

Consumer Perceptions of Iconicity and Indexicality and Their Influence on Assessments of Authentic Market Offerings

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Although consumer demand for authentic market offerings has often been mentioned in consumer research, the meaning of the term “authentic” has not been sufficiently specified. Thus, some important differences among authentic market offerings have not been recognized or examined. This article uses Peirce’s semiotic framework to distinguish between two kinds of authenticity—indexical and iconic. We identify the cues that lead to the assessment of each kind, and, based on data collected at two tourist attractions, we show that these cues can have a different influence on the benefits of consuming authenticity. Our results also contribute to an understanding of the negotiation of reality and fantasy as a part of consumption.

Consumer demand for authenticity has existed for hundreds of years. For example, from the ninth to the eleventh centuries, interest in authentic religious relics in Europe helped to generate significant retail and tourism revenues (Phillips 1997). And, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, diversity in consumer standards for authenticity in China created a flourishing market for luxury goods (Clunas 1992). Demand for authenticity persists today and is reflected in the purchase of a wide variety of market offerings, including travel souvenirs (Harkin 1995), ethnic food (Lu and Fine 1995), tickets to historical reconstructions (Handler and Gable 1997), and original art (Bentor 1993)—not to mention more conventional consumer goods and services such as athletic shoes and brokerage advice (Goldman and Papson 1996). In fact, Brown (2001) argues that one of modern marketing’s central themes is the tension between authenticity and inauthenticity. During the last century, this tension has been intensified by technological advances, which have facilitated the effective simulation of authenticity (Benjamin 1969; Halliday 2001; Orvell 1989). But, as an *Adweek* columnist

recently noted, despite “all the attempts to fake it as a marketing ploy,” the “appeal of authenticity seems oddly undiminished” (Dolliver 2001, p. 19). In light of authenticity’s long-standing, persistent, and contemporary marketplace appeal, it is a potentially significant and interesting topic for consumer researchers.

Many scholars outside of marketing and consumer research agree that authenticity is an important topic for study. Authenticity has been the focus of several influential works over the past several decades (Anderson 1990; Baudrillard 1983; Benjamin 1969; Boorstin 1987; Goodman 1976; MacCannell 1999; Trilling 1972) and has been identified by a number of scholars as a pivotal attribute of contemporary life. For example, Lowenthal (1992, p. 184) suggests that “the cult of authenticity pervades modern life,” and Jacknis (1990, p. 9) says that “authenticity is a general preoccupation of modern western culture.” Similarly, MacCannell (1999, p. 145) calls the dialectics of authenticity “the key to the development of the modern world,” and Orvell (1989, p. xvi) argues that the tension between imitation and authenticity “has been a key constituent in American culture since the Industrial Revolution.” Perhaps because of its central role in Western culture, authenticity has consistently provided fertile ground for research in anthropology, geography, communication studies, philosophy, archaeology, aesthetics, tourism, literary criticism, and sociology (in this article, we cite examples of published work from each of these fields). Yet, consumer research has not given considerable focused attention to authenticity, and the fact that authenticity is still “not well understood in its market manifestations” (Peñaloza 2000, p. 103) suggests that consumer

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researchers have an opportunity to enhance our understanding of this important cultural concept and to contribute to an active and ongoing research effort in the social sciences.

This is not to say that consumer researchers have completely ignored authenticity. A few articles in consumer research have focused explicitly on authenticity, and several consumer researchers have discussed authenticity's marketplace manifestations. For instance, consumer-research studies have shown that consumers seek authenticity in museum souvenirs (Costa and Bamossy 1995), experiences in foreign cultures (Thompson and Tambyah 1999), brands (Holt 2002), props from favorite television shows (Kozinets 2001), personal possessions (Grayson and Shulman 2000), reproductions of period artifacts (Belk and Costa 1998), consumption communities (Kozinets 2002), and retail settings (Peñaloza 2001; Wallendorf, Lindsey-Mullikin, and Pimentel 1998). However, although many of these studies have noted that commercialization can undermine authenticity (Costa and Bamossy 1995; Holt 2002; Kozinets 2002; Thompson and Tambyah 1999) and that the assessment of authenticity involves a complex perceptual process (Belk and Costa 1998; Peñaloza 2001), few have responded to Stern's (1994) call for a closer look at the attributes that influence this process. Furthermore, despite their frequent use of the term "authentic," few consumer researchers have explicitly defined it, and this has allowed the term to be used in different ways to imply different meanings. To address this problem, we specify and identify two types of authenticity. Although the distinction we make has been described in previously published work on authenticity (e.g., Bruner 1994; Evans-Pritchard 1987; MacCannell 1999; Peterson 1997), we codify this distinction based on concepts from Charles Peirce's (Peirce 1998) philosophy of signs. We also test the usefulness of this distinction using perceptual data collected at two tourist attractions. Our results show that consumers rely on different cues to assess different kinds of authenticity and that different cues for authenticity can differentially influence some of the benefits that authenticity produces.

REFINING THE CONCEPT OF AN AUTHENTIC MARKET OFFERING

The word "authentic" is associated with "genuineness," "reality," and "truth" (Bendix 1992, p. 104; Costa and Bamossy 1995, p. 300; Goldman and Papson 1996, p. 142; Kennick 1985, p. 4; Peterson 1997, p. 209; Phillips 1997, p. 5; see *Webster's New World Dictionary of American English*, 3d ed., s.v., "authentic"). Yet, the words "genuine" and "true" can mean different things to different consumers in different contexts. To one consumer, a Native American necklace is genuine only if it is made by a Native American craftsman, while, to another consumer, the necklace must have particular colors and designs, regardless of who made it (Evans-Pritchard 1987). To one consumer, a meal is truly Mexican only if it is made in Mexico and consumed by Mexicans, while, to another consumer, the meal must reflect

certain recipes, regardless of who eats or makes the food (Salamone 1997). In this section, we show that the word "authentic" has often been used to denote one of two meanings, both of which are associated with genuineness and truth but in different ways. To ground these two meanings theoretically in relation to consumer perceptions of market offerings, we draw from the philosophy of Peirce (Peirce 1998), whose writings have been particularly influential in the field of semiotics (Mick 1986). Peirce wrote at length about human perception and epistemology, and he placed considerable focus on how people discern what is real or truthful and what is not (Merrell 2000). His ideas therefore provide a useful foundation for exploring and understanding how consumers evaluate indicators of authenticity. One hallmark of Peirce's work is his link between certain types of cues (or "signs") and certain kinds of phenomenological experiences (Grayson and Shulman 2000). Below we specify how different cues and their associated phenomenological experiences can contribute in different ways to assessments of authentic market offerings.

In this article, we use the term "market offering" to refer broadly to any product, service, or marketplace experience evaluated by a consumer. In contrast, some consumer researchers have studied authenticity in relation to how consumers feel about themselves, that is, whether they believe they are revealing their true selves (Arnould and Price 2000; Schouten and McAlexander 1995). As Trilling (1972) explains, evaluating whether one's self is authentic is qualitatively different from evaluating whether something else is authentic (see also Daniel 1996). Because our purpose is to examine consumer evaluations of market offerings, we focus on only the latter.

Indexical Authenticity

The word "authentic" is sometimes used to describe something that is thought not to be a copy or an imitation (Bruner 1994, p. 400; Huntington 1988, p. 157). In this sense, an object is authentic when it is believed to be "the original" or "the real thing" (Barthel 1996, p. 8; Benjamin 1969, p. 220; Cohen 1989, p. 40; Culler 1981, p. 132; Eco 1990, p. 193; MacCannell 1999, p. 14; Orvell 1989; Peterson 1997, p. 207; Sagoff 1978, p. 453). For example, Jimmy Stewart's handprints in the concrete at Grauman's Chinese Theater in Los Angeles are authentic if they are perceived to be original, real handprints left by the actor (O'Guinn 1991). In a similar sense, a person's actions or expressions are authentic if they are thought clearly to reflect who the person really is (Curnutt 1999–2000; Goldman and Papson 1996; Phillips 1997; Trilling 1972; Upton 1996; Weinberg 1996) and are not "put on" or imitated merely to meet social conventions or make money (Cohen 1988; Gair 1997; Holt 2002; Kingston 1999; Martin 1993; Thompson and Tambyah 1999; Trilling 1972). For example, the self-assured behavior of a river-rafting guide is authentic if it is perceived to be a reflection of the guide's actual confidence in leading the trip, and not a feigned impersonation of confidence (Arnould, Price, and Tierney 1998).

