ,  $SD = 8.17$ ;  $p = 0.045$ ). After excluding the outliers ( $F(2, 166) = 4.462$   $p = 0.013$ ), the unique store condition scored significantly higher than both the individual and the chain conditions ( $p = 0.028$  and  $p = 0.044$  respectively). No difference was found between the chain and the individual conditions.

**Figure 5. Mean scores of WTP between individual, unique store and chain**



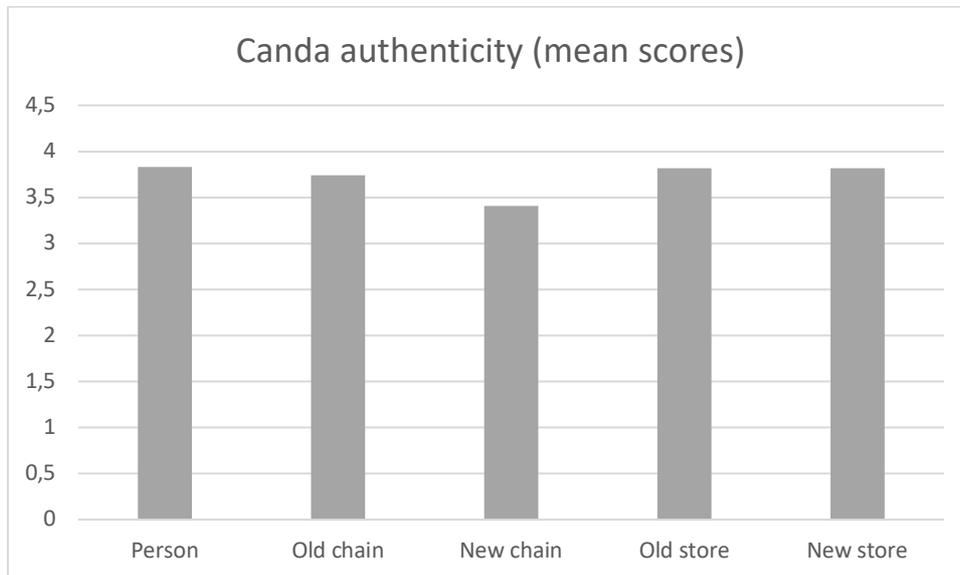
Taken all together, these results reveal that there is an effect caused by the independent variables to the WTP of participants, although the post hoc analysis couldn't capture the concrete differences between conditions. Overall, the chain/store manipulation does seem to affect willingness to pay as the unique store scored significantly higher than the chain conditions in the *Type of commerce* analysis. No such effect was found for whether the candles come from a new or an old brand. Lastly, we could conclude that the unique store condition has a significantly higher score than the chain and individual conditions, and that not such

difference exists between chain and individual. These results follow a similar pattern of those revealed for expected quality, however, whether the chain is new or old doesn't seem to be significant for this item. The differences are not as pronounced either like previous items such as expected quality, as they weren't captured in the initial post hoc tests across conditions. Taking the mean scores of the data after excluding the outliers, participants in the unique store condition would pay 48% more than the participants in the chain condition and 72% more than the participants of the individual condition.

#### *Canda authenticity.*

The one-way MANOVA revealed a significant difference on Canda's perceived authenticity across conditions ( $F(4, 166) = 2.901; p = 0.024$ ). According to the post hoc Tukey HSD test findings, the individual condition ( $M_{\text{individual}} = 3.83, SD = 0.54$ ) and the old store condition ( $M_{\text{old store}} = 3.82, SD = 0.56$ ) scored significantly higher than the new chain condition ( $M_{\text{new chain}} = 3.41, SD = 0.60; p = 0.038$  and  $p = 0.044$  respectively). The new store condition also scored marginally higher than the new chain ( $M_{\text{new store}} = 3.82, SD = 0.57; p = 0.058$ ). Only the old chain condition ( $M_{\text{old chain}} = 3.74, SD = 0.75$ ) remained in a neutral position in comparison to the other conditions. As expected, comparing only *brand* conditions also revealed differences similar as before ( $F(3, 132) = 3.251; p = 0.024$ ), with the old store condition and the new store condition scoring significantly higher than the new chain condition ( $p = 0.035$  and  $p = 0.046$  respectively). These previous analyses could help us predict the posterior t-test results: a significant difference arose in the *Type of commerce* comparison, being the mean of the unique store condition higher than the mean of the chain condition ( $M_{\text{unique store}} = 3.82, SD = 0.56$  vs.  $M_{\text{chain}} = 3.58, SD = 0.70; t(128) = 2.232, p = 0.027$ ). No significant difference was found in the *Longevity* variable ( $M_{\text{new}} = 3.6, SD = 0.62$  vs.  $M_{\text{old}} = 3.78, SD = 0.66; t(134) = -1.553, p = 0.123$ ) or their interaction ( $F(1, 132) = 2.365; p = 0.126$ ). Similar as before, due to the significant differences between the unique store and chain conditions, instead of comparing individual against the brand condition we decided to compare individual against store and chain to see how their unique relationship may unfold. A significant difference was found in the one-way ANOVA ( $F(2, 168) = 3.286; p = 0.040$ ). While the individual condition didn't have any difference with the unique store and chain, the unique store had a marginally significant higher score than the chain ( $p = 0.059$ ).

