The Impact of Product Cue Manipulation and Consumer Product Involvement on Product Authenticity Evaluations

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Student: Thom Lubberts

Student number: 940211531090

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Supervisor: Ilona de Hooge

Second reader: Jannette van Beek

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Abstract

The concept of authenticity is becoming increasingly interesting and present in the marketing sphere nowadays. Especially in the food and beverage sector, numerous brands claim to represent the "real deal" when it comes to their offerings. However, what is actually perceived as that "true", "real", or "genuine" offering is often a hard to grasp. Existing research made diverse but diligent efforts to conceptualize brand authenticity, but little is known about the effectiveness of such an authenticity strategy irrespective of the brand. Packaging cues have shown to be a strong method of differentiation thereby signaling product quality. This thesis proposes the conceptualization of perceived product authenticity as a basis for the development of visual objective (indexical) and subjective (iconic) authenticity packaging cues. It further quantitatively analyzes the influence of two types of visual packaging cues -i.e. indexical and iconic cues-, on the authenticity perceptions and purchase intentions of a product by consumers. Since interest and excitement about a product category are expected to potentially influence consumers' perception process, consumer product involvement was taken into account as well. Results of an online experiment show that the information communicated by both cue types is mainly subjectively perceived. This finding supports the notion that authenticity lies in the eye of the beholder. Furthermore, results also suggest that perceived product authenticity increases purchase intention, and that only the inclusion of both cue types on a package drives purchase intention through perceived product authenticity. No evidence was found that consumer product involvement moderates the influence of the packaging cues on consumers' perceived product authenticity. Because no direct positive effects are found from the authenticity cues on purchase intention, it is suggested that future research can further explore other cue configurations or potentially omitted mediators in varying settings.

Keywords: product authenticity, indexical cues, iconic cues, packaging design, consumer, product involvement, purchase intention

Preface

Authenticity… The phenomenon already interested me during my bachelor in tourism studies and during the traveling I did so far. Always looking for the real experiences, but not always sure whether these experiences were actually true or staged. Now, for my MSc thesis in marketing and consumer behavior, I decided to dive deeper into the world of authenticity by addressing the phenomenon in a product marketing context. Writing my thesis was interesting and challenging, but foremost very instructive. I could not have done it without the support of other people.

There are various people that I would like to thank for their support during the progress of writing my thesis. First of all, my supervisor Ilona de Hooge, for her helpful feedback and the creation of a thesis ring. This thesis ring functioned as an helpful environment in which I was able to develop my thesis with the help of my supervisor and peer students. Therefore, I would like to thank these peer students being Adriëtte Taekema, Max van Riet and Kejia Li for their helpful and constructive feedback as well. I would also like to thank my second reader, Jannette van Beek, for the first month of supervising my thesis, and for the mid-term feedback session. A fresh pair of eyes helped me in identifying important points of improvement regarding my literature research. Furthermore, I would like to thank my fellow students and friends, Eva van Bruinessen and Lisa van der Meulen, for always supporting me during my Master's program both in fun and in difficult times. Last but not least, I would like to thank my parents, my friends and my girlfriend for moral support when needed.

1. Introduction

When walking through contemporary supermarkets, it is almost impossible to avoid confrontation with authenticity claims on food packaging. Various food brands claim to possess ancient recipes, execute authentic production methods and represent the 'real deal'. Authenticity can be seen as "a cornerstone of marketing practices nowadays" (Brown, Kozinets & Sherry, 2003, p. 21). Authenticity as a branding strategy entered the marketing sphere as a response to the longing for more authentic and meaningful products by the consumer (Arnould & Price, 2000). People have become alienated from the world they live in through purchasing and consuming commercialized and meaningless products. This form of alienation is mainly due to underlying post-modern trends like globalization (Arnould & Price, 2000). For example in the food domain, nowadays consumers actively seek for those commodities that bring them back to pleasurable experiences like eating good old grandma's apple pie or eating that perfectly seasoned pad-thai on holiday in Thailand.

Authenticity can be understood as something that is 'real', 'genuine', and/or 'truthful' (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). In consumer literature, the concept is generally understood as a socially constructed interpretation of what is observed, rather than the properties inherent in an object (e.g. Beverland, Farrelly & Quester, 2010; Grayson & Martinec, 2004). This implies that for one consumer, a food object can subjectively be perceived as authentic, while for the other it can be evaluated as a strategic marketing trick. Since contemporary technological advances facilitate authentic simulation, businesses do not necessarily have to fulfill all specific aspects of authenticity to convince the consumer of its authenticity (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). As a result, it becomes a challenge for consumers to differentiate between the 'real' objects and the 'fake' ones.

From the above, one can imagine that offering products in an authentic way provides interesting positioning opportunities for businesses (Alexander, 2009; Beverland, 2006). However, even though a lot of companies have adopted the strategy already, confusion arises around the question whether this strategy is really successful in practice. That is, finding the situation in which aspects of authenticity are optimally used in order to generate the most beneficial outcome possible for the company. The issue here is that the ambiguous concept itself is not well understood nor clearly defined (Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Napoli, Dickenson, Beverland & Farrely, 2014).

A whole stream of consumer literature around authenticity contests the concept by proposing its own definitions and conceptualization (Beverland, Lindgren & Vink, 2008; Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Morhart, Malär, Guevremont, Girardin, & Grohmann, 2015). A popular topic concerns a concept that is generally called 'brand authenticity'. Various scholars already addressed the measurement and effects of perceived brand authenticity on consumer judgements (e.g. Morhart et al., 2015; Napoli et al., 2014), but little is known about the impact of authenticity marketing from an unknown brand. Therefore, the focus of the present study lies on a concept I call perceived product authenticity. Although interrelated, one should be aware of the subtle difference between perceived product authenticity and perceived brand authenticity. Brand authenticity refers to the total authenticity evaluation of a brand by the consumer, whereas product authenticity refers to an authenticity evaluation of the object itself, irrespective the brand. With brand authenticity people may already have particular believes and judgements about a brand before buying a product since a brand can indicate quality (Grunert, 2005). New insights into the effect of solely

packaging design on authenticity perceptions and purchase intention would be valuable for marketing managers that are interested in launching a new brand.

Although authenticity is receiving growing consumer research attention, questions regarding its nature, and the factors driving authenticity perceptions and purchase intentions remain. Specifically, companies have little indication of the influencing packaging information that could be used to promote an aura of authenticity around a product, nor do they know which information may positively or negatively influence purchase intentions. Insight in these matters is essential to further confirm the relevance of authenticity as a marketing strategy.

To fill this knowledge gap, my research focuses on the effects that authentic visual package design has on consumer perceptions and subsequent willingness to buy. In order to gain more knowledge about whether authentic design is beneficial, a need arises to address how consumers generally judge products in the market. From that, assumptions can be made how consumers are likely to judge and evaluate indicators of authenticity. Purchase decision making generally involves risk and uncertainty. "To reduce uncertainty, consumers seek and process information regarding the product and generally attempt to form accurate impressions of it" (Jacoby, Olson & Haddock, 1971, p. 570). Since product packaging and it's informational stimuli can be considered as an 'array of cues', it is the task of the consumer to use cues from the array as a basis of judgements about a product (Cox, 1962). Thus, a possible way for companies to express authenticity is through visual packaging cues on products.

When making a purchase decision, the impression of product quality is often considered to be of great importance for the consumer. Consumer research emphasized the difference between objective and perceived quality (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1996; Zeithaml, 1988). Objective quality refers to measurable and verifiable superiority whereas perceived quality refers to the consumer's subjective judgement of the superiority or excellence of a product. This distinction is also visible within authenticity literature. Grayson and Martinec (2004) identified two frames of reference that consumers apply in perceiving an object, and attributing the word "authentic" to it, i.e. indexical authenticity (objective verifiable characteristics) and iconic authenticity (subjective impression-based characteristics). For example, one consumer may perceive Trappist beer as authentic because it is brewed by monks, in a traditional brewery and according to traditional recipe. Another consumer may perceive the beer as authentic as long as it conveys the Trappist culture regardless of its production location and whether real monks were involved in the process. While the first consumer is susceptible for indexical authenticity cues, the latter is more susceptible for iconic cues. Authentic packages can contain a multitude of these visual indexical and iconic cues, that are designed to fit with the consumers' mental frames of authenticity associations (Ewing, Allen & Ewing, 2012; Grayson & Martinec, 2004).

Against this background, my study experimentally manipulates visual indexical and iconic authenticity cues on product packaging and investigates the potency of these effects on perceived product authenticity and subsequently willingness to buy. Would it be effective for a new unknown brand to implement authenticity as a marketing strategy and which type of cues are most prevalent in authenticity perceptions? Hereby, the current study fills the earlier identified knowledge gap. The gained knowledge based on the identified distinction between indexical and iconic cues contributes in providing useful information for marketing managers for designing and formulating strategic communication on product packaging. Additionally, my study contributes to existing literature by investigating a potential interaction

effect between these two types of cues on product authenticity formation. This implies that different types of cues (iconic and indexical) could support each other in generating an increased perceived product authenticity compared to the effects of the cues separated from each other.

The level of consumer product involvement is taken into account as a consumer-specific characteristic that potentially moderates the relationship between packaging cues and consumers' authenticity perception of products. Consumer product involvement is generally conceptualized as the interest, enthusiasm, and excitement that consumers display towards a particular product category (Barber, Alamanza & Dodd, 2008; Flyn & Goldsmith, 1993). Earlier studies already indicated the potential relevance of consumer product involvement to influence authenticity perception (Beverland, 2006; Rose, Merchant, Orth, & Horstmann, 2016). My study answers a call for inquiry on the matter whether perceptions of authenticity change as consumers become more or less involved in a product category (Beverland, 2006). The inclusion of consumer product involvement in this study potentially provides interesting insights since it can be hard to predict for brand managers how high or low involved consumers will respond to brand manager's marketing efforts. For example, authenticity seems to be more relevant for people that are more involved in a product category (Beverland, 2006). However, high-involved people possess more knowledge about a product category and may therefore be more skeptical towards an overload of authenticity claims (Morhart., 2015). In my study consumer product involvement will be measured in order to find out if, and how different levels of consumer product involvement can lead to different perceptions of authentic products.

My study builds on previous research through the development of a theoretical framework addressing the following research question: *What is the effect of different configurations of authentic packing cues on willingness to buy authentic products for consumers on different product involvement levels?* The research context will concern coffee products sold in a marketplace. Although theories applied in my research are aimed to hold for multiple types of authentic products, focussing on a beverage like coffee can yield interesting insights regarding consumer product involvement. A comprehensive analysis of quantitative data concerning product authenticity perceptions and purchase intentions will provide insight into the effectiveness of an authenticity marketing strategy for different levels of consumer product involvement.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Authenticity

Before the the concept of authenticity became introduced in a food marketing context, it had been documented in studies for many years already. Within tourism literature, where the origins of the authenticity concept in the market sphere lie, it was noticed that tourists were looking for 'genuine' experiences (Cohen, 1979; McCannell, 1973). These studies however claimed that most of the authentic experiences were not accurately portrayed or "staged" and used to sell to the consumer. Later, research agreed that this form of "staging" experiences is happening, but that for most tourists this is not really relevant as long as they have a good time on holiday (Urry, 1995). Nowadays, traditional authentic foods and souvenirs play a prominent role in the marketing and branding efforts of travel destinations throughout the world (Lin, Pearson & Cai, 2011; Tellström, Gustafson & Mossberg, 2006; Timothy and Ron, 2013).

Authenticity entered the product marketing sphere due to current homogenization of the marketplace (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). To overcome meaningless consumption, consumers are searching for those brands that stand out in terms of relevance, originality and genuineness instead of just quality or costs (Morhart et al., 2015; O'Neill, Houtman & Aupers, 2014; Pine & Gilmore, 2007). As a response, a shift took place within brand related advertising when it comes to authenticity branding strategies. (Beverland, Lindgreen & Vink, 2008). Where the term first was used to reassure consumers from a genuine article, it now goes beyond these claims by imbuing products with particular values in order to differentiate from more commercialized brands (Rose & Wood, 2005).

The term authenticity itself is generally associated with genuineness, reality and truth (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). These three terms seem to signify objectivity. Literature on the nature of authenticity indeed describes objective elements of authenticity in products. Authenticity can for example contain elements that are intrinsic to a product, like its traditional production processes or verifiable links with heritage sites (Beverland, 2005). For illustration in the food domain, one can imagine traditionally handmade bolognese pasta sauce according to traditional recipe in Bologna. It is an image that many consumers could have in their minds when buying pasta sauce in the supermarket. However, one could wonder whether this pasta sauce really contains all 'true' authentic elements.

Various studies identify authenticity to be more contrived than real (Beverland, 2005; Brown et al., 2003; Holt, 2002). While there may be some truth in the authenticity claims businesses make, authenticity is often fabricated and used to strategically position themselves in the marketplace (Beverland, 2005). In a consumer context, Beverland (2006) describes that perceived authenticity in products must conform to "consumers' mental frames of how things ought to be" (p. 251). This description demonstrates the subjective nature of the concept. If companies can deliver a product that lives up to the expectations of what consumers think is authentic, it will be perceived as authentic. Here it appears that authenticity of a product is mostly not crafted or intrinsic but rather a socially constructed phenomenon (Beverland, 2006; Beverland et al. 2010; Rose & Wood, 2005). This subjectivity might be one of the reasons why literature on the topic of authenticity is still very fragmented. Despite high level of agreement on the relevance of authenticity for consumer behavior, the nature of authenticity is contested and a clear definition is still lacking (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Napoli et al., 2014).

In an attempt to increase clarity around the understanding of authenticity, Morhart et al. (2015) proposed an overview of authenticity literature by dividing it into three main perspectives. The first perspective forms the objectivist perspective. This perspective refers to the belief that authenticity is really a quality which is inherent in an object and which is evaluated by experts. Grayson and Martinec (2004) refer to this belief with the term 'indexical authenticity'. Judgements of a products' authenticity are according to this perspective mainly based on labels containing e.g. spatial origin, age, certificates (Morhart et al., 2015). In other words, for objectivists authentic evaluation is based upon a factual or spatio-temporal connection between the product and some reference point (Fritz, Schoenmueller & Bruhn, 2017).

The second perspective is the constructivist perspective. This perspective refers to the earlier indicated belief that authenticity is a socially constructed phenomenon. Grayson and Martinec (2004) refer to belief with the term 'iconic authenticity'. The constructivist perspective reasons from the notion that different people can have different interpretations of what 'real' objects look like (Morhart et al., 2015). Consequently, whether an object is evaluated as being authentic is based on the result of the consumer's feeling and imagination rather than an evaluation based on evidence (Beverland et al., 2008). The constructivist perspective can be considered to be the most common perspective throughout authenticity literature since most literature seems to agree that the phenomenon is socially constructed rather than an objective property (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). To illustrate the subjectivity of the authenticity concept, a good example can be found in the work of Gillmore and Pine (2007). The Venice Hotel in Las Vegas is clearly not authentic compared to "real" Venice. Or is it? For Venetians on holiday in the dessert, on the other side of the world, a little piece of Venice can be perceived as a small part of home and therefore surprisingly authentic. To the large amount of satisfied guests that visit the Venetian, the experience is quite authentic despite the clear fake-ness. The fake is here presented in an authentic way. Gilmore and Pine (2007) even point out that it is almost impossible to find something really true in our world. Certainly not in Venice (Italy) since most buildings are restored or rebuild.

The third perspective is described as the existentialist perspective. Within the existentialist perspective the primary focus is on the self rather than on a product or service (Morhart et al., 2015). Whether a consumption good is perceived as authentic depends on whether this good assists consumers uncovering their true self (Arnould & Price, 2000) or whether this object is contingent to consumer goals (Beverland & Farrely, 2010). Authenticity here, functions as an identity related source. (Morhart et al., 2015). For example, when long term identity goals are taken into account such as supporting local communities, people may evaluate authenticity cues to a broader level thereby actively constructing a sense of authenticity that reinforces their desired sense of self (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010).

For my research, the first two perspectives (i.e. the objectivists and the constructivists) are of importance since they represent two ways of perceiving authenticity that can be reflected in two type of packaging cues. Indexical (objectivist) and iconic (constructivist) packaging cues aid consumers in generating a perception and judgement about a products' authenticity. A more comprehensive understanding of how this perception process works follows in paragraph 2.3. The reason why I only focus on the objectivist and constructivist perspectives, and not on the existentialist perspective, is because "evaluating whether one's self is authentic is qualitatively different from evaluating whether something else is authentic" (Trilling, 1972, as cited in Grayson & Martinec, 2004, p. 297). Since my purpose is to analyze

consumer perceptions and intentions regarding authentic market products, the focus is on products and not on the self.

2.2 Dimensions of product authenticity

Earlier findings on wines (Beverland, 2006) and foods (Autio, Collins, Wahlen & Antilla, 2013), suggest that the desire for authenticity that people have nowadays, can be saturated by the consumption of food and beverages. As explained in the introduction, the focus of this thesis is on perceived product authenticity rather than brand authenticity. However, due to a lack of existing research on perceived product authenticity, theory on brand authenticity forms the basis for understanding product authenticity and its underlying dimensions. Furthermore, when applying the basic understanding of brand authenticity on products irrespective the brand, there is no reason to expect different theoretical outcomes. In the end, product authenticity can be seen as a tool for an authenticity branding strategy.

