



## Research Paper

## Do brand authenticity and brand credibility facilitate brand equity? The case of heritage destination brand extension

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## ABSTRACT

Brand extension is a strategy widely used among firms with high brand equity to launch new products into the market. This strategy has been the subject of considerable scholarly interest over the last few years. However, there are very few published works that have focused on analyzing brand extensions in the heritage context or, more specifically, in relation to the UNESCO World Heritage brand. The present study examines the extent to which the authenticity of a brand extension pertaining to a heritage destination parent brand affects the formation of brand equity for the extension. It takes into account the moderating roles of brand extension credibility and tourists' experience and product knowledge. To fulfill the research objectives, an experimental design is applied to a sample of 217 tourists visiting the Monumental Complex of the Alhambra and Generalife in Granada, Spain, and the degree of authenticity of the brand extension is manipulated between subjects. The findings show that brand extension authenticity exerts a direct effect on brand extension equity, and an indirect effect, via brand extension credibility: these effects being activated only beyond certain levels of tourist experience of the heritage site and product knowledge.

## 1. Introduction

Cultural heritage and public awareness of its importance are among the primary elements that can contribute to socio-economic and cultural development (Backman & Nilsson, 2016; Carbone, 2016). Cultural heritage assets constitute a resource for the area in question, offering the potential to act as a tourist attraction and thus contribute to the development of the territory (Carbone, 2016). If these resources can be exploited in a sustainable manner, this constitutes an excellent opportunity to improve a community's quality of life (Timothy & Boyd, 2006). On this point, Carbone (2016) notes that cultural heritage is vital for tourism destination development, appeal, and competitiveness. Thus, countries, regions, and cities the world over now compete for the attention of tourists, to attract them to their heritage offer (Paskaleva-Shapira, 2007). Among heritage sites, those classified as World Heritage (WH) according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) are of exceptional interest, as this universally recognizable label sets them apart as genuine heritage brands (Kim, Stepchenkova, & Yilmaz, 2019).

This intense competition between tourist destinations requires them to generate their own competitive edge over others (Pike & Page, 2014). A clear competitive advantage can be gained by developing powerful brands that deliver a high level of value for clients. One way to achieve

this is by employing a brand extension strategy, which consists of using the name of a well-established brand (the 'parent' brand) to launch a new product (the brand extension) in the market. While this approach has proved of great interest in the marketing realm, it has received little scholarly attention in the context of tourism destinations (Kim et al., 2019), yet it could provide a valuable source of competitive advantage for destinations that carry the WH brand.

The literature corroborates the idea that the authenticity of a destination, as perceived by tourists, is a consequence of their experience of the heritage site and that this authenticity is an important driver of tourist behavior (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). On this basis, the success of any extended brand will depend on how it is evaluated by consumers in terms of the degree of authenticity it presents relative to the parent heritage brand. This notion is also corroborated in the marketing context by Spiggle, Nguyen, and Caravella (2012), who point to the concept of brand extension authenticity (BEA) as a key success factor in brand extension implementation. According to Spiggle et al. (2012), BEA encapsulates the consumer's perception of the legitimacy of the extension and its cultural alignment, in terms of how it upholds the style and standards of the original brand, respects the heritage behind it, preserves its essence and core values, and avoids its overexploitation.

For the managers of tourist destinations in general, and managers of destinations linked to WH sites in particular, selecting the right brand

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extension strategy that will deliver the greatest brand equity is essential. In this sense, the consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) model (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993) provides a powerful tool that heritage destination managers can use to evaluate: (1) tourist response to the parent brand (Pike & Bianchi, 2013) and to its extensions; and (2) the extent to which the use of authentic extensions contributes to the formation of brand equity for those extensions. Academic research has examined a range of brand equity antecedents (Kocak, Abimbola, & Özer, 2007), some of which are more functional and others that are more experiential. It has been identified, for instance, that brand credibility is an intrinsic factor in the formation of brand equity (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000; Erdem & Swait, 1998). In the literature dealing with brand extensions, there are only a few published studies that analyze the degree to which the perceived credibility of an extension affects the formation of its brand equity. And there are even fewer studies examining the mediating role of brand extension credibility in the relationship between brand extension authenticity and the formation of brand equity for the extension.

There are also several other factors that are found by the literature to moderate the process of brand equity-formation, including the individual's degree of experience of the brand (Erdem & Swait, 1998; Kumar, Dash, & Chandra Purwar, 2013) and their level of prior product knowledge (Alba & Hutchinson, 2000; Baker, Hunt, & Scribner, 2002; Peracchio & Tybout, 1996). The importance of the consumer's previous experience when making decisions about goods and services is widely acknowledged (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987), and its moderating role in the tourism context has also been tested in various studies (Frías, Del Barrio-García & López-Moreno, 2012; Li, Cheng, Kim, & Petrick, 2008). However, there is scant literature dealing with the moderating effect of consumers' previous experience of the parent brand on their response to brand extensions, and fewer still addressing this question in the heritage tourism sector. It is also well known that the consumer's prior knowledge of a given product affects their schema-congruity (Peracchio & Tybout, 1996) and, therefore, their response to the product in question.

Therefore, the main aim of the present study is to examine (1) the extent to which, in the case of a WH destination parent brand, the level of brand extension authenticity contributes to the brand equity of that extension, and (2) whether that effect is mediated via tourists' perception of the brand extension's credibility. The study, which takes the brand of the Monumental Complex of the Alhambra and Generalife (MCAG) as its focus, complements the main aim with an analysis of the moderating effect of the tourist's previous experience of the heritage site (that is, the parent brand) and their prior product knowledge (the brand extension product category) on the direct effect of authenticity on brand equity, and its indirect effect, via credibility.

## 2. Cultural tourism and heritage tourism

The link between tourism and culture has always been strong. Places of cultural interest offer a major motivation to travel, and traveling itself generates culture. But it is only in recent decades that this link has become even deeper, encapsulated in the term cultural tourism (Richards, 2018). In the 1980s, the volume of international tourists visiting the world's main cultural sites and attractions became such that the 'cultural tourism' label created a new niche market. Today, cultural tourism is one of the most rapidly developing emerging products the world travel sector has witnessed. According to UNTWO's *Report on Tourism and Culture Synergies* (2018), it is estimated that cultural tourism accounted for more than 39% of all international tourism arrivals in 2017: the equivalent of 516 million international trips (Richards, 2018). In Spain, which provides the geographical sphere of the present study, 16.8% of all trips (both domestic and international) undertaken by national residents in 2016 were primarily motivated by an interest in culture, accounting for 14.4 million trips, compared to 14.3 million in 2015. Similarly, the total spending associated with trips

made for cultural purposes rose to €7339 million in 2016, an 8.9% increase on 2015, according to statistics from the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (MECD, 2017). In short, according to figures from the World Economic Forum, in 2017 Spain was ranked in second position worldwide among destinations offering the greatest number of cultural resources (Lascu, Manrai, Manrai, & Gan, 2018).

The rapid growth witnessed in cultural tourism since the 1980s led to various definitions being attached to the concept. UNESCO's definition of cultural tourism, for example, centered on the knowledge, protection and conservation of heritage (Morère & Perelló, 2014). Camarero and Garrido (2004) defined cultural tourism in even broader terms, as those visits made by people from outside a given area, which are totally or partially motivated by their interest in the historical, artistic or scientific offer, or the lifestyle or heritage of a community, this offer being managed by a group or institution. This definition of the concept covers not only cultural resources but also historical and natural assets. More recently, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2017, p.18) defined cultural tourism as "a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible attractions/products in a tourism destination". Regarding this point, Carbone (2016) adds an important nuance, differentiating between cultural resource and cultural attraction. He contends that cultural heritage *per se* does not constitute a tourist attraction, but is rather a resource that has the *potential* to become an attraction.

