Authenticity, Uniqueness and Intention to Buy Scarce Products

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Abstract

This study aims to find empirical evidence between personality elements (authenticity, sense of uniqueness, need for uniqueness) and individual's preference of scarce products (PUI). A model was founded upon an extension of Snyder's studies of uniqueness seeking behavior and psychological authenticity literature. Survey methodology was used and a questionnaire was developed using widely accepted authenticity (operationalized under three categories, namely authentic living, self-alienation and external influence), sense of uniqueness (SOU), and need for uniqueness (NFU) scales. A total of 257 valid questionnaires were obtained out of 298 fully-completed forms collected from young millennials in Turkey, one of the largest developing countries with a collectivist culture. The data was analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that only authentic living has a statistically significant effect on individuals' SOU. This component of authenticity also has a significant effect on consumers' desire for scarce and unique products through SOU. Significant but moderate level direct effects of SOU on PUI and NFU on PUI were observed in the analysis. Compared to the extant literature, this study adopts a more comprehensive interpretation of uniqueness, and incorporates authenticity as an antecedent to fill a research gap.

Keywords: authenticity, scarce products, uniqueness, need for uniqueness, sense of uniqueness, PLS-SEM

1. Introduction

Among the populace, a multitude of consumers feel a need to be special and unique. They try to differentiate and distinguish themselves from others in the society. A valid way of differentiating from others is by possessing and using products that cannot be owned by everyone in society (Belk, Bahn, & Mayer, 1982). Beginning from ancient times material possessions have been used as status symbols by individuals in numerous cultures (Ghosh & Varshney, 2013; Trigg, 2001). Therefore, goods, services or experiences that are scarce in supply are used by consumers as a time-tested way to set themselves apart from other individuals in society (Han, Nunes, & Drèze, 2010; Richins, 1994). This motive is also fueled by popular culture, marketing activities of global companies in conjunction with the rise of individualism.

The scarcity is one of the attributes highlighted in the literature that sets apart luxury products from common products (Dubois, Laurent, & Czellar, 2001). In this context, the growing interest in luxury goods, scarcity and consumer behavior can be grounded on the growing luxury consumption despite the downturns in the global economy (Truong, Simmons, McColl, & Kitchen, 2008). In addition to being a widely accepted attribute of luxury goods, scarcity is also used in promoting more affordable products. Currently luxury goods marketers are not catering only to upper class but targeting a wider audience with affordable luxury products (Nueno & Quelch, 1998). Scarcity can be created by the marketers using a limited quantity message or a limited time message. The scarcity established for countless consumer goods in this way attract the attention of buyers, shape their judgments and create a more unique, and valuable product perception leading to increased profits for companies (Aggarwal, Jun, & Huh, 2011; Amaldoss & Jain, 2008; Jang, Ko, Morris, & Chang, 2015).

Uniqueness motivation is accepted as a force putting people to action especially in Western cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1992). Scarcity and uniqueness as one of the components, drivers and communication tools of various consumer industries is of utmost importance to marketing practitioners. This importance attributed to scarcity and uniqueness can also be noticed in the marketing communication carried out by consumer goods companies. A rather aged but well-cited study by (Pollay, 1984) points out that nearly one-third of the ads chosen from bestselling magazines used uniqueness as a central or subordinate theme.

Even the success of numerous leading corporations is founded to a notable extent upon scarcity. For instance the success of e-commerce giant eBay and one of the leading fashion retailers Zara can be attributed to their clever use of scarcity. On eBay the items on sale are limited in supply, and scarce due to time-limits on auctions. Usually there are only a few items of a particular kind on sale with many buyers bidding to buy it. Likewise, Zara pursues a similar strategy and markets small batches of apparel with frequent new model arrivals that are derived from better selling designs. In this way, a sense of scarcity is created among consumers and they are urged to buy the products they like when they see them due to the risk of not finding them on their next visit to the store (Pearson, 2013). Similarly, one of the quickly growing e-marketplaces, Etsy owes its success to offering artisan products limited in supply. According to Hiroko Tabuchi (2015) from The New York Times: *"It's their (customers) vote for authenticity and good old craftsmanship and a seemingly ethical alternative to buying from big corporations."*

Despite the importance attributed to scarcity and uniqueness among marketing practitioners, the scholarly interest on this subject is rather limited. Uniqueness studies in the literature are predominantly focused on a particular point of view, namely the 'need for uniqueness'. The lack of different perspectives and extensive applied research in different countries and cultures create a research gap on this important subject. Further studies are needed to understand the underlying psychological factors that drive the scarce product demand such as authenticity, which has become an important concept with the changing role of individuals within the society. This study aims to decipher how the search for self-actualization and the need to be different from others is affecting consumer behavior in scarce and unique goods. Firstly, to address why some consumers prefer scarce products over more common ones while others don't, the literature on uniqueness and personality factors affecting this inclination is scrutinized in the following section.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Authenticity

Authenticity characterizes an individual's behavior to be in accordance with his/her motives and beliefs and able to express who he/she really is (Varga & Guignon, 2014). Authenticity in psychology and consumer behavior is related to self-actualization and individuation. The significance of authenticity is on the rise with the increase in individualism among societies. Following the industrial revolution, urbanization, and socio-cultural changes of the last two centuries, human beings are considered more as individuals rather than insignificant members of large social systems. This altering view towards the society and its members amplified the prominence of the individual. In this new paradigm, being an individual can be best achieved through being unique and distinctive. Moreover, an increasing consciousness of "inwardness" led to a distinction between one's unique individuality and public self (Taylor, 1991; Varga & Guignon, 2014).