Peirce coined the term “index” to refer to cues that, like the handprints and the guide’s behavior, are thought to have a factual and spatio-temporal link with something else. In the case of authentic market offerings, this link can be physical (as with the link between an actor and his handprints) or psychic (as with the link between a guide and his behavior; Markel 1995). Indexicality distinguishes “the real thing” from its copies (Benjamin 1969; Goodman 1976; Kingston 1999). Even if two things appear exactly alike, the authentic object is the one that is believed to have particularly valued or important physical encounters with the world. Similarly, even if two social actors behave in similar ways, the authentic set of behaviors are those that are believed to reflect the actor’s true self, not simulated to achieve a particular effect. Indices, according to Peirce, are associated with the phenomenological experience of fact (CP 1.419).¹ To view something as an index, the perceiver must believe that it actually has the factual and spatio-temporal link that is claimed. For example, to judge whether a chair is an indexically authentic Victorian chair, a consumer must have some verification (e.g., via certification or a trustworthy context) that it was indeed made during the Victorian Era. And, to determine whether a cultural dance performance is indexically authentic, a consumer must have some confidence (e.g., via additional information about the performers or cues offered during the performance) that the dancers are being true to their selves and/or cultural identity and not simply going through motions that are unrelated to their personality or heritage.

Iconic Authenticity

Alternatively, the word “authentic” is sometimes used to describe something whose physical manifestation resembles something that is indexically authentic.² Authors sometimes distinguish this sense of authenticity from indexical authenticity by using phrases such as “authentic reproduction” or “authentic recreation” (Bruner 1994, p. 399; Crang 1996, pp. 421–22; Peterson 1997, p. 208). For example, silver pieces in a museum gift shop are authentic (or authentic reproductions) if they are thought to look very similar to coins made in the sixteenth-century Spanish colonies (Costa and Bamossy 1995). And, a participant at a mountain-man rendezvous is authentic (or is creating an authentic reenactment) to the extent that his actions and speech are believed to mimic the behavior of someone attending a real rendezvous in the nineteenth century (Belk and Costa 1998).

Although previous consumer research has used the term “verisimilitude” to describe this kind of similarity (Deighton, Romer, and McQueen 1989; Kozinets et al. 2002), we use Peirce’s more general term “iconicity.” An icon is something that, like the coin and the rendezvous participant, is

perceived as being similar to something else. Icons, according to Peirce, are associated with the phenomenological experience of attending to one’s senses (CP 1.304–07). A consumer’s sensory experience of the coins and the mountain man are the basis for determining whether they are iconically authentic (for a similar point, see Eco [1990]). Peirce explained that, to view something as an icon, perceivers must have some preexisting knowledge or expectations, which create a “composite photograph” (CP 2.435) in their minds. The perceivers compare this composite photograph with what they sense and make an assessment of similarity. For instance, to judge whether a reproduction of a Victorian chair is iconically authentic, a consumer must have some idea, however sketchy or detailed, of how Victorian chairs tend to look and feel. And to assess whether a cultural dance performance is iconically authentic, a consumer must have some sense—again, however sketchy or detailed—of how dances from this culture tend to look and sound.

Discussion

Having distinguished between indexical and iconic authenticity, we further clarify these concepts by discussing three important issues in relation to both types. First, although some researchers (e.g., Westbrook 1978) have used the word “authentic” as a synonym for “true,” our conceptualization associates authenticity with only particular kinds of truth. For example, a consumer’s evaluation of the authenticity of a French restaurant menu will not necessarily hinge on whether the menu presents truthful information. If the menu offers a “kids meal” that includes hamburgers, and if the restaurant does serve hamburgers, this truth would not make the menu authentic. Questions of truth and deception are important to consumer behavior research (e.g., Stern 1992), but not all of these questions are relevant to the study of authenticity.

Second, iconic and indexical authenticity are not mutually exclusive. Although perception can sometimes emphasize iconicity more than indexicality and vice versa (CP 2.276), every perceived cue has iconic and indexical properties (CP 2.306). Thus, some things can be viewed as being both iconically and indexically authentic. For example, a consumer may believe not only that a chair was built during the Victorian era (indexical authenticity) but also that it is illustrative of Victorian style (iconic authenticity). However, iconic and indexical authenticity are conceptually and practically distinct. For example, the original U.S. Declaration of Independence was poorly preserved for many years and, as a result, has faded considerably. Thus, an 1823 engraving of the original Declaration is the version most commonly reproduced in books, because the engraving was much better preserved than the original and is therefore thought to be a better representation of what the Declaration looked like when it was first signed. From this perspective, the original Declaration is indexically authentic (because it was actually signed by 56 Continental Congress delegates in 1776) but not iconically authentic (because it no longer looks like the orig-

¹In referencing Peirce, we use shorthand that is conventional in Peirce scholarship: “CP” indicates the Hartshorne and Weiss collection of Peirce’s papers (Peirce 1998). The subsequent number (e.g., 5.45) refers to the referenced volume and paragraph number.

²See Barthel 1996; Cohen 1993; DeLyser 1999; Handler and Saxton 1988; Jacknis 1990; Lu and Fine 1995; Stern 1994; Walsh 2001. We thank an anonymous reviewer for assisting us in clarifying this definition.

inal when it was signed). In contrast, the engraving is perceived as iconically authentic but not indexically authentic.

Finally, most scholars who study authenticity agree that authenticity is not an attribute inherent in an object and is better understood as an assessment made by a particular evaluator in a particular context (Bruner 1994; Cohen 1988; DeLyser 1999; Haslam 1985). This perspective is consonant with Peirce's view that signs are better conceptualized as personal experiences rather than objective realities (Merrell 1995). Despite our belief that we perceive iconic or indexical signs "out there" in the "real world," our perception of these signs are highly influenced by our personal predilections and perceptual imperfections (CP 7.465). Thus, there are no purely objective criteria for deciding whether a market offering is indexically or iconically authentic (Phillips 1997). All market offerings have indexical and iconic properties, but not all will be judged as authentic by a particular consumer. For example, to a Revolutionary War buff, the 1823 engraving of the Declaration of Independence may lack indexical authenticity because it was not signed by John Hancock, but, to a printing enthusiast, the engraving may be indexically authentic because it was printed by the engraver William J. Stone (cf. Barthel 1996; Howard 1992). Furthermore, perceptions of iconicity and indexicality are graded, not binary; consumers can perceive market offerings as being more or less iconic or indexical. For example, a fan may view a photograph signed by a favorite actress as being less indexical than a photo that was personally handed to the fan by the actress (Grayson and Shulman 2000).

The research we describe in this article uses the above conceptual distinctions to make three related contributions. First, we empirically identify the two types of authenticity. Second, we show a link between the different kinds of cues (iconic and indexical) and authenticity. Third, we show that different kinds of cues lead to different kinds of consumer benefits.

RESEARCH SITES

For this research, we collected data from visitors at two tourist attractions: the Sherlock Holmes Museum and Shakespeare's Birthplace. Both of these sites are commonly mentioned as notable English attractions, both are associated with a well-known character, and both are presented as recreations of the character's household environment. Thus, we anticipated that consumers visiting the sites would be interested in genuine links with the character and/or his time period. By collecting data at two similar sites, we provide a modest test of the external validity of any significant findings.

Of course, our two research sites differ in at least one important way: Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character who, according to the stories by Arthur Conan Doyle, lived at the turn of the twentieth century. In contrast, William Shakespeare was a real person who, according to history books, lived at the turn of the seventeenth century. Because fiction is often considered to be less factual than history (Hodge and Kress 1995), one might expect that at least some perceptions of iconic and indexical authenticity would be

weaker at the Sherlock Holmes Museum than at Shakespeare's Birthplace, and that this might in turn affect some of the benefits of authenticity. However, consumer researchers who have studied authenticity have noted that perceptions of authenticity are not limited to market offerings that are historically or factually true (Kozinets 2001). For instance, in their study of the "mountain man" rendezvous, Belk and Costa note that, although certain kinds of clothing and equipment at these events would not have been found at the original mountain man gatherings, "participants join in what might be thought of as the social construction of unreality," where their imaginings about the past create a "fabricated authenticity" that participants accept as real (1998, pp. 232, 236). If authenticity is socially constructed by consumers, then it is possible that the fact-fiction distinction between Shakespeare and Holmes will not moderate the relative influence of iconic and indexical cues at each site. Consumers may perceive things associated with Holmes as being just as authentic as things associated with Shakespeare, and this perception of authenticity may therefore result in similar benefits. Whether or not this is the case is an empirical question.

