Brand authenticity leads to perceived value and brand trust

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper investigates consumer perceptions of brand authenticity (BA), perceived value (PV) and brand trust (BT) into the context of craft beer market. The purpose of this paper is to examine the statistical associations between these constructs as well as the three antecedents of BA: individuality, consistency and continuity.

Design/methodology/approach – The survey, delivered in an online format, was completed by 749 respondents from the USA. These respondents were gained through a basic simple random sampling technique. After conducting data analysis techniques such as reliability, correlation and regression, all five research hypotheses were accepted.

Findings – All three antecedents of BA were found to have significant influence on the first-order construct. Also, BA was shown to have a substantial effect on both PV and BT. The relationship between brand individuality and BA was the most significant of the five, while the association between BA and PV was found to be the least significant.

Originality/value – Prior research on BA, the majority of which has involved a qualitative approach, has been severely limited. The authors' work deepens the study of the effects of BA, or its various antecedents, on PV and BT, enhancing the research with an empirical, quantitative analysis. In addition to the shortage of investigation related to these factors, there has been a nearly complete absence of the application of these variables to the craft beer market.

Keywords Perceived value, Brand trust, Brand authenticity, Craft beer market,
Individuality, Consistency, Continuity

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Nowadays, consumers are faced with increasing commercialization of products and a globalization market (Morhart *et al.*, 2015). Consumers look for brands that are relevant and genuine. They increasingly search for authenticity in brands because of authenticity has overtaken quality as the prevailing purchasing criterion (Gilmore and Pine, 2007). Authenticity begins to capture interest amongst marketers, keen to analyze on consumer preference for authentic offerings (Taheri *et al.*, 2018), which enhances consumer experience (both in terms of the consumer's subjectivity and in relation to their experience with others). Therefore, delivering authentic experiences to consumers is necessary (Kim and Bonn, 2016).

While the more-general concepts of branding, brand equity and brand loyalty have been studied in great detail by a variety of authors (Šeinauskienė *et al.*, 2015; Abril and Rodriguez-Cánovas, 2016; Yeh *et al.*, 2016), little examination of the brand authenticity (BA) construct has been conducted (Morhart *et al.*, 2015), presenting a significant research gap. This sentiment is

clearly shared by Schallehn *et al.* (2014), when they say "brand authenticity theory is in its infancy" (p. 195). In addition, Napoli *et al.* (2014) said, "it provides a tool by which firms can evaluate the effectiveness of strategic decisions designed to deliver an authentic brand offering to consumers" (p. 1090). Thus, both academics and practitioners therefore agree on the importance of authenticity for consumer behavior and branding (Morhart *et al.*, 2015).

Furthermore, there is a substantial lack of research regarding the effects of BA, or its various antecedents, on perceived value (PV) and brand trust (BT). In addition, there has been a nearly complete absence of the application of these variables to the craft beer context (Gundlach and Neville, 2012). In the craft beer market, many opportunities are present for the creation and renewal of authenticity as well as its numerous advantages (Fritz *et al.*, 2017). Giving credence to this belief is the statement that beverages are highly symbolic and richly connotative product classes coupled with the view that BA involves symbolism and genuine meaning. Therefore, this type of product has an innate foundation and prospect for generating authenticity in the minds of consumers.

In this research, we propose a conceptual framework to analyze how BA leads to PV and BT on the context of craft beer market. Following Withers (2017), craft beer is conceptualized as a beer that is brewed, bottled, and sold by a privately owned brewery; is small in production; and contains only traditional ingredients. Moreover, our findings can serve as a guideline for managers and executives to generate higher consumer perceptions of brand individuality (BI), brand consistency (BCons) and brand continuity (BCont).

By providing empirically validated results demonstrating the proposed relationships, marketers and managers will be able to more precisely explain and justify marketing budgets aimed at increasing these perceptions.

In order to achieve the research objective, this research has been divided into four sections: literature review, research methodology, results, and overall discussion and conclusions.

2. Literature review
2.1 The BA construct
The concept of BA, while a recent focus of modern researchers, has grown and evolved rapidly both in definition and conceptualization. The result of this rapid development is a plethora of definitions created by an array of authors. It can be said that authenticity is a much more complex phenomenon than the simple fact of being genuine or original, although this view is evident in many early definitions (Alexander, 2009). Social-scientific sources hardly ever attempt to pinpoint the meaning of authenticity with any degree of precision, due to it being so notoriously difficult to define. They typically opt for a more or less comprehensive enumeration of meanings and connotations (O'Neill *et al.*, 2014).

The concept of authenticity has its roots in Greek philosophy ("To thine own self be true"). Later studies approach authenticity from a diverse approach as "a general preoccupation of modern Western culture" (Liu, Yannopoulou, Bian and Elliott, 2015) immerse in a competition in lifestyle display multicultural (Potter, 2010), as manifestations and antecedents in marketing communications (Ibarra, 2015), and as authenticity in the leadership tending to latch on to authenticity as an excuse for sticking with what is comfortable for ourselves (Liu, Cutcher and Grant, 2015). Or, as marketing literature (Gilmore and Pine, 2007) puts it, stands as "authenticity is what consumers want" (O'Neill *et al.*, 2014). In sum, authenticity is often used to denote a product or other object that is the real, genuine article and not an imitation (Chhabra and Kim, 2018). In this sense, consumers tend to seek traditional or historical products in their pursuit of authentic encounters.

