



Antecedents of Brand Authenticity: A Dimensional Analysis of ATLAS Sarong Consumers in Tasikmalaya City

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of brand warmth and brand competence on the dimensions of brand authenticity, including continuity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism among consumers of ATLAS Sarongs in Tasikmalaya City. The study employed statistical methods, utilizing a seven-point Likert scale as the data collection tool. Purposive sampling was used as the sampling method, and the data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with SmartPLS 4. The results indicate that brand warmth and brand competence have a positive influence on continuity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism. Brand warmth was found to have the greatest influence on credibility, while brand competence was found to have the greatest influence on continuity.

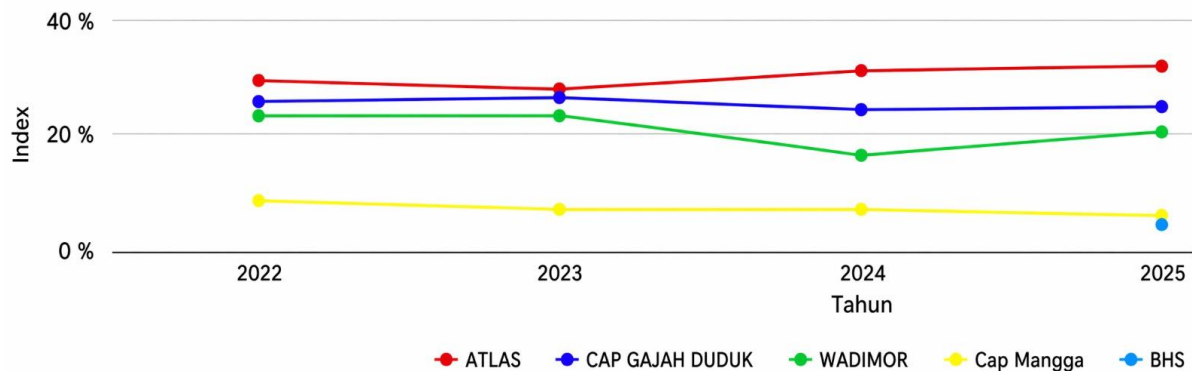
INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's traditional textile and apparel industry is currently facing increasingly complex competitive dynamics driven by globalization, shifting consumer preferences, and the influx of substitute products from both domestic and international markets. These conditions are prompting companies to compete not only on product quality and price but also through brand strength capable of fostering positive perceptions. In this context, a brand no longer functions merely as a product identifier but also serves as a representation of the values, trust, and identity perceived by consumers (Mihalcea & Catoiu, 2026).

Sarong, locally known as *sarung*, is considered a traditional garment that plays a significant role in the lives of Indonesians. In addition to serving as a basic necessity, the sarong also holds symbolic value related to cultural identity, religious values, and the community's lifestyle (Farid et

al., 2025). Husna (2019) notes that the use of sarongs is still widely observed in various activities, such as religious worship, social and religious gatherings, and daily routines within the community. This indicates that the sarong possesses not only functional value but also strong social and cultural significance, making it essential for sarong brands to establish a strong sense of meaning among consumers.

Figure 1. Brand Index Comparison for the Sarong Product Category



One of the sarong brands that has long been familiar to the Indonesian public is ATLAS. In 2025, data from the Top Brand Award showed that ATLAS led the pack with a Top Brand Index (TBI) score of 32%, while maintaining its position amid fierce competition in the sarong industry. This achievement signifies that ATLAS enjoys a high level of popularity and acceptance among consumers. However, in a highly competitive market, a brand's success is determined not only by popularity but also by its ability to build a perception of authenticity. Therefore, it is important to understand how consumers perceive the authenticity of the ATLAS sarong brand, along with the factors that influence it.

In this study, brand authenticity is understood through several key dimensions: continuity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism. Continuity indicates a brand's consistency in maintaining its values and character over time; credibility relates to the level of consumer trust in the claims and quality offered by the brand; integrity reflects the brand's commitment and honesty in upholding its values; while symbolism describes the brand's ability to represent specific meanings or identities for its consumers (Morhart et al., 2015).