As a leading thinker on authenticity, Martin Heidegger believed that humans are free to choose the way they live and the nature of their own existence. According to Heidegger, leading an authentic life, exercising the freedom to create a meaningful existence and continually grow is possible for individuals and should be sought after. The alternative is living an inauthentic life that can be expressed as giving up freedom, accepting conventionality, and thinking of only the present. The relation of authenticity to the well-being of an individual is also hinted in his works in terms of guilt. He suggests that the majority of individuals don't exercise their personal freedom, which leads to guilt (Zimmerman, 1981). This autonomy of an individual indicates his/her ability to decide independently, free from social manipulation. Nietzsche's thoughts on authenticity are also similar to this notion as he denoted that one must "stand alone" and avoid herding behavior in order to find authenticity (Nietzsche, 2001). Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, in addition to Heidegger, had their own views of authenticity that draw from existentialist philosophy. Being true to oneself, autonomy and rejecting social dictation can be considered the indicators of authenticity summarizing these philosophers' points of view (Golomb, 1995; Varga & Guignon, 2014).

In psychology, the first wave of research on authenticity defined this term as a lack of false behavior and hiding one's actual thoughts by behaving the way others expect an individual to behave (Harter, 2002). Another approach, which is received favorably in academia, refers to individuals' personal experiences. In this approach, authenticity reflects the degree of an individuals' awareness of her/himself, the way he/she acts in accordance with his/her thoughts, desires, needs and beliefs about themselves. The thoughts, desires, needs and beliefs lead to behavior consistent with these experiences (Rogers, 1980). Authenticity is also called congruence and sincerity in the related literature pioneered by Rogers (1980).

Authenticity is accepted as an important determinant of well-being and research on authentic personality is proliferated in psychology. Despite extensive studies by psychology researchers in the latter half of 20th century

(i.e., Horney, 1951; Rogers, 1961), there is no significant interest attributed to this important concept in marketing oriented consumer behavior studies.

In this study, authenticity is assumed to be one of the drivers of consumers' sense and need for uniqueness. It was also expected to be an indirect driver of scarce and unique product demand. Individuals with high authenticity, that are influenced less by others and act sincerely, may develop a need for unique products that can set themselves apart from others and make them feel unique. This can also be seen as a way for individuals to actualize a self-concept.

A person-centered view of authenticity is adopted in the present study to analyze this concept. A tripartite approach that has been operationalized by Wood et al. (2008) into an authenticity scale from existing literature (Barrett-Lennard, 1998, p. 82; Rogers, 1980) is utilized. This approach involves coherence among three dimensions: individual's actual psychological status (beliefs, values etc.); self-awareness of this status and actual expression of emotions (behavior). In the operationalization of this approach three aspects of authenticity are defined as "self-alienation", "authentic living", and "accepting external influence" (Robinson, Lopez, Ramos, & Nartova-Bochaver, 2013).

Self-alienation, the first dimension of authenticity, refers to feeling out of touch with an individual's core self. The discrepancy in conscious awareness and the actual living of an individual (actual experience) are manifested in this dimension. In other words, if a person does not know her/himself well enough self-alienation emerges (Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis, & Joseph, 2008).

The second dimension of authenticity from a person-centered view is authentic living, which reflects the coherence between an individual's conscious awareness and behavior. A person's way of living and behavior may or may not be in accordance with his/her values and beliefs. Consequently, authentic living involves being true to oneself and expressing emotions and behaving based on conscious awareness (Robinson et al., 2013).

The third and final dimension is the degree of accepting external influence (i.e., others people's opinions) by an individual. The effect of social environment on an individual and the extent to which an individual conforms to it is an important factor that drives psychological authenticity. Individuals may unconsciously be affected by society, their peers and reference groups, incorporating their beliefs and attitudes. These external influences may manifest in both self-alienation and authentic living and consequently may affect both the sense of self-alienation and authentic living experience (Wood et al., 2008). This notion can be found in various definitions of authenticity (Golomb, 1995; Rogers, 1980; Varga & Guignon, 2014; Zimmerman, 1981) and considered as one of its major components.

All the aforementioned philosophers and psychologists' works suggest a link between being different, uniqueness and authenticity. The sub-dimensions of authenticity may all have effects on individuals' sense of uniqueness. This can be attributable to existentialism theory. The authenticity concept is also related to self-actualization in the literature. As proposed by Abraham Maslow, self-actualization is the utmost level of needs an individual may have. Self-actualization can only be achieved after all the lower level needs (physiological, security and social) are satisfied. Self-actualization can be achieved by creativity, spiritual enlightenment and a pursuit of betterment and knowledge (Maslow, 1970). The relation of authenticity to individuation and uniqueness is also evident in Jung's writings. Jung proposed that an individual's personal growth and differentiation, or being unique is needed for individuation. The individuation process is defined as a "process by which a person becomes a psychological individual, a separate, indivisible unity or whole" (Jung, 1969, p. 275).

