Guest Editors’ Introduction
Manufactured Authenticity and Creative Voice in Cultural Industries

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All work of culture industries, in some way or the other is preoccupied with claims to authenticity. This insight comes from the recent work of the sociologist Richard A. Peterson that has been inspired by Hobsbawm and Ranger’s (1983) landmark volume on ‘invented tradition’. While much of Peterson’s earlier work focuses on the organization and production of popular music (for a review, see Peterson and Anand, 2004), in Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity he examines the way in which meaning is manufactured through various organizational processes in the culture industries. Starting with the observation that producers and consumers alike declare that authenticity is the hallmark of country music, Peterson (1997) skilfully shows that authenticity is not only socially constructed and agreed upon, but also used as a renewable resource for securing audiences, performance or exhibition outlets and relationships with key brokers by participants in the milieu. To create country music, it would seem, is also to participate in an ongoing discourse about what authentic country music is. In this special issue we examine the tension between manufactured authenticity and creative voice.

Two distinct strategies may be used for claiming authenticity. One is to subject one’s creative voice to the perpetuation of tradition and to copy canonical works as exactly as possible such as symphonies performances of classical canons. A second route to authenticity, as Peterson states in this volume, is to be original and offer a distinctive approach such as Hank Williams did in reshaping country music in the 1950s. In our call for papers, we sought to understand the dynamic tension between authenticity seen as an individual’s creative voice – that is, their ability to resolve problems in unique and distinctive ways, often described as self-expression.
and claims to authenticity that are carefully crafted to create a personae of an artist with a view to attracting the attention of customers, critics, gatekeepers and other artists. We sought papers that would expand and extend Peterson’s original insight – that managing impression of authenticity, through claims to traditions or a distinctive personae and approach, is the central work of creative industries. We wanted to explore what strategies are used for creating and defining authenticity and how these strategies shape our understanding of what is authentic. We also sought to understand who was critical in defining what was seen as authentic. Our call for submissions attracted many manuscripts with provocative insights on the topic of manufactured authenticity and creative voice. Through the review process, we winnowed down our manuscripts to seven that made important contributions to Peterson’s original insights on authenticity in cultural production.

Our first contribution by Moeran (2005), ‘Tricks of the Trade: The Performance and Interpretation of Authenticity’, is a deftly executed ethnography of a Tokyo-based advertising agency. Moeran shows that the performance and interpretation of authenticity is accomplished through impression management. He notes that in advertising work, there are two facets of authenticity. One involves the output, which is the advertisement itself. Here Moeran observes a particularly complex context of cultural production: that of Japanese executives making evaluation of authenticity about an advertisement campaign that was intended for consumers in the United States and Germany. Moeran argues that in such contexts, paradoxically, what is taken to be authentic is firmly grounded in clichés, stereotypes, and naïve assumptions that are commonly shared about ‘other’ cultures. The second facet of authenticity involves the social process of advertising work, which is played out in interactions between executives of the advertising agency and its client organization. In this context, Moeran argues, authenticity is bound up with the advertising executives’ need to be seen as original and different from their competitors. Moeran’s study shows that in a field of cultural production, the manufacturing of authenticity is a collective action the leads to the emergence and transformation of meaning (cf. Hughes, 2000).

Jones and Smith (2005), in their article ‘Middle-earth Meets New Zealand: Authenticity and Location in the Making of The Lord of the Rings’, analyse the production and marketing of The Lord of the Rings (LOTR) film trilogy in terms of tensions between two strands of authenticity: creative and national. By creative authenticity Jones and Smith mean claims of artist integrity and merit, which was established principally by assertions that director Peter Jackson is a scholar of the novels of J. R. R. Tolkien and hence he and his crew have painstakingly ensured that the films ring true to the original works. National authenticity, for Jones and Smith, is based on the notion of national identity. The LOTR project was, on occasion, passed off as a local New Zealand product, thereby imbuing it with the legacy of the country’s national heritage. This move also provided opportunists to leverage the LOTR project for social and economic development, largely through
the promotion of tourism. Jones and Smith provide a provocative account of the contradictions inherent in the LOTR filming project, which was based on an explicitly English text, financed by Hollywood, and set in the milieu of New Zealand’s emerging nationalism. The authors conclude that rather than looking at truth or falsity of the ‘authentic’, one needs to think of authenticity as a cultural category in and of itself that is established or constructed through discourse.