**Figure 6. Mean scores of Canda authenticity across conditions**

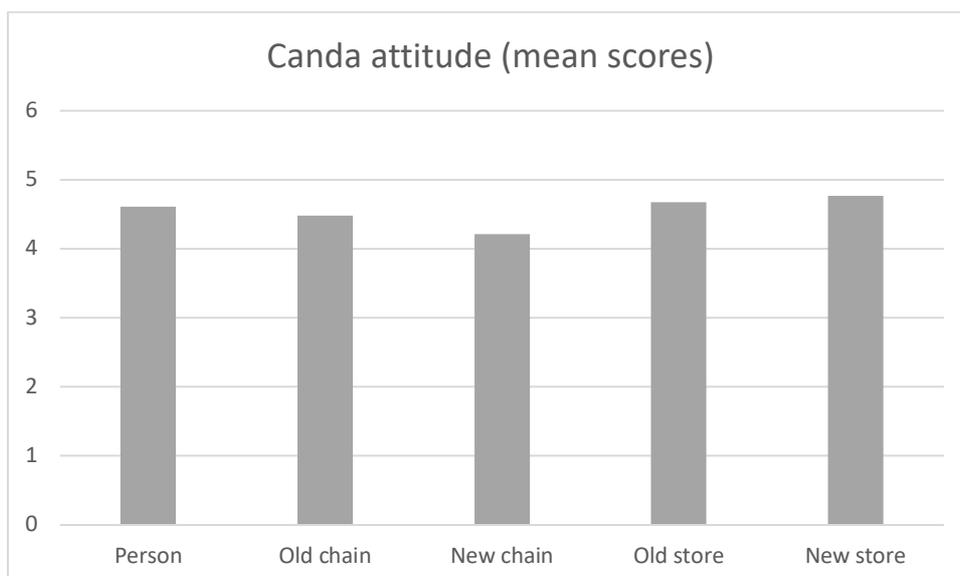


Although the *Type of commerce* analysis revealed that the unique store is perceived as more authentic than the chain, and the *Longevity* analysis didn't show, at first glance, any significant effect, the one-way MANOVAS seem to suggest that the difference in authenticity perceptions lays, again, upon the comparisons with the new chain. All results taken together, we could conclude that the individual and the unique store are perceived as equally authentic, and the new chain is perceived as significantly less authentic in comparison. Hence, while no difference is found on whether Canda is a new or an old store, longevity matters when Canda is a chain. Leaving aside the *Type of commerce* analysis (which pose the same problems discussed previously), does the chain/store manipulation alone pose some effect on Canda's authenticity perceptions, or the effect lays singlehandedly upon the new chain condition? (that is to say, whether it is only the combination of low longevity and high mass commercialization what causes the reduction in authenticity perceptions). We will conclude similarly as with the expected quality item: among the commercial conditions, only the unique stores score significantly higher than the new chain. Hence, the effect lays within the interaction of the unique stores with the new chain, that is to say, it is not enough to not be a new chain to have higher authenticity perceptions, but the fact of being a store (or the fact of not being a chain) seems to be relevant as well. Therefore, there is some superiority of authenticity scores from the store in comparison to the chain, although the effect only becomes comparatively significant against the new chain.

### *Canda attitude.*

There is no significant difference in the attitude towards Canda across conditions ( $F(4, 166) = 1.677$ ;  $p = 0.158$ ). No difference was found either when comparing only *brand* conditions ( $F(3, 132) = 2.057$ ;  $p = 0.109$ ). However, when running a t-test in the *Type of commerce* variable, the unique store condition ( $M_{\text{unique store}} = 4.72$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ ) had a significantly higher score than the chain condition ( $M_{\text{chain}} = 4.34$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ;  $t(134) = 2.206$ ,  $p = 0.029$ ). This was not the case for the *Longevity* variable, for which no significant effect was found ( $M_{\text{new}} = 4.48$ ,  $SD = 0.95$  vs.  $M_{\text{old}} = 4.58$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ;  $t(134) = -0.568$ ,  $p = 0.571$ ), nor for the interaction of *Type of commerce* and *Longevity* ( $F(1, 132) = 1.053$ ;  $p = 0.307$ ). Lastly, as significant differences arose from the *Type of commerce* analysis, a one-way ANOVA was carried out comparing the individual condition against the store and chain conditions. The test revealed a marginally significant difference between the three conditions ( $F(2, 168) = 2.665$ ;  $p = 0.073$ ). While the individual condition did not differ from the store nor the chain conditions, again, the unique store proved to have a marginally significant higher score in attitude than the chain ( $p = 0.061$ ).

