

“Make an Effort to Show Me Love” The Effects of Indexical and Iconic Authenticity on Consumer Perceived Ethicality

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Abstract

This research contributes to an improved understanding of the link between authenticity and ethicality. A series of four studies show that indexical authenticity (i.e. original first version) leads people to perceive that a product is made with more effort, which increases the perception of a product being made with more love, which subsequently positively affects the consumer perceived ethicality of the brand compared to iconic authenticity (i.e. authentic reproduction). The latter's perceived brand ethicality can be uplifted by adding a cue (i.e. handmade) that the product is made with more effort. This research contributes to the literature in several ways. First, this research links (types of) authenticity with perceived brand ethics, something that has been virtually ignored in past literature, as well as proposes the process behind this link. Second, this research is one of the few looking at the downstream consequences of both types of authenticity: indexical versus iconic. Third, this research helps shedding light on the link between effort and ethicality by revealing made with love as the underlying mechanism.

Keywords: *Authenticity; Ethicality; Effort*

Track: Social Responsibility & Ethics