This is particularly noteworthy in the craft beer market, as many companies advertise traditional methods of production, while opting out of including the current, industrial aspects that are truly at the heart of modern manufacturing. Until recently, much of the authenticity research has focused on a single dimension: how real or genuine a product is

another example of this can be found in the work of Fine (2003) as the author describes self-taught artistic endeavors as consisting of sincerity, innocence and originality. Contrary to this belief, many studies have shown that authenticity can, in fact, reveal itself in a multitude of ways for different products or categories (Lu *et al.*, 2015).

According to Interbrand (2014, p. 68), "The brand is soundly based on an internal truth and capability. It has a defined heritage and a well-grounded value set. It can deliver against the (high) expectations that customers have of it". While Beverland's *et al.* (2008) research primarily focused on exploratory, qualitative findings in specific industries such as luxury wines, many additional and important insights were gleaned about the components of BA: links to past, handcrafted methods, respect for traditions and cultural links.

Overall, the message of authenticity has advanced greatly over the years, from a simple reassurance of genuine merchandise or service (Beverland *et al.*, 2008) to a more powerful and cohesive message of non-commercial differentiation and deeply rooted firm values (Kim and Bonn, 2016). In a recent dissertation, Coary (2013) defined BA in a simplistic manner: "genuineness in its product and its principles" (p. 7). This belief of authenticity as having strong values and principles is evidently shared by Schallehn *et al.* (2014) after reviewing the measurement scale for BA used in their research.

Regarding the understanding of BA and its antecedents, Beverland *et al.* (2008) has been a powerful influence. According to this author, authenticity possesses six dimensions or attributes: heritage and pedigree, stylistic consistency, quality commitments, relationship to place, method of production and downplaying commercial interests. As is the case in other frameworks that will be discussed later, this model includes consistency as an antecedent of authenticity. While these attributes cannot be generalized to many industries, the application of them to the craft beer market is undeniable.

Bruhn *et al.* (2012) developed a scale for measuring consumers' perceptions of BA. In this research, authenticity is examined in the context of containing four dimensions. Through literature review and qualitative studies, the antecedents are identified as continuity, originality, reliability and naturalness. These four dimensions differ greatly from those derived in the work of Napoli *et al.* (2014). According to these authors, BA is represented by only three factors: quality commitment, sincerity and heritage. These dimensions are the result of a factor analysis consisting of 14 items, and the ensuing findings possess convergent, discriminate and predictive validity (Napoli *et al.*, 2014).

According to Eggers *et al.* (2013), BA consists of BCons, brand customer orientation and brand congruency. This conception shares a distinct similarity with the model developed the next year by Schallehn *et al.* (2014), one that is referenced frequently in the current research. In both models, BCons is noted as an antecedent of BA, giving additional credence to the theory. Additionally, both sets of authors investigated the connection between BA and BT.

In a comprehensive dissertation regarding BA, Coary (2013) noted a pervasive theme regarding the meaning of authenticity, one that included both temporal and spatial aspects; he observed this nearly universal agreement after reviewing a wide array of literature. According to this author, three key dimensions materialize: being a pioneer, maintaining product originality and adhering to principles (Coary, 2013).

In order to remedy the lack of empirical assessment of BA's effects and antecedents, Moulard *et al.* (2016) developed a conceptual framework of BA based on the self-determination theory, attribution theory and existing brand research. This model asserts that BA possesses four antecedents – two related to rare brand behaviors (uniqueness and scarcity) and two related to stable brand behaviors (longevity and longitudinal consistency). In addition, the framework proposes two effects or outcomes of BA – expected quality and trust (Moulard *et al.*, 2016). This model appears to share distinct similarities with the research structure composed by Schallehn *et al.* (2014). According to these authors, and within the scope of their study, individuality is "defined

as the unique way in which the brand fulfills its promise" (Schallehn *et al.*, 2014, p. 194). To draw comparison, it seems their concept of individuality can theoretically be categorized in rare brand behaviors proposed by Moulard *et al.* (2016). The concepts of consistency and continuity can then be classified as stable brand behaviors. Also, the outcome of trust is found in both conceptual models. As seen below, Table I displays a summary of the development of the BA literature.

2.1.1 BA concept interfaces with experiences. Current consumers increasingly use products and experiences to reconnect to places, history, culture and one another (Napoli *et al.*, 2014; Eades *et al.*, 2017). This is true across of range of products including tourism. Products and places became increasingly standardized. Travelers are actively seeking authentic experiences. Therefore, the interface between BA and experiences is evident. As Slocum (2015) stated, not only companies but also government support this relationship (e.g. Virginia County helped to organize tours of the three local breweries to encourage visitors at local resorts to experience the local community).

The issue of whether consumers perceive their experiences to be authentic when visiting tourism destinations or consuming a beer is no trivial matter. Authenticity and its importance among consumers perceptions have been discussed and debated for many decades and continue to be highly controversial topics not only in the tourism and marketing research literature (Hede *et al.*, 2014) but also in practical studies.