In this context, the following hypotheses were developed to test the potential effects of authentic personality on dispositions towards scarce products:

H_1: Consumers' degree of accepting external pressure affects their sense of authentic living

H_2: Consumers' degree of accepting external pressure affects their sense of self-alienation

H_3: Consumers' degree of accepting external pressure affects their sense of uniqueness

H_4: Consumers' degree of authentic living affects their sense of uniqueness

H_5: Consumers' degree of self-alienation affects their sense of uniqueness

In a separate perspective, authenticity is also a term and approach used in promoting various products and services. Authenticity of products and retailers is assumed to be an important factor driving demand in online marketplaces as evidenced in Etsy (Griffith, 2015). Etsy, which focuses on artisan products mentioned the terms "authentic" or "authenticity" 24 times in their IPO filing whereas the term "artisan" is not mentioned even once

(Zeitlin, 2015). The importance attributed to authenticity leads to the assumption that authenticity is an important factor for companies marketing scarce or customized products. Consequently, the authentic personality of consumers may affect indirectly their demand for customized, scarce and unique products.

2.2 Uniqueness

Uniqueness is one of the important dimensions of personality that has attracted limited attention in consumer behavior studies. Uniqueness is considered by psychology scholars as a basic requirement for happiness and finding a purpose in life (Frankl, 1959; Şimşek & Yalınçetin, 2010).

It was observed that individuals are trying to establish a unique image in society that can provide them a distinctive social image (Fisher & Price, 1992). This is related to the individual's need for counter-conformity (moving away from conformity) which is defined as the establishment of a group opinion norm and the tendency of individuals to comply with that norm (Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975; Nail, 1986). It was seen that consumers buy and use possessions to develop a personal image that is different from others in the society (Lynn & Harris, 1997; Richins, 1994). This need for being different and unique manifests itself in the search for and the use of unique possessions. The acquisition of unique and scarce products is an on-going process since when scarce products become more available in the market and more people use them, they lose their unique scarcity aspect. Accordingly, uniqueness is related with the scarcity of a product (Snyder, 1992, p. 20; Tian & McKenzie, 2001) and consumers continuously look for other products to differentiate themselves from others.

One of the key factors affecting degree of conformity of individuals is their culture. According to Hofstede's(1984) framework, individualism/collectivism is one of the important dimensions differentiating cultures. In highly collectivist cultures, individuals may have weak desires to be unique compared to individualistic cultures (Kim & Markus, 1999).

2.3 Need for Uniqueness and Sense of Uniqueness

Extant literature on uniqueness is predominantly focused on the "need for uniqueness" (NFU). From this point of view uniqueness literature primarily deals with people's behavioral responses to information related to their similarity to others. This can be considered as a motivation for differentness (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980).

According to this theory, individuals want to be different from others but only to a certain extent. Being very dissimilar to others is avoided by individuals according to the NFU theory. On the opposite hand, when individuals see high level of similarities with others, they endeavor to establish differences and create a moderate level of dissimilarity from them. In accordance with this argument, when an individual has a high level of NFU, he or she wants to be more different from his or her peers (Lynn & Harris, 1997; Snyder, 1992). The imperative notion in this perspective is the perception of differentness by individuals. In this regard, NFU construct and the tools offered to measure it place the individual on a continuum specifying similarity to or dissimilarity from other individuals (Şimşek & Yalınçetin, 2010).

The two popular measures of NFU are Snyder & Fromkin's (1980) need for uniqueness scale and Lynn & Harris's (1997) self-attributed need for uniqueness scale. Some limitations of and criticism towards these two common NFU measures can be found in the literature. For instance, individuals are more eager to be unique on positive traits rather than negative ones and on abilities rather than opinions (Lynn & Snyder, 2002; Şimşek & Yalınçetin, 2010). Moreover, the emphasis of Snyder & Fromkin's (1980) scale on risky displays of uniqueness is criticized by researchers (Lynn & Harris, 1997).

The literature on uniqueness that typically focuses on NFU can be extended by adopting a different perspective. In this regard a different perspective on uniqueness, namely "sense of uniqueness" (SOU), was also incorporated into the study to enhance the understanding of uniqueness and scarce product demand. This construct measures the personal sense of being unique and is partly related to individuals' comparison of self with others but also focuses on the personal evaluation of an individual's sense of being different. Consequently this construct is not same as NFU, which reflects an individual's need to be different from others. In a nutshell SOU provides an individual's personal perception of self that is unique to him/her. This concept operationalized by (Şimşek & Yalınçetin, 2010) as a one dimensional construct is adopted in the present study to incorporate a better understanding of individuals' uniqueness. Şimşek & Yalınçetin (2010) witnessed that this construct is psychometrically different from NFU construct, in addition to observing a moderate level of correlation between SOU and NFU in their study. Incorporating SOU into the model and adopting Lynn & Harris's (1997) NFU approach, SOU is predicted to affect consumers' self-attributed NFU and their demand for scarce products.

2.4 Effect of Uniqueness on Scarce Product Purchase Intention

Scarce product preference and the value added to products by their scarcity are evaluated in the commodity

