

Revisiting the Authenticity–Loyalty Nexus: A Critical Review and Pathways for Future Research

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ABSTRACT

The growing complexity of consumer behavior highlights the critical role of brand authenticity in shaping long-term customer loyalty, yet fragmented findings across industries and contexts have left the authenticity–loyalty relationship underexplored. Despite increasing recognition of authenticity as a driver of trust, attachment, and satisfaction, there remains limited integration of how authenticity influences loyalty across sectors and how it extends beyond transactional outcomes toward prosocial and sustainable behaviors. This review aims to address this gap by systematically mapping key findings, identifying emerging themes, and proposing future research pathways. Using Scopus AI (25 September 2025), a structured analysis was conducted that included summaries, expanded summaries, concept mapping, identification of topic experts, and emerging theme exploration. The findings reveal consistent themes around customer loyalty and satisfaction across industries, where trust, perceived value, and service quality are central determinants, and in tourism and heritage contexts, where authenticity strongly predicts satisfaction, destination loyalty, and cultural preservation. Additionally, a rising theme connects authenticity to virtuous behavior, demonstrating its role in encouraging ethical consumption, prosocial actions, and environmental responsibility. Theoretically, the study contributes to refining the authenticity–loyalty nexus by linking it to moral and prosocial behavior, while practically, it offers strategies for businesses to leverage authenticity to strengthen loyalty and align with sustainability goals. Limitations related to industry scope and reliance on secondary data highlight the need for longitudinal and cross-cultural studies. Overall, the study emphasizes authenticity as both a relational and moral compass, shaping consumer loyalty and guiding sustainable marketplace practices.

Keywords— Brand Authenticity, Customer Loyalty, Consumer Behavior, Tourism and Heritage Marketing, and Sustainable Consumptions

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the concept of authenticity has gained prominence in marketing and consumer behavior research as firms increasingly strive to differentiate themselves in saturated markets. Authenticity, often defined as the perception of genuineness, truthfulness, and consistency in brand identity, has emerged as a critical determinant of consumer trust and loyalty across diverse industries (Choi et al., 2015; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). With customer loyalty serving as a cornerstone of sustainable business success, the authenticity–loyalty nexus has become a vital area of inquiry for both scholars and practitioners seeking to understand how authentic experiences influence consumer commitment.

Although authenticity has been explored in contexts such as omni-channel retail (Han, 2017), cultural and heritage tourism (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Cheng et al., 2023; Zhao & Li, 2023), and fashion branding (Choi et al., 2015), findings remain fragmented. Prior studies demonstrate that authenticity impacts loyalty directly (Lacœuilhe et al., 2017), indirectly via mediators like brand image and satisfaction (Xu et al., 2022; Yin & Dai, 2021), or conditionally depending on moderating factors such as consumer knowledge, demographics, and self-authenticity (Carroll et al., 2022; Han, 2017). Moreover, authenticity may interact with corporate social

responsibility (Gunawan et al., 2020), service recovery (Tran, 2024), and cultural expectations (Le et al., 2023; Lorgnier et al., 2024), illustrating its context-sensitive nature. These varied perspectives highlight both the theoretical richness and conceptual ambiguities that characterize the authenticity–loyalty literature.

Despite this progress, significant research gaps remain. First, much of the scholarship is industry-specific, with heavy emphasis on tourism and retailing, while sectors such as healthcare, education, and technology remain underexplored. Second, most studies adopt cross-sectional designs, leaving temporal dynamics of authenticity and loyalty underexamined. Third, the multidimensional nature of authenticity ranging from object-based and existential to interpersonal forms has not been comprehensively integrated into existing frameworks (Yin & Dai, 2021). Finally, the growing influence of digitalization and omni-channel strategies necessitates further investigation into how technology reshapes perceptions of authenticity (Han, 2017).

To address these gaps, this review critically synthesizes existing literature on the authenticity–loyalty nexus, with the aim of mapping key findings, identifying emerging themes, and proposing future research pathways. Specifically, the paper analyzes the research area by developing a concept map, identifying topic experts, and highlighting critical debates that shape the field. In doing so, the study contributes to consolidating dispersed knowledge and offering a structured agenda for advancing theoretical and empirical understanding.