The study conducted by Papadopoulou et al. (2023) focuses primarily on the consequences of brand authenticity, while research on the factors shaping such perceptions remains limited. In other studies, consumer perceptions of a brand are often explained through the two main dimensions of the Stereotyping Content Model (SCM): brand warmth and brand competence. Brand warmth relates to how consumers perceive a brand's goodwill, care, and emotional closeness, while brand competence describes a brand's ability to deliver product quality, reliability, and good performance to consumers (Kolbl et al., 2020). Therefore, brand warmth and brand competence are believed to play a significant role in shaping perceptions of brand authenticity.

In the Indonesian sarong market, ATLAS is one of the brands with a fairly extensive distribution network across various regions, including Tasikmalaya. Tasikmalaya City was chosen as the research location because its residents are known for their strong religious life, supported by numerous Islamic educational institutions, such as pesantren and madrasahs, leading it to be frequently referred to *kota santri*. These conditions highlight Tasikmalaya as a relevant location for examining consumer perceptions of sarong brands, particularly regarding how consumers interpret sarong products not only from a functional perspective but also in terms of the symbolic value inherent in the products.

Based on the research gap outlined above, this study examines the antecedents of brand authenticity, specifically its dimensions, such as continuity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism,

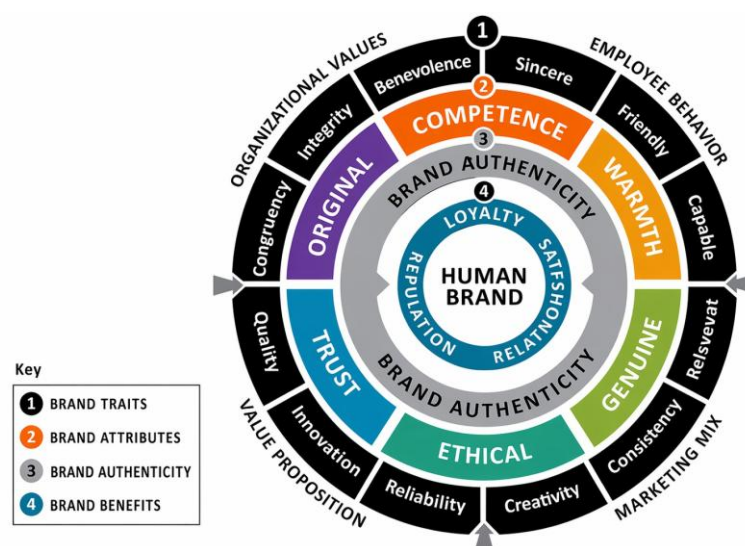
which still require empirical validation through a quantitative approach. The study aims to investigate the influence of brand warmth and brand competence on brand authenticity among ATLAS Sarong consumers in Tasikmalaya City through dimensional analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand Warmth

Brands that project warmth tend to be better able to build deeper emotional connections with consumers and are more easily perceived as authentic because they are seen as non-exploitative (Kirkby et al., 2023; Rodrigues et al., 2024). According to Kolbl et al. (2020), brand warmth describes consumers' perceptions of a brand's sincerity, friendliness, and concern for its customers' well-being.

Figure 2. The Human Brand Model (Portal et al., 2018a)



Portal et al. (2018a) propose a graphical representation for building a brand perceived as human through a four-stage process, in which the first three stages represent brand inputs, while the fourth stage represents brand benefits or the consequences of those actions. Based on Figure 2, it is evident that brand warmth (the second stage) can lead to perceptions of brand authenticity (the third stage). In another study, Eigenraam et al. (2021) demonstrated that brand warmth significantly influences consumers' perceptions of authenticity, as assessed by the engagement initiatives a brand launches for its customers. Additionally, research by Girardin et al. (2023) states that perceptions of brand authenticity are influenced by existential cues, which are experiences that allow consumers to feel a genuine and meaningful connection with a brand. In this context, brand warmth can be viewed as a form of existential cue because it reflects the perception that the brand possesses good intentions, sincerity, and care for its consumers. When consumers view a brand as friendly and sincere, they tend to perceive the brand as more authentic. Furthermore, research by Mathur & Nayak (2025) found that relational communication from online retailers elicits perceived warmth and perceived effort, thereby strengthening perceived brand authenticity.

