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Brand Concepts as Representations of Human Values: Do Cultural Congruity and Compatibility Between Values Matter?

Global brands are faced with the challenge of conveying concepts that not only are consistent across borders but also resonate with consumers of different cultures. Building on prior research indicating that abstract brand concepts induce more favorable consumer responses than functional attributes, the authors introduce a generalizable and robust structure of abstract brand concepts as representations of human values. Using three empirical studies conducted with respondents from eight countries, they demonstrate that this proposed structure is particularly useful for predicting (1) brand meanings that are compatible (vs. incompatible) with each other and, consequently, more (less) favorably accepted by consumers when added to an already established brand concept; (2) brand concepts that are more likely to resonate with consumers with differing cultural orientations; and (3) consumers' responses to attempts to imbue an established brand concept with new, (in)compatible abstract meanings as a function of their own cultural orientations.

Keywords: brand concepts, human values, cultural congruity, cultural orientation, global branding

Brand concepts are defined as "unique, abstract meanings" associated with brands (Park, Milberg, and Lawson 1991, p. 186). These unique, abstract meanings arise from a particular combination of attributes, benefits, and the marketing efforts used to translate these benefits into higher-order concepts (Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis 1986; Park, Milberg, and Lawson 1991). Although brand concepts reflect both tangible (i.e., what the brand actually does) and intangible (i.e., the way people think about the brand abstractly) aspects of the brand (Keller 1993, 2007), over the years, both practitioners and academics have come to realize that establishing abstract brand concepts on the basis of motivational and emotional meanings induces more favorable consumer responses than focusing on superior functional attributes (Hopewell 2005; Monga and John 2010). This explains the increasing prevalence of abstract brand concepts imbued with human-like values, goals, and emotions through processes such as anthropomorphization (e.g., California Raisins), personification (e.g., Jolly Green Giant), and user imagery (e.g., the Mountain Dew "dudes") (Aaker 1997; Keller 2007).

For multinational companies (MNCs), one of the greatest challenges lies in carefully managing these abstract brand concepts across different cultures (Hollis 2008). This implies that global brands need to convey abstract concepts that not only are consistent across borders but also resonate with consumers of different cultures. Consistency in brand concepts across borders allows MNCs to lower marketing costs and more easily manage advertising and promotions across countries. However, MNCs also need to localize advertising and promotion through the incorporation of concepts and ideas that align with local cultural value priorities (De Mooij 2010). The expectation is that a cultural matching between the abstract brand concepts and consumers' value priorities will facilitate brand penetration in the local markets (Shavitt et al. 2006; Shavitt, Lee, and Torelli 2008). However, because there is considerable variation in value priorities across cultures (Triandis 1995), several issues arise. For example, are there specific abstract brand concepts that match different cultural value priorities? When

marketers attempt to localize a brand, are there particular brand meanings that are (in)compatible with an existing brand concept? If so, what is the combined effect of adding a novel brand meaning that is incompatible with an existing brand concept but congruent with consumers' value priorities? As an illustration, when Procter & Gamble launched its Pampers' Baby Stages of Development line in the United States several years ago, sales were initially unremarkable because the company focused on the absorbency of the diapers. However, when the brand concept shifted to incorporate the more abstract accomplishments and emotions that child and mother experience throughout the different stages of child development, the brand enjoyed 19 consecutive months of share gains (Neff 2003). Notably, in Japan, the absorbency campaign faltered for a different reason: Because frequent change of diapers was perceived as fundamental to keeping the baby clean, the American brand concept did not resonate well with Japanese consumers (Trompenaars and Woolliams 2004).

