Is That a Real Song Or Did You Just Make It Up? Styles of Authenticity in the Cultural (Re)Production of Music

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By extending music consumption to include production of music by musicians, we examine the nature of authenticity expressed among this group using participant observation and depth interviews. We find authenticity is a moving target that is expressed both through nostalgic use of equipment and through creative transcendence of equipment.

[to cite]:

[url]:
http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/15881/volumes/v38/NA-38

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rating ($r=-.14$, $p>.6$ and $r=-.07$, $p>.8$, respectively). That is, participants who reported using the BVT created funnier headlines than participants who learned about the BVT but did not use it. Conversely, using the theory did not appear to help participants exposed to either incongruity theory or superiority theory.

References


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Extended Abstract
Music as an art form has many linkages to consumption. While music itself is consumed in the form of songs, videos, and concerts, its consumption is also integral in the consumption of other art forms such as films (Holbrook 2008; Suisman 2009) and commercial forms such as advertising (Scott 1990) and retail atmospherics (Kellaris and Kent 1993; Kotler 1973/1974; Milliman 1986). Similarly, music often serves as the background in consumers’ lives—commercial radio accompanies us on our daily errands or newer subscription-based services free us from the commercial (usually including musical) intrusion into our otherwise quiet lives while we dine, shop, or ride elevators (Bradshaw and Holbrook 2008).

Music is also consumed in its live form (Deighton 1992). Bands perform publicly and privately in venues as diverse as symphony halls and local blues clubs, and from marching band performances during athletic events to weddings and other gatherings. While we see performances as consumption, we might also see the production of music as a consumption activity (Bradshaw, Sherlock, and McDonagh 2003; Kerrigan, O’Reilly, and Lehn 2009). Musicians use instruments, amplification equipment, and pursue education; and put a great deal of effort into both individual practice and group rehearsal. Distinctions between musicians and non-musicians are difficult because musical groups may perform frequently, occasionally, or not at all. Similarly, the lines between professional and amateur musicians (Stebbins 1979; Thompson and Tambyah 1999) and between performer and audience member (Drew 1997; Minor et al. 2004) may at times be vague or nonexistent. Simply getting together with other musicians and “jamming” represents a community activity with its own set of norms and values that include respect for others’ abilities, turn-taking, and providing support; and songwriters gain particular respect in this community for their originality\(^1\) and authenticity.

FOOTNOTE
\(^1\)The title of this paper is derived from a CD of original music produced by a local songwriter’s group.

In consumer research, authenticity is desired when cultural resources are used in the production of the self-identity (Beverland and Farrelly 2009; Hesmondhalgh 2008; Holt 2002). Authenticity is seen in opposition to the commercial (Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1989;
Kozinets (2002) and may be seen as “staged” if a commercial connection becomes apparent to consumers (Murray 2002). In contrast, authenticity may be seen as a desirable consequence of a commercial transaction (Arnould and Price 1993) and may serve the role as a marker of status (Schouten and McAlexander 1995; Belk and Costa 2001). This paper reports the preliminary results of a study of local musicians’ expressions of authenticity. We were interested in assessing the varied nature of authenticities found in the culture of musicians (Bennett 1991), and in learning the degree to which the equipment required to produce music would be associated with these expressions.

The study uses qualitative methodology, including participant observation and depth interviews. The first author became immersed in the local music community by playing in a band, attending musical performances, participating in guitar circles, and attending meetings and monthly performances of a local songwriter’s group. We have, to date, conducted in-depth interviews with 8 musicians. Interview participants were recruited through the first author’s contacts within the community, and were questioned about their early influences, performance experiences, and equipment. As the topic of authenticity emerged early in the study, the interview guide was altered in order to more thoroughly capture what is authentic to these musicians. Data are analyzed using a hermeneutic approach (Thompson, Pollio, and Locander 1994; Thompson 1997). First, each interview was read to develop a perspective of each informant’s lived experience as a musician. This involved constructing a summary of that musician’s data and writing a narrative summary for each musician. Second, the interviews were thematically coded, the coded texts were sorted, and each code was analyzed across interview participants.