Brand Competence

The study by Kervyn et al. (2022) confirms that brand warmth and brand competence are predictors of specific feelings toward a brand. According to Wang & Liu (2020), brand competence refers to perceptions of a brand's technical ability, efficacy, and intelligence in

producing high-quality products. Based on Figure 2, it is evident that brand competence can also generate perceptions of brand authenticity. Eigenraam et al. (2021) found that brand competence plays a crucial role in shaping consumers' perceptions of authenticity, which can be observed through various engagement initiatives undertaken by the brand toward its customers. Previous research indicates that perceptions of brand authenticity are formed when consumers assess the alignment between a brand's claims and the reality they experience. Girardin et al. (2023) demonstrate that indexical cues are viewed as one of the antecedents influencing these perceptions because they serve as tangible evidence that a brand is genuinely capable of fulfilling the promises it makes to consumers. In this context, brand competence can be viewed as a form of indexical cues because it reflects a brand's ability, reliability, and efficiency in delivering performance that aligns with consumer expectations. When consumers perceive a brand as competent and capable of fulfilling its promises, they tend to view that brand as authentic. In addition, a study by Im et al. (2025) found that brand competence and brand warmth are positively correlated with brand authenticity.

Continuity

As one dimension of perceived brand authenticity, continuity is defined as the perception that a brand is able to consistently maintain its core values, identity, and character over time (Morhart et al., 2015). Consumers, particularly among the younger generation, prefer brands that have a "soul" and consistency over brands that appear to be solely profit-driven without caring about long-term relationships with their customers (Södergren, 2021). According to Hegner & Jevons (2016), brands must focus on the safety, consistency, and continuity of their products to achieve a high level of predictability. Cop & Astekin (2022) explain that brand authenticity reflects a brand's ability to endure over time and through changing trends. Therefore, the researchers propose the following hypothesis.

H1: Brand warmth positively affects continuity.

H2: Brand competence positively affects continuity.

Credibility

As one dimension of perceived brand authenticity, credibility is defined as the perception that a brand is honest, trustworthy, and capable of fulfilling the promises it makes to consumers (Morhart et al., 2015). Credibility reflects consumers' belief that a brand consistently meets their expectations without manipulation (Campagna et al., 2022; Portal et al., 2018b). Cop & Astekin (2022) explain that brand authenticity reflects a brand that is open and honest. Therefore, the researchers propose the following hypothesis.

H3: Brand warmth positively affects credibility.

H4: Brand competence positively affects credibility.

Integrity

As one dimension of perceived brand authenticity, integrity is defined as the perception that a brand possesses strong moral principles and ethical values, reflected through honesty toward consumers, loyalty to the brand's internal values, and a commitment to carrying out its established mission (Coary & Oakley, 2018; Morhart et al., 2015). Integrity is evident when a brand demonstrates a deep commitment to the best interests of its customers, placing customer interests above its own and making them the core of the organization (Portal et al., 2018a). In this context, integrity is conveyed through transparent, responsible, and accountable behavior. Therefore, the researchers propose the following hypothesis.

H5: Brand warmth positively affects integrity.

H6: Brand competence positively affects integrity.