However, the very diversity of cultural products in the market makes it difficult to reach a consensus on how 'cultural tourism' is to be understood, particularly as it is impossible to describe fully the essence of this notion in a few succinct words (McKercher & du Cros, 2002). According to these authors, cultural tourism has become an umbrella term covering a wide range of activities including heritage tourism, ethnic tourism, artistic tourism, and so on. All such terms share a common set of resources, management issues, and aspirational outcomes. Therefore, heritage tourism can be seen from this perspective as a specific case of cultural tourism in which the central product is the cultural heritage itself (du Cros, 2001; McKercher & du Cros, 2002). Camarero and Garrido (2004) propose that differences between cultural and heritage tourism stem from the fact that the latter is based on a given place and creating a sense of place that is rooted in its specific features (its people, events, history, and traditions), while the former focuses on experiences that are similar but with less emphasis on the place itself.

Today, for heritage tourism managers, marketing is now a fundamental tool for achieving a range of objectives: to raise awareness of the heritage site; to educate the population on heritage conservation; to encourage people to enjoy the cultural assets left by previous generations; and to generate resources that will help develop the site. According to Misiura (2006, p.19), "the essence of the heritage marketing process is to find out what the customer wants and to deliver it, subject to any constraints that might prevail, such as the need to protect parts of a heritage site". Chhabra, Healy, and Sills (2003) assert that, on the demand side, heritage tourism represents the desire of visitors to experience and consume culture; and, on the supply side, it is regarded by governments and private firms as an economic development tool.

Heritage site managers and destination marketers face the strategic challenge of better understanding the market and developing products and brands that satisfy tourists' needs, striking a balance between tourism and management of cultural heritage (McKercher & du Cros, 2002). This complex balancing act between upholding the integrity and authenticity of cultural heritage while fostering the economic development associated with heritage tourism is a major challenge for heritage site managers and the marketing professionals working with them (Fyall & Garrod, 1998).

Of special relevance in the field of heritage tourism are those sites that have been granted WH status. In its 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, UNESCO set

out its vision for protecting exceptional properties or sites. States parties were invited to submit to the World Heritage Committee an inventory of those properties they deemed suitable for inclusion in the World Heritage List. UNESCO's designation of the WH classification has become known as a hallmark of quality and authenticity: a brand much-coveted by destinations the world over (Ryan & Silvanto, 2009). Indeed, the use of the word 'brand' to refer to WH is widely supported by the academic literature (Boyd & Timothy, 2006; Gilmore, Carson, & Ascensão, 2007; Poria, Reichel, & Cohen, 2011; Ryan & Silvanto, 2009). The WH brand is associated with values of international excellence, and is thus being used increasingly by tourist destinations in their marketing campaigns (Fyall & Rakic, 2006).

### 3. Authenticity as a success factor in brand extensions

The brand extension strategy consists of using the name (or other associations) of a well-established brand to launch a new product/service (Aaker & Keller, 1990), so that consumers transfer the positive attitudes and perceptions they have of the parent brand to the newly-created extension. This approach is very popular among firms seeking market growth (Farquhar, 1989), as it offers several advantages, including: market growth for less investment than other strategies (Kapferer, 2004); a reduction in the risks and costs associated with launching new products into the market (Buil, de Chernatony, & Hem, 2009; Klink & Athaide, 2010); greater market share (Smith & Park, 1992); and improved survival rates (Martinez & Pina, 2003), among others.

A variety of studies have researched the aspects that may ensure the success of a brand extension. Among these aspects, there is one in particular that stands out: the idea that authenticity between the parent brand and the extension is critical. Authenticity, derived from the Greek *autos*, meaning 'self', and *hentes*, meaning 'doer', implies something that has the authority of its original creator (Spiggle et al., 2012), its modern association with genuineness developing in the 18th Century. In the marketing context, authenticity is conceived as a fundamental component of a brand that forms part of its identity (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1993) and provides inimitability and uniqueness (Iversen & Hem, 2008). However, as noted by Bruhn, Schoenmüller, Schäfer, and Heinrich (2012) and Kolar and Zabkar (2010), despite the importance of authenticity in marketing terms, there is no scholarly consensus on its conceptual framing or its practical application. Bruhn et al. (2012) hold that brand authenticity is expressed in terms of continuity (stability and consistency) originality (singularity), reliability (capacity to deliver on its promises) and unaffectedness (lack of artifice, genuineness). According to Grayson and Martinec (2004), perceptions of a brand's authenticity may be shaped by its internal consistency, which reflects whether it is true to itself and retains its essence, and its external consistency, which refers to whether the brand is really what it purports to be, and not based on fake or exaggerated claims.

The notion of authenticity has been widely used in the tourism literature and is recognized as a universal value and driving force that motivates tourists to travel to distant destinations (Cohen, 1988). It is not only relevant to tourist motivation, however (Chhabra, 2005): it is also considered a key antecedent of tourist behavior (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). It has been found to exert a significant effect on tourist satisfaction and even on the perceived image of the destination (Ram, Björk, & Weidenfeld, 2016; Ramkissoon, 2015).

Hence, authenticity has garnered significant attention in the tourism sphere in recent decades (Zhou, Zhang, Zhang, & Li, 2018), as it is closely related to the development of tourist destinations (Cole, 2007). The search for authentic experiences is one of the key factors in present-day tourism, and is particularly relevant for heritage tourism (Yeoman, Brass, & McMahon-Beattie, 2007). In turn, the concept is also of major interest in the marketing of heritage tourism, as it helps heritage site managers understand the motivations and behaviors of the tourists that visit such locations and the strategic implications for their management

(Kolar & Zabkar, 2010).

Given the widely recognized potential benefits of using a heritage site's authenticity for marketing purposes (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Ram et al., 2016; Ramkissoon, 2015), it is to be expected that if the brand extensions created by high-profile heritage sites are authentic, this will have a positive impact on tourists' evaluation of those extensions.

Spiggle et al. (2012) propose that the authenticity of a brand extension, relative to its parent brand, is a key factor in its being ultimately accepted in the market. To create a brand extension is, in effect, to stretch the original idea of the parent brand in such a way that it remains distinct from the parent yet connected to it. Consumers regard a brand extension to be authentic when it retains the uniqueness, originality, heritage, values and essence of the parent brand. Being loyal to itself, an authentic brand resists the temptation to become something it is not, and it thus avoids illegitimate extensions. An authentic extension intensifies rather than dilutes the meanings and core essence of the parent brand, demonstrating its internal consistency (Spiggle et al., 2012).

d'Astous, Colbert, and Fournier (2007) observe that the results of brand extensions for tangible goods cannot simply be generalized to the arts and culture sphere. Cultural products, such as heritage sites, are inherently unique. Therefore, associating the name of a heritage destination with a mass consumer product that is more utilitarian in nature may come across as incongruent. These authors note that this is an important point to take into account when assessing brand extensions, and they examine different factors that may prove influential in the evaluation of a brand extension for cultural and artistic products, among them the congruence between the extended product and the artistic or cultural organization that owns the parent brand.

### 4. Brand equity in the cultural and heritage sphere

The concept of brand equity first emerged several decades ago as a central construct in marketing theory and practice (Aaker, 1991). Nowadays, it is one of the most widely-used indicators of brand performance (Frías-Jamilena, Sabiote-Ortiz, Martín-Santana, & Beerli-Palacio, 2018). Following the work of Aaker (1991), Keller (1993) re-defined the original concept, expressing it as consumer-based brand equity, or CBBE. He defined this as the differential effect caused by the consumer's knowledge of a brand on their response to the marketing actions conducted by the firm.

Since its appearance in the 1990s, the concept of brand equity has become a prominent topic in tourism marketing literature (Stojanovic, Andreu, & Curras-Perez, 2018). In the context of tourist destinations, the academic literature holds that the CBBE concept is suitable for measuring and evaluating the performance of a destination and clients' perceptions of the brand associated with that destination (Frías-Jamilena, Polo Peña, & Rodríguez Molina, 2017; Pike & Bianchi, 2013). It is also acknowledged, however, that the very complexity of destinations, compared to physical goods, hinders the measurement of their brand equity (Boo, Busser, & Baloglu, 2009; Pike, 2009). While there is also a lack of consensus in this sphere as to the dimensions of brand equity and its key antecedents (Castañeda, Del Valle, & Martínez, 2018; Frías et al., 2017), nevertheless there are several recent studies that focus on the measurement of destination brand equity from the consumer perspective. In these works, its component dimensions are taken to be brand awareness, brand quality, brand image, and brand loyalty, and in some studies also perceived value (Boo et al., 2009; Frías et al., 2018, 2017; Pike & Bianchi, 2013).

