



Enhance marketing performance trough heritage, sincerity and quality commitment

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of brand authenticity dimensions on marketing performance in Central Java's batik industry. Despite UNESCO's recognition of batik as an Intangible Cultural Heritage and its strong export growth, batik entrepreneurs face challenges in developing effective marketing strategies amid increasing competition. Using a quantitative approach, we examined how three dimensions of brand authenticity—heritage, sincerity, and quality commitment—impact the marketing performance of batik enterprises. Data were collected from batik entrepreneurs in Central Java using a five-point Likert scale questionnaire and analyzed through SEM-PLS. Results revealed that the sincerity dimension significantly influences marketing performance, while heritage and quality commitment showed positive but non-significant relationships. These findings suggest that while all dimensions contribute to marketing performance, transparency, honesty, and genuine adherence to traditional values are particularly crucial for batik enterprises. The non-significant impact of heritage may indicate that cultural connections have become a baseline expectation rather than a differentiating factor in this industry. Similarly, quality commitment appears to function more as a necessary condition than a performance driver. This research contributes to brand authenticity theory by highlighting dimension-specific impacts in indigenous product contexts and offers practical guidance for batik entrepreneurs seeking to leverage authenticity for competitive advantage in markets increasingly favoring authentic, unique, and sustainable products.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is renowned for its abundant cultural wealth, which is reflected in various indigenous products that embody the nation's identity. Indigenous or local products are created using local wisdom and traditional values that have been passed down through generations (Setyawati et al., 2023). Among Indonesia's diverse indigenous products, batik stands as a cultural heritage recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity since 2009 (RI, 2023). This recognition has become a crucial momentum for batik entrepreneurs to develop their products not only as cultural heritage but also as economic commodities with high market value in both domestic and international markets.

The batik industry in Indonesia, particularly in Central Java, has significant economic potential. Data from the Ministry of Industry shows that Indonesia's batik export value reached USD

533.6 million in 2022, increasing by 35.4% compared to the previous year (RI, 2023). This growth indicates substantial opportunities for the batik industry to continue developing and contributing positively to the national economy. Nevertheless, the batik industry also faces various challenges, ranging from competition with imported textile products, low innovation in design and marketing, to limited understanding of effective branding strategies (Setyawati, H. A., Trifiyanto, K., & Zakiyah, 2024). Amid increasingly intense market competition, batik enterprises in Central Java need to develop effective marketing strategies to enhance their marketing performance. Marketing performance serves as an important indicator of a business's success in achieving its marketing objectives, including increased sales, market share, and customer satisfaction (Morgan, 2012). One strategy that can be implemented to improve the marketing performance of indigenous products like batik is by building brand authenticity.

Brand authenticity has become an important construct in contemporary marketing literature (Fritz et al., 2017; Morhart et al., 2015). Conceptually, brand authenticity is defined as consumers' subjective evaluation of a brand's genuineness, encompassing aspects of consistency, continuity, individuality, and credibility (Bruhn et al., 2012). Beverland (2006), in his research on the luxury wine industry, found that brand authenticity is a crucial factor in building consumer trust and product differentiation. Morhart et al. (2015) further developed this concept by identifying four main dimensions of brand authenticity: continuity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism (Morhart et al., 2015). In its development, several researchers such as Fritz et al. (2017) and Napoli et al. (2014) simplified the dimensions of brand authenticity into three main aspects that are more applicable in the context of indigenous product marketing: heritage, sincerity, and quality commitment. Heritage refers to the history, traditions, and cultural values embedded in the product (Schallehn et al., 2014). Sincerity relates to honesty, truthfulness, and transparency in the production and marketing processes (Fritz et al., 2017). Quality commitment reflects the producer's dedication to consistent and superior quality standards (Napoli et al., 2014).

Social Identity Theory proposed by Tajfel and Turner (1979) provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the importance of brand authenticity. This theory explains that individuals define themselves partly based on membership in particular social groups, including through the consumption of products with certain cultural values and identities. In the context of indigenous products like batik, product consumption is based not only on functional utility but also on the symbolic and cultural values embedded in these products (Elbedweihy et al., 2016). Marketing performance is a measure of the success of a business's marketing strategy, which can be evaluated through indicators such as sales growth, market share, profitability, and customer satisfaction (Katsikeas et al., 2016). Morgan (2012) states that marketing performance is the manifestation of the effectiveness of marketing activities carried out by a company (Morgan, 2012). Vorhies and Morgan (2005) add that marketing performance encompasses not only financial aspects but also non-financial aspects such as brand reputation and customer loyalty (Vorhies & Morgan, 2005).