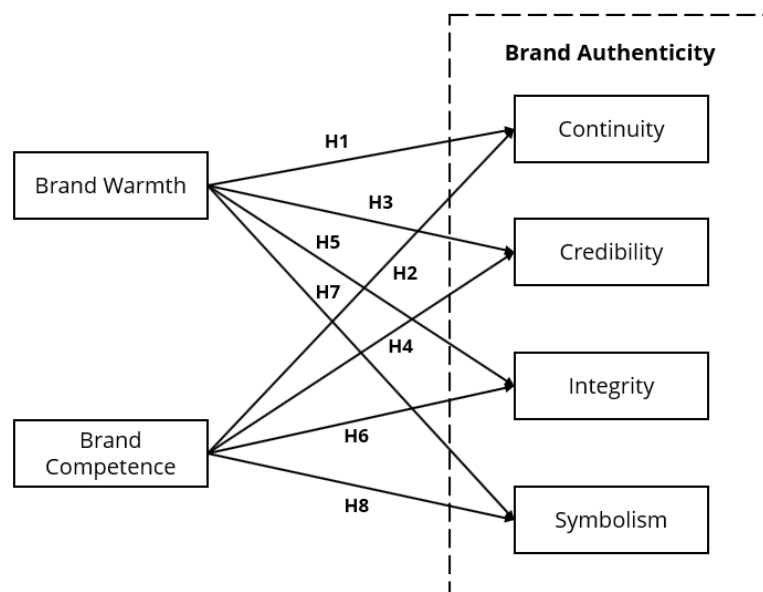
Symbolism

As one dimension of perceived brand authenticity, symbolism is defined as a brand's ability to represent consumers' self-identity and help them express their values, personality, or lifestyle (Morhart et al., 2015). Brands perceived as authentic not only offer functional quality but also allow consumers to express their self-identity more honestly. Through the use of brands perceived as authentic, consumers can demonstrate their true selves and personal values to their social environment with greater confidence (Halwani & Cherry, 2024; Napoli et al., 2014). Wu et al. (2017) found that brand warmth and brand competence can enhance brand attachment. When consumers develop an emotional bond with a brand, they no longer view it solely from a functional perspective but also as a means to express their identity, thereby endowing the brand with symbolic meaning for the consumer. Therefore, the researchers propose the following hypothesis.

H7: Brand warmth positively affects symbolism.

H8: Brand competence positively affects symbolism.

Figure 3. Conceptual Framework



METHODS

This study employed a quantitative method, which involves the collection and analysis of numerical data to explain, predict, and control relevant factors. A purposive sampling technique was selected to ensure that respondents met specific criteria, which were having purchased an ATLAS sarong and residing in Tasikmalaya City. A questionnaire with a seven-point Likert scale was used as the data collection tool because it was deemed most suitable for subjective assessment and easy to use (Taherdoost, 2019; Yusof et al., 2019), based on 23 validated indicators from previous studies. Four indicators of brand warmth and four indicators of brand competence were adopted from Fiske et al. (2002), while four indicators of continuity, three indicators of credibility, four indicators of integrity, and four indicators of symbolism were adopted from Morhart et al. (2015). Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using SmartPLS 4 was employed for data analysis. Hair et al. (2019) state that in Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), the minimum sample size must be at least five times the number of indicators. Therefore, a total of 130 respondents will constitute the sample for this study.

RESULTS

Respondent Demographics

The survey, which was distributed via a Google Form, yielded a substantial dataset for analysis. Table 1 presents a comprehensive demographic profile of the respondents, including their gender, age, and education level.

Table 1. Respondent Demographics

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	113	86.9%
	Female	17	13.1%
Age	18 - 25	32	24.6%
	26 - 35	51	39.2%
	36 - 45	36	27.7%
	> 45	11	8.5%
Level of Education	Elementary School	0	0%
	Junior High School	4	3.1%
	Senior High School	28	21.5%
	College	98	75.4%

Source: Data Processed, 2026

The majority of respondents were male (n=113; 86.9%), aged 26 – 35 (n=51; 39.2%), and had completed college as their highest level of formal education (n=98; 75.4%).

Evaluation of Measurement Model (Outer Model Test)

Outer model tests are used to assess the validity and reliability of a research model (Hair et al., 2021). The results of the measurement model tests are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Respondent Demographics

Latent Variable	Indicators	Convergent Validity		Internal Consistency Reliability		
		Outer Loadings	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (ρ_A)	Composite Reliability (ρ_C)
Brand Warmth	BW1	0.917	0.825	0.929	0.930	0.950
	BW2	0.905				
	BW3	0.907				
	BW4	0.905				
Brand Competence	BC1	0.954	0.877	0.953	0.953	0.966
	BC2	0.920				
	BC3	0.937				
	BC4	0.934				
Continuity	BACO1	0.906	0.835	0.934	0.935	0.953
	BACO2	0.925				
	BACO3	0.910				
	BACO4	0.914				
Credibility	BACR1	0.876	0.828	0.896	0.897	0.935

