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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The pursuit of the ideal self: An investigation of the relationship of authenticity and ideal self-congruence

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Abstract

Research suggests that authentic branding strategies should focus on consumers' actual self rather than their ideal self; that is, brands that match consumers' ideal self are perceived as too psychologically distant from their present self and, thus, as inauthentic. This study challenges this prevailing notion by proposing the novel perspective that ideal self-congruence is more influential than actual self-congruence in driving authenticity. Contrary to the view that brands matching consumers' ideal self are deemed inauthentic due to psychological distance, our research, encompassing four empirical studies, demonstrates that ideal self-congruence significantly enhances positive authentic pride while effectively reducing negative hubristic pride more than actual self-congruence. Furthermore, this study not only reveals that ideal self-congruence is more strongly associated with authentic pride than actual self-congruence but also reshapes the theoretical understanding of the role of self-congruence in the realm of authenticity. Our findings therefore contradict previously cited but hardly empirical arguments by demonstrating that ideally self-congruent brands positively affect perceived brand authenticity more than actually self-congruent brands. Thus, we recommend brands to focus authentic marketing strategies on consumers' ideal self to positively influence consumer behavior.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Brands from various sectors (e.g., Rolex, Mercedes, Disney, Nike) aim to align with the ideal self-concept of consumers to positively influence their behaviors (Malär et al., 2018). The marketing technique of aligning the brand concept with consumers' ideal self-concept (i.e., ideal self-congruence) has been successful because consumers can enhance their self-concept and thus their self-esteem by consuming ideally self-congruent brands (Malär et al., 2011; Sirgy, 1985). The importance of this technique for positively influencing individual behavior has been demonstrated in various contexts (e.g., brands and products, tourism and hospitality, and the health sector) (Beerli et al., 2007; Ekinci et al., 2008; Japutra et al., 2019; Mähner et al., 2023).

However, while it has been shown that ideal self-congruence positively influences perceptions and behaviors, research has increasingly drawn attention to the dangers of ideal self-congruence by indicating that ideally self-congruent brands are perceived as overly (psychologically) distant, leading to a lack of perceived authenticity; thus, they are perceived by consumers as hubristic and inauthentic (Fritz et al., 2017; Koo et al., 2014; Malär et al., 2011; Tan et al., 2019).

Although this line of argumentation seems intuitive at first (i.e., brands that match our ideal self, the self that we aspire to, are psychologically farther away than brands that match our actual self, which is why ideally self-congruent brands are perceived as less authentic than brands that match our actual self in the here and now); research results indicate that ideal self-congruence, like actual self-congruence, is positively related to authenticity-related factors such

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as commitment, quality, reliability, and symbolism (Huber et al., 2010; Japutra et al., 2016; Morhart et al., 2015; Sirgy et al., 1991; Zhu et al., 2019). A consideration of practices supports our belief regarding the positive relationship between ideal self-congruence and authenticity, as ideally self-congruent brands such as Disney, BMW, and Mercedes are among the most authentic brands worldwide (Heilpern, 2016).

The concept of authenticity concerning individuals and their preference for authentic products and services has been a subject of observation for centuries (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). However, its significance has grown notably in the past few decades. In a digital era characterized by social media and artificial intelligence, distinguishing authenticity has become increasingly complex due to rising consumer skepticism toward advertising and transparency. This growing demand for authenticity underscores the need for an in-depth exploration of authenticity dynamics. Such research is crucial for marketers striving to align brand values with the evolving expectations of a conscious audience and practical marketing approaches (Lee & Eastin, 2021; Yang et al., 2021). Companies can meet this desire for authentic consumption and brand authenticity by enhancing the perceived similarity between brand and consumer, thereby increasing the perceived authenticity of their brand (Gilmore & Pine II., 2007). However, it is unclear whether brands should focus on consumers' ideal or actual self-concept in this matching process.

Therefore, to overcome this uncertainty and to answer our research question of whether ideal or actual self-congruence is more strongly related to authenticity, we first reveal that ideal self-congruence is a vital driver of authentic pride when consumers purchase products. In doing so, we conceptually argue that consuming ideally self-congruent brands activates authentic pride (i.e., positive achievement-oriented feelings) but mitigates hubristic pride (i.e., negative egoistical feelings). We empirically test this hypothesis across two studies (Study 1 and Study 2).

Building on these results, we then incorporate actual self-congruence into our considerations and demonstrate why ideal self-congruence should have a stronger positive effect on authentic pride and thus on consumer behavior than actual self-congruence. We empirically test this hypothesis based on our third study (Study 3).

Subsequently, we expand our proposed theoretical model by considering brand authenticity as a new variable and hypothesize that the effect of ideal self-congruence on authentic pride is stronger than the effect of actual self-congruence, as ideal self-congruence is more strongly related to brand authenticity than actual self-congruence. Thus, we first discuss why both ideal and actual self-congruence should positively influence perceived brand authenticity and why the effect of ideal self-congruence on authentic pride via brand authenticity should be stronger than the effect of actual self-congruence. We empirically test this hypothesis based on a fourth study (Study 4). Overall, our findings contribute to self-congruence theory and authenticity theory by providing an understanding of how authenticity mediates the positive effect of ideal self-congruence on consumer behavior. Furthermore, our results provide insights for practice regarding the use of this marketing technique to positively influence consumer behavior.

2 | THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

This study focuses on self-congruence theory, which describes the influence of the psychological match between consumers' self-concept and the self-concept of another entity (e.g., a brand) on individual behavior (Hosany & Martin, 2012; Khan, 2023; Malär et al., 2018). Self-congruence is a multidimensional concept that reflects the main dimensions of ideal self-congruence and actual self-congruence (Malär et al., 2011; Sirgy, 1982). Whereas ideal self-congruence describes the match between consumers' ideal self-concept (i.e., the person people aspire to be) and the self-concept of another entity, actual self-congruence describes the match between consumers' actual self-concept (i.e., the actual perception of oneself in the here and now), and the self-concept of another entity (Malär et al., 2011; Malär et al., 2018). Both ideal and actual self-congruence positively influence consumer behavior (see, e.g., Huber et al., 2018; Japutra et al., 2019; Moons et al., 2020; Olk, 2021; Schnebelen & Bruhn, 2018; Zogaj, 2023). From a psychological perspective, the positive effects of ideal and actual self-congruence can be explained by how people attempt to avoid inconsistencies in their thoughts and behaviors because such inconsistencies lead to uncomfortable feelings and tensions (Festinger, 1957). Hence, consumers prefer brands (or other entities) that are similar to their self-concept and therefore reduce cognitive dissonance and increase cognitive harmony (Malär et al., 2011; Moharana et al., 2023).