The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory developed by Barney (1991) explains that a company's competitive advantage derives from resources that are valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and non-substitutable (Barney, 1991). In the context of indigenous product marketing, brand authenticity can be a strategic resource that meets the VRIN (Valuable, Rare, Inimitable, Non-substitutable) criteria and has the potential to enhance marketing performance (Eggers et al., 2013). Several empirical studies have examined the relationship between brand authenticity and various aspects of marketing performance. Eggers et al. (2013) found that brand authenticity positively influences consumer trust, which in turn impacts small and medium enterprise (SME) growth. Mody and Hanks (2020) demonstrated that brand authenticity positively affects brand love and consumer loyalty in the hospitality industry (Mody & Hanks, 2020). Meanwhile, research by Choi et al. (2015) confirmed that perceptions of brand authenticity have a positive effect on consumers' purchase intentions (Choi et al., 2015).

The study conducted by Schallehn et al. (2014) emphasizes the importance of the heritage dimension in building brand authenticity for products with strong cultural values (Schallehn et al., 2014). The heritage dimension allows consumers to identify with the traditional and cultural values embedded in the product, thereby enhancing the emotional bond between consumers and the

brand. Research by Fritz and Schoenmueller (2017) revealed that the sincerity dimension plays an important role in building consumer trust, which is a prerequisite for loyalty and repeat purchases (Fritz et al., 2017). Meanwhile, Napoli et al. (2014) found that the quality commitment dimension contributes significantly to value perception and consumers' willingness to pay premium prices. Napoli et al. (2016) further affirm that brand authenticity is becoming increasingly relevant in an era where consumers are more critical and seek products with values of authenticity, uniqueness, and sustainability (Campagna et al., 2023; Morhart et al., 2015; Napoli et al., 2014, 2016). This aligns with the findings of McKinsey & Company (2022), which indicate a shift in global consumer preferences towards products with authenticity, uniqueness, and sustainability values (Company, 2022; Eastman et al., 2021).

Although numerous studies have examined the relationship between brand authenticity and marketing performance, several theoretical gaps need to be addressed through further research. First, previous research has tended to examine brand authenticity as a unidimensional construct, thus not providing a comprehensive understanding of the specific role of each brand authenticity dimension in enhancing marketing performance (Bruhn et al., 2012; Eggers et al., 2013). Second, the majority of research on brand authenticity has been conducted in the context of developed countries with market characteristics and consumer preferences that differ from developing countries like Indonesia (Fritz et al., 2017; Harjadi et al., 2023; Morhart et al., 2015). Cultural context differences can influence how consumers perceive and respond to brand authenticity, so findings from research in developed countries may not be directly generalizable to the Indonesian context. Third, research on brand authenticity has primarily focused on the food, beverage, and tourism industries (Beverland, 2006; Graefe et al., 2018; Mody & Hanks, 2020), while studies in the context of indigenous products such as batik remain limited. Indigenous products have unique characteristics that differ from mass-produced products, including strong connections to cultural identity and more traditional production processes (Setyawati, H. A., Trifiyanto, K., & Zakiyah, 2025; Setyawati, 2018; Setyawati et al., 2020). Fourth, there is limited research specifically examining how the dimensions of brand authenticity (heritage, sincerity, quality commitment) individually and simultaneously influence the marketing performance of indigenous products. This research aims to fill this gap by examining the influence of each brand authenticity dimension on the marketing performance of batik products in Central Java, as well as identifying which dimensions have the most significant influence.

By addressing these theoretical gaps, this research can make a significant contribution to the development of brand authenticity theory in the context of indigenous products in developing countries, while also providing practical implications for batik entrepreneurs in optimizing their marketing strategies. From a theoretical perspective, the findings can enrich the literature on brand authenticity by providing empirical evidence from a context that has not been extensively explored. From a practical perspective, the research can help batik entrepreneurs identify which brand authenticity dimensions should be prioritized in marketing strategies to enhance marketing performance. Based on the theoretical review and research gaps that have been identified, this research proposes a conceptual model that tests the influence of brand authenticity dimensions (heritage, sincerity, quality commitment) on the marketing performance of batik products in Central Java. This research is expected not only to fill gaps in academic literature but also to provide practical recommendations for the sustainable development of the batik industry.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study takes a quantitative route, deploying a survey design to explore how different facets of brand authenticity shape the marketing performance of batik products. We targeted batik entrepreneurs across Central Java—both artisans and business owners—and invited 120 of them to participate. Respondents were carefully chosen through purposive sampling based on three criteria: at least two years in operation, possession of their own trademark, and a Central Java location.