Camarero, Garrido-Samaniego, and Vicente (2012, p.1533) introduce the concept of cultural brand equity (CBE) for cultural organizations and activities, defining it as "the added value of the cultural brand, which is rewarded by the market with enhanced attachment towards the brand and/or the organization". These authors found that CBE exerted a positive effect on satisfaction and revisit intention for a cultural activity. Along the same lines, Liu, Liu, and Lin (2015)

recorded a positive relationship between CBE and loyalty among museum visitors.

As can be seen, those heritage sites classified as WH are deemed of exceptional interest, thanks to their universally recognizable hallmark (Boyd & Timothy, 2006). It is to be expected, then, that they are likely to enjoy a high level of CBE that contributes to increasing: tourists' preference for visiting them (King, 2011); visitor traffic (Boyd & Timothy, 2006); and visitor willingness to pay an entry fee (Poria et al., 2011). In short, as noted by Poria et al. (2011), the WH hallmark generates positive brand equity that will attract tourists to those sites that bear it. Similarly, Ryan and Silvano (2009) contend that sites branded WH enjoy considerable brand equity, which will translate into high brand awareness, high perceived brand quality, powerful mental associations, and other major assets.

## 5. Methodology

### 5.1. Proposed hypotheses

Several studies have established a positive relationship between brand authenticity and some of the component variables of brand equity. Among these, Lu, Gursoy, and Lu (2015) found that brand authenticity exerted a positive influence on perceived quality. They also found that consumers' perceptions of brand authenticity constitute an important factor when developing brand associations about the extension, such that their perception of authenticity is a major antecedent of brand image. Other authors have concluded that authenticity is a primary driver of brand loyalty (Gilmore & Pine, 2007; Lu et al., 2015). More specifically in the context of cultural tourism, and particularly referring to a WH site, Shen, Guo, and Wu (2014) find that the authenticity of a heritage site has a positive and significant effect on tourist loyalty. In their study on cultural tourism, Domínguez-Quintero, González-Rodríguez, and Paddison (2018) also confirm the influence of authenticity on satisfaction, an antecedent of loyalty.

However, there are very few published works on brand extension that have tested the relationship between brand extension authenticity and some of the dimensions of brand equity, and fewer still that, taking brand equity as an overall concept, analyze the effect of authenticity on brand equity. Among the exceptions is the study conducted by Spiggle et al. (2012), which demonstrates that brand extension authenticity exerts a positive effect on purchase intention and likelihood of recommendation. The research undertaken by Butcher, Sung, and Raynes-Goldie (2018) also finds that brand extension authenticity has a positive effect on attitude, and therefore also on brand equity—attitude being considered an antecedent of brand equity (Kocak et al., 2007).

A further important functional antecedent of brand equity is that identified by Kocak et al. (2007), namely brand credibility. Erdem and Swait (1998) noted that credibility refers to the capacity and willingness of brands to consistently deliver what they promise, and is formed through a combination of reliability and experience. According to signaling theory, credible brands help build brand equity (Erdem & Swait, 1998), as a result of their positive effect on perceived brand quality, on the perceived positive attributes of the brand, and on consumer perceived utility of the brand (Spry, Pappu, & Bettina Cornwell, 2011). In a similar vein, Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) and Broyles, Schumann, and Leingpibul (2009) take credibility to be a functional antecedent of brand equity. Hence, when brands fail to deliver what they promise, their brand equity is negatively affected (Erdem & Swait, 2004).

Consumers associate authentic brands with a high level of credibility, then, as these present the willingness and ability to fulfill their promises (Morhart, Malär, Guèvremont, Girardin, & Grohmann, 2015). Buil et al. (2009) note that brand extensions gain credibility among consumers, the greater the congruence between the parent brand and the extension. Beyond the sphere of brand extensions, Özsumer and Altaras (2008) conducted a study on global brands, finding that the

perceived authenticity of a global brand has a positive influence on its credibility. In a similar finding, Coary (2013) demonstrated that the perceived authenticity of brands pertaining to experiential products can exert a positive effect in terms of building such fundamental aspects as confidence and credibility.

In light of the present literature review, the following research hypotheses are proposed:

- H1.** The greater the authenticity of the heritage brand extension, the greater its credibility.
- H2.** The greater the authenticity of the heritage brand extension, the greater its brand equity.
- H3.** The greater the credibility of the heritage brand extension, the greater its brand equity.

Turning to consumer behavior theory, one of the central concepts in this field is that what people know and store in their memories affects how they process and evaluate new incoming information, known as schema-congruity (Peracchio & Tybout, 1996). According to the literature, the extent of an individual's prior product knowledge is a construct considered to be a major moderator of behavior (Alba & Hutchinson, 2000; Baker et al., 2002). People with more extensive knowledge of a given product have been found to perceive and analyze the congruences or incongruences between brand extensions and parent brands much more easily than individuals with less prior product knowledge (Peracchio & Tybout, 1996). It is therefore to be expected that tourists with a high level of prior product knowledge will be more able to distinguish whether the brand extension is authentic than those with a low level of product knowledge. Furthermore, if they do perceive the brand extension to be authentic, they will generate a more positive response in terms of the different dimensions of brand equity for the brand extension.

Credible brands enjoy lower information-gathering and information-processing costs than less credible ones (Erdem & Swait, 2004; Spry et al., 2011). Consumers with a high level of product knowledge are better informed than those with little such knowledge (Kempf & Smith, 1998), such that they are less likely to generate a biased evaluation of the information, and will be better able to appreciate a brand's credibility. Therefore, it is to be expected that the greater the subject's level of prior product knowledge, the less processing they need to perform on the information they receive about the extension. In turn, the effect of the extension's credibility on its brand equity will be greater than in the case of an individual with less prior knowledge.

On this basis, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H4.** The tourist's prior product knowledge will positively moderate the relationship between brand extension credibility and brand extension equity.
- H5.** The tourist's prior product knowledge will positively moderate the relationship between brand extension authenticity and brand extension equity.

Consumers' experience of a parent brand appears to positively affect their response to the brand extension (Swaminathan, Fox, & Reddy, 2001), while experience of a brand has also been found to be a determining factor in the formation of brand equity (Erdem & Swait, 1998; Kumar et al., 2013). In the tourism context, various studies have demonstrated that tourists' accumulated knowledge of a destination affects their perceptions of it (Beerli & Martin, 2004). In this regard, those subjects that have already visited a given destination will hold certain perceptions of the quality and services it offers. They will also hold an image of the destination (or a perception of its value) that entirely differs from those of first-time visitors who have only received information about it from external sources (Frías-Jamilena, Del Barrio-García, & López-Moreno, 2012). Applying similar arguments to those used in the case of product knowledge, those tourists who have visited

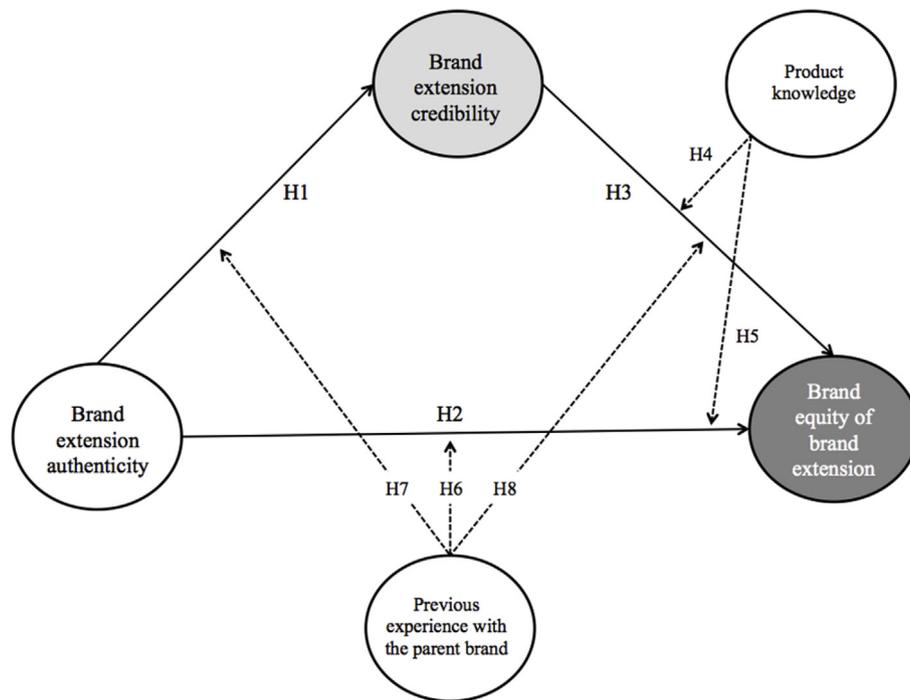


Fig. 1. Research model and hypotheses.