The contribution of this article is threefold. First, it provides a critical synthesis of fragmented insights to clarify the mechanisms linking authenticity and loyalty across contexts. Second, it proposes an integrative framework that accounts for mediating and moderating influences, as well as the role of digital environments. Third, it offers actionable directions for future research, thus guiding both academic inquiry and managerial practice. The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 details the review methodology; Section 3 synthesizes empirical findings and outlines the conceptual foundations of authenticity and loyalty; and Section 4 discusses research gaps and proposes pathways for future research and concludes with theoretical and practical implications.

METHODOLOGY

To systematically examine the nexus between brand authenticity and customer loyalty, this study employed Scopus AI as the primary bibliometric and content analysis tool. The search was conducted on 25 September 2025, ensuring the inclusion of the most current and comprehensive body of scholarly work available in the Scopus database. The study followed a structured approach designed to achieve the aim of mapping key findings, identifying emerging themes, and proposing future research pathways.

The search strategy was developed to capture a wide spectrum of research related to authenticity and loyalty across consumer contexts. Specifically, the Boolean search string applied was:

("authenticity" OR "genuineness" OR "realness" OR "truthfulness") AND ("loyalty" OR "fidelity" OR "commitment" OR "devotion") AND ("consumer" OR "customer" OR "buyer" OR "client") AND ("behavior" OR "conduct" OR "actions" OR "decision") AND ("brand" OR "product" OR "service" OR "experience"). This string allowed for inclusivity while ensuring relevance to the conceptual focus of the paper.

Scopus AI outputs were analyzed across multiple dimensions: summary, expanded summary, concept map, topic experts, and emerging themes (refer to Figure 1). The summary provided a synthesized overview of how brand authenticity and customer loyalty have been linked in the literature, offering an initial understanding of the scope and intensity of scholarly interest. The expanded summary allowed for deeper contextualization, highlighting mediating and moderating variables (e.g., self-authenticity, brand image, cultural factors) and sector-specific insights (e.g., heritage tourism, omni-channel retail, CSR contexts) reported in prior research (Cheng et al., 2023; Han, 2017; Gunawan et al., 2020).

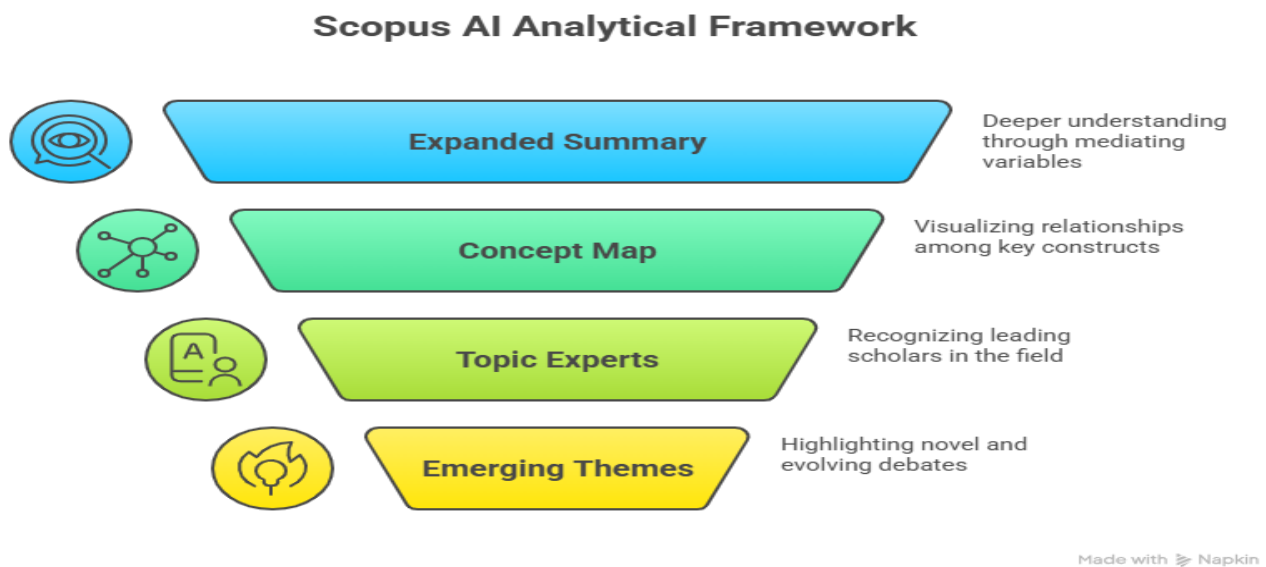


Figure 1: Four core elements of Scopus AI

The concept map, generated through Scopus AI's co-occurrence analysis, visually mapped relationships among key constructs such as authenticity, satisfaction, brand trust, customer attachment, and loyalty. This helped identify clusters of research interest and theoretical intersections, demonstrating the multidimensionality of authenticity (object-based, existential, interpersonal) and its varying effects across industries (Yin & Dai, 2021; Choi et al., 2015).