In addition, Gilmore and Pine II. (2007) argue that perceived similarity already makes the perception of a brand more authentic. Since consumers' perceived self-congruence with a brand is perceived as a reflection of the individual's (ideal/actual) self, it is interpreted as unique, genuine, and reliable (i.e., authentic). In line with this argumentation, research indicates that ideal self-congruence, such as actual self-congruence, is positively related to authenticity-related factors such as commitment, quality, reliability, and symbolism (Huber et al., 2010; Japutra et al., 2016; Japutra et al., 2023; Morhart et al., 2015; Sirgy et al., 1991; Zhu et al., 2019). However, although these findings apply to both ideal and actual self-congruence, research on self-congruence is increasingly warning of the dangers of ideally self-congruent brands, indicating that authentic branding should not be based on ideal self-congruence. That is, since ideally self-congruent brands do not match consumers' self in the here and now (i.e., actual self-congruence), ideally self-congruent brands might be perceived as psychologically distant and inauthentic, that is, hubristic and aspirational brands that threaten consumers' self-concept (see, e.g., Fritz et al., 2017; Koo et al., 2014; Malär et al., 2011; Tan et al., 2019).

Contrary to the research that warns of the potential for ideally self-congruent brands to be perceived as inauthentic, we argue that ideal self-congruence not only relates to authenticity (i.e., authentic pride and brand authenticity) but does so more strongly than actual self-congruence. To do so, we first elucidated the relationship between ideal self-congruence and pride.

To understand how the consumption of ideally self-congruent brands affects feelings of pride, it is crucial to consider the underlying

behavioral driver of ideal self-congruence. Ideal self-congruence is driven by self-enhancement, a concept rooted in the foundational theory suggesting that people seek experiences to increase their self-esteem (Ditto & Lopez, 1992). That is, individuals can increase their self-esteem by achieving their self-imposed goals (e.g., consuming ideally self-congruent brands) (Higgins, 1987). Accordingly, individuals prefer brands that correspond to their ideal self-concept. Consuming ideally self-congruent brands supports individuals' self-enhancement tendencies by reducing the gap between their existing and ideal self-concept (Malär et al., 2018). The positive effect of ideal self-congruence on consumer behavior has been confirmed in many different areas (e.g., brands and products, tourism and hospitality, the social media context, and the health sector) (Ahn, 2019; Huber et al., 2018; Mähner et al., 2023; Moons et al., 2020; Rabbanee et al., 2020; Wijnands & Gill, 2020; Zogaj et al., 2021).

Having clarified the underlying behaviors of ideal self-congruence, the question of how ideal self-congruence influences authenticity (i.e., actual pride and brand authenticity) arises. We first focus on authentic pride. The concept of pride has two facets: authentic pride and hubristic pride (Sung & Phau, 2019; Tracy & Robins, 2007).

Considering the dual feelings of pride related to consumption, authentic pride describes positive feelings, such as success, fulfillment, and self-worth, whereas hubristic pride is related to negative feelings, such as arrogance, egoism, and conceit (McFerran et al., 2014; Sung & Phau, 2019). Considering that the consumption of ideally self-congruent brands (i.e., brands that match the personal ideal self-concept of a consumer) helps consumers close the gap between their present actual self and their ideal self-concept, which increases their self-esteem and self-worth (Nolan & Harold, 2010; Sirgy, 1982), consuming ideally self-congruent brands should lead to achievement-oriented feelings (i.e., authentic pride). Thus, the more a brand represents individuals' own ideal self-concept (i.e., ideal self-congruence), the more likely individuals are to perceive their success in reaching that ideal (i.e., authentic pride) when consuming such a brand.

In contrast, ideal self-congruence should be negatively correlated with hubristic pride. This is predicated upon the understanding that ideal self-congruence, centered on self-esteem and self-improvement, counteracts the inflated self-perception inherent in hubristic pride. A positive correlation between ideal self-congruence and hubristic pride would imply that individuals perceive the negative emotions of hubristic pride as ideal, contradicting the positive self-improvement and achievement-oriented characteristics of ideal self-congruence. Therefore, consuming brands that match one's personal ideal self should decrease negative feelings such as hubristic pride (i.e., feeling snobbish, pompous, smug, and so on) and bolster authentic pride by acting as a mirror of one's aspirational self, reinforcing self-worth derived from personal growth and genuine accomplishments. Consequently, ideal self-congruence should reduce hubristic pride, which is characterized by inflated self-esteem not grounded in real achievements, as alignment with the ideal self reflects aspirational rather than boastful/narcissistic self-perceptions.

Furthermore, while authentic pride has a positive effect on consumer behavior, hubristic pride drives consumers to disseminate

negative information regarding brands and therefore has a negative effect on consumer behavior (Septianto et al., 2020; Sung & Phau, 2019). Thus, authentic pride positively influences consumer behavior, whereas hubristic pride has a negative effect on consumer behavior. Summarizing the above considerations, we hypothesize the following:

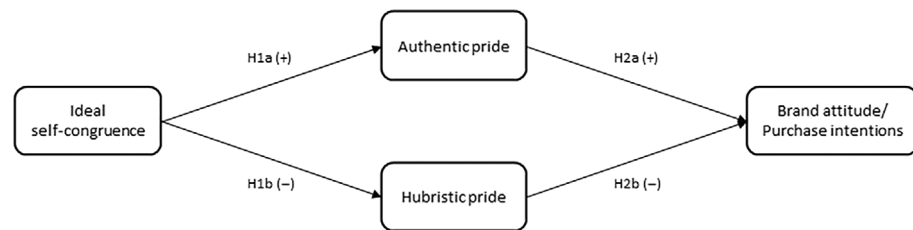
H1. Ideal self-congruence has (a) a positive effect on authentic pride and (b) a negative effect on hubristic pride.

H2. (a) Authentic pride has a positive effect on consumer behavior (i.e., brand attitude and purchase intentions), whereas (b) hubristic pride has a negative effect on consumer behavior (i.e., brand attitude and purchase intentions).

Figure 1 presents our first proposed theoretical model.

Now that we have demonstrated in theory that ideal self-congruence should positively (negatively) affect authentic (hubristic) pride, we turn to the claim that authentic branding strategies should not focus on consumers' ideal self but rather on their actual self (Fritz et al., 2017; Koo et al., 2014; Malär et al., 2011; Tan et al., 2019). Therefore, we include actual self-congruence in our considerations and further demonstrate why ideal self-congruence should have a stronger positive effect on authenticity than actual self-congruence.