EXPLORATORY PRETEST

Rather than assuming that our conceptualization is appropriate for understanding and measuring perceptions of authenticity at our two research sites, we used open-ended interview questions to hear, in consumers' own words, how they experienced the sites. Is authenticity a salient issue for these consumers? If it is, do consumers rely on indexical and iconic cues for assessing authenticity? A second pretest goal was to provide a basis for developing site-specific survey questions about indexicality and iconicity. Although Grayson and Shulman (2000) identified two types of indexicality for personal possessions (indexicality with a person and indexicality with a time), we wanted to determine whether these types were also applicable to our research contexts. Furthermore, iconic authenticity has not previously been systematically analyzed, so we wanted to explore whether consumers perceive different kinds and, if so, what these kinds are.

We interviewed 47 consumers (21 at the Sherlock Holmes Museum and 26 at Shakespeare's Birthplace) who ranged in age from 16 to 68 years of age. The sample was 51% female and was comprised of consumers representing 18 different countries. We conducted the interviews near each site's exit and paid volunteers a nominal fee. During the interviews, we first inquired about which site features informants liked or disliked, and why. We then asked about which features they thought were authentic or inauthentic, and why.

When asked in the first portion of the interview about site likes or dislikes, all but one informant volunteered issues relating to authenticity. This substantiated our expectation that consumers at these two sites consider authenticity during their visit and that the sites are therefore appropriate venues for our research. During the interviews, informants

described a range of indexical and iconic cues in association with authenticity. Some illustrative quotations are listed in table 1, and, in the following two sections, we briefly summarize the interview findings.

Informant Descriptions of Indexicality

When describing authentic site features, informants mentioned three kinds of indexicality. First, authentic site features were often believed to be really from the time of Shakespeare or Holmes. We refer to this as “actual indexicality with inhabitant’s era.” Second, at Shakespeare’s Birthplace, authentic site features were often described as having been spatio-temporally linked with Shakespeare. We refer to this as “actual indexicality with inhabitant.” Interestingly, despite the fictional status of Holmes, informants at the Sherlock Holmes Museum nonetheless also mentioned indexical associations with the inhabitant. However, when describing these associations, they frequently signaled Holmes’s fictional status by using language such as “as if”

or “theoretically,” which distanced their statements from indicating actual fact (Hodge and Tripp 1986). For example, when identifying authentic site aspects, one informant (F, 49, Canada) mentioned “things that Sherlock Holmes *might have used* to solve the crimes,” and another informant (M, 18, U.S.) liked “just the subtle reminders that [Holmes] had *theoretically* been there” (our emphasis). These informants recognized that Holmes is merely fictional. However, when visiting the site, they allowed themselves to think as if he could have touched certain site features or could have been physically near them. We refer to this as “hypothetical indexicality with inhabitant.”

In transcripts from the Sherlock Holmes Museum interviews, we found no evidence that any informants believed that Holmes actually existed. Yet, when some of them described indexicality with Holmes, they were not always careful to indicate this fictionality in their language. For example one informant (M, 43, U.S.), who mentioned at the start of the interview that “I think Sir Arthur Conan Doyle writes great stuff,” also mentioned that he enjoyed “seeing

TABLE 1
EXAMPLES OF INFORMANT DESCRIPTIONS OF INDEXICAL AND ICONIC AUTHENTICITY

Construct label	Description	Example quotations from Shakespeare’s Birthplace interviews	Example quotations from Sherlock Holmes Museum interviews
Iconicity with fiction	Something that looks like a composite picture, which was constructed based on the consumer’s exposure to fictional narratives.	The house is authentic, especially if you look at it “with the film [<i>Shakespeare in Love</i>] in mind” (F, 28, Zimbabwe).	The layout of the apartment is authentic because it “is similar to what you’ve read,” and there is even “the right number of steps” up to the first floor (M, 30, U.S.).
Iconicity with old things	Something that looks like a composite picture, which was constructed based on the consumer’s exposure to how things age.	The beams are authentic because they “looked pretty weathered” (M, 31, U.S.).	The furniture is authentic because it “looks like it’s been well worn” (M, 28, India).
Iconicity with history	Something that looks like a composite picture, which was constructed based on the consumer’s exposure to information about historical fact.	The structure of the house is authentic because it looks just like “stuff you read and pictures you’ve seen” of homes from that time period (M, 32, England).	The interior decoration is authentic because “I have read a lot of books of that time,” and it looks “just as it should” (M, 16, Argentina).
Actual indexicality with inhabitant	Something that is believed to have been spatio-temporally linked with Holmes or Shakespeare.	The house is authentic because “I just like knowing that [Shakespeare’s] been here” (F, 16, Australia).	The window is authentic “I know that [Holmes] was usually standing at the window and listening to others . . . when he was thinking” (M, 43, U.S.).
Hypothetical indexicality with inhabitant	Something that was regarded as if it had been spatio-temporally linked with Holmes or Shakespeare.	No informant descriptions fit this category.	Items on desk are authentic because “When I saw some books, old newspapers, I just, you have a feeling as if [Holmes] really touched everything” (F, 35, Russia).
Actual indexicality with inhabitant’s era	Something that is believed to have been spatio-temporally linked with Holmes’s or Shakespeare’s era.	Kitchen utensils are authentic because “it’s actually the same utensils used back then. They found them here and they’re really old” (F, 61, Australia).	Antiques are authentic because they are “actual things from that era” (M, 17, U.S.).

NOTE.—Gender, age, and nationality are indicated in parentheses after each quotation.

[Holmes’s] living quarters, and *where he sat, did his writings and thinking*” (our emphasis). Despite his awareness that Sherlock Holmes is fictional, this informant (and others) sometimes still referred to Holmes as having actually owned the items on display and having lived in the space now occupied by the museum. This way of referring to fiction is not uncommon (Walton 1978), but it suggests that people can sometimes, even if temporarily, take the perspective that a fictional world is an actual one.

Informant Descriptions of Iconicity

In the context of assessments of authenticity, iconicity is the use of a mental template or “composite picture” to assess whether something’s physical manifestation is similar to something that is indexically authentic. At our two research sites, the templates that informants used to assess authenticity came in three forms. Informants compared what they saw at the site with (a) what they knew from history and what they therefore thought was fact (“iconicity with history”), (b) what they knew from fictional narratives about the inhabitant or his era (“iconicity with fiction”), and/or (c) what they knew about how things from the 1500s or the 1800s tend to age (“iconicity with old things”).

At first glance, an informant’s belief that something looks old might indicate a perception of indexicality rather than iconicity (Lowenthal 1985). However, informants often explicitly recognized that age can be faked. For example, one informant (F, 28, South Africa) at Shakespeare’s Birthplace mentioned that the linen displayed in the house was inauthentic because “I know they wanted to show what the original painted linen was, but that was really too new. They could have actually washed it out a bit. So it looked more old.” At the Sherlock Holmes Museum, another informant (M, 61, Australia) mentioned a piece of clothing hanging on the wall as being authentic because “it looked old” and then went on to comment that “whether it was a reproduction, or old, I don’t know, but it certainly looked old. I mean, I couldn’t say whether things are old, or whether they are reproductions, but everything looked right.” This recognition that age can be faked highlights why we categorize this perception as being iconic. Informants realized that just because something looks old does not mean that it is indexical with a previous era.

In sum, our exploratory pretest indicated that authenticity is indeed a salient issue for consumers at the two sites. It also suggested that perceptions of iconicity and indexicality contribute to perceptions of authenticity. Finally, it helped us to identify a range of indexical and iconic cues that consumers use to assess authenticity at the two sites and, therefore, to develop survey questions that cover this range.

HYPOTHESES: THE EFFECTS OF PERCEIVED ICONICITY AND INDEXICALITY

The pretest results gave us some familiarity with how consumers evaluate authenticity at each of the two sites.