In wine tourism, activity of visiting wineries showed that authenticity perceived by consumers is a determinant for customer loyalty (Kolar and Zabkar, 2010), behavioral intention (Robinson and Clifford, 2012) and satisfaction (Tsai and Sakulsinlapakorn, 2016). In addition, in heritage tourism, studies attribute the decisive significance of authenticity to the fact that authenticity connects tourists to destination experiences attractions (Lindberg *et al.*, 2014).

As Eades *et al.* (2017) affirmed, with the rise in craft beer popularity in the USA, craft beer destinations that feature breweries, brewpubs and craft-beer-focused bars have increasingly become appealing to tourist and consumers. Tourists seeking "authentic and unique" experiences can use craft beverages to explore others cultures and lifestyles (Lu *et al.*, 2015). In this sense, Murray and Kline (2015) investigated the factors that influence customer's brand loyalty within two rural destinations. Through surveying customers of two North Carolina craft breweries, Murray and Kline found that the brewery's connection with the community, the respondent's desire for unique consumer products and the respondent's satisfaction with the product were the key influences as to establish. Thus, craft beer often leverages distinct place-based qualities of the communities in which it is produced to join authenticity and experiences (Newman and Dhar, 2014; Eades *et al.*, 2017).

Dimensions	Author(s)
Cultural/historic integrity, workmanship, craftsperson and materials, esthetics, function and use, shopping experience, genuineness, uniqueness, originality	Littrell *et al.* (1993)
Heritage/pedigree, stylistics consistency, quality commitments, relationship to place, method of production, downplaying commercial interests	Beverland *et al.* (2008)
Continuity, originality, reliability, naturalness	Bruhn *et al.* (2012)
Brand consistency, brand customer orientation, brand congruency	Eggers *et al.* (2013)
Being a pioneer, maintaining product originality, adhering to principles	Coary (2013)
Quality commitment, sincerity, heritage	Napoli *et al.* (2014)
Brand individuality, brand consistency, brand continuity	Schallehn *et al.* (2014)
Uniqueness, scarcity, longevity, longitudinal consistency	Moulard *et al.* (2016)
Source: Adapted by the author after the references of the paper	

Table I.
Antecedents of brand
authenticity

2.2 Relationship of BI, BCons BCont and BA

Taken from the conceptual framework developed and tested by Bruhn *et al.* (2012), Eggers *et al.* (2013) and Schallehn *et al.* (2014), BA is shown to consist of three antecedents: BI, BCons and BCont. Additionally, the significant influence of these three antecedents on the BA construct is empirically validated in their research (BCont was found to have the largest influence on BA ($R^2 = 0.37$), followed closely by BCons ($R^2 = 0.36$). BI was shown to be the least significant contributor ($R^2 = 0.15$). In the case of craft beer, however, BCons was found to have the highest explanation of variance in BA. In fact, while describing the empirical results of their investigation, the authors upheld the assumption that "fulfilling the brand promise at every touch-point is essential for the authenticity perception of beer brands" (Schallehn *et al.*, 2014, p. 196). With the current study placing context in the craft beer market, these findings and assertions present significant and relevant evidence to support the relationship.

The most recent research cited in this paper also found nearly identical similarities in these proposed connections. In this work, Moulard *et al.* (2016) examined the antecedents and outcomes of BA. Of particular emphasis are the four antecedents, two of which share distinct similarities with the model of Schallehn *et al.* (2014). Uniqueness and longitudinal consistency were found to have a positive and significant impact on the BA construct. Again, the choice of wording for the antecedents differs between authors, but the semantics seem to be quite comparable. Therefore, the same connections will likely hold true, resulting in the development of *H1–H3*:

H1. Higher perceptions of BI result in higher perceptions of BA.

H2. Higher perceptions of BCons result in higher perceptions BA.

H3. Higher perceptions of BCont result in higher perceptions of BA.

2.3 The PV construct

The concept of value has been widely researched in both exploratory and empirical studies, resulting in an array of definitions, scales of measurement, and consumer responses regarding the meaning of value (Zeithaml, 1988; Ulaga and Chacour, 2001; Rajh, 2012).

Zeithaml (1988) captured the meaning of value in a single, overall definition: "perceived value is the consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given" (p. 14). This definition and conceptualization of value as a trade-off, or an evaluation of what is given and what is received, has laid a strong foundation for value literature and is evident in a majority of future research (e.g. Ulaga and Chacour, 2001; Rajh, 2012).

Regarding the dimensions of value, Petrick (2002) concluded that value consisted of five dimensions including quality, emotional response, monetary price, behavioral price and reputation. Also, Petrick (2002) extended the work of Sweeney and Soutar (2001) extending the previous PERVAL measurement scale into a new one, known as SERV-PERVAL.

As seems to be a natural progression, Sanchez *et al.* (2006) enhanced both of these previous studies by again redefining the PV dimensions, expanding the scope from five to six, as well as creating a new measurement scale, known as GLOVAL. Currently, the work of Rajh (2012) presents a measurement scale for PV which appears to draw inspiration from the extensive, prior findings of other authors. From this, it seems that the author has embraced the perspective of a value as a trade-off or cost-benefit analysis, a view that has come to be widely accepted by both academics and practitioners.

2.4 Relationship of BA and PV

There has been severely limited examination of the direct relationship between BA and PV. However, Wuestefeld *et al.* (2012) investigated the impact of brand heritage on customer PV.