Svejenova (2005), in her in-depth case study of Pedro Almodovar, ‘The Path with the Heart: Creating an Authentic Career’, illuminates how authenticity as an artist requires managing both identity and image construction. Prior work in authenticity has highlighted the importance of either image management (Peterson, 1997) or identity (Fine, 2003) in creating authenticity in cultural production. By examining Almodovar’s career evolution, Svejenova shows how Almodovar carefully manages both his identity and image, creating a renewable resource. By doing so, she argues that authenticity may be the motor and anchor driving boundaryless careers, and shows how a career links micro-level processes of identity to macro-level processes of image construction.

Delmestri, Montanari and Usai (2005), in ‘Reputation and Strength of Ties in Predicting Commercial Success and Artistic Merit in the Italian Feature Film Industry’, examine how an artist’s construction of authenticity involves social relationships which may vary by an industry’s milieu. In cultural industries, scholars focus on authenticity in two different domains: economic (box office performance) and artistic (critical acclaim and awards). The authors suggest that these two domains require different kinds of networks: vertical relations with producers and distributors for commercial success versus horizontal relations with screenwriters, directors of photography and actors for artistic merit. By examining the ties of Italian independent film directors, they found that a director’s strength of vertical ties predicts commercial success whereas a director’s strength of horizontal ties and artistic reputation predict artistic merit. Task routineness, they suggest, explains this dichotomy because commercial and artistic success require different social structures – horizontal versus vertical relations. Thus, their research suggests that authenticity is not solely the attribute of an artist, but rather a function of his/her relationships.

Beverland (2005), in ‘Crafting Brand Authenticity: The Case of Luxury Wines’, argues that brands need to be perceived as authentic in order to be commercially successful. Authenticity, in this regard, is manifested in impressions people form about the product, its history, the process by which it is produced, its links to a particular place, and associated mythologies purveyed by its producers. Based on a case study of 26 luxury wineries, Beverland delineates various strategies that producers employ to create and manage impressions of brand authenticity. Strategic actions that were designed to bolster brand authenticity include commitment to high quality, maintenance of stylistic consistency, and instrumental use of history and place as positive referents. Beverland shows that there is an element of
hypocrisy and manipulation in parlaying impressions of brand authenticity, such as when producers appear to stay above commercial considerations while actively marketing their brands, and in decrying modern production methods while using those all the same. This study demonstrates that claims about authenticity are deeply implicated in efforts to create differentiation in a field of cultural production.

Glynn and Lounsbury (2005), in ‘From the Critics’ Corner: Logic Blending, Discursive Change and Authenticity in a Cultural Production System’, use a symphony strike to illuminate the role of critics as cultural gatekeepers who certify what is authentic, and this certification process, rather than being static, is dynamic because critics’ sense making and stories are embedded in broader discursive fields. Their empirical analysis shows that the discursive content of critics’ reviews shifted away from a strict focus on aesthetic criteria and reproduction of a musical canon to include economic conditions and ticket sales after the strike. In more stable time periods, symphonies and critics place greater emphasis on reproduction of classical composers, adhering to a narrower repertoire of music, whereas in more turbulent times, musical boundaries become wider, opening up to include popular music that will attract a newer and more diverse audience base. Their empirical analysis gives us insight into the field- and organization-level processes that contribute to the manufacturing of authenticity – the interplay among critics, musicians, symphony management and the economic conditions of arts within a city and nation.

Guthey and Jackson, in their provocative piece ‘CEO Portraits and the Authenticity Paradox’, examine how CEO portraits embody and are the loci for the visual construction of organizations’ identity. They analyse executives’ portraits taken by Danish photographer Per Morten Abrahamsen, contrasting these portraits with Mark Alcarez. Guthey and Jackson suggest that authenticity is fundamentally paradoxical. The stylistic and artistic conventions of photographic portraits, including the photographic frame, end up revealing corporations’ chronic lack of authenticity. The more authenticity is deliberately searched for in organizations, the more easily their artificiality is revealed. Yet, Per Morten Abrahamsen advocates that he has captured an authentic sense of the CEO, often to the consternation of the CEO in the portrait and his or her public relations personnel. Whose self-expression is critical to authenticity – the artist’s or CEO’s? Who determines authenticity – subject, viewer or photographer? Does revealing authenticity fundamentally involve artifice and manipulation?