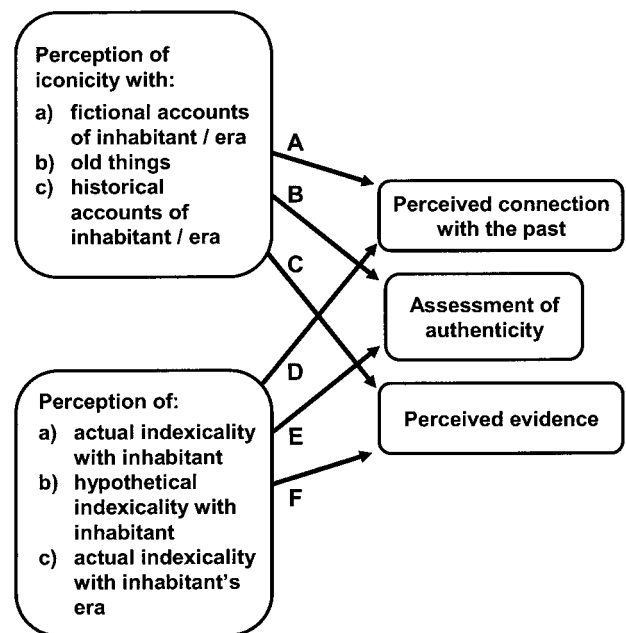
They also provided us with a foundation for stating the propositions inherent in our framework as formal hypotheses, and for developing additional hypotheses. (An illustration of our hypotheses is presented in fig. 1.) First, the basic premise of our framework is that perceptions of iconicity and indexicality each contribute to assessments of authenticity. To test this basic assumption, we propose the following two hypotheses:

H1: The more a site feature is perceived as being (a) iconic with fictional accounts of the site inhabitant or his era, (b) iconic with old things, or (c) iconic with historical accounts of the site inhabitant or his era, the more the site feature will be assessed as authentic.

H2: The more a site feature is perceived as being (a) actually indexical with the site inhabitant, (b) hypothetically indexical with the site inhabitant, or (c) actually indexical with the inhabitant’s era, the more the site feature will be assessed as authentic.

FIGURE 1

DIAGRAM OF ASSOCIATIONS PROPOSED IN HYPOTHESES 1–5



Hypothesis 1 = path B

Hypothesis 2 = path E

Hypothesis 3 = path E > path B

Hypothesis 4 = path A > path C

Hypothesis 5 = path F > path D

A Different Effect on Assessments of Authenticity

Although iconic and indexical cues may both encourage a consumer to believe that a market offering is authentic (hypotheses 1 and 2), it is possible that one type of cue has a stronger influence on assessments of authenticity. For example, at the U.S. National Archives, the two Declarations of Independence mentioned earlier may both be viewed as authentic, but consumers may view one as being more authentic than the other. To develop a tentative answer, we turn to Peirce's framework, which associates indexical cues with the phenomenological experience of fact and iconic cues with the phenomenological experience of attending to one's senses. Because authenticity is associated with fact and truthfulness, we argue that it will be more strongly associated with indexicality than with iconicity. Certainly, an iconically authentic market offering is "true" in the sense that its perceived physical qualities are believed to truly resemble an indexical market offering. But, as Peirce explains, "The Icon has no dynamical connection with the object it represents; it simply happens that its qualities resemble those of that object, and excite analogous sensations in the mind for which it is a likeness. But it really stands unconnected with them. The Index is physically connected with its object; they make an organic pair, but the interpreting mind has nothing to do with this connection" (CP 2.299). This stronger connection could explain why consumers sometimes value indexical possessions more strongly than possessions that are merely copies (icons) of the original (Grayson and Shulman 2000). We therefore propose the following hypothesis:

H3: As compared with iconic cues, indexical cues will more strongly influence assessments of authenticity.

A Different Effect on the Benefits of Authenticity

Based on our conceptual framework and exploratory pretest, we have hypothesized that indexical and iconic cues both contribute to assessments of authenticity. However, our framework also implies that each type of cue contributes different types of authenticity to the assessment. To examine further the potential differential influence of indexical and iconic cues, we hypothesize that each type of cue has a different influence on some of the benefits that consumers experience from the consumption of authenticity. According to many consumer researchers, one of authenticity's benefits is that it provides an escape from the phoniness that underlies most of today's marketing practices (Costa 1998; Holt 2002; Thompson and Tambyah 1999). Some researchers have observed that this escape is particularly important to consumers in a postmodern age, where the very concept of a reliable truth is being questioned (Cohen 1988, p. 373). "Left with a past so shorn of credibility," says Lowenthal (1992, p. 188), "we crave at least a residual authenticity . . . [and]

hunger for firm truths." In Belk's (1990, p. 671) words, "it is the very shallowness and artificiality of our lives that causes us to seek the authentic." Authentic things therefore provide consumers with a sense of hard evidence and unequivocal verification. For example, in O'Guinn's (1991, p. 108) study of Barry Manilow fans, an object touched by the singer is valued because "it somehow proves that Barry exists for them." Objects like these give consumers "factual certainty" (Grayson and Shulman 2000, p. 28) and "a tangible form of evidence" (Barthel 1996, p. 3). We refer to this benefit as "perceived evidence."

A second potential benefit of authenticity has been identified in studies outside of consumer research. A number of researchers have suggested that, when consumers believe they are in the presence of something authentic, they can feel transported to the context to which the object or location is authentically linked, and thus they feel more connected with the context. Although this context could be the future (as with Disney's "Tomorrowland"), most research on authenticity has addressed links to the near or distant past. For example, Weiner (1992, p. 9) notes that authentic possessions help to "reproduce the past for the future," and Barthel (1996, p. 119) observes that an authentic building or object can provide "a direct link between contemporary viewer and historical period, above and apart from the interpretive surround." Historical sites and tourist attractions sometimes market this direct connection as an opportunity to "travel back into the past" (Walsh 2001, p. 101) and to participate in "time travel" (Crang 1996, p. 422). When evaluating a market offering that they perceive as authentic, consumers believe they can feel "what it felt like to live back then" (Handler and Saxton 1988, p. 245), can "'see' the imagined past" (DeLyser 1999, p. 618), and can experience the "past brought to life" (Phillips 1997, p. 197). We refer to this benefit as a "perceived connection with the past."

We hypothesize that these two benefits of authenticity are differentially influenced by iconic and indexical cues. Again recalling Peirce's claim that indexicality is strongly associated with the phenomenological experience of fact, we argue that indexical authenticity is more likely to foster the first benefit we described above—perceived evidence, which involves a sense of proof and verification. In contrast, because iconicity is strongly associated with the phenomenological experience of attending to one's senses, we argue that iconic authenticity is more likely to foster the second benefit—a perceived connection with the past, which involves a feeling of being transported back into time.

H4: Iconic cues will be more strongly associated with a perceived connection with the past than with perceived evidence.

H5: Indexical cues will be more strongly associated with perceived evidence than with perceived connection with the past.

TABLE 2
RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS, PHASE 2

Age	Percent reporting this age	Occupation	Percent reporting this occupation	Level of education	Percent reporting this education
11–20	15	Student	21	Primary school	4
21–30	31	Service	13	Secondary school	31
31–40	22	Manager/executive	39	College/university	45
41–50	18	Professional service	3	Graduate	20
51–60	8	Blue collar/clerical	16		
61–70	5	Homemaker	3		
71–81	1	Retired/unemployed	6		

MAIN STUDY

Data Collection Instrument

For our main study, we collected data via pen-and-paper surveys administered to volunteers as they exited the site. On page 1 of the survey, roughly half of our respondents were asked to identify up to four authentic site features, while the other half were asked to list up to four inauthentic features. (Based on our pretest, we felt comfortable assuming that most visitors experienced both authentic and inauthentic site features. However, nine respondents at the Sherlock Holmes Museum could not think of an inauthentic site feature and were therefore allowed to list authentic features instead.) All respondents were then asked to choose one feature from their list and to answer a series of survey questions about it, after which they were paid a nominal fee.

To develop the survey questions, we wrote three items to measure each of our research constructs. We then pretested the survey verbally with consumers at the Sherlock Holmes Museum. After making adjustments based on consumer comments, we pretested written survey questions on a total of 77 respondents from both sites and used exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation to identify additional adjustments for improving construct validity. Six questions were rewritten because they did not load sufficiently on their intended factors. The final survey questions (including a description of the scales used) are reported in the appendix.