Additionally, Scopus AI facilitated the identification of topic experts, based on prolific authors, citation frequency, and contributions across domains. These experts such as Kolar and Zabkar (2010) in cultural heritage marketing, Xu et al. (2022) in hospitality and food service, and Choi et al. (2015) in fashion branding, provided a foundation for situating this review within established scholarly debates. The recognition of these experts also served to contextualize critical discourses shaping the field, such as authenticity's role in service recovery (Tran, 2024) and CSR-driven loyalty (Gunawan et al., 2020).

Finally, the emerging themes function was employed to highlight novel and evolving debates. These included the impact of digitalization and omni-channel environments on perceived authenticity (Han, 2017), the intersection of authenticity with sustainable development goals and cross-cultural dynamics (Le et al., 2023; Lorgnier et al., 2024), and the temporal evolution of authenticity-loyalty relationships, signaling the need for longitudinal studies.

By triangulating insights from Scopus AI's analytical layers such as summary, expanded summary, concept mapping, expert identification, and emerging themes, this study established a rigorous methodological foundation. This approach enabled not only a consolidation of fragmented findings but also the identification of critical debates and research gaps, thereby laying the groundwork for a coherent synthesis and future research agenda.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this review are presented by synthesizing insights from Scopus AI outputs, including the summary and expanded summary, the concept map, the identification of topic experts, and the extraction of emerging themes. Together, these outputs provide a multi-layered understanding of the authenticity-loyalty nexus, highlighting both established knowledge and underexplored dimensions that warrant scholarly attention.

Summary and Expanded Summary

The synthesis of the Scopus AI summary and expanded summary reveals that the relationship between brand

authenticity and customer loyalty is both direct and multifaceted, involving mediating and moderating constructs that shape consumer behavior in diverse contexts. Several critical insights emerge, which collectively advance the understanding of the authenticity–loyalty nexus.

First, research consistently shows that brand authenticity exerts a significant positive influence on loyalty-related outcomes, including repurchase intention, word of mouth, willingness to pay premium prices, and long-term attachment to brands (Deng, Wang, & Li, 2025; Safeer, Yuanqiong, Abrar, & Rasheed, 2021). This direct pathway underscores authenticity as a core antecedent of loyalty, validating its strategic role across industries ranging from hospitality and tourism to frozen food and retail (Shahzad, Li, & Sarwar, 2025). Notably, authenticity serves as a mediator between consumers' self-authenticity and loyalty, suggesting that when individuals perceive alignment between their self-concept and the brand's values, their loyalty intensifies (Carroll, Cadet, & Kachersky, 2022).

Second, the expanded summary highlights the importance of mediating mechanisms such as brand trust, attachment, and satisfaction, which translate authenticity into loyalty. For instance, CSR authenticity fosters stronger brand trust and credibility, which in turn enhance loyalty intentions (Safeer & Liu, 2023). Similarly, experiential authenticity derived from meaningful brand encounters strengthens perceived quality and subsequently increases loyalty (Murshed, Dwivedi, & Nayeem, 2023). These findings confirm that authenticity does not operate in isolation but instead triggers a sequence of psychological and behavioral responses.

Third, authenticity's role is context-dependent, with tourism and cultural heritage research offering particularly rich insights. Authentic experiences at heritage sites, cultural villages, and traditional restaurants are found to be decisive in driving revisit intentions and long-term loyalty, often mediated by cultural motivation and place attachment (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Kim, 2021). Importantly, this extends beyond symbolic value; authenticity in services and products also enhances positive emotions, further solidifying loyalty (Kim, 2021).

Methodologically, studies of this nexus have employed diverse approaches, including structural equation modeling (SEM), partial least squares (PLS-SEM), fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA), and meta-analysis. Such diversity strengthens the robustness of findings while also indicating that nonlinear and configurational effects are relevant in understanding the authenticity–loyalty relationship (Shahzad et al., 2025; Yin & Dai, 2021).

