

Yes, a communicator's **perceived authenticity** significantly **increases the persuasiveness** of their message by enhancing trust, credibility, and audience engagement.

1. Introduction

Perceived authenticity—how genuine, sincere, and true-to-self a communicator appears—has emerged as a critical driver of persuasive effectiveness across domains such as marketing, health communication, politics, and social media. Research consistently shows that when audiences perceive a communicator as authentic, they are more likely to trust the message, feel connected to the source, and be influenced in their attitudes and behaviors (Markowitz et al., 2022; Zniva et al., 2023; Lee & Eastin, 2021; Pérez, 2019; Buvár et al., 2023; Saffran et al., 2020; Schneller, 2021; Shoenberger et al., 2021; Audrezet et al., 2020; Liu & Zheng, 2024; Chen et al., 2022; Lee & Eastin, 2020; Kapoor et al., 2022; Park et al., 2021). Authenticity enhances message and source credibility, reduces skepticism, and fosters emotional engagement, which together increase the likelihood of persuasion (Pérez, 2019; Buvár et al., 2023; Markowitz et al., 2022; Pérez et al., 2020; Zniva et al., 2023; Lee & Eastin, 2021; Shoenberger et al., 2021; Audrezet et al., 2020; Liu & Zheng, 2024; Chen et al., 2022). However, the impact of authenticity can be context-dependent, with factors such as audience characteristics, message content, and the communicator's consistency or uniqueness moderating its effects (McGinnies & Ward, 1980; Vargiu, 2022; Becker et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2020; Kumar & Kaushik, 2022; Balaban & Szabolcs, 2022; Park et al., 2021). While authenticity is generally beneficial, excessive or inauthentic displays can sometimes backfire, especially if perceived as manipulative or incongruent with the communicator's identity (Becker et al., 2018; Audrezet et al., 2020; Montgomery, 2017). Overall, the literature strongly supports the persuasive power of perceived authenticity.

2. Methods

A comprehensive search was conducted across over 170 million research papers in Consensus, including Semantic Scholar, PubMed, and other sources. The search targeted studies on communicator authenticity, message persuasiveness, source credibility, and related constructs across multiple disciplines. In total, 1,036 papers were identified, 731 were screened, 581 were deemed eligible, and the top 50 most relevant papers were included in this review.