In his invited piece, ‘In Search of Authenticity’, Peterson (2005) avers that authenticity is socially constructed, and typically becomes an issue when authenticity is put in doubt. In his view, authenticity does not inhere in an object, person, or performance, but is best understood as a claim made by or for someone, thing, or performance that is accepted or rejected. He shows that ‘authenticity work’ can take a number of forms, inter alia, in claiming authenticity through ethnic iden-
tity, through status identity or through congruence with a constructed self. Peterson provocatively argues that the quest for authenticity, intriguingly, also makes for change in the culture industries. Peterson’s article serves as a significant commentary on the concept of authenticity.

From these articles, we identify three key dilemmas of how creative voice and authenticity are crafted in cultural industries. The first dilemma is whether authenticity comes from deliberate versus emergent strategies. Moeran’s study of the advertising agency and Beverland’s of elite wines highlight the deliberate nature of authenticity – how it is anchored in impression management tactics. For example, Morean’s study shows the role of impression management by the ad agency with clients such as figuring out who is a key decision maker and how to pitch the ideas to this decision maker. Guthey and Jackson’s study of Per Abrahamson’s CEO portraits highlights the artist’s deliberate framing and pushing of the subject to evoke a particular understanding. The emergent nature of authenticity is shown in the studies by Smith and Jones on The Lord of the Rings, Glynn and Lounsbuy on critics who covered the Atlanta Symphony and Svejenova on Almodovar’s career. These studies highlight how authenticity evolves and changes over time, requiring the feedback of and interaction among interdependent participants. An important question is when and for whom a deliberate versus emergent strategy is important and works in evoking perceptions of authenticity and whether actors need to change their dominant strategy over time, from deliberate to emergent or vice versa.

The second dilemma of authenticity is how categories of understanding are managed. Artists may either play within or play with social categories such as genres, roles or adaptations and translations of one creative product into a new domain. For example, Smith and Jones show how Peter Jackson played within categories – trying to remain true to Tolkein through reinterpretation and also true to a New Zealander’s sense of national identity. Delmestri, Montanari and Usai show how Italian directors play within either commercial or artistic categories, which are quite distinct, and Glynn and Lounsbury show how music critics facilitated the Symphony incorporating the category of popular music into their classical repertoire. In contrast, Guthey and Jackson examine how Per Morten Abrahamsen plays with categories, redefining the nature and role of CEO portraits. Svejenova highlights how Almodovar plays with categories – he is a Spanish independent who creates films that attract mass audiences, playing Hollywood rules with Spanish infrastructure and originality. An important direction for future research is when and how artists, producers and gatekeepers are able to transcend categories, redefining these categories without being punished by key audiences (Zuckerman, 1999) versus when artists can successfully play within categories, moving from one category to the next, much as the pop star Madonna reinventing herself every few years. A related question is whether these two strategies require different skill sets, impression management tactics and theorizing.
about self, and thus, a different range of skills by the artist who adopts each strategy.

The third dilemma of authenticity is whether it is primarily the outcome of an individual or a social phenomenon. The role of the individual is highlighted by Smith and Jones’s study of director Peter Jackson, Svejenova of Almodovar, and Guthey and Jackson of Per Abrahamsen. These individuals’ sense of self and purpose drive their own and their collaborators’ actions and meaning. The social process of authenticity is highlighted in Delmetri, Montanari and Usai’s study of Italian directors where artistic versus commercial authenticity are anchored in different social networks, showing who matters for which kinds of authenticity claims and the socially constructed nature of authenticity. Glynn and Lounsbury glean insight into how critics facilitated the Atlanta Symphony to maintain its artistic authenticity while moving into a popular music repertoire. Finally, the social nature of authenticity is also seen in how creative voice of artists is anchored in a national or local geography, which evokes a country’s national heritage – New Zealand for Smith and Jones, Spain for Svejenova, and Italy for Delmestri et al. – and historical traditions and attachment to a place for wine producers in Beverland’s study and Moeran’s Japanese clients, who interpret Western culture through stereotypes and clichés.

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