Despite these advancements, the expanded summary points to several pathways for future research. First, there is a need to investigate authenticity beyond traditionally examined sectors like tourism and retail. Emerging contexts such as healthcare, education, and technology present fertile ground for exploring how authenticity manifests and influences loyalty. Second, longitudinal designs are critical to capture the temporal dynamics of authenticity perceptions, particularly in fast-changing digital and omni-channel environments (Han, 2017). Third, more attention should be directed toward the multi-dimensionality of authenticity (e.g., object-based, existential, and interpersonal authenticity) and its differential effects on loyalty outcomes (Murshed et al., 2023). Finally, as digital platforms increasingly shape consumer–brand interactions, the role of technology and sustainability in shaping perceptions of authenticity requires deeper exploration.

In summary, the findings demonstrate that while authenticity is a well-established driver of customer loyalty, its influence is nuanced, mediated, and contextually embedded. A richer understanding of this relationship will emerge from integrating multi-sectoral perspectives, employing longitudinal methods, and examining how digital and cultural shifts reshape authenticity in consumer markets. Such research is not only theoretically relevant but also practically vital, enabling brands to cultivate meaningful and enduring consumer relationships through authentic engagement.

Concept Map

The concept map generated by Scopus AI (25 September 2025) provides a visual representation of the multi-dimensional dynamics that define the authenticity–loyalty relationship. As shown in Figure 2, the nexus is not linear but structured around three interconnected domains: consumer behavior, customer loyalty, and brand authenticity. Each of these domains is linked to specific constructs that help explain how authenticity translates

into enduring loyalty outcomes.