Prior research has attempted to answer the previously mentioned questions. In particular, the brand personality construct (Aaker 1997) represents an important early effort in viewing abstract brand concepts as representations of human characteristics. Specifically, Aaker (1997) identifies five trait dimensions (i.e., sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness). Nonetheless, subsequent empirical research suggests that this trait-based structure of abstract brand concepts lacks generalizability in cross-cultural settings. Attempts to replicate the five-dimensional structure outside the United States (where the structure was originally developed) have yielded limited success, as some new brand-trait dimensions emerged that were idiosyncratic to local cultural markets (e.g., peacefulness in Japan, passion in Spain [Aaker, Benet-Martinez, and Garolera 2001]; passive likeableness, ascendancy in Korea [Sung and Tinkham 2005]), and dimensions that were idiosyncratic to U.S. culture had to be dropped from the structure (e.g., ruggedness in both Spain and Japan [Aaker, Benet-Martinez, and Garolera 2001]). Similarly, researchers have found that other trait-based measures of brand concepts—such as those based on the "Big Five" model of personality (Caprara, Barbaranelli, and Guido 2001) or an expanded list of Aaker's (1997) measure (Sung and Tinkham 2005)—lack cross-cultural generalizability.

Our research proposes an alternative perspective of abstract brand concepts based on human values that not only overcomes the lack of cross-cultural generality of brand personality measures but also facilitates linking knowledge about brand concepts to extant research about differences in cultural value priorities (or cultural orientations). Specifically, we hypothesize and find empirical evidence that our structure of abstract brand concepts as representations of human values is particularly useful for predicting (1) brand meanings that are compatible (vs. incompatible) with each other and, consequently, more (less) favorably accepted by consumers when added to an already established brand concept; (2) brand concepts that are more likely to resonate with consumers with differing cultural orientations; and (3) consumers' responses to attempts to imbue an established brand concept with new,

(in)compatible abstract meanings as a function of their own cultural orientations. Taken together, our studies provide a comprehensive framework that allows managers to better understand the complexities of being consistent in brand meanings across markets while also being relevant to local markets.

We structure the rest of this article as follows: We first introduce our theoretical framework and develop testable hypotheses. Then, we conduct three empirical studies that reveal the robustness of representing brand concepts as human values across cultural markets. We conclude by discussing the theoretical and managerial implications of our findings, as well as providing suggestions for further research.

Theoretical Background

Brand Concepts as Human Values

The present research investigates abstract brand concepts in terms of human values. Values are abstract representations of desired end-states that serve as guiding principles in people's lives (Schwartz 1992). Shared abstract human values are transformed into concrete and material reality when embodied by brands (Allen 2002). Marketers imbue brands with human values to evoke the sense that the brands can benefit consumers' lives in ways that are meaningful, not merely utilitarian (Durgee, O'Connor, and Veryzer 1996). Approaches such as the means–end chain (Gutman 1982), laddering (Reynolds and Gutman 1988), activities-interests-opinions (Wells and Tigert 1971), and the observations of values (Durgee, O'Connor, and Veryzer 1996) all aim to uncover and leverage the link between product attributes and consumer values. For example, Allen and colleagues (Allen 2002; Allen, Gupta, and Monnier 2008) show that Australian consumers more favorably evaluate a product such as meat (associated with the human value of power) or a brand such as Coca-Cola (associated with the value of enjoying life) to the extent that the values associated with those products are more (vs. less) personally important to those consumers.

Accordingly, we propose that a new measure of brand concepts based on the structure of human values (Schwartz 1992) would be amenable to understanding brand perceptions across consumers with differing cultural values. Our reasoning is as follows: First, human values are universal constructs that represent the same meanings around the world yet have been documented to vary systematically in their self-relevance for people in different cultural contexts. In particular, Schwartz's Value Survey has emerged as a universally reliable and cross-culturally valid measure of human values that has been tested on more than 200 samples in more than 60 countries from every inhabited continent (Schwartz 1992; Schwartz and Boehnke 2004). Second, human value priorities have already been extensively used to document cross-cultural differences in both consumer behavior (for reviews, see Shavitt et al. 2006; Shavitt, Lee, and Torelli 2008) and psychological (Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey 1988; Oyserman, Coon, and Kemmelmeir 2002) research. For example, past research has demonstrated that cross-cultural differences in the pri-