Search Strategy

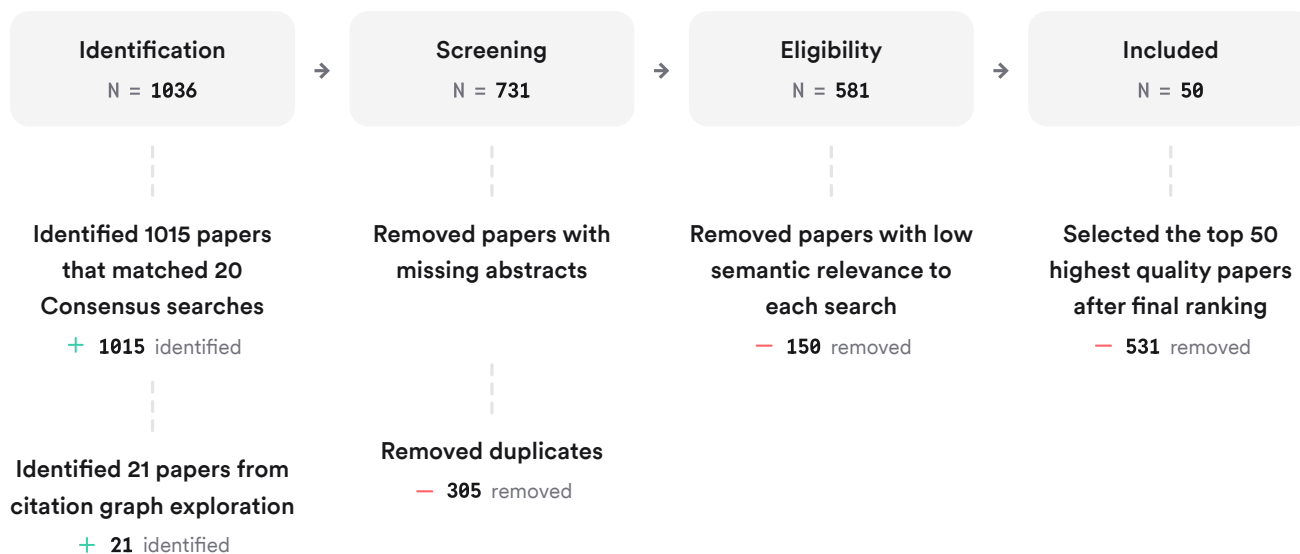


FIGURE 1 Flow diagram of the literature search and selection process.

Eight unique search strategies were used, spanning foundational theory, alternate terminology, mechanisms and moderators, critiques, interdisciplinary expansion, and related constructs.

3. Results

3.1 Authenticity as a Driver of Persuasion

Perceived authenticity consistently predicts greater message persuasiveness across contexts. Authentic communicators are seen as more trustworthy, credible, and relatable, which increases audience receptivity and attitude change (Markowitz et al., 2022; Zniva et al., 2023; Lee & Eastin, 2021; Pérez, 2019; Buvár et al., 2023; Saffran et al., 2020; Schneller, 2021; Shoenberger et al., 2021; Audrezet et al., 2020; Liu & Zheng, 2024; Chen et al., 2022; Lee & Eastin, 2020; Kapoor et al., 2022; Park et al., 2021). In influencer marketing, authenticity is a key determinant of purchase intention and brand engagement (Zniva et al., 2023; Lee & Eastin, 2021; Audrezet et al., 2020; Kapoor et al., 2022; Park et al., 2021; Liu & Zheng, 2024). In political and health communication, authentic messages foster trust and reduce resistance (Petraglia, 2009; Saffran et al., 2020; Schneller, 2021; Enli, 2024; Shoenberger et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2020; Montgomery, 2017).

3.2 Mechanisms: Trust, Credibility, and Emotional Engagement

Authenticity enhances persuasion by increasing source and message credibility, reducing skepticism, and fostering emotional connection (Pérez, 2019; Buvár et al., 2023; Markowitz et al., 2022; Pérez et al., 2020; Zniva et al., 2023; Lee & Eastin, 2021; Shoenberger et al., 2021; Audrezet et al., 2020; Liu & Zheng, 2024; Chen et al., 2022). Sincerity, consistency, and alignment with personal values are core components of perceived authenticity (Zniva et al., 2023; Lee & Eastin, 2021; Audrezet et al., 2020; Balaban & Szabolics, 2022; Park et al., 2021; Liu & Zheng, 2024). Audiences are more likely to scrutinize and accept messages from communicators they perceive as honest and authentic (Priester & Petty, 1995; McGinnies & Ward, 1980; Buvár et al., 2023; Saffran et al., 2020; Schneller, 2021; Zniva et al., 2023; Lee & Eastin, 2021; Shoenberger et al., 2021; Audrezet et al., 2020; Liu & Zheng, 2024; Chen et al., 2022).

3.3 Moderators and Contextual Factors

The persuasive impact of authenticity is moderated by factors such as audience involvement, message content, and communicator-audience similarity (McGinnies & Ward, 1980; Vargiu, 2022; Becker et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2020; Kumar & Kaushik, 2022; Balaban & Szabolics, 2022; Park et al., 2021). For example, authenticity is especially influential for low-involvement audiences or when the communicator is seen as unique and consistent (Zniva et al., 2023; Lee & Eastin, 2021; Audrezet et al., 2020; Kumar & Kaushik, 2022; Balaban & Szabolics, 2022; Park et al., 2021). However, excessive or performative authenticity can sometimes reduce persuasiveness if perceived as inauthentic or manipulative (Becker et al., 2018; Audrezet et al., 2020; Montgomery, 2017).