theory by Brock (1968). This theory assumes that unavailability of a commodity enhances its value given that the commodity can be possessed, offers utility to its users and is transferrable to others. The unavailability is analogous to scarcity and can appear due to the nature of the product (limited supply, high costs) or can be created by marketing activities such as limited edition products, selective distribution, or premium pricing (Lynn, 1991). Creating scarcity for a product is assumed to create a preference for that product. One of the potential reasons for this preference that is suggested by Brock (1968) is the ability to convey a sense of personal distinctiveness and/or uniqueness to its user. In fact, Snyder & Fromkin (1980) developed their need for uniqueness model detailed in the previous section based on this presumption. Using material possessions for self-expression and preferring scarce and unique products to create distinctiveness and self-uniqueness is a valid behavior of consumers (Belk, 1988; Lynn, 1991; Wilcox, Kim, & Sen, 2009). Consequently the need for uniqueness theory is accepted as a means to explain scarce product preference behavior. However, the existing literature analyzing the relationship between uniqueness and consumer behavior provides mixed results. The relationship detected between need for uniqueness and intention to buy scarce products is usually not very strong (Lynn & Harris, 1997). A meta-analysis carried out by Lynn (1991) on 11 studies revealed that the combined relationship effect between NFU and preference for scarce products was significant. Conversely, these effects were reliable only in 4 of the 11 studies, which leads to the suggestion that need for uniqueness motive can lead to preference for scarcity, but the effect is not robust (Lynn, 1991). The measures for variables and the narrow range of behaviors researched in the related studies were offered as potential reasons for the weak and mixed results observed in the literature (Lynn & Harris, 1997; Lynn, 1991; Snyder, 1992).

In accordance with the discussions provided on uniqueness theory developed upon commodity theory, the related studies and their empirical findings, the following hypotheses were developed to test the relationships between uniqueness and scarce product demand:

H_6: Consumers' sense of uniqueness positively affects their need for uniqueness

H_7: Consumers' sense of uniqueness positively affects their purchase intention for unique and scarce products

H_8: Consumers' need for uniqueness positively affect their purchase intention for unique and scarce products.

Another factor that can affect uniqueness and scarce product demand is culture, which is an important driver of consumer behavior. In collectivist cultures, consumers have a tendency to prefer goods and services that conform to social norms (Kim & Markus, 1999). In line with Hofstede's cultural distance framework Turkey, with a score of 37, is considered a collectivist culture. For comparison purposes this score is calculated as 91 in U.S.A., a substantially individualist society and 20 in China, an extremely collectivist society (The Hofstede Centre, 2015). The present study aims to shed light on cultural differences in uniqueness seeking behavior and scarce product demand by providing a study in a moderately collectivist culture, Turkey.

3. Method

No study similar to the above-discussed studies has been carried out in Turkey on personality traits, uniqueness and scarce product preference. Therefore, the present study offers a novel line of research for similar future studies in emerging markets and Turkey. Moreover, by using well-established scales validated in various settings, the present study offers findings that can be compared to studies in other regions and cultures (i.e. U.S.A. or Europe). The proposed model and the scales employed in the study are provided below in Figure 1 and Table 1.

3.1 Proposed Model

The proposed model that is constructed on the hypotheses developed upon the theoretical framework is visualized in Figure 1. The psychologic authenticity and desire to be authentic may create a sense of uniqueness in individuals. This in turn may create a need for uniqueness and lead to demand for the products that can satisfy this need. In summary, the tripartite authenticity construct is expected to positively affect SOU construct and indirectly affect NFU and PUI constructs.
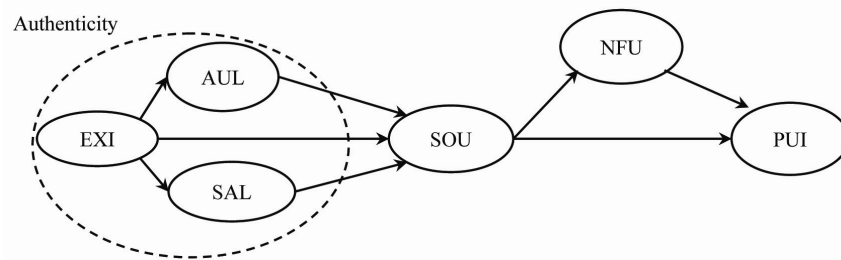
Figure 1. Proposed model

Note. EXI: External Influence, AUL: Authentic Living, SAL: Self Alienation, NFU: Self Attributed Need for Uniqueness, SOU: Sense of Uniqueness, PUI: Purchase Intention of Scarce Products.

3.2 Sample & Research Design

Millennials were chosen as the target group/population in this study. The members of this young generation are popular targets of consumer studies by academicians and practitioners of marketing. Convenience sampling method was used to gather data from this target group. A questionnaire was developed using the aforementioned authenticity, sense of uniqueness, need for uniqueness and purchase intention scales. The sources and operationalization of the constructs are summarized in Table 1 and provided in detail in Appendix A. In addition to the questions related to the constructs, questions on demographics were also incorporated into the questionnaire. The validity and reliability of the scales were tested and confirmed in various studies (i.e. Şimşek & Yalınçetin, 2010; Lynn & Harris, 1997; Wood et al. 2008; Lynn & Snyder, 2002). In this study, all the items' loadings on their own constructs were higher than their cross-correlations as can be seen in Appendix B. The validity and reliability of the scales were tested and confirmed as indicated in analysis and findings section.

Table 1. Scales and constructs

Construct(s)	# of Items	Source(s)
Sense of Uniqueness (SOU)	5 items	Şimşek &Yalınçetin, 2010
Self-Attributed Need for Uniqueness (NFU)	4 items	Lynn & Harris, 1997
Authenticity: Authentic Living (AUL)	4 items	
Authenticity: Accepting External Influence (EXI)	4 items	Wood et al., 2008
Authenticity: Self-Alienation (SAL)	4 items	
Desire for Unique & Scarce Products (PUI)	8 items	Lynn & Snyder, 2002; Lynn & Harris, 1997

The data was collected through questionnaires distributed by the author and students in various locations in Istanbul, Turkey targeting the millennials. The questionnaires were predominantly self-administered and filled by the respondents themselves who then turned the forms in. An initial screening of the questionnaires led to exclusion of 36 partially completed forms. Then, the gathered data was coded and carefully screened. In this second step of screening low quality surveys (all answers coded the same etc.) were eliminated. After the second screening process 257 valid questionnaires were available for analysis out of 298 collected fully-coded questionnaires. No imputation methods were used as there were no missing data in the final dataset. Basic demographic information on the sample is revealed in Table 2. As can be seen from Table 2 all the respondents were between ages 18-28, besides, nearly half of them were aged between 21 and 24. Gender (male/female distribution was balanced.