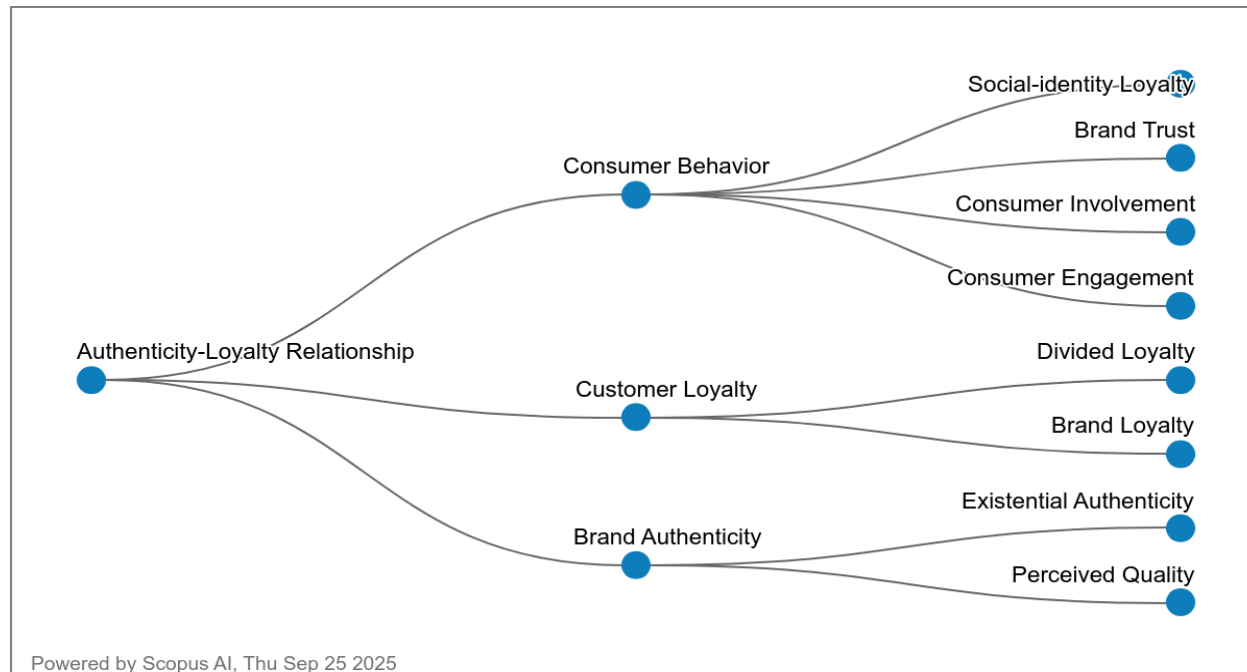


Figure 2: Concept map of authenticity-loyalty relationship

A review of authenticity-loyalty relationship

The authenticity–loyalty relationship has been extensively examined in tourism contexts, where authenticity consistently emerges as a critical driver of consumer loyalty behaviors. A meta-analysis by Yin and Dai (2021) established that authenticity positively correlates with tourist loyalty, with objective authenticity exerting the strongest influence, followed by constructive and existential authenticity. This finding suggests that authenticity is not a singular construct but a multidimensional one, where tangible and verifiable elements carry considerable weight, while personal and experiential dimensions also contribute to sustained loyalty. These results highlight the complexity of authenticity and its varying effects on consumer decision-making and revisit intentions.

Subsequent studies have refined this understanding by exploring the mediating and moderating mechanisms shaping the authenticity–loyalty nexus. Yi, Fu, Yu, and Jiang (2018) found that postmodern authenticity moderates the relationship between architectural heritage and existential authenticity, implying that consumer interpretations of originality influence how authenticity translates into loyalty outcomes. Similarly, Luo, Chen, Cheng, and Cai (2024) identified that both object-related and existential authenticity positively affect tourist loyalty behaviors, with tourist engagement mediating this effect. In heritage tourism contexts, Shen, Guo, and Wu (2014) further confirmed that existential authenticity significantly predicts loyalty, while constructive authenticity reinforces the experiential dimensions of authenticity. Collectively, these findings underscore that loyalty emerges not only from the presence of authentic attributes but also from the interpretive processes and emotional involvement of consumers.

Beyond tourism, recent research highlights the role of authenticity in branding, extending the conversation to fan loyalty and social values. Do et al. (2024) demonstrated that enhancing brand authenticity in the sports industry not only strengthened fan loyalty but also improved receptivity to sustainability messaging, suggesting that authenticity can act as a gateway to influence broader pro-social behaviors. However, gaps remain in understanding the authenticity–loyalty relationship in general consumer markets, especially within omni-channel, digital, and cross-cultural contexts. Future research should adopt longitudinal and comparative approaches to examine how authenticity perceptions evolve over time and across different consumer segments. Such inquiries would provide deeper insights into the strategic role of authenticity in fostering loyalty and shaping consumer engagement beyond heritage and tourism sectors.

Authenticity-loyalty relationship and consumer behaviour

The authenticity–loyalty relationship plays a central role in shaping consumer behavior, especially within contemporary markets characterized by omni-channel experiences. Han (2017) demonstrated that authenticity significantly influences brand loyalty in omni-channel contexts, while perceived differentiation, value, and consumer brand relationships had no significant impact. This indicates that consumers prioritize authenticity over traditional value-based or relational attributes when forming loyalty judgments. Such findings suggest that authenticity functions as a key behavioral driver, shaping not only consumer trust but also their decision to repeatedly engage with a brand in complex retail environments.

Beyond direct effects, authenticity often operates through mediating pathways that connect consumer experiences to loyalty outcomes. Safeer, Yuanqiong, Abrar, and Rasheed (2021) revealed that perceived brand authenticity mediates the relationship between brand experience dimensions and consumer loyalty, emphasizing its role as a psychological mechanism that translates experiences into loyalty behaviors. Similarly, Carroll, Cadet, and Kachersky (2022) found that self-authenticity positively influences brand loyalty, mediated by perceived brand authenticity. These findings align with broader consumer behavior theories, which highlight that brand attachment and self-concept alignment play pivotal roles in shaping loyalty. In parallel, Gunawan, Budiarsi, and Hartini (2020) showed that corporate social responsibility (CSR) authenticity indirectly affects loyalty through corporate image and credibility, reinforcing the idea that authenticity extends beyond product attributes to organizational practices that shape consumer perceptions and trust.

The broader consumer behavior literature also points to relationship marketing as an important complementary factor, where authentic relational efforts enhance consumer loyalty and purchase behaviors in online environments (Liang, Chen, & Wang, 2008). Collectively, these insights highlight authenticity as a multidimensional construct that influences loyalty through direct effects, mediating mechanisms, and broader relational strategies. Future research should investigate how authenticity interacts with consumer identity, digital trust, and cross-cultural perceptions, particularly in rapidly evolving digital marketplaces. Moreover, longitudinal studies are needed to examine how authenticity-driven loyalty develops over time and whether it translates into sustainable consumer behavior. By integrating authenticity into consumer behavior frameworks, scholars and practitioners can better understand how authenticity strengthens loyalty and drives long-term consumer engagement.