For my purposes, perceived product authenticity can best be defined as a modified version of the one Napoli et al. (2014) propose for brand authenticity which is: "a subjective evaluation of genuineness ascribed to a brand by consumers" (p. 1091). In my research, the definition for perceived product authenticity becomes "*a subjective evaluation of genuineness ascribed to a product by consumers*". This does not mean that authenticity cannot possess objective properties. Authenticity can be true, stylized or fake, but in the end perceived product authenticity is determined by the subjective evaluation of the consumer. This latter notion brings us to a question of which aspects of authenticity convince the consumer to buy an authentic product.

Diverse but diligent research has been conducted to operationalize and conceptualize underlying dimensions of authenticity (e.g. Beverland, 2006; Beverland et al., 2008; Morhart et al. 2015; Napoli et al., 2014). Although research varies in terminology used to capture the complexity that lies behind consumer evaluations and authenticity, considerable overlap between the conceptualizations is visible. Most common themes in authenticity literature are built around perceptions of heritage (Beverland, 2006; Brown et al. 2003; Postrel, 2003), nostalgia (Beverland et al., 2008, Postrel; 2003), cultural symbolism (Holt, 2004; Morhart et al., 2015), sincerity (Beverland, 2005; Holt, 2002), quality commitment (Beverland, 2005; Beverland, 2006; Gillmore & Pine, 2007), design consistency (Beverland, 2006; Beverland et al., 2008; Brown et al., 2008) and craftsmanship (Beverland, 2006; Postrel, 2003). Later, in an attempt to design a quantitative measurement scale for measuring brand authenticity, Napoli et al. (2014) narrowed these themes down by identifying three interrelated first order factors including heritage, quality commitment and sincerity. These three factors function as broader umbrella terms capturing the essential elements of the total authenticity evaluation of a brand by the consumer. Other research built further on this conceptualization and found empirical evidence for symbolism as a key dimension of perceived brand authenticity (Mohart et al. 2015).

In my thesis, the authenticity attribute conceptualization of Beverland (2006) is used to represent six dimensions capturing the essential elements that underpin the consumers' authenticity evaluations of food products. The six attributes involve: heritage and pedigree, stylistic consistency, quality commitment, relationship to place, method of production and downplaying commercial motives. This conceptualization is chosen for multiple reasons. Firstly, these attributes (or some variations of them) have been repeatedly discussed in existing authenticity studies as being influential in consumers' (brand) authenticity perceptions (e.g. Beverland et al., 2008; Morhart et al., 2015; Napoli et al., 2014; O'Neill, Houtman & Aupers, 2014).

Secondly, the six attributes represent both objective as well as subjective sources of authenticity (Beverland, 2006). This is important because I would like to analyze the effect of both objective and subjective packaging cues on perceived product authenticity. Thirdly, drawing upon multiple attributes leads to rich authentic stories that can appeal to consumers with different levels of expertise and different levels of variety seeking behavior (Beverland, 2006). This can lead to interesting results when it comes to my moderator of consumer involvement. Finally and foremost, the conceptualization of Beverland (2006) is well suited for manipulating and measuring perceived product authenticity evaluations regardless of the brand. Other, conceptualizations and measurement scales demonstrate a focus on brands (Morhart et al., 2015; Napoli et al., 2014), whereas my research focuses on the packaging of the product itself that can be used as a tool for authenticity branding.

An elaboration of the six authenticity dimensions by Beverland (2006) will follow in the coming sections. Some nuances and contributions of other work which can be assumed to be relevant for one of the dimensions is added to the conceptualization on order to generate a more complete view. In a later stage, the dimensions will be used as a basis for the construction and manipulation of product packaging design.

2.2.1 Heritage and pedigree

The first commonly presented dimension of authenticity concerns 'the past'. "The past represents an ideal form of the authentic experience - the pure" (Gillmore & Pine, 2007, p. 45). Companies need to acquire a certain authentic aura around their products and their brand in order to be perceived as authentic (Brown et al. 2003). Heritage is a large contributor to this aura. Brown et al. (2003) describes brand heritage as "using marketing-mix variables that invoke the history of a particular brand, including all its personal and cultural associations" (p. 20). It is this heritage of companies that makes them unique and provides them possibilities for superior performance (Balmer & Gray, 2003). Companies are increasingly using history and historical associations as sources of market value (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). For example, Trappist beer brewing dates from hundreds of years ago, executed by monks according to special production processes and recipes. Nowadays, commercial producers of Trappist beer use the symbolic meaning of ancient Trappist beer in order to position themselves in the commercial international arena (Beverland et al, 2008).

Beverland (2006) finds a positive relation between demonstrable information around a brand that connects with heritage and tradition, and brand authenticity. He calls this attribute "heritage and pedigree". A brand's pedigree signifies constant quality over time, thereby holding on to a particular standard from the past till the present. As a result, a brand's pedigree identifies two aspects: that it will result in a price premium for a product, and a higher expectation of performance by the consumer (Beverland, 2006). This means that quality has its price, and the company is challenged to keep up with this quality standard.

Further research also revealed a positive relationship between cues around a brand's heritage that do not necessarily represent the truth and brand authenticity (Beverland et al. 2008; Morhart et al. 2015). People tend to rely on a communication style based on a brand's virtue and roots (Morhart et al. 2015). It is the overall abstract impression created by this communication style that people value in products. Beverland et al. (2008) found that some consumers describe authenticity more as an historic feeling that a product evokes rather than proving its historical connections. Here it is just the feeling that a product is from "way back" that positively influences the consumer.

The dimension heritage is expected to have an important role in my research on perceived product authenticity. Both objectively and subjectively interpretable cues will be used to create a package that breathes a sense of history. The dimension "heritage" is expected to have a positive influence on the consumer's perceived product authenticity and may eventually lead to an increased willingness to buy.

2.2.2 Stylistic consistency

Stylistic consistency mainly concerns design related features of products, and signals reliable performance over time. From an authentic brand managers perspective, it is important for brands not to be very rapid in physically or aesthetically changing their products and packaging (Beverland, 2006). This has to do with the expectations consumers have about particular products. Consumers' know what to expect when they recognize certain brands because their products have looked like that from past to present. They assign a particular quality standard to that. For example, the oatmeal brand "Quaker" has never changed its logo and signals authenticity for many people. Here stylistic consistency shows commonalities with the continuity dimension of Morhart et al. (2015).

Morhart et al. (2015) emphasized the ability of authentic brands to survive fashion trends. For example, think of new entrants in the market of a particular product category, or how Beverland (2006) puts it "the new boys on the block" (p. 253). By projecting sincere and passionate commitment to a product that has existed for ages, brand managers of authentic products may position themselves positively against its competitors.

Previous work found that stylistic consistency may be better described as a facilitating factor rather than a promotor of authenticity in its own right (Alexander, 2009). Heritage for example, is a promotor and part of the creation of the overall authentic brand message. Yet heritage is implied through the lens of stylistic consistency and relationship to place. Since it can be assumed that stylistic consistency plays a similar facilitating role in my study, it is not expected to have a direct impact on consumers' product authenticity evaluations but rather functions as a lens through which an authentic aura of heritage and traditions is projected.

2.2.3 Quality commitment

The third authenticity dimension concerns perceived quality commitment. If a company aims to provide and sell authentic products, it is crucial to demonstrate sincere commitment for product and production quality (e.g. Beverland, 2006, Napoli et al., 2014). Again, quality is closely related with expectations of the consumer. That is, if a product signals authenticity, consumers have immediately high expectations of that product. Therefore, it is important that a company delivers what it promises (Morhart et al., 2015). By expressing quality commitments, a companies' values can become accepted as objectively genuine (Alexander, 2009).

Quality labels form a way to express uncompromising commitments and dedication to quality (Beverland, 2006). In my study, quality labels are used to communicate (verifiable) quality commitment to the product. Expressing quality commitment in both an objective and a subjective way is likely have a positive effect on consumers' authenticity perceptions since this value is often very much appreciated by the consumer (Beverland, 2006).

2.2.4. Relationship to place

The dimension relationship to place can form a core contribution to the creation of authentic meaning around a product or brand (Alexander, 2009; Beverland, 2006; Grayson and Martinec, 2004; O'Neill, Houtman and Aupers, 2014). Place is strongly related to origin (Parasecoli, 2008). When a brand becomes associated with a certain place or country of origin, the brand becomes a bit more tangible for the consumer. In this way, origin ads to a brands' identity (O'Neill, Houtman & Aupers, 2014). National symbols and icons are used on packaging to create associations between certain products and their origin (Insch and Florek, 2009). For example, the chocolate brand Milka is strongly associated with "chocolate country" Switzerland where the purple cow grazes in the mountains with an Alps bell around her neck. Other examples can be Russian vodka or German Cars. The use of region or country of origin of a product can give the consumer an indication of quality (Beverland, 2006).

However, country of origin research highlighted the importance of congruency between product category and country image (Kaynak & Cauvsgil, 1983; Ahmed et al., 2004). A positive product image in one category is not necessarily transferable in other product categories. For example, the association that Switzerland is famous for producing good chocolate does not mean that they produce good pasta as well. Brand managers need to take congruency between country and product category into account in order to create increased willingness to buy. Roth and Romeo (1992) called this product-country matches.

Again, "relationship to place" can both be objectively and subjectively evaluated. Research found the perceived positive value of being able to trace where wine comes from (Beverland, 2006). This would relate to the objective perspective on authenticity. For groceries including beef, veal, fish and shellfish, wine, most fresh fruit and vegetables, honey, olive oil and poultry meat it is even mandatory to provide country of origin labels in the European Union (Insch and Jackson, 2014). However, since many food products do not contain such traceability methods, much of authenticity evaluations will probably rely on personal believes and mental frames of reference. Brand managers anticipate on mental pictures of how things should look like by portraying stereotypical connections between product and place, thereby contributing to an aura of authenticity.

In my study, the relationship to place dimension is reflected on the packages by the use of spatial symbols. The importance of associations between place and food and beverages has been recognized in literature (Tellström, Gustafson & Mossberg, 2006; Verlegh, 2001) Consumers are generally interested in where food and beverages are produced, which can influence their purchase intentions (Inch & Florek, 2009). Therefore, it seems logical to presume that production location in my research is likely to play a significant role in consumers intentions to buy authentic coffee products.

2.2.5 Method of production

Previous work demonstrated the interest consumers have into the production process of wine, especially the need to know what goes into the final product (Beverland, 2006). This knowledge can yield an increased enthusiasm and interest in a product. Yet, more important for my research, signaling method of production enhances the authentic aura around a product by providing a link between the product and the creative process behind it (Beverland, 2006).

Signaling craftsmanship for example, is a way to demonstrate quality commitment for authentic products (Napoli et al., 2014). Craftsmanship can signal authenticity with words like hand-made, hand-

cooked, the finest ingredients etc. The love and care that the craftsman behind the product dedicates to the final product can be portrayed on packaging. In the food domain, one could think of an old Vietnamese woman preparing fresh spring rolls. Here the authenticating powers of un-alienated labour and personal attention to production is emphasized (O'Neill, Houtman & Aupers, 2014). However, again one can wonder whether this authentic image actually represents the truth or whether its stylized or fake.

2.2.6 Downplaying commercial motives

Consumers commonly value mass-marketed products less than those that are less overtly commercialized (Beverland, 2006; Holt, 2002). For example, people value heritage in wines, but often do not value overt use of heritage in marketing campaigns. Instead of reinforcing an aura of authenticity, the overdone use of heritage has now the unintended effect of rejection. The Post-modern consumer perceives modern branding efforts to be inauthentic because modern brands generally act with the commercial intend of their sponsors in the back of their mind (Holt 2002).

In order to be authentic, products must be perceived as established by actors without an instrumental economic agenda, and by people that are intrinsically motivated to perform by their inherent value (Holt, 2002). The "downplaying commercial motives" dimension has commonalities with the "integrity" dimension of Morhart et al., (2015) in which they highlight the importance reflecting a brands' values and intentions. Deeply held values, passions and loyalty are highly valued by consumers in brands and their products.

The link between the "downplaying commercial motives" dimension and my research on product authenticity can be found in uncovering that line between being perceived as authentic or being perceived as over-commercialized. Which cues lead to embracement, and which cues lead to rejection of the product?

2.3 Authentic packaging cues

In the present research, visual packaging cues along the previous indicated six authenticity dimensions will be designed in order to manipulate food product packaging. Cues can be defined as all informational stimuli available to the consumer before consumption and can be extrinsic or intrinsic (Ahmed et al., 2004; Olson & Jacoby 1972). Cues serve as surrogate indicators of quality for the average consumer in the absence of an objective product quality testing procedure (Cox, 1967). Consumers often buy a product because they believe it benefits them in some way. Nevertheless, consumers often need to infer benefits they cannot reliably assess when buying a product (Steenis, van Herpen, van der Lans, Ligthart, & van Trijp, 2017). Intrinsic cues are cues that are hard to assess before purchase. Intrinsic cues refer to to the physical composition of the product e.g. texture, flavor, level of sweetness. These attributes cannot be experimentally manipulated without also changing the physical characteristics of the product itself (Olson & Jacoby, 1972). Extrinsic cues are product related but not part of the physical product itself e.g. price, packaging and advertising. Since the present research explores the impact of product packaging design on consumer evaluations and intentions, the focus will be on extrinsic cues.

The importance of visual packaging design as a predictor of consumer evaluations of food products and brands has been recognized in literature (Wang, 2013). To be noticed in supermarkets, packaging cues form a strategic method of differentiation to attract consumer's conscious awareness to a products and bias their preference to that product (McDaniel & Baker, 1977; Silayoi & Speece, 2007). Packaging is even often

argued as the fifth "P" of the marketing mix nowadays. Thus, packaging is not only developed for ensuring safe and efficient delivery to the customer, but it is also one of the most important marketing tools for communicating a message to the consumer (Hellström & Nillson, 2011).

People must choose and purchase a food product in a market before it can be consumed. Here consumers rely on a wide range of beliefs they posses in order to form judgements about products (Steenis et al., 2017). The process that underlies these judgements is generally described as the cue utilization process (Olson and Jacoby, 1972). The basic understanding of this cue utilization theory holds that consumers evaluate multiple cues (e.g. texts, shape, color) based on the cues' predictive and confidence values. The predictive value of cues refers to the specific benefits associated to a certain product (e.g. taste, authenticity), while the confidence value of the cues refers to the degree to which consumers feel confident in making the right judgements based on these available cues. Before this evaluation takes place, packaging cues must first be acquired and interpreted. Earlier research indicated that consumers hold a strong preference for appealing appearances and especially in a food choice situation, the product with the greatest visual appeal would be chosen first (Clydesdale, 1993). Applying authenticity cues on a package can be used to make food products appealing to consumers.

A basic conceptualization that can help in understanding how consumers assess these authenticity cues is the authenticity conceptualization proposed by Grayson & Martinec (2004). Specifically, the authors distinguish two types of authenticity: indexical and iconic authenticity. As indicated earlier, the distinction between the two is based on two separate frames of reference that are applied when a consumer forms a perception of an object and attributes the word authentic to it (Fritz, Schoenmueller & Bruhn, 2017). At this point, the previously explained objectivist and constructivist perspectives come to the surface again. Some consumers may prefer to rely on verifiable statements about a product while others tend to rely on their personal schema of how products "ought to look". While the first objective perspective (i.e. indexical authenticity) distinguishes "the real from its copies" by referring to some reference point, the latter subjective perspective (i.e. iconic authenticity) constitutes a projection of the consumers' feeling and imagination rather than an evidence based evaluation.

If we would express the indexical- and iconic authenticity conceptualization into visual packaging cues, logically two types of cues emerge. Firstly indexical cues, which are evidence based characteristics like age, country of origin, quality labels, ingredients, method of production (Morhart et al., 2015). Indexical cues have the ability to reinforce a continuance of historic practices by providing a direct link to means of production, place of production, and product styling. Advertising literature claims that without such a direct link, authenticity advertisements are believed to be less successful (Beverland, Lindgren & Vink, 2008). Or how Ewing et al. (2012) phrase it: "A key to communication of authenticity via indexical cues is the establishment of a connection with a trusted point of reference" (p. 382). Secondly, iconic cues can be identified. These cues can for example serve in signaling authenticity in the form of commitment to traditions, a passion for craft and product excellence, hand- made methods and/or natural ingredients (Beverland, 2005; Napoli et al. 2014). Instead of proving authentic connection based on evidence, iconic cues include abstract cues that are constructed to create a sincere impression about the authenticity of a product.

In my study the effects of indexical and iconic cues are studied because it is relevant to gain more insight into the effectiveness of indexical and iconic cues on perceived product authenticity and willingness

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to buy. Apparently authenticity is both objectively and subjectively assessed by the consumer, and earlier research demonstrated that indexical and iconic cues can have positive effects on e.g. perceived brand authenticity and attitude towards green products (Ewing et al., 2012; Morhart et al., 2015) However, it is unclear which type of visual cues dominate in this authenticity formation process on product packaging. When substantial indicators of quality like brand and price are held constant, which type of visual product cues convince consumers of its authenticity and in the end convince consumers to buy the product? More research in these relationships broadens insight into the authenticity formation process and facilitates marketers in considering whether an authentic marketing strategy is probably going to be effective for an unfamiliar brand, especially in terms of willingness to buy among consumers. And if so, whether it is more effective to design packages with mainly indexical, iconic or both type of cues.