the heritage site previously will possess accurate information about the symbols, icons, and meanings of the parent heritage brand, and this will enable them to evaluate the degree of authenticity of the extended brand more accurately than first-time visitors. On this basis, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**H6.** The tourist's previous experience of the parent heritage brand will positively moderate the relationship between brand extension authenticity and brand extension equity.

**H7.** The tourist's previous experience of the parent heritage brand will positively moderate the relationship between brand extension authenticity and brand extension credibility.

**H8.** The tourist's previous experience of the parent heritage brand will positively moderate the relationship between brand extension credibility and brand extension equity.

The proposed research model and theoretical hypotheses are summarized in Fig. 1.

## 5.2. Context of the study

The Monumental Complex of the Alhambra and Generalife is a walled estate, of Arabic origin, located in Granada, in southern Spain. The MCAG is one of the most-visited heritage sites in the world and was included in the World Heritage List in 1984, being one of the first such sites to be classified by UNESCO. From this point onward, its profile as a draw for international tourism has grown consistently. In 2016, it registered 2,615,188 visits – an increase of 5.7% compared to 2015 – and it is Spain's most popular monument. The Alhambra is known internationally as an all-time emblem of cultural heritage, thanks in particular to its special melding of architecture and nature. Throughout history, the symbols and iconography of the MCAG have been reproduced in a multitude of artistic and commercial contexts, and its name and typography have been used by innumerable firms and organizations. For this reason, the present work takes the MCAG as a case study for its empirical study. It is used here as the parent heritage brand from which diverse brand extension strategies were created.

## 5.3. Experiment design

To fulfill the proposed research aims and test the theoretical hypotheses, a between-subjects experiment was designed, which manipulated the degree of brand extension authenticity relative to the MCAG parent brand. To manipulate the levels of the independent variable, first the term 'authenticity' needed to be conceptually defined. As mentioned earlier, authenticity was taken as the consumer's perception that a brand extension is legitimate and culturally consistent with its parent brand (Spiggle et al., 2012). According to Bruhn et al. (2012), brand authenticity is expressed in terms of continuity (stability and consistency), originality (uniqueness), reliability (capacity to keep its promise), and unaffectedness (lack of artificiality, genuine).

All of these factors were taken into account when deciding on the number of levels of authenticity to be controlled under experimental conditions, along with the symbolic and normative aspects of the brand (logo and typeface) and also the identification of the extension with what the MCAG represents (via its name). To assist in this task, a focus group was conducted with directors and senior managers of the MCAG. Following their input, it was decided that the experiment should manipulate three levels of authenticity: (1) high, (2) moderate, and (3) low. It was also decided that, when creating an extension for the MCAG heritage brand, a product should be selected bearing little similarity to the activities of the parent brand. The objective here was to make a clear distinction in the analysis of the beneficial effects of a genuine brand extension strategy, in terms of brand equity, in scenarios in which the brand extension presents a very low level of congruence with the parent brand.

A pretest was carried out among 250 university Marketing undergraduates, to enable a product category to be selected. The students, who had all attended a lecture on brand extensions and the concept of extension congruence, were asked to reflect on the MCAG and its tourist activities. Next, they each had to write a list of product categories and their attributes, in descending order of congruence with the nature of the MCAG's principal activities. The result of the pretest was that 'clothes and other accessories' was deemed to be the product category that presented the least congruence/similarity relative to the MCAG.

Three promotional ads for the brand extension were designed as the

experimental stimuli, to be shown to tourists for their evaluation. With this in mind, an extension for the MCAG brand was created, based on a fictitious clothes and accessories shop. This was applied to three versions of a flyer, each with the same structure and design, including a brief description of the brand, its name, a logo, and a series of images (see Appendix A). The rationale for using a fictitious name was to avoid a scenario in which the subjects had preconceptions and preexisting attitudes toward the brand used in the experiment, which could potentially skew the results (Alcántara-Pilar, Del Barrio-García, & Rodríguez-López, 2018). The only difference in the three treatments was that each flyer presented different attributes relating to brand extension authenticity. The flyer with the highest level of brand authenticity (T1) featured the name of the shop as ‘Treasures of the Alhambra’, a direct reference to the most characteristic name of the MCAG. The logo used was based on a detail from the intricately tiled plinths that are typical of the architecture of the MCAG, and the typography was typically Arabic in style, reminiscent of the inscriptions found at the Alhambra. For the moderate level of authenticity (T2), Alhambra was retained as the name of the shop, again making a clear reference to the MCAG, but this time the typography used in the name was quite distinct from the Arabic style associated with the monumental complex, and the logo used an image of a flower, rather than the Nasrid-style tile-work of the MCAG. At the lowest level of authenticity (T3), neither the name, nor the logo, nor the typography made any reference to the MCAG. Only the brand name, ‘Treasures of al-Andalus’, made a direct allusion to the Arabic world.

5.4. Sample and data-collection

The sample subjects were selected randomly from among tourists visiting the MCAG, by setting up several temporary ‘rest and relaxation’ points where they could take a short break from their tour. Fully trained interviewers recruited the tourists to the survey and explained the purpose of the branding research, prior to conducting the personal interviews (see the instructions for participating tourists in Appendix B). Those accepting the invitation to participate were first asked a series of introductory questions, before being shown the flyer corresponding to the particular treatment they had been assigned. They were asked to read it carefully for a maximum of 1 min, after which they had to complete the questionnaire dealing with the dependent variables.

The final sample comprised 217 tourists and was reasonably balanced in terms of the size of the three sub-samples reflecting the different treatments (see Table 1). To check for sample selection bias, various association tests were performed between the three treatments and the sociodemographic variables of age, gender, and marital status. None of these tests revealed any significant differences: age (Chi-Square: 0.63; p: 0.89); gender (Chi-Square: 0.001; p: 0.96); and marital status (Chi-Square: 0.45; p: 0.93).

Table 1  
Sample by treatments.

Gender	Age	T1	T2	T3	TOTALS
Male	< 25	14.71%	38.71%	35.71%	27
Male	25–40	47.06%	35.48%	32.14%	36
Male	41–55	17.65%	6.45%	21.43%	14
Male	> 55	20.59%	19.35%	10.71%	15
Totals	34	31	28	93	
Female	< 25	37.21%	29.55%	32.43%	41
Female	25–40	34.88%	29.55%	29.73%	39
Female	41–55	16.28%	22.73%	13.51%	22
Female	> 55	11.63%	18.18%	24.32%	22
Totals	43	44	37	124	
TOTALS	77	75	65	217	

5.5. Measures

In line with the most widely-recommended approach in the literature (Frias-Jamilena et al., 2018, 2017; Yoo, Donthu, & Lee, 2000), and taking into account the theoretical justification set out in the earlier section, the brand equity of the brand extension was configured as a second-order construct measured by three first-order constructs: perceived quality, perceived image, and loyalty toward the extension. The present study did not include the brand awareness dimension, given the use of a fictitious brand extension in the experiment design. It was deemed unrealistic to present subjects with information on the extension, including the brand name, and then ask them about their awareness of that brand. Following a similar rationale, the perceived brand value dimension was also omitted from the measurement of brand equity.