Data were gathered via a five-point Likert questionnaire (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), measuring three authenticity dimensions—heritage, sincerity, and quality commitment (each with four indicators)—alongside marketing performance (five indicators). We

analyzed the results using SEM-PLS (SmartPLS 3.3.3), first validating the measurement model through convergent validity (factor loadings > 0.7; AVE > 0.5), discriminant validity (Fornell–Larcker criterion), and reliability checks (Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability > 0.7). The structural model was then assessed via R^2 (explained variance), f^2 (effect sizes), Q^2 (predictive relevance), and the significance of path coefficients via bootstrapping (5,000 subsamples; $t > 1.96$ or $p < 0.05$) (Hair Jr et al., 2017).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

Among the 120 batik business owners surveyed in Central Java, adults aged 45 to 55 formed the largest age cohort, while those aged 34 to 44 and those over 55 were equally represented. Females made up roughly two-thirds of the sample (79 individuals), leaving 41 male participants. Educational levels spanned from primary through postgraduate study: most held a high school diploma (55), followed by elementary (23), junior high (19), bachelor's (20), and a small number of master's or higher degrees (2). Although the majority (83) still relied on in-person sales channels, a notable subset (37) had incorporated online platforms into their marketing approach.

The evaluation of the research model using Structural Equation Modeling with Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) approach revealed compelling insights through a systematic assessment of both measurement and structural components.

Assessment of Measurement Model

Internal consistency reliability measures reinforced this strength, with all constructs showcasing Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values well above the recommended 0.7 minimum. The Heritage dimension ($\alpha=0.861$, CR=0.900), Sincerity dimension ($\alpha=0.831$, CR=0.887), Quality Commitment dimension ($\alpha=0.922$, CR=0.937), and Marketing Performance ($\alpha=0.991$, CR=0.994) all demonstrated exceptional internal consistency, showed in table 1.

Convergent validity analysis through Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values further supported the model's integrity. Each construct captured substantial variance in its indicators: Heritage (0.645), Sincerity (0.662), Quality Commitment (0.680), and Marketing Performance (0.982). The Fornell-Larcker assessment confirmed appropriate discriminant validity, with the square root of AVE for each construct exceeding its correlations with other constructs, validating that each construct measures a unique concept, showed in table 1.

Table 1. Construct reliability and validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Heritage	0,861	0,864	0,900	0,645
Marketing Performance	0,991	0,992	0,994	0,982
Quality Commitment	0,922	0,934	0,937	0,680
Sincerity	0,831	0,851	0,887	0,662

Assessment of Structural Model

The structural model assessment revealed fascinating relationships between brand authenticity dimensions and marketing performance. Model fit indices indicated appropriate alignment with the data (SRMR=0.074, NFI=0.802). The collective explanatory power of the three brand authenticity dimensions yielded an R^2 value of 0.338 for Marketing Performance, suggesting these dimensions together explain approximately 34% of the variation in marketing outcomes among batik enterprises.

Table 2. Fit summary

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0,074	0,074
d_ULS	1,053	1,053
d_G	0,732	0,732
Chi-Square	480,664	480,664
NFI	0,802	0,802

Path coefficient analysis uncovered a particularly interesting pattern. The Heritage dimension showed a positive but statistically non-significant relationship with Marketing Performance ($\beta=0.134$, $t=0.893$, $p=0.372$). Similarly, Quality Commitment demonstrated a positive yet non-significant effect ($\beta=0.181$, $t=1.276$, $p=0.202$). Most notably, Sincerity emerged as the only dimension with a statistically significant positive influence on Marketing Performance ($\beta=0.315$, $t=2.194$, $p=0.029$).