In this research, brand heritage plays an even more important role. Whereas prior perspectives have linked heritage to only past behavior and traditions, these authors (Wuestefeld *et al.*, 2012) believe heritage is relevant in both the present and future. To exemplify its significance, they proclaimed: "a brand that is infused with a heritage stands for authenticity, credibility, and trust and can provide leverage for that brand, especially in global markets" (Wuestefeld *et al.*, 2012, p. 2).

This statement provides further evidence that brand heritage and BA are highly interrelated. By developing a conceptual model, the authors hypothesized that brand heritage has a positive effect on four dimensions of PV: economic, functional, affective and social. Again, these dimensions have been used and verified by previous authors, adding to the credibility of this modern research. Other distinct similarities can be noted such as two of the measurement items in the scale for brand heritage: BCont and brand differentiation. In the framework used in the current investigation, derived from the work of Schallehn *et al.* (2014), BCont and BI are included as antecedents of BA. These comparisons serve to further validate and legitimize the framework and proposed relationships. Findings of the research published by Wuestefeld *et al.* (2012) found positive and significant relationships between brand heritage and all four dimensions of PV: economic, functional, affective and social. Therefore, it can be said that higher perceptions of brand heritage result in higher perceptions of PV in the eyes of consumers (Wuestefeld *et al.*, 2012).

The following year, Kovacs *et al.* (2013) presented two studies which sought to determine whether organizations regarded as authentic were also perceived as having more value. They hypothesized that "organizations referred to as authentic by consumers will generate higher consumer value ratings" (Kovacs *et al.*, 2013, p. 9). Findings of the first study show that consumers perceive higher levels of value in restaurants regarded as authentic, even after controlling for several other factors. The second study further reinforces these results by presenting respondents with photos and descriptions of fictitious restaurants and having them evaluate the expected levels of authenticity, quality, and value. Overall, these two studies reveal the significant relationship between authenticity and PV (Kovacs *et al.*, 2013).

Additional research published by Lee *et al.* (2014) investigated the effect of employee authenticity and manipulative intent on customer PV and satisfaction. While their research clearly focuses on the authenticity of individuals employed by a business, rather than that of brands, it should not be disregarded. Findings of the study show that employee authenticity significantly enriches customer perceptions of economic value, an important factor in contributing to overall PV (Lee *et al.*, 2014). These results suggest that authentic relationships between employees and customers, or at least the perception of, aid in the enhancement of customer value perceptions. Based on this assumption, the relationship between customers and brands, particularly the experience of BA, may also be a critical determinant in generating PV.

In this sense, we can propose the following hypothesis:

H4. Higher perceptions of BA result in higher perceptions of PV.

2.5 The BT construct

The notion of trust, in general, has been studied in detail since the 1960s, if not earlier. The topic has received immense attention in a variety of disciplines such as psychology, sociology, economics, management and marketing.

The research of the twenty-first century has heavily focused on the connection between consumers and brands (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001, 2002). According to Delgado and Fernandez (2016), major contributors to the BT literature, defined the construct as a "feeling of security held by the consumer in his/her interaction with the brand, that it is based on the perceptions that the brand is reliable and responsible for the interests and welfare of the

consumer" (p. 11). This description is congruent with many aspects of previous research involving trust. First, BT involves the willingness to put oneself at risk, typically through the reliance of one party on the promise of another. Second, confidence and security are deeply entangled in the development of trust. Third, related to reliance, BT involves an expectancy as it cannot exist without the possibly of error, failure or disappointment (Delgado-Ballester *et al.*, 2003). According to the authors, their definition also includes important facets of trust such as fiability and intentionality.

Among the literature, there is a general consensus that behavioral involvement and authenticity are highly entangled in the trust-building process. While no single factor of the BA, construct directly relates to or addresses perceived risk, the aim of this paper is to examine the effect of BA on PV and BT, both of which have been shown to reduce perceived risk (Snoj *et al.*, 2004). Therefore, by reducing functional and emotional brand-choice risk through increased perceptions of BA, BT can likely be significantly and positively influenced.

2.6 Relationship of BA and BT

Eggers *et al.* (2013) examined the associations between BA, BT, and small- and medium-size enterprise (SME) growth. In their study, BA was operationalized as having three dimensions: BCons, brand customer orientation and brand congruency. Using data from 285 German SMEs and structural equation modeling, results found that both BCons and congruency generate BT. With two of three dimensions showing significant influence on the dependent variable, it can be said that overall BA fosters BT.

Coary (2013) also investigated the relationship between BA and BT as part of the conceptual framework. In this work, the author hypothesized that "brand trust mediates the effects of authenticity on attitudinal measures" (Coary, 2013, p. 22). Results of this study found that respondents with high perceptions of authenticity reported significantly higher perceptions of BT than those with lower perceptions of authenticity. This revelation was even more significant in the case of experiential products, such as craft beer (Coary, 2013).

As with the connections discussed previously, the relationship between the BA construct and BT was hypothesized and empirically tested by Schallehn *et al.* (2014). In terms of the relationship between authenticity and BT, BA is examined and empirically tested, even in this research. In this work, BA was found to have an extremely significant and strong correlation with BT. These findings suggest that consumer perceptions of a brand's authenticity are highly associated with their trust in the brand.

Sung and Kim (2010) investigated the relationship between five brand personality dimensions (sincerity, ruggedness, excitement, sophistication and competence), BT and brand affect. Results of their study suggest that the brand personality dimensions of sincerity and ruggedness more significantly influence the level of BT than brand affect.