	BACR2	0.934				
	BACR3	0.919				
Integrity	BAI1	0.878	0.794	0.914	0.920	0.939
	BAI2	0.888				
	BAI3	0.905				
	BAI4	0.893				
Symbolism	BAS1	0.897	0.796	0,915	0.916	0.940
	BAS2	0.888				
	BAS3	0.889				
	BAS4	0.894				

Source: Data Processed, 2026

All indicators have outer loadings above 0.70, which meets the minimum threshold for convergent validity. In addition, both the composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha exceed 0.70, indicating strong construct reliability. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is also above 0.50, indicating that more than 50% of the variance in the indicators can be explained by the construct.

Evaluation of Structural Model (Inner Model Test)

Inner model tests are used to examine the relationships among latent variables, predictors, and model fit (Hair et al., 2021). These tests include the R-squared test, the F-squared test, and the model fit test, which are presented in Table 2, Table 3, and Table 4, respectively.

Table 3. R-Square Test

	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
Continuity	0.852	0.850
Credibility	0.870	0.868
Integrity	0.732	0.728
Symbolism	0.557	0.550

Source: Data Processed, 2026

The R^2 values for continuity and credibility are above 0.75, indicating a strong model, while the R^2 values for integrity and symbolism fall between 0.50 and 0.75, indicating a model with moderate predictive power.

Table 4. F-Square Test

	f-square
Brand Warmth → Continuity	0.155
Brand Competence → Continuity	0.262
Brand Warmth → Credibility	0.294
Brand Competence → Credibility	0.189
Brand Warmth → Integrity	0.100
Brand Competence → Integrity	0.095
Brand Warmth → Symbolism	0.049
Brand Competence → Symbolism	0.040

Source: Data Processed, 2026

The results of the F-square test indicate that brand warmth has a moderate effect on continuity (0.155) and credibility (0.294). Brand competence also has a moderate effect on continuity (0.262) and credibility (0.189). Meanwhile, both brand warmth and brand competence

have only a small effect on integrity and symbolism. The respective effect sizes are 0.100 and 0.049 for the influence of brand warmth, and 0.095 and 0.040 for the influence of brand competence.

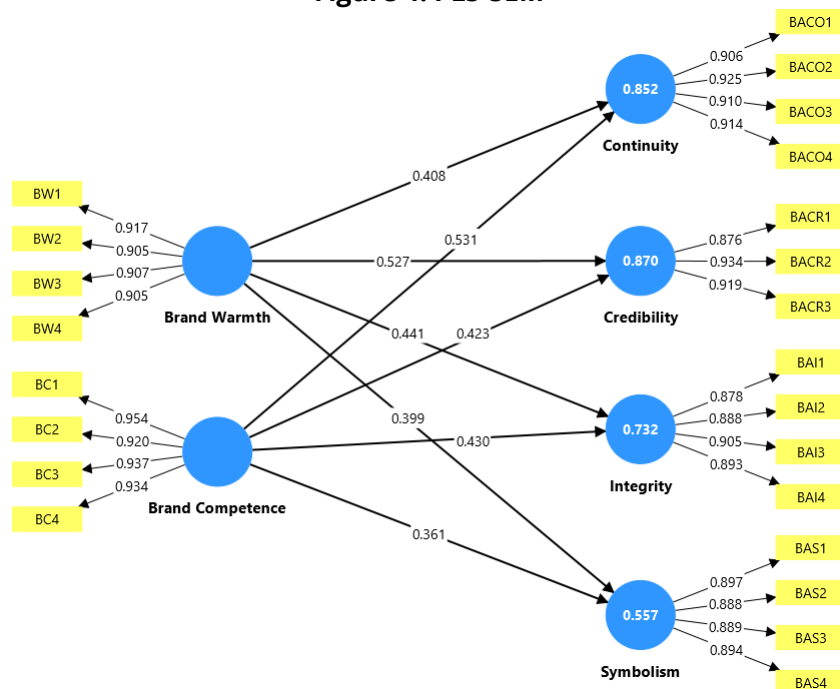
Table 5. Model Fit Test

	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
SRMR	0.055	0.073
d_ULS	0.832	1.462
d_G	1.427	1.642
Chi-Square	881.081	975.374
NFI	0.790	0.767

Source: Data Processed, 2026

The SRMR results, for both the saturated model and the estimated model, are below 0.08, indicating good model fit.