**Figure 7. Mean scores of Canda attitude across conditions**



All results taken together, although no differences arose from the comparison of the five conditions, a general effect from the store/chain manipulation in attitude towards Canda was captured by the *Type of commerce* analysis. The fact of Canda being a new chain or an old chain didn't test as significant for this item. Although the difference is not as pronounced as in previous measures (and hence, not being captured in the MANOVA analyses), we can conclude that being a unique store or a chain does matter in attitude towards Canda. In this item, being an individual was not shown to be significant.

#### *Perceived closeness with Canda.*

Again, no difference was found in perceived closeness with Canda across conditions ( $F(4, 166) = 0.794$ ;  $p = 0.530$ ) nor across only *brand* conditions ( $F(3, 132) = 0.877$ ;  $p = 0.455$ ). Neither in *Type of commerce* comparison ( $M_{\text{unique store}} = 2.74$ ,  $SD = 1.69$  vs.  $M_{\text{chain}} = 2.38$ ,  $SD = 1.64$ ;  $t(134) = 1.236$ ,  $p = 0.218$ ), Longevity comparison ( $M_{\text{new}} = 2.66$ ,  $SD = 1.75$  vs.  $M_{\text{old}} = 2.47$ ,  $SD = 1.59$ ;  $t(134) = 0.641$ ,  $p = 0.523$ ) and their interaction ( $F(1, 132) = 0.652$ ;  $p = 0.421$ ). As not significant differences arose from the unique store and chain conditions, a final analysis comparing the individual against the brand condition was carried. The perceived closeness with Canda when Canda is an individual did not differ from the perceived closeness when Canda is a brand ( $M_{\text{individual}} = 2.37$ ,  $SD = 1.39$  vs.  $M_{\text{brand}} = 2.56$ ,  $SD = 1.67$ ;  $t(169) = 0.612$ ,  $p = 0.542$ ).

Overall, no significant effect from any independent variable was found on perceived closeness scores. That is to say, participants' perceived closeness with Canda did not differ across conditions nor variables.

## 5. General discussion and conclusion

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Even though the concept of authenticity is not new, it is a construct that has been gaining the interest of marketers, psychologists, sociologists and the general public in the recent years (Lehman et al., 2018; B. J. Pine & Gilmore, 2013; Stackla, 2017). According to Lehman and colleagues (2018), in the past decade the number of articles in management journals about authenticity has doubled and if you search for the topic “authenticity” in Google Trends, you can see a positive slope about the interest over time for this concept since 2004 to present (see **Appendix D**).

There is extensive research trying to deconstruct the complex concept of authenticity, for which, among many others, we specially highlight Beverland’s work (M. Beverland, 2006; M. B. Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; M. B. Beverland et al., 2008). Many researchers try to answer the questions “What is authenticity?”, “How are authentic products and brands?” or “What is needed to be perceived as authentic?”. Other revolve around more practical implications as “Why is authenticity important?” and “How does authenticity interact with brand and product value?”. This area of research is significative because it seeks to comprehend and use the authenticity construct to achieve better managerial performance, consumer-brand relationship and general consumer well-being. As Pine and Gilmore (2013) explain in their recent article on *Experiential Economy*, it’s about giving consumers what they want. And they want authenticity.

In this context, how do commercialization and authenticity interact? As suggested earlier, many implications of commercialization nowadays seem to go against authenticity cues (meaningfulness, uniqueness, doing something for mere enjoyment and not for an external reward, etc.). Consumers find brand content inauthentic, and brand trust is decreasing (Edelman, 2018; Stackla, 2017, 2019). Does commercialization have a negative effect on authenticity? And, hence, does commercialization have a negative effect on product and brand value? This research study was conducted in hope of bringing some answers to these questions.

Accordingly, we wish to remark the findings of our study and try to give a meaning to them that fits in this context:

As our theory predicted, the commercial context, in this case defined as the producer being a non-commercial entity such as a person against the producer being a commercial entity such as a brand, seems to play a role in authenticity perceptions. The candles were perceived as more authentic (at least marginally) when they came from an individual than in the cases when they came from a brand. Canda scores high in both gift authenticity (how authentic are the candles she makes) and in Canda authenticity (how intrinsically motivated is she perceived to be) when she is a person. On the other hand, the type of commerce (the mass commercialization manipulation) seems to effectively play a role on commercial orientation perceptions, or, as we defined in the theoretical framework, on intrinsic motivation perceptions. Putting it all together, Canda is regarded as equally authentic when she is a unique store as when she is a person. However, commercial orientation doesn't seem to directly relate to the perceived authenticity of the gift, as candles were not perceived as more authentic when they came from a store or from an old brand, even if the producer was perceived as equally intrinsically motivated as the individual. This suggests that commercial orientation alone does not lead to higher gift authenticity. Commercial context itself, or the producer being or not a commercial entity, may play a certain role in perceived meaningfulness, originality, embodiment of "love", and other dimensions that surround the complex construct of authenticity, that may be not captured by "intrinsic motivations" alone. On the other hand, and new to the findings of Moulard, Raggio, & Folse (2016), longevity doesn't seem to influence producer's authenticity perceptions when the producer is a store. However, it seems to affect the perceived authenticity of a chain. Both the individual and the store conditions are perceived as significantly more authentic than the new chain, while the old chain remains outside of any significant disparity with the other conditions. Whereas it seems evident that the combination of being a chain and being new awakens inauthenticity perceptions, we do not exclude the possibility that not being a chain (thus, not being mass commercialized) would also signal higher authenticity cues. Additionally, although comparing the averaged mean scores of unique stores and chains alone cannot lead us to a definite conclusion, the unique stores, when merged, still scored significantly higher on authenticity than the chains when merged.