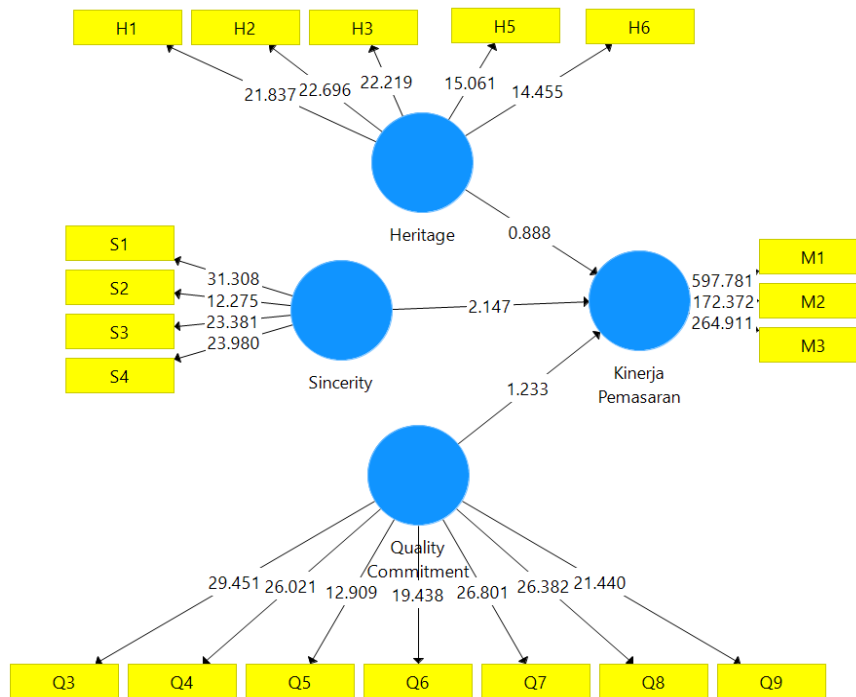


Figure 1. Test result bootstrapping

These findings suggest that while all dimensions contribute positively to the marketing performance of batik enterprises, the Sincerity dimension plays a particularly crucial role in driving tangible marketing outcomes. The hypothesis testing results confirm that only H3 (Sincerity has a positive effect on Marketing Performance) is supported by the empirical evidence.

Table 3. Path coefficients

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Heritage -> Marketing Performance_	0,134	0,140	0,150	0,893	0,372
Quality Commitment_ -> Marketing Performance_	0,181	0,181	0,142	1,276	0,202
Sincerity -> Marketing Performance_	0,315	0,315	0,144	2,194	0,029

The findings of this study offer illuminating perspectives on how brand authenticity dimensions influence marketing performance in Central Java's batik industry, challenging some conventional assumptions while reinforcing others.

Discussion

The findings of this study offer illuminating perspectives on how brand authenticity dimensions' influence marketing performance in Central Java's batik industry, challenging some conventional assumptions while reinforcing others.

Contrary to what many might expect, our analysis reveals that Heritage does not significantly impact marketing performance directly. This finding invites a thoughtful reconsideration of heritage's role in the batik industry context. In Central Java, heritage elements have become so deeply embedded in the batik industry landscape that they may represent a baseline expectation rather than a differentiating advantage. Almost every batik producer emphasizes historical and cultural connections in their marketing narratives, potentially diluting heritage's power as a competitive edge. As Napoli et al. (2016) suggest, when attributes become ubiquitous across an industry, they lose their distinctive value in driving superior performance.

Heritage might also function as a foundation that needs to be activated through other mechanisms to generate tangible marketing outcomes. While establishing cultural legitimacy, heritage factors alone may not translate directly into consumer purchasing decisions without additional elements that make historical relevance meaningful to contemporary consumers. Beverland (2006) highlights this challenge, noting that heritage must be skillfully recontextualized to resonate with modern market realities.

The non-significant relationship between Quality Commitment and Marketing Performance presents another intriguing finding that warrants careful interpretation. This result doesn't diminish quality's importance but rather suggests a more complex relationship than typically assumed. In Central Java's batik industry, quality commitment might function as what marketing theorists call a "hygiene factor"—an essential baseline requirement rather than a performance differentiator. Consumers likely expect a certain quality threshold from authentic batik products, making quality commitment necessary but insufficient for standout market success. This perspective aligns with Kano's customer satisfaction model, where certain attributes fulfill basic expectations without necessarily generating enthusiasm or loyalty (Campagna et al., 2023; Matzler & Hinterhuber, 1998).

The relationship between quality investments and marketing returns may also follow a non-linear pattern. Quality improvements beyond consumer expectations might yield diminishing returns, especially if these enhancements aren't effectively communicated or don't align with what consumers truly value. In the artisanal batik context, technical perfection might sometimes be less important than other authenticity attributes that carry emotional or cultural significance.

Among the three dimensions, Sincerity emerges as the star performer—the only dimension showing a statistically significant positive impact on marketing performance. This reveals the power of transparency, honesty, and genuine adherence to traditional values in driving batik market success. Sincerity's significance can be understood through several conceptual lenses. From a signaling theory perspective (Kumar & Kaushik, 2022; Spence, 1978), sincerity serves as a credible marker of a brand's genuine intentions, reducing information asymmetry in a market where product quality assessment can be challenging before purchase. In such contexts, sincere communication and transparent practices become powerful trust-building mechanisms.