To measure *perceived quality*, a five-point Likert scale comprising two items was adapted from previous studies (Broyles et al., 2009; He & Li, 2010). *Perceived image of the brand extension* was measured using, once again, a five-point, three-item Likert scale, also adapted from previous works, including that of García, Gómez, and Molina (2012). Finally, the third dimension of brand equity, *loyalty toward the brand extension*, was also measured on a five-point, three-item Likert scale. In this case, the final scale was adapted from that proposed originally by Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996) and subsequently used by authors including Boo et al. (2009) and Im, Kim, Elliot, and Han (2012) (see Table 2).

*Brand extension credibility* was measured on a five-point, two-item Likert scale, also adapted from the work of other authors (Erdem & Swait, 2004) (see Table 2). With regard to the moderating variables of consumer response to brand extensions, *tourist prior experience of the MCAG* was measured using a dichotomous variable in which the tourist was asked to indicate whether it was the first time they had visited the monumental complex or if they already had experience of the site. This means of measuring tourist experience of the heritage site has been used in a number of studies dealing with tourism (Frias-Jamilena et al., 2012). The *extent of tourist prior product knowledge* (referring to the ‘clothes and accessories’ product category) was measured by means of a five-point, four-item Likert scale adapted from previous studies (Kalro, Sivakumaran, & Marathe, 2013) (see Table 2).

The questionnaire also included a measure for the manipulation check of the experimental factor (brand extension authenticity), comprising a single item measured on a five-point Likert scale, which referred to one of the key dimensions of authenticity, according to Spiggle et al. (2012): namely, the degree of perceived connection between the brand extension and the MCAG: *Customers of the clothes and accessories shop have similar interests to visitors to the MCAG*.

Finally, a further issue to consider in the experimental procedure was *attitude of the subjects toward the flyers* to which they were exposed: to ensure that attitudes did not vary excessively between the different treatments. This would help avoid the possible existence of confounding bias around the dependent measures, as a result of some treatments being perceived as more appealing, persuasive, or informative than others. To control this possible effect, a five-point, four-item Likert scale was used to measure overall attitude toward the flyers, this scale being adapted from other studies dealing with attitudes toward ads (Donthu, 1992; Neese & Taylor, 1994) (see Table 2).

6. Data analysis

6.1. Analysis of the psychometric properties of the scales

To examine the psychometric properties of the multi-item scales, a CFA was performed using Lisrel 8.8 software (see Table 2). The overall goodness-of-fit indices were found to be within the recommended range (S-B Chi-Square: 248.14; p-value: 0.00; RMSEA: 0.06; CFI: 0.98); all of the loadings were significant (p < 0.01), with a high magnitude

**Table 2**  
CFA results.

Items	Standardized coefficients	R <sup>2</sup>	CR	AVE
<b>PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE</b>				
With regard to clothes and accessories, how familiar with such products do you regard yourself to be?	.88 (+)	.78	.90	.69
Compared to the majority of people, how knowledgeable do you think you are about clothes and accessory products?	.86 (*)	.74		
How much do you know about the major characteristics that should be taken into account when buying clothes and accessories?	.80 (*)	.65		
Compared to the majority of people, how familiar do you regard yourself to be with the process of shopping for clothes and accessories?	.79 (*)	.63		
<b>BRAND QUALITY</b>				
It strikes me as a quality brand	.85 (+)	.72	.83	.71
I think it is a brand of value to customers	.84 (*)	.71		
<b>BRAND IMAGE</b>				
The image I have of the brand is good	.78 (+)	.62	.88	.70
The image I have of the brand is positive	.90 (*)	.81		
The image I have of the brand is favorable	.83 (*)	.68		
<b>BRAND LOYALTY</b>				
I would be open to buying clothes and accessories for myself in a shop like this	.87 (+)	.76	.91	.76
I would be likely to buy clothes and accessories in a shop like this	.93 (*)	.87		
I would be prepared to recommend this clothes and accessories shop to a family member or friend	.82 (*)	.67		
<b>BRAND CREDIBILITY</b>				
It strikes me as a credible brand	.79 (+)	.63	.85	.73
It strikes me as a convincing brand	.92 (*)	.85		
<b>ATTITUDE TOWARD THE FLYER</b>				
I like it	.84 (+)	.70	.87	.63
It is interesting	.82 (*)	.67		
It is appealing	.80 (*)	.64		
It is persuasive	.71 (*)	.50		
<b>BRAND EQUITY (SECOND-ORDER FACTOR)</b>				
Brand quality	.77 (*)	.56	.79	.56
Brand image	.68 (*)	.46		
Brand loyalty	.79 (*)	.64		

Note: + Value not calculated because the parameter was established at 1 in order to set the scale for the latent variable; \*p < 0.01.

(> 0.70); and the individual reliability values for each indicator (R<sup>2</sup>) were all above the threshold of 0.50 recommended in the literature (Del Barrio & Luque, 2012). The composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) indices were both above the recommended limits of 0.80 and 0.50, respectively.

Table 3 shows how, in all cases, the correlations between constructs did not exceed the values of the square root of the AVEs, thus confirming discriminant validity, in line with the criterion proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981).

As all the variables were confirmed as valid and reliable for the data analysis and hypothesis testing, an indicator variable for each of the constructs under study was calculated, as the mean score for the different items.

### 6.2. Confounding bias

An important feature to check in the sample *a posteriori* was that the design of the flyers for each treatment generated the same overall attitude, so as to avoid any differences affecting the dependent variables under analysis and thus generating confusion. An ANOVA was therefore conducted, with the treatments as the factor and the overall attitude

**Table 3**  
Discriminant validity.

	Knowledge	Quality	Image	Loyalty	Credibility	Attitude Flyer
Knowledge	<b>.93</b>					
Quality	.41	<b>.84</b>				
Image	.31	.60	<b>.84</b>			
Loyalty	.31	.59	.45	<b>.87</b>		
Credibility	.30	.78	.60	.59	<b>.85</b>	
Attitude Flyer	.41	.61	.47	.46	.46	<b>.79</b>

Note: diagonal elements in bold are the square root of the AVE between the constructs and their indicators. Off-diagonal elements are correlations between the constructs.

toward the flyer as the dependent indicator variable. The results of this test showed that there was no significant relationship between overall attitude toward the flyer and the treatments (F-test: 0.29; p > 0.10). It was thus concluded that the manipulation of the independent variables had not affected participants' overall perception of the flyers to which they were exposed.

### 6.3. Manipulation check

Once the fieldwork was complete, and prior to testing the hypotheses, it was necessary to conduct a *a posteriori* test to ensure that the independent variable under analysis – brand extension authenticity – had been correctly manipulated between subjects. To this end, an ANOVA was performed, with the brand extension authenticity variable (at high, moderate, and low level) as the independent factor, and the degree of perceived authenticity as the dependent variable. The results of this test were non-significant (F-test: 2.12; p-value > 0.10) (M<sub>Authenticity\_high</sub>: 3.48; M<sub>Authenticity\_moderate</sub>: 3.19; M<sub>Authenticity\_low</sub>: 3.14). The *post-hoc* tests demonstrated that, in this regard, there were no significant differences between a moderate level of authenticity and a low level (p-value: 0.80), indicating that the subjects could not detect the subtle differences between the conditions of moderate and low authenticity. It is worth remembering that, while in the 'high authenticity' treatment the brand name, logo, and typography all captured explicit references to the MCAG, the only difference between the moderate- and low-authenticity treatment was that the product name changed from 'Treasures of the Alhambra' to 'Treasures of al-Andalus'. It is relevant to bear in mind that this was a very slight, subtle difference, amid all of the information presented in the flyers.