ority that consumers give to the pursuit of individualistic or collectivistic values predict the prevalence of different types of advertising appeals (Han and Shavitt 1994), the processing and persuasiveness of advertising messages (Aaker and Maheswaran 1997; Han and Shavitt 1994), the perceived importance of product information (Aaker and Lee 2001), and the determinants of consumers' purchase intentions (Lee and Green 1991), among other outcomes. Finally, recent refinements in understanding the links between Schwartz's value types and key cultural dimensions used by MNCs to successfully localize their advertising appeals (i.e., the market's level of individualism or collectivism; De Mooij 2010) facilitate our investigation of the compatibility between brand concepts, as well as the brand preferences of consumers with differing cultural orientations. We turn to these issues next.

The (In)Compatibility of Abstract Brand Concepts

Recent evidence suggests that brands can possess human-like characteristics such as values (Aaker, Vohs, and Mogilner 2010; Allen, Gupta, and Monnier 2008) and that marketers intentionally imbue brands with these human characteristics to relate them to consumers' abstract value priorities and subsequently gain consumers' preference

(Gutman 1982; Keller 1993, 2007). The present research uses Schwartz's (1992) structure of human values to represent abstract brand concepts.

Schwartz (1992) postulates that values represent basic requirements of human existence in the pursuit of individualistic needs (i.e., needs of individuals as biological organisms, such as independence and enjoyment in life) or collective needs of groups (i.e., requisites of coordinated social interactions or survival welfare needs of groups, such as honesty and social justice). Schwartz's model proposes 11 conceptually distinct human value domains, each associated with a particular abstract goal (see Table 1), representing a continuum of motivations.[1] This motivational continuum

[1]Schwartz (1992) develops a model with 10 human value domains. Schwartz and Boehnke (2004) provide empirical evidence for a model with 11 human value domains, resulting from dividing universalism further into two distinct values: social concerns (i.e., maintaining just relationships with others in society) and concerns with nature (i.e., preserving scarce natural resources on which life depends). Although both types of values share the same motivational foundation of transcending personal or family concerns and promote the welfare of distant others and of nature, we consider social concerns and concerns with nature as separate, though contiguous, value dimensions (Schwartz and Boehnke 2004).

TABLE 1
Definitions of the 11 Value Dimensions and Their Corresponding Higher-Order Values

| Higher-Order Type of Values	Value Dimension	Abstract Goal	Individual Value Items
Self-enhancement	Power	Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources	Social power, authority, wealth
	Achievement	Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards	Success, capability, ambition, influence on people and events
Openness	Stimulation	Excitement, novelty, and challenge in life	Daring, a varied and challenging life, an exciting life
	Self-direction	Independent thought and action—choosing, creating, exploring	Creativity, freedom, curiosity, independence, choosing one's own goals
Self-transcendence	Social concerns	Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people	Broad-mindedness, social justice, a world at peace, equality, wisdom
	Concerns with nature	Protection of the environment	Beauty of nature, unity with nature, environmental protection
	Benevolence	Preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact	Helpfulness, honesty, forgiveness, loyalty, responsibility
Conservation	Tradition	Respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide	Respect for tradition, humbleness, accepting one's portion in life, devotion, modesty
	Conformity	Restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms	Obedience, honoring parents and elders, self-discipline, politeness
	Security	Safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships, and of self	National security, family security, social order, cleanliness, reciprocation of favors
None	Hedonism	Pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself	Gratification of desires, enjoyment in life, self-indulgence

Source: Schwartz and Boehnke (2004).

can be arranged according to a circular structure, whereby compatible values are adjacent to one another (i.e., can be pursued concurrently) and incompatible values are opposite to one another (i.e., cannot be pursued concurrently) (Schwartz 1992; Schwartz and Boehnke 2004). Consequently, relationships between adjacent values can be further summarized in terms of four higher-order value types that form two basic, bipolar, conceptual dimensions (Schwartz 1992).

