Journal of Business Research 181 (2024) 114741

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Business Research

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jbusres

The inauthentic consumer: Consequences of self-inauthenticity for possession disposal

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Authenticity
Self-product connection
Disposal
Possessions
Ownership
Sustainability

ABSTRACT

Self-inauthenticity is characterized by feeling out-of-touch with one's true, authentic self. Here, we propose that self-inauthenticity causes consumers to also feel out-of-touch with objects that are extensions of the self—namely, their material possessions. We call this effect *possession alienation* and suggest that it drives possession disposal. Supporting this view, chronic self-inauthenticity leads consumers to dispose of everyday products (e.g., apparel and electronics) at higher frequencies. Additionally, situational triggers of self-inauthenticity (e.g., using counterfeits or out-group-related brands) cause possession alienation and disposal. Self-inauthenticity thereby increases consumer intention to declutter at home, increases consumer preference to replace, rather than repair, broken electronics, and increases consumer participation in C2C product exchanges. Effects of self-inauthenticity on disposal can, however, be mitigated. Marketing interventions (e.g., advertisements) that reinforce consumers' psychological connection to material possessions, compared to interventions that promote product functionality, encourage inauthentic consumers to retain possessions. Implications, limitations, and future directions are discussed.

1. Introduction

We live in an era of rampant consumerism. People incessantly update wardrobes with the latest fashion trends and eagerly replace technological gadgets with new-and-improved models. Routinely, consumers must decide whether to part with their current possessions or keep them. To inform such decisions, they often consider a possession's functional value—"Is my shirt ill-fitting? Is my electronic device obsolete?" However, consumers also may ask, "Is my possession *still me*?" when deciding whether to dispose of it. Consumers rely on their psychological connection and will discard a perfectly functional product if they feel out-of-touch with it. Although the strength of their psychological connection could wane for various reasons (e.g., evolving tastes or market trends), our investigation focuses on consumers' self-authenticity—or, more precisely, self-*inauthenticity*—to explain why consumers may feel out-of-touch with material possessions and, in turn, dispose of them.

Authenticity refers to being real, genuine, or true (Lehman, O'Connor, Kovacs, & Newman, 2018; Newman & Smith, 2016). Self-authenticity refers to being true to the self. Although many people are free to pursue an authentic life through their lifestyle, career, hobbies, and social groups, people instead suppress or augment their authentic selves in daily life (Lenton et al., 2013). People misrepresent their abilities or status, mask their true emotions, or adopt personas that do not come naturally.

In such instances, when self-authenticity is undermined, we find that consumers are more likely to dispose of possessions. This occurs because consumers feel out-of-touch, or alienated, from their possessions. That is, consumers who experience higher levels of self-authenticity (i.e., authentic consumers) feel more connected to possessions and thus are more likely to retain them, whereas consumers who experience lower levels of self-authenticity (i.e., inauthentic consumers) feel more alienated from possessions and thus are more likely to dispose of them.

Disposal might seem benign, or even beneficial to the extent it generates future sales for firms, but consumers are disposing of goods at an unprecedented and unsustainable pace. This trend is prompting firms to reconsider fundamentals of their business models. For new models to arise, however, firms must shift focus from the point-of-purchase and better understand consumers at the point of disposal. For instance, with the emerging emphasis on sustainability, a circular economy is offering consumers more sustainable ways to part with possessions (e.g., donating, reselling). Businesses operating in this space often seek to

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https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2024.114741
Received 3 September 2021; Received in revised form 14 May 2024; Accepted 23 May 2024
Available online 1 June 2024

predict disposal decisions and to segment markets based on consumers' disposal tendencies. The present research suggests that consumer self-inauthenticity is relevant for defining and targeting such segments.

Beyond prediction, organizations may seek to *influence* disposal decisions. The present findings show that organizations indeed can intervene to influence such decisions. Whereas promoting products' functional benefits to inauthentic consumers facilitates disposal, promoting psychological connection facilitates retention. Moreover, self-inauthenticity affects the decision to dispose or not, not necessarily the form disposal takes. Inauthentic consumers thus are more inclined to declutter at home, replace, rather than repair, broken electronics, and resell apparel in C2C (consumer-to-consumer) exchanges. These seemingly disparate behaviors share an underlying common denominator: all represent means to dispose of material goods consumers no longer wish to possess. Because of this underlying similarity, self-inauthenticity influences disposal decisions in wide-ranging contexts and is relevant to diverse organizational objectives.

In sum, the present research is relevant to stakeholders interested in predicting or shaping disposal decisions. Additionally, by establishing a relationship between self-inauthenticity and disposal, this research fills a gap in academic literature. First, prior work on self-inauthenticity focuses on self-inauthenticity's relationship to product desire and acquisition (Aydin, 2016; Lasaleta & Loveland, 2019; Morhart et al., 2015; see Table 1). But consumer behavior progresses through four stages: desire, acquisition, use, and disposal (Pham, 2013). The present investigation is the first to link self-inauthenticity to the disposal stage of consumer behavior.

Second, prior research on disposal often compares its different forms (e.g., recycling vs. trashing, Trudel et al., 2016; gifting vs. reselling, Price et al., 2000). However, before deciding *how* to dispose of a possession, consumers must decide *whether* to dispose of it. Our theorizing is agnostic about the form disposal takes and instead focuses on the initial decision, whether to dispose or not. This distinction is important. The implications of this *whether* decision can be applied to reduce disposal, whereas the implications of the *how* decision can be applied to nudge more sustainable forms of disposal but not necessarily to reduce it. Noting the importance of the *whether* decision, Dommer and Winterich (2021; pg. 43) "call for further research on disposal, particularly that which considers the role of object attachment at earlier stages of the disposition process." The present research answers this call and, in doing so, contributes to literatures on self-authenticity, the self and disposal, ownership, and self-product consistency effects (Table 1).

2. Theoretical development

2.1. Self-inauthenticity

The extent to which individuals are true to themselves—i.e., "authentic"—results from knowing one's true self, choosing to act on that self-knowledge, and being unencumbered in doing so (Heppner et al., 2008; Lenton et al., 2013; Wood et al., 2008). Self-authenticity thus is undermined when individuals lack self-knowledge or misrepresent the true self (e.g., by acting dishonestly or expressing insincere emotions; Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Lenton et al., 2013). Self-authenticity varies chronically, across individuals, and thus can be measured as an individual difference variable (Wood et al., 2008). It also varies situationally, within individuals, and thus can be experimentally manipulated (Lenton et al., 2013).

Self-authenticity research establishes the importance of being true to ourselves, and the detrimental effects of deviating from our authentic selves, for emotional wellbeing and life satisfaction (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Lenton et al., 2013; Wood et al., 2008). Chronically low self-authenticity is associated with increased anxiety and stress, reduced wellbeing and self-esteem (Lenton et al., 2013; Wood et al., 2008), and reduced self-concept clarity (Vess et al., 2016).[1] In marketing, authenticity research has historically examined the authenticity of brands and experiences, with less attention paid to the authenticity of consumers themselves (for a review, see Newman & Smith, 2016). But as the importance of the "self" to marketing and consumer decision-making has become more apparent, research has begun to examine the interplay between consumer self-authenticity and consumption behavior.

Three streams of consumer research examine self-authenticity and its corollary, self-inauthenticity. First is research linking chronic self-authenticity to consumption preferences. Chronically authentic (vs. inauthentic) consumers prefer more authentic brands (Morhart et al., 2015), prefer more unique products (Aydin, 2016), and exhibit greater brand loyalty (Carroll et al., 2022). Second, research examines how momentary threats to self-authenticity influence consumption preferences, with such threats driving preference for *retro*-styled products (Lasaleta & Loveland, 2019). A third stream of research examines consumption as an antecedent to self-inauthenticity. Consuming, or using, a brand inauthentically (i.e., using an "undeserved" luxury brand, Goor et al., 2020, or a counterfeit brand, Lasaleta & Loveland, 2019) can increase self-inauthenticity. Building on this literature, the present research is the first to examine self-inauthenticity and disposal. Disposal is a unique and rich context to study the consequences of self-inauthenticity because disposal happens to products consumers already own and, thus, already relate to as extensions of the self via product ownership (Belk, 1988).

2.2. Self-inauthenticity and self-product consistency effects

Owning (vs. not owning) a product forges bidirectional self-possession links by which reciprocal influence readily occurs (Weiss & Johar, 2013; 2016). Put simply, ownership causes consumers and products to more readily "rub off" on each other. A relationship to a possession thus fluctuates depending on one's relationship to the self, and factors that affect one's relationship to the self can affect one's relationship to a possession. The result is *self-product consistency effects*: people maintain consistency between the self and objects incorporated into the self, such as possessions (Wheeler & Bechler, 2021). For example, people with higher self-esteem perceive their possessions as more valuable (Alexopoulos et al., 2015) and people who see themselves as creative perceive their possessions as more creative (Weiss & Johar, 2013).

Egocentric Categorization Theory explains self-product consistency effects by positing that mere ownership subsumes objects under mental representations of "self," which causes owned (unowned) products to be categorized as "me" ("not me"; Weiss & Johar, 2013). Balance Theory posits that people intrinsically strive to maintain a balanced triad among the self, objects, and attitude valence (Perkins & Forehand, 2012). Consistency effects occur because attitudes toward the self and toward objects linked to the self (e.g., through ownership) must align for balance to be achieved. Consumers may vary in the tendency to incorporate material possessions into the self (Ferraro, Escalas, & Bettman, 2011), and material possessions may be less important to the self than other

[1] Self-authenticity is distinct from self-esteem: situations that lower authenticity may not lower self-esteem (e.g., changes in social roles lower authenticity but not self-esteem; Liu et al., 2021). Self-authenticity also is distinct from self-concept clarity: inauthenticity involves feeling alienated from the self, which may or may not be due to a lack of self-knowledge, while low self-concept clarity involves unstable/inconsistent self-views (Vess et al., 2016).