In this sense, we can propose the following hypothesis:

*H5.* Higher perceptions of BA result in higher perceptions of BT.

In Figure 1, the conceptual framework for the research is displayed which is applied to the craft beer market.

3. Research methodology

3.1 Research methods

This research has been focused in the context of craft beer in the USA due to the relevance of this market in the last years and regarding all the opportunities present for the creation and renewal of authenticity as well as its numerous advantages.

Indeed, as of the end of 2015, craft beer production volume, amounting to slightly over 24 million barrels, accounts for 12.2 percent of the total beer production volume in the USA. This volume corresponds to a \$22.3bn retail sales value, or approximately one-fifth of the
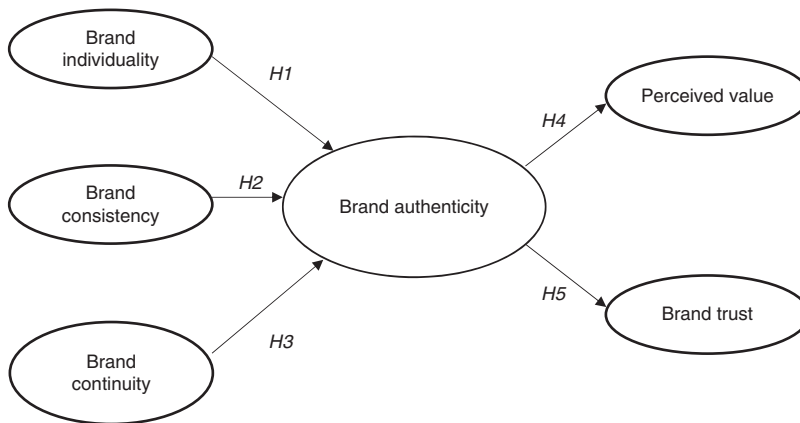
Sources: Rajh (2012), Schallehn *et al*. (2014)

Figure 1.
Conceptual framework
for the research

overall US beer market (Brewer Associations, 2016). To continue, the craft beer market experienced 16 percent $ sales growth from the previous year, a significant leap in an otherwise mature industry. While the craft beer market realized a 12.8 percent year-over-year growth in production volume, the overall beer market saw a 0.2 percent decline in product volume (Brewer Associations, 2016). To broaden the perspective, US craft beer production has increased by an astonishing 290 percent over the past decade.

Thus, this investigation has placed emphasis on the more-specialized and premium craft beer market, particularly that of the USA. While the questionnaire used in the research contained foreign craft beer brands, such as the popular Belgian brand Duvel, the primary focus of the examination is related to consumer perceptions in the American craft beer market. In total, 48 craft beer brands were used in the quantitative study, providing respondents with a high degree of freedom when completing the survey. Of the craft beer brands, 45, or 94 percent, are American brands and include the following: Yuengling, Samuel Adams, Sierra Nevada, New Belgium, Lagunitas, Goose Island, Founders, Cigar City, Tree House, Stone, Ballast Point, Brooklyn, Firestone Walker, Oskar Blues, Dogfish Head, SweetWater, Harpoon, Abita, Anchor, Long Trail, Shipyard, Full Sail, Odell, Rogue Ales, 21st Amendment, Flying Dog, Left Hand, Uinta, Allagash, Lost Coast, Troegs, Karl Strauss, North Coast, Minhas, Alaskan, Summit, Ninkasi, Bear Republic, Bell's, Deschutes, Victory, Southern Tier, Green Flash, Four Peaks and Revolution. Three of the craft beer brands, or 6 percent, are foreign brands and include the following: Gambrinus (Czech Republic), Duvel (Belgium) and August Schell (Germany).

In order to achieve the research objective, a survey was delivered through an online format (Google Forms) and was completed by a sample of 749 consumers. The survey included an extensive list of popular craft beer brands from which respondents could select a single brand in order to complete the questionnaire. By employing this technique, familiarity with and actual consumption of the chosen brand were more likely guaranteed. For the ensuing analysis, respondents who provided the same answer for every question, including reverse-coded questions, were eliminated from the sample. The sample was "cleaned" and narrowed to 738 respondents. This group was acquired through a basic simple random sampling technique for sake of convenience.

All questions were developed using seven-point Likert scales, with "1" representing "Strongly disagree" and "7" representing "Strongly agree." All scale measurement items were derived from previous research. All three antecedents of BA (BI, BCons and BCont) were measured using three-item scales taken directly from the work of Schallehn *et al.* (2014). However, these items

were adapted from previously developed scales (Netemeyer *et al.*, 2004). The construct of BA was measured with a six-item scale which was originally developed by Schallehn *et al.* (2014) through a two-faceted qualitative investigation. In terms of the dependent variables, PV was assessed using a five-item scale taken from the research of Rajh (2012). Finally, BT was evaluated using a three-item scale, again taken directly from the research of Schallehn *et al.* (2014). The items for this measurement scale were slightly adapted from the previously established and empirically measured trust scale developed by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001).

Table II shows the measurement scales used in this current investigation along with their respective set of scale items.