The attained sample size was above the recommended levels of ten times the number of indicators and largest number of paths targeted at a latent variable (Barclay, Higgins, & Thompson, 1995; Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics, 2009). Basic descriptive statistics of the data collected through the survey study is provided in Appendix B.

Table 2. Sample basic demographic information

Demographic (N:257)	Value	Frequency	Percent
Age	18-20	102	40%
	21-24	128	49%
	25-28	27	11%
Gender	Male	124	49%
	Female	133	51%
Monthly Household Income (USD Equivalent)	0-700	42	16%
	701-1000	65	25%
	1,001-1,700	49	19%
	1,701-2,500	55	21%
	2,500+	46	18%

4. Analysis & Findings

In the first step of the analysis, an explanatory factor analysis with principal component technique was carried out to confirm the tripartite authenticity scale. Promax rotation method was selected to allow correlations between different authenticity dimensions in line with the findings of Wood et al. (2008). In agreement with the underlying theories and expectations, three significant factors have appeared in the analysis. The results of the analysis including the related items of the authenticity scale are provided in Table 3.

The three factors observed represented 57.5% of the total variance. Bartlett's sphericity test for these orthogonal factors was significant at 99.9% level with a KMO score of 0.757. The item loading on the factors appeared as expected and each item had the highest loading on its own construct. Items 1, 8, 9 and 11 represented one factor, which in original scale were used to measure authentic living. Items 3,4,5,6, which were intended to measure the degree of accepting external pressure, made up the second factor. Lastly, items 2,7,10 and 12 had the highest loadings on the third factor, which was labeled as self-alienation.

Table 3. Authenticity factor analysis results

Authenticity Items	Component			Communalities
	1	2	3	
Variance Explained	*27.3%*	*18.4%*	*11.7%*	
Item-1: I think it is better to be yourself than to be popular.			0.625	0.393
Item-8: I always stand by what I believe in.			0.772	0.599
Item-9: I am true to myself in most situations.			0.799	0.642
Item-11: I live in accordance with my values and beliefs.			0.688	0.483
Item-3: I am strongly influenced by the opinions of others.	0.817			0.668
Item-4: I usually do what other people tell me to do.	0.688			0.489
Item-5: I always feel I need to do what others expect me to do.	0.763			0.596
Item-6: Other people influence me greatly.	0.865			0.749
Item-2: I don't know how I really feel inside.		0.699		0.495
Item-7: I feel as if I don't know myself very well.		0.729		0.558
Item-10: I feel out of touch with the real me.		0.797		0.667
Item-12: I feel alienated from myself.		0.745		0.555

Before moving on to the path analysis, the descriptive statistics were examined. The averages of the items in SOU construct is calculated as 3.56 and NFU construct as 2.79. A higher level of sense of uniqueness and a lower level of need for uniqueness among the sample is detected. The scarce product purchase intention on the other hand is practically neutral with a mean score of 3.12 for related items. When the related items are weighted using the factor scores and normalized, similar findings are attained (SOU: 3.78, NFU: 2.78, PUI: 3.21). A significant difference between SOU and NFU constructs was detected, which is contemplated in conclusions section.

Following the factor analysis, a variance based partial least squares (PLS) structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis was conducted. PLS approach tries to maximize the explained variance of the variables instead of explaining the co-variation among indicators. Consequently, it is a robust model for prediction-oriented studies (Henseler et al., 2009). PLS-SEM approaches are attaining popularity (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010) largely attributable to some basic characteristics detailed below. First of all, both reflective and formative models can be estimated using PLS (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2013). As another advantage, PLS technique can be used with

very small sample sizes (Chin & Newsted, 1999). This ability offers decent research avenues for academicians that have limited datasets and have not been able to use SEM approaches (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Hair et al., 2013). Finally, PLS can be applied to non-parametric and non-normally distributed data, which is encountered in various studies (Hair et al., 2013). As an additional benefit of these properties, SEM offers opportunities to analyze complex models (Henseler et al., 2009). In the present study, this method was chosen due to non-normal distributions detected (skewness and kurtosis) in nearly two-thirds of the items. The PLS-SEM analysis was carried out on SmartPLS software (Ringle, Wende, & Will, 2005) using reflective indicators. Following an initial SEM analysis, one item from SOU construct and one item from PUI construct were dropped due to low loadings on their latent variables. The results of the final analysis are provided in Table 4 and further discussed below.