As Figure 1 depicts, the first basic dimension Schwartz (1992) proposes places a higher-order type combining stimulation and self-direction values (labeled "openness to change") in opposition to one combining security, conformity, and tradition values (labeled "conservation"). This dimension arrays values in terms of the extent to which they motivate people to be open to change and to follow their own intellectual and emotional interests in unpredictable ways versus to be conservative and to preserve the status quo and the certainty it provides in existing social relations. The second basic, and orthogonal, dimension places a higher-order type combining power and achievement values (labeled "self-enhancement") in opposition to one combining universalism and benevolence values (labeled "self-transcendence"). This dimension arrays values in terms of

the extent to which they motivate people to enhance their self-interests (e.g., their status, personal accomplishments) versus to transcend self-interests and promote the welfare of close and distant others and of nature. Hedonism values share some elements of both openness and self-enhancement. Consequently, we keep hedonism as a separate value dimension located between these two higher-order types (see Figure 1). Prior research indicates that activating a value (e.g., power) inhibits the pursuit of an opposing value (e.g., concerns with nature, social concerns) but has no effect on the pursuit of orthogonal values (e.g., tradition, stimulation) (Schwartz 1992; Schwartz and Bilsky 1990). In other words, value-order types that are at opposite ends (e.g., self-enhancement vs. self-transcendence, openness vs. conservation) are more incompatible with one another, whereas those that are contiguous (e.g., self-enhancement and openness, self-transcendence and self-direction) are more compatible with one another.

By extension, if brand values follow the same (in)compatibility structure found among human value dimensions, would a brand whose image is linked to stimulation (e.g., Apple) gain or lose customer favorability if it also promotes itself with a tradition value such as modesty? To answer this question, we note that Schwartz's (1992) model proposes