Authenticity-Loyalty relationships and customer loyalty

The authenticity–loyalty relationship has been increasingly recognized as a key determinant of customer loyalty across industries. Evidence suggests that authenticity enhances trust, credibility, and emotional attachment, which in turn foster loyal consumer behavior. Gunawan, Budiarsi, and Hartini (2020) demonstrated that CSR authenticity does not directly influence customer loyalty but indirectly contributes through enhanced corporate image and credibility. This indicates that authenticity in organizational practices functions more as a reputational and trust-building mechanism, strengthening loyalty indirectly. Such findings align with relationship marketing theories, which highlight credibility as a central pathway through which authenticity fosters long-term customer commitment.

Brand authenticity has also been shown to exert a more direct influence on customer loyalty, particularly when mediated by relational constructs such as trust. In Indonesia's automotive industry, Nasrul, Said, and Faidah (2020) found that brand authenticity significantly impacted customer loyalty, with online trust serving as a key mediator. Similarly, in the airline industry, Tran (2024) reported that brand authenticity moderated the relationship between attitudinal loyalty and service recovery satisfaction, highlighting its role in reinforcing customer loyalty even in negative service encounters. Together, these findings emphasize that authenticity not only nurtures loyalty under ordinary circumstances but also strengthens recovery processes during service failures, thereby deepening customer commitment.

Beyond relational trust, authenticity has been linked to emotional constructs that further enhance loyalty outcomes. Dogrul and Kosar (2025) revealed that brand authenticity significantly influences brand love, which

subsequently drives repurchase intentions, with brand image moderating these effects. Furthermore, Keiningham et al. (2019) conceptualized authenticity as interconnected with innovation, where brand centrality and distinctiveness reinforce both authenticity and loyalty. These insights suggest that authenticity's role in fostering customer loyalty extends beyond trust-based mechanisms to include emotional bonds and innovation-driven differentiation. Future research should further explore how authenticity interacts with customer emotions, digital trust, and innovation strategies across sectors, particularly in global and omni-channel contexts, to build a more holistic understanding of its impact on loyalty.

Authenticity-Loyalty relationships and brand authenticity

Brand authenticity has emerged as a central driver of customer loyalty, influencing both cognitive and emotional dimensions of consumer behavior. Research consistently demonstrates that authenticity strengthens attachment and trust, which in turn translate into greater brand loyalty (Deng, Wang, & Li, 2025; Kim, Kim, Holland, & Townsend, 2021). Deng et al. (2025) found that brand authenticity not only directly affects loyalty but also indirectly reinforces it through brand attachment and brand trust, highlighting the multi-layered pathways through which authenticity creates long-term consumer commitment. Similarly, Yang, Kim, and Jung (2016) showed that service attributes such as consistency, expertise, and openness contribute to authenticity, thereby enhancing brand reputation and loyalty. These findings affirm that authenticity functions as a strategic foundation for loyalty-building across diverse sectors, from retail to healthcare.

In addition to fostering trust and attachment, brand authenticity plays a crucial role in cultivating emotional bonds such as brand love and identification. Dogrul and Kosar (2025) revealed that all dimensions of brand authenticity significantly influence brand love, which subsequently impacts repurchase intentions, with brand image serving as a moderator. Likewise, Carroll, Cadet, and Kachersky (2022) highlighted that self-authenticity serves as a driver of brand authenticity, suggesting that consumers' perceptions of their own authenticity amplify their loyalty toward brands perceived as genuine. Furthermore, Xu, Prayag, and Song (2022) emphasized that the influence of authenticity on loyalty varies by consumer age, indicating that demographic factors shape how consumers respond to authenticity cues. Collectively, these insights point to authenticity not only as a cognitive trust-building mechanism but also as a powerful emotional connector that strengthens consumer-brand relationships.