The effect of commercial context and commercial cues on the different value measures is unexpected as well. To start, although the individual is perceived as more authentic—and so are the candles made by her—the attitude towards the individual is not different than the attitude towards the store or the chain. This suggests that higher authenticity doesn't lead straightaway to an improvement in attitude—there are other factors that also affect it. The store, for instance, besides being regarded as more authentic than the chain (than the new chain, at least), also benefits from a better attitude from the consumer (although for this item, the difference is not high enough for us to distinguish clearly between conditions, that is to say, we only know that there is a general difference in attitude between the store and the chain, but the analysis didn't capture any differences when testing the separated conditions in the MANOVA). In practical ways, this means that, when receiving a gift, a participant likes, trusts and feels more grateful towards the producer when she is a store than when she is a chain. This expanded attitude scale also adds to the findings of Moulard, Raggio, & Folse (2016); given that they only measured effects of scarcity (that we name mass commercialization) and longevity on brand authenticity, brand trust and expected quality. As commented above, the gift value (that is, how valuable the gift is for the participant) does not differ across conditions. Observing this, we can conclude that how much a participant likes a gift does not depend significantly on its origin (whether it is more or less commercial), but on other more influential factors. We can speculate, for example, on factors such as the product category of the gift in itself, the person that gives it, or how much effort did the producer spend in making it, such as handmade versus machine made. The fact that the individual scored marginally higher on gift authenticity but not on gift value also indicates that perceived authenticity of a gift isn't a straightaway predictor of gift value, as we expected originally. On the other hand, the type of producer affects the scores of more tangible items such as expected quality and willingness to pay. Curiously, the individual and the chain have significantly lower scores in comparison with the store on such items. Since expected quality of the gift and WTP to recover the gift if it was lost had similar results and patterns, we can speculate that they may be correlated. In the case of expected quality, the relationship between the store and the chain unfolds in a similar manner than in the producer's authenticity item (in the MANOVA analysis stores score higher than new chain but not than the old chain, and merged stores score higher than merged chains), so we also hold similar conclusions and beliefs as those exposed for Canda authenticity. We can speculate why the person would score low on these items. Since we stated in the survey that the person “made candles in her free time”, she could easily be regarded as an amateur, and not be considered such a professional and skilled candle-crafter

as commercial entities may be. Hence, it would explain the decrease in expected quality and, if expected quality served as a predictor of WTP, it would also explain why the lower WTP. What is interesting here is that the expected quality and the WTP of the individual are comparable to those of the chain. Thus, the chain is not regarded as better than an individual on such items, in contrast to the store. Finally, the perceived closeness with Canda was not altered across conditions, which means that the type of producer (on the terms we defined) does not influence perceived distance. The question that remains is how authenticity influences and mediates the different value items. For instance, if we leave aside the attitude towards the person, which could be affected by other factors (such as professionalism, commitment, etc.) authenticity of the producer could be a good predictor of brand attitude, expected quality and WTP when all producers are firms. That is to say, the store could have scored higher on such items because it is perceived as less commercially oriented, or as more authentic, while still having the professionalism that the individual may lack (if professionalism was the cause on the difference between authenticity perceptions and value perceptions of the person). In the bottom line, these findings raise many new questions about the why and how of such results, and also elicit many different possibilities that could answer them. In our own literature review we have proposed three different frames that explain why commercialization may undermine authenticity that, although not empirically tested, could serve as a good basis to explain the why of our findings, and as possible next steps for research. All in all, what is clear is that new lines of research are required to keep exploring the complex relationship of commercialization, authenticity and value.

### **Limitations and future research**

Many limitations arise from our study. For instance, as Beverland et. al. (2006) tested, small brands are commonly associated to handmade goods and mass commercialized brands are associated to machine made goods. In this study, in order to neutralize the handmade effect (Fuchs et al., 2015) we set all conditions to have handmade goods. However, in real life this is uncommon and a brand directed to the mass market usually produces machine made goods. Participants in the chain conditions could have perceived the handmade trait as strange, and despite the clarification of the candles being handmade, may have unconsciously associated the candles to the mass-production factories and machines that usually come with the idea of a chain. The rejection for mass commercialized products and the inauthenticity it elicits may

also be partly related to the preference for handmade goods and the rejection for machine made products.