Indexical and iconic cues are thus predicted have an effect on consumer processing of apparent product meaning and benefits (Grayson and Martinec, 2004, Steenis et al., 2017)). Subsequent perceptions and judgements (perceived product authenticity) about a product should be favorably affected if the authenticity cues operate as expected. Therefore, the following can be hypothesized:

H1. Indexical cues have a positive effect on perceived product authenticity compared to no authenticity cues. and

H2. Iconic cues have a positive effect on perceived product authenticity compared to no authenticity cues

Furthermore, to my best of knowledge no attempt has been made to find a supporting effect of the two types of cues. Iconic and Indexical cues are not mutually exclusive (Grayson and Martinec, 2004). This means that a product can be seen as both iconically and indexically authentic. Moreover, Fritz, Schoenmueller & Bruhn (2017) emphasized that studying potential supporting effects of these cues on authenticity evaluations could lead to important practical insights for marketers.

It seems reasonable to expect that both cues can strengthen each other in creating an authentic aura around a product. A theory supporting this notion is the cue consistency theory (Maheswaran & Chaiken, 1991). This theory explains how combinations of heuristic and systematic design cues are processed by the consumer. Systematic (more) and heuristic (less) refers to the amount of cognitive effort a cue demands by the consumer. Literature identified for example claims (van Ooijen, Fransen, Verlegh & Smit, 2016), labels (Roberto et al., 2012) and country of origin (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999) as cues to be perceived systematically by the consumer. Color and images are generally perceived as heuristic (van Ooijen, Fransen, Verlegh & Smit, 2017) and highly associative cues (Underwood, 2003). While the first sum of cues can be related with indexical cues, the latter can be related with iconic cues.

According to cue consistency theory, processing of packaging cues can happen in two ways, of which the first is called the additive effect. This effect forms an increase in perceived quality of a product and occurs when cues are congruent (e.g. both cues communicate authenticity). However, when a systematic and an heuristic cue are incongruent this will result in attenuation. Incongruent cues will undermine confidence in heuristic based judgements (van Ooijen et al., 2017).

Following the reasoning of cue consistency theory, one would expect that in the case of congruent indexical and iconic cues an additive affect takes place. Thus, an increase in perceived product authenticity as a result of e.g. brown authentic paper will occur when product claims also communicate authenticity. I

expect an interaction effect between indexical cues and iconic cues on perceived product authenticity inferences, such that indexical (iconic) cues will only affect product authenticity inferences when they are congruent with iconic (indexical) cues. Thus, if authentic packages would be designed in such a way that both type of cues are congruent to one another, the following can be hypothesized:

H3: Involving both iconic and indexical cues on food product packaging leads to an interaction effect between iconic and indexical cues leading to a stronger perceived product authenticity among consumers, such as:

H3a: Iconic and indexical cues together will lead to higher perceived product authenticity than only using indexical cues

H3b: Iconic and indexical cues together will lead to higher perceived product authenticity than only using iconic cues

H3c: Iconic and indexical cues together will lead to higher perceived product authenticity than using no indexical or iconic authenticity cues.

2.4 Willingness to buy

Willingness to buy is considered to be the dependent construct in my research, thereby reflecting the impact of authenticity as a marketing strategy. Willingness to buy can be referred to as "the tendency to buy or not to buy the product" (Spears and Singh, 2004). The construct of willingness to buy can be considered as a purchase intention. Consumers' purchase intention is generally accepted as both practically and theoretically relevant in marketing and consumer research. Influential work in this field by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) states that "the best single predictor of an individual's behavior will be a measure of his intention to perform" (p. 369).

As previously explained, consumers are looking for those commodities that hold more relevance for them, compared to the homogenized mass marketed ones that are offered in large numbers in contemporary society (Arnould & price, 2000; Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). If we assume that people are indeed longing for products that contain more meaning for them, and authenticity can fulfill in these desires, it seems logical to expect that a higher perceived product authenticity leads to more willingness to buy. Therefore it is hypothesized that:

H4. A higher perceived product authenticity leads to more willingness to buy.

2.5 Consumer product involvement

Literature suggests that extrinsic cue effects are not universal and moderated by consumer's individual differences (Lee & Lou, 1995). Since multiple research demonstrated the subjectivity of perceiving authenticity, it is likely that different individuals with different interests can have different interpretations, associations and beliefs of authentic marketed products. Previous studies indicated that the level of consumer involvement within a product category could provide new interesting insights into perceiving authenticity in products (Beverland, 2006; Ewing et al., 2012). Consumer product involvement is generally conceptualized as the interest, enthusiasm, and excitement that consumers display towards a

particular product category (Barber, Alamanza & Dodd, 2008; Flyn & Goldsmith, 1993). The principle of personal relevance plays a large role here, meaning that a consumers' level of involvement with an object is mainly determined by the extend to which the product is personally relevant based on an individual's inherent needs, values and interests (Mittal, 1995; Zaichkowsky,1985).

In the world of advertising strategies, consumer involvement in a product category has been recognized to be a variable of great relevance (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985). Consumers differ in the extent of their decision-making process and their search for information. Whether people actively or passively receive advertising information and accordingly act upon this, depends on this level of involvement (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985). The challenge for brand managers and advertisers arises to make accurate judgements of how people with different levels of product involvement will possibly perceive authentic products and adapt their strategies to these different levels of product involvement. Assuming that adapting to the consumer can be done by adjusting communication on packaging and advertising, makes the variable of level of consumer involvement an interesting variable to take into account for my research.

Although mentioned as a recommendation for future research in some articles (Beverland, 2006; Fritz, Schoenmueller & Bruhn, 2017; Rose, Merchant, Orth, & Horstmann, 2016), little work addressed consumer product involvement in authenticity literature yet. It seems likely that consumers with different levels of involvement have different perceptions of authentic aura's around packages. As mentioned earlier, personal relevance plays a large role in consumer's product involvement. For my research, this may imply that people that are really enthusiastic and intrinsically motivated about consuming a product under study, are more involved into that product than people that are not motivated to learn more about this topic. Yet, how this level of consumer product involvement is likely to affect the evaluation process of authentic products is not clear and the answer is not easily predicted.

2.5.1 Utilitarian and hedonic authenticity shoppers

Theory that is useful in predicting the moderating effect of consumer product involvement is the empirically founded classification between utilitarian and hedonic product types (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985; Mittal, 1989). Utilitarian products are often typified to be functional, problem solving and performance based, while hedonic goods are more targeted at pleasure and self-expression (Park & Moon, 2003). Thus, shoppers who buy a particular product to satisfy utilitarian needs, generally behave carefully and are efficiently oriented to solving a problem. On the contrary, hedonic consumption is consumer behavior that is related to sensual and sensitive experiences with a product (Hirschman, 1980). It means that consumers attach a subjective meaning to a product which is not explained by concrete or objective attributes. Thus, hedonic consumption is based on the persuasion of consumer ideals, rather than knowledge of objective reality. Whether a product is classified as utilitarian or hedonic depends on the subjective judgement of the consumer. Products may therefore possess utilitarian and hedonic characteristics simultaneously (Park & Moon, 2003).

Accordingly, a product marketed as authentic can both be considered by the consumer as an hedonic and an utilitarian good. The link with authenticity and the classification presented above can reasonably be drawn. Indexical authenticity is closely related with the utilitarian characteristics described. Indexical cues also refer to the objective attributes of a product that can assist a consumer in choosing the right (or the real?) product suiting their functional needs. However, especially from an constructivist perspective, it can be

argued that applying an authenticity marketing strategy is mainly targeted at hedonic shoppers. As with hedonic products, iconic authenticity cues evoke judgements that are feeling and imagination based, rather than an evaluation based on evidence.

In the case of authentic food packaging, high-involved consumers are expected to approach a product in an hedonic way. This is because consumers with a large enthusiasm and interest about a particular product category pursue a feeling of satisfaction that goes beyond concrete functional need such as "I am hungry, so I need food". Like hedonic shoppers, high-involved consumers pursue experiential value, pleasure and self-expression. An authentic product manipulation can satisfy in those needs. On the contrary, low-involved consumers of food products are more likely to take an utilitarian approach in which they will judge a few objective attributes of the product. They generally tend to rely on a variety of extrinsic cues in order to make quick decisions that require low cognitive effort (Zeithaml, 1988).

Based on the above presented product type classification and its coherence to indexical and iconic authenticity literature, expectations regarding my moderator consumer product involvement can be made. Following previous research noting that hedonic shoppers judge products based upon an holistic image rather than separate product attributes (Hirschman, 1980; Mittal, 1989), I suggest that the correlation between iconic cues and perceived product authenticity increases for high-involved consumers. This suggestion is supported by the work of Park and Moon (2003), who found that highly-involved consumers tend to have difficulties in recognizing that they do not know much about the concrete attributes of an hedonic product. They often overestimate their own product knowledge. Therefore, I reasonably assume that high-involved people in a particular food category are likely to overestimate their own knowledge within my research as well. As a result, high-involved consumers may pay less attention to the indexical information available, and are mainly susceptible for the subjective iconic cues. Accordingly, the following is hypothesized:

H5: The level of consumer product involvement moderates the effect of iconic cues on perceived product authenticity in such a way that the positive effects of iconic cues are stronger when consumers are high-involved in a product category compared to low-involved consumers.

Level of consumer product involvement is also likely to influence the relationship between indexical cues and perceived product authenticity. In line with earlier statements about iconic cues and consumer involvement, Mittal (1989) questioned previous theories indicating that the amount of information search (e.g. verifiable indexical cues) increases when product involvement is high. Mittal (1989) found evidence that consumer involvement and degree of information search are more highly related when buying utilitarian goods than when buying hedonic goods. Thus, for my research this means that low-involved consumers are likely to base their judgements more on indexical cues compared to iconic cues because they would consider the product as a functional necessity and approach it in an utilitarian way.

H6: The level of consumer product involvement moderates the effect of indexical cues on perceived product authenticity in such a way that the positive effect of indexical cues is stronger when consumers are low-involved in a product category compared to high-involved consumers.

Since low-involved consumers are more likely to make inferences based on indexical cues, and high-involved consumers are more likely to make inferences based on iconic cues, it may be hard to predict how consumer involvement may influence authenticity judgements when both type of cues are used. However, based on the previously elaborated notion that high involved people are more likely to look at the holistic image around a product, and indexical cues like age and country of origin may contribute to this holistic image, it is expected that the more involved people are, the stronger the interaction effect of the cues on perceived product authenticity.

H7: The level of consumer product involvement moderates the interaction effect of indexical and iconic cues cues on perceived product authenticity in such a way that the positive interaction effect is stronger when consumers are high-involved in a product category compared to low-involved consumers.

2.6 Theoretical framework

Having elaborated on all variables and intermediate relationships within this study, the following theoretical framework is drawn (figure 1). The framework presents three phases describing a purchase situation of an authentic product. First the design outcome phase, wherein indexical/iconic cues are acquired and interpreted by the consumer, followed by the consumer perception phase (perceived product authenticity), wherein consumers weigh the personal benefits of the product, ending with a consumer intentional phase (willingness to buy), wherein consumers decide whether to buy the product or not. To summarize, it is expected that indexical and iconic cues have a positive influence on perceived product authenticity. Furthermore, it is expected that taking these two type of cues together leads to an interaction effect on perceived product authenticity. A positive perceived product authenticity is expected to lead to more willingness to buy. The level of consumer involvement within a product category moderates the relation between authenticity cues and perceived product authenticity in such a way that the positive effect of indexical cues is stronger for low-involved consumers, whereas the positive effect of iconic and the usage of both cues is stronger for high-involved consumers.
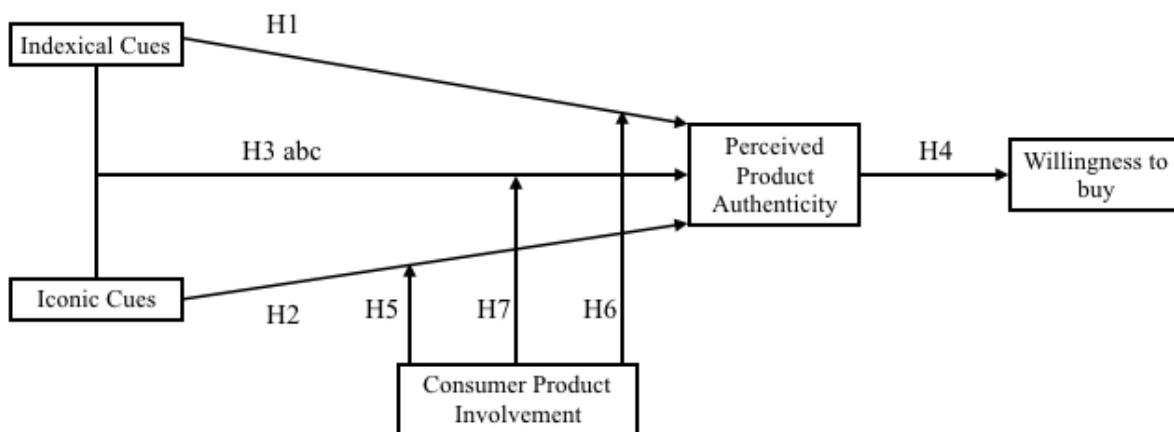

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

3. Method

3.1 Sampling population and design

In the present study, participants received an online survey (appendix I) in which they were asked to evaluate a package of a product. To enhance potential generalizability of the results, no major limits were set concerning demographical factors. In other words, any individual that can be considered as a consumer was allowed to fill in the survey. Response has been received from 222 participants, of which 35,1% was male and 64,9% was female (age 15-85, $M = 34.9$, $SD = 16.41$). Respondents were gathered by using convenience sampling, and approached via online measures (i.e. social media and e-mail) and word of mouth with an invitation towards the online survey to be filled in voluntarily. Participation in this research was completely anonymous.

The design used in this current study was a 2 (indexical cues yes/no) x 2 (iconic cues yes/no) between-subject design. Packages were manipulated with indexical and iconic cues according to the earlier elaborated six dimensions of authenticity (Beverland, 2006). From confrontation with one of the packages, a perception and purchase intention regarding authenticity of the presented condition was expected to emerge.

3.2 Pre-test

In order to find an appropriate consumption product for manipulation, a pre-test was conducted among 50 respondents (appendix II). Main reason for conducting a pre-test was to ensure that the product chosen for my study held enough variance within the consumer involvement construct. In other words, for analyzing whether level of personal product involvement influences authenticity perceptions it is desirable to reach both low and high involved respondents with my survey. The pre-test survey was designed in English and translated in Dutch by a native speaker. Since the survey was conducted in The Netherlands, translation was done in order to increase convenience among potential participants. In the pre-test, level of consumer involvement for 9 different products including coffee, thee, wine, chocolate, cooking with foreign foods, speciality beer, sneakers, clothes and fair trade products was measured. All 9 products were believed to hold potential to be perceived as being authentic.

In the pre-test, first a short description was provided concerning level of personal product involvement:

> *"Product involvement can best be described as the <u>interest, enthusiasm and excitement</u> a particular product category generates. Based on your own needs, values and interest, how important are the following products for you?"*

The generally accepted definition of Zaichkowsky (1985), being "A person's perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values, and interests" (p. 342), was used to underly the personal product involvement description. After reading the description, participants were asked to rate the earlier indicated 9 products on level of involvement. Rating was done according to a self-constructed likert scale (1-7) which was inspired by comparable scales e.g. "level of importance" and "level of appropriateness" (Wade, 2006). The scale items ranged from "not involved at all" to "extremely involved".

Based on the results of the pre-test, multiple products would have been suitable for my research. Coffee was chosen to use in my product manipulation since the product indicated a large variance, var(coffee) = 4,06, and the mean (M = 4.02, SD = 2.02) did not significantly differ from the centre of the scale (t = .07, $p.$ = 0.94). This was desirable since a large variance and no significant difference indicated a large spread from the mean and no strong preference among respondents for a particular item.

3.3 Procedure and package design

Participants were able to fill in the survey on electronic devices e.g. computer, tablet or phone. The first thing presented after opening the questionnaire via an online link or QR-code was a small introduction text. This text involved a short description of the context of my study, a confidentiality statement and an indication about the length of the survey. Like in the pre-test, participants were able to fill in the survey in English or Dutch. Again, the English version had been translated in Dutch by a native speaker.

After having agreed to participate, participants were confronted with one out of four conditions i.e. a standard control condition containing no authenticity cues, an indexical condition containing solely indexical cues, an iconic condition containing solely iconic cues and a both condition containing both type of cues. Qualtrics randomization was used to randomly decide which participant got to see which condition. In the end, a balanced amount of participants across the four conditions was desired. Participants were asked to take a careful look at the package since most of the questions afterwards concerned that particular package. Furthermore, participants were asked to imagine a situation in which they were looking for a nice pack of coffee beans.

Packaging cues

The *no cue condition* forms the standard package on which the cues are eventually added. The package has been kept very basic. Just an image of a cup of coffee, the type of beans (Arabica), and a fictitious brand was displayed on the front of the package. Since brands may already be powerful cues in evoking a sense of quality among consumers (Grunert, 2005), and my research concerns perceived product authenticity and not directly perceived brand authenticity, a fictional brand was made-up i.e. "BRON Coffee Roasters". By using an unknown brand, respondents are not likely to have initial perceptions and believes about the product to be evaluated. The basic package design used for this research is from the existing brand "DROP Coffee Roasters". However, just the shape from this design has been used. The term "Roasters" has been removed from the *no cue condition* since this may already signal authenticity. The color used for this package was plain white.