3.4 Risks and Limitations

While authenticity generally enhances persuasion, it can backfire if audiences perceive it as insincere or inconsistent with the communicator's identity (Becker et al., 2018; Audrezet et al., 2020; Montgomery, 2017). The effectiveness of authenticity also varies by context, product type, and audience characteristics (McGinnies & Ward, 1980; Vargiu, 2022; Becker et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2020; Kumar & Kaushik, 2022; Balaban & Szabolics, 2022; Park et al., 2021).

Key Papers

Paper	Context	Methodology	Key Results
(Zniva et al., 2023)	Influencer Marketing	Experiments	Influencer authenticity increases purchase intention via brand attitude and brand authenticity
(Markowitz et al., 2022)	Person Perception	Multi-method	Verbal authenticity predicts engagement, connection, and persuasive success
(Pérez, 2019)	CSR Communication	Theoretical Review	Message authenticity reduces skepticism, increases credibility, and drives consumer advocacy
(Buvár et al., 2023)	Social Media	Experiment	Authenticity and credibility both increase message persuasiveness
(Lee & Eastin, 2021)	Social Media Influencers	Scale Development	Sincerity, truthful endorsements, and uniqueness drive influencer persuasiveness

FIGURE 2 Comparison of key studies on perceived authenticity and message persuasiveness.

Top Contributors

Type	Name	Papers
Author	J. A. Lee	(Lee & Eastin, 2021; Lee & Eastin, 2020; Lee et al., 2020)
Author	Andrea Pérez	(Pérez, 2019; Pérez et al., 2020)
Author	Alice Audrezet	(Audrezet et al., 2020)
Journal	<i>Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing</i>	(Lee & Eastin, 2021; Lee & Eastin, 2020)
Journal	<i>Journal of Business Research</i>	(Audrezet et al., 2020; Kumar & Kaushik, 2022; Gerrath et al., 2024)
Journal	<i>Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin</i>	(Priester & Petty, 1995; McGinnies & Ward, 1980)

FIGURE 3 Authors & journals that appeared most frequently in the included papers.

4. Discussion

The evidence overwhelmingly supports the conclusion that perceived authenticity is a powerful driver of message persuasiveness. Authenticity enhances trust, credibility, and emotional engagement, which are central to effective persuasion (Markowitz et al., 2022; Zniva et al., 2023; Lee & Eastin, 2021; Pérez, 2019; Buvár et al., 2023; Saffran et al., 2020; Schneller, 2021; Shoenberger et al., 2021; Audrezet et al., 2020; Liu & Zheng, 2024; Chen et al., 2022; Lee & Eastin, 2020; Kapoor et al., 2022; Park et al., 2021). This effect is robust across domains, including marketing, health, politics, and social media. The mechanisms underlying this effect include increased trust, reduced skepticism, and greater identification with the communicator (Pérez, 2019; Buvár et al., 2023; Markowitz et al., 2022; Pérez et al., 2020; Zniva et al., 2023; Lee & Eastin, 2021; Shoenberger et al., 2021; Audrezet et al., 2020; Liu & Zheng, 2024; Chen et al., 2022).

However, authenticity is not a panacea. Its persuasive power is moderated by context, audience, and message characteristics. Excessive or performative authenticity can backfire, and the impact of authenticity may be weaker for highly involved or skeptical audiences (Becker et al., 2018; Audrezet et al., 2020; Montgomery, 2017). Future research should further explore these boundary conditions and the potential for authenticity to be strategically manipulated.