On the other hand, our study lacked more direct manipulation checks as ones that tested how mass commercialized the participants perceived the candles to be, or how commercial they perceived the producer to be. Although we obtained significant insights nonetheless, the direct relationship between commercialization of producer or mass commercialization of the gift with our study results cannot be straightforwardly proved without such manipulations.

The longevity manipulations that we used, despite leading to interesting nuances, was not exactly the same than the one proposed by Moulard et al. (2016) either. They originally set the low longevity condition as a brand that is one week old, in contrast to a brand that soon would be one hundred years old. Although our high longevity condition was the same as theirs, we set the low longevity condition as a brand that is three years old, as it was unrealistic to create a chain that was only one week old. The different effects that longevity has on both of our researches may be caused by this difference.

Other limitation we cannot ignore was the quality of our participants sample. The population of survey-sharing platforms such as SurveyCircle and SurveyExchange is not a good representation of the general population, as most of them are graduate students doing research themselves. On the other hand, the quality of the responses from workers of Amazon Mechanical Turk decreased greatly since last August 2018 (Bai, 2018) and, although we tried to neutralize it by excluding participants in the basis of attention checks, duplicated IP Addresses and GPS locations; we do not know up to which extent this may have affected the results of our study.

Hence, the first step we suggest as a future line of research would be to reproduce the studies of this paper with a more representative population sample to see if the findings replicate. Other future direction of research, as we already proposed above, would be to test the role of authenticity as a mediator between commercialization and product and brand value.

Although we found out that commercialization reduces authenticity perceptions in many ways, we still do not know the mechanisms behind such phenomenon. We proposed three frames in our literature review that could serve as explanation, and we suggest a future line of

research that actually tests such propositions. Additionally, we discovered that stores are viewed as more authentic than new chains and elicit more value perceptions, but we don't know the exact nature or the direction of such difference. Is it because stores are perceived as more authentic and valuable, or is it because there is a general rejection towards new chains (or chains in general)?

On the other hand, although we speculated that authenticity could be a mediator between commercialization and value, it could also be the other way around: authenticity may be reduced as a consequence of the decrease of value. Carrying a mediation analysis could shed light into the nature and directionality of these events.

Finally, with our study, we have contributed to the literature between commercialization and authenticity in the context of gift-giving; adding to previous findings in the artistic and hedonic domains (Bhattacharjee et al., 2014; Moulard, Garrity, & Rice, 2015; Moulard et al., 2016). We suggest for future researchers to keep contributing to this literature with new contexts and product categories, such as that of functional products or experiences; and also, to keep studying new sides of the complex concept of commercialization and their singular relationship with authenticity.

## **Implications**

The most important consideration is to understand that this effect —or phenomenon— shouldn't be limited to the context of giving and receiving gifts. We chose to study this scenario as one among many others that could have been studied as well. Our contribution with this study consists in explaining the dynamics of commercialization and authenticity in a new context and product category, but we are only adding knowledge to a previous literature that has already started exploring this research question in many other grounds.

For instance, we can see this effect illustrated in the real world, beyond the gift-giving context: In the last five years, small brands have been taking market share from bigger brands. According to Bokkerink, Charlin, Sajdeh, & Wald (2017), “in North America, about \$22 billion in industry sales shifted from large to smaller companies from 2011 to 2016. Europe has experienced a similar shift”. Consumer preferences are shifting, and the same authors have

stated that authenticity is key in the process: millennials prefer authentic *to mass-produced goods*. Consumers are certainly perceiving smaller brands as more authentic and they are switching their brand choice to them.

What we recommend with our study is for managers to take into account that commercialization is a factor that can punish a brand, and they may have to compensate it: a highly commercial company, for instance, a chain or a multinational brand, may have to dedicate more effort in conveying authenticity cues than a smaller company.

Other implication from our findings is that persons are perceived as more authentic than mass commercial brands. This knowledge can elicit action from companies as well: one way of conveying more authenticity may be by “humanizing” the brand. For instance, we can take the company Waynabox as an example: their website<sup>8</sup> include the photos, descriptions and the LinkedIn account of the founders. They show that they are not just a faceless company; real humans are behind it. Talent Clue goes beyond: their website<sup>9</sup> depicts all employees’ names, photos, LinkedIn accounts, short introductions and even hobbies. The social accounts of the company are full of photos and videos of the employees’ daily work life. If persons are indeed perceived as more authentic and real, commercial firms may have to start showing that they are not just brands, they are a team of humans too.

In sum, with this study we tried to demonstrate empirically the —perhaps obvious— notion that, if for your birthday you got invited to eat a ramen bowl in Barcelona, you would probably find more authentic and of higher quality the small and local place Ramen Ya Hiro than the chain Udon Noodles (despite the latter being more expensive!).