Table 1
Summary of relevant literature.

Research	IV	DV	Mediator/Moderator	Key Findings
The present research	Self-inauthenticity	Disposal of material possessions	*Med:* Possession-alienation; *Mod:* Ads fostering self-possession connection	Self-inauthenticity makes consumers feel disconnected from their material possessions and in turn increases disposal of possessions. This effect is mitigated by ad exposure that fosters self-possession connection.
Self-inauthenticity and Consumer Behavior				
Research	**IV**	**DV**	**Mediator/Moderator**	**Key Findings**
Aydin, 2016	Authentic living (a facet of self-authenticity)	Need for uniqueness; desire for unique product	*Med:* Sense of uniqueness	Trait authentic living correlates with sense of uniqueness, need for uniqueness, and desire for unique products. A sense of uniqueness mediated the effect of authentic living on need for uniqueness and desire for unique products.
Carroll, Cadet & Kachersky, 2022	Self-authenticity	Brand loyalty	*Med:* Perceived brand authenticity	Authentic consumers perceive greater brand authenticity in a brand (in general, not necessarily a brand they own), which in turn, leads to greater loyalty to the brand.
Choi, Seo, Septianto, & Ko, 2022	Product customization	Subjective wellbeing	*Med:* Self-authenticity; *Mod*: Luxury (vs. non-luxury) brands	Luxury product customization heightens self-authenticity and increases consumers' subjective and behavioral wellbeing.
Ebrahimi, Kouchaki, & Patrick, 2019	Identity integration	Unethical Behavior	*Med:* Self-inauthenticity	Low perceived overlap among different identities – low identity integration – experience greater feelings of inauthenticity, which in turn leads to a higher likelihood of engaging in unethical behavior.
Gino, Norton, & Ariely, 2010	Using counterfeits	Unethical behavior	*Mediator:* Self-inauthenticity	Using counterfeit products makes consumers experience feelings of self-inauthenticity, which in turn increases unethical behaviors.
Goor, Ordabayeva, Keinan, & Crener, 2020	Using luxury brands	Self-inauthenticity; confident behavior	*Med:* Perceived undue privilege of using luxury products; *Mod:* Sense of entitlement	Using luxury products reduces self-authenticity because consumers perceive luxuries as an undue privilege. This in turn reduces confident behavior. The effect is attenuated when consumers have high psychological entitlement.
Lasaleta & Loveland, 2019	Self-inauthenticity	Preference for *retro*-styling products	*Med:* Desire for self-continuity; *Mod*: Past personal relevance of the object	A threat to self-authenticity increases preference for *retro*-styled objects, as these objects elicit self-continuity, restoring the self-authenticity. Object self-relevance moderates this effect, the effect holds for products relevant to the past self.
Morhart et al., 2015 (Study 6)	Perceived brand authenticity	Brand choice; actual consumption	*Med:* Self-brand congruence; *Mod:* Authentic living	Perceived brand authenticity increases brand choice and consumption among consumers with high (vs. low), self-authenticity. Self-brand congruence drives this effect.
Quach, Septianto, Thaichon, & Mao, 2022	Art infusion in advertising	Brand attitude	*Med:* Self-inauthenticity; *Mod:* Value-expressive attitude	Artwork in advertising increases brand evaluation for consumers with a value-expressive (vs. social-adjustive) attitude toward luxury brands, because artwork reduces feelings of self-inauthenticity associated with luxury brands.
Riis, Simmons, & Goodwin, 2008	Fundamental traits (with an authenticity component)	Willingness to enhance such a trait	*Mod*: Framing enhancement as enabling rather than enhancing	Consumers are more reluctant to enhance fundamental (vs. non-fundamental) traits due to the reluctance to change self-identity (i.e., authentic self). The effect is mitigated when the self-enhancing product is framed as enabling the true self.
Self and Possession Disposal				
Research	**IV**	**DV**	**Mediator/Moderator**	**Key Findings**
Ferraro, Escalas, & Bettman, 2011	Self-worth match	Grief upon possession loss	*Med:* Possession-self link; *Mod:* Dispositional self-extension tendency	Possessions representing an important domain of self-worth generate a stronger self-possession link among those who tend to extend the self to possessions. This possession-self link, in turn, produces grief upon possession loss.
Savary & Dhar, 2020	Self-concept clarity	Maintain (vs. cancel) subscription; acquire new subscriptions	*Mod:* Service self-relevance	Low (vs. high) self-concept clarity increases the choice to maintain (vs. cancel) on-going subscriptions, and decreases the choice to acquire new subscriptions. These effects are moderated by subscription self-relevance, such that the effect holds only for self-relevant subscriptions.
Trudel, Argo, & Meng, 2016	Identity link of products	Recycle versus trash the product	*Med:* Negative emotions; *Mod:* Strength and positivity of identity link	Identity-linked products are more likely recycled than trashed, especially when the identity link is strong and positive.
Winterich, Reczek, & Irwin, 2017	Taking photos of products before donation	Willingness to donate products	*Med:* Perceived identity loss; *Mod:* Alternative reinforcement, current-future self connection, disposal method	Taking photos of sentimental products reduces reluctance to donate these products, because it reduces identity-loss due to disposal. This effect is mitigated when the product-identity link is reinforced by another means, when consumers do not have strong current and future self-identities, and when the disposal method is selling rather than donating.
Self-product Consistency Effects				
Research	**IV**	**DV**	**Mediator/Moderator**	**Key Findings**

(*continued on next page*)

Table 1 (*continued*)

Research	IV	DV	Mediator/Moderator	Key Findings
Alexopoulos, Šimleša, & Francis, 2015	Seller vs. buyer	Difference in seller- buyer valuation	*Mod:* Threat to the self before endowment	Self-threat (vs. no threat) before being endowed with a product reduces the valuation of the product, hence, eliminating the endowment effect.
Cheng, White, & Chaplin, 2012	Brand failure	Consumers' self-evaluation	*Mod*: Self-brand connection; self-affirmation opportunity	Brand failure reduces the self-evaluation for consumers with a high (but not low) self-brand connection. When these consumers have an opportunity to self-affirm, they lower their brand evaluation and connection to the failed brand.
Chung & Johar, 2018	Psychological ownership of a product	Performance on product related (vs. unrelated) task	*Med:* activation of product-related identity; *Mod:* self-concept clarity	Psychological ownership [de]activates product-[un] related identity, which in turn increases [decreases] product [un]related task performance. The effect is more pronounced among those high (vs. low) in self-concept clarity.
Fennis & Wiebenga, 2017	Self-referencing in brand names	Responses to the brand	*Mod*: Positive vs. negative self-view	Self-referencing (vs. not) in a brand name (i.e., "I" as in "iTunes") leads to positive [negative] attitude to the brand for consumers with a positive [negative] self-view.
Gawronski, Bodenhausen, & Becker, 2007	Product evaluation before vs. after choice	Implicit product evaluation	*Med:* Implicit self-evaluation; *Mod*: Chosen vs. rejected product	Product choice increases implicit evaluations for the chosen (vs. rejected) product, because the choice creates a self-object association, spilling over from one's implicit evaluation of the self to that of the chosen product.
Kiesler & Kiesler, 2005	Design intent of a product	Self-object similarity	*Med:* The object symbolizing the self	Product designed to symbolize the self (vs. to be sold) are perceived as more similar to the self
Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer, & Nyffenegger, 2011	Actual versus ideal self-brand congruence	Emotional attachment	*Mod:* Involvement, self-esteem, public self-consciousness	Brands with actual self-congruence increase emotional brand attachment, especially when consumers have high involvement with the product, high self-esteem, or high public self-consciousness. Brands with ideal self-congruence, in contrast, reduce emotional brand attachment.
Morewedge, Shu, Gilbert, & Wilson, 2009	Seller vs. buyer	Difference in seller-buyer valuation	*Mod:* Owner vs. non-owner	The endowment effect disappears when the buyers are owners of an identical product, or when the sellers are not owners of the product being sold, suggesting that the endowment effect is driven by ownership.
Park & John, 2010	Brand personalities	Self-perceptions	*Med:* Use of brand as a self-signal; *Mod*: Entity (vs. incremental) theorists	Entity (but not incremental) theorists consumers perceive themselves as having personalities aligned with the brands they use, because they use brands as a self-signal to generate self-perceptions.
Park & John, 2014	Using a brand that promises performance	Task performance	*Med:* Self-efficacy; *Mod*: Entity (vs. incremental) theorists; credibility of brand promise	Using a brand that promises performance increases entity (but not incremental) theorist consumers' task performance by increasing a sense of self-efficacy. This effect is moderated by perceived credibility of the brand's performance task.
Perkins & Forehand, 2012	Nonvolitional self-object association	Attitudes; purchase intentions; choice	*Med:* Self-object implicit association; *Mod:* Implicit self-esteem	Nonvolitional pairing of the self and novel objects improves the evaluations of the objects, but the effect is moderated by implicit self-esteem. Self-object association improves responses to the object when implicit self-esteem is positive.
Stuppy, Mead, & van Osselaer, 2020	Trait self-esteem	Preference for inferior products	*Med:* Self-verification motive; *Mod:* Product signals; product self-views	Low trait self-esteem consumers gravitate toward inferior products to verify their pessimistic self-view. This effect is moderated by whether the inferior product signals pessimistic (vs. positive) self-view, and whether the consumers perceive themselves as consumers of superior products.
Weiss & Johar, 2013	Product ownership	Perceived product traits in relation to own traits	*Med:* Egocentric categorization; *Mod*: me-mine sensitivity	Consumers judge product traits as consistent with [opposite to] if they own [do not own] the product. This effect is more pronounced for consumers with higher me-mine sensitivity and self-consciousness.
Weiss & Johar, 2016	Product ownership	Perceived own traits in relation to product traits	*Med:* Egocentric categorization; *Mod:* me-mine sensitivity	Consumers judge their own traits in assimilation [contrast] to products they own [do not own], because consumers classify owned [unowned] products as "self" ["not self"]. The effect is stronger for consumers with higher me-mine sensitivity.
Yeung et al., 2017	Product ownership	Perceived self-efficacy		Mere ownership of an object increases consumers' perceived self-efficacy related to the function of the product.