Next, the standard package was adjusted with only *indexical* authenticity cues. Verifiable information like labels, places of origin and age have proven to be strong indexical indicators of perceived product authenticity (Morhart et al., 2015). The year 1917 signified a temporal link to the history of the unknown brand. In line with the heritage dimension, it indicates that the brand has history and tradition with roasting coffee. Furthermore, Sweden was used as the spatial link towards the basis of the brand. Sweden was chosen because the country stands among the world's top coffee consumers per capita (Mowery, 2016). A label was chosen to incorporate on this package i.e. a premium quality label. This label assured that the product meets all the standards to be considered as premium quality beans. This indexical cue could signify quality commitment for consumers, not only to the product itself but also to production process. Cues like

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"premium quality" and "100% organic" can be considered as indexical since producers need to obtain permissions from authority inspection and regulation agencies that determine whether the product meets requirements to make those claims. These labels are in line with the dimensions of method of production (organic) and quality commitment (premium quality). An altitude label was included because it is believed that the higher the coffee beans grow, the better the quality. One should be careful with providing information on packaging. Information like presented in this paragraph may never be false or used to mislead the consumer (foodpackaginglabels.net). However, this does not mean that producers can't use unverifiable and more seductive texts on their packages.

The third package was manipulated with only iconic authenticity cues. On this package a coffee bean picker was displayed. This image may signal love and care for the coffee bean (method of production). Furthermore, seductive texts like "a rich dark roast" and "El Oro Marrón" (the brown gold in Spanish) are used to create an authentic setting. Using Spanish language could add to this authentic aura, since the beans are originally from Colombia (relationship to place). On the side of the iconic package, more seductive descriptions concerning the product's texture and taste can be found. Words like "rich" and "full" flavor are in line with certain quality expectations consumers have regarding coffee. Again, iconic cues aided in creating a schematic fit with those expectations. Another text on the side of the package signals craftsmanship: *The Arabica coffee beans are hand roasted at our traditional family-run roastery in Stockholm.* Besides craftsmanship, this sentence is also in line with the heritage and pedigree dimension since a traditional family-run roastery is likely to create an impression of a roastery already existing for some time. The map of Colombia was added to the package in order to contribute to the authentic dimension of "relationship to place". Lastly, the package was wrapped with a brown colored paper. Ewing et al., (2012) already indicated that such packaging material can contribute to looking organic. Other exploratory work found that "color value" (a dimension of color that is related to "lighter" versus "darker" colors) may influence product attribute perception in a way that lower value (darker) paper is associated with higher quality expectations (van Ooijen et al., 2016). Therefore the choice was made to give the *iconic cue* package a darker appearance compared to the previous explained *indexical* and *no cue* packages.

Reasonably, the final condition combined the above presented indexical and iconic cues on one package. Again, my research aims to investigate whether involving both type of cues lead to an interaction effect, or whether the consumer may apply heuristics to simplify their decision and not pay attention to all the product attributes when choosing to buy or not to buy the product like Verbeke (2008) found. It may be the case that the sixth authenticity dimension, downplaying commercial motives, plays a role here. Too much claims regarding authenticity may lead to the unintended effect of becoming commercialized or "fake". Illustrations of the packages and its cue manipulations can be found in the survey (appendix I).

Willingness to buy

After observing the package, participants were confronted with questions measuring dependent variable *willingness to buy*. First a direct yes/no choice question was asked: *"Would you buy the presented product?"* After that, a 7-point likert measurement scale was used ranging from 1 = 'strongly disagree' to 7 = 'strongly agree'. The scale items were based on the purchase intention scale proposed by Putrevu and Lord (1994). However, the word "brand" was changed into "product" or "coffee". People were asked whether they intend to buy the product with the help of the following three items. "*It is very likely that I will buy this*

product", *"I will purchase this product the next time I need coffee"* and *"I will definitely try this product"*. The requirements for a factor analysis were met i.e. KMO > .5 (= 0.753) and Bartletts test of sphericity was significant ($p < .001$). The three Items formed the underlying factor *"purchase intention"* (EV = 2.61), explained 86,85% of the variance together and formed a reliable scale (α = .922).

Perceived product authenticity

After participants indicated their purchase intention, the same package was presented to them again. This was done in order to support participant's memory and remind them of the package that they were already faced with. Thereafter, participants were confronted with questions intended to measure perceived product authenticity. In order to measure participant's opinions to a larger degree than just a yes/no question, all questions concerning the variable perceived product authenticity were measured using 7-point likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) till strongly agree (7). First participants were asked for their opinion on the heritage and stylistic consistency of the given product. Building upon the earlier elaborated notion that stylistic consistency rather fulfills a facilitating than a promoting role for perceived authenticity (Alexander, 2009), items of heritage and stylistic consistency were asked together in one block. The first three items were taken from the continuity brand authenticity dimension of Morhart et al., (2015), in so far that 'brand' was replaced for 'product'. This means that *'A brand with history', 'A timeless brand'* and *'A brand that survives trends'* were changed into *'A product that has history', "A product that is timeless'* and *'A product that survives trends'*. Since a lot of authenticity measurement literature concerns brand authenticity scales, and product authenticity measurement scales are limited, a lot of the items had to be modified from brand authenticity scales or were self-constructed. The remaining two items were developed by Napoli et al., (2014). First the two items were simplified in order to make them understandable for non-academics. *'The brand has a strong link to the past, which is still perpetuated and celebrated to this day'* was changed into: *'the product has a strong link to the past, which is still celebrated to this day'*. *'The brand reinforces and builds on long-held traditions'* was changed into: *'a product that reinforces and builds on long-held traditions'*. The five items measuring perceived heritage and stylistic consistency were taken together to create one new variable being 'heritage and consistency' (KMO = .787). Factor analysis (table 1) indicated that only one component can be extracted (EV = 3,185), explaining 63,7% of the variance. The internal consistency of the scale can be considered as "good" (α = 0,857), and there was no reason to delete any items from the scale.

Table 1: Items measuring heritage and consistency	Factor loadings
In my view, the product presented on the previous page...	
… has history	0,785
… is timeless	0,697
… survives trends	0,744
… has a strong link to the past, which is still celebrated to this day	0,866
… reinforces and builds on long-held traditions	0,883

Next participants were asked to judge their package on the quality commitment and method of production dimensions. Since both dimensions are closely related to the quality of the product, items corresponding to these dimensions were taken together. The first four items were developed by Napoli et al., (2014). Again, 'brand' was replaced for 'product'. '*Quality is central to this product*' was the first item asked for, followed by '*Only the finest ingredients/materials are used in the manufacture of this product*'. In order to capture the craftsmanship element, the item '*It feels like artisan skills and customized manufacturing processes have been retained in the production of this brand*' was incorporated but changed into layman's terms: '*It feels like craftsman skills have been retained in the production of this product*'. The fourth item was modified again. '*The firm is committed to retaining long-held quality standards for the brand*' was changed into: '*this product represents long-held quality standard commitment by the manufacturer*'. The final three items were picked and modified from the naturalness dimension Bruhn, Schoenmüller, Schäfer and Heinrich (2012) proposed. '*The brand does not seem artificial*', '*the brand makes a genuine impression*''and '*the brand makes the impression of being natural*' were changed into: '*The product does not seem artificial*', '*the product makes a genuine impression*' and '*the product makes the impression of being natural*'. Factor analysis (KMO = .905) (table 2) indicated that again one component called "quality perception" can be extracted (EV = 4.692). The new variable 'quality perception' explains 67% of the variance. Reliability analysis of the scale presented "excellent" internal consistency (α = .917) , which gave me no reason to delete any item.

Table 2: Items measuring perceived product authenticity	Factor loadings
Quality is central to this product	0,804
Only the finest ingredients/materials are used in the manufacture of this product	0,856
It feels like craftsman skills have been retained in the production of this product	0,854
This product represents long-held quality standard commitment by the manufacturer	0,824
The brand does not seem artificial	0,766
The brand makes a genuine impression"	0,802
The product makes the impression of being natural	0,813

In the next block, participants were asked to judge the product and its relationship to place with the help of two items. The first question was inspired by the item '*The brand has a strong connection to an historical period in time, culture and/or specific region*' (Napoli et al., 2014). My item was stated as: '*The product has a strong connection to a culture and/or specific region*'. The second item was self-constructed: '*Coffee beans from Colombia are of good quality*'. With this item I intend to measure the perceived congruency between the object (coffee beans) and its country of origin. The requirements for a factor analysis were hardly met (KMO = .500). Besides that, a reliability analysis presented a poor internal consistency of the scale (α = .598). A possible reason for this questionable consistency could be the fact that the second item is not directly referring to the product, but rather to coffee beans in general. Therefore, just the item '*Coffee beans from Colombia are of good quality*' functioned as a manipulation check in order to

check whether the intended authenticity manipulation worked. The authenticity manipulation worked if participants would score high on that particular item and indeed think that columbian beans are of good quality. The remaining item, "*The product has a strong connection to a culture and/or specific region",* was still used representing the "relationship to place" authenticity dimension. Within my analysis, this component was called *"region attachment".*

The final block of items related to the dimensions of perceived product authenticity concerned downplaying commercial motives. In order to make authenticity successful as a branding strategy, the product under study should not be perceived as a too commercial. Two items here are self-constructed being: '*The brand's intentions with the product seem commercial'* and '*the claims of this product seem exaggerated to me'.* The other item is based on the 'brand commercialization' construct Fritz, Schoenmueller & Bruhn (2017) developed: '*the objective of brand is making profits, even if this contradicts its ideals'.* In my survey, this item was changed into *"the objective of the brand with this product is making profits, even if this contradicts its ideals".* Because the items measuring commercial intentions were reverse scored, I recoded them before running the factor analysis. Requirements for a factor analysis were met (KMO = .651). The three items together formed one new component: *"downplaying commercial motives".* This component explained 67,6% of the variance. The internal consistency of the scale was α = .757, which can be considered as acceptable.

Factor analysis was also ran for all authenticity dimensions and its measuring items together as well (KMO = .894). After implementing oblique rotation, factor analysis showed that four factors could be extracted; factor 1 (EV= 7.335) explaining 43,15% of the variance, factor 2 (EV = 2.032)explaining 11,95% of the variance, factor 3 (EV = 1.307) explaining 7,69% of the variance and factor 4 (EV = 1.059) explaining 6,23% of the variance. However, based on the point of inflexion in the scree plot and the eigen values, it was decided to extract only one component named '*perceived product authenticity'* (EV = 7.335). The component explains 43.15% of the variance. Furthermore, it was remarkable that the three items regarding commercial intentions did not load on the 'perceived product authenticity' factor according to the component matrix. Therefore the three items '*The brand's intentions with the product seem commercial', 'the claims of this product seem exaggerated to me'* and '*the objective of the brand with this product is making profits, even if this contradicts its ideals'* will be deleted from this particular *'perceived product authenticity'* scale (table 3). The internal consistency of the scale was excellent, α = .926.

Table 3: Items measuring perceived product authenticity	Factor loadings
… has history	0,641
…is timeless	0,590
… survives trends	0,652
… has a strong link to the past, which is still celebrated today	0,719
… reinforces and builds on long-held traditions	0,773
Quality is central to this product	0,763
Only the finest ingredients/materials are used in the manufacture of this product	0,807
It feels like craftsman skills have been retained in the production of this product	0,833
The firm "BRON Coffee roasters" is committed to retaining long-held quality standards for this	0,806
The product makes the impression of being natural	0,704
The product makes a genuine impression	0,794
The product does not seem artificial	0,769
The product has a strong connection to a culture and/or specific region	0,600
Coffee beans from Colombia are of good quality	0,580

Personal product involvement

After the respondents filled in all items regarding perceived product involvement, they were asked for their opinion about coffee in general. In order to measure the moderator, being level of personal involvement in the product category under study, 'the revised personal involvement inventory' (PII) proposed by Zaichkowsky (1994) was used. This measurement scale was chosen due to its widely shared acceptance within literature and its usability for evaluating products and advertisements. A semantic differential scale is known to be a good scale for measuring the meaning of things and concepts. For my research, I am interested in the meaning coffee holds for the participants in my survey. After revisiting her original PII scale which was very lengthy (Zaichkowsky, 1985), Zaichkowsky (1994) brought the scale down to ten semantic differential items. Participants in my study were asked to rate coffee against a series of 7-point polar adjectives (opposite-meaning terms). Requirements for factor analysis were met again (KMO = .938). All ten items together formed one underlying factor called '*consumer product involvement*' (EV = 7,311) (table 4), which explained 73,11% of the variance. The internal consistency of the involvement scale was excellent (α = .958) and there was no plausible reason to extract any items.

Table 4: Polar adjectives measuring consumer product involvement   **Factor loadings**

Boring < > Interesting	0,857
Irrelevant < > Relevant	0,896
Unexciting < > Exciting	0,756
Means nothing < > Means a lot	0,962
Unappealing < > Appealing	0,898
Mundane < > Fascinating	0,853
Worthless < > Valuable	0,859
Uninvolving < > Involving	0,849
Not needed < > Needed	0,875
Unimportant < > Important	0,784

4. Results

Before analyzing the data retrieved, search for missing values across all data was done. Missing values were not likely since respondents were forced to respond to every question (they were not able to answer the next question if they refused to answer one). Probably due to a technical problem, multiple incomplete surveys were transferred from the Qualtrics software to SPSS. Data was received from 283 respondents, however 61 of them were removed from the dataset since those were incomplete. Respondents were evenly spread across the four possible conditions (i.e. indexical (55), iconic (56), both (56) and none (55)).

4.1 Manipulation checks

To check whether the indexical and iconic cue manipulation of the packages was successful, analysis of the manipulation check items was conducted. First, independent sample t-tests were executed for both the dummy variables iconic (yes vs. no) and indexical cues (yes vs. no) to check whether any difference between both groups was visible. The subjective manipulation check showed that the manipulation for iconic cues was successful. Participants that saw iconic cues ($M = 4,84$, $SD = 1,41$) reported to perceive the package to be more subjective than people that did not see iconic cues ($M = 4,40$, $SD = 1,60$). This difference was statistically significant (t (220) $= 2.17$, $p = .03$). However, based on the manipulation checks for participants that saw indexical cues, no statistical evidence was found that this manipulation was perceived to be more objective and thereby successful (t (220) $= 0.17$, $p = .87$).

To check whether my manipulation was successful within the indexical and iconic group, paired sample t-tests were executed for both groups. Again we can conclude that the iconic manipulation was successful. Participants that saw iconic cues scored higher on the subjective manipulation check ($M = 4,84$, $SD = 1,41$) than on the objective manipulation check, ($M = 3,59$, $SD = 1,54$), t (111) $= 5.55$, $p < .001$. Regarding the indexical manipulation, it must be concluded that the manipulation did not come across properly at the respondents. Moreover, statistical evidence was found that people who saw indexical cues perceived the information to be more subjective ($M = 4,62$, $SD = 1,52$) than objective ($M = 3,77$, $SD = 1,71$), t (110) $= 3,34$, $p = .001$. This difference is reversed from what was intended. Therefore we can conclude that the iconic manipulation worked sufficiently but the indexical manipulation did not. This had to be kept in mind while interpreting the results of the present study.

In order to check if people ever bought coffee had any significant influence on the results, the item *"do you ever buy coffee?"* was analyzed. Out of 222 respondents that filled in the survey, 183 indicated to buy coffee, while the remaining participants indicated to never buy coffee. Two independent sample t-tests with the item *"do you ever buy coffee?"* as independent variable, and perceived product authenticity (t (220) $= 1,26$, $p = .21$) and purchase intention (t (220) $= 0,18$, $p = .86$) as dependent variables, showed insignificant results. It can be concluded that purchase behavior, had no statistical influence on the outcomes in this study. Therefore all respondents were taken into account when analyzing the results related to the hypotheses proposed.

Finally, it was checked whether the congruency between coffee beans and columbia as a country of origin was sufficient. A frequency table showed that 81,5% of the participants rated the item *Coffee beans*

from Colombia are of good quality with a 4 (centre of the scale) or higher. This percentage was considered to be sufficient for continuing with the analysis.