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<sup>8</sup> Waynabox Webpage: <https://waynabox.com/es/quienes-somos>

<sup>9</sup> Talent Clue website: <https://talentclue.com/es/equipo>

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# 7. APPENDICES

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## APPENDIX A. SURVEY.



### Intro

Welcome! This survey is part of a Masters Research Thesis. It takes 5-10 minutes on average to be completed. It is completely anonymous and all the information will be used exclusively for academic research.

As participation is voluntary, you can leave the survey at any moment by closing your browser.

Please, answer **carefully and with sincerity**, your answers will be really important to the study. Thank you very much for participating.

Do you agree to participate in the study?

- Yes
- No

**Please, click >> to continue.**

### Intro conditions

In the next section we will describe to you a hypothetical situation. **Please, read carefully the information, as you will not be able to go back.** A few True or False questions are presented to help you enhance your understanding of the text.

Once you have read the text and completed the True or False, you will be asked a series of questions. There is no right or wrong answer, just answer what you believe you would truly think or feel in that situation.

**Condition 1 (Not commercial)**

Please imagine that someone with whom you have a close relationship (e.g. a close familiar, a dear friend, a significant other, etc.) has given you a set of four handmade candles with your favourite scent as a gift for your birthday. They tell you they have asked Canda, an acquaintance that makes candles in her spare time, to make them. It has taken Canda one week to finish them.



Please, say if the following statements are true or false:

	True	False
An acquaintance of the giver made the gift	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The candles are machine made	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Canda makes candles in her free time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You received 3 candles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Condition 2.1**

Please imagine that someone with whom you have a close relationship (e.g. a close familiar, a dear friend, a significant other, etc.) has given you a set of four handmade candles with your favourite scent as a gift for your birthday. They tell you they have ordered it from an old chandlery chain called Canda and it has taken them one week to finish them. Canda has stores in many countries and will soon celebrate its 100th anniversary.



Please, say if the following statements are true or false:

	True	False
The candles are machine made	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You received 3 candles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Canda is a new brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The giver bought the gift from a chain	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Condition 2.2**

Please imagine that someone with whom you have a close relationship (e.g. a close familiar, a dear friend, a significant other, etc.) has given you a set of four handmade candles with your favourite scent as a gift for your birthday. They tell you they have ordered it from a new chandlery chain called Canda and it has taken them one week to finish them. Canda has stores in many countries and opened its first store three years ago.



Please, say if the following statements are true or false:

	True	False
Canda is a new brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The giver bought the gift from a chain	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You received 3 candles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The candles are machine made	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Condition 2.3**

Please imagine that someone with whom you have a close relationship (e.g. a close familiar, a dear friend, a significant other, etc.) has given you a set of four handmade candles with your favourite scent as a gift for your birthday. They tell you they have ordered it from an old local chandlery called Canda and it has taken them one week to finish them. Canda only has one store and will soon celebrate its 100th anniversary.



Please, say if the following statements are true or false:

	True	False
You received 3 candles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The candles are machine made	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Canda is a new brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The giver bought the gift from a chain	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Condition 2.4**

Please imagine that someone with whom you have a close relationship (e.g. a close familiar, a dear friend, a significant other, etc.) has given you a set of four handmade candles with your favourite scent as a gift for your birthday. They tell you they have ordered it from a new local chandlery called Canda and it has taken them one week to finish them. Canda only has one store and it opened three years ago.



Please, say if the following statements are true or false:

	True	False
Canda is a new brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You received 3 candles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The giver bought the gift from a chain	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The candles are machine made	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Condition questions**

Please select how much you agree with each statement

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Receiving this gift makes me happy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like this gift.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I consider this gift very valuable to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would have preferred to receive another gift.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you lost this gift, how much would you pay **in DOLLARS** to have it back? (enter only the number)

Please select how much you agree with each statement.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
This gift is unique.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
These candles are authentic.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This gift is meaningful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
These candles were made with love.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This gift is original.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please select how much you agree with each statement.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Canda wants to give her best when making candles.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I trust Canda.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Canda enjoyed making your gift.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Canda genuinely enjoys making candles.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Canda mostly wants to make money.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Canda wants to make something meaningful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Canda has a true passion for making candles.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Overall, what is the level of **quality** you would expect from the candles you received?

- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- Poor
- Terrible

### Personality - Authenticity

In the next section we will ask a few questions about your personal beliefs and behavior. Please, answer honestly according to **how you truly think you are**, not how you would like to be or what you think is the most desirable or *nice* answer.

Try to avoid as much as possible neutral answers.

Please select how much you agree with each statement.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
When I receive a gift, I care for the price.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Some gifts are more meaningful than others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Some gifts are more authentic than others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I care for authenticity in gifts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This is an attention check. Please select "somewhat agree".	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please select how much you agree with each statement.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I pursue what is original and unique.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
What I buy defines me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I prefer international brands over small local brands.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Truly meaningful things cannot be bought.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I trust most brands.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I care for authenticity in brands and products.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There are things that should not be commercialized.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Demographics

What is your age? (Enter only the number)

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Rather not answer

What is your current or latest completed education?