Respondent Sample

At Shakespeare’s Birthplace, 56 respondents rated an inauthentic site aspect, and 58 rated an authentic site aspect; at the Sherlock Holmes Museum, 42 respondents rated an inauthentic site aspect, and 62 rated an authentic site aspect (*N* = 218). Respondents were also asked to rate Holmes or Shakespeare on a scale ranging from 1 (definitely a fictional character) to 7 (definitely a true historical person). All but one Holmes Museum respondent (who was removed from the analysis) gave a rating below the midpoint (mean 2.3), and all Shakespeare’s Birthplace respondents gave a rating above the midpoint (mean 6.7). The resulting sample was 54% female and represented 21 different countries. Addi-

tional information about respondent demographics is reported in table 2. All demographics, including nationality, were included as covariates in our analyses.

Measurement

Before testing hypotheses, we tested our construct measures for convergent and discriminant validity. A confirmatory factor analysis (LISREL 8.30) produced acceptable fit statistics ($\chi^2(df = 221) = 370, p = .0, RMSEA = 0.054, CFI = 0.97, GFI = 0.88$), and all survey items loaded significantly on their intended latent construct (with the lowest *t*-value being 14.4). Cronbach’s alphas for each scale are reported in the appendix and were all greater than .80. To assess discriminant validity further, we modeled the constructs in pairs and compared the chi-square statistic when the correlation between constructs (i.e., Φ) was free versus constrained to one (Gerbing and Anderson 1988). For all 28 pairs, there was a statistically significant increase in chi-square ($p < .001$) when the correlation was constrained. These analyses point to acceptable convergent and discriminant validity. We therefore analyzed the average of the three items for each construct (and, to create consistency among the measures, used a linear transformation to convert answers to the five-point scales into answers on a seven-point scale).

Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses 1 and 2 predicted that, as compared with inauthentic site features, authentic site features would be rated more highly in terms of iconicity and indexicality. To compare the ratings of authentic and inauthentic site features, we used an ANOVA that controlled for site (Holmes vs. Shakespeare) and included an interaction term to control for the possibility that effects may differ between sites (see table 3 for ANOVA *F*-values). For each pair of means reported in table 4, the rating for the authentic site feature is significantly larger ($p < .05$) than the rating for the inauthentic site feature. The ANOVA contrasts on the three significant interaction terms show that, in each case, the difference between authentic and inauthentic site features was greater at one site versus the other but that this difference was significant at both sites. Hypotheses 1 and 2 are there-

TABLE 3

ANOVA *F*-VALUES: THE EFFECT OF SITE AND TYPE OF SITE FEATURE ON RATINGS OF ICONICITY AND INDEXICALITY

	Type of site feature (authentic vs. inauthentic)	Site (Holmes vs. Shakespeare)	Type of site feature × site
Iconicity with fiction	74.20*	4.15*	.00
Iconicity with old things	528.92*	1.34	22.62*
Iconicity with history	80.85*	5.72*	.05
Actual indexicality with inhabitant	153.76*	.44	7.17*
Hypothetical indexicality with inhabitant	358.56*	10.33*	.03
Actual indexicality with inhabitant's era	250.73*	.23	6.23*

NOTE.—The ANOVA included the covariates of respondent gender, age, education, and nationality, but these *F*-values are not reported above.**p* < .05.

fore supported at both sites for all measures of iconicity and indexicality.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that, as compared with iconic cues, indexical cues will more strongly influence assessments of authenticity. To test this, we calculated the extent to which authentic and inauthentic site features differed on their ratings of iconicity and indexicality. For each cue, we calculated a “difference score” (the difference between the ratings for authentic and inauthentic site features; see fig. 2) and used MANOVA contrasts to compare the scores. At both sites, the scores for all indexicality ratings were numerically greater than the scores for iconicity with fiction and iconicity with history (although, at the Sherlock Holmes Museum, actual indexicality with a person was not statistically greater). In contrast, at both sites, the difference score for iconicity with old things was statistically equal to or greater than the difference score for the indexicality ratings. Hypothesis 3 is therefore not supported for iconicity with old things.

To test hypotheses 4 and 5, we used a mean split to divide the iconicity and indexicality ratings into two categories (low vs. high; Tybout 2001) and, thus, grouped site features by whether they exhibited high or low iconicity and high or low indexicality. We again controlled for site and included an interaction term to control for the possibility that the effects may differ between sites. We then used ANOVA to model iconicity and indexicality as predictors of the two benefits of authenticity (see *F*-values in table 5). Hypothesis 4 predicted that iconic cues will have a stronger influence on perceived connection with the past than on perceived evidence. At both sites, there was a significant main effect for iconicity with fiction as a predictor of perceived connection with the past, and no significant effect as a predictor of perceived evidence, which supports hypothesis 4. At both sites, there was a significant main effect for iconicity with old things as a predictor of both benefits of authenticity, but MANOVA contrasts indicate that this effect was larger for perceived connection with the past than for perceived evidence, which also supports hypothesis 4. Finally, the significant interaction term for iconicity with history as a predictor of perceived connection with the past indicates that this association was statistically significant for Sherlock Holmes Museum respondents but not for Shakespeare's

Birthplace respondents, so hypothesis 4 was supported for this type of iconicity only at the Sherlock Holmes Museum. All iconicity effects are illustrated in figure 3. Hypothesis 4 predicted that iconicity would more strongly influence perceived connection with the past than perceived evidence. Thus, the slopes of the lines in graphs B and D (which plot the means for perceived connection with the past) should be steeper than those in graphs A and C (which plot the means for perceived evidence). In all but one instance (iconicity with history at Shakespeare's Birthplace), this is the case.

Hypothesis 5 predicted that indexical cues will have a stronger influence on perceived evidence than on perceived connection with the past. At both sites, there was a significant main effect for actual indexicality with inhabitant as a predictor of perceived evidence and no significant effect for perceived connection with the past, which supports hypothesis 5. At both sites, there was a significant main effect for hypothetical indexicality with inhabitant as a predictor of both benefits of authenticity, but MANOVA contrasts indicate that this effect was larger for perceived evidence than for perceived connection with the past, which also supports hypothesis 5. (The significant interaction term indicates that this significant difference in effects was larger at Shakespeare's Birthplace, but the hypothesis is supported at both sites.) Finally, there was no significant association between actual indexicality with inhabitant's era and either benefit of authenticity, which does not support hypothesis 5. All indexicality effects are illustrated in figure 4. Hypothesis 5 predicted that indexicality would more strongly influence perceived evidence than perceived connection. Thus, the slopes of the lines in graphs A and C (which plot the means for perceived evidence) should be steeper than those in graphs B and D (which plot the means for perceived connection with the past). In four out of six instances (i.e., not indexicality with era), this is the case.

DISCUSSION

Consumer researchers have frequently commented on the allure of authentic market offerings, and our study contributes to an understanding of these market offerings by (a) showing that authenticity can come in qualitatively different

TABLE 4
RATINGS OF ICONICITY AND INDEXICALITY: INAUTHENTIC VERSUS AUTHENTIC SITE FEATURES

	Shakespeare's Birthplace		Sherlock Holmes Museum	
	Mean rating, inauthentic site feature	Mean rating, authentic site feature	Mean rating, inauthentic site feature	Mean rating, authentic site feature
Iconicity with fiction	3.77	5.48	4.27	6.08
Iconicity with old things	1.76	5.72	2.64	5.23
Iconicity with history	4.27	5.89	3.81	5.44
Actual indexicality with person	2.55	4.59	1.83	4.97
Hypothetical indexicality with person	2.54	5.52	1.96	4.90
Actual indexicality with era	2.82	5.31	2.26	5.66

NOTE.—At each site, the mean rating for the inauthentic site feature is significantly different ($p < .05$) from the corresponding rating for the authentic site feature.

forms, (b) pinpointing the cues that consumers use to evaluate different kinds of authenticity, and (c) making progress toward understanding the differential influence of these cues. More specifically, we support the importance of both iconic and indexical cues in the evaluation of authenticity (hypotheses 1 and 2). Although we are not the first to observe that assessments of authenticity are influenced by how something looks in relation to a template, or by perceived links with a time, person, or place, our research emphasizes the importance of clearly indicating which authenticity consumers are evaluating and demanding.