Gilmore and Pine II. (2007) suggest that perceived similarity (i.e., the basis of self-congruence) makes consumers' perception of a brand more authentic since consumers' perceived self-congruence with the brand is perceived as a reflection of the individual's (ideal/actual) self and thus interpreted as unique, genuine, and reliable (i.e., authentic). In addition, in line with this argumentation, research has shown that actual self-congruence, such as ideal self-congruence, is positively related to authenticity-related factors such as commitment, quality, reliability, and symbolism (Huber et al., 2010; Japutra et al., 2016; Morhart et al., 2015; Sirgy et al., 1991; Zhu et al., 2019). To better understand how the consumption of actually self-congruent brands affects feelings of authentic pride, the underlying behavioral driver of actual self-congruence must be considered. Whereas ideal self-congruence is motivated by self-enhancement, actual self-congruence is driven by self-verification (Malär et al., 2011; Malär et al., 2018; Zhou et al., 2023). According to self-verification theory, people strive to maintain their existing self-concept. Therefore, individuals avoid experiences that threaten their existing self-concept and thus their self-worth and try to promote experiences that confirm their existing self-concept (Lieberman et al., 1999; Swann Jr., 1983). Hence, individuals prefer entities that correspond to their actual self-concept since such behavior confirms the actual self-concept of the individual, elicits positive emotions, and contributes to consumers' self-worth (Malär et al., 2011). The positive effect of actual self-congruence on consumer behavior has been confirmed in various areas (e.g., brands and products, tourism and hospitality, and the social media context) (Ahn, 2019; Huber et al., 2018; Moons et al., 2020;

FIGURE 1 Theoretical Model 1.

Rabbanee et al., 2020; Shimul & Phau, 2023; Wijnands & Gill, 2020; Zogaj et al., 2021).

In relation to consumption, authentic pride describes positive feelings, such as success, fulfillment, and self-worth (McFerran et al., 2014; Sung & Phau, 2019). Furthermore, the consumption of actually self-congruent brands helps consumers verify their self-concept by, for example, verifying their self and thus their self-worth (i.e., authentic pride). That is, the more a brand represents an individual's actual self-concept, the more his or her self-concept should be verified. Consequently, consumers feel authentic pride when the consumption of a brand strengthens their self in the here and now.

Accordingly, given the simultaneous effects of ideal and actual self-congruence on authentic pride, we expect the positive effect of ideal self-congruence on authentic pride to be stronger than the positive effect of actual self-congruence on authentic pride. That is, research has shown that humans exhibit a natural drive to strive for authenticity in their lives to enhance their self (Lehman et al., 2019; Lenton et al., 2013), which is why authenticity has gained importance for contemporary consumption. This aligns with Gilmore and Pine II. (2007), who state that “authenticity has overtaken quality as the prevailing purchasing criterion, just as quality overtook cost, and as cost overtook availability” (p. 5). Consequently, authenticity is highly relevant for consumers' self-concept. Since people strive for authenticity to improve themselves and the ideal self is based on consumers' ideals, desires and goals, authenticity (i.e., to be authentic) is an elementary part of consumers' ideal self-concept. Whether a consumer's actual self-concept is authentic depends on whether the consumer considers himself or herself to be authentic in the here and now. However, even if consumers deem their self-concept in the here and now (i.e., their actual self) authentic, their ideal self-concept should be even more characterized by authenticity; consumers are continually striving for improvement (i.e., authenticity) in their lives. Therefore, even if an individual claims to be authentic (actual self), his or her ideal self should be more authentic, as it is still a personal ideal. Even if consumers have moved closer to their ideal self through self-improvement (living more authentically), they will never reach it because there are no limits to the human desire for ongoing improvement. Consequently, based on the above explanations, consumers' ideal self-concept contains more authenticity than their actual self-concept. Their consumption of ideally self-congruent brands thus elicits more feelings of authentic pride than actually self-congruent brands. Furthermore, from another perspective, in evaluating the link between ideal self-congruence and authenticity, we expect a stronger relationship compared with actual self-congruence. If this is not true,

it would paradoxically mean that individuals aspire to be less authentic in the future compared with their current selves, counter to the inherent purpose of ideal self-congruence, which is to align with a more authentically realized version of oneself in the future.

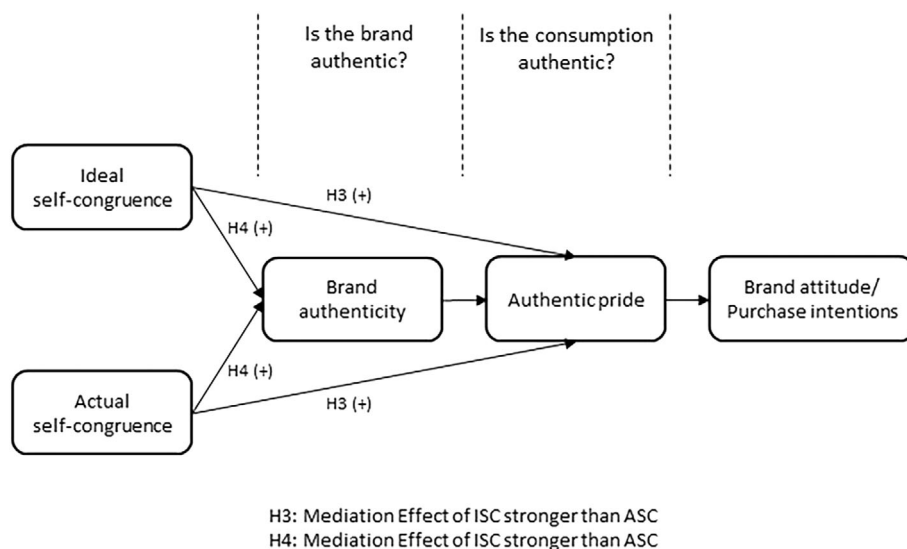
Therefore, the positive effect of ideal self-congruence on consumer behavior via authentic pride should be stronger than the positive effect of actual self-congruence on consumer behavior via authentic pride. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

H3. The effect of ideal self-congruence on consumer behavior (i.e., brand attitude) via authentic pride is stronger than the effect of actual self-congruence on consumer behavior (i.e., brand attitude) via authentic pride.

In the following section, we will examine our hypothesis, which posits that brand authenticity plays a stronger mediating role in the relationship between ideal self-congruence and consumer behavior, particularly through the lens of authentic pride, than the influence of actual self-congruence. Thus, in our final theoretical considerations, we also consider the factor of brand authenticity, as authentic pride describes feelings related to the consumption of a brand, whereas brand authenticity describes the perception of a brand.

Overall, there are different conceptualizations of brand authenticity; however, these conceptualizations generally focus on personality traits (Cinelli & LeBoeuf, 2020). For example, Bruhn et al. (2012) defined brand authenticity as an evaluation of brand continuity, originality, reliability, and naturalness; Napoli et al. (2014) define brand authenticity as quality commitment, heritage, and sincerity; and Morhart et al. (2015) describe brand authenticity as an evaluation of brand continuity, integrity, credibility, and symbolism. Therefore, when considering the dimensions of brand authenticity, brand authenticity-related factors such as commitment, quality, reliability, and symbolism are positively related to both ideal and actual self-congruence (Huber et al., 2010; Japutra et al., 2016; Morhart et al., 2015; Sirgy et al., 1991; Zhu et al., 2019). In addition, the positive relationship between ideal/actual self-congruence and brand authenticity is supported by similarity-attraction theory since perceived similarity (i.e., self-congruence) creates the perception that a brand is more authentic (Gilmore & Pine II., 2007). Furthermore, the content-related similarity between brand authenticity (i.e., is the brand authentic?) and authentic pride (i.e., is the consumption of the brand authentic?) indicates that brand authenticity should positively affect authentic pride. Specifically, the more individuals perceive a brand as authentic, the

FIGURE 2 Theoretical Model 2.



greater they should perceive its consumption as authentic. Consequently, perceived brand authenticity should positively influence feelings of positive pride (see also Grayson and Martinec (2004), who show that it is necessary to consume authentic brands and products to fulfill the need for authenticity).

