Why authenticity causes trouble for consumer behavior?

Joel Hietanen
Aalto BIZ /// Stockholm University
Last time we talked about marketplace myths and how iconic brands can tap into them.

Now let’s talk about the most important, pervasive and persistent one - **authenticity**.
“the cult of authenticity pervades modern life”
   (Lowenthal, 1992: 184)

“authenticity is a general preoccupation of modern
western culture” (Jacknis, 1990: 9)

“the key to the development of the modern world”
   (McCannell, 1999: 145)
Product attribute?

Cultural, fluid conception?
Consumption object vs. brand

Indexical/Iconic (Grayson and Martinec, 2004)

Modernity’s disenchantment of the world, rationalization, marketization and mass production

Brands are ‘enchantment processes’ that need constant ‘enchantment acts’

Vocation – Dedication – Tradition – Mystification – Association

To ’authenticate’ is a constant act of co-production and co-creation
Paradoxes of luxury (*branded luxury* in particular)

“uniqueness and ubiquity”

“heritage and cutting edge”
Let’s go to India and Turkey
Do companies themselves take counterfeit seriously?

Outsourcing (quality issues), night shifts, segmentation, allowing fakes
Fashion industry – indeed the very logic of fashion cycles themselves

Top-down cyclicality to reproduce the latest fashion

Mimicking
Now, let’s try to figure this one out together…
What’s going on here?

Why would this be popular?

Why would this be worth desiring?
Remember what Yuran (2016) said – with (mythical) brands you are purchasing into exactly what the product cannot provide.

When faced with the paradoxical notions of authenticity, might we pose the same question?
In a commodity:

Which one is the ‘original’ or ‘genuine’ article?

“The modern sign dreams of its predecessor, and would dearly love to rediscover the obligation in its reference to the real”

(Baudrillard, 2007: 51)
“it is the reflection of a profound reality; it masks and denatures a profound reality; it masks the *absence* of a profound reality; it has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum” (Baudrillard, 1994: 6, emphasis in the original)

Is authenticity the simulation of a connection to ‘nature’ in commodities?
“This would make perfect sense as the possibility of emerging beyond the system that is embedded in ubiquitous commodities and commodification is exactly the relation it cannot deliver.”
Is the search for authenticity in consumer behavior the last grand myth of our times?

Without counterfeit, how can the genuine speak for itself?
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Without counterfeit, how can the genuine speak for itself?
Creating new types of business models that focus on craft / following the inconspicuous consumption trend
The focus has been cultural, because to understand a range of consumption, it is important to see the context

What is need / use / value in a culture that is predominantly branded?

Fluid identities of postmodernity – find their ways into communities to negotiate sense of belonging
Course highlights (2):

Advertising is a cultural producer, imagine the amount of literacy a consumer must possess – is viewing advertising work?

Iconic brands alleviate cultural contradictions and tap into mythical resources of culture

Impending ‘crisis’ of authenticity, how is it that one can approach the real?
Questions, all of them 😊