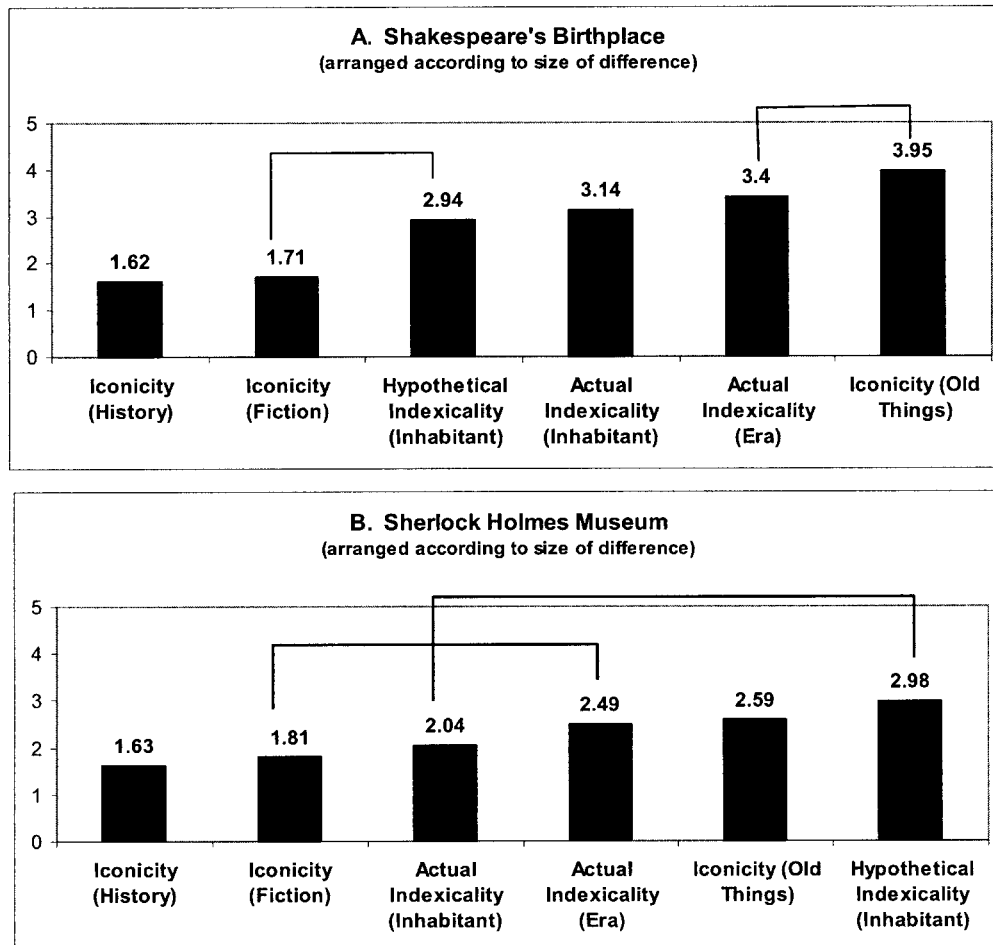
We also make a contribution by explicitly comparing and contrasting the influence of these cues on consumer assessments and benefits. Our hypothesis that indexical cues are more strongly associated with assessments of authenticity (hypothesis 3) received mixed support. As hypothesized, iconicity with fiction and with history did tend to be less strongly associated with assessments of authenticity than indexical cues were. However, the association between authenticity and iconicity with old things was often equal to or greater than the association between authenticity and indexical cues. Why would a site feature's old appearance have such a relatively strong association with authenticity? One explanation comes from Lowenthal (1975, p. 26), who suggests that, because authentic things are frequently presented as being old and worn, people have a hard time granting authenticity to new-looking things, even if they are in fact old. "Because we feel that old things should look old," he explains, "we may forget that they originally looked new." DeLyser (1999) saw evidence of this in her research at the "ghost town" of Bodie, California. Even though Bodie was well maintained when it was inhabited, it is now kept in a state of "arrested decay" because visitors believe that, in its worn and dilapidated condition, it "looks more like it was 'back then'" (DeLyser 1999, p. 622). For our respondents, this bias against new-looking things in the assessment of authenticity may have been strong enough to increase the influence of iconicity with old things relative to indexical cues. The influence of signs of age on assessments of authenticity deserves further examination, in part because, in the broader marketplace, these signs are not found only on market offerings whose authenticity is related to distant his-

tory. As Lowenthal (1985) notes, even personal possessions such as clothing acquire signs of wear and tear that make them iconic with old things. And, some marketers make an extra effort to create market offerings that exit the assembly line (or go to the auction block) already exhibiting simulations of these marks. Yet, in contrast, some markets for authenticity value pristine and still-packaged items (such as vintage toys, baseball cards, and comic books), and many authentic market offerings are not manufactured to look old. In markets where iconicity with old things is not important, which cues for authenticity come to the fore? Do indexical cues become exclusively predominant or do other iconic cues gain more influence? Future research on assessing authenticity might productively examine potential trade-offs between indexical and iconic cues.

A second general finding from our study is that, at both sites, iconic cues were more strongly and consistently associated with perceived connection with the past (hypothesis 4), while indexical cues were more strongly and consistently associated with perceived evidence (hypothesis 5). This supports Peirce's conceptualization of the phenomenological experiences associated with indices and icons. Interestingly, our results also show that, even if an indexical or iconic cue contributes to assessments of authenticity, this does not necessarily mean it will also contribute to the benefits of authenticity. Two of the cues we measured (indexicality with inhabitant's era at both sites and iconicity with history at Shakespeare's Birthplace) had no significant association with the benefits of authenticity, despite their association with assessments of authenticity. This suggests that researchers should take care when making observations about authenticity as a global construct, not only because different kinds of authenticity can have different effects on consumers but also because some kinds of authenticity may have no significant effects. For example, even though a consumer may view a mountain-man costume as being iconically authentic or a *Star Trek* prop as being indexically authentic, this does not necessarily mean the consumer is experiencing perceived evidence or a perceived connection with the past. Future research can and should explore what additional benefits, if any, consumers might experience from their exposure to objects or behaviors that they believe are authentic.

FIGURE 2

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE RATINGS OF AUTHENTIC AND INAUTHENTIC SITE FEATURES



NOTE.—Brackets indicate significant differences; they link together bars that are significantly different from one another ($p < .05$). Bars adjacent to one another without brackets indicate that no statistically significant difference was found between them. Bars to the right of any bracket are significantly different from bars to the left, and vice versa.

Our study also contributes to a growing body of research that has identified a porous boundary between consumer fantasy and subjectivity, on one hand, and consumer perceptions of reality and objectivity, on the other. For example, consumer researchers have described consumption experiences as a “blending [of] fantasy and reality” (Kozinets et al. 2002, p. 18), the creation of a “fantasy reality” (Belk and Costa 1998, p. 227), and “a blur of fantasy and reality” (Peñaloza 2001, p. 372). Yet, more work is needed to understand how consumers allow these usually oppositional elements to coexist as part of the same experience. One potential explanation comes from the postmodern concept of “hyperreality,” which originated with Baudrillard (1983) and has since been echoed by a number of postmodern commentators and researchers (e.g., Best and Kellner 1991; Firat and Venkatesh 1995). According to this view, con-

sumers no longer see fantasy and reality as meaningful categories because they recognize that all “realities” are subjectively constructed and evaluated. Similarly, because the distinction between authentic and inauthentic is subjective, “there is no sense in asking what is the original and what is the copy” (Venkatesh 1999, p. 157). Our study supports the perspective that the distinction between the authentic and the inauthentic can be socially or personally constructed (see also Belk and Costa [1998] and Kozinets [2001]). For example, despite the fictional status of Sherlock Holmes (and his apartment) and the historical status of William Shakespeare (and his home), our respondents assessed authenticity at both sites in similar ways. Furthermore, some of the same site features deemed authentic by some respondents were deemed inauthentic by others. Based on these results, it is easy to deconstruct the distinctions be-

TABLE 5

THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN ICONICITY/INDEXICALITY AND THE BENEFITS OF AUTHENTICITY (ANOVA *F*-VALUES)