Again, considering the simultaneous effects of ideal and actual self-congruence, once brand authenticity is accounted for, the positive effect of ideal self-congruence on consumer behavior via brand authenticity and authentic pride should therefore be stronger than the effect of actual self-congruence on consumer behavior via brand authenticity and authentic pride. The reason for this, once more, is that a consumer's ideal self-concept contains more perceived authenticity than a consumer's actual self-concept since consumers are continually striving for improvement (i.e., authenticity) in their lives. Summarizing the above considerations, the positive effect of ideal self-congruence on consumer behavior via brand authenticity and authentic pride should be stronger than the positive effect of actual self-congruence on consumer behavior via brand authenticity and authentic pride. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

H4. Brand authenticity is a stronger mediator of the effect of ideal self-congruence on consumer behavior (i.e., purchase intentions) via authentic pride than of the effect of actual self-congruence on consumer behavior (i.e., purchase intentions) via authentic pride.

Figure 2 presents our second proposed theoretical model.

3 | STUDY 1

3.1 | Method

To test H1 and H2, we showed the participants the fictitious brand “ABC” (Appendix A). Based on Malär et al. (2018), we chose this brand

because it represents ideal characteristics while controlling for confounding preexisting brand associations. Next, we conducted an attention check by asking participants to cite how many product quality points were given in the last customer survey. If the answer was wrong, the participant was not considered due to insufficient attention. Next, we measured ideal self-congruence based on Malär et al. (2018) and Sirgy et al. (1997). To do so, we first asked participants to take a moment and to think about the ABC brand. The participants were asked to describe the brand in their mind using personality characteristics (character traits, personality traits, appearance). Next, we asked the participants to take some time and to think about how they would like to be and what personality characteristics they would like to have. Subsequently, they answered questions about ideal self-congruence. This was followed by the questioning of authentic and hubristic pride based on Tracy and Robins (2007). To avoid sequence effects, we set the order of the constructs (i.e., authentic and hubristic pride) randomly for each participant. Next, brand attitude was measured based on Malär et al. (2018). All the items are presented in Table 1. The participants provided their sex, age, and financial situation (control variables) at the end of the study.

The data were collected via the online panel provider Qualtrics (www.qualtrics.com). Since we did not want to examine effects for specific population groups but rather general main effects, we collected data according to the age and sex distribution of the German population aged 18–66 years. The sample consisted of 310 participants. Overall, the average age was 42.5 years (median = 44 years), and 49.4% of the respondents were female. A detailed summary of the demographic profiles of the respondents is provided in Appendix B (Tables B1 and B2).

3.2 | Results

The results of the confirmatory factor analysis confirmed both the items' validity and the model's fit (see Appendix C: Tables C1 and C5).

TABLE 1 Constructs of Studies 1–4.

Constructs	
Ideal self-congruence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study 1 • Study 2 • Study 3 • Study 4 Based on Malär et al. (2018) and Sirgy et al. (1997)	Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The personality of the “ABC/Mercedes” brand is consistent with how I would like to be (my ideal self). 2. The personality of the “ABC/Mercedes” brand is a mirror image of the person I would like to be (my ideal self).
Actual self-congruence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study 3 • Study 4 Based on Sirgy et al. (1997) and Zogaj et al. (2023)	Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The personality of the “ABC/Mercedes” brand is consistent with how I see myself (my actual self). 2. The personality of the “ABC/Mercedes” brand is a mirror image of me (my actual self).
Authentic pride <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study 1 • Study 2 • Study 3 • Study 4 Based on Tracy and Robins (2007)	If I bought this brand's products, I would feel... (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accomplished. 2. Successful. 3. Fulfilled. 4. Confident. 5. Productive. 6. Achievement. 7. Self-worth.
Hubristic pride <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study 1 • Study 2 Based on Tracy and Robins (2007)	If I bought this brand's products, I would feel... (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Snobbish. 2. Pompous. 3. Stuck-up. 4. Conceited. 5. Egoistical. 6. Arrogant. 7. Smug.
Brand attitude <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study 1 • Study 3 Based on Malär et al. (2018)	Please think again about the ABC brand and indicate how you perceived the brand. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1 = very bad to 5 = very good 2. 1 = very negative to 5 = very positive 3. 1 = very unfavorable to 5 = very favorable
Purchase intentions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study 2 • Study 4 Based on Kozup et al. (2003)	(1 = very unlikely to 5 = very likely) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How likely would you be to purchase Mercedes brand products? 2. Assuming you were interested in buying a car, would you be more likely or less likely to decide on this brand? 3. Thinking about the Mercedes brand, how probable is it that you would consider this brand if you were looking for a car?
Brand authenticity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study 4 Based on Hamby et al. (2019)	Please indicate how you perceive the brand. (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I view the brand as authentic. 2. I view the brand as genuine. 3. I view the brand as real.

As shown in Appendix C, the study demonstrated strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alphas above 0.80 (Cortina, 1993). The AVE values exceeded 0.50 and surpassed the MSV values, with the square root of the AVEs greater than the construct correlations, eliminating discriminant validity concerns (Hair et al., 2010). Additionally, the HTMT analysis results were below the 0.90 threshold, reaffirming the lack of any discriminant validity issues (Franke & Sarstedt, 2019; Henseler et al., 2015). Finally, the model's fit was assessed as appropriate (Byrne, 2016).

Next, to assess H1 and H2, we estimated the effect of ideal self-congruence (IV) on brand attitude (DV) via authentic and hubristic pride (mediators) using PROCESS Model 4 based on 10,000 bootstrap samples and a 95% confidence interval (CI) (Hayes, 2018). The results

indicated that ideal self-congruence positively influenced authentic pride ($c = .684$; 95% CI [.598, .769]) and negatively influenced hubristic pride ($c = -.368$; 95% CI [−.500, −.237]). Thus, H1a and H1b are supported. In addition, ideal self-congruence had a positive direct effect on brand attitude ($c = .261$; 95% CI [.173, .349]). With respect to H2a and H2b, the results indicated that authentic pride positively influenced brand attitude ($c = .387$; 95% CI [.301, .474]), whereas hubristic pride had a negative effect on brand attitude ($c = -.201$; 95% CI [−.257, −.145]), supporting H2a and H2b. Next, we assessed the indirect effect of ideal self-congruence on brand attitude via pride. As expected, the results indicated that the indirect effects of ideal self-congruence on brand attitude via authentic pride ($c' = .265$; 95% CI [.180, .357]) and via hubristic pride ($c' = .074$; 95% CI [.034, .123])

were significant. Overall, the variables explained 63.19% of the variance in brand attitude.