* = significantly different from the no cue condition
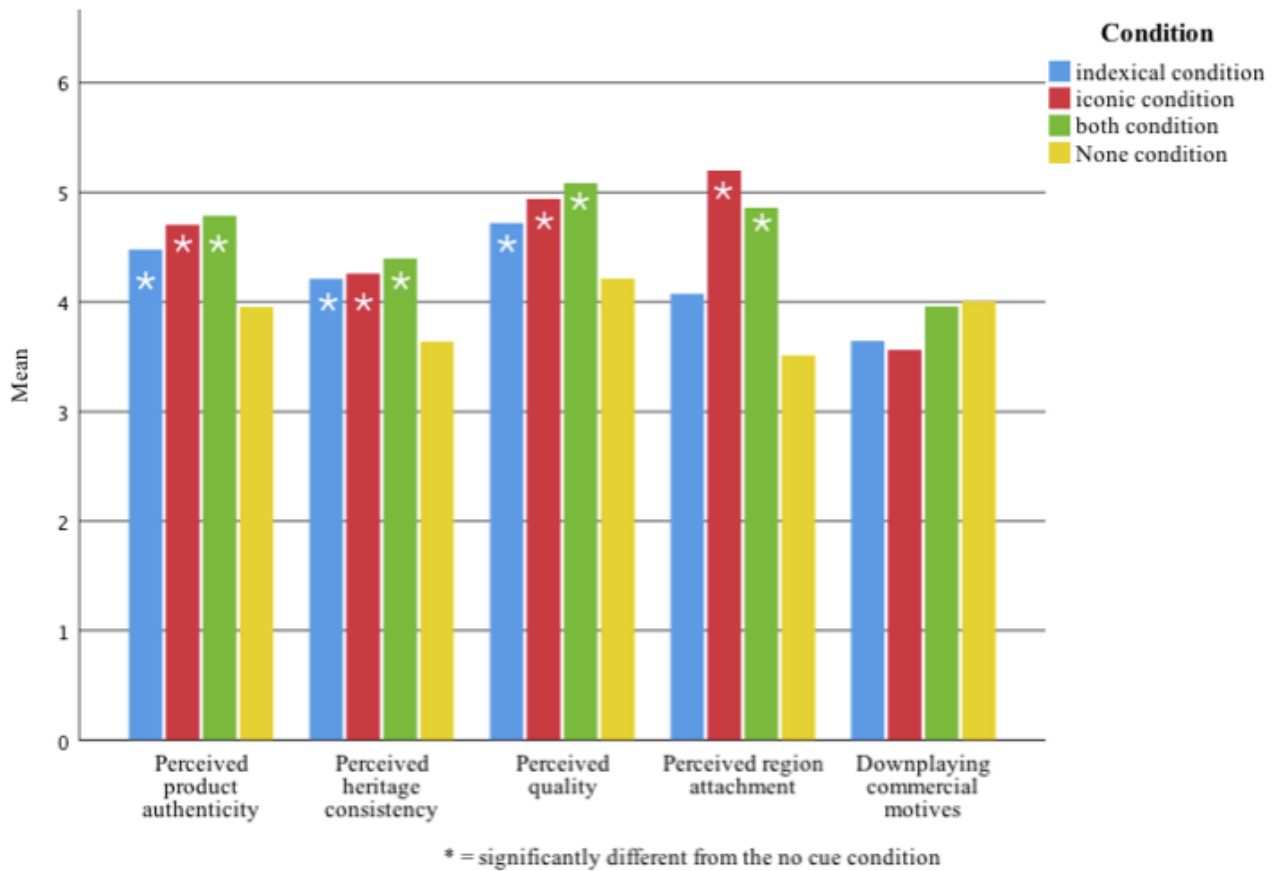
Figure 2: Mean scores for the four different conditions on perceived product authenticity and its dimensions.

4.2 Hypothesis testing

Several analyses were conducted in order to test the hypotheses that were stated earlier in the theoretical background section. Results of these analyses are presented in the coming (sub)sections.

Iconic and Indexical cues

In order to get an idea of the general trend within the data concerning the influence of the cues on perceived product authenticity, a bar chart was plotted with the mean scores of the several authenticity dimensions and the authenticity construct as a whole for every condition (figure 2). Except for the *downplaying commercial motives* dimension, all authenticity components presented the lowest mean score for the no cue condition compared to the other three conditions. This trend was in line with my expectations since no authenticity cues should generate a lower authenticity score. Importantly it should be noted here that a mean score of 3,5 - 4 for the no cue condition on a 7-point scale was still reasonably high. Factor analysis indicated earlier that downplaying commercial motives had a different influence on perceived product authenticity compared to the other dimensions. The mean scores for *perceived product authenticity*, *heritage and consistency* and *perceived quality* presented a similar trend in which iconic cues are perceived to be more authentic than indexical cues, and using both cues is on average perceived to be most authentic.

Regarding the *region attachment* dimension, a high mean score for the iconic condition was visible. Iconic cues seemed to have a large positive influence on perceived regional attachment.

In order to test the influence of indexical and iconic cues on the participant's perceived product authenticity, a two-way ANOVA was executed. According to my predictions, both iconic and indexical cues were expected to have a positive main effect on perceived product authenticity and its dimensions, compared to no authenticity cues. Furthermore, an interaction effect between indexical and iconic cues on perceived product authenticity was expected. First a 2(Indexical: yes vs. no) x 2(Iconic: yes vs. no) ANOVA test was executed with *perceived product authenticity* as one umbrella dependent variable. The findings supported my expectations to the extent that two significant main effects were found. The first main effect formed the positive effect of indexical cues on perceived product authenticity (F (1, 218) = 4,56, p = .03). Participants that saw indexical cues perceived their product to be more authentic (M = 4,48, SD = 1,05), compared to people that did not see any authenticity cues (M = 3,95, SD = 1,24). The second main effect effect formed the positive effect of iconic cues on perceived product authenticity (F (1, 218) = 13.97, p < .001). Participants that saw iconic cues also perceived their product to be more authentic (M = 4,70, SD = 0,93), compared to people that did not see any authenticity cues. Against my expectations, no statistical significant interaction effect for indexical*iconic was found (F (1, 218) = 2.44, p = .120). However, contrast analysis revealed that the both condition did significantly differ from the none condition (t = (218) = 3.92, p < .001) People that saw both cues perceived their package to be more authentic (M = 4,78, SD = 0,97) than people that did not see any authenticity cues. This finding explained that taking the two cues together on one package worked in creating an increased perception of authenticity, but it was not enough to make the interaction effect between indexical and iconic cues significant

As mentioned earlier, potential effects of the cues were also tested with the separate product authenticity dimensions as dependent variables. A two-way ANOVA presented that both indexical (F (1, 218) = 4.50, p = .035) and iconic (F (1,218) = 5,75, p = .017) cues had a positive main effect on *perceived heritage and consistency* compared to no cues. People that saw indexical cues (M = 4,21, SD = 1,23), or saw iconic cues (M = 4,25, SD = 1,15), scored higher on the heritage and consistency component than people that did not see any cues (M = 3,64, SD = 1,35). Again, no statistical evidence for an interaction effect from the cues on perceived heritage and consistency was found (F (1, 218) = 2,59, p = .199) but contrast analysis revealed that the both condition (M = 4,39, SD = 1,24) did significantly differ from the no cue condition (t = (218) = 3,07, p < .01)

Two positive main effects were found for *perceived quality* as a dependent variable. Participants that saw indexical cues (F (1, 218) = 4,15, p = .043)((M = 4,72, SD = 1,21), and people that saw iconic cues (F (1,218) = 11.62, p = .001)(M = 4,94, SD = 1,05), scored significantly higher on perceived quality than people that did not see any authenticity cues (M = 4,21, SD = 1,38). Again no interaction effect was found (F (1, 218) = 1,310, p = .254) but a supporting effect between the cues was visible since the both condition (M = 5,09, SD = 1,10) was scored significantly higher than the no cues condition on perceived quality (t = (218) = 3,68, p < .001).

The two way ANOVA with *region attachment* as a dependent variable presented different results than the previous dimensions. A positive main effect of iconic cues on region attachment was found(F (1, 218) = 32,81, p < .001) but no significant main effect from indexical cues on region attachment was found. People that saw iconic cues (M = 5,20, SD = 1,48) perceived the product to be more attached to a specific

region/culture than people that did not see any authenticity cues ($M = 3,51$, $SD = 1,62$). The analysis also presented a two-way interaction; Indexical*Iconic (F (1, 218) = 4,38, p = .038). Contrast analysis was conducted in order to specify which conditions significantly differed from each other. Other than the former contrast analyses, here Levene's test statistic turned out to be significant meaning that we do assume equal variances. However, based on Welch en de Brown-Forsythe tests significant difference between the groups was found (for both $p < .001$). Table 5 indicates the significant contrasts. To summarize, participants in the iconic condition scored significantly higher on region attachment than people in the indexical condition (($t = (102) = 3,51$, p < .01) and people in the none condition (($t = (108) = 5,72$, p < .001). Participants in the both condition scored higher on region attachment than people in the indexical condition (($t = (101) = 2,48$, p < . 02) and people in the none condition (($t = (107) = 4,64$, p < .001). Here it seemed that iconic cues had such a large influence on perceived region attachment, that it brought the influence of indexical cues to another level. This observation was reflected in the interaction effect between the two type of cues.

Table 5: *Contrast analysis for the four conditions with region attachment as a dependent variable*

		Iconic	
		Yes	No
Indexical	Yes	M = 4.86[a] SD = 1.43	M = 4.07[b] SD = 1.86
	No	M = 5.20[a] SD = 1.48	M = 3.51[b] SD = 1.62

a.b. Different letters indicate significant difference between the conditions, while similar letters indicate insignificant difference between the conditions.

The two-way ANOVA with *downplaying commercial motives* as a dependent variable indicated no main effects of indexical or iconic cues. However, a significant interaction term (indexical*iconic) was found ($F (1, 218) = 5,34$, $p = .02$). Again, contrast analysis was applied to specify the differences between the conditions and two marginal significant effects were found. Participants in the none condition scored marginally higher ($M = 4,01$, $SD = 1,18$) on downplaying commercial motives than participants in the iconic condition ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.18$), $t = 1,92$, $p = .06$. Participants in the both condition also scored marginally higher ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 1,24$) on downplaying commercial motives than participants in the iconic condition, $t = 1,72$, $p = .09$. The effects indicated that participants perceived the iconic cue condition to be more commercialized than the none and both cue condition. Furthermore, these marginal effects probably explained the interaction effect found between indexical and iconic cues. Including both type of cues seemed to favor consumer perceptions in a way that the both condition was perceived to be less commercial and more authentic than using solely iconic cues.

Mediation perceived product authenticity and purchase intention

According to hypotheses, authenticity cues would positively influence purchase intentions because they signal a higher perceived product authenticity. However, the findings dd not fully support this assumption. To check whether the authenticity cues had a direct influence on willingness to buy, a chi-square test with the item '*would you buy the presented product?*' as a dependent variable was executed. The results of this chi-square test did not indicate statistical significant evidence that the item '*would you buy the presented product?*' was dependent on the exposure to indexical ($\chi 2$ (1, N = 110) = .33, *p* = .57) or iconic cues ($\chi 2$ (1, N = 112) = 1,29, *p* = .26).

In order to test whether the conditions had a direct influence on the purchase intention component, and to test whether perceived product authenticity functions as a mediator (M) between the cues (X) and purchase intention (Y), a mediation analysis with the PROCESS macro tool model 4 (Hayes, 2016) was conducted for all three (Indexical, Iconic, Both) dummy variables (0 = not seen, 1 = seen) separately (figure 3). A significant direct effect was found of iconic cues on purchase intention (b = -.42, p = .05). However, the nature of the effect was not as expected since the coefficient is negative meaning that purchase intention decreases when a person would change from the none to the iconic cue condition. There was no statistical evidence that the indexical (*b* = -.03, *p* = .90) and both condition (*b* = -.22, *p* = .30) directly influenced purchase intention.

Regarding the potential mediation, there was a significant indirect effect of the both condition on purchase intention through perceived product authenticity *(b* = .28, p = .02). This means that when people would change from the no cues to the both cue condition, people are likely to have a higher purchase intention because they perceive the product to be more authentic. This claim was supported by bootstrap confidence intervals for the indirect effect of perceived product authenticity based on 5.000 bootstrap samples were entirely above zero (CI 95% [0.07, 0.52]). A marginal significant influence of iconic cues on purchase intention through perceived product authenticity was found (b = .21, p = .08). Again this means that when people would change from the no cue condition to the iconic condition, an increase in purchase intention is expected because people perceive the package to be more authentic. However, this result should be interpreted with care since it is not fully significant, and bootstrap confidence intervals for 5000 bootstrap samples were not entirely above zero (CI 95% [-0.01, 0,45]). No significant evidence was found for an indirect influence of indexical cues (*b* = -.01, *p* = .97) on purchase intention through perceived product authenticity.

Since no direct positive effects were found from cues on purchase intention, the same mediation analysis with PROCESS (model 4) was performed for the no authenticity cue condition. This analysis presented interesting results. In figure 3 below, a significant direct positive effect from "dummy none" (0 = not seen, 1 = seen) on purchase intention is visible. This means that opposed to the other three conditions, the none condition positively influenced purchase intention (*b* = .73, *p* < .01) Furthermore, based on 5000 bootstrap samples, an indirect effect of no cues on purchase intention through perceived product authenticity was visible. As expected, this indirect effect had a negative direction (b = - .53, C.I. 95% [- 0.85, 0.26]) .

b = .69, p < .001

Purchase intention

Perceived product authenticity

b = .41, p = .02

Dummy both

Direct effect: b = -.22, p = .30
Indirect effect: b = .28, 95% C.I. [0.07, 0.52]

b = .76, p < .001

Purchase intention

Perceived product authenticity

b = -.71, p < .001

Dummy None

Direct effect: b = .73, p < .01
Indirect effect: b = -.53, 95% C.I. [-0.85, -0.26]

b = .68, p < .001

Purchase intention

Perceived product authenticity

b = -.01, p = .97

Dummy indexical

Direct effect: b = -.28, p = .90
Indirect effect: b = -.01, 95% C.I. [-0.23, 0.21]

b = .70, p < .001

Purchase intention

Perceived product authenticity

b = .30, p = .08

Dummy iconic

Direct effect: b = -.42, p = .05
Indirect effect: b = .21, 95% C.I. [< -0.01, 0.45]

Figure 3: Four models with type of cues as a predictor of purchase intention, mediated by perceived product authenticity. The confidence interval for the indirect effect is a BCa bootstrapped CI based on 5000 samples.

Moderation: consumer product involvement

Since it can be assumed that consumer product involvement has a direct effect on purchase intention, a linear regression was conducted in order to check whether consumer product involvement (X) has a direct influence purchase intention (Y). The results of this linear regression were significant F (1, 220) = 8.29, p < . 01, R^2 = 0,04. Consumer product involvement can be considered as a small (4%) predictor of the variance in purchase intention. The model showed that consumer product involvement had a positive main effect on purchase intention (b = .18, p = < .01)

More importantly, the variable consumer product involvement was expected to have a moderating effect on he relationship between the type of cues (i.e. indexical, iconic and both) and the perceived product authenticity variable. In order to test for these effects, a moderated mediation analysis with PROCESS (model 7) was performed. Results of this analysis based on 5.000 bootstrap samples did not support my hypotheses. The interaction term for *indexical* x *consumer product involvement* turned out to be insignificant, *b* = .17, 95% CI [-0.03, 0.38], *t* = 1.67, *p* = .01. Besides that, as mentioned earlier, no direct effect in this model could be found between *indexical cues* and *perceived product authenticity*. The interaction term for *iconic* x *consumer product involvement* was also insignificant, *b* = .03, 95% CI [-0.17, 0.22], *t* = 0.28, *p* = . 78. Regarding the both cue condition, again no moderating influence was visible. The interaction term *both* x *consumer product involvement* turned out to be insignificant *b* = - .13, 95% CI [-0.34, 0.07], *t* = - 1.27, *p* = . 21.

Other outcomes

In light of hypothesis 4, stating that a higher perceived product authenticity leads to a higher purchase intention, the influence of the separate authenticity dimensions was tested as well. I already found that perceived product authenticity as a whole significantly predicts purchase intention. By investigating the effects of the separate dimensions, I was able to check which dimensions have an effect on purchase intention, and how much variance each dimension explained. A multiple linear regression was calculated to predict *purchase intention* based on *perceived heritage consistency, perceived quality, perceived region attachment and downplaying commercial motives* (see table 6). A significant regression equation was found (*F* (4, 217) = 16,48, *p* < .001, with an R^2 of .23. Participants' purchase intention increased with *b* = .19 for every increase of *perceived heritage consistency* of 1 unit. Participants purchase intention also increased with b = .52 for for every increase of *perceived quality* of 1 unit. Both *perceived heritage consistency* and *perceived quality* were (at least marginal) significant predictors of purchase intention. However, no significant effects for the other two dimensions on purchase intention were found. It can be concluded that perceived quality turned out to be the best predictor of purchase intention..

Table 6: *Multiple linear regression results for the four authenticity dimensions as predictors of purchase intention*

Predictor	b	t	p
Perceived heritage and consistency*	.19	1,89	.06
Perceived quality*	.52	4,65	> .001
Perceived region attachment	-.07	-1,04	.30
Downplaying commercial motives	.01	0,07	.94

* = significant

Finally, search for potential influences of demographical factors (age and gender) and chosen survey language was executed as well. However, three 2 (indexical yes/no) x 2(iconic yes/no) x 2(gender, age, language) ANOVA's indicated no significant effects of gender, age or language on outcome variables perceived product authenticity and purchase intention. Therefore it was reasonable assume that the presented results were not dependent of age, gender or the chosen survey language.

Summary main findings

First of all, I found that the intended cue manipulation partly worked. Both independent sample t-tests and paired sample t-tests indicated that the information on all the packages was mostly perceived to be subjective. Therefore it was determined that the indexical cue manipulation did not work.

The first hypothesis stated: *"Indexical cues have a positive effect on perceived product authenticity compared to no authenticity cues"*. This hypothesis was accepted with *perceived product authenticity* as a dependent variable. The separate dimensions *perceived heritage consistency* and *perceived quality* also presented a significant difference between people that saw indexical cues and people that did not see any authenticity cues. The nature of all these effects was positive, meaning that on average indexical cues lead to a higher perceived product authenticity than no cues. However, for the dimensions *perceived region attachment* and *downplaying commercial motives* no significant effect of indexical cues was found and therefore hypothesis one is partially accepted when considering the separate authenticity dimensions.