Figure 4. PLS-SEM



The structural representation of the proposed theoretical framework is shown in Figure 4. This structure meets all the previously established criteria. Then, the following structural equation was obtained, using brand warmth as X_1 and brand competence as X_2 .

Table 6. Structural Equation

	Structural Equation
Continuity	$= 0.408X_1 + 0.531X_2 + \varepsilon_1$
Credibility	$= 0.527X_1 + 0.423X_2 + \varepsilon_2$
Integrity	$= 0.441X_1 + 0.430X_2 + \varepsilon_3$
Symbolism	$= 0.399X_1 + 0.361X_2 + \varepsilon_4$

Source: Data Processed, 2026

Hypothesis Test

Path coefficient tests are used to evaluate the relationships between variables in a model, with a p-value of less than 0.05 indicating a significant relationship (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 7. Path Coefficients

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Brand Warmth → Continuity	0.408	0.413	0.145	2.812	0.005
Brand Competence → Continuity	0.531	0.527	0.139	3.822	0.000
Brand Warmth → Integrity	0.527	0.530	0.117	4.500	0.000
Brand Competence → Symbolism	0.423	0.420	0.117	3.625	0.000
Brand Warmth → Continuity	0.441	0.432	0.200	2.199	0.028
Brand Competence → Credibility	0.430	0.441	0.200	2.149	0.032
Brand Warmth → Integrity	0.399	0.391	0.193	2.070	0.039
Brand Competence → Symbolism	0.361	0.371	0.183	1.971	0.049

Source: Data Processed, 2026

The results of the path coefficients indicate that both brand warmth and brand competence positively and significantly influence all dimensions of brand authenticity, namely continuity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism. Brand warmth has the greatest influence on credibility (0.527, $p = 0.000$), followed by integrity (0.441, $p = 0.028$), continuity (0.408, $p = 0.005$), and symbolism (0.399, $p = 0.039$). Meanwhile, brand competence has the greatest influence on continuity (0.531, $p = 0.000$), followed by integrity (0.430, $p = 0.032$), credibility (0.423, $p = 0.000$), and symbolism (0.361, $p = 0.049$).

DISCUSSION

The Effect of Brand Warmth and Brand Competence on Continuity among ATLAS Sarong Consumers in Tasikmalaya City

The results of the study showed that brand warmth and brand competence have a positive effect on continuity, suggesting that H1 and H2 are accepted. This indicates that when ATLAS is perceived as a friendly, sincere brand that possesses the capability and reliability to meet consumer needs, consumers tend to view ATLAS as having continuity and being able to endure over time. Perceived brand warmth fosters emotional closeness, while brand competence reinforces consumers' confidence in the brand's quality and performance consistency.

These findings are consistent with those of Marthur and Nayak (2025), who demonstrated that perceived warmth can reinforce perceived brand authenticity, and are supported by Im et al. (2025), who found that brand competence and brand warmth are positively correlated with perceived brand authenticity. Perceived brand authenticity describes the perception that a brand possesses authenticity and is capable of sustaining its existence amidst changing times and trends, which in this study is reflected through the continuity dimension (Cop & Astekin, 2022). Therefore, ATLAS needs to strengthen brand warmth through a more human-centered approach in service and communication, as well as maintain brand competence through consistent product quality and performance, thereby building a perception of the brand as sustainable and timeless.

The Effect of Brand Warmth and Brand Competence on Credibility among ATLAS Sarong Consumers in Tasikmalaya City

The results of the study demonstrate that brand warmth and brand competence have a positive effect on credibility, suggesting that H3 and H4 are supported. This indicates that when ATLAS is perceived as a friendly, sincere brand that cares about its consumers' well-being, and possesses the capability and reliability to produce high-quality products, consumers tend to view ATLAS as a trustworthy brand capable of fulfilling its promises. Perceptions of brand warmth foster the belief that the brand has good intentions and cares about consumers, while brand competence reinforces trust in consistent quality and performance.