The relationship between brand authenticity and loyalty also extends to specific contexts such as sports, hospitality, and social media. Do et al. (2024) demonstrated that authenticity significantly enhances fan loyalty in sports, even increasing receptivity to sustainability messaging, while Kang and Ro (2024) showed that brand authenticity and existential authenticity together build loyalty toward LGBT-friendly hotels. On the digital front, Ahmad, Liang, Iqbal, and Hussain Sarki (2024) confirmed that social media marketing activities directly boost brand authenticity, which in turn drives brand loyalty in the fashion industry. These findings open future research pathways by suggesting the need to examine authenticity across multiple touchpoints, including digital platforms, service recovery contexts, and diverse cultural markets. Moreover, further exploration of authenticity as both a trust-based and emotion-based mechanism will help refine strategies for leveraging authenticity as a long-term competitive advantage in loyalty building.

Topic Expert

The expertise of Monica Patricia Costa-Ruiz highlights the importance of generational perspectives in understanding the authenticity-loyalty relationship. Her research, which examines Millennials and Generation Z, provides critical insights into how authenticity is perceived differently across age cohorts and how these perceptions shape brand loyalty. Millennials, for example, may place greater emphasis on consistency and trustworthiness, whereas Generation Z tends to prioritize transparency and value-driven practices in brands (Costa-Ruiz, 2022). These differences suggest that authenticity is not a one-dimensional construct but rather a dynamic factor that interacts with generational values and expectations. Such findings align with broader consumer behavior literature, which emphasizes that brand loyalty is shaped by both cognitive trust and emotional identification with the brand.

Dayanara Gissel Caguana-Abad, though at the early stages of her academic career, contributes to this growing

body of knowledge by exploring comparative aspects of brand loyalty between Millennials and Generation Z. Her work emphasizes that authenticity is increasingly central in loyalty-building, particularly for younger generations who are more skeptical of traditional advertising and more reliant on social media and peer-driven narratives (Caguana-Abad, 2023). The focus on emerging generational differences underscores the evolving nature of authenticity and loyalty, suggesting that marketing strategies must be adapted to resonate with generational values. This contribution is significant as it provides a foundation for further empirical research into how authenticity cues—such as transparency, sustainability, and inclusivity—can foster loyalty among younger, more socially conscious consumer groups.

Verónica Alexandra Armijos-Buitrón further strengthens the discourse by situating authenticity as a pivotal driver of loyalty through her comparative studies of Millennials and Generation Z. Her work reveals that authenticity plays a crucial role in bridging consumer perceptions with behavioral outcomes, particularly in fostering long-term brand commitment (Armijos-Buitrón, 2022). By highlighting authenticity as a multi-layered construct that includes emotional, social, and ethical dimensions, Armijos-Buitrón advances the understanding of how loyalty is cultivated in a generational context. Collectively, the contributions of these scholars underscore the need for future research to examine authenticity not only as a determinant of loyalty but also as a cultural and generationally contingent phenomenon. Future studies may explore cross-cultural comparisons, the role of digital authenticity, and how emerging technologies such as AI influence perceptions of brand genuineness and loyalty formation.

Emerging Themes

Consistent Themes

A consistent theme in the literature on consumer behavior is the central role of customer loyalty and satisfaction across industries, including retail, hospitality, education, and healthcare. Numerous studies highlight satisfaction, trust, and perceived value as critical determinants of loyalty, although the strength of these drivers varies across sectors and cultural contexts (Ali et al., 2016; Han & Hyun, 2017). For example, in the hospitality sector, the service environment and staff responsiveness directly shape loyalty intentions (Rather, 2018), while in higher education, institutional reputation and trust in academic quality are pivotal to maintaining student loyalty (Ali et al., 2016). These findings underscore that while loyalty is universally tied to satisfaction, its antecedents require contextual tailoring. Future research could further test whether cultural intelligence enhances loyalty in multicultural markets or whether innovative loyalty programs provide resilience in times of social change.

Another consistent theme is the role of authenticity in tourism and heritage experiences, which has been shown to significantly influence both tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. Tourists increasingly demand authentic cultural experiences, and studies confirm that perceived authenticity strongly enhances satisfaction and return intentions (Yi, Fu, Yu, & Jiang, 2018; Shen, Guo, & Wu, 2014). At the same time, the integration of digital engagement such as virtual tours and augmented reality has allowed destinations to enhance perceived authenticity without compromising cultural preservation (Loureiro, Guerreiro, & Ali, 2020). Moreover, research shows that authenticity and loyalty in heritage tourism are reinforced by cultural identity, heritage image, and active community engagement, all of which foster stronger emotional connections between visitors and destinations (Luo, Chen, Cheng, & Cai, 2024). These insights suggest that future research should explore hypotheses such as digital engagement enhancing perceived authenticity and visitor satisfaction and community involvement strengthening cultural identity and loyalty in heritage contexts.