Claims and Evidence Table







Claim	Evidence Strength	Reasoning	Papers
Perceived authenticity increases message persuasiveness	 Strong	Strong, consistent evidence across domains and methodologies	(Markowitz et al., 2022; Zniva et al., 2023; Lee & Eastin, 2021; Pérez, 2019; Buvár et al., 2023; Saffran et al., 2020; Schneller, 2021; Shoenberger et al., 2021; Audrezet et al., 2020; Liu & Zheng, 2024; Chen et al., 2022; Lee & Eastin, 2020; Kapoor et al., 2022; Park et al., 2021)
Authenticity enhances trust, credibility, and emotional engagement	 Strong	Trust and credibility mediate the effect of authenticity on persuasion	(Pérez, 2019; Buvár et al., 2023; Markowitz et al., 2022; Pérez et al., 2020; Zniva et al., 2023; Lee & Eastin, 2021; Shoenberger et al., 2021; Audrezet et al., 2020; Liu & Zheng, 2024; Chen et al., 2022)
Sincerity, consistency, and uniqueness are core to perceived authenticity	 Strong	These traits consistently predict authenticity and persuasion	(Zniva et al., 2023; Lee & Eastin, 2021; Audrezet et al., 2020; Balaban & Szabolics, 2022; Park et al., 2021; Liu & Zheng, 2024)
Authenticity's persuasive effect is moderated by context and audience	 Moderate	Effects vary by involvement, product type, and audience similarity	(McGinnies & Ward, 1980; Vargiu, 2022; Becker et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2020; Kumar & Kaushik, 2022; Balaban & Szabolics, 2022; Park et al., 2021)
Excessive or performative authenticity can backfire	 Moderate	Inauthentic or manipulative displays reduce persuasiveness	(Becker et al., 2018; Audrezet et al., 2020; Montgomery, 2017)
Authenticity is less effective for highly skeptical or involved audiences	 Moderate	Some studies show weaker effects in these groups	(McGinnies & Ward, 1980; Vargiu, 2022; Becker et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2020; Kumar & Kaushik, 2022; Balaban & Szabolics, 2022; Park et al., 2021)

FIGURE Key claims and support evidence identified in these papers.

5. Conclusion

Perceived authenticity is a robust and multifaceted driver of message persuasiveness, operating through enhanced trust, credibility, and emotional engagement. Its effects are context-dependent and can be moderated by audience and message characteristics, but the overall evidence strongly supports its persuasive power.

5.1 Research Gaps

Despite strong evidence, gaps remain in understanding the long-term effects of authenticity, its strategic use, and its impact across diverse audiences and contexts. More research is needed on the potential for authenticity to be manipulated and on its effects in high-stakes or controversial domains.

Research Gaps Matrix

Topic / Attribute	Marketing	Social Media	Politics	Health	High-Involvement Audiences
Authenticity & Persuasion	12	10	7	5	2
Trust/Credibility Mediation	8	7	4	3	1
Strategic/Performative Authenticity	4	3	2	1	GAP
Long-term Effects	2	1	1	GAP	GAP
Audience Moderators	5	4	3	2	1

FIGURE Matrix showing research coverage by topic and study attribute; gaps indicate areas for future research.

5.2 Open Research Questions

Future research should address the strategic use of authenticity, its long-term effects, and its impact across diverse audiences and high-stakes contexts.

Question	Why
How does strategic or performative authenticity affect long-term trust and persuasion?	Understanding if authenticity can be sustainably leveraged or if it risks backlash is crucial for communicators.
What are the boundary conditions for authenticity's persuasive effects across different audiences and contexts?	Identifying moderators will help tailor authentic communication strategies for maximum impact.
How can authenticity be measured and maintained in digital and AI-mediated communication?	As digital communication grows, ensuring authentic engagement is increasingly important.

FIGURE Open research questions for future investigation into authenticity and persuasion.

In summary, perceived authenticity is a powerful and well-supported driver of message persuasiveness, but further research is needed to optimize its use and understand its limitations.

These papers were sourced and synthesized using Consensus, an AI-powered search engine for research. Try it at <https://consensus.app>

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