This finding resonates with Fritz and Schoenmueller's (2017) research highlighting sincerity's role in fostering consumer trust and loyalty (Fritz et al., 2017). In the batik industry, where cultural authenticity carries profound significance, sincere commitment to preserving traditional techniques, adhering to established norms (*pakem*), and maintaining philosophical values clearly resonates with consumers in ways that translate to improved market outcomes.

The connection between sincerity and performance also aligns with broader shifts toward conscious consumption. Today's consumers increasingly favor brands that demonstrate authentic values and transparency, as noted in market analyses by McKinsey & Company (2022) (Busser & Shulga, 2019; Company, 2022; Yang & Battocchio, 2021). This trend holds particular relevance for cultural products like batik, where concerns about cultural appropriation or dilution may influence consumer choices.

This research advances theoretical understanding of brand authenticity in several meaningful ways. By examining authenticity dimensions individually rather than as a unified construct, we reveal their distinct contributions to marketing performance, addressing a significant gap in previous research that often treated brand authenticity monolithically (Bruhn et al., 2012; Eggers et al., 2013; Fritz et al., 2017). Our study expands brand authenticity theory into indigenous product contexts within developing economies, suggesting that authenticity dimensions may carry

different weights across cultural settings. While Western marketing literature frequently emphasizes heritage and quality aspects, our findings highlight sincerity's preeminent role in Indonesian batik marketing—a nuance that enriches cross-cultural understanding of authenticity constructs. Additionally, our findings contribute to Resource-Based View (RBV) theory by demonstrating how different authenticity dimensions vary in their capacity to create sustainable competitive advantage. Sincerity's significant performance impact suggests it more effectively satisfies the VRIN criteria (Valuable, Rare, Inimitable, Non-substitutable) in indigenous product contexts compared to heritage or quality commitment dimensions.

These findings offer valuable guidance for batik industry stakeholders. First, producers should prioritize sincerity in their brand strategies by emphasizing authentic philosophical values, adhering to traditional norms, and maintaining transparency about production processes. Communications highlighting these aspects may yield stronger market performance than those focusing primarily on heritage or quality claims.

While heritage and quality commitment didn't show significant direct effects, they shouldn't be neglected. Rather, batik entrepreneurs might explore ways to leverage these dimensions more effectively—perhaps by making heritage elements more personally relevant to contemporary consumers or communicating quality commitments in ways that differentiate their offerings in an increasingly crowded marketplace. Industry associations and policymakers could develop certification or recognition programs that emphasize sincerity aspects, helping consumers identify genuinely authentic batik products. Such initiatives could support broader industry development while preserving cultural integrity.

4. CONCLUSION

This study explores how brand authenticity dimensions influence marketing performance in Central Java's batik industry, revealing that sincerity plays a particularly vital role in driving market success. The findings underscore the importance of honesty, transparency, and genuine adherence to traditional values in marketing indigenous products.

By demonstrating the differential effects of authenticity dimensions, this research enhances theoretical understanding while providing practical guidance for batik entrepreneurs seeking to leverage authenticity for competitive advantage. As consumer preferences increasingly favor authentic, unique, and sustainable products, understanding these nuanced relationships becomes increasingly valuable for both scholars and practitioners. The batik industry, with its rich cultural heritage and economic potential, serves as an ideal context for exploring these dynamics. By better understanding how authenticity drives performance, stakeholders can develop strategies that honor cultural traditions while creating sustainable business models—ultimately supporting both cultural preservation and economic development.

While providing valuable insights, this study has natural boundaries that future research might address. Our focus on Central Java batik producers offers deep contextual understanding but limits generalizability to other regions or indigenous products. Future studies might explore these relationships across different cultural contexts or product categories. Our producer-focused approach, using self-reported performance measures, could be complemented by research incorporating consumer perspectives and objective performance metrics to create a more comprehensive understanding of authenticity's market impact.

The cross-sectional design captures relationships at a specific moment rather than their evolution over time. Longitudinal studies could reveal how these dynamics develop in response to changing market conditions or interventions. Future research might also explore potential mediating factors like consumer trust or brand attachment, and moderating variables such as competitive intensity or technological change. Such investigations would further enrich our understanding of how brand authenticity translates into market success.

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