After eliminating certain respondents from the final sample, as mentioned above, descriptive analysis was conducted to provide detail regarding the demographic distribution of the sample in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, education, employment and location. While this information was not specifically relevant to the research hypotheses, it offered insight into how successfully the sample represented the target population of the study. The typology of the desired target population of this research, in terms of demographics, are Americans consumers who are 21–55 years of age, employed for wages, and have completed at least a bachelor's degree. Table III provides an overview of the demographic profile of the sample respondents.

Measurement scale	Items	Adopted from
Brand individuality	1. The way how [X][a] fulfills its brand promise is very different from competing brands 2. The way how [X] fulfills its brand promise is unique 3. [X] fulfills its brand promise in a distinct way	Netemeyer *et al.* (2004), Schallehn *et al.* (2014)
Brand consistency	1. Brand [X][a] fulfills its promise consistently 2. The current brand behavior of [X] fits to its brand promise 3. The brand promise of [X] and its present actions are in line with each other	
Brand continuity	1. In the past, brand [X][a] has already fulfilled its brand promise 2. The previous behavior of [X] fits to its current brand promise 3. The brand promise of [X] and its past actions are in line with each other	
Brand authenticity	1. Brand [X][a] possesses a clear philosophy which guides the brand promise 2. Brand [X] knows exactly what it stands for and does not promise anything which contradicts its essence and character 3. Considering its brand promise, the brand [X] does not pretend to be someone else 4. Considering its brand promise, brand [X] does not curry favor with its target group; moreover, it shows self-esteem 5. Brand [X] distorts itself, to match contemporary trends[b] 6. The saying "you trim your sails to every wind that blows" describes brand [X] adequately	Schallehn *et al.* (2014)
Perceived value	1. This brand is very good value for money 2. Given its price, this brand is economical 3. This brand can be considered a favorable purchase 4. The price of this brand is acceptable with regard to its quality 5. The price of this brand corresponds to its value	Rajh (2012)
Brand trust	1. I trust the brand [X][a] 2. I rely on brand [X] to fulfill its brand promise 3. I feel safe when I rely on brand [X]	Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), Schallehn *et al.* (2014)

Notes: [X][a] indicates a brand name; [b]reverse-coded question

Age	Sample information
Mean	33.8
SD	10.34
Gender (%)	
Male	52.7
Female	47.3
Ethnicity (%)	
White	73.9
Asian or Pacific Islander	14.6
Black or African American	5.8
Hispanic or Latino	5.7
Education (%)	
High school graduate	19.6
Bachelor's degree	38.1
Post-graduate or doctoral degree	22.9
Others	19.4
Employment (%)	
Employed for wages	83.4
Unemployed	4.6
Retired	2.7
Student	9.3
Location (%)	
USA	100
Note: $n = 738$	

Table III.
Sample information –
demographics

3.2 Data analysis
The quantitative analysis of the conceptual model was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics. The six constructs used in the research were tested for internal reliability. A scale is said to be "reliable" if the reliability coefficient, Cronbach's α, is 0.70 or higher (Bagozzi *et al.*, 1981; Chin, 1998). Dimension reduction was then performed in the form of a factor analysis to determine whether variation in the six constructs used in the research actually reflects variation in a fewer number of unobserved, underlying variables. These tests can be viewed as preliminary in the sense that they must be executed in order to verify the reliability and validity of the data and constructs.

After this introductory investigation, correlation and regression analysis formed the heart of the quantitative examination. First, correlation analysis was used to determine the degree to which two variables move together, whether positively or negatively. Second, regression analysis was utilized to ascertain the extent to which the changes in one variable, or the dependent variable, can be explained by and attributed to another variable, or the independent variable.

4. Results
The six constructs used in the research were tested for internal reliability. In this case, five of the six scales were found to have relatively high internal reliability. The BI scale was comprised of three items ($\alpha = 0.85$), the BCons scale contained three items ($\alpha = 0.84$) and the BCont scale consisted of three items ($\alpha = 0.87$). Cronbach's α values for the five PV items and three BT items were both 0.88, indicating that these two scales have the highest reliability of the six. The BA scale, comprising six items, was found to have the lowest Cronbach's α value of 0.58. A possible explanation for this phenomenon is the inclusion of

two reverse-coded items in the BA scale, which may have instigated comprehension issues among respondents. These two items were eliminated in hope of improving the quality of the scale and it was then re-tested, resulting in a revised Cronbach's α value of 0.82.

Subsequently, dimension reduction was conducted in the form of a factor analysis, which did not uncover the presence of any additional underlying variables in the data. All scale measurement items were correctly and reliably categorized into their respective first-order constructs. The results of the factor analysis are presented visually below in Table IV.

Regarding results from the model, they provide us with measures of the relationships between the constructs. Assessing the model, the results indicate expected relationship between BI and BA. Furthermore, changes in BI were found to have significant influence on changes in BA, thus deepening the relationship ($R^2 = 0.25$, F(1, 736) = 248.71, $p < 0.01$). According to these results, higher perceptions of BI result in higher perceptions of BA.

In the same sense, results show expected relationship between BCons and BA. Moreover, changes in BCons were found to have significant influence on changes in BA ($R^2 = 0.21$, F(1, 736) = 199.81, $p < 0.01$). With this in mind, it can be affirmed that a brand's present actions have a meaningful impact on the extent to which consumers perceive the brand as authentic.