The second hypothesis stated: *"Iconic cues have a positive effect on perceived product authenticity compared to no authenticity cues"*. This hypothesis was accepted as well. Significant positive effects were found for iconic cues on *perceived product authenticity, perceived heritage and consistency, perceived quality* and *perceived region attachment*. Again, downplaying commercial motives did not show evidence of significant influences of iconic cues.

The third hypothesis concerned a potential interaction effect between the two type of cues: *Involving both Iconic and Indexical cues on food product packaging leads to an interaction effect between iconic and indexical cues leading to a stronger perceived product authenticity among consumers"*. Firstly, based on a two-way ANOVA, no significant evidence for an interaction (indexical*iconic) was found. Secondly, contrast analysis revealed that the *both condition* significantly differed from the *no cue condition*

(Hypothesis 3c). However, no evidence was found that the *both condition* significantly differed from the *indexical condition* (H3a) or the *iconic condition* (H3b). Therefore it was decided that there was not enough evidence for an interaction effect and hypothesis 3 was rejected.

The fourth hypothesis stated that "*A higher perceived product authenticity leads to more willingness to buy that product*". First, a chi-square test revealed no significant differences between the four conditions when it came to the direct question: *"would you buy the presented product"?* Based on solely this item, no direct relationship between the cue types and purchase intention was found. Second, a mediation analysis was performed to test whether perceived product authenticity could function as a mediator between the type of cues and purchase intention. For all three authenticity conditions (i.e. indexical, iconic and both) different results were visible. Firstly, no direct and indirect relationships were found between *indexical cues* and purchase intention. This means that the usage of solely indexical cues does not support the theoretical framework proposed. Again one should keep in mind that it was exactly this indexical manipulation that did not fully come across among the respondents. Secondly a significant direct effect was visible for *iconic cues* on purchase intention. This relationship turned out to be negative meaning that people within the iconic condition rated their package significantly lower on purchase intention than people in the other conditions. Also a marginal positive indirect effect from iconic cues on purchase intention through perceived product authenticity was discovered. Opposite to the direct effect, this indirect relationship turned out to be positive. This pattern is called "competitive mediation" (Zhao, Lynch and Chen, 2010). Thus, competitive mediation is a relationship wherein the direct effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable has an opposite direction than the indirect effect (when a mediator becomes involved) (Zhao, Lynch and Chen, 2010). Thirdly, no direct effect was found for the *both condition* on purchase intention. However, a positive indirect effects was found for the usage of both cues on purchase intention through perceived product authenticity.. This result meant that the usage both cues lead to more perceived product authenticity and thereby more purchase intention. This pattern is called "indirect-only mediation" (Zhao, Lynch and Chen, 2010) or "full mediation" (Baron & Kenny, 1986), meaning that the mediator identified is consistent with the hypothesized framework. To conclude, based on the above presented findings, I can accept H4 (that more perceived product authenticity leads to higher purchase intention) but I cannot claim that the theoretical framework functioned properly for every condition.

The fifth, sixth and seventh hypothesis were related to an expected moderating variable being consumer product involvement. It was expected that level of consumer product involvement influenced the relationship between the the two cue types and a possible interaction on the one hand, and perceived product authenticity on the other. However, no significant evidence was found that consumer product involvement had any moderating influence on the model proposed. Therefore hypothesis 5, 6 and 7 had to be rejected.

5. General discussion

The main aim of this study was to investigate whether using authenticity as a marketing strategy actually works. Research was done by proposing a theoretical framework that can aid in understanding the underlying decision process of consumers in the marketplace. The effects of indexical and iconic cues on purchase intention via perceived product authenticity were analyzed. Additionally, the effect of consumers product involvement was studied to find out whether one's level of involvement in a product category moderates authenticity perception. The main research question in my study was: *What is the effect of different configurations of authentic packing cues on willingness to buy authentic products for consumers on different product involvement levels?* This research question was addressed by the means of an online survey in which respondents were confronted with a product.

In short, I found that the developed theoretical framework functioned as expected for the usage of iconic and both packaging cues. Although no evidence was found that the cue types influenced purchase intention directly, the cues seemed to influence consumer purchase intention through perceived product authenticity. Mediation did not take place for indexical cues, but since the indexical manipulation did not work, no rigid conclusions can be made for this manipulation. Considering the separate product authenticity dimensions, 'perceived quality' was found to be a major contributor to purchase intention. Indexical and iconic cues related to this dimension seem to be important in creating a desired package for consumers. No evidence was found for the proposed moderating influence of consumer product involvement. This implies that independently of consumers' level of product involvement, the cues are equally effective in creating product authenticity perceptions.

5.1 Theoretical contributions

First of all, my present study contributes to a vast array of existing authenticity research in a way that it addresses another way of looking at authenticity. Instead of reasoning from a brand perspective, my study addresses authenticity from a product perspective regardless of the brand. As mentioned earlier, multiple research already addressed measuring perceived brand authenticity (e.g. Morhart et al., 2015; Napoli et al., 2014). A brand authenticity evaluation by the consumer is based on the history, image, scandals etc. around a particular brand. However, since a fictitious coffee brand was made up in my study, evaluation by the consumer is solely based on the package of the product. In my research, the constructed concept referring to this evaluation is called "perceived product authenticity". By conceptualizing perceived product authenticity along the six dimensions of Beverland (2006) and by constructing a quantitative measurement scale for perceived product authenticity based on earlier developed authenticity related marketing scales, my study provides researchers with a comprehensive conceptualization and scale for future work on product authenticity. From the concept of perceived product authenticity, my study contributes in developing a theoretical framework in which packaging cues that consumers may use to evaluate authenticity can ultimately lead to an increased purchase intention.

My study sheds light upon the application of indexical and iconic authenticity cues on a product with an unknown brand. By studying indexical and iconic cues as main influencers of perceived product authenticity and purchase intentions, this study contributes to a growing body of literature that has identified a boundary between consumer subjectivity, on one hand, and consumer perceptions of reality and objectivity,

on the other (Grayson and Martinec, 2004; Kozinets et al., 2002; Morhart et al., 2015). This boundary is not fixed, but open for personal interpretation. My study provides insight into how consumers are likely to respond when confronted with objective and/or subjective authenticity related information. Remarkably, it was found that the objective manipulation (indexical cues) did not fully work as intended. Respondents still perceived objective packages to be covered with subjective statements. A potential reason for this could be related to the product knowledge of the consumer. Consumers may not be aware that a coffee brand is only allowed to make statements like *"premium quality"* and *"100% organic"* if those claims are actually true and controlled by a commission (foodpackaginglabels.net). The finding that my indexical manipulation did not work means that results for this manipulation should be interpreted with care and I cannot jump to rigid conclusions. Theoretically speaking, one can conclude that packaging cues through the eyes of the consumer may almost never be fully objectively perceived. From consumer psychology literature, it is known that cognitive capacity is limited and that it would take too much effort for a person to just make deliberative objectively founded decisions during a day (Kahneman, 2011; Payne, Bettman & Johnson, 1991). From a company perspective a manager may intend to deliver objective information, but eventually it is the consumer that subjectively decides how to process the information available. With this reasoning, my research contributes to the constructivist perspective on authenticity, such that authenticity is a personally constructed phenomenon thereby based on personal interpretations of reality.

Although my research supports the theoretically founded notion that iconic and indexical cues demonstrate reliable positive effects on perceived product authenticity (H1, H2), unexpected results came to the surface when considering the findings related to the direct effects of the cue configurations on purchase intention. Apparently consumers were more willing to buy the package containing no authenticity cues compared to the other packages, while the usage of solely iconic cues would decrease even consumers' purchase intention. No direct effects were found for the other two configurations (i.e. indexical and both). These findings suggest that using authenticity as a marketing strategy does not work. This finding is not in line with earlier brand authenticity work where at least iconic authenticity cues were discussed as a positive direct influencer of attitude (Ewing et al., 2012). According to my study, it seems to be a different story with purchase intention as a dependent behavioral intention.

There are various explanations possible for the unwillingness to buy the product under study. It could for example be the case that respondents were not inclined to buy it because they were not familiar with the fictitious brand, or that they did not feel the urge to try a new brand. Several respondents indicated in the comment section of the survey that they rather sticked to their own brand since they were used to the brand and drank it for many years. The underlying theoretical concept here can be confidence and its antecedent being brand familiarity. Previous consumer research indicated confidence to play a major role in purchase intentions, such that an increased amount of confidence leads to an increased intention to buy (Bennett & Harrell, 1975). Confidence refers to the consumers' subjective certainty in making a judgement of the quality of a brand (Howard, 1989). Other empirical work found brand familiarity to be an antecedent of confidence in way that confidence about a specific brand will increase as a consumers' brand familiarity increases (Laroche, Kim & Zhou, 1996) Since the choice was made to use a fictitious brand, this familiarity effect and an according lack of confidence may explain why participants in the present study were not eager to buy the product they were presented with.

A second theoretical explanation for the unwillingness to buy the coffee packages may lie in a possible status quo bias among consumers (Samuelson and Zeckhauser, 1988). Consumers are generally loss aversive and a new coffee brand may not be as good as their own "good-old" brand. Kahneman, Knetsch & Thaler (1991) explained this loss aversion well by stating that "such choices are best explained by assuming that the significant carriers of utility are not states of wealth or welfare, but changes relative to a neutral reference point" (p. 199). This means that consumers often compare new products with the ones that are already familiar with. Another important element that Kahneman, Knetsch & Thaler (1991) point out is that losses loom larger than gains. Participants in my research may have felt the same way, thereby not willing to switch towards another brand because they are satisfied with what they used to have (prefer to keep the status quo).

A third explanation can be a lack of confidence value regarding the cues in general. To remind, cue utilization theory states that besides predictive value consumers also evaluate cues based on their confidence value, whereby this confidence value refers to the degree to which consumers feel confident in making the right judgements based on the cues available (Olson & Jacoby, 1972). Participants may not have felt confident in making judgements because they for example missed certain information that they value a lot in making purchase decisions e.g. sustainability or fair trade coffee labels. A lack of information that consumers perceive to be valuable can be a reason for them not to buy a particular product.

Conventional mediation analysis supported the causal role of perceived product authenticity for the usage of both cues, and the usage of just iconic cues. From the first effect we can conclude that iconic and indexical cues in some way support each other in creating an increased purchase intention that would not have been there if solely iconic or indexical cues are used. So when using both cue types, my theoretical framework on perceived product authenticity fully functioned as expected and contributes to existing authenticity literature in understanding the complementary powers of authenticity packaging cues in the marketing sphere. Although no interaction term between the two cues was discovered, my research found that the cues at least support each other in creating an authentic image and thereby a higher purchase intention. In addition, this finding is supported by statistical evidence showing that the usage of both cues also performed better in terms of downplaying commercial motives compared to the usage of solely iconic cues.

The second relationship represents a remarkable outcome. In the current study, a negative direct relationship between iconic cues and purchase intention was found, but a positive indirect relationship was found for iconic cues on purchase intention through perceived product authenticity. Methodological consumer literature suggests that in case of competitive mediation, the theoretical framework is likely to be incomplete i.e. a factor explaining the negative relationship between exposure to solely iconic cues and consumers' purchase intention may be omitted (Zhao, Lynch and Chen, 2010). It can be concluded that my research discovered an unexplained direct effect thereby opening up new trajectories for future research to look for alternative mediators that match the direction of the revealed negative direct effect of iconic cues on purchase intention.

When examining the role of perceived product authenticity in the development of consumers' purchase intention, positive effects were found for the *perceived heritage and consistency and perceived quality* dimensions on purchase intention separately. *Perceived regional attachment* and *perceived commercial intentions* did not relate to purchase intention. Hereby, my research supports consumer research

indicating that perceived product quality is a major influencer of purchase intention (Zeithaml, 1988). Especially iconic cues turned out to be a major predictor of perceived quality. A possible explanation for this effect could lie in the usage of brown wrapping paper. Hereby my research supports existing research on the earlier elaborated concept "color value", such that darker colors signify higher quality (van Ooijen et al., 2016)

The finding that the *perceived commercial intentions* dimension presented a different authenticity trend compared to the other authenticity dimensions is an important finding to point out. Factor analysis of the scales already indicated that perceived commercial intentions seemed to measure "something else" compared to the other dimensions. These findings could signify a possible preference for naïve marketing across respondents. Consumers that prefer naïve marketing believe in "less is more". It is a form of marketing that enhances the intrinsic qualities of a product, no more (Beverland, 2006). Products can lose value when they appeal to the mass market. When people notice commercialization of a product, perceived authenticity goes down. This could explain why no significant positive effect was found from the usage of any authenticity cues on perceived commercial intentions. This finding again highlights the thin line marketers have to deal with when applying authenticity cues on their product. It is that thin line between overdoing and not having enough (or the right) cues that makes authenticity such an unpredictable and debatable concept.

Finally, my study also contributes to existing authenticity literature in a way that it is the first attempt to study consumer product involvement as a potential influencer perceived product authenticity. Against my expectations, no evidence was found for an effect of level of consumer product involvement on the relationship between the cues and perceived product authenticity. This means that independently of consumers' level of product involvement, iconic and indexical cues are equally effective in creating product authenticity perceptions. However, given the notion that consumer product involvement has the ability to play a role in various consumption fields, it is not definitely said that consumer product involvement has no influence on other product categories. However, that is for future studies to find out.

5.2 Practical implications

The findings of my study are especially relevant for new companies and its marketers that have the ambition to create or influence an authentic image around their brand. The launch of a new product with both type of authenticity cues can contribute to this authentic aura. Evidence was found that an increased perceived product authenticity can lead to an increased purchase intention by consumers. However, companies are advised to carefully consider two main things.

A marketing manager should first consider whether the product fits the conceptualization of product authenticity. The earlier elaborated six dimensions of Beverland (2006) can assist in deciding whether their product can be marketed as being authentic. E.g. smart phones are not likely to be marketed as authentic since the product lacks heritage, or wines from France are more likely to be perceived authentic compared to wines from Texas. Congruency between the product and authentic dimensions like heritage and relationship to place key seems to be key in this regard.

Secondly and foremost, a marketing manager should be careful with which cues to use and which cues not to use. Findings in my study on coffee did not present direct effects of the cues on purchase

intention. A possible explanation is that the cues were not used and combined in an optimal way. A wrong combination of cues can even lead to the opposite effect being attenuation (van Ooijen et al., 2017). This makes the influence of authenticity cues very unpredictable. E.g. the usage of just iconic cues scored on average lowest on purchase intention and perceived product authenticity. My findings would suggest that an overload of iconic cues can lead to attenuation, but a combination of the cues can lead to more desired outcomes. Outcomes of my research stress the difficulty that marketers face nowadays, being that they cannot always know a priori what information is needed for every consumer to convince them of the product. It is a complicated process for the marketing team to carefully find the optimal configuration of cues specified for their product in order to make authenticity positively work for the brand. Only then will authentic packaging cues form a strategic method of differentiation and attract consumer's preference to their product.

5.3 Limitations and directions for future research

Within this study, several limitations and avenues for future research can be distinguished. First of all, based on a pre-test the choice was made to take coffee as a research object. Coffee showed largest potential with regard to the consumer product involvement variable. However, this does not necessarily mean that coffee is the ultimate object for this study. The developed theoretical framework holds potential to be applied on other food/beverage related items or in other consumption contexts. In addition, the fact that I mentioned coffee as an example in the introductory text of the pre-test could bias respondents in a way that they might think more extensively about the first object (which was coffee) and less extensively about the other eight objects. In the case of coffee, I helped respondents to visualize the product more than for others. Although it does not necessarily is considered a limitation, future research may seek further and check whether the framework functions for other products or other contexts and whether in these studies find consumer product involvement to have a moderating influence.

It is also important to remind that the indexical cue manipulation did not come across to respondents as intended. Since respondents still perceived indexical packages to contain mainly subjective interpretable information, future research could make a new attempt in manipulating a package with solely indexical cues. For example, more explicit signs that the information on the package is actually verifiable could assist in creating at least a more objective perception compared to the numbers found in the present study. It should be argued that multiple cue configurations are possible. Although the current manipulations are based on the earlier identified six authenticity dimensions, packages are self-constructed in a way that the researcher considered appropriate. Future research can, possibly in collaboration with food/beverage marketing experts, think of other cue configurations that may increase purchase intention.

Furthermore, choosing a product above other products by the consumer includes considering more factors than solely authenticity cues (e.g. brand, shopping atmospherics, price). However, for the scope of my research, other variables like price and brand were held constant. Price is, together with quality and value, generally considered to be a central factor in consumer shopping behavior and product choice (Zeithaml, 1988). Moreover, price is often considered as an indication of quality by the consumer in a way that more expensive products are mostly considered as better quality products (Jacoby, Olson & Haddock, 1971). Does this type of relationship work for authenticity as well? Are more expensive products generally perceived as more authentic? Earlier research already touched upon consumer's willingness to pay a premium price for

authentic products as a result of an increased brand-consumer relationship (Fritz, Schoenmueller & Bruhn, 2017). Future research may investigate whether this effect is also visible when the brand is new and unknown for the consumer.