Table 4. Construct and discriminant validity analysis

Latent Variable	AVE	CR	CA	Communalities	Avg. inter-item correl.	EXI	AUL	SAL	SOU	NFU	PUI
EXI	0.606	0.859	0.783	0.682	0.080	**0.779**[*]					
AUL	0.531	0.818	0.704	0.518	0.111	-0.003	**0.729**				
SAL	0.549	0.829	0.725	0.530	0.089	0.397	-0.109	**0.741**			
SOU	0.544	0.825	0.715	0.651	0.146	-0.069	0.388	-0.039	**0.738**		
NFU	0.532	0.818	0.705	0.504	0.134	-0.087	0.122	0.079	0.412	**0.729**	
PUI	0.590	0.908	0.880	0.682	0.100	0.065	0.207	0.078	0.260	0.298	**0.768**

Note. [*] The square root of average variance extracted is provided on the diagonal. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)> 0.5; Composite Reliability (CR)> 0.7; Cronbach's Alpha (CA)> 0.7.EXI: External Influence, AUL: Authentic Living, SAL: Self Alienation, NFU: Self Attributed Need for Uniqueness, SOU: Sense of Uniqueness, PUI: Purchase Intention of Scarce Products

The internal consistency of the constructs was evaluated using composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha (CA). Both CA and CR were within the recommended levels of >0.70 (Carmines & Zeller, 1979; Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Nunnally, 1978).

Validity of the model was confirmed by analyzing two types of validity; convergent and discriminant. The convergent validity of the model implies that a group of indicators represent the same underlying construct (latent variable). Discriminant validity, on the other hand, denotes whether two different concepts exhibit sufficient difference or not. The convergent and discriminant validity of the model and construct reliability were assessed using commonly employed measures. The first approach to assess discriminant validity compares the indicators' loadings on their own constructs with loadings on other constructs. The second approach, which was proposed by Fornell & Larcker (1981), compares the correlations between items with the square roots of AVE for each construct. The inter-item correlations were lower than the square root of the AVE and lower than the 0.90 threshold (Hair et al., 2013). All the loadings were greater than 0.50, and AVE was above the recommended values (>0.5) for all the latent variables. The results provided in Table 4 and loadings provided in Appendix B indicate that all constructs share more variance with their indicators than with any other construct; therefore the discriminant validity conditions were satisfied. The results of the SEM analysis are visualized in Figure 2 and presented in detail in Table 5.
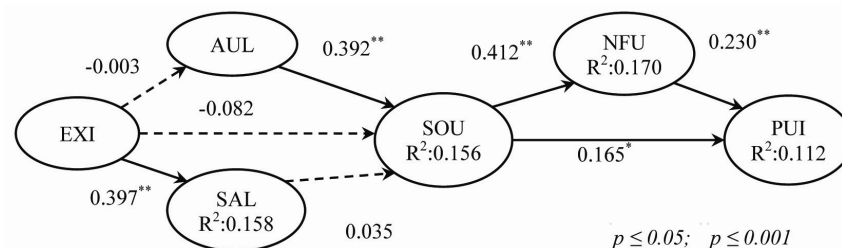

Figure 2. Model and analysis results

There are no widely accepted goodness of fit measures for PLS-SEM analysis, therefore Stone-Geisser's Q^2 (Geisser, 1974; Stone, 1974) and coefficient of determination (R^2) values are used to assess the predictive power

of the model as proposed by Hair et al. (2013). When R^2 values representing the amount of variance explained by the exogenous constructs were analyzed, it can be seen that the model accounted for limited levels of variance in SOU, NFU and PUI constructs (16% and 17% and 11% respectively). In addition to R^2, Stone-Geisser's Q^2 values that denote how appropriately the model can predict the originally observed values were used in assessing the predictive power of the model (Geisser, 1974; Stone, 1974). The Q^2 values were obtained by using blindfolding procedure, a sample reuse technique that omits every n^{th} data point of the indicators. Using the cross-validated redundancy technique and an omission distance (n) of 6, Q^2 values were calculated as 0.078 for SOU, 0.085 for NFU and 0.053 for PUI constructs. Q^2 values larger than zero suggest predictive relevance for the endogenous constructs in the model (Hair et al., 2013; Henseler et al., 2009), thus the proposed model had predictive relevance for all the three constructs. In summary, the R^2 and Q^2 analysis confirmed the predictive relevance of the model. On the other hand, the predictive power of the model in explaining NFU and PUI constructs is not very strong. This is an anticipated outcome as there are various factors that can affect NFU and SUI but not incorporated into the model as they lay outside the scope of the present study.

Table 5. Path analysis results and direct effects

Hypothesis	Path	Path Coeff.	Std. Dev.	t- stat.	Supported	Sign.
H_1	EXI->AUL	-0.0030	0.0664	0.0422	No	-
H_2	EXI->SAL	0.3972	0.0729	5.4458	Yes	<0.001
H_3	EXI->SOU	-0.0816	0.0701	1.1647	No	-
H_4	AUL->SOU	0.3918	0.0592	6.6165	Yes	<0.001
H_5	SAL->SOU	0.0354	0.0690	0.5138	No	-
H_6	SOU->NFU	0.4121	0.0555	7.4305	Yes	<0.001
H_7	SOU->PUI	0.1653	0.0644	2.5655	Yes	<0.05
H_8	NFU->PUI	0.2299	0.0653	3.5222	Yes	<0.001

Note. Bold text denotes statistically significant relations.

Five of the eight hypotheses tested were supported as an outcome of the analysis. The expected effect of accepting external influence on authentic living was not observed in the analysis; but its effect on self-alienation was significant. It should be noted that all the significant effects observed in the analysis were positive. An increase in AUL leads to an increase in SOU and an increase in SOU leads to an increase in NFU and PUI.

Sense of uniqueness acted as a mediator between the authentic living construct and the need for uniqueness construct. Sense of uniqueness affected need for uniqueness which in turn affected purchase intention. Additionally, a direct positive effect of sense of uniqueness on purchase intention was also observed, which led to the conclusion that NFU and SOU constructs are able to explain different variances in purchase intention of scarce products. Table 6 provides the total effect of each variable on the constructs by incorporating direct and indirect effects to better assess the path model analysis results.