Regarding relationship between BCont and BA, findings show that changes in BCont were found to have significant influence on changes in BA, thus further validating the relationship ($R^2 = 0.21$, F(1, 736) = 191.09, $p < 0.01$). Since this hypothesis is confirmed, it is evident that the prior behavior of a brand has a substantial influence on consumers' perception of BA. Results also show expected relationship between BA and PV. Furthermore, changes in BA were found to have significant influence on changes in PV ($R^2 = 0.15$, F(1, 736) = 126.92, $p < 0.01$). With *H4* also being supported, it is shown that this perception has a significant effect on how a brand is perceived in terms of value. If a brand is viewed as possessing higher authenticity, it will also be seen as being a very good value for money, a trait that may be a critical decision criterion among certain consumer groups. In addition, higher

Component	1	2	3	4	5	6
BI1		0.828				
BI2		0.831				
BI3		0.805				
BCons1					0.678	
BCons2					0.640	
BCons3					0.634	
BCont1				0.756		
BCont2				0.724		
BCont3				0.751		
BA1						0.508
BA2						0.650
BA3						0.629
BA4						0.779
BT1			0.718			
BT2			0.758			
BT3			0.787			
PV1	0.778					
PV2	0.855					
PV3	0.673					
PV4	0.659					
PV5	0.682					

Table IV.
Factor analysis – rotated component matrix

Notes: Extraction method: principal component analysis; rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization

perceptions of BA will result in a brand being perceived as a more economical (given its price) and favorable purchase. Regarding monetary costs, the price of perceived authentic brands will be considered acceptable with regard to their quality and corresponding to their value, regardless of the levels of said prices.

Finally, BA and BT shown to be significantly and positively correlated. Furthermore, changes in BA were found to have significant influence on changes in BT ($R^2 = 0.24$, F(1, 736) = 238.24, $p < 0.01$). According to these results, BA is a powerful driver of BT among consumers.

Table V presents a summary of hypotheses. All the proposed relationship have been supported.

Figure 2 presents a visual summary of the findings derived from the empirical investigation.

5. Discussion

This study provides some significant contributions to the marketing theory. This research has confirmed that the three antecedents of individuality, consistency and continuity effectively capture and positively influence consumer perceptions of BA and that a higher consumers' perception of brand authenticity resulting in higher perceived value and brand trust. Nowadays, brands' competitive battles for winning the consumer's mind and heart are focusing in forging deep connections with individuals, rather than delivering excellent service or innovative technologies (Napoli *et al.*, 2016). Our findings are consistent with previous researches (Alexander, 2009; Kolar and Zabkar, 2010; Newman and Dhar, 2014) where authentic brands offer consumers an opportunity for establishing a stronger emotional connection with a brand, compared to less authentic brands.

Hypotheses	Variables	R	R^2	F-change	df	Sig. F-change	Result
H1	BI and BA	0.503[a]	0.253	248.707	736	0.000	Supported
H2	BCons and BA	0.462a	0.214	199.806	736	0.000	Supported
H3	BCont and BA	0.454a	0.214	191.094	736	0.000	Supported
H4	BA and PV	0.384a	0.154	126.924	736	0.000	Supported
H5	BA and BT	0.495a	0.241	238.236	736	0.000	Supported

Notes: [a]Predictors: (Constant). BAavg ($p < 0.01$)

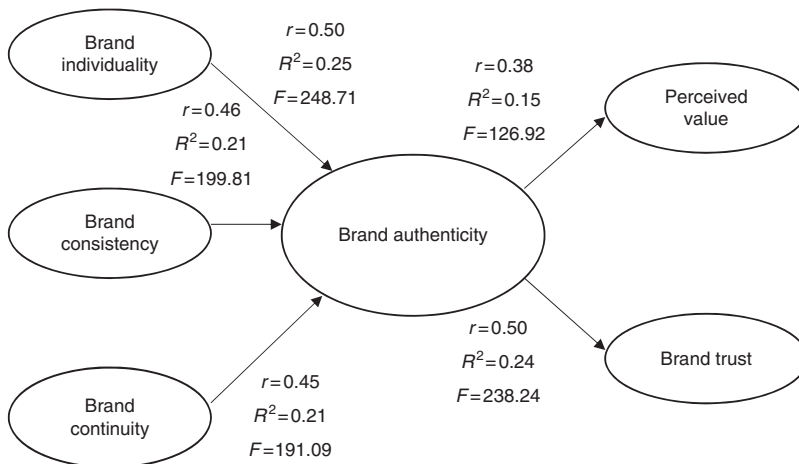Table V.
Summary of
hypotheses

Figure 2.
Evaluation of the
conceptual framework

Our findings show the needs to explore the benefits that consumers experience when they consume something authentic (Hede *et al.*, 2014) as well as the need to use of BI, BCons, BCont and BA as a positioning device. Positioning a brand based on product superiority, quality and great service is all too common in the competitive market, whereas authenticity allows a brand to be true without being perfect (Beverland *et al.*, 2008). Moreover, by being able to measure and assess authenticity, marketers may be empowered to identify new opportunities for brand positioning and value creation that may contribute to greater consumer PV and BT.

According to Liao and Ma (2009), consumers with a high need for authenticity tend to spend more time and energy searching for truly authentic offerings, consume authentic products deliberately, remain trust to authentic products and refuse to consume imitation goods, compared to consumers with a low need for authenticity (Napoli *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, marketers should clearly show in their communications campaign the characteristics and attributes that demonstrate the authenticity of a product.