IV = independent variable; DV = dependent variable; Med = Mediator; Mod = Moderator.

resources (e.g., experiences, van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). Nevertheless, because ownership intertwines mental representations of products and self, ownership causes self-product consistency effects (Wheeler & Bechler, 2021).

In line with self-product consistency effects, we expect consumers' self-inauthenticity to affect how they relate to (and treat) their possessions. Self-authenticity implies that people harbor a true self to which they feel more or less connected. When self-authenticity is undermined, chronically or situationally, people subjectively experience it as self-alienation (Heppner et al., 2008; Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Lenton et al., 2013; Wood et al., 2008). Self-alienation is a generalized experience, not a domain-specific one. Feeling like an imposter at work,

for instance, makes one feel alienated from oneself in general, not simply alienated from a workplace identity. Accordingly, if self-inauthenticity produces a self-product consistency effect, it too should be a generalized effect. The feelings of self-alienation that characterize self-inauthenticity should generalize across various objects that are extensions of the self.

It follows that inauthentic consumers, who feel out-of-touch with the self, should likewise feel out-of-touch with their possessions. We call this effect *possession alienation* and define it as a weak affective connection to possessions. Possession alienation parallels self-alienation in that it reflects an affective state of distance versus closeness (Lenton et al., 2013), but differs in that the affective response occurs in relation to possessions rather than the self. Thus, in addition to (and because of) feeling alienated from the self, inauthentic consumers should experience possession alienation. Formally:

H1: Self-inauthenticity causes possession alienation.

2.3. Self-inauthenticity and possession disposal

Consumers' psychological connection to a possession affects whether they dispose of it, with strong connections facilitating retention and weak connections facilitating disposal. For example, Winterich et al. (2017) find that consumers are reluctant to donate possessions that elicit emotionally significant memories (i.e., sentimental possessions) presumably because they are strongly connected to such possessions. Relatedly, qualitative evidence finds that consumers tend to dispose of possessions that reflect undesirable "past" or "never me" selves because they are weakly connected to such possessions (Lastovicka & Fernandez, 2005). These investigations examine specific possessions (i.e., sentimental possessions, possessions linked to the past) and thus cannot speak to generalized effects on disposal, nor to the effect of self-inauthenticity on disposal. These investigations do, however, demonstrate that the strength of one's psychological connection to possessions can influence disposal decisions. Accordingly, if we are correct that self-inauthenticity weakens the strength of connection to possessions (possession alienation), self-inauthenticity, in turn, should prompt consumers to dispose of possessions. Formally:

H2: Self-inauthenticity causes possession disposal.

H3: Possession alienation underlies the effect of self-inauthenticity on possession disposal.

Theoretically, the effect of self-inauthenticity on possession disposal can be manipulated. Because possession alienation, the driver of disposal, is defined as a weak affective connection between consumers and material possessions, then an intervention that instead reinforces a strong, positive affective connection between consumers and material possessions should safeguard possessions from disposal. Suppose that an organization wants consumers to retain a product for an extended time, perhaps repairing or reusing it. Advertising that portrays positive self-product connections should nudge retention, rather than disposal. Advertising that fails, however, to reinforce self-product connection—such as advertising that portrays functional benefits of products—should instead enable disposal by inauthentic consumers. Formally:

H4: Reinforcing consumers' psychological connection to material possessions mitigates the effect of self-inauthenticity on possession disposal.

Although we posit that self-inauthenticity leads to disposal, the opposite effect is theoretically possible: self-inauthenticity might prompt *retention*. For example, because self-inauthenticity is associated with disengaging and withdrawing effort under stress (Kernis & Goldman, 2006), inauthentic consumers may retain products if it is less effortful to do so. Another reason self-inauthenticity might prompt retention is if retention is comforting or draws consumers closer to their true self, a psychological process we revisit in the General Discussion.

3. The current research

Five main studies, one follow-up field study, and two appendix studies collectively show that (1) self-inauthenticity increases possession disposal in various forms; (2) the effect occurs because self-inauthenticity causes possession alienation (study 4 and appendix C study 1), and (3) the effect attenuates when psychological connection to possessions is reinforced (study 5). To operationalize self-inauthenticity, we use a chronic measure of trait self-inauthenticity (i.e., Wood et al., 2008′s trait self-authenticity reverse coded; study 1, study 3′s follow-up field study, and study 5). We also use various experimental manipulations of state inauthenticity (studies 2–4 and appendix C studies 1–2). These include (1) a direct activation task with high internal validity (i.e., an idiosyncratic writing task, which ensures the construct, self-inauthenticity, is active; studies 2–4), and (2) tasks that activate self-inauthenticity indirectly, via consumer behavior (i.e., using brands associated with social outgroups and using counterfeits; appendix C). Appendix A shows the key stimuli and measures, and Appendix B details various robustness analyses.

4. Study 1: Chronic self-inauthenticity & everyday disposal tendencies

Study 1 tests the direction and strength of the relation between consumers' chronic self-inauthenticity and their tendency to dispose of everyday possessions, including apparel and electronics. We included two product categories to establish generalizability, and specifically chose apparel and electronics because disposal in these categories has a tremendous impact on the environment and is unconstrained by product expiration or perishability. Per H2, we expect a positive relation between chronic self-inauthenticity and the frequency of possession disposal.

4.1. Methods

In exchange for monetary payment, 160 American participants recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurkers) completed a survey about apparel and electronics. On 11-point scales, participants reported how frequently they discard apparel products (*How frequently do you throw out shirts/shoes/socks?*) and replace electronics (*How frequently do you replace electronics?*), with higher scores indicating greater frequency. Participants then completed a chronic self-authenticity scale[2] (Wood et al., 2008; e.g., *I feel alienated from myself*; 1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*, recoded such that higher scores reflect higher self-*in*authenticity; $\alpha = 0.93$, $M = 2.63$, $SD = 1.22$) and a chronic self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965; e.g., *I take a positive attitude toward myself*; 1 = *strongly disagree*, 4 = *strongly agree*; $\alpha = 0.90$, $M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.61$).

Lastly, participants completed demographics and an embedded an attention check (*This is an attention check. Please click on the option that indicates "strongly disagree"*). This same attention check was administered in a similar way in Studies 2–4. Here and across studies, we exclude from analyses participants who failed attention checks. In study 1, excluding those who failed ($n = 18$) left 142 participants for analysis (45.8 % female, $M_{age} = 36.12$, $SD = 12.18$).

4.2. Results & discussion

Disposal Frequencies. To test the relation between chronic self-

[2] Throughout this research, we measure chronic self-inauthenticity using Wood et al.'s (2008) scale (consistent with Lasaleta & Loveland, 2019) and we measure self-esteem using Rosenberg's (1965) scale (consistent with Wood et al., 2008, who also examined and controlled for self-esteem in relation to self-authenticity).

inauthenticity and disposal, we conducted separate ordinal logistic regressions on each of the three apparel disposal frequency measures and on the electronics replacement frequency measure, using chronic self-inauthenticity as the independent variable (IV). Because self-inauthenticity correlated with self-esteem (r = -0.70, $p < 0.001$), self-esteem was included as a covariate. Supporting H2, consumers more frequently dispose of shirts, shoes, and socks, and more frequently replace electronics, as their chronic level of self-inauthenticity increases (Table 2).

Purchase Frequencies. Immediately after disposal frequencies, we measured apparel purchase frequencies (note that purchase is subsumed within replacement of electronics so we did not ask this question regarding electronics). On 11-point scales, participants reported how frequently they purchase apparel products (*How frequently do you buy shirts/shoes/socks?*). Ordinal logistic regressions on each of the three apparel purchase frequency measures indicated that self-inauthenticity positively affects purchase frequencies of shirts and shoes, but not socks (Table 3). These results raise the possibility that disposal and purchase are related (e.g., inauthentic consumers dispose of old shirts and shoes because they want to purchase new ones). We therefore conducted ordinal logistic regressions on disposal frequencies for shirts and shoes, controlling for purchase frequencies (Table 3). The relation between inauthenticity and disposal held controlling for purchase (a finding we revisit in the General Discussion). Also, the effect held in additional robustness analyses that include demographics (e.g., age, gender).

In sum, study 1 links consumers' chronic self-inauthenticity to everyday decisions to discard and replace possessions (H2). Importantly, this effect was observed even though disposal was measured *before* self-inauthenticity. This procedure conservatively tests our hypothesis because obtaining significant results implies that self-inauthenticity need not be salient for it to affect disposal. Next, we conceptually replicate and extend this finding and establish causality.

5. Study 2: manipulated self-inauthenticity & spring-cleaning scenario

Study 2 tests whether self-inauthenticity causes consumers to dispose of possessions (H2). We compare the effect of experimentally induced inauthenticity against a baseline control condition (in which the construct is not made salient). The dependent variable (DV) measures the intention to dispose of clothing while "spring cleaning." We predict that inauthentic (vs. control) consumers choose to keep less of their clothing, opting to trash or donate their clothing instead.

5.1. Methods

In exchange for monetary payment, 201 American MTurkers completed a 2-condition (inauthenticity: inauthentic, control), randomized, between-subjects study. We manipulated self-inauthenticity directly, using an idiosyncratic writing task (adapted from Lenton et al., 2013). Participants in the inauthentic [control] condition wrote about a situation wherein they were not being themselves [what they did in the morning before going to work/school], then completed a manipulation check (α = 0.94; e.g., *I feel alienated from myself;* Gino et al., 2010). Participants next imagined "spring cleaning" and allocated the proportion of clothing in their current wardrobe they would keep, trash, or donate (summed to 100). We counterbalanced the order of the manipulation check and DV here and in Study 4. Order had no effect, so we collapsed across this factor in the analyses (we revisit this order manipulation in Footnote 8). We had no a priori prediction that trashing and donating would differ but included both options for external validity in the context of "spring cleaning." The DV was the proportion of clothes participants intended to keep. Excluding four who failed the attention check left 197 respondents for analysis (45.2 % females; M_{age} = 37.85, SD = 12.04). Stimuli are reported in Appendix A.[3]

Table 2
Ordinal Logistic Regressions on *Disposal* Frequencies in Study 1.