	Perceived evidence	Perceived connection with the past	Hypothesis supported?
Iconicity with fiction	.03	4.45*	Hypothesis 4 supported at both sites
Iconicity with fiction × site	.06	1.52	
Iconicity with old things	12.74*	69.04*	Hypothesis 4 supported at both sites
Iconicity with old things × site	.91	.49	
Iconicity with history	1.19	2.30	Hypothesis 4 supported only at Sherlock Holmes Museum
Iconicity with history × site	1.26	3.89*	
Actual indexicality with person	14.07*	1.16	Hypothesis 5 supported at both sites
Actual indexicality with person × site	1.40	2.32	
Hypothetical indexicality with person	57.09*	19.29*	Hypothesis 5 supported at both sites
Hypothetical indexicality with person × site	.70	6.18*	
Actual indexicality with era	.76	2.08	Hypothesis 5 not supported at either site
Actual indexicality with era × site	.19	.31	

NOTE.—The ANOVA included the covariates of site and respondent gender, age, education, and nationality, but these *F*-values are not reported above.
**p* < .05.

tween fantasy and subjectivity and reality and objectivity and to suggest that these distinctions are therefore arbitrary or meaningless. However, from the perspective of our informants and respondents, the distinction was often very clear and influential. Consumers at both sites confidently identified and described authentic and inauthentic site features, and site features perceived as authentic often had a different effect than inauthentic features. This supports Scott’s (1993) suggestion that hyperreality may be more evident from a detached analytic perspective than from the perspective of someone participating in the marketplace (see also Peñaloza 2001).

If consumers do indeed make distinctions between what is real and what is not, how do they blur or blend the two? Our study’s identification of hypothetical indexicality suggests that imagination may play a role in this blending process. At the Sherlock Holmes Museum, it appears that hypothetical indexicality helped respondents to enjoy the evidentiary function of particular site features despite the fact that this “evidence” was in support of a fictional character. This is akin to the “suspension of disbelief” that is sometimes mentioned in association with the consumption of fictionally oriented marketing activity (Belk and Costa 1998; Stern 1994). Our results at the Sherlock Holmes Museum suggest that hypothetical indexicality plays a key role in this blurring of fantasy and reality. More interesting are the results for hypothetical indexicality at Shakespeare’s Birthplace. Despite the fact that our respondents considered Shakespeare to be a real historical person, perceptions of hypothetical indexicality often had the strongest associations with the benefits of authenticity. This suggests that imagination influences the perception of authenticity even in relation to someone with historical status. A consumer’s belief that a quill pen is evidence of Shakespeare’s existence appears to depend in part on their ability to imagine that Shakespeare used the pen. This is a blurring of imagination and belief—not in support of making a presumed fiction seem

more real, but in support of making a presumed fact seem more real.

Limitations

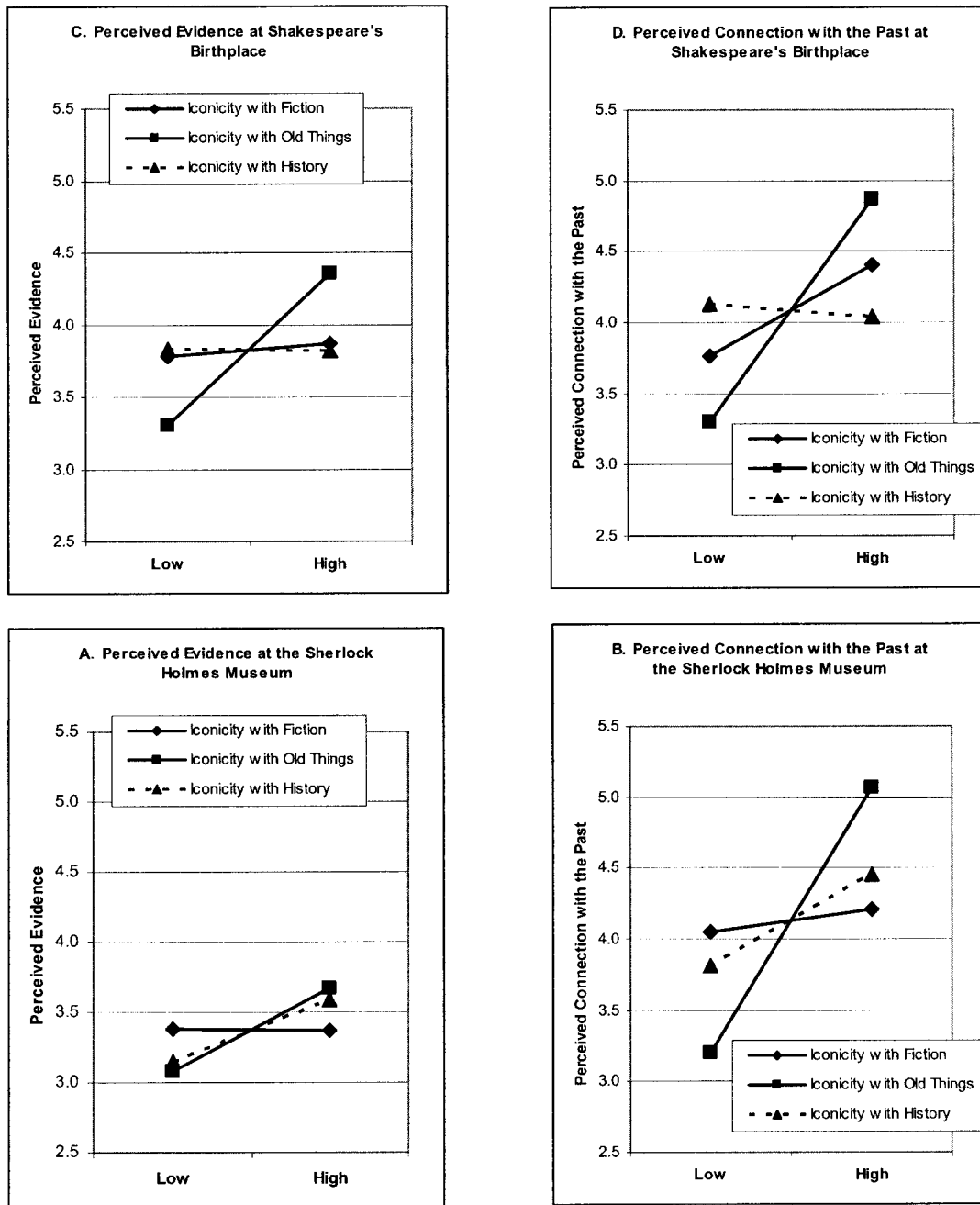
Our findings must be understood in the context of our study’s methodological trade-offs and limitations. First, because we examined consumer perceptions of objects associated with two similar contexts, our measures for iconicity and indexicality are likely to be limited by some context specificity, and the generalizability of our findings to other contexts and/or other types of authentic objects can be speculative only. However, we note that some of the indexical cues that were important in our context were also found to be influential in the assessment of authentic possessions (Grayson and Shulman 2000). And, unlike most studies of authenticity, ours analyzed consumer perceptions from two contexts rather than one. The fact that both contexts produced some similar results helps to decrease concerns that these findings result from a particular site’s idiosyncrasies.

A second limitation is internal validity. Although our method had the advantage of allowing consumers naturalistically to experience the sites without the influence of an experimental manipulation, cross-sectional studies like ours are limited in their ability to make confident assertions about causality. Future research on iconicity and indexicality might employ manipulations—such as priming different respondents to focus on iconic or indexical cues or informing them that the same object is either indexically or iconically authentic—in order to test further the influence of these cues.