In view of these results, Treatments 2 and 3 were grouped into one single treatment labeled 'low authenticity' and to conduct the ANOVA once more, using just two levels for the independent variable: T1 (high authenticity, N: 77) and T2 (low authenticity, N: 140). This time, the ANOVA results did produce significant differences between the two treatments regarding the level of authenticity perceived by the subjects

**Table 4**  
Moderated mediation analysis. Outcome variable: Credibility.

Effect	Coeff.	SE	t-value	p-value	95% CI
Constant	.0072	.0590	.1222	.9029	-.1091 – .1235
Authenticity (X)	.1173	.1289	.9096	.3640	-.1368 – .3713
Experience (W)	.1617	.1180	1.3702	.1721	-.0709 – .3944
X*W	.6136	.2576	2.3824	.0181*	.1059–1.1214

Note: \*p < 0.05; 95% CI does not contain 0.

(F-test: 4.19; p-value < 0.05) (M<sub>Authenticity\_high</sub>: 3.48; M<sub>Authenticity\_moderate</sub>: 3.16).

6.4. Testing the hypotheses

For the purpose of testing the research hypotheses, a moderated mediation regression model was used: PROCESS 3.1 ordinary least squares and bootstrap estimation (10,000 sub-samples) (Hayes, 2017). The independent variable was brand extension authenticity (with two levels, high vs. low, following the aforementioned reconfiguration); the dependent variable was the brand equity of the extension expressed as the mean value of the three component dimensions (quality, image, and loyalty); the mediating variable was brand extension credibility; and the moderating variables were prior product knowledge (clothes and accessories) and experience of the parent heritage brand (MCAG).

The analysis of direct effects (see Tables 4 and 5) revealed that neither the direct effect of authenticity on brand extension credibility ( $\beta_{Authenticity \rightarrow BrandCredibility}$ : 0.10; CI: 0.03–0.22) nor that of authenticity on brand equity ( $\beta_{Authenticity \rightarrow BrandEquity}$ : 0.03; CI: -1.131–0.1809) were significant (p > 0.01). By contrast, the direct effect of credibility on brand equity was significant ( $\beta_{BrandCredibility \rightarrow BrandEquity}$ : 0.46; CI: 0.3849–0.5441) (p < 0.01). In view of these findings, H1 and H2 must be rejected, while H3 can be confirmed. However, given the existence of the two moderating factors – tourist experience of the MCAG and product knowledge – those direct and indirect effects needed to be examined in conditional terms, in line with the different levels of the moderators (Hayes, 2017).

First, Table 4 and Fig. 2 show a significant interaction effect between experience and authenticity on brand extension credibility ( $\beta_{Authenticity \times Experience \rightarrow BrandCredibility}$ : 0.61; CI: 0.1059–1.1214) (p < 0.05). Hence, among tourists with previous experience of the heritage site, high brand extension authenticity generates a much greater perception of credibility than low authenticity. Conversely, among those visiting the MCAG for the first time, there was little difference between the two treatments: indeed, some participants even found the brand extension with the low-authenticity treatment more credible than the high-authenticity one.

Similarly, a significant interaction effect was observed between authenticity and knowledge on brand equity ( $\beta_{Authenticity \times Knowledge \rightarrow BrandEquity}$ : 0.19; CI: 0.0237–0.3589) (p < 0.05) and between credibility and knowledge on brand equity ( $\beta_{Credibility \times$

**Table 5**  
Moderated mediation analysis. Outcome variable: Brand equity.

Effect	Coeff.	SE	t-value	p-value	95% CI
Constant	3.2555	.0348	93.6197	.0000*	.31870–3.3241
Authenticity (X)	.0339	.0746	.4548	.6498	-.1131 – .1809
Credibility (M)	.4645	.0404	11.5068	.0000*	.3849–.5441
Experience (W)	.0387	.0679	.5694	.5697	-.0952 – .1725
Knowledge (Z)	.1949	.0392	4.9728	.0000*	.1176–.2721
X*W	.0813	.1499	.5421	.5884	-.2143 – .3768
M*W	-.1010	.0708	-1.2951	.1967	-.2548 – .0527
X*Z	.1913	.0850	2.2506	.0255*	.0237–.3589
M*Z	.1387	.0455	3.0510	.0026*	.0491–.2283

Note: \*p < 0.05; 95% CI does not contain 0.

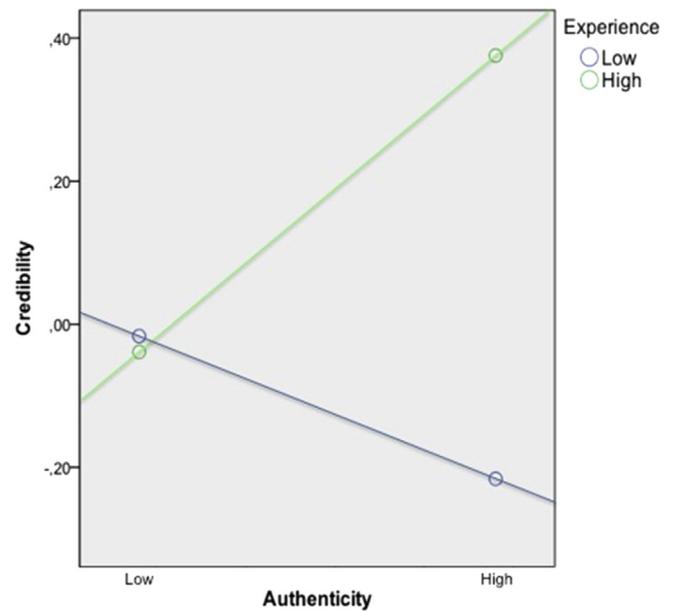


Fig. 2. Authenticity on credibility by experience.

Knowledge→BrandEquity: 0.14; CI: 0.0491–0.2283) (p < 0.01) (see Fig. 3). Under conditions of low brand extension authenticity, regardless of the level of prior product knowledge, the degree of experience of the MCAG heritage site has no effect on brand equity. By contrast, under conditions of high authenticity, the higher the level of prior product knowledge, the greater the positive effect of previous experience on brand extension brand equity. Therefore, when a tourist presents a high level of product knowledge, authentic brand extensions generate significantly greater brand equity than non-authentic ones, with this effect heightened further by tourist experience (Panel A). If the analysis is conducted in terms of the brand credibility variable, it can be observed that, regardless of the tourist's level of product knowledge, the greater the perceived credibility of the brand extension, the greater its brand equity. However, as the level of product knowledge rises, the differences in the effect of credibility on brand equity become more marked (Panel B).

Using the PROCESS macro, it was possible to calculate the conditional direct and indirect effects of the independent variable (authenticity) on the dependent variable (brand equity), taking into account the different levels of the moderators (previous experience and prior product knowledge) (see Table 6). It can be observed that this conditional direct effect is positive and significant, in the direction proposed in H2, albeit only among those tourists with previous experience of visiting the MCAG and with either a moderate level of product knowledge ( $\beta_{HIGH-Exp\_MODERATE-Know}$ : 0.07; CI: 0.1378–0.2843; p < 0.05) or a high level ( $\beta_{HIGH-Exp\_HIGH-Know}$ : 0.24; CI: 0.0045–0.4942; p < 0.05).

The conditional indirect effects of authenticity on brand equity, via credibility, were significant and positive only among those tourists with previous experience of the MCAG; furthermore, this conditional indirect effect increased as the level of product knowledge increased ( $\beta_{HIGH-Exp\_LOW-Know}$ : 0.12; CI: 0.0205–0.2498;  $\beta_{HIGH-Exp\_MODERATE-Know}$ : 0.17; CI: 0.0321–0.3216;  $\beta_{HIGH-Exp\_HIGH-Know}$ : 0.22; CI: 0.0417–0.4114) (p < 0.05).