Table 6. Total effects of constructs

Path	Total Effects	St. Dev	T-statistics	Sign.
AUL -> SOU	0.3918	0.0592	6.6165	<0.001
AUL -> NFU	0.1614	0.0325	4.9631	<0.001
AUL -> PUI	0.1019	0.0283	3.5984	<0.001
SAL -> SOU	0.0354	0.0690	0.5138	-
SAL -> NFU	0.0146	0.0297	0.4921	-
SAL -> PUI	0.0092	0.0195	0.4724	-
EXI -> AUL	-0.0028	0.0664	0.0422	-
EXI -> SAL	0.3972	0.0729	5.4450	<0.001
EXI -> SOU	-0.0687	0.0691	0.9942	-
EXI -> NFU	-0.0283	0.0302	0.9365	-
EXI -> PUI	-0.0179	0.0196	0.9105	-
SOU -> NFU	0.4121	0.0555	7.4305	<0.001
SOU -> PUI	0.2601	0.0584	4.4500	<0.001
NFU -> PUI	0.2299	0.0653	3.5222	<0.001

Note. Bold text denotes statistically significant relations.

When the total effects are analyzed, it can be seen that SAL and EXT have no significant effects on SOU, NFU or PUI. Authentic living on the other hand, has significant positive effects on SOU, NFU and PUI constructs. The strongest effect on purchase intention originated from sense of uniqueness construct followed by need for uniqueness and authentic living constructs.

5. Conclusions & Limitations

This study aimed to find empirical evidence between psychological authenticity and uniqueness, which is suggested by existential theories, Maslow, Jung and the writings of several others. The findings of the present study contribute to the theoretical and practical understanding of individuals' (millennials) behavior (purchase intention) toward unique and scarce products in Turkey. Turkey is a large developing country in the crossroads of Asia and Europe and is characterized as a collectivist society. Thus far no similar study has been carried out in Turkey in the related literature, making this study a proper foundation for future studies. By utilizing well-established scales validated in various settings, this study also provides comparable findings to researchers working on related fields worldwide. In this way potential cultural different in uniqueness seeking behavior and scarce product demand may be inferred.

Compared to the studies in the existing literature, this study adopts a more comprehensive point of view on uniqueness by incorporating sense of uniqueness construct into the model. Sense of uniqueness construct was able to explain purchase intention of scarce products independent from need for uniqueness construct (there was a direct effect of SOU on PUI independent from NFU). This leads to the conclusion that incorporating sense of uniqueness into similar studies may add value to the research by increasing the predictive power of the model.

In addition to uniqueness, this study also evaluated authentic personality's role in the preference for unique and scarce products. This important construct is investigated in various psychological studies and found to affect the well-being of individuals; however research in marketing is limited. One of the trends witnessed in electronic retail is the increasing demand for scarce and customized artisan products. The rise of this trend, which gave birth to marketplaces such as Etsy, is attributed to a particular degree to the authenticity of the marketing channel and products offered (Griffith, 2015; Tabuchi, 2015; Zeitlin, 2015). The reflection of "authenticity" on consumer psychology, the "authentic personality", was correspondingly expected to have an effect on scarce and unique product purchase intention. As an outcome of the analysis, only one component of the tripartite authenticity scale, namely authentic living was found to have a significant effect on purchase intention of unique products through two uniqueness constructs (SOU and NFU). Authentic living denotes an individual's degree of expressing emotions and behaving based on conscious awareness, also indicates being true to oneself.

Accepting external influence and self-alienation, the other two components of authenticity construct had no significant effects on individuals' purchase intention of scarce products. The degree to which an individual accepts social influence from others, including but not limited to friends, family and peer groups, appeared as an insignificant factor affecting scarce product demand. In other words, whether an individual is affected to a high degree from others in shaping his or her behavior is irrelevant in their intention to prefer scarce products. Similarly, the degree of not knowing one's true self (self-alienation) does not have a significant effect on scarce product preference.

It can be concluded from the mean scores of constructs provided in Appendix B that the sense of uniqueness is significantly higher than the need for uniqueness among the sample (T-test between paired NFU and SOU construct means is significant at 95% level). As stated earlier, need for uniqueness for the most part focuses on people's behavioral responses to information related to their similarity to others. Sense of uniqueness construct, on the other hand, adopts a different perspective and measures an individual's personal perception of self that is unique to him/her. These two constructs were found to be psychometrically different (Şimşek & Yalınçetin, 2010) consequently the results are in line with the existing literature. The focus on behavior in NFU and focus on perceptions in SOU can be considered the major distinction creating the detected differences between these constructs. NFU construct may be suppressed by the collectivist nature of society in Turkey.

Scarce product purchase intention is approximately neutral (mean score of 3.12). This finding may be attributed to the collectivist nature of the society in Turkey, where consumers do not exhibit strong individualistic behaviors in their purchase decisions.

The findings on the effect of uniqueness on intention were in accordance with the assumptions derived from related theories. Both sense of uniqueness and need for uniqueness constructs positively affected consumers' purchase intention of scarce products. The strongest total effect deriving scarce product purchase intention was observed in sense of uniqueness followed by need for uniqueness constructs. This leads to the conclusion that consumers with a higher sense of uniqueness prefer scarce products more than people with low sense of

uniqueness. Likewise, as an individual's need for uniqueness increases they strive to be more different from other people, consequently, higher need for uniqueness leads to more scarce products preference among consumers.