4 | STUDY 2

4.1 | Method

To extend the generalizability of our findings from Study 1 and to show that the relationship between the constructs also applies to real brands, we conducted Study 2 based on the Mercedes brand. As in Study 1, we asked the participants to describe the Mercedes brand using personality characteristics (e.g., character traits, personality traits, appearance). However, to intensify the confrontation with the brand, we asked the participants to note three characteristics that came to mind when they had thought about the Mercedes brand. Next, we asked the participants to take some time and think about how they would like to be and what personality characteristics they would like to have. Subsequently, they answered the same questions as in Study 1 about ideal self-congruence, authentic pride, and hubristic pride. We again randomized the order of authentic and hubristic pride to avoid sequence effects. Next, we conducted an attention check in which we asked the participants how many characteristics they had given at the beginning of the questionnaire to describe the brand. If the answer was wrong, the participant was not considered due to insufficient attention. Next, to extend the generalizability of the effects on consumer behavior, we measured purchase intentions based on Kozup et al. (2003). Furthermore, Mercedes is a real brand that can be purchased; hence, the query about purchase intentions seemed more plausible here than in Study 1 (i.e., fictitious brand ABC). All the items are given in Table 1. Finally, as in Study 1, the participants provided their sex, age, and financial situation (control variables). The data were collected according to the age and sex distribution of the German population aged 18–66 years via Qualtrics. The sample consisted of 260 participants. Overall, the average age was 42.5 years (median = 44 years), and 48.8% of the respondents were female. A detailed summary of the demographic profiles of the respondents is provided in Appendix B (Tables B3 and B4).

4.2 | Results

The results of the confirmatory factor analysis confirmed both the items' validity and the model's fit (see Appendix C: Table C2 and C5). Again, as shown in Appendix C, the study demonstrated strong internal consistency and discriminant validity. Furthermore, the model's fit was assessed as appropriate. Next, to assess H1 and H2, we estimated the effect of ideal self-congruence (IV) on purchase intentions (DV) via authentic and hubristic pride (mediators) by using PROCESS Model 4 based on 10,000 bootstrap samples and a 95% CI (Hayes, 2018). The results indicated that ideal self-congruence positively influenced authentic pride ($c = .752$; 95% CI [.684, .820]) and negatively influenced hubristic pride ($c = -.422$; 95% CI [–.543,

–.301]). Thus, as in Study 1, H1a and H1b are accepted. In addition, ideal self-congruence had a positive direct effect on purchase intentions ($c = .512$; 95% CI [.372, .653]). Furthermore, in line with H2a and H2b, the results indicated that authentic pride positively influenced purchase intentions ($c = .241$; 95% CI [.094, .387]), whereas hubristic pride had a negative effect on purchase intentions ($c = -.187$; 95% CI [–.269, –.105]). Next, we assessed the indirect effect of ideal self-congruence on purchase intentions via pride. As expected, the results indicated that the indirect effects of ideal self-congruence on purchase intentions via authentic pride ($c' = .181$; 95% CI [.045, .322]) and via hubristic pride ($c' = .079$; 95% CI [.034, .141]) were significant. Overall, the variables explained 64.52% of the variance in purchase intentions. In summary, the results of the second study, based on a real brand scenario, confirm the findings of the first study.

5 | STUDY 3

5.1 | Method

The results of Studies 1 and 2 demonstrate that ideal self-congruence positively affects authentic pride. As shown, Study 3 addresses the question—as H3 presents—of whether ideal self-congruence has a positive effect on authentic pride and thus on consumer behavior when actual self-congruence is included in the same model. Furthermore, as stated in H3, whether the effect of ideal self-congruence on authentic pride is stronger than the effect of actual self-congruence should be examined.

To test H3, we decided to use the abstract scenario from Study 1, which made it possible to eliminate confounding preexisting brand associations and showed the participants the fictitious brand “ABC” (Appendix A). Subsequently, we asked them to describe the brand using personality characteristics and to note three characteristics that came to mind when they thought about the ABC brand. Next, we conducted an attention check, asking participants to recall the number of quality points the product received in the last customer survey. If the answer was wrong, the participant was not considered due to insufficient attention. Next, we asked the participants to take some time and think about how they would like to be and what personality characteristics they would like to have. Subsequently, they answered two questions about ideal self-congruence (as in Study 1). Furthermore, we asked participants to take some time and think about how they are and what personality characteristics they have. Afterward, they answered two questions about their actual self-congruence (based on Sirgy et al., 1997 and Zogaj et al., 2023). Whether ideal self-congruence or actual self-congruence was queried first was determined randomly. Next, authentic pride was measured as in previous studies. Subsequently, we conducted an attention check, asking participants how many characteristics they had given at the beginning of the questionnaire to describe the brand. If the answer was wrong, the participant was not considered due to insufficient attention. Because the ABC brand is not a real brand, we measured brand attitude as a

behavioral intention variable (as in Study 1). All the items are given in Table 1. Finally, the participants provided their sex, age, and financial situation (control variables). The data were collected according to the age and sex distribution of the German population aged 18–66 years via Qualtrics. The sample consisted of 229 participants. Overall, the average age was 42.8 years (median = 44 years), and 49.3% of the respondents were female. A detailed summary of the demographic profiles of the respondents is provided in Appendix B (Tables B5 and B6).

5.2 | Results

The results of the confirmatory factor analysis confirmed both the items' validity and the model's fit (see Appendix C: Tables C3 and C5). Again, as shown in Appendix C, the study demonstrated strong internal consistency and discriminant validity. Furthermore, the model's fit was assessed as appropriate. Next, to assess H3, we estimated the effect of ideal self-congruence (IV) and actual self-congruence (IV) on brand attitude (DV) via authentic pride by using IBM AMOS 26 based on 10,000 bootstrap samples and a 95% CI. The results indicated that ideal self-congruence ($c = .584$; 95% CI [.282, .944]) positively affected authentic pride, whereas actual self-congruence had no significant effect on authentic pride ($c = .237$; 95% CI [−.102, .534]). For testing purposes, we eliminated interferences between actual and ideal self-congruence by removing the independent variable “ideal self-congruence” from the SEM, keeping only the independent variable “actual self-congruence.” This resulted in a positive effect of actual self-congruence on authentic pride ($c = .726$; 95% CI [.607, .848]). This finding indicates that there might be a positive relationship between actual self-congruence and authentic pride, but the effect of ideal self-congruence on authentic pride is so strong that it eliminates the potential effect of actual self-congruence. In addition, as in Study 1, ideal self-congruence had a positive direct effect on brand attitude ($c = .484$; 95% CI [.227, .807]). On the other hand, actual self-congruence had no significant effect on brand attitude ($c = -.039$; 95% CI [−.285, .161]). With respect to H3, the mediator authentic pride had a positive effect on brand attitude ($c = .307$; 95% CI [.134, .475]), which is why ideal self-congruence had a positive indirect effect on brand attitude via authentic pride ($c' = .179$; 95% CI [.070, .356]), whereas actual self-congruence had no significant indirect effect on brand attitude via authentic pride ($c' = .073$; 95% CI [−.017, .192]). Thus, H3 is supported. Overall, the variables explained 68.5% of the variance in brand attitude.