7. Conclusions

Today's cultural heritage management involves making decisions regarding how best to conserve cultural heritage assets to ensure they can be enjoyed not only in the present, but also by future generations (McKercher & du Cros, 2002). Furthermore, efforts to protect and

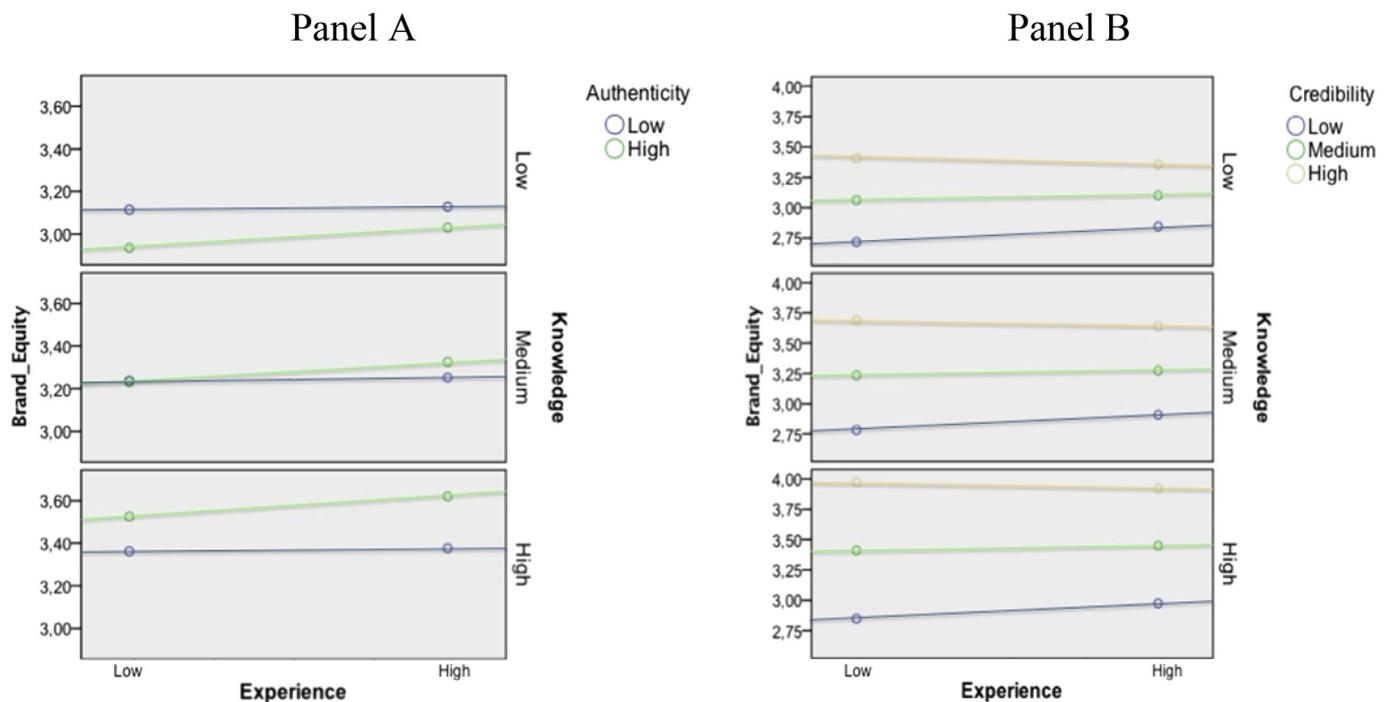


Fig. 3. Statistically significant interaction effects.

Table 6  
Conditional direct and indirect effects of Authenticity on Brand Equity.

Conditional direct effects				
Previous experience	Product knowledge	Effect	SE	95% CI
Low	Low	-.1796	.1230	-.4220 – .0628
Low	Moderate	-.0080	.1043	-.2135 – .1975
Low	High	.1636	.1351	-.1027 – .4299
High	Low	-.0984	.1362	-.3669 – .1702
High	Moderate	.0732*	.1071	.1378–.2843
High	High	.2448*	.1265	.0045–.4942
Conditional indirect effects				
Previous experience	Product knowledge	Effect	SE	95% CI
Low	Low	-.0782	.0871	-.2713 – .0722
Low	Moderate	-.1031	.1101	-.3356 – .0966
Low	High	-.1279	.1346	-.4077 – .1218
High	Low	.1206*	.0587	.0205–.2498
High	Moderate	.1722*	.0726	.0321–.3216
High	High	.2237*	.0932	.0417–.4114

Note: \*p < 0.05; 95% CI does not contain 0.

maintain heritage assets are not at odds with the promotion of the tourist destinations in which they are located and that tourists wish to visit, such promotion being the job of marketing. In short, the essence of heritage marketing is to examine the desires of clients and endeavor to provide a means by which they can visit and get to know heritage sites, providing of course that restrictions designed to protect historic heritage are respected (Misiura, 2006). In recent decades, the growth witnessed in heritage marketing activities has been due, in part, to the need among heritage site managers to generate income, to address underfunding. While the implementation of marketing activities and strategies is essential for tourism in general, this is especially true for heritage tourism (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). It is on this basis that the strategy of brand extension, which has been widely and successfully used in the marketing field (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Keller & Lehmann, 2006), is of particular interest for heritage sites, particularly those bearing the WH hallmark, as it helps construct a strong competitive

advantage that contributes to the wealth-generation capacity of the territory concerned. The present study seeks to investigate this under-researched topic in the academic literature on tourist destinations (Kim et al., 2019), by examining the extent to which the authenticity with which heritage brands are extended to other product and service categories is successful in terms of generating brand equity.

Appropriate marketing, for example brand extension strategies based on authenticity, can lead to robust brands with high brand equity that delivers important advantages and profit to firms (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). Since the late 1990s, there has been a growing scholarly interest in understanding the factors that contribute to the formation of brand equity in different contexts. However, there has been little academic research to date in the sphere of brands associated with culture and, in particular, WH brands, such as the MCAG.

Among the many factors studied throughout the literature that has been found to contribute to the success or failure of this strategy is the authenticity of the brand extensions themselves. Authenticity is considered a key antecedent of consumer response, in terms of behavioral intention (Spiggle et al., 2012). The concept of authenticity has drawn particular attention in the tourism field (Zhou et al., 2018) as it is considered a key variable in tourist motivation (Chhabra, 2005; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). Similarly, other works have noted the primary role of brand credibility in building brand equity (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000; Broyles et al., 2009).

Yet, despite the extensive literature dealing with the brand extension strategy, very few studies have addressed this issue in the context of heritage brand extensions. To the authors' knowledge, the present study is the first of its kind to examine WH brands from the perspective of how the equity of the brand extension is formed, together with the effect of two key antecedents – authenticity and credibility of the extension – on the formation of extension brand equity.

The findings of this paper suggest that the perceived credibility of the brand extension exerts a direct and positive effect on its brand equity, contributing to its formation, as asserted in previous studies beyond the sphere of brand extensions (Broyles et al., 2009; Erdem & Swait, 1998; Spry et al., 2011). Similarly, brand extension authenticity is found to exert an effect on brand extension credibility, a result in line with those of Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009), Gilmore and

Pine (2007) and Özsoy and Altaras (2008), although this effect is activated only among tourists with previous experience of visiting the MCAG. The present results also show that the direct effect of brand extension authenticity (and its indirect effect via credibility) on brand extension equity are influenced by the moderating variables under analysis—that is, according to the tourist's level of product knowledge and previous experience of the MCAG. In this regard, it has been found here that it is only beyond a certain level of product knowledge (moderate or high) that the direct effect of authenticity on brand equity is activated—a finding that corroborates those of Lu et al. (2015). This direct effect is complemented by the indirect effects (via brand extension credibility), which were significant only among subjects with previous experience of the heritage site, regardless of their level of product knowledge.

These findings, in part, confirm earlier studies dealing with tourism, which found that authenticity exerted a significant effect on the level of tourist satisfaction (which is a key antecedent of brand equity) or on destination image and loyalty (both being dimensions of brand equity) (Engeset & Elvekrok, 2015; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Ram et al., 2016; Ramkissoon, 2015). However, the present study goes a step further by applying the concept of authenticity to heritage brand extensions and by proposing that the influence of the authenticity variable on the formation of brand equity for the extension is not *always* significant, but rather depends on the extent of the tourist's previous experience of the heritage site and the degree of knowledge they possess regarding the product category to which the heritage brand extension belongs.