Among the managerial implications of the study we can propose that creating a sense of uniqueness among consumers and promoting an authentic way of living can facilitate an increase in the demand for scarce products. Another implication is the lack of any significant effect of accepting external influence on purchase intention. A possible interpretation is that demand for scarce products is not affected significantly by consumers' efforts not to accept social norms dictated to them. Instead, consumers prefer scarce products more for self-actualization, and living authentic lives. Consumers that are self-aware and live according to the way they feel are more likely to prefer scarce products. These conclusions may be of value for luxury goods marketers and artists.

The major limitation of the study is related to sampling. By focusing on young millennials, the current study was able to reflect the point of view of this important group. However use of convenience sampling limits the generalizability of the study. Future studies that represent distinct consumer segments applied on larger samples may shed more light on the relations among authenticity, uniqueness and purchase intention of scarce products and offer insights to practitioners of marketing as well as academicians.

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Appendix A. Constructs

Construct	Item	Source(s)
Sense of Uniqueness (SOU)	As people get to know me more, they begin to recognize my special features. I feel unique. I cannot think of many special characteristics that distinguish me from others. I think that the characteristics that make me up are different from others'. I feel that some of my characteristics are completely unique to me.	Şimşek & Yalınçetin, 2010
Self-Attributed Need for Uniqueness (NFU)	I prefer being different from other people. I have a need for uniqueness. Being distinctive is important to me. I intentionally do things to make myself different from those around me.	Lynn & Harris, 1997
Authenticity: Authentic Living (AUL)	I think it is better to be yourself than to be popular. I always stand by what I believe in. I am true to myself in most situations. I live in accordance with my values and beliefs.	Wood et al., 2008
Authenticity: Accepting External Influence (EXI)	I am strongly influenced by the opinions of others. I usually do what other people tell me to do. I always feel I need to do what others expect me to do. Other people influence me greatly.	
Authenticity: Self-Alienation (SAL)	I don't know how I really feel inside. I feel as if I don't know myself very well. I feel out of touch with the real me. I feel alienated from myself.	
Desire for Unique & Scarce Products (PUI)	I am very attracted to rare objects. I tend tobe a fashion leader than a fashion follower. I am more likely to buy a product if it is scarce. I would rather to have things custom-made than to have them ready-made. I enjoy having things others do not. I rarely pass up the opportunity to order custom features on the products I buy. I like to try new products and services before others do. I enjoy shopping at stores that carry merchandise which is different and unusual.	Lynn & Snyder, 2002; Lynn & Harris, 1997

Appendix B. Descriptive Statistics & Outer and Cross-Loadings

Items	Mean	Std.Dev.	EXI	AUL	NFU	INT	SOU	SAL
INT1	3.412	1.1731	0.032	0.294	0.179	0.765	0.328	-0.040
INT3	3.167	1.2590	0.045	0.133	0.212	0.812	0.133	0.021
INT4	2.895	1.2596	-0.059	0.014	0.115	0.487	0.076	0.108
INT5	3.074	1.3601	0.065	0.115	0.247	0.848	0.177	0.056
INT6	3.300	1.1791	0.043	0.241	0.259	0.743	0.202	0.080
INT7	3.191	1.2834	0.117	0.098	0.296	0.802	0.188	0.129
INT8	3.331	1.2822	0.045	0.136	0.250	0.856	0.218	0.095
NFU1	3.039	1.1951	-0.108	0.141	0.769	0.238	0.346	0.041
NFU2	2.977	1.1987	0.009	0.063	0.805	0.233	0.331	0.033
NFU3	2.642	1.1843	-0.042	0.080	0.712	0.169	0.211	0.068
NFU4	2.482	1.2503	-0.110	0.065	0.619	0.215	0.283	0.099
SAL1	2.066	1.1522	0.289	-0.032	0.120	0.062	-0.025	0.710
SAL2	1.724	1.0958	0.300	0.041	0.024	0.024	-0.044	0.720
SAL3	1.786	1.1646	0.312	-0.231	0.019	0.123	-0.050	0.800
SAL4	1.615	1.0324	0.273	-0.095	0.078	0.017	0.005	0.730
AUL1	4.113	0.9916	-0.011	0.622	0.001	0.080	0.226	-0.060
AUL2	4.113	1.0265	0.032	0.779	0.160	0.178	0.295	-0.063
AUL3	4.128	1.0093	-0.003	0.777	0.043	0.136	0.303	-0.136
AUL4	4.167	0.9638	-0.028	0.727	0.134	0.196	0.300	-0.056
EXI1	2.226	1.0475	0.818	0.006	-0.080	0.091	-0.066	0.312
EXI2	1.763	1.0010	0.730	-0.037	-0.118	-0.030	-0.073	0.334
EXI3	2.405	1.2467	0.686	0.049	-0.049	0.038	-0.040	0.205
EXI4	1.895	1.0683	0.867	-0.006	-0.022	0.101	-0.033	0.353
SOU1	3.833	0.9918	-0.079	0.333	0.242	0.186	0.694	-0.040
SOU2	2.576	1.2543	-0.063	0.141	0.331	0.202	0.620	0.001
SOU4	3.479	1.1356	-0.032	0.284	0.361	0.161	0.806	-0.029
SOU5	3.728	1.1506	-0.035	0.364	0.288	0.221	0.812	-0.044

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