6 | STUDY 4

6.1 | Method

To extend the generalizability of our findings from Study 3 and to analyze whether brand authenticity is a better mediator of the effect of ideal self-congruence on brand attitude via authentic pride than of the

effect of actual self-congruence, we conducted Study 4 based on the Mercedes brand (as in Study 2). In doing so, we asked the participants to describe the brand using personality characteristics and to note three characteristics that came to mind when they thought about the Mercedes brand. Next, as in Study 3, we asked them to take some time and think about how they would like to be and about the personality characteristics they would like to have. Afterward, they answered two questions, as in previous studies about ideal self-congruence. Subsequently, we asked them to take some time and think about how they are and about their personality characteristics. Afterward, they answered two questions about their actual self-congruence. As in Study 3, whether ideal self-congruence or actual self-congruence was queried first was decided randomly to prevent sequence effects. Next, they answered questions about brand authenticity and authentic pride (Table 1). Afterward, we conducted an attention check asking the participants how many characteristics they had given at the beginning of the questionnaire to describe the brand. If the answer was wrong, the participant was not considered due to insufficient attention. Finally, we considered purchase intentions as the behavioral outcome, as in Study 2. All the items are given in Table 1. Furthermore, participants provided their sex, age, and financial situation (control variables). The data were collected according to the age and sex distribution of the German population aged 18–66 years via Qualtrics. The sample consisted of 240 participants. Overall, the average age was 42.8 years (median = 44 years), and 49.2% of the respondents were female. A detailed summary of the demographic profiles of the respondents is provided in Appendix B (Tables B7 and B8).

6.2 | Results

The results of the confirmatory factor analysis confirmed both the items' validity and the model's fit (see Appendix C: Tables C4 and C5). Again, as shown in Appendix C, the study demonstrated strong internal consistency and discriminant validity. Furthermore, the model's fit was assessed as appropriate. Next, to assess H4, we estimated the effect of ideal self-congruence (IV) and actual self-congruence (IV) on purchase intentions (DV) via brand authenticity (first-stage mediator) and authentic pride (second-stage mediator) by using IBM AMOS 26 based on 10,000 bootstrap samples and a 95% CI. The results indicated that ideal self-congruence ($c = .320$; 95% CI [.084, .614]) positively affects brand authenticity (first-stage mediator), whereas actual self-congruence has no significant effect on brand authenticity ($c = .184$; 95% CI [−.132, .437]). As in Study 3, in a further step, we removed ideal self-congruence for testing purposes. Doing so led to a positive effect of actual self-congruence on brand authenticity ($c = .480$; 95% CI [.376, .588]), again demonstrating the power of ideal self-congruence.

Furthermore, as in Study 3, ideal self-congruence positively affected authentic pride ($c = .308$; 95% CI [.117, .527]), whereas actual self-congruence had no effect on authentic pride ($c = .168$; 95% CI [−.043, .376]). According to the SEM without the independent variable ideal self-congruence, as expected, the effect of actual self-

congruence on authentic pride was positive and significant ($c = .423$; 95% CI [.295, .552]).

With respect to H4, the first-stage mediator brand authenticity positively affects the second-stage mediator authentic pride ($c = .418$; 95% CI [.286, .575]), which in turn positively affects purchase intentions ($c = .467$; 95% CI [.164, .759]), resulting in a positive indirect effect ($c = .063$; 95% CI [.015, .168]) of ideal self-congruence on purchase intentions via brand authenticity (first-stage mediator) and authentic pride (second-stage mediator). On the other hand, as expected, as actual self-congruence has no effect on brand authenticity when considering ideal self-congruence, there is no indirect effect of actual self-congruence on brand attitude via brand authenticity and authentic pride ($c = .036$; 95% CI [−.012, .124]). Thus, H4 can be supported.

Surprisingly, ideal self-congruence had no effect on purchase intentions ($c = .011$; 95% CI [−.276, .258]), whereas actual self-congruence had a direct positive effect on purchase intentions ($c = .444$; 95% CI [.165, .753]). We assumed that the mediators (brand authenticity and authentic pride) would explain the effect of ideal self-congruence on purchase intentions so strongly that the direct effect of ideal self-congruence on purchase intentions would no longer be significant. However, it should also be mentioned that a non-significant effect can occur when there are other confounding positive and negative mediators (not analyzed in this model) that cancel each other out (Hayes, 2018). Overall, the variables explained 67.6% of the variance in purchase intentions.

7 | DISCUSSION

Before discussing the implications of our results, it should be noted that they are based on cross-sectional studies and thus indicate correlations rather than causal proof.

7.1 | Theoretical implications and future research avenues

Overall, our findings contradict those of other studies whose assumptions are more theoretical than empirical; thus, we extend self-congruence theory as well as authenticity theory and advance our understanding of how ideal and actual self-congruence are linked to authenticity. The results of our study are particularly important because the relevance of authenticity for consumers has increased in recent decades due to the increasing challenge in understanding what perceptions and behaviors are authentic in a world increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence and pervasive social media consumption (Lee & Eastin, 2021; Yang et al., 2021). Companies are therefore increasingly faced with the challenge of increasing the perceived authenticity of their advertising and how consumers perceive their brand to positively influence consumer behavior. However, companies lack guidance on whether they should focus on the ideal or actual self-concept of their consumers when influencing the perceived

authenticity of their offerings. With our study, we resolve this uncertainty and provide evidence for the influence of ideal and actual self-congruence on consumer behavior via authenticity (both authentic pride and brand authenticity), which has not been empirically investigated to date.