DV	IV	*b*	*S.E.*	*z*	*p*-value	*Odds Ratio*
Disposal of Shirts	Inauthenticity	0.65	0.18	3.57	<0.001	1.91
	Self-esteem	0.10	0.35	0.28	0.78	1.10
Disposal of Shoes	Inauthenticity	0.54	0.18	3.02	0.003	1.72
	Self-esteem	0.23	0.35	0.65	0.52	1.25
Disposal of Socks	Inauthenticity	0.31	0.17	1.83	0.068	1.36
	Self-esteem	0.13	0.33	0.69	0.69	1.14
Replacement of Electronics	Inauthenticity	0.89	0.19	4.68	<0.001	2.43
	Self-esteem	0.32	0.33	0.94	0.35	1.37

IV = independent variable; DV = dependent variable; S.E. = standard error.

Table 3
Ordinal Logistic Regressions on Apparel *Purchase* Frequencies in Study 1.

DV	IV	*b*	*S.E.*	*z*	*p*-value	*Odds Ratio*
Purchase of Shirts	Inauthenticity	0.43	0.18	2.42	0.02	1.53
	Self-esteem	0.36	0.33	1.08	0.28	1.43
Purchase of Shoes	Inauthenticity	0.46	0.17	2.69	0.007	1.58
	Self-esteem	0.23	0.34	0.68	0.50	1.26
Purchase of Socks	Inauthenticity	0.24	0.17	1.41	0.16	1.27
	Self-esteem	0.05	0.32	0.15	0.88	1.05
Effects on Shirts and Shoes Disposal while Controlling for Purchase Frequencies						
DV	**IV**	***b***	***S.E.***	***z***	***p*-value**	***Odds Ratio***
Disposal of Shirts	Inauthenticity	0.59	0.19	3.16	0.002	1.80
	Self-esteem	−0.01	0.35	−0.02	0.99	0.99
	Purchase of Shirts	0.61	0.11	5.62	<0.001	1.84
Disposal of Shoes	Inauthenticity	0.36	0.18	1.99	0.047	1.43
	Self-esteem	0.22	0.35	0.63	0.527	1.25
	Purchase of Shoes	0.87	0.11	7.85	<0.001	2.40

IV = independent variable; DV = dependent variable; S.E. = standard error.

5.2. Results & discussion

Manipulation Check. ANOVA confirmed the inauthenticity manipulation was successful ($M_{inauthentic}$ = 2.83, SD = 1.78; $M_{control}$ = 2.17, SD = 1.47; $F(1, 195) = 8.20$, $p = 0.005$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.04$).

Clothes to Keep. The DV was the proportion of clothing allocated to be kept, donated or trashed, with a constant sum of 100. We divided the scores in each category by 100 to compute proportions. With inauthenticity as the IV, a fractional outcome logistic regression on the proportion of clothes kept found that self-inauthenticity reduced the proportion of clothes kept (b = -0.20, SE = 0.06, z = -3.61, $p < 0.001$, *Odds Ratio* = 0.82), per H2.

We theorize that self-inauthenticity affects disposal but not necessarily the form disposal takes. To test this, we computed a difference score by subtracting the proportion to donate from the proportion to trash. The resulting DV is not bounded by 0 and 1, so we conducted a linear regression. Inauthenticity did not differentially affect the two disposal methods, trashing and donating ($b = 0.02$, $SE = 0.02$, $t(195) = 1.47$, $p = 0.14$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.01$).[4]

[3] Across studies, we measured several individual differences (e.g., Self-extension Tendency; Ferraro et al., 2011; Self-consciousness; Fenigstein et al., 1975) at the end of the studies as potential covariates or moderators. These variables did not reliably affect our results and hence are not reported, but details are available upon request.

[4] Similar findings can be derived from a repeated-measures analysis using disposal method as a within-subject factor. We found no interaction of inauthenticity X disposal method ($F(1,195) = 2.16$, $p = 0.14$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.01$), suggesting that inauthenticity did not differentially affect decision to trash versus donate.

Lastly, to test the robustness of the effect of self-inauthenticity on disposal, we used text analysis software to measure the positive and negative emotions expressed by participants in the writing task, here and in the next two studies (Appendix A). Across studies, the effect of self-inauthenticity on disposal held controlling for emotions (Appendix B).

In sum, Study 2 experimentally confirms that self-inauthenticity *causes* possession disposal, supporting H2. Moreover, although self-inauthenticity causes disposal, it does not affect the form disposal takes (i.e., although inauthentic consumers intended to dispose of more clothing items when "spring cleaning," they were equally likely to trash or donate these items).

6. Study 3: Manipulated self-inauthenticity & C2C clothing exchanges

Study 3 tests H2 in the context of a C2C platform for apparel resale. We created an online platform where consumers ostensibly sell secondhand clothing to each other. We sought to show that the effect of self-inauthenticity (1) holds on a behavioral measure in a realistic context, (2) generalizes to another disposal decision (resale), and (3) holds with a different control condition (i.e., authentic consumers, who represent the other end of the construct's continuum).

6.1. Methods

In exchange for monetary payment, 302 American MTurkers completed a 2-condition (inauthenticity: inauthentic, authentic), randomized, between-subjects study. Our recruitment post announced an online, interactive clothing exchange platform that connects consumers who want to resell secondhand clothing. Those who joined the platform were instructed to wait while other exchangers ostensibly joined, too. While waiting, participants were asked to complete a "personality survey" (the writing task IV). The inauthentic [authentic] condition wrote about a situation wherein they were not being themselves [completely being themselves].

We then launched the exchange platform. Those who wished to resell were required to photograph the shirt they wished to sell and upload its image. The disposal DV was "upload to resell" (Appendix A). Keeping with the cover story, those who uploaded to resell then provided details about the shirt (e.g., size). Next, we measured purchase behavior to potentially use as a covariate, as in study 1. Participants thus reported bid prices for two shirts ostensibly for sale by other exchangers. Inauthenticity (vs. authenticity) indeed increased bid prices (log-transformed: $M_{\text{inauthentic}} = 2.04$, $SD = 1.11$; $M_{\text{authentic}} = 1.63$, $SD = 1.32$; $F(1, 298) = 8.77$, $p = 0.003$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.03$[5];). Lastly, participants reported intentions to subscribe to the platform and to buy or sell in future exchanges.[6] Excluding two who failed an attention check left 300 respondents for analysis (50.3 % females; $M_{\text{age}} = 36.39$, $SD = 11.63$).

6.2. Results & discussion

Upload to Resell. To test the effect of inauthenticity on resell, we conducted a binary logistic regression on upload to resell (1 = uploaded, 0 = did not upload), using inauthenticity (1 = inauthentic, −1 = authentic) as the IV, and bid price as a covariate. Inauthenticity increased uploads to resell ($b = 0.24$, $SE = 0.12$, $z = 1.99$, $p = 0.046$, *Odds Ratio* = 1.28). Countering the idea that inauthentic (vs. authentic) consumers wish to sell possessions because they want to purchase new ones, bid price had no effect ($b = -0.12$, $SE = 0.10$, $z = -1.18$, $p = 0.24$, *Odds Ratio* = 0.89).

In sum, study 3 replicates the finding that inauthenticity prompts possession disposal, per H2, and does so in a novel and realistic context: a C2C online apparel exchange. Next, we test H2 in a naturalistic field context, that of a C2C clothing swap.

6.3. Follow-up field study: chronic self-inauthenticity & C2C clothing swaps

We partnered with our university's Sustainability Unit to test the relationship between consumers' chronic self-inauthenticity and intentions to participate in a C2C clothing swap. We emailed university staff and students (N = 966; 65.3 % females; $M_{\text{age}} = 23.86$, $SD = 8.25$), asking them to complete an online survey about "Fashion Revolution Week." This annual event raises awareness about sustainable living, including clothing swaps where students can exchange gently worn items. The survey asked participants' intentions to attend (i) a campus clothing swap and (ii) a movie screening about textile waste (Appendix A). We included both events to test discriminant validity. While both events pertain to fashion sustainability, only the clothing swap involves possession disposal. Inauthenticity thus should increase interest in the clothing swap and not the movie screening. Participants then completed the IV measure of chronic self-inauthenticity ($\alpha = 0.87$, Wood et al., 2008) and two covariate measures: environmental attitudes ($\alpha = 0.90$, Bohlen et al., 1993) and self-esteem ($\alpha = 0.85$, Rosenberg, 1965).

We regressed interest in each event on chronic self-inauthenticity, controlling for interest in the other event, chronic self-esteem, and chronic environmental attitudes. As predicted, chronic self-inauthenticity positively predicted interest in the clothing swap ($b = 0.17$, $SE = 0.08$, $t(961) = 1.97$, $p = 0.05$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.004$) but not the movie screening ($b = 0.06$, $SE = 0.08$, $t(961) = 0.82$, $p = 0.41$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.001$; Appendix B). In sum, Study 3 and its follow-up study show that inauthenticity increases participation in C2C reselling and C2C swapping contexts, respectively.