In conclusion, the present work makes the following contributions to the literature: (1) it is the first study of its kind to examine, within the WH destination brand context, the effect of two key antecedents (authenticity and credibility of the brand extension) on the formation of brand equity for the extension; (2) it conducts an experiment to control the level of brand extension authenticity—an approach that, to date, has rarely been applied in the brand extension context (and even less so in research dealing with brand extension authenticity); (3) it examines the moderating effect of the tourist's previous experience of the heritage brand and their product knowledge on those antecedents of brand equity; and (4) it proposes a moderated mediation model to assess the level at which the moderating variables activate the effect of the antecedent variables on brand extension equity.

## 8. Managerial implications

The results of the present study hold some interesting implications for managers of heritage destinations, or tourism firms. The findings demonstrate that, when creating brand extensions, it is important to invest time and resources in creating authentic extensions that preserve and honor the heritage in question and the essence of the parent brand. The tourist's perception of authenticity on the part of the heritage destination will transfer over to the brand extension provided that they perceive the connection between the destination brand and its extension to have legitimacy and cultural continuity, as asserted by Spiggle et al. (2012). The objective here is to make brands that are more credible in the eyes of tourists, and thus greater brand equity. This point is particularly relevant for those tourists who are more 'expert' in terms of their knowledge of the product being extended, and who have prior experience of visiting the heritage site/destination. Such tourists are familiar with the uniqueness, originality, values, and essence of the parent brand.

These findings align perfectly with the modern approach to heritage management, which focuses on identifying strategic opportunities for developing heritage sites and their surroundings (Carbone, 2016). The results are also in line with the idea that the combination of active curation and management of cultural heritage, in harmony with its ongoing protection, constitutes a strategic driver for local development (Carbone, 2016). It is essential that today's approach to marketing heritage grows demand and satisfies the needs of visitors while at the

same time taking action to conserve that historical heritage for future generations to enjoy (Misiura, 2006). Therefore, as Carbone (2016) notes, any action taken to attract greater tourist volumes to heritage sites must factor-in (in addition to making the sites appealing and accessible) the need to ensure the actions are perceived by the public as authentic and credible. This approach helps convert cultural heritage into a distinctive element when building the destination brand.

On this point, a further interesting implication arising from the study is the need for heritage site managers to understand the importance of authenticity when developing their marketing plans, and the benefits it can provide in terms of brand value. The present findings affirm the basic assumption that marketing activities can contribute to improving the tourist experience, by means of authenticity of goods and services. These findings are consonant with those of other studies, which have identified that authentic experiences can be used to trigger a positive effect on the formation of loyalty toward heritage sites (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010), loyalty being a dimension of brand equity. Thus, this paper contends that any actions designed to increase the authenticity of the heritage brand extension should go beyond a simple reference to the name of the heritage site. Rather, there should be a genuine connection between the tourist and the heritage brand, ensuring that their experience of the extended brand is as close as possible to their experience of the heritage site. To achieve this, particular care must be taken over any references to the heritage site, so that they not only include the name of the site, its icons, typography, and colors, but also convey a connection with the tourist via the values and essence of the parent brand.

According to the above, the paper also contends that heritage brands that are considering an extension strategy should make every effort to educate future tourists (that is, those who have yet to visit the site) about the unique values and essence of the parent heritage brand (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010), to enable them to subsequently identify the brand extensions as authentic. These efforts to promote the essence of the parent brand can be channeled prior to the visit, via online campaigns, during the visit to the site, or afterwards, through remarketing activities.

Meanwhile, marketing in general, and heritage marketing in particular face the strategic challenge of how to achieve a better understanding of the market, which will contribute to the designing of products and services that fulfill potential tourists' needs and tastes (McKercher, 2002; McKercher & du Cros, 2002). This connects with the need for heritage brand managers to adopt a more proactive stance by working toward better understanding the tourists who visit the destination, in terms of the degree of previous experience they have and the extent of knowledge achieved during the visit. The findings of the present study have demonstrated how important it is for heritage managers to understand tourists (either prior to their arrival or during their visit) in terms of their previous experience of the heritage site in question and their level of knowledge of the product category used in the brand extension. The resulting benefits of creating authentic brand extensions, in terms of brand equity for the tourist, are further strengthened in the case of tourists with prior product knowledge and experience of visiting the heritage site in question. This suggests that heritage site managers who are contemplating the option of brand extensions must assume that tourists will have a certain level of experience and knowledge, and that they should therefore pay special attention to these two variables.

Furthermore, tourists' perceptions of authenticity will depend not only on the characteristics of the destination but also on the emotional connection they have with it. Heritage site managers should therefore consider how tourists form and perceive their connection with history, religion, spiritual experiences, humanity and civilization: while remembering that these felt perceptions and connections will vary depending on the type of tourist in question. Tourists' active participation in learning and discovery regarding cultural heritage is highly recommended, even after their visit to a particular attraction, as it will

help increase their experience of heritage.

Heritage managers are also responsible for safeguarding the internal coherence of the heritage brand, protecting its heritage, originality, reliability, and uniqueness. Furthermore, in the case of sites denominated as WH, managers should take full advantage of this hallmark, which is a sign of authenticity and uniqueness of exceptional value, universal in reach.

### 9. Limitations and future research

Finally, as with any scientific research, the present study has certain limitations that should be taken into account. First, this study uses a WH cultural heritage site as the parent brand, and a specific product as the brand extension: a clothes and accessories shop, which presents a strong hedonistic component. It would be of interest in future studies to replicate this research using other WH categories, such as a natural or mixed site, together with other product categories, with a more utilitarian component, to test whether the present results are upheld. A further limitation of the study is that two of the three levels of brand extension authenticity originally proposed were found not to be

significant, which required them to be combined for the purpose of the planned analysis. Future studies could work with other aspects of the brand to design different levels of authenticity. Lastly, while not a limitation, it would also be of interest to examine the degree to which cultural differences between countries may moderate tourist responses to different levels of brand extension authenticity. This type of heritage site is visited by tourists from numerous countries and continents, with widely diverging cultural values. The academic literature has demonstrated the importance of national culture in how individuals process information (Alcántara-Pilar et al., 2018).

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### Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

### Appendix A. Experimental stimuli



T1. Clothes and accessories flyer: high brand extension authenticity.



 **Tesoros de la Al-hambra**

Tesoros de la Al-hambra offers a collection of clothing and accessories of character.

For the confection of our garments, which go from fluid skirts and blouses to wrap around shawls, we have resorted to using natural materials such as linen, silk and wool with smooth colours as well as ethnical and floral prints, perfectly combining tradition and modernity.

We have also designed a collection of bags ranging from large and informal ones to mini purses for special occasions.

Nevertheless, our Tesoro wouldn't be complete without the renowned range of totally artisanal trinkets. Necklaces, bracelets and earrings made with fabrics, seeds, wood or rattan complete the collection of jewelry which we have created just for you.



**T2. Clothes and accessories flyer: moderate brand extension authenticity.**



 **Tesoros de Al-Andalus**

Tesoros de Al-Andalus offers a collection of clothing and accessories of character.

For the confection of our garments, which go from fluid skirts and blouses to wrap around shawls, we have resorted to using natural materials such as linen, silk and wool with smooth colours as well as ethnical and floral prints, perfectly combining tradition and modernity.

We have also designed a collection of bags ranging from large and informal ones to mini purses for special occasions.

Nevertheless, our Tesoro wouldn't be complete without the renowned range of totally artisanal trinkets. Necklaces, bracelets and earrings made with fabrics, seeds, wood or rattan complete the collection of jewelry which we have created just for you.



**T3. Clothes and accessories flyer: low brand extension authenticity.**

**Appendix B. Instructions for participating tourists**

Dear Sir/Madam, With the permission of the Council of the Alhambra & Generalife, we are conducting a study to research the perceptions and opinions of tourists visiting Granada regarding new commercial outlets that will shortly be launched in the monumental complex. You have been selected at random to evaluate information about one of these establishments, and we would like you to read the information sheet (flyer), paying the same level of attention as you would if you were reading it at home.

You will then be given a questionnaire on which to indicate your opinions and impressions about what you have read and seen. Please respond sincerely to the questions, as the success of our study relies on your genuine opinions and thoughts. All opinions will be kept in the strictest confidence and will be used exclusively for research purposes.

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