- Less than high school
- High school
- College degree
- Professional degree
- Masters degree
- Doctorate

**PARH Scale**

Before finishing the survey, we would like to check the degree of perceived awareness you have about the purpose of this study.

Please select how much you agree with each statement

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I wasn't sure what the researchers were trying to demonstrate in this research.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had a good idea about what the hypotheses were in this research.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I knew what the researchers were investigating in this research.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was unclear about exactly what the researchers were aiming to prove in this research.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**End - Comments**

If you have any comments, doubts, or inquiries about the survey please write us here:

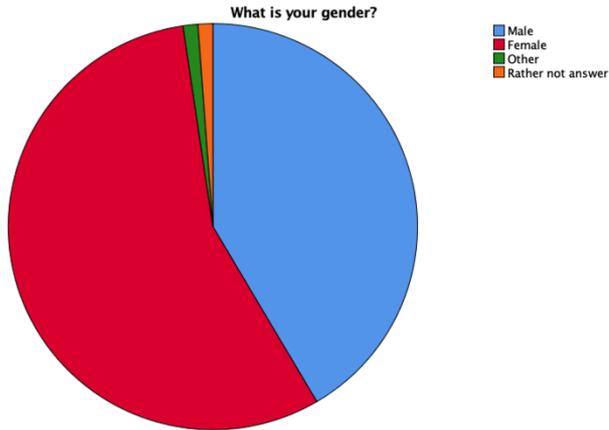
Here is your ID: \${e://Field/Random%20ID}

Copy this value to paste into MTurk.

When you have copied this ID, please click >> to submit your survey.

APPENDIX B. DEMOGRAPHICS

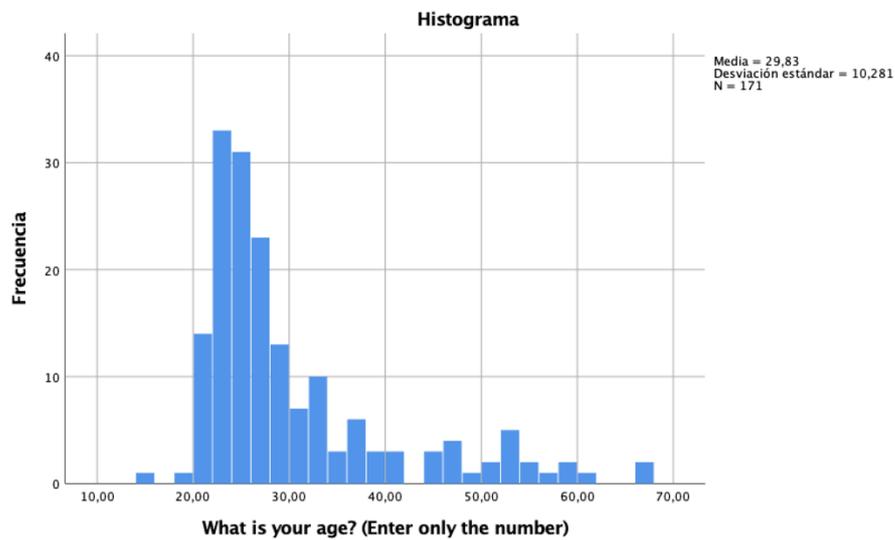
Appendix B1. Gender



### What is your gender?

		Frecuencia	Porcentaje	Porcentaje válido	Porcentaje acumulado
Válido	Male	71	41,5	41,5	41,5
	Female	96	56,1	56,1	97,7
	Other	2	1,2	1,2	98,8
	Rather not answer	2	1,2	1,2	100,0
	Total	171	100,0	100,0	

### Appendix B2. Age.

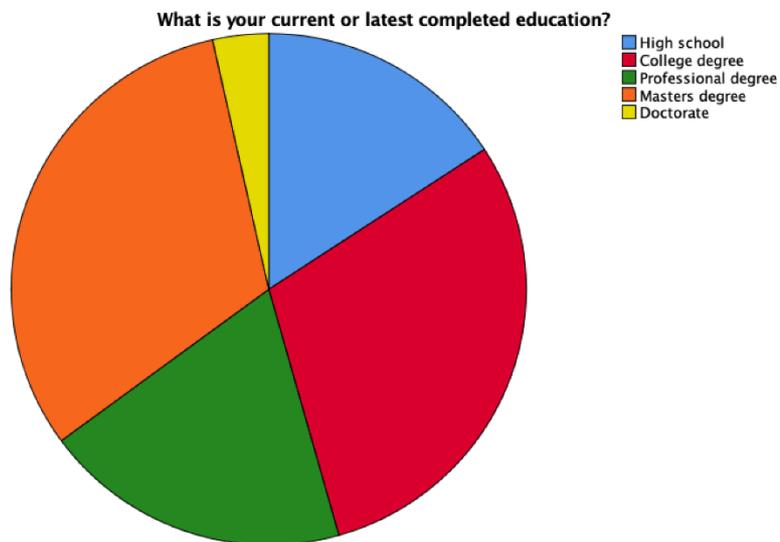


### What is your age? (Enter only the number)

		Frecuencia	Porcentaje	Porcentaje válido	Porcentaje acumulado
Válido	15,00	1	,6	,6	,6