7. Study 4: Possession alienation as the mediating psychological process

Study 4 tests the prediction that self-inauthenticity increases possession disposal via possession alienation (H3). We measure strength of connection to a possession as the mediator and the decision to replace (i.e., dispose) or repair (i.e., keep) a broken smartphone as the DV. Comparing inauthenticity, authenticity, and baseline conditions, we expect inauthenticity to increase possession alienation (H1) and, thereby, disposal (H3), relative to the authenticity and baseline conditions, and are agnostic regarding the effect of authenticity relative to baseline.[7]

Possession alienation implies that consumers feel disconnected only

[5] Raw means: $M_{\text{inauthentic}} = 12.99$, $SD = 20.03$; $M_{\text{authentic}} = 10.85$, $SD = 18.61$. Analysis was done on log-transformed values, to address skewness of the bid price variable (Skewness = 4.41).

[6] Uploading to resell had downstream consequences. Participants who uploaded clothes to resell (vs. those who did not) intended to subscribe (49.5% vs. 23.3%, $p < 0.01$, $X^2 = 21.83$) and to continue to buy/sell clothes on the platform ($\alpha = 0.76$, $Ms = 4.91$ vs. 3.84, $F(1, 298) = 29.88$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that identifying inauthentic consumers presents opportunities to influence participation in the circular economy and, possibly, forge long-term relationship with the consumers.

[7] Prior research suggests that people feel authentic in daily life more often than they feel inauthentic (Lenton et al., 2013). This research does not lend itself to predictions that differentiate between the authentic condition and baseline control condition. It allows us to predict only that (1) self-alienation (and therefore possession alienation) should be relatively low in these two conditions, and (2) self-alienation (and therefore possession alienation) would be lower in these two conditions compared to the self-inauthenticity condition. Future research should systematically compare inauthenticity with both authenticity and control conditions to determine if and how self-authenticity affects possession connection.

from products they own. To address the alternative possibility that self-inauthenticity affects strength of connection to products in general, we also measure connection to an unowned product (a new smartphone). We expect inauthenticity to affect connection to possessions (H1) but not to unowned products.

7.1. Methods

In exchange for monetary payment, 447 American MTurkers completed a 3-condition (inauthenticity: inauthentic, control, authentic), randomized, between-subjects study. We again manipulated self-inauthenticity via an idiosyncratic writing task (Appendix A), then administered a manipulation check (as in Study 2; $\alpha = 0.91$). Next, participants imagined a scenario wherein their smartphone's screen turns black, and they must decide whether to replace or repair their phone. The DV was a scale response, from 1 = *definitely get a new phone* to 100 = *definitely repair the current phone* (reversed coded for analyses). The possession alienation mediator asked participants to report how connected they feel at the moment to their own phone on a 7-point pictorial scale (adapted from Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992; Appendix A). This measure was then repeated in reference to an unowned phone in a retail store. Finally, participants completed demographics, an attention check, and reported whether they own a smartphone. Excluding 34 who failed the attention check and 12 who did not own a smartphone left 401 respondents for analysis (56.9 % females; $M_{age} = 38.11$, $SD = 12.75$) for analyses.

7.2. Results & discussion

Manipulation Check. ANOVA confirmed the inauthenticity manipulation was successful (omnibus $F(2, 398) = 3.29$, $p = 0.04$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$; contrast effects: $M_{inauthentic} = 2.70$, $SD = 0.15$; vs. $M_{control} = 2.24$, $SD = 0.13$, $p = 0.02$; vs. $M_{authentic} = 2.28$, $SD = 0.14$, $p = 0.04$; the latter two $p = 0.8$).

Possession Alienation. ANOVA on possession alienation (i.e., strength of connection to one's smartphone) yielded a marginal effect (omnibus $F(2, 398) = 2.85$, $p = 0.06$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.01$). Per H1, contrast effect analyses found that possession alienation was stronger in the inauthenticity condition ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.13$) compared to either the control ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 0.12$, $p = 0.04$, $d = 0.25$) or authenticity condition ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.13$, $p = 0.03$, $d = 0.26$), which did not differ ($p = 0.85$, $d = 0.02$). Moreover, ANOVA found no effect on alienation from an unowned product (i.e., a new phone in a store; omnibus $F(2, 398) = 0.03$, $p = 0.97$, $\eta_p^2 < 0.001$; $M_{inauthentic} = 5.32$, $SD = 1.73$; $M_{control} = 5.36$, $SD = 1.51$; $M_{authentic} = 5.31$ $SD = 1.68$; all contrast effects $p > 0.8$). The results confirm our expectation that the effect of self-inauthenticity on alienation depends on ownership and thus emerges for owned products (possessions) and not unowned products.

Replace vs. *Repair Decision*. Next, we tested whether alienation from a possession affected the decision to replace or repair it. We conducted a mediation analysis with the decision to replace (vs. repair) as the DV, possession alienation as the mediator, inauthenticity condition as the IV (with inauthenticity as the benchmark), and alienation from the unowned product as a covariate (PROCESS Model 4; bootstrapped samples = 5000). As expected, possession alienation increased possession replacement ($b = 3.50$, $SE = 1.18$, $t(398) = 2.96$, $p = 0.003$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$). We also found a main effect of alienation from the unowned product ($b = -4.71$, $SE = 1.06$, $t(398) = -4.46$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.05$), but no effect of authenticity or control (contrast to inauthenticity) having included the mediator (possession alienation) in the regression. Possession alienation thus mediated the indirect effect on smartphone replacement (control vs. inauthentic: 95 % CI = [-3.062, -0.134]; authentic vs. inauthentic: 95 % CI = [-3.046, -0.174]), supporting H3.

In sum, study 4's mediation analysis shows that possession alienation underlies the effect of self-inauthenticity on possession disposal. Specifically, self-inauthenticity causes consumers to feel weakly connected to possessions (i.e., their own smartphones) but does not affect feelings of connection toward unowned products (i.e., new smartphones). This result is consistent with the notion that self-inauthenticity's effect depends on ownership; only owned products are perceived as extensions of the self. Lastly, possession alienation, in turn, leads to disposal, operationalized here as the preference to replace rather than repair one's broken smartphone.

8. Study 5: marketing intervention

Study 5 aims to mitigate the effect of self-inauthenticity on disposal. We predict that the effect can be mitigated by interventions (e.g., advertising) that reaffirm consumers' connection to possessions. We designed advertisements that communicate positive psychological connections to products (connection ads) and compared them to advertisements that communicate functional benefits of products (function ads). Exposure to the former and not the latter should encourage inauthentic consumers to keep possessions.

8.1. Methods

In exchange for monetary payment, 402 American MTurkers completed a study with a 2-condition (ads: connection, function) by chronic self-inauthenticity (measured) between-subjects design. Participants completed the chronic self-inauthenticity scale (Wood et al., 2008; $\alpha = 0.91$), then viewed and evaluated six different ads, displayed in random order (*How much do you like the above ad?*; 1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*). The ad images were identical between conditions, but the text differed. Connection ads' text linked products to the self (e.g., a shoe ad stated, "Walk your way"), whereas function ads' text linked products to functional benefits (e.g., the shoe ad stated, "Walk in comfort"; Fig. 1). A pre-test conducted with a different sample from the same population (N = 131 MTurkers) confirmed that the connection (vs. function) ads "*reflect the connections between people and their products*" ($M_{connection} = 5.97$, $SD = 1.09$ vs. $M_{function} = 5.42$, $SD = 1.22$, $F(1, 129) = 7.40$, $p = 0.007$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.05$).

After evaluating the ads, participants imagined a scenario wherein they declutter their home by disposing of material possessions. The DV was the proportion (in %) of possessions they chose to part with from 0 to 100 (Appendix A). Participants completed demographics and an attention check (*To what extent are you paying attention to the questions in this survey? Please click on the option labeled "far above average"*). Excluding 45 who failed the attention check left 357 participants for analysis (45.9 % female, $M_{age} = 40.83$, $SD = 11.68$).

8.2. Results & discussion

Confound Checks. With ads as the IV, ANOVA confirmed that the connection and function ads did not differ on ad evaluation ($M_{connectio} = 3.28$, $SD = 0.72$ vs. $M_{function} = 3.30$, $SD = 0.68$, $F(1, 355) = 0.06$, $p = 0.96$, $\eta^2 < 0.001$). Another ANOVA confirmed they did not differ on chronic self-inauthenticity ($M_{connection} = 2.50$, $SD = 1.00$ vs. $M_{function} = 2.44$, $SD = 1.08$, $F(1, 355) = 0.26$, $p = 0.61$, $\eta^2 = 0.001$). We thus proceeded to test the predicted interaction effect between self-inauthenticity and ad condition on possession disposal.

Disposal. A fractional outcome logistic regression on the proportion of possessions to dispose, using ads (1 = connection, -1 = function), chronic self-inauthenticity (standardized) and their interaction as IVs, yielded a significant interaction ($b = -0.16$, $SE = 0.06$, $z = -2.47$, $p = 0.013$, *Odds Ratio* = 0.85), and no main effects of inauthenticity ($b = 0.08$, $SE = 0.06$, $z = 1.2$, $p = 0.23$, *Odds Ratio* = 1.08) or ads ($b = 0.003$, $SE = 0.05$, $z = 0.05$, $p = 0.96$, *Odds Ratio* = 1.00). Simple effect analyses in the function ads condition replicated prior findings and supported H2: chronic self-inauthenticity increased possession disposal ($b = 0.04$, $SE = 0.01$, $z = 3.04$, $p = 0.002$). However, as predicted (H4), this effect attenuated in the connection ads condition ($b = -0.01$, $SE = 0.02$, z =

Fig. 1. Examples of Ads in Study 5 (Ad condition: Connection vs. Function).

-0.78, $p = 0.43$; Fig. 2).

In sum, per H4, ad exposure that fosters self-possession connection offsets the effect of self-inauthenticity by encouraging possession retention. However, as expected, ad exposure that makes salient the functional benefits of products facilitates disposal (i.e., the effect of self-inauthenticity on disposal observed in prior studies held). These findings point to a practical and straightforward way to strategically manipulate the effect of self-inauthenticity on disposal.