Preliminary findings suggest that, while authenticity is a moving target (Beverland and Farrelly 2009; Holt 2002; Rose and Wood 2005), musicians seek to capture and signal authenticity in a number of ways, some of them related to their equipment. Moreover, musicians’ legitimacy as performers is potentially contested terrain, and they seek to signal this legitimacy through use of appropriate equipment. For instance, some brands represented a higher degree of authenticity and use of equipment from previous eras in music was one path to legitimacy and authenticity (Grayson and Martinec 2004; Grayson and Shulman 2000; Holbrook 1993).

During the early phases of the study, we suspected that an authentic music experience was related to a nostalgic connection with the past (Holbrook 1993) or with particular music groups, and this expectation was consistent with our first finding. Perhaps ironically, other participants suggested that authenticity is attained through transcendence of the awareness of equipment and brands in favor of a focus of being in the moment with the music. For them, equipment and its use are necessary in creating music, but focus on equipment takes the artist away from that creational process (Heidegger 1962). This group was likely to suggest that authenticity is located in creativity and is represented in originality of music. For these musicians, often singer-songwriters, authenticity derived from a movement away from the ordinary into new musical terrain. Routes to this authenticity included writing music that was lyrically complex, melodic, and new.

Selected References
In Search of an Authentic Conceptualization for Authenticity in Marketing Offerings

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Extended Abstract

This research reviews and synthesizes the existing conceptualizations of authenticity. Authenticity is becoming a popular topic in contemporary literature and business practices. It has been applied to tourism experience (e.g., Wang 1999), music (e.g., Peterson 2005), leadership behavior (e.g., Bass and Steidlmeier 1999), culture (e.g., Limkem 1991), education (e.g., Breen 1985), social study (e.g., Erickson 1995) and in marketing domains such as service delivery (e.g., Chalmers 2008), consumer rituals (e.g., Wallendorf and Amould 1991), consumer possessions (e.g., Grayson and Shulman 2000) and advertising (e.g., Stern 1994). However, the different conceptualization of authenticity create great confusion for both academic researchers and marketing practitioners.

Confusion still exists when the scope of investigation in narrowed down to the domain of describing authenticity in marketing offering. In some articles, while authenticity has been named differently, their meanings are very similar if not identical. For instance, an offering which has the characteristic of unbroken commitments to tradition and place of origin, Beverland et al. (2008) calls it pure authenticity, while Grayson and Martinec (2004) refer to it as indexical authenticity. More commonly, authenticity (or its component) are named the same but referring to totally different aspects of it. For example, it means being genuine and natural when describing a commodity or person (e.g., Trilling 1972); trustworthiness when describing messages like advertisements (e.g., Chalmers 2008); being historically grounded and/or rooted in traditional modes of production (e.g., Peterson 2005); or similarity between two objects when describing products or individuals (e.g., Grayson and Martinec 2004). Therefore, it is vital to clear up this confusion to allow progress to be made in this stream of research.

This research provides a qualitative review on the existing literature on authenticity in marketing and identifies fourteen existing concepts, namely, indexical, iconic (Grayson and Radan Martinec 2004), natural, original, exceptional, referential, influential (Gilmore and Pine II 2007), existential, absolute, symbolic (Leigh, Peters and Shelton 2006), synthetic (Cloud, John, Time 2008), pure, approximate and moral (Beverland, Lindgreen, and Vink 2008).

The qualitative review includes two stages. In the first stage, the authors compare and contrast the fourteen conceptualizations of authenticity through logical induction. For each dimension, we review the definitions and examples from the article. Then, a panel of expert judges in linguistic and in communication reviews each of the conceptualizations and categorize them into four groups based on each of their definition and explanation. Afterward, the authors review and pick a conceptualization that best represents the group. We avoid creating new names that would lead to more confusion.

The four groups are: 1) indexical authenticity, which contains originality (which further includes true self or true origin, not a copy or imitation), and absolute connection with some time, venue, or person. It incorporates pure authenticity and absolute authenticity. The definition of exceptional authenticity is also partially incorporated; 2) iconic authenticity, on the other hand, requires no connection, but instead emphasizes on being similar to the object one resembles. It incorporates referential, approximate, symbolic, moral, and synthetic