Our first contribution concerns the effect of ideal self-congruence on consumer behavior via authentic (positive) and hubristic (negative) pride. One strand of research (Fritz et al., 2017; Koo et al., 2014; Malär et al., 2011; Tan et al., 2019) has theoretically argued, but not empirically validated, that ideally self-congruent brands are psychologically perceived as being too distant, leading them to be perceived as inauthentic but rather hubristic. Contrary to this argumentation, our results provide empirical evidence and indicate that ideal self-congruence has a positive (negative) effect on authentic (hubristic) pride. Furthermore, authentic (hubristic) pride positively (negatively) affects consumer behavior. Consequently, contrary to the abovementioned strand of research, our results show that consuming ideally self-congruent brands activates authentic pride (i.e., positive achievement-oriented feelings), whereas it mitigates hubristic pride (i.e., negative egoistical feelings), which is why authentic branding can focus on ideal self-congruence. In addition, these results contribute to the literature regarding the effect of pride on consumer behavior. While previous research agrees that authentic pride positively influences consumer behavior, there are both studies that indicate a negative effect of hubristic pride (Septianto et al., 2020; Sung & Phau, 2019) and studies that indicate a positive effect of hubristic pride on consumer behavior (Yang & Zhang, 2018). Our results confirm that authentic pride positively affects consumer behavior, whereas hubristic pride negatively influences consumer behavior. Thus, our results support the view that consumers strive for authenticity and aim to avoid egoistic and arrogant feelings (i.e., hubristic pride) when consuming brands.

Our second contribution involves a reevaluation of the simultaneous effect of ideal and actual self-congruence on consumer behavior via authenticity (i.e., brand authenticity and authentic pride). That is, our results indicate that the effect of ideal self-congruence on consumer behavior via authenticity is stronger than the effect of actual self-congruence. Considering consumers' perception of not only a brand (i.e., brand authenticity) but also their consumption of that brand (i.e., authentic pride) enabled us to examine whether consumers perceive ideally and actually self-congruent brands as authentic and whether their consumption of ideally and actually self-congruent brands drives their feelings of authentic pride. Previous studies have argued that consumers may consider brands that match consumers' actual self (actually self-congruent brands) to be more authentic than ideally self-congruent brands, as ideally self-congruent brands might be perceived as too distant from the self in the present and therefore as inauthentic (Fritz et al., 2017; Malär et al., 2011; Tan et al., 2019). In contrast, our research shows that ideal self-congruence positively influences both perceived brand authenticity and the perceived authenticity of the consumption of an ideally self-congruent brand (i.e., authentic pride). Thus, our findings demonstrate that even if ideally self-congruent brands are perceived as distant from the here and

now (Tan et al., 2019), they are still perceived as authentic, leading to authentic pride, as authenticity is a characteristic that might be strongly related to individuals' ideals. This is because authenticity involves not only how far a brand is from the here and now but also how original, trustworthy, committed, and quality-oriented this brand is (Bruhn et al., 2012; Cinelli & LeBoeuf, 2020; Morhart et al., 2015; Napoli et al., 2014). Furthermore, our findings highlight that authentic branding should preferentially align with consumers' ideal self-concept, as this has a stronger positive effect on brand authenticity and authentic pride feelings than the actual self-concept. This implication contradicts previous research (mentioned above), which has warned of the dangers of ideally self-congruent brands and recommended that brands must align with consumers' actual self-concept to be perceived as authentic (Malär et al., 2011).

Finally, although some studies do not confirm the positive main effect of ideal self-congruence on consumer behavior (Ahn et al., 2013; Çifci et al., 2016; Huang et al., 2017), our empirical studies show that ideal self-congruence generally has a positive main effect on consumer behavior (i.e., brand attitude and purchase intentions). Thus, future studies should focus on moderators and mediators to understand the effect of ideal self-congruence on consumer behavior.

7.2 | Practical implications

As mentioned above, the relevance of authenticity for individual consumption has increased in recent decades, which is why companies are constantly trying to ensure that their offerings are authentic. To do this, they require guidance on which factors positively influence the perceived authenticity of their advertising, products, services, and brands. Although companies are aware that the perceived similarity between their brand and consumers positively influences consumers' perceived authenticity (Gilmore & Pine II., 2007), they are still unsure whether they should focus on consumers' ideal self-concept or on consumers' actual self-concept in this matching process. Research (Japutra et al., 2019; Malär et al., 2011) and practice (Sunrise, 2020) have repeatedly noted that the brand Dove focuses on consumers' actual self in the here and now instead of on consumers' ideal self and is therefore perceived as an authentic brand, implying that ideally self-congruent brands cannot be perceived as authentic. In contrast, the aim of this research was to show that authentic branding strategies can also focus on ideal self-congruence. Our results show that ideal self-congruence positively and more strongly influences brand authenticity and authentic pride than actual self-congruence, which is based on achievement-oriented feelings. Therefore, branding can focus on consumers' ideal self to generate brand authenticity and authentic pride. Thus, to match consumers' ideal self, brands must know who their target group is and what their target group's ideal self-concept is. To this end, brands should conduct surveys to determine which ideal characteristics represent the target group's ideal self-concept.

In addition to the positive effect of ideal self-congruence on authentic pride, our findings illustrate that brand authenticity also mediates its effect on authentic pride. Our findings highlight that the effect of consumers' ideal self-concept on consumer behavior via brand authenticity and authentic pride is stronger than the effect of consumers' actual self-concept on consumer behavior via both mediators. Consequently, brands should preferentially focus authentic branding strategies based on consumers' ideal self.

In the Dove brand example, Dove can reflect an ideal self-concept for many individuals because, for example, the down-to-earth manner of the brand is perceived as an ideal characteristic. This phenomenon needs to be investigated in a further study. In addition, it should be mentioned that other brands that work with more luxurious attributes (and accordingly tend to be further away from the actual self in the here and now) are also perceived as authentic. In practice, authentic branding strategies based on ideals have already been widely implemented by brands such as Disney, Mercedes, and Rolex because these brands, on the one hand, match consumers' ideal self (Malär et al., 2018) and, on the other hand, are among the most authentic brands worldwide (Heilpern, 2016). Moreover, our results show that ideal self-congruence has a generally positive direct effect (regardless of authenticity) on brand attitudes and purchase intentions. This may be because self-enhancement mediates the effect of ideal self-congruence on consumer behavior (Nolan & Harold, 2010; Sirgy, 1982). Therefore, regardless of authenticity, brands can focus on ideal self-congruence to positively influence consumer behavior.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

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APPENDIX A: DESCRIPTION OF THE ABC BRAND

The following description of the ABC brand is based on Malär et al. (2018):

“The ABC brand is a brand in the higher price segment that offers clothes, shoes, bags, and sunglasses for men and women. The brand was founded 5 decades ago and is distributed world-wide. In its communication activities, the brand uses elegantly styled models who appear to be sovereign, wealthy, attractive, powerful, and independent. The brand's management invests a lot of resources in trend research and its own design department. By doing so, it wants to ensure that consumers feel superior, more self-confident, and more independent when purchasing products of the brand. Furthermore, the brand keeps a particular eye on only hiring the most talented and self-confident sales people for its flagship stores. These sales people are continuously trained in order to advise their customers competently on style and image. With regard to product quality, customers assessed the brand with 4.5 points out of 5 points in the last customer survey.”

APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES

TABLE B1 Age and gender—Study 1.