9. General discussion

Across diverse disposal decisions, self-inauthenticity causes consumers to dispose of material possessions. This effect occurs independent of (1) self-esteem (study 1 and study 3′s follow-up field study), (2) positive and negative emotions (studies 2–4), and (3) purchase decisions (i.e., purchase frequencies in study 1, bid prices in study 3, and purchase intentions in appendix study 2). Mediation analyses confirm that the effect is caused by alienation from *possessions*—objects perceived as extensions of the self via ownership—and rule out the alternative possibility that it is driven by alienation from products in general. Indeed, while self-inauthenticity weakens the strength of consumers' affective connection to possessions, it does not affect their connection to unowned products (i.e., new products available in retail stores; study 4). Lastly, the effect of self-inauthenticity is mitigated—that is, inauthentic consumers will keep rather than dispose of their material possessions—if consumers are exposed to advertising that reaffirms their psychological connection to possessions. In comparison, exposure to advertising that instead promotes the functional benefits of products has no such effect.

9.1. Theoretical contributions

Whereas prior self-authenticity research has focused on the desire for and acquisition of unowned products (for a review, see Table 1), the present research focuses on the disposal of products consumers already own and thus already relate to as extensions of the self. Furthermore, whereas much prior disposal research focuses on *how* consumers dispose of possessions, we focus on *whether* they dispose. In doing so, we identify a novel self-product consistency effect: the subjective experience of self-alienation that characterizes self-inauthenticity carries over to one's possessions, causing possession alienation. To our knowledge, this is the first self-product consistency effect linked to self-inauthenticity and to disposal. Self-authenticity is a unique construct in that it reflects the structure of the self. Self-product consistency research to-date has not examined structure of the self, but content of the self (i.e., self-evaluations and self-perceived traits; Campbell, Assanand, & Di Paula, 2003). While future research can tease apart differences based on structure and content, evidence that self-product consistency effects occur for structure hints that the scope of such effects is larger than prior research empirically suggests.

9.2. Generalizability & external validity

We establish generalizability across decision contexts in which consumers decide to discard/keep (studies 1, 2, 5, appendix study 2), replace/keep (study 1), resell/keep (study 3), swap/keep (study 3′s follow-up field study), or replace/repair (study 4) possessions. Moreover, the effect is observed on measures of behavioral tendencies (study 1), behavioral intentions (studies 2, 4, 5, study 3′s follow-up field study, appendix study 2), and actual behavior (study 3).

Furthermore, study 3 and its follow up were designed with ecological validity in mind. In study 3, participants opted into an online, C2C exchange platform, then photographed an item of clothing and uploaded its image to sell it. And in the follow-up field study, participants received an email from their university's Sustainability Unit and we measured their response to it. We also administered that measure *before* they reported chronic self-inauthenticity, and chronic self-inauthenticity nevertheless affected their responses. Collectively, these findings suggest that self-inauthenticity can affect disposal in more naturalistic settings, and that baseline levels of chronic self-inauthenticity can affect everyday disposal decisions in subtle but pervasive ways.

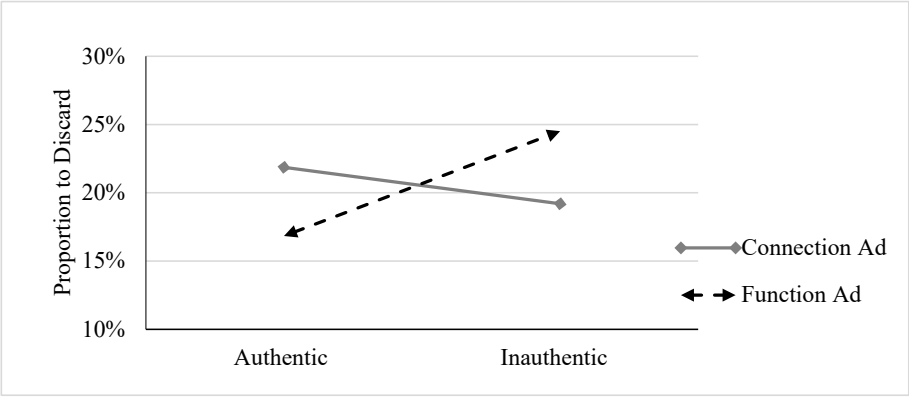


Fig. 2. Inauthenticity by ad condition interaction on possession disposal in Study 5.

9.3. Antecedents to self-inauthenticity and disposal

Although this research focuses on consequences of self-inauthenticity for disposal, it also addresses antecedents to self-inauthenticity. Participants who wrote about experiences with self-inauthenticity (in studies 2–4) cited a wide range of everyday situations, such as lying (e.g., "I lied about my life"), masking personality at work (e.g., "I was not my normal self but instead had to be the person the job wanted"), hiding true feelings to friends (e.g., "pretend to like someone to be their friend but I really didn't want to"), and experiencing personality changes due to external shocks (e.g., "after I had surgery, I had a short-term change in my personality").

Building on these antecedents, we establish two consumer-relevant triggers of self-inauthenticity (see Appendix C): (1) using an outgroup brand (i.e., a brand consumers associate to a social outgroup rather than ingroup; Escalas & Bettman, 2005; appendix study 1), and (2) using a counterfeit (appendix study 2). We also establish that self-inauthenticity, in turn, increases alienation from one's favorite possession (appendix study 1) and increases possession disposal (appendix study 2). In sum, this investigation identifies numerous antecedents to self-inauthenticity, including two consumer-relevant antecedents, that predict possession disposal.

9.4. Practical implications for consumers and business

The present findings are important to consumers. Consumers may not anticipate that the inauthenticity they experience, say, when using a counterfeit, can inadvertently affect subsequent decisions, say, to declutter their homes. Such effects could be consequential. After disposing of possessions, consumers might purchase new products and incur greater financial costs (e.g., electronics often are replaced rather than discarded). A cycle of disposal and purchase also fuels fast fashion's "throw-away culture" (Gupta & Gentry, 2018). When feeling self-alienation and, in turn, possession alienation, consumers may pause their disposal decisions and reflect on the personal meanings they attach to their possessions (Richins, 1994). Reflection should make salient consumers' strong self-possession connections and prompt them to reconsider disposal decisions. Consumers may also introspect about whether possession alienation stems from self-alienation and, if so, focus on restoring the authentic self. It benefits consumers to be aware of such strategies, particularly to the extent that naturally occurring triggers to self-inauthenticity are prevalent in daily life and its effects on disposal are unanticipated and potentially far-reaching.

The present findings also have business implications. Indeed, diverse businesses can benefit from predicting disposal. Consider those in the circular economy, such as consignment or vintage retail stores, firms that upcycle (e.g., Patagonia makes bags using pieces of old jeans), C2C resell/swap platforms (e.g., Vinted.com), or firms that offer buy-back programs (e.g., H&M promotes in-store disposal of its products). Such firms may seek to identify target segments who are inclined to dispose of possessions. Consumers could be identified based on chronic self-inauthenticity or situational triggers. Situational triggers can include individual life transitions (e.g., a new school or job increases self-inauthenticity), or even macro-level shocks (e.g., the Covid-19 pandemic increased self-inauthenticity; Liu, Dalton, & Lee, 2021). By identifying which/when consumers are more inclined to dispose of possessions, organizations that offer sustainable disposal schemes or that want to acquire used goods can better target consumers.

Other organizations might want to encourage product retention. These include firms that offer post-purchase services that extend use of products (e.g., Patagonia wants consumers to retain and repair their products rather than replace them); those who encourage consumers to trade-up to higher price points for high quality products that consumers will retain over longer periods of time (e.g., luxury brands); and even those that want consumers to reuse packaging they otherwise discard (e.g., Burger King recently launched reusable packaging). Interventions that nudge consumers to consider using products for extended lengths of time may not only generate profits for these firms and benefits for the environment, such interventions also may strengthen consumers' brand loyalty and willingness to recommend the brand to others (Sabbaghi et al., 2016). For such firms, we identify a relatively easy and effective way to shape inauthentic consumers' disposal decisions: advertising that reaffirms self-possession connection. [Study 5's connection ads are arguably subtle and whether heavy-handed ads would also offset disposal is an empirical question. Ads that depict overly strong and/or obvious self-possession connections may produce contrast effects and potentially backfire, perhaps by inadvertently reminding consumers that their current connection to possessions is broken, or simply by drawing attention to the ads' persuasive intent (Laran, Dalton, & Andrade, 2011).].

9.5. Limitations and future research directions

First, self-inauthenticity can yield consequences beyond disposal. For example, we found that it influences both disposal and purchase (i.e., purchase frequencies in Study 1 and bid prices in Study 3). While disposal reflects a self-product consistency effect, the purchase of new products might reflect a compensatory effect. That is, self-inauthenticity may drive purchase because consumers purchase new products to compensate for self-inauthenticity or for one of the negative psychological experiences associated with it (e.g., reduced self-continuity; Lasaleta & Loveland, 2019). Certain types of products, such as products that represent a new self (Song, Gonzalez-Jimenez, & Belk, 2021), also might be more likely to be purchased than others. Moreover, possession alienation, like self-inauthenticity, also might have consequences beyond disposal. It might affect monetary valuation of possessions (which could lower resell prices) or attitudes toward possessions (which could lower consumers' ratings on product review sites).