In line with this recommendation for future research, it is important to eventually test the influence of authenticity cues on actual behavior as well. The present research only studied purchase intention. Here my study follows the theoretically founded notion that actual behavior can be predicted by behavioral intentions (Ajzen, 1991). However, as indicated above, multiple other factors can play a role before consumers perform intended behavior. This is the so-called intention-behavior gap (Sheeran & Webb, 2016) By measuring actual behavior, managers have a better founded indication of cues that do and do not work. Therefore it is advised to perform research with manufactured prototype packages in order to actually test which manipulation leads to biggest sales. A tangible product in a real supermarket setting, instead of the pictures used in my research, may lead to different results.

6. Conclusion

Taken together, this research shed light upon the complexity and the ambiguity of the authenticity concept by using the concept in a marketing context, and applying it as a strategy to potentially increase sales with the help of indexical and iconic visual packaging cues. No evidence was found for a direct positive influence of indexical and iconic packaging cues on purchase intention compared to a situation where no authenticity marketing strategy was used. Should we thus conclude that applying an authenticity strategy does not work? Are numerous companies that are already implementing this strategy in the wrong? I would not say so. My research is one of the first steps in understanding product authenticity. Product authenticity and purchase intention were found to be positively correlated and also iconic and indexical cues presented indications to positively influence authenticity inferences. Moreover, I found that people confronted with both cue types perceived their package to be more authentic and respectively indicated a higher willingness to buy. Therefore we can argue that product authenticity in general holds interesting and favorable possibilities for marketers. I also found that objectively intended visual cues were still perceived to be subjective information and maybe this is exactly the reason why no package really stood out in terms of purchase intention. In the end, I am inclined to agree with constructivists stating that authenticity really lies in the eye of the consumer which makes authenticity such a complex concept. There can always be factors leading to attenuation of an authenticity perception about a product. The remaining challenge for marketers is to find an optimal set of visual cues for their packaging that are complementary to one another i.e. using both objective and subjective authenticity cues. A package with cues focussing on heritage, consistency and quality could form a good starting base for a successful marketing strategy. However, a marketer should always be cautious not to overstep the line of being perceived as commercial.

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Appendix I: Surveys (English/Dutch)

Welcome to this Research

Thank you for participating in this survey. My name is Thom Lubberts and this survey is part of my MSc thesis for Wageningen University. For my thesis, I am interested in the decision making process of consumers doing groceries in a supermarket.

In the following section, a situation is described in which you can make various decisions. There are no right or wrong answers since I am only interested in your opinion. The survey is completely anonymous and answers will be solely used for this research. The survey will take approximately 5 minutes. You can stop the survey at any time. However, if you stop before the end of the survey, your answers will not be of value for this research anymore.

If you have any questions regarding this survey beforehand, please contact me by e-mail at: thom.lubberts@wur.nl

Please notice the language option at the right-top or your screen. You are provided with the opportunity to fill in the survey in "English" or "Dutch".

When clicking "I Agree", you confirm that you have read this text and you understood the terms regarding participation in this study.

☐I agree
☐I disagree

Imagine yourself doing groceries in the supermarket and coffee is on your shopping list. You are looking for nice coffee beans to use for yourself. The following product catches your eye. Please take a careful look at the front (1) and the back (2) side of the package. The next questions will concern this product.

1   2
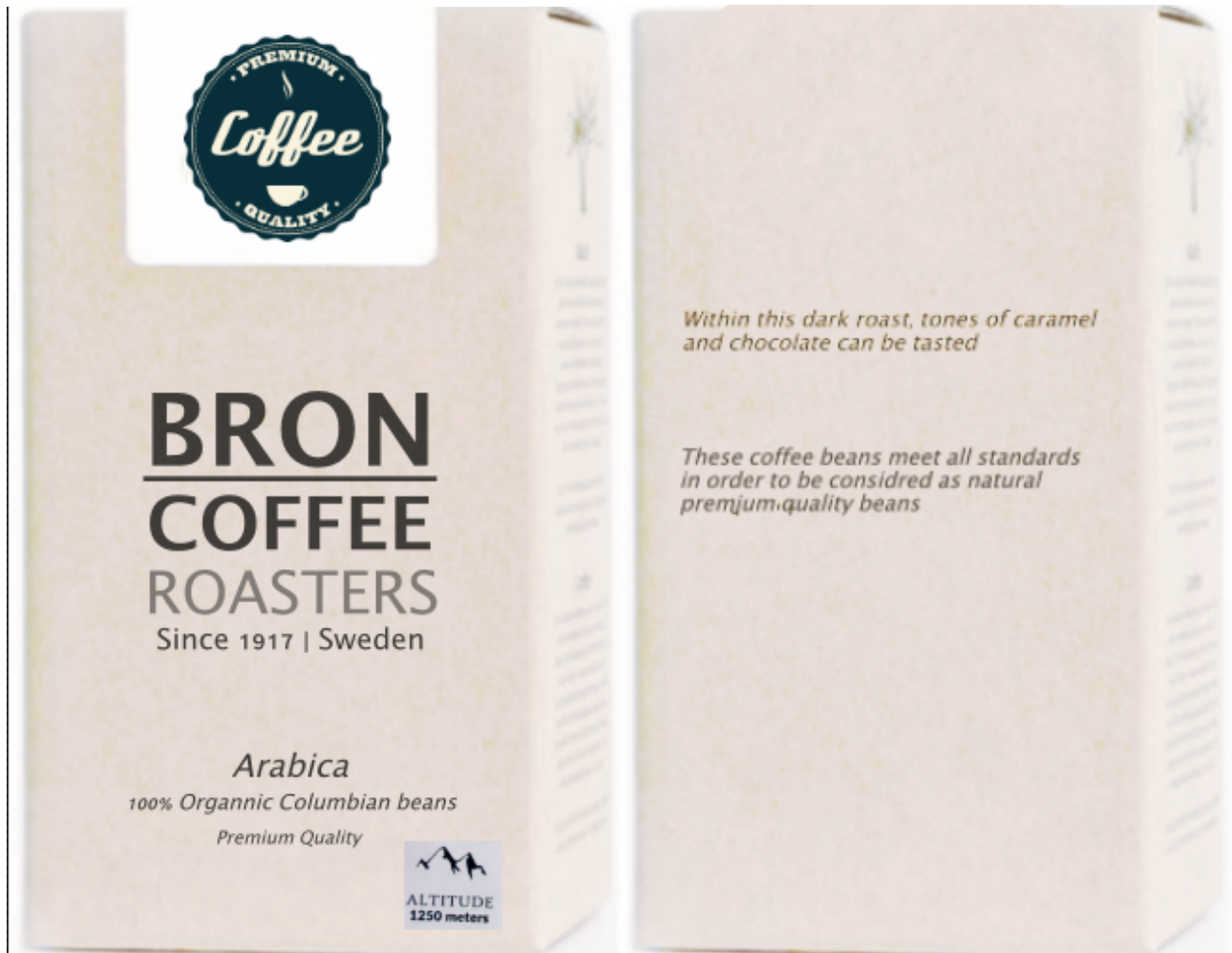
- Participants that saw this package were placed in the indexical condition -

Imagine yourself doing groceries in the supermarket and coffee is on your shopping list. You are looking for nice coffee beans to use for yourself. The following product catches your eye. Please take a careful look at the front (1) and the back (2) side of the package. The next questions will concern this product.

1

2

- Participants that saw this package were placed in the iconic condition -

Imagine yourself doing groceries in the supermarket and coffee is on your shopping list. You are looking for nice coffee beans to use for yourself. The following product catches your eye. Please take a careful look at the front (1) and the back (2) side of the package. The next questions will concern this product.

1   2

Arabica

BRON
COFFEE
ROASTERS
Since 1917 | Sweden

El Oro Marrón
A rich dark roast

100% organic Columbian Beans

250 g

Premium Quality   ALTITUDE 1250 meters

This delicious dark roast consists of the best Arabica beans from the region of Caldas (Colombia). One of the most distinctive attributes of a good Columbian coffee bean is it's body. Dark roast coffee provides a richer, fuller and delicious flavor

Within this dark roast, tones of caramel and chocolate can be tasted

These coffee beans meet all standards to be considered as natural premium quality beans

The Arabica coffee beans are hand-roasted in our traditional family-run roastery in Stockholm

MICRO-HAND ROASTED

Caldas | Colombia

- Participants that saw this package were placed in the both cues condition -

Imagine yourself doing groceries in the supermarket and coffee is on your shopping list. You are looking for nice coffee beans to use for yourself. The following product catches your eye. Please take a careful look at the front (1) and the back (2) side of the package. The next questions will concern this product.

1   2
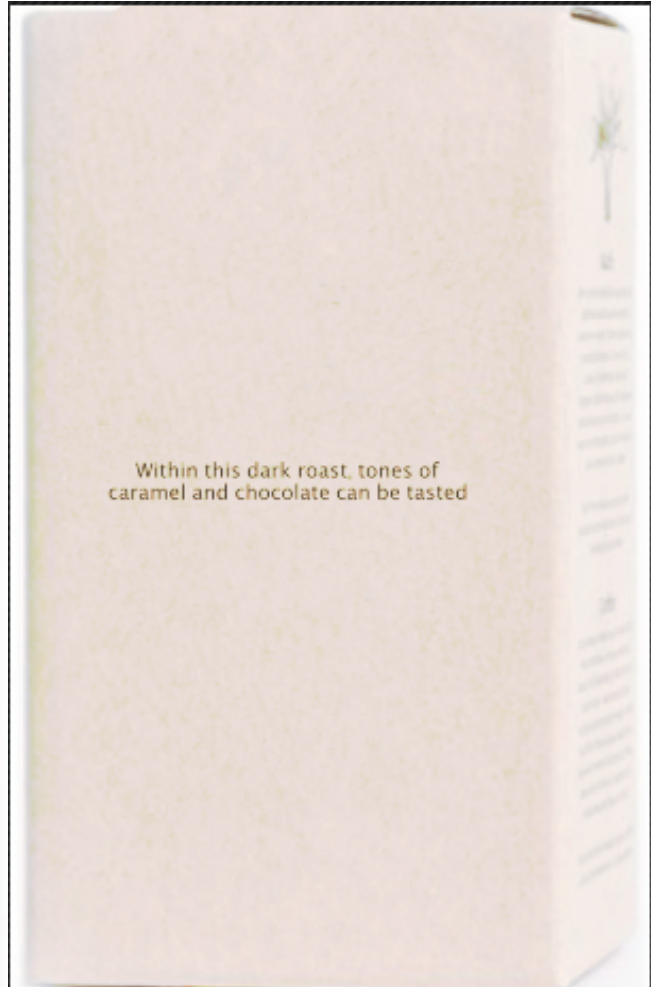
- Participants that saw this package were placed in the no authenticity cues condition -

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Would you buy the presented package?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Please indicate to which extend you agree on the following statements...

Answer possibilities range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Please click on the answer that best fits your opinion.

	Strongly disagree (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly agree (7)
It is very likely that I will buy this product	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I will purchase this product the next time I need coffee	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I will definitely try this product	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

- Now the same condition is shown to the respondent again -

After having seeing the product, how much do you agree with the following statements?

Answer possibilities range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Please click on the answer that best fits your opinion.

In my view, the product presented on the previous page...

	Strongly disagree (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly agree (7)
... has history	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
... is timeless	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
... survives trends	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
... has a strong link to the past, which is still celebrated to this day	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
... reinforces and builds on long-held traditions	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

After seeing the product, how much do you agree with the following statements?

Answer possibilities range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Please click on the answer that best fits your opinion.

	Strongly disagree (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly agree (7)
Quality is central to this product	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Only the finest ingredients/materials are used in the manufacture of this product	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It feels like craftsman skills have been retained in the production of this product	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm "BRON Coffee roasters" is committed to retaining long-held quality standards for this product	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The product makes the impression of being natural	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The product makes a genuine impression	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The product does not seem artificial.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

After having seen the product, how much do you agree with the following statements?

Answer possibilities range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Please click on the answer that best fits your opinion.

	Strongly disagree (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly agree (7)
The product has a strong connection to a culture and/or specific region	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Coffee beans from Colombia are of good quality	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Regarding the commercial intentions of the brand behind the product, to which extent do you agree with the following statements?

Answer possibilities range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Please click on the answer that best fits your opinion.

	Strongly disagree (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly agree (7)
The brand's intentions with the product seem commercial	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The objective of the brand with this product is making profits, even if this contradicts its ideals	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The claims of this product seem exaggerated to me	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

The following questions are about buying coffee in general. One of the purposes of this study is to measure a person's involvement or interest in coffee.

To illustrate, regarding the first question, if you feel that coffee is very important to you, you should place your check mark at the very right of the scale. If you feel that coffee is very unimportant to you, you should check the box at the very left of the scale. If you feel neutral you check the centre box etc.

Follow the same procedure for all ten contradictions. It is your first impression that matters, so don't puzzle too much!

Please rate how you perceive coffee in your life:

For me, coffee is:

Unimportant	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○						Important
Boring	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○						Interesting
Irrelevant	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○						Relevant
Unexciting	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○						Exciting
Means nothing	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○						Means a lot to me
Unappealing	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○						Appealing
Mundane	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○						Fascinating
Worthless	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○						Valuable
Uninvolving	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○						Involving
Not needed	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○						Needed

- The product is here presented for a final time -

To what degree do you consider the presented information on the package to be...

Answer possibilities range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Please click on the answer that best fits your opinion.

	Strongly disagree (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly agree (7)
... objective (verifiable, factual) information	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
... subjective (abstract, feeling-based) information	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Please indicate what applies to you:

Do you ever buy coffee?

☐Yes
☐No

What is your gender?

☐Male
☐Female

What is your age? Please use the slidebar:

This is the end of the survey. Thank you very much for participating in this research. Do you have any final questions or remarks? You can type them in the box below. Otherwise please click the next button to submit your answers. If you have further questions or are you interested in the final results? Please contact me at thom.lubberts@wur.nl.

Welkom bij dit onderzoek

Hartelijk dank voor het deelnemen aan dit onderzoek. Mijn naam is Thom Lubberts en deze enquête is onderdeel van mijn MSc scriptie voor de Wageningen Universiteit. Voor mijn onderzoek ben ik geïnteresseerd in beslissingen die de consument maakt tijdens het boodschappen doen in de supermarkt.

In de volgende sectie zal een situatie worden geschetst waarin u gevraagd wordt verschillende keuzes te maken. Er zijn geen "goede" of "foute" antwoorden aangezien ik alleen geïnteresseerd ben in uw mening. De enquête is volledig anoniem en de antwoorden zullen alleen voor het huidige onderzoek worden gebruikt. De enquête zal ongeveer 5 minuten van uw tijd in beslag nemen. De enquête kan op ieder moment worden afgebroken. Echter zijn uw antwoorden dan niet meer van waarde voor mijn onderzoek.

Mocht u vragen hebben voor het invullen van deze enquête, kunt u met mij contact opnemen via het volgende e-mail adres: thom.lubberts@wur.nl

Graag maak ik u er nog op attent dat u deze enquête zowel in het Engels als in het Nederlands kunt invullen. Selecteer uw taal naar keuze rechts bovenin uw scherm.

Zodra u op "bevestigen" klikt, bevestigt u dat u de bovenstaande tekst gelezen heeft en dan u geen verdere vragen heeft over deelname in de huidige studie.

☐Bevestigen
☐Niet bevestigen

Stelt u zich voor dat u boodschappen aan het doen bent bij uw lokale supermarkt en koffie staat op uw boodschappenlijstje. U bent opzoek naar mooie koffiebonen waar u lekkere koffie mee kunt zetten. Het volgende product springt bij u in het oog. Bekijk de voor- (1) en achterkant (2) van het volgende product aandachtig. De aankomende vragen zullen gaan over dit product.