Age	Female	Male
18–24 years	5.8%	6.5%
25–34 years	9.7%	10.3%
35–44 years	9.4%	9.4%
45–54 years	11.3%	11.6%
55–66 years	13.2%	12.9%
Sum	49.4%	50.6%

Note: $n = 310$.**TABLE B2** Monthly net income—Study 1.

Income (EUR)	Shares
0–1000	17.7%
1001–2000	22.9%
2001–3000	25.8%
3001–4000	12.9%
>4000	11.6%
No answer	9.0%

Note: $n = 310$.**TABLE B3** Age and gender—Study 2.

Age	Female	Male
18–24 years	5.8%	6.5%
25–34 years	9.6%	10.4%
35–44 years	9.2%	9.6%
45–54 years	11.2%	11.9%
55–66 years	13.1%	12.7%
Sum	48.8%	51.2%

Note: $n = 260$.**TABLE B4** Monthly net income—Study 2.

Income (EUR)	Shares
0–1000	16.2%
1001–2000	22.3%
2001–3000	30.0%
3001–4000	14.6%
>4000	11.5%
No answer	5.4%

Note: $n = 260$.**TABLE B5** Age and gender—Study 3.

Age	Female	Male
18–24 years	5.7%	6.6%
25–34 years	10.0%	10.0%
35–44 years	8.7%	10.0%
45–54 years	11.4%	11.4%
55–66 years	13.5%	12.7%
Sum	49.3%	50.7%

Note: $n = 229$.**TABLE B6** Monthly net income—Study 3.

Income (EUR)	Shares
0–1000	15.3%
1001–2000	22.3%
2001–3000	23.6%
3001–4000	19.2%
>4000	14.4%
No answer	5.2%

Note: $n = 229$.**TABLE B7** Age and gender—Study 4.

Age	Female	Male
18–24 years	5.8%	6.7%
25–34 years	9.6%	10.4%
35–44 years	9.6%	9.6%
45–54 years	11.3%	11.7%
55–66 years	12.9%	12.5%
Sum	49.2%	50.8%

Note: $n = 240$.**TABLE B8** Monthly net income—Study 4.

Income (EUR)	Shares
0–1000	16.7%
1001–2000	25.0%
2001–3000	28.3%
3001–4000	11.7%
>4000	10.4%
No answer	7.9%

Note: $n = 240$.

APPENDIX C: CONSTRUCT VALIDITY AND MODEL FIT

For each study, we ran a reliability analysis in SPSS 29 and a confirmatory factor analysis in AMOS 26 (Tables C1–C4). The Cronbach's alphas (>.80) indicated internal consistency (Cortina, 1993). Moreover, the AVE values were greater than .50 and greater than the MSV values. Furthermore, the

square root of the AVE values was greater than the correlations between the constructs, indicating that there were no discriminant validity concerns (Hair et al., 2010). In addition, the HTMT analysis indicated that there were no discriminant validity concerns because all the values were smaller than the threshold of .90 (Franke & Sarstedt, 2019; Henseler et al., 2015). Next, we assessed the model fit based on Byrne (2016). The results showed an appropriate model fit (Table C5).

TABLE C1 Construct validity—Study 1.

Construct	Mean	SD	α	AVE	MSV	F1	F2	F3	F4
Ideal self-congruence (F1)	3.260	.935	.897	.817	.550	.904	(.743)	(.313)	(.735)
Authentic pride (F2)	3.246	.952	.950	.731	.573	<i>.742***</i>	.855	(.310)	(.765)
Hubristic pride (F3)	2.536	1.111	.970	.824	.251	<i>-.301***</i>	<i>-.305***</i>	.907	(.498)
Brand attitude (F4)	3.488	.858	.920	.796	.573	<i>.732***</i>	<i>.757***</i>	<i>-.501***</i>	.892

Note: In bold: square root of the AVE; in italics: correlations between constructs; in brackets: HTMT analysis; significance: *** $p < .001$.

TABLE C2 Construct validity—Study 2.

Construct	Mean	SD	α	AVE	MSV	(F1)	(F2)	(F3)	(F4)
Ideal self-congruence (F1)	2.850	1.299	.934	.877	.759	.937	(.868)	(.403)	(.815)
Authentic pride (F2)	3.092	1.181	.958	.766	.759	<i>.871***</i>	.875	(.338)	(.730)
Hubristic pride (F3)	2.928	1.310	.969	.810	.226	<i>-.409***</i>	<i>-.345***</i>	.900	(.473)
Purchase intentions (F4)	2.850	1.327	.960	.890	.665	<i>.815***</i>	<i>.734***</i>	<i>-.475***</i>	.943

Note: In bold: square root of the AVE; in italics: correlations between constructs; in brackets: HTMT analysis; significance: *** $p < .001$.

TABLE C3 Construct validity—Study 3.

Construct	Mean	SD	α	AVE	MSV	F1	F2	F3	F4
Ideal self-congruence (F1)	3.245	1.072	.912	.839	.743	.916	(.864)	(.796)	(.792)
Actual self-congruence (F2)	3.081	1.088	.930	.871	.743	<i>.862***</i>	.933	(.742)	(.694)
Authentic pride (F3)	3.197	1.075	.954	.775	.627	<i>.792***</i>	<i>.744***</i>	.880	(.758)
Brand attitude (F4)	3.595	.923	.939	.836	.637	<i>.798***</i>	<i>.698***</i>	<i>.761***</i>	.914

Note: In bold: square root of the AVE; in italics: correlations between constructs; in brackets: HTMT analysis; significance: *** $p < .001$.

TABLE C4 Construct validity—Study 4.

Construct	Mean	SD	α	AVE	MSV	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
Ideal self-congruence (F1)	2.940	1.301	.942	.890	.741	.943	(.862)	(.590)	(.746)	(.703)
Actual self-congruence (F2)	2.763	1.254	.930	.870	.741	<i>.861***</i>	.933	(.555)	(.699)	(.752)
Brand authenticity (F3)	3.801	1.036	.915	.786	.482	<i>.591***</i>	<i>.561***</i>	.887	(.706)	(.541)
Authentic pride (F4)	3.242	1.174	.954	.776	.559	<i>.748***</i>	<i>.708***</i>	<i>.694***</i>	.881	(.735)
Purchase intentions (F5)	2.911	1.305	.959	.887	.566	<i>.702***</i>	<i>.753***</i>	<i>.541***</i>	<i>.741***</i>	.942

Note: In bold: square root of the AVE; in italics: correlations between constructs; in brackets: HTMT analysis; significance: *** $p < .001$.

TABLE C5 Model fit—Studies 1–4.

	χ^2/df	SRMR	CFI	IFI	TLI	RMSEA
Study 1	2.476	.035	.967	.967	.961	.069
Study 2	2.474	.029	.965	.965	.959	.075
Study 3	2.241	.027	.977	.978	.970	.074
Study 4	2.304	.033	.972	.972	.964	.074