Second, the present studies show that self-inauthenticity affects disposal in general. We do not examine the types of possessions targeted for disposal, but it is possible that some possessions are targeted less than others. For example, consumers may not target product categories that are not perceived as extensions of the self (e.g., bike lights, dish soap, Berger & Heath, 2007). They also may not dispose of specific possessions that provide comfort or that symbolize the authentic self. For example, products that are customized (Choi et al., 2022) or that carry nostalgic value (Lasaleta & Loveland, 2019) might symbolize the authentic self. Keeping such possessions might help consumers cope with self-inauthenticity. Conversely, some possessions might be targeted *more* than others. For example, consumers may dispose of possessions that are linked to the source of self-inauthenticity as a compensatory response.[8]

Third, the present research supports the idea that feeling out-of-touch with the self causes inauthentic consumers to feel out-of-touch with possessions because, through ownership, possessions are extensions of the self. However, objects can become extensions of the self without physical ownership. Controlling an object or possessing intimate knowledge about an object can establish *psychological* ownership (Kirk, Peck, & Swain, 2018). Marketing that encourages consumers to mentally simulate product use also might facilitate psychological ownership. An object could also be linked to the self by implicit priming

[8] We suggest that compensation is not at play in the present research. Empirically, if disposal enabled consumers to compensate for self-inauthenticity, self-authenticity would increase after disposal (Lasaleta & Loveland, 2019). We addressed this possibility in studies 2 and 4 by counterbalancing the order of the self-alienation measure (the self-inauthenticity manipulation check) and the disposal DV. We obtained similar results regardless of order, suggesting that disposal did not compensate for inauthenticity (at least not immediately). We call for future research to examine when self-inauthenticity may affect product disposal through a compensatory mechanism.

that pairs the object with the self (Perkins & Forehand, 2012). Thus, although we suggest that the effect of self-inauthenticity on alienation and disposal depends on ownership, it is possible that ownership need not be physical but instead can be psychological.

Fourth, the effect of self-inauthenticity on disposal may be influenced by other individual and social factors. For example, self-inauthenticity might be less likely to affect disposal among environmentally-conscious consumers, who hesitate to dispose of possessions in general. If they do dispose, the perceived incongruity between disposal and their values could further undermine their self-authenticity. Lastly, cultural norms may influence which situations elicit self-authenticity, as well as consumers' disposal habits. Future research should investigate how these and other factors moderate our effects.

10. Conclusion

As modern businesses models are trying to incorporate sustainability concepts, understanding how consumers decide whether to retain versus dispose of their products becomes paramount. Good solutions will hinge on understanding the factors and mechanisms that govern these disposal decisions. The present research demonstrates one psychological catalyst to disposal: self-inauthenticity and the feelings of alienation from possessions it engenders. Specifically, inauthentic consumers, who feel out-of-touch with their true self, likewise feel out-of-touch with objects that are extensions of the "self"—i.e., their possessions—and therefore become more likely to dispose of a possession than to keep it.

Funding

This research is funded by the Hong Kong Research Grants Council (GRF16504817).

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Jingshi (Joyce) Liu: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Amy Nicole Dalton:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Funding acquisition.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

Acknowledgements

The authors sincerely thank Jaideep Sengupta and Christine Kim for their thoughtful comments on the earlier versions of this paper.

Appendix A. Key stimuli & measures

Self-inauthenticity Manipulation

Inauthentic Condition, Studies 2–4 [Authentic Condition, Studies 3, 4].

The way we feel, think, and behave may or may not be consistent with who we are.[9]

Please take a moment to think back to a time when you felt that you were not being [completely being] yourself. It might be a situation in which you acted inconsistently [consistently] with your true feelings or acted as someone other than yourself [in accordance with who you are]. Please vividly recall your feelings in that situation.

In the space below, please describe that situation and your feelings in detail.

Control Condition, Study 2 (Control Condition in Study 4 was similarly worded).

Please take a moment to think back to what you did this morning after you got up. Please vividly recall all the things you did after you got up and before you went to work/school.

In the space below, please describe everything you did this morning in detail.

Describe what you did this morning before you went to work/school.

Self-inauthenticity manipulation checks (Studies 2, 4)

How do you feel right now?

- I feel as if I don't know myself very well
- I feel out of touch with the "real me"
- I feel alienated from myself
- I don't know how I really feel inside

Study 2 DV: Spring cleaning scenario

Decision Making Task

It is time for Spring cleaning. Today, you are cleaning your room and going through all the things in your closet. You realize that have a lot of clothes. Thus, you are considering what to do with these clothes. You decide that you will separate your clothes into three piles:

The first pile includes clothes to keep for yourself.

The second pile includes clothes to throw away in the trash.

The third pile includes clothes to donate to others.

Please take a moment to think about the clothes you have and make your allocation for each pile.

Please make your allocation for the three piles of clothes (in %, the sum must equal to 100).

CLOTHES TO KEEP:_____

CLOTHES TO TRASH:_____

[9] This first sentence appeared for participants in Study 4, but was excluded from Studies 2 and 3.

CLOTHES TO DONATE:_____

Total: [summed to 100]

Study 3 DV: Online clothing exchange (upload to resell)

Welcome back to Clothing Exchange! We now have enough participants online!

First, we would like to offer you the opportunity to sell your used T-shirts to other participants who are currently online during the Clothing Exchange. If you would like the opportunity to sell a used t-shirt to someone, please upload a photo of that t-shirt on the next screen. Other participants will have a chance to view the photo of your t-shirt later.

o Yes, I would consider selling my used t-shirts.

o No, I am not interested in the opportunity of selling today.

Please take a photo of the t-shirt that you are willing to sell and upload the photo.

** Please try to take the photo in a plain background. Other participants may view your t-shirt during the clothing exchange.

Study 3′s follow-up field test DV: clothing swap participation intentions

Fashion Revolution Week

This week (April 22–28, 2019) is Fashion Revolution Week! The purpose of the Fashion Revolution Week is to encourage and educate people to consume fashion products in a responsible and sustainable way. In support of the Fashion Revolution Week, [university] is interested in organizing events and activities in the upcoming weeks. So, we would like to know what events might interest our students and staff members.

Please indicate how likely you are to participate in each of the following events and activities (and please try to be realistic and honest so we can get an accurate picture of demand).

How likely are you to participate in each of the following activities?

- Clothing Swap ("sell" your clothes by exchanging them for other [university] members' clothes) (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*)
- Textile Waste Movie Screening (attend a movie screening to learn more about textile waste in [city]) (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*)

Study 4 DV: Cellphone replace vs. Repair decision

Cellphone Problem

Today, you are playing with your smart phone as usual. As you click on an app, however, your phone freezes and, moments later, turns into a black screen….

You search online, using your computer, and find out that the black screen is likely caused by a battery problem. As the battery ages, it takes a longer processing time for your phone to switch from one app to another, and sometimes it may even cause black screen. As you search further, you learn that you can in fact change the battery inside your smart phone to solve the problem. You look at your cell phone and start contemplating what to do with it……..

You can get rid of the current phone and get a new one if you want, or you can repair your current phone by changing the battery…. What is your decision?

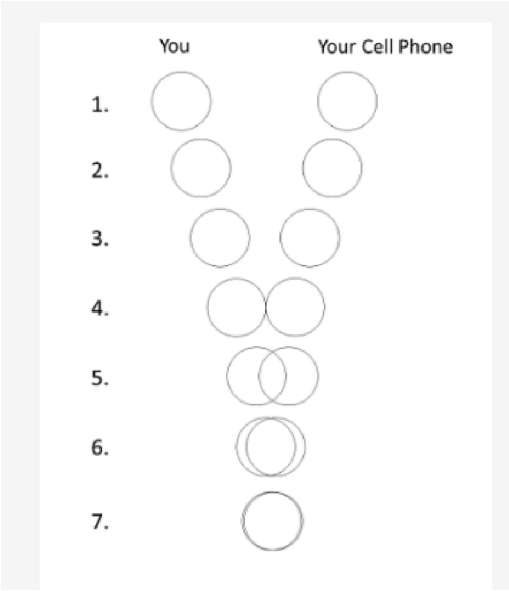
- What is your decision regarding the phone? (1 = *Definitely Get a New Phone*; 100 = *Definitely Repair the Current Phone*; reverse coded in analysis: higher scores indicate preference for replacement over repair)

Study 4 possession alienation [Non-possession Alienation] Measure

(Reverse coded for analysis: higher scores indicate greater alienation).

Imagine that this is your cell phone [a phone in a store]:

How connected do you feel to your cell phone [the cell phone] right now? In the following images, the circle on the left represents you, and the circle on the right represents your cell phone [a cell phone in a store]. Please indicate the number of the image that most accurately represents the distance you feel between you and your cell phone [a cell phone in a store] right now.



Study 5 DV: Home decluttering disposal decision

Imagine that you have decided to "declutter" your home, and today is the big day. To declutter your home, you have decided that you will get rid of some material possessions (e.g., by trashing, donating, gifting, or selling the items). Think about your material possessions at home, such as your clothes, electronics, and kitchen appliances. If you were to declutter today, what proportion (in %) of these possessions would you part with?

(Please enter a number between 0 and 100 in the text-box below).

Studies 2–4: Measure of emotions

We analyzed text responses in Studies 2-4′s writing tasks using the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count software (LIWC). LIWC uses a dictionary to categorize words on linguistic dimensions (e.g., positive or negative emotions) and calculates the percentage of words in each dimension (Pennebaker et al., 2015). LIWC's emotion dimensions have been validated. Following prior research, we computed a relative emotions index (positive emotions − negative emotions; Pennebaker et al., 1997). Our key results held; see Appendix B-1.

References to Appendix A

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Appendix B. Additional analyses

1. Results of analyses with emotions as a covariate in studies 2–4

Study 2. A fractional outcome logistic regression including emotions as a covariate showed that self-inauthenticity reduces the proportion of clothes kept (b = -0.20, SE = 0.06, z = -3.65, $p < 0.001$, *Odds Ratio* = 0.82), while emotions did not predict the decision to keep or dispose of clothing (b = -0.002, SE = 0.02, z = -0.09, p = 0.93, *Odds Ratio* = 0.99).

Study 3. A binary logit regression including emotions and bid price as covariates showed that self-inauthenticity marginally increased uploads to resell (b = 0.21, SE = 0.13, z = 1.63, p = 0.10, *Odds Ratio* = 1.23). Bid price (b = -0.12, SE = 0.10, z = -1.14, p = 0.25, *Odds Ratio* = 0.89) and emotions did not affect uploads to resell (b = -0.02, SE = 0.03, z = -0.93, p = 0.35, *Odds Ratio* = 0.98).