FIGURE 1
The 11 Values and Higher-Order Dimensions in the Expanded Schwartz and Boehnke (2004) Model
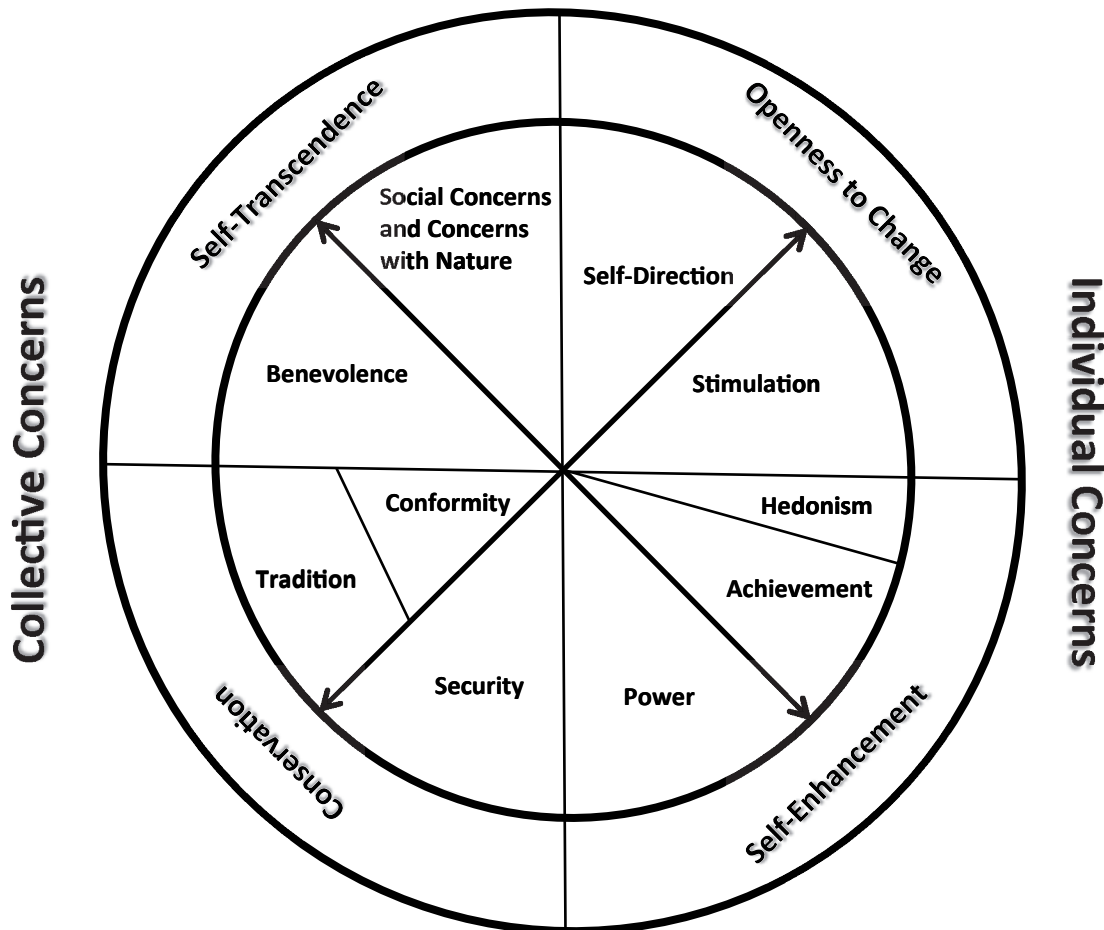
that opposing human values cannot be simultaneously pursued, whereas adjacent values can be. Recent research corroborates this assertion by showing that systematically activating values from all the domains in Schwartz's (1992) model (e.g., status concerns from the higher-order self-enhancement type) inhibit the pursuit of opposing values (e.g., social concerns from the higher-order self-transcendence type) but has no effects on the pursuit of orthogonal values (e.g., tradition, stimulation from the higher-order openness or conservation types) (Maio et al. 2009). Because the simultaneous activation of opposing values should trigger a motivational conflict, we propose that consumers will negatively evaluate attempts to imbue brands with opposing values. Specifically, we suggest that including in a message value meanings that are opposed to the existing brand concept leads consumers to experience a sense of unease or disfluency, which in turn results in unfavorable evaluations of the message (for a similar claim in the context of the simultaneous activation of incompatible regulatory goals, see Labroo and Lee 2006; Lee and Aaker 2004). Accordingly:

> H_1: For a brand with (a) an existing self-enhancement (self-transcendence) concept, messages adding a layer of self-transcendence (self-enhancement) meaning are less favorably evaluated than those adding a layer of openness or conservation meaning, and (b) an existing openness (conservation) concept, messages adding a layer of conservation (openness) meaning are less favorably evaluated than messages adding a layer of self-transcendence or self-enhancement meaning.

Congruity Between Brand Concepts and Cultural Value Priorities

In the quest to build brands that can resonate with local consumers, MNCs often localize advertising and promotion by incorporating concepts and ideas that align with local cultural value priorities. Marketers often accomplish this cultural matching of brand meanings and cultural value priorities by focusing on the levels of individualism (IND) and collectivism (COL) in the local market (De Mooij 2010). In their extensive reviews, Shavitt and colleagues (Shavitt et al. 2006; Shavitt, Lee, and Torelli 2008) find that the majority of research on the role of culture in consumer psychology involves the broad-level IND–COL classifications. Originally introduced by Hofstede (1980), IND and COL refer to the emphasis on the attainment of values that serve the individual (by making him or her feel good, be distinguished, and be independent) or the collective (by preserving in-group integrity, interdependence of members, and harmonious relationships), respectively (Schwartz 1990). Thus, at a broad level, IND is related to values in the service of personal concerns, such as self-enhancement and openness, whereas COL is related to values that serve collective concerns, such as self-transcendence and conservation. However, because the IND–COL classifications are broad-based cultural distinctions, mapping them into specific value dimensions in Schwartz's model often yields mixed results (Schwartz 1990).