More specifically, in the craft beer market and regarding the relationship between BI and BA, the higher the extent to which a brand is perceived as fulfilling its brand promise differently from competing brands, the more likely the brand is to be perceived as authentic among consumers. This same principle applies to the perception that a brand fulfills its brand promise in a unique and distinct fashion. That is, a brand's ability to create unique mental associations between the brand and things that matter to an individual. This finding may hold particular importance in the highly competitive craft beer market. With an enormous array of craft beer brands, each presenting seemingly similar brand promises, value propositions, and physical products, consumers may perceive BI as an exceedingly significant attribute influencing potential consumption of these brands (Grohs *et al.*, 2016). If a single brand is able to differentiate itself among the thousands of craft beer brands available in the market, thereby increasing its perceived BI, the brand will be handsomely rewarded with perceptions of authenticity among its audience.

Regarding the relationship between BCons and BA, a brand must fulfill its brand promise consistently, ensure that its current brand behavior and present actions fit to its promise, and not engage in any other activities that contradict this essence. Otherwise, a noteworthy and negative impact on perceived BA will be realized. With an array of brands, not only those in the craft beer industry, offering consistent and fulfilling consumer experiences across a variety of touchpoints, it comes as no surprise that perceptions of BCons and BA are highly interrelated. For craft beer brands, comparable success can be achieved by following a related strategy. These brands are similar in the sense that they are offer premium and aspirational products. Therefore, higher perceptions of authenticity can be realized by aiming to increase levels of perceived BCons.

Regarding the relationship between BCont and BA, the successful past fulfillment of its brand promise and the fit of past actions to its current brand promise are vital to enhancing these perceptions among a brand's audience. Again, this likely holds particular importance in the craft beer market. Although the industry sees many new entrants each year, a large number of popular brands have existed in the market for an extensive period. These entrenched brands have well-grounded sets of values, deeply rooted heritage, and an engaging story to share with consumers, attributes that have been shown to contribute to perceived authenticity. Even for new entrants in the market, the relationship between BCont and BA should not be disregarded. By crafting this engaging story and developing core values from the beginning, perceptions of BCont can be increased, resulting in higher perceptions of authenticity among consumers.

Regarding the relationship between BA and PV, since craft beer brands are positioned as premium or even luxury products with associated high price levels, this finding is tremendously informative. In order to command these premium prices and compete effectively against lower-priced, mass-market products such as those manufactured by Anheuser-Busch, craft beer brands must generate high consumer perceptions of authenticity. By doing so,

consumer PV will also likely be increased (Vera, 2015). While this relationship is the least significant of the five examined in the study, the significance should be not understated.

Finally, regarding the relationship between BA and BT, to put it simply, higher perceptions of BA result in higher perceptions of BT. If a brand is viewed as more authentic in the eyes of consumers, it will be significantly more trusted than brands with the opposite perception. Higher perceptions of BA will also produce a higher reliance on a brand to fulfill its brand promise. Additionally, consumers will enjoy feelings of safety when relying on authentic brands. In the past, craft beer firms were focused on single, short-term transactions and did not concern themselves with deepening their relationships with consumers. However, the concentration of modern firms and marketers is to develop long-term, mutually beneficial relationships with consumers in order to generate a higher customer lifetime value. In order to achieve these connections, trust must be gained from consumers. Based on the current finding, BT can be more easily formed and enhanced by increasing perceptions of BA.

6. Conclusion, limitations and future research
The positive and significant relationships found in this study provide factual support that BA can and should be considered a critical factor for the success of brands. A positive causal relationship was found among all variables in the study, confirming all five hypotheses. Thus, the individual, consistent, and continuous fulfilment of the brand promise is essential for creating and increasing perceptions of authenticity (Kolar and Zabkar, 2010). This is a particularly important revelation in the craft beer market due to with an immense number of brands employing very similar marketing strategies, it is increasingly difficult to position a single brand as having high individuality, but the yearning for BA is evident.

Managers and executives should generate higher and better consumer perceptions of individuality, consistency and BCont. Keeping track of what consumers know about BA is advisable in order to improve higher PV and BT among their target audience (McColl *et al.*, 2018). For this purpose, it could be useful considers the value of using three approaches to assess brand knowledge: free association technique, storytelling and collage-creation (Pera and Viglia, 2016). In addition, it could be useful to encourage relational activities to improve brand experiences (Delgado and Fernández, 2016). These new trends have been identified as important to know what consumers think consciously and unconsciously about a brand, which influences their attitudes and behaviors toward the brand, and ultimately brand success.

While the findings and insights gained from this research are valid and significant, there are important limitations that cannot be overlooked (numbers of participants, the US craft beer market, etc.). Also, the R^2 is at times low, so future research should analyze if others factors could explain the variance in the outcome.

It is obvious the need for continued research by expanding the conceptual framework to include moderating variables (as personality, social environment, education, etc.) or applying the model to services context. Also, future research should replicate the findings across other product categories. Moreover, it could be very interesting to consider the inclusion of mediators and covariates; identifying other antecedents of authenticity and to do a cross-cultural research taking into account the country of origin for beer or the nationality of consumers.

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