Study 4. We first regressed possession alienation on the inauthenticity conditions (using inauthenticity as benchmark), keeping emotions and alienation from non-possession as covariates. Both the baseline control (b = -0.38, SE = 0.16, $t(396)$ = -2.24, p = 0.02, η_p^2 = 0.01) and authenticity (b = -0.42, SE = 0.18, $t(396)$ = -2.30, p = 0.02, η_p^2 = 0.01) conditions reported lower possession alienation than the inauthenticity condition. Alienation from a non-possession had a main effect (b = 0.39, SE = 0.04, $t(396)$ = 9.76, $p < 0.001$, η_p^2 = 0.19), but emotions yielded no effect (b = 0.006, SE = 0.02, $t(396)$ = 0.32, p = 0.75, $\eta_p^2 < 0.001$). Furthermore, we reran a mediation analysis with emotions as an additional covariate. As in the main text (Section 7.2), we found a significant indirect effect of self-inauthenticity on decisions to replace, mediated by possession alienation (bootstrapped sample = 5000, comparing control vs. inauthentic: 95 % CI = [-3.154, -0.120]; comparing authentic vs. inauthentic: 95 % CI = [-3.568, -0.079]).

2. Results of study 3′s follow-up field survey

		DV = Clothing Swap	***DV = Movie Screening***
Inauthenticity	***b, (SE)***	**0.17, (0.08)**	0.06, (0.08)
	t(961)	**1.97**	0.82
	p-value, (η_p^2)	**0.05, (0.004)**	0.41, (0.001)
	VIF	**1.74**	1.74
Self-esteem	*b, (SE)*	0.26, (0.16)	0.13, (0.15)
	t(961)	1.58	0.84

(*continued on next page*)

(*continued*)

		DV* = *Clothing Swap	***DV* = *Movie Screening***
	p-value, (η_p^2)	0.11, (0.003)	0.40, (0.001)
	VIF	1.64	1.65
Environmental attitudes	*b, (SE)*	0.29, (0.07)	0.21, (0.07)
	t(961)	4.01	3.10
	p-value, (η_p^2)	< 0.001, (0.016)	0.002, (0.010)
	VIF	1.14	1.15
Interest in the other event	*b, (SE)*	0.36, (0.03)	0.31, (0.03)
	t(961)	10.90	10.90
	p-value, (η_p^2)	< 0.001, (0.11)	< 0.001, (0.11)
	VIF	1.03	1.04

Covariates include chronic self-esteem (correlated with inauthenticity, $r = -0.62$, $p < 0.001$), environmental attitudes (correlated with inauthenticity, $r = -0.32$, $p < 0.001$ and should affect interest in sustainability events), and interest in the other event (interests in the events were correlated, $r = 0.351$, $p < 0.001$). VIFs < 10, the regressions found no multicollinearity issue.

Appendix C. Appendix Studies 1 & 2

The Appendix Studies show that self-inauthenticity can be activated in consumption contexts, which, in turn, affects consumers' possession disposal decisions in unrelated contexts. We activate inauthenticity by replicating the finding that counterfeit users feel inauthentic (Lasaleta & Loveland, 2019; Appendix Studies 1–2). We also establish that inauthenticity arises when using an outgroup brand (Appendix Study 1).

Appendix study 1

In this study, we manipulate product authenticity (counterfeit or genuine) and brand association (ingroup or outgroup). We expect users of counterfeited and/or outgroup brands to feel more inauthentic than users of genuine ingroup brands, as the latter is the only group who are engaging in consumption that is true to the self. Moreover, we test whether self-inauthenticity triggered by these consumer behaviors would in turn induce possession alienation, using a measure of alienation from *favorite* possessions. Because consumers' connection to their favorite possessions tends to be strong and enduring (Kleine et al., 1995), connection to a favorite possession may be less swayed by inauthenticity. Thus, alienation from a favorite possession provides a strong test of the potential situational effects of inauthenticity.

Methods. For partial course credit, 459 undergraduates completed a 2 (product authenticity: counterfeit, genuine) by 2 (brand association: ingroup, outgroup) between-subjects study. They listed one social group to which they belonged (ingroup) and one to which they did not belong (outgroup), then a brand associated with each group (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). The genuine [counterfeit] condition imagined wearing a genuine [counterfeit] brand t-shirt. In the ingroup [outgroup] condition, they imagined it was the ingroup [outgroup] brand they named earlier. All participants completed a self-inauthenticity measure ($\alpha = 0.87$, as the manipulation check in studies 2 & 4). They reported how connected they felt to their favorite possession (Aron et al., 1992; higher scores indicated greater alienation). Excluding six who failed an attention check, 453 participants (68.9 % females; $M_{age} = 19.88$, $SD = 1.56$) remained for analyses.

Results: Consumption-Induced Self-Inauthenticity. ANOVA on self-inauthenticity yielded main effects of product authenticity ($F(1,449) = 11.66$, $p < 0.001$) and brand association ($F(1,449) = 17.45$, $p < 0.001$), and an interaction ($F(1,449) = 3.83$, $p = 0.05$). Three planned contrasts confirmed that, compared to using a genuine ingroup brand ($M = 2.99$), using a counterfeit ingroup brand ($M = 3.69$, $p < 0.001$), a genuine outgroup brand ($M = 3.79$, $p < 0.001$), or a counterfeit outgroup brand ($M = 3.98$, $p < 0.001$) increased feelings of inauthenticity.

Results: Possession Alienation. A linear regression found that inauthenticity increased consumers' alienation from their favorite possessions ($b = 0.16$, $t(451) = 2.63$, $p < 0.01$). We conducted a mediation analysis using the four conditions as a multi-categorical IV (genuine ingroup brand as the benchmark condition), self-inauthenticity as the mediator, and alienation from favorite possessions as the DV (Process Model 4, bootstrapped samples = 5000). The results yielded significant mediation effects (see the below table for results).

Indirect effect on alienation from favorite possessions, mediated by inauthenticity:	*b*	*SE*	95 % CI
Genuine ingroup vs. Genuine outgroup	0.113	0.06	[0.008, 0.253]
Genuine ingroup vs. Counterfeit ingroup	0.099	0.05	[0.008, 0.215]
Genuine ingroup vs. Counterfeit outgroup	0.140	0.07	[0.010, 0.291]

Appendix study 2

This study tests whether inauthenticity elicited by using a counterfeit increases disposal of other possessions (i.e., other than the counterfeit). Desire to purchase new products also is measured to use as a covariate when analyzing the effect of self-inauthenticity on disposal.

Methods. In exchange of monetary payment, 201 American MTurkers completed a 2-condition (consumption: counterfeit brand, genuine brand) between-subjects study. Participants in the counterfeit [genuine] brand condition read and imagined themselves in a scenario where they used a counterfeit [genuine] brand. They then completed a self-inauthenticity measure ($\alpha = 0.95$, as in Appendix Study 1). Then, participants made decisions in two separate scenarios displayed in counterbalanced orders: a decluttering scenario where they reported the proportion of possessions they would dispose of (same as in Study 5); and a purchase scenario where they imagined going to the mall on the weekend and reported their likelihood to purchase new clothes (1 = *definitely will not purchase new clothes*, 7 = *definitely will purchase new clothes*). Finally, participants completed demographic questions and an attention check. Excluding eight participants who failed the attention check left data from N = 193 participants in the analyses (42.5 % female, $M_{age} = 41.52$, $SD = 12.49$).

***Results*: *Consumption-Induced Self-Inauthenticity*.** ANOVA on self-inauthenticity using consumption scenario as a factor showed that using a counterfeit (vs. genuine) brand increased inauthenticity ($M_{counterfeit} = 2.39$, $SD = 1.64$; $M_{genuine} = 1.89$, $SD = 1.22$; $F(1,191) = 5.87$, $p = 0.02$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.03$), replicating Appendix Study 1 and Lasaleta & Loveland (2019).

Results: Possession Disposal. To test whether self-inauthenticity elicited by using a counterfeit (vs. genuine) brand in turn leads to possession

disposal, we conducted a mediation analysis, with consumption conditions as the IV, self-inauthenticity as the mediator, and decluttering as the DV (PROCESS Model 4). Self-inauthenticity increased decluttering ($b = 3.96$, $SE = 0.89$, $t(190) = 4.43$, $p < 0.001$) and mediated the indirect effect of counterfeit (vs. genuine) brand consumption on decluttering (bootstrapped sample = 5000, 95 % CI = [0.178, 2.10]. Thus, self-inauthenticity elicited in using a counterfeit brand in turn increases disposal of other products (e.g., possessions at one's home).

Results: New product purchase. A second mediation analysis with the same IV and mediator but purchase intentions as the DV found that self-inauthenticity had no effect on purchase intention ($b = 0.09$, $SE = 0.08$, $t(190) = 1.13$, $p = 0.26$), nor did it mediate the indirect effect of counterfeit (vs. genuine) brand consumption on purchase (bootstrapped sample = 5000, 95 % CI = [-0.023, 0.076]. Finally, the indirect effect mediated by self-inauthenticity on disposal held even controlling for purchase (bootstrapped sample = 5000, 95 % CI = [0.171, 1.964]).

Discussion

In sum, using a counterfeit (Appendix studies 1–2) or an outgroup brand (Appendix study 1) can activate self-inauthenticity. Inauthentic consumers, in turn, feel alienated from favorite possessions (Appendix study 1) and inclined to dispose of possessions (Appendix study 2). These results replicate those of the main studies by showing that self-inauthenticity causes possession alienation and disposal. However, while those studies rely on a writing task that activates self-inauthenticity idiosyncratically, these studies rely on consumer behaviors that activate self-inauthenticity across participants. Specifically, we replicate prior evidence that using counterfeits elicits self-inauthenticity, and we offer initial evidence that using outgroup brands elicits self-inauthenticity. These studies indicate that inauthentic consumption can be a driver of possession disposal.

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