A way to overcome these limitations is to incorporate additional attributes that can delineate finer distinctions within the broader IND–COL classifications. In particular,

Triandis (1995) proposes the horizontal/vertical (H/V) distinction nested within the IND–COL classifications. The H/V distinction emerges from the observation that American or British individualism differs from, say, Australian or Norwegian individualism in much the same way that Chinese or Japanese collectivism differs from the collectivism of the Israeli kibbutz. Whereas people in horizontal societies value equality and view the self as having the same status as others in society, people in vertical societies view the self as differing from others along a hierarchy and accept inequality (Triandis 1995). Thus, combining the H/V distinction with the IND–COL classifications produces four cultural orientations: horizontal individualist (HI), vertical individualist (VI), horizontal collectivist (HC), and vertical collectivist (VC) (Shavitt et al. 2006; Shavitt, Lee, and Torelli 2008; Torelli and Shavitt 2010; Triandis and Gelfand 1998).

In VI societies (e.g., the United States, the United Kingdom), people tend to be concerned with improving their individual status and standing out—distinguishing themselves from others through competition, achievement, and power. In contrast, in HI cultures (e.g., Australia, Norway), people prefer to view themselves as equal to others in status. Rather than standing out, the person's focus is on expressing his or her uniqueness and establishing his or her capability to be successfully self-reliant. In VC societies (e.g., Korea, Japan), people emphasize the subordination of their goals to those of their in-groups, submit to the will of authority, and support competition between their in-groups and out-groups. Finally, in HC cultural contexts (e.g., exemplified historically by the Israeli kibbutz), people view themselves as similar to others and emphasize common goals with others, interdependence, and sociability, but they do not submit to authority.

In our research context, linking the H/V distinction nested within the IND–COL classification to Schwartz's value dimensions allows us to identify cross-cultural preferences for certain brand concepts as representations of human values. Specifically, although both self-enhancement (emphasizing individual concerns with status achievement) and openness (emphasizing individual concerns with being free and living an exciting life) seem equally appropriate in individualist cultures (i.e., both primarily refer to individual interests; Schwartz 1990, 1992), we predict that an openness brand concept would be more appealing for consumers with an HI orientation but less so for those with a VI orientation. In contrast, a self-enhancement brand concept would be more appealing for consumers with a VI orientation but less so for those with an HI orientation. We advance these notions on the basis of past research that shows a positive relationship between an HI orientation and the pursuit of self-direction values (Oishi et al. 1998; Soh and Leong 2002). People high in HI value uniqueness but are not especially interested in becoming distinguished and achieving high status. In addition, high-HI people are particularly concerned with self-reliance but do not place importance on displays of success (Nelson and Shavitt 2002). In contrast, a VI orientation is positively related to the endorsement of power values (Oishi et al. 1998) because people high in VI orientation place importance on displays of success and

gaining of influence (Nelson and Shavitt 2002). High-VI people strive to achieve power and status and exhibit behavioral intentions that promote the attainment of power goals (Torelli and Shavitt 2010), but they do not exhibit concerns with the pursuit of stimulation and self-direction values (Oishi et al. 1998; Soh and Leong 2002). Thus, we expect a VI orientation to positively predict liking for the self-enhancement brand concepts of power and achievement. Stated formally,

H_{2a}: An HI cultural orientation leads to liking brand concepts representing openness but not brand concepts representing self-enhancement.

H_{2b}: A VI cultural orientation leads to liking brand concepts representing self-enhancement but not brand concepts representing openness.