Rising Theme

Emerging literature has also identified a rising theme connecting authenticity with virtuous behavior, shifting the discourse beyond transactional loyalty to prosocial and pro-environmental outcomes. Authentic experiences are increasingly associated with ethical consumption, self-transcendence, and sustainable practices (Sedikides, Slabu, Lenton, & Thomaes, 2017; Audrin & Raufaste, 2022). For example, authenticity-driven identification with sustainable brands has been found to encourage environmentally responsible behaviors, while authentic self-expression fosters prosocial actions that enhance community well-being. This perspective

expands the traditional authenticity–loyalty nexus by situating authenticity as a moral compass that guides consumer behavior toward socially beneficial outcomes. Future research could examine how authenticity-driven self-transcendence influences prosocial and environmental actions, thereby extending authenticity’s influence from consumer loyalty to broader social and cultural sustainability.

CONCLUSION

This review paper examined the emerging themes surrounding the impact of brand authenticity on customer loyalty, with attention to both consistent and rising areas of scholarly focus. The consistent themes reveal that customer loyalty and satisfaction remain foundational constructs across industries such as retail, hospitality, education, and healthcare, where trust, perceived value, and service quality are key determinants (Ali et al., 2016; Han & Hyun, 2017). Furthermore, research on authenticity in tourism and heritage contexts demonstrates its strong influence on satisfaction, destination loyalty, and cultural preservation, with authenticity reinforced through digital engagement, cultural identity, and community involvement (Yi et al., 2018; Loureiro et al., 2020; Luo et al., 2024). These findings highlight the enduring role of authenticity in fostering emotional and behavioral commitment among consumers.

In addition to these consistent themes, the study also identified a rising theme connecting authenticity to virtuous behavior, marking an important shift in the literature. Authenticity is increasingly linked not only to loyalty but also to ethical consumption, prosocial behavior, and environmental responsibility, reflecting consumers’ desire for alignment between values and marketplace choices (Sedikides et al., 2017; Audrin & Raufaste, 2022). This evolution suggests that authenticity functions as both a relational and moral construct, shaping customer behavior in ways that extend beyond transactional loyalty to encompass social and environmental sustainability.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings contribute to the refinement of the authenticity–loyalty nexus, bridging traditional loyalty models with emerging frameworks of moral and prosocial behavior. This integration expands theories of consumer behavior by positioning authenticity as both a cognitive–affective determinant of loyalty and a normative driver of ethical conduct. Furthermore, it underscores the value of cultural and contextual perspectives, as authenticity and loyalty are mediated by variables such as cultural intelligence, digital engagement, and community identity.

The practical implications of these findings are equally significant. For managers in industries such as tourism, hospitality, and retail, cultivating authenticity through transparent practices, cultural engagement, and digital innovations can strengthen loyalty while simultaneously enhancing brand image and social impact. Organizations that embed authentic values into their services and communication strategies are more likely to build enduring customer relationships and differentiate themselves in competitive markets. Moreover, businesses that leverage authenticity to inspire prosocial and pro-environmental actions can position themselves as leaders in ethical and sustainable branding.

Despite these contributions, the review is not without limitations. The analysis relied primarily on secondary data from existing literature, which may limit the ability to capture rapidly evolving consumer perceptions of authenticity in real time. Additionally, much of the research on authenticity and loyalty has been conducted in specific industries (e.g., tourism and hospitality), creating challenges for generalization across broader markets. The relatively limited exploration of authenticity as a driver of virtuous behavior also points to a gap in the literature that requires deeper empirical testing.

Looking ahead, future research should expand on these insights in several ways. First, empirical studies should examine how cultural intelligence shapes loyalty in multicultural markets, testing whether cross-cultural competencies can strengthen authentic customer relationships. Second, longitudinal research could explore the effectiveness of innovative loyalty programs during times of social change, such as economic crises or digital transformation. Third, more attention should be given to the authenticity–virtuous behavior link, particularly how authenticity fosters prosocial and environmental outcomes across generational cohorts. Finally, interdisciplinary approaches combining marketing, psychology, and sustainability studies could provide richer theoretical and practical frameworks for understanding the evolving role of authenticity in shaping customer

loyalty and beyond.

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