These findings are consistent with those of Im et al. (2025), who demonstrated that brand warmth and brand competence are positively correlated with perceived brand authenticity. Perceived brand authenticity describes the perception that a brand is open, honest, and capable of meeting consumer expectations without manipulation, which in this study is reflected through the credibility dimension (Cop & Astekin, 2022; Campagna et al., 2022; Portal et al., 2018b). Therefore, ATLAS needs to strengthen brand warmth by emphasizing honesty and care in every interaction with consumers, as well as maintaining brand competence through consistent product quality and reliability, thereby building and sustaining consumer trust in the brand.

The Effect of Brand Warmth and Brand Competence on Integrity among ATLAS Sarong Consumers in Tasikmalaya City

The results of the study confirm that brand warmth and brand competence have a positive effect on integrity, suggesting that H5 and H6 are supported. This indicates that when ATLAS is perceived as a friendly, sincere brand that cares about its consumers' well-being, while also possessing the capability and reliability to produce high-quality products, consumers tend to assess that ATLAS has strong moral principles and a genuine concern for them. Perceptions of brand warmth foster the belief that the brand has good intentions and cares about consumers, while brand competence reinforces the perception that the brand is capable of consistently upholding its values and commitments.

These findings are supported by Im et al. (2025), who demonstrate that brand warmth and brand competence positively contribute to perceived brand authenticity. In this context, integrity as one of the dimensions of perceived brand authenticity is reflected when a brand demonstrates a strong commitment to its customers' best interests, prioritizes consumer needs above all else, and embodies this through transparent and responsible behavior (Portal et al., 2018a). Therefore, ATLAS needs to strengthen brand warmth by demonstrating genuine care for consumers, as well as maintaining brand competence through consistent product quality and performance, so that it can sustainably demonstrate the brand's moral values and integrity.

The Effect of Brand Warmth and Brand Competence on Symbolism among ATLAS Sarong Consumers in Tasikmalaya City

The results of the study revealed that brand warmth and brand competence have a positive influence on symbolism, suggesting that H4 and H8 are supported. This indicates that when ATLAS is perceived as a friendly, sincere brand that cares about its consumers, and possesses the capability and reliability to produce high-quality products, consumers tend to view ATLAS as a brand that holds symbolic meaning in their lives. Perceptions of brand warmth foster emotional closeness between consumers and the brand, while brand competence reinforces the belief that the brand can represent consumers' values, social identity, and lifestyle.

These findings are consistent with the study by Wu and Dou (2016), which showed that brand warmth and brand competence have a positive effect on brand attachment. This emotional attachment causes consumers to view the brand not only from a functional perspective but also as a means to express their values, identity, and self-image. Therefore, ATLAS needs to strengthen brand warmth by building emotional closeness through more

personal and human-centered interactions, while maintaining brand competence through consistent product quality and performance, thereby creating strong and relevant symbolic meaning for consumers.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study reveal that brand warmth and brand competence have a positive influence on all dimensions of brand authenticity, as defined by continuity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism among consumers of ATLAS Sarongs in Tasikmalaya City. Brand warmth has the greatest influence on credibility, while brand competence has the greatest influence on continuity. This confirms that brand warmth and brand competence play a significant role in shaping perceptions of brand authenticity.

LIMITATION

This study has several limitations. First, this study focuses only on a single brand (ATLAS Sarong) in a specific region, so the generalizability of the findings remains limited. Future research is recommended to involve diverse subjects and regions to obtain more comprehensive results. Second, the purposive sampling method may limit the representativeness of the sample. Therefore, probability sampling techniques, particularly stratified random sampling, should be considered to get more accurate results. Third, the relatively limited number of respondents may affect the strength of the research results; thus, future studies are advised to involve a larger number of respondents. Additionally, future research is encouraged to examine other antecedents of brand authenticity. Portal (2018a) indicates that genuine attributes and brand trust are the human brand characteristics that contribute most significantly to enhancing brand authenticity.

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