1   2
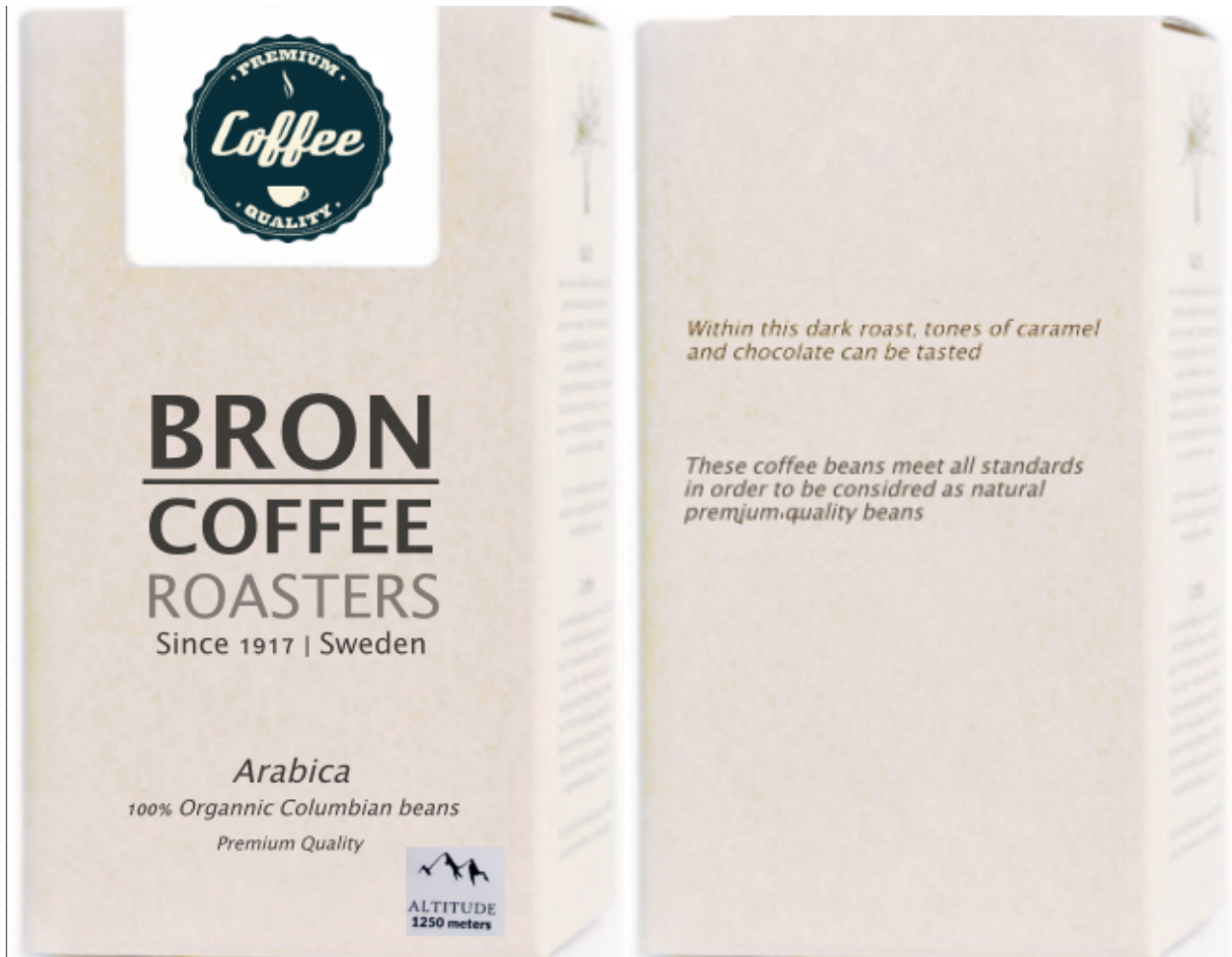
- Participants that saw this package were placed in the indexical condition -

Stelt u zich voor dat u boodschappen aan het doen bent bij uw lokale supermarkt en koffie staat op uw boodschappenlijstje. U bent opzoek naar mooie koffiebonen waar u lekkere koffie mee kunt zetten. Het volgende product springt bij u in het oog. Bekijk de voor- (1) en achterkant (2) van het volgende product aandachtig. De aankomende vragen zullen gaan over dit product.

1   2
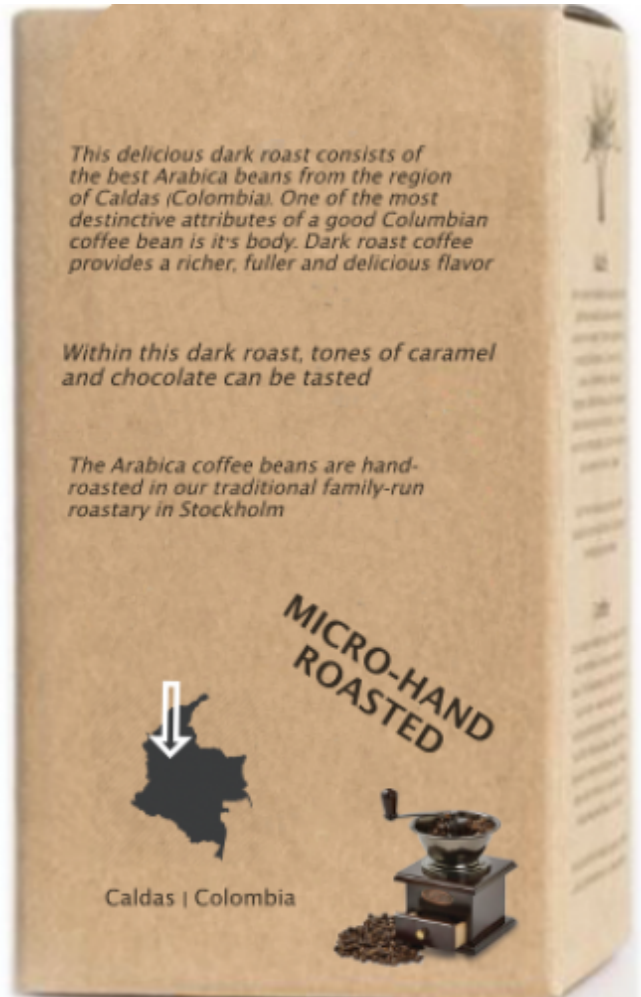
- Participants that saw this package were placed in the iconic condition -

Stelt u zich voor dat u boodschappen aan het doen bent bij uw lokale supermarkt en koffie staat op uw boodschappenlijstje. U bent opzoek naar mooie koffiebonen waar u lekkere koffie mee kunt zetten. Het volgende product springt bij u in het oog. Bekijk de voor- (1) en achterkant (2) van het volgende product aandachtig. De aankomende vragen zullen gaan over dit product.

1

2

- Participants that saw this package were placed in the both cue condition -

Stelt u zich voor dat u boodschappen aan het doen bent bij uw lokale supermarkt en koffie staat op uw boodschappenlijstje. U bent opzoek naar mooie koffiebonen waar u lekkere koffie mee kunt zetten. Het volgende product springt bij u in het oog. Bekijk de voor- (1) en achterkant (2) van het volgende product aandachtig. De aankomende vragen zullen gaan over dit product.

1
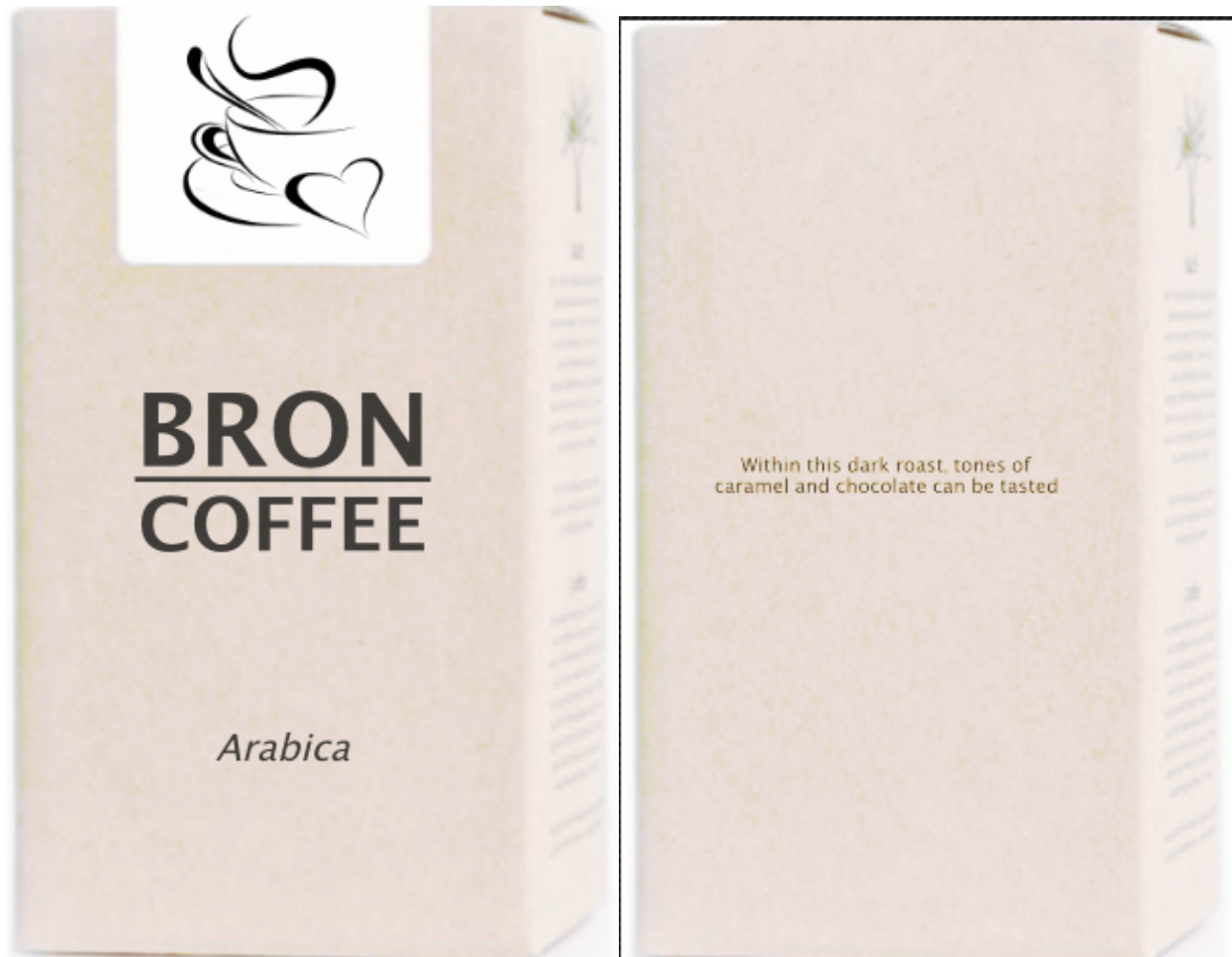
- *Participants that saw this package were placed in the no authenticity cues condition -*

Zou u het gepresenteerde product aanschaffen?

☐Ja
☐Nee

Geef aan in welke mate u het eens bent met de volgende stellingen...

Antwoord mogelijkheden variëren van 1 (sterk mee oneens) tot 7 (sterk mee eens). Klik de antwoord mogelijkheid aan die het beste bij uw mening past.

	Sterk mee oneens (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Sterk mee eens (7)
De kans is erg groot dat ik dit product zal kopen	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
De volgende keer dat ik koffie nodig heb, zal ik dit product aanschaffen	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Ik zal dit product zeker proberen	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

- Dezelfde verpakking wordt hier nog een keer getoond aan de respondent -

Na het product nog een keer bekeken te hebben, tot welke mate bent u het eens met de volgende stellingen?

Antwoord mogelijkheden variëren van 1 (sterk mee oneens) tot 7 (sterk mee eens). Klik de antwoord mogelijkheid aan die het beste bij uw mening past.

Naar mijn mening, het product gepresenteerd op de vorige pagina...

	Sterk mee oneens (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Sterk mee eens (7)
... heeft een verleden	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
... is tijdloos	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
... overleeft trends	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
... heeft een sterke band met het verleden wat hedendaags nog steeds benadrukt wordt	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
... versterkt en bouwt op lang gekoesterde tradities	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Na het product bekeken te hebben, tot welke mate bent u het eens met de volgende stellingen?

Antwoord mogelijkheden variëren van 1 (sterk mee oneens) tot 7 (sterk mee eens). Klik de antwoord mogelijkheid aan die het beste bij uw mening past.

	Sterk mee oneens (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Sterk mee eens (7)
Kwaliteit staat centraal voor dit product	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Alleen de fijnste ingrediënten en materialen zijn gebruikt voor de productie van dit product	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Ik krijg het gevoel dat ambachtelijke bekwaamheid is behouden en gebruikt in de productie van dit product	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Het bedrijf "BRON Coffee roasters" is toegewijd tot het behouden van lang gekoesterde kwaliteits normen voor dit product	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Het product maakt een natuurlijke indruk	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Het product maakt een eerlijke indruk	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Het product lijkt niet kunstmatig	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Na het product bekeken te hebben, tot welke mate bent u het eens met de volgende stellingen?

Antwoord mogelijkheden variëren van 1 (sterk mee oneens) tot 7 (sterk mee eens). Klik de antwoord mogelijkheid aan die het beste bij uw mening past.

	Sterk mee oneens (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Sterk mee eens (7)
Het product heeft een sterke band met een cultuur en/of een specifieke regio	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Koffie bonen uit Colombia zijn van een goede kwaliteit	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Betreffende de commerciële intenties van het merk achter het product, in welke mate bent u het eens met de volgende stellingen?

Antwoord mogelijkheden variëren van 1 (sterk mee oneens) tot 7 (sterk mee eens). Klik de antwoord mogelijkheid aan die het beste bij uw mening past

	Sterk mee oneens (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Sterk mee eens (7)
De intenties van het merk met het betreffende product lijken commercieel van aard	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Het doel van het merk met het betreffende product is winst maken, ondanks dat dit tegen de idealen van het merk in gaat	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
De beweringen op het betreffende product lijken mij overdreven	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

De volgende vragen gaan over koffie kopen in het algemeen. Eén van de doelen van het huidige onderzoek is het bepalen van uw betrokkenheid of interesse in koffie.

Ter illustratie, betreffende de eerste vraag, als koffie heel belangrijk voor u is, klik dan op het uiterst rechter rondje. Als koffie totaal niet belangrijk voor u is, klik dan het meest linker rondje aan. Als u een neutraal gevoel hebt klikt u het middelste rondje aan etc.

Volg dezelfde procedure voor alle tien tegenstellingen. Het gaat om uw eerste indruk dus denk er niet te lang over na!

Geef aan wat koffie voor U betekent:

Koffie is voor mij:

Onbelangrijk	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Belangrijk
Saai	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Interessant
Irrelevant	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Relevant
Onopwindend	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Opwindend
Betekent niks	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Betekent een hoop
Onaantrekkelijk	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Aantrekkelijk
Mondain	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Fascinerend
Waardeloos	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Waardevol
Onbetrokken	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Betrokken
Niet nodig	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Zeer nodig

In hoeverre komt de informatie op de betreffende verpakking op u over als...

Antwoord mogelijkheden variëren van 1 (sterk mee oneens) tot 7 (sterk mee eens). Klik de antwoord mogelijkheid aan die het beste bij uw mening past.

	Sterk mee oneens (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Sterk mee eens (7)
... objectieve (verifieerbare, feitelijke) informatie	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
... subjectieve (abstracte, gevoelsmatige) informatie	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Klik het rondje aan wat voor u van toepassing is:

Koopt u wel eens koffie?

☐Ja
☐Nee

Wat is uw geslacht?

☐Man
☐Vrouw

Wat is uw leeftijd? Gebruik de onderstaande schuifbalk

15	24	32	41	49	58	66	75	83	92	100

Leeftijd

Dit is het einde van de enquête. Hartelijk dank voor het deelnemen aan dit onderzoek. Heeft u verdere vragen of opmerkingen? Deze kunt u in het onderstaande tekstvak typen. <u>Vervolgens is het belangrijk om het "volgende pijltje" aan te klikken om uw antwoorden definitief te maken.</u> Heeft u nog verdere vragen of bent u geïnteresseerd in de uitkomsten van het onderzoek? Dan kunt u contact met mij opnemen via e-mail: thom.lubberts@wur.nl

Nogmaals bedankt!

Appendix II: Pre-test

Please either fill in the Dutch OR the English version / Vul alstublieft alleen de Engelse OF de Nederlandse versie in

ENGLISH VERSION

Dear participant,

As part of my Master Thesis on product authenticity, I am researching the level of product involvement of the everyday consumer. Product involvement can best be described as the interest, enthusiasm and excitement a particular product category generates. Based on your own needs, values and interest, how important are the following products for you?

Answering this sheet is completely anonymous.

Please check the box that most suits you:

For example: If coffee is very important to you and you are interested in the best beans and its place of origin, you check the very involved or extremely involved box.

	Not involved at all	Low involved	Slightly Involved	Neutral	Moderately involved	Very Involved	Extremely Involved
Coffee	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Thee	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Wine	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Chocolate	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Cooking with foreign foods*	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Speciality beer	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Sneakers (schoes)	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Clothes	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Fair trade products	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

* Means typically not from your country of origin e.g. Italian, Asian, Spanish etc.

Thank you very much for your participation!

For further info, please contact thom.lubberts@wur.nl

Please either fill in the Dutch OR the English version / Vul alstublieft alleen de Engelse OF de Nederlandse versie in

NEDERLANDSE VERSIE

Beste participant,

Voor mijn master these onderzoek naar authenticiteit in producten, onderzoek ik onder andere de mate van betrokkenheid van de alledaagse consument binnen bepaalde product categorieën. Product betrokkenheid kan het best worden beschreven als de interesse en het enthousiasme dat bepaalde producten bij u als consumenten oproept. Oftewel, in hoeverre zijn de volgende producten belangrijk voor u als u denkt aan uw persoonlijke behoeftes, waardes en interesses?

Het invullen van de vragenlijst is volledig anoniem.

Kleur per product het rondje in wat het best bij u past:

Voorbeeld: Als u zeer geïnteresseerd bent in koffie en u wil vaak weten welke bonen het lekkerste zijn en waar ze vandaan komen, dan kleurt u het "zeer betrokken' of "heel erg betrokken" rondje in.

	Niet betrokken	Nauwelijks betrokken	Een beetje betrokken	Neutraal	Redelijk betrokken	Zeer betrokken	Heel erg betrokken
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Koffie	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Thee	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Wijn	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Chocolade	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Het koken van buitenlandse gerechten*	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Speciaal Bier	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Sneakers (schoenen)	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Kleding	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Fair trade producten	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

*Denk bijvoorbeeld aan de Italiaanse, Spaanse, Aziatische etc. keuken

Bedankt voor uw deelname!

Voor verdere vragen en/of informatie neem contact op met: thom.lubberts@wur.nl