Third, although our internationally diverse group of respondents supports the proposition that our findings are not limited to a particular demographic category, it also introduces a limitation: English was not a first language for some pretest informants, who might therefore have had difficulty communicating their thoughts accurately. Nonetheless, 24 of our 47 pretest informants were from English-speaking

FIGURE 3

THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN ICONICITY AND THE BENEFITS OF AUTHENTICITY

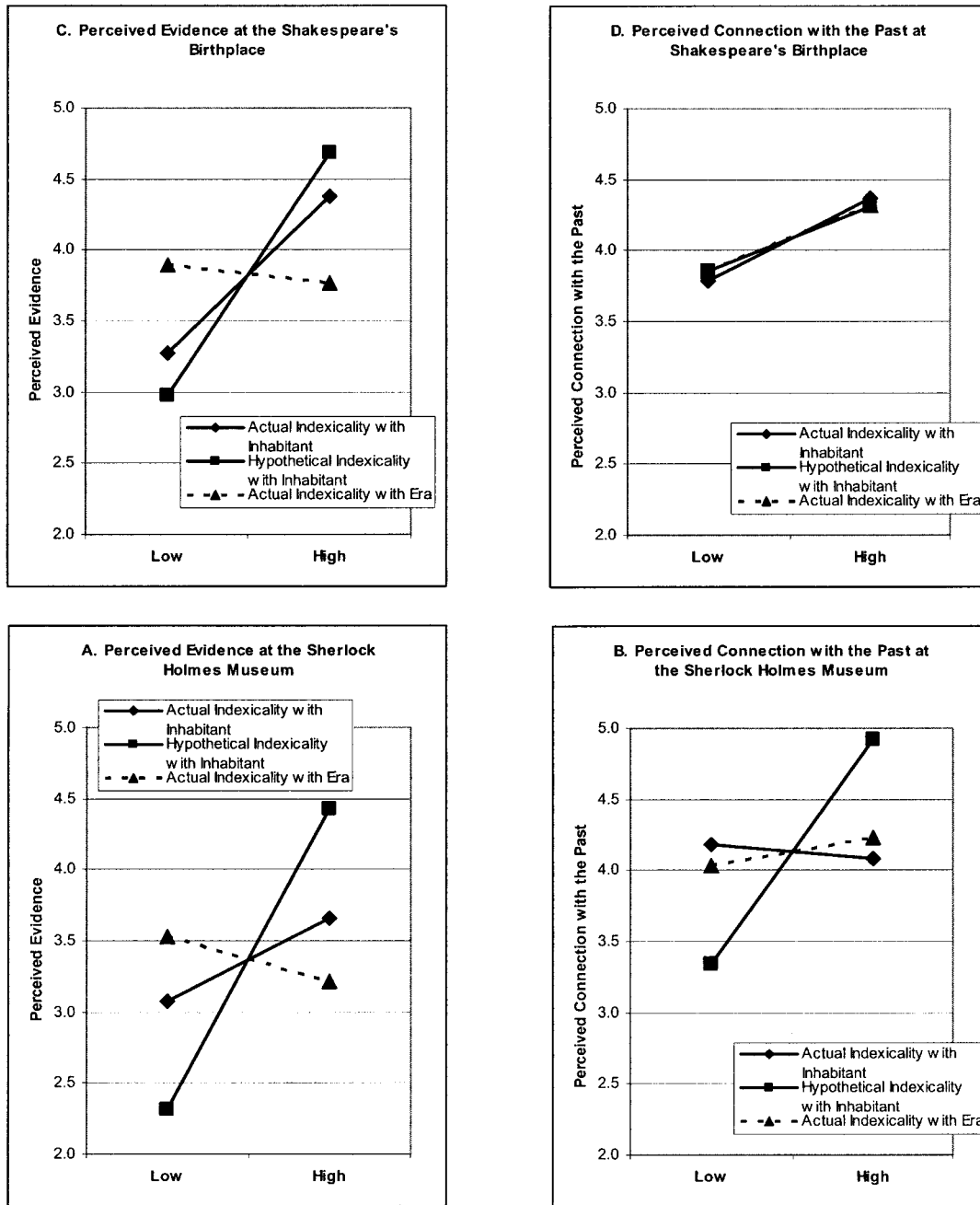


countries, and an additional seven were from countries where natives tend to be fluent in English as a second or third language. Furthermore, participating in the pretest required fairly advanced English speaking abilities, which created an implicit fluency screen. We therefore believe that our interviews provided a reasonable foundation for concept pretesting and survey development. However, it is interest-

ing to consider consumer variables beyond basic demographics that might influence perceptions of iconicity and indexicality. When developing this study, we thought that one potentially influential factor might be consumer expertise in the domain of interest. Although we used reliable and valid measures of expertise, it had no significant main or interactive effects on the other constructs (which is why

FIGURE 4

THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN INDEXICALITY AND THE BENEFITS OF AUTHENTICITY



we do not report this result in more detail). In retrospect, it is not surprising that there were no effects for expertise, because our data collection process allowed considerable latitude for idiosyncratic identification of (in)authentic site features. Experts and novices may have differed in their criteria for identifying iconicity and indexicality, but this difference may not have moderated the influence of iconicity

and indexicality on each individual's perceptions. Future research on authenticity might examine potential differences in standards used by experts versus novices. Another potential influence on perceptions of iconicity and indexicality is the perceived authority or expertise of the person or organization marketing the offering. Trust in the marketer is likely to be an important factor in assessing iconicity and

indexicality, but, because iconicity involves the evidence of one's senses and indexicality often does not, trust may be more important for the latter.

Conclusion

Like most articles on authenticity, ours has highlighted some of the tensions associated with the perception of authenticity. We have contributed to an understanding of these tensions by specifying how authenticity can be both a social construction and a source of evidence, and by detailing how the perception of authenticity can depend on the simultaneous application of imagination and belief. Because the constructed and imagined nature of authenticity allows for some latitude in the development and marketing of authentic market offerings, organizations have considerable opportunity to profit from consumer demand for authenticity (Lu and Fine 1995). Yet, as many researchers (e.g., Holt 2002; Kozinets 2002) have noted, commercialization often undermines the value of authenticity to consumers. This is in part because, in the minds of consumers operating in the marketplace, authenticity is associated with evidence and truth. Consumers can therefore become circumspect if they discover that the standards for authenticity have been manipulated for the purpose of making a profit. The cues for communicating and perceiving authenticity are at the foundation of this dialogue between marketers and consumers over what is (or is not) authentic, and understanding and specifying these cues is an important step in the process of understanding this negotiation of meaning.

APPENDIX

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Iconicity with Fiction (alpha = 0.90)³

- *Stories or films* about Sherlock Holmes/Shakespeare depict this sort of thing.
- This sort of thing is depicted *in stories or films* about Sherlock Holmes/Shakespeare.
- How likely is it that a *story or film* about Sherlock Holmes/Shakespeare depicts something like this?

Iconicity with Old Things (alpha = 0.93)

- It looked *very old*.
- It looked as if it was made *a long time ago*.
- *How old* did it look to you?

Iconicity with History (alpha = 0.87)

- *Historical documents* about home life in the late 1800s/1500s describe this sort of thing.
- *Historians agree* that this sort of thing existed in the

late 1800s/1500s.

- How likely is it that *historical documents* about home life during the late 1800s/1500s mention something like this?

Actual Indexicality with Inhabitant (alpha = 0.96)

- Sherlock Holmes/Shakespeare *touched this* or was *physically near it*.
- This was *touched by* Sherlock Holmes/Shakespeare, or he *was physically near it*.
- How much do you believe that Sherlock Holmes/Shakespeare actually *touched this* or *was physically near it*?

Hypothetical Indexicality with Inhabitant (alpha = 0.91)

- While I was looking at it, I felt *as if* Sherlock Holmes/Shakespeare *could have touched this* or *could have been physically near it*.
- While I was in the museum, it made me feel *as if* Sherlock Holmes/Shakespeare *could have touched this* or *could have been physically near it*.
- While you were looking at it, how much did you feel *as if* Sherlock Holmes/Shakespeare *could have touched it* or *could have been physically near it*?

Actual Indexicality with Inhabitant's Era (alpha = 0.93)

- It was *made or built* in the late 1800s/1500s.
- This is *old enough to be from* the late 1800s/1500s.
- How much do you believe this was *made or built* during the late 1800s/1500s?

Perceived Evidence (alpha = 0.93)

- It is almost like *proof* that Sherlock Holmes/Shakespeare really existed.
- It helped me to *believe some facts* about Sherlock Holmes/Shakespeare.
- It is almost like *verification* that Sherlock Holmes/Shakespeare really existed.

Perceived Connection with the Past (alpha = 0.93)

- When I looked at it, I felt a *connection with the past*.
- It helped to *transport me back in time*.
- *How much* of a *connection with the past* did this make you feel?

[*Dawn Iacobucci served as editor and Eric Arnould served as associate editor for this article.*]

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³The first two statements listed for each construct were rated on a seven-point scale (anchored by strongly disagree–strongly agree or very unlikely–very likely) and the third was rated on a five-point semantic differential. One exception is that all three measures for "evidentiary function of site feature" were rated on a seven-point scale.

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