19,00	1	,6	,6	1,2
20,00	5	2,9	2,9	4,1
21,00	9	5,3	5,3	9,4
22,00	12	7,0	7,0	16,4
23,00	21	12,3	12,3	28,7
24,00	17	9,9	9,9	38,6
25,00	14	8,2	8,2	46,8
26,00	15	8,8	8,8	55,6
27,00	8	4,7	4,7	60,2
28,00	6	3,5	3,5	63,7
29,00	7	4,1	4,1	67,8
30,00	5	2,9	2,9	70,8
31,00	2	1,2	1,2	71,9
32,00	6	3,5	3,5	75,4
33,00	4	2,3	2,3	77,8
34,00	3	1,8	1,8	79,5
36,00	3	1,8	1,8	81,3
37,00	3	1,8	1,8	83,0
38,00	3	1,8	1,8	84,8
40,00	3	1,8	1,8	86,5
44,00	2	1,2	1,2	87,7
45,00	1	,6	,6	88,3
46,00	2	1,2	1,2	89,5
47,00	2	1,2	1,2	90,6
48,00	1	,6	,6	91,2
50,00	1	,6	,6	91,8
51,00	1	,6	,6	92,4
52,00	4	2,3	2,3	94,7
53,00	1	,6	,6	95,3
55,00	2	1,2	1,2	96,5
56,00	1	,6	,6	97,1
58,00	1	,6	,6	97,7
59,00	1	,6	,6	98,2
61,00	1	,6	,6	98,8
66,00	2	1,2	1,2	100,0
Total	171	100,0	100,0	

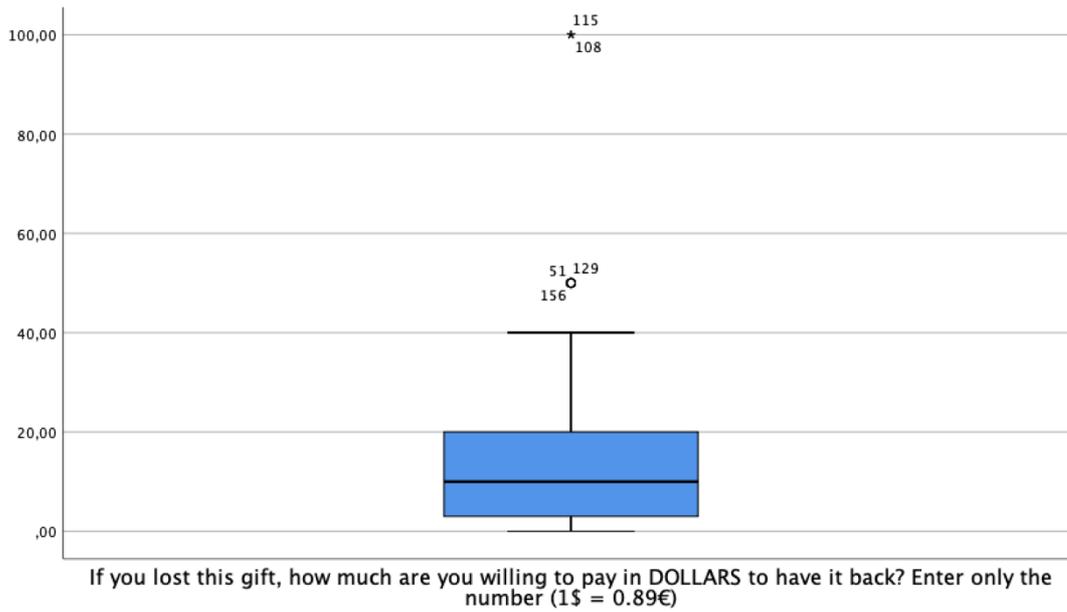
### Appendix B3. Level of Education.



**What is your current or latest completed education?**

		Frecuencia	Porcentaje	Porcentaje válido	Porcentaje acumulado
Válido	High school	27	15,8	15,8	15,8
	College degree	51	29,8	29,8	45,6
	Professional degree	33	19,3	19,3	64,9
	Masters degree	54	31,6	31,6	96,5
	Doctorate	6	3,5	3,5	100,0
	Total	171	100,0	100,0	

### APPENDIX C. EXTREME VALUES IN WILLINGNESS TO PAY MEASURE



APPENDIX D. INTEREST OVER TIME FOR THE TOPIC “AUTHENTICITY” SINCE 2004 TO PRESENT (Source: Google Trends)