Similarly, although both self-transcendence (emphasizing collective concerns with the welfare of others and of nature) and conservation (emphasizing collective concerns with maintaining traditions) brand concepts seem equally appropriate in collectivist cultures, we predict that a self-transcendence concept will be more appealing for consumers with an HC orientation but less so for those with a VC cultural orientation. In contrast, a conservation brand concept would be more appealing for consumers with a VC orientation but less so for those with an HC orientation. We advance these predictions on the basis of past research showing that HC orientation is positively correlated with a focus on social relationships (Oishi et al. 1998). High-HC people strive to have positive effects on others and exhibit behavioral intentions that promote the attainment of prosocial goals of helping others (Torelli and Shavitt 2010). Therefore, we expect that HC orientation will resonate with the self-transcendence brand concepts of concerns with nature and social concerns. In contrast, high-VC people believe in the importance of existing hierarchies and emphasize traditional family values. Research indicates that VC is positively correlated with a sense of obligation within a social hierarchy (Chan and Drasgow 2001) and with traditional values (Oishi et al. 1998). We anticipate that VC predicts liking for the conservation brand concepts of tradition, conformity, and security. Stated formally,

H_{3a}: An HC cultural orientation leads to liking brand concepts representing self-transcendence but not brand concepts representing conservation.

H_{3b}: A VC cultural orientation leads to liking brand concepts representing conservation but not brand concepts representing self-transcendence.

The Combined Effects of Cultural (In)Congruity and (In)Compatibility

Thus far, we have proposed that measuring brand concepts as representations of human values helps in identifying which new brand meanings are (1) incompatible with an existing brand concept and (2) appealing to consumers with differing cultural orientations. However, what happens when a new brand meaning is compatible with consumers' value priorities, achieving "cultural matching," but incompatible with an existing brand concept? Consider, for example, luxury brands that often represent self-enhancement values. Could a luxury watch brand attempt to promote a self-transcendence concept help it to be favorably evaluated by consumers who are HC oriented? On the one hand, the newly promoted self-transcendence meaning would be incompatible with the existing self-enhancement brand concept, which should cause disfluency and result in unfavorable brand evaluations (H_1). On the other hand, self-transcendence is congruent with the cultural orientation of HC consumers and should result in favorable brand evaluations (H_3). Considering that attitudes are formed by the integration (or summation) of the different evaluative judgments (positive or negative) triggered by relevant information about a target (Anderson 1971), we anticipate that the negative effect from promoting an incompatible brand concept will be partially offset by the favorable brand concept–cultural orientation matching. More generally,

H_4: The decrease in brand evaluations due to the addition of an incompatible abstract meaning to an existing brand concept is significantly less when there is a match between the newly added abstract meaning and the cultural orientation of consumers.

Study 1: Incompatibility Between Layers of Brand Concepts

We designed Study 1 to achieve two major objectives: (1) to assess the reliability, validity, and cross-cultural invariance of a measure of brand concepts representing human values and (2) to evaluate consumers' response to a brand's attempt to add a layer of abstract meaning that is incompatible (vs. compatible) to its existing brand concept (H_1). Next, we describe the pilot study run before the main study.

Pilot Study

We conducted a pilot study to assess the reliability, validity, and cross-cultural invariance of a measure of brand concepts as representations of human values, as well as to identify the dimensional structure of this measure. We conducted this pilot study among consumers from a culturally diverse base residing in eight countries located on five continents, which we chose to include the four cultural orientations noted previously. Specifically, we used Hofstede's (1980) scores to select four individualistic countries—Norway (N = 169), the United States (N = 206), Australia (N = 160), and Canada (N = 282)—and four collectivistic countries—Turkey (N = 407), China (N = 302), Mexico (N = 221), and Brazil (N = 207). Due to the lack of large-scale studies documenting country-level scores for H/V orientations, we relied on Triandis's (1995) country-level descriptions and categorized Norway and Australia as relatively more horizontal countries and Mexico and the United States as relatively more vertical countries. We expected the other countries (i.e., Canada, Turkey, China, and Brazil) to vary in their levels of H or V orientations, given prior studies showing mixed results when measuring cultural orientation among samples of participants from these countries (Chirkov et al. 2003; Torelli and Shavitt 2010).

Survey procedure. In all eight countries, we selected one brand each for 12 product categories (for the list of product

categories, brands, and their selection criteria, see the Appendix). We included 41 brands in the surveys and presented 63% of the brands to participants in more than one country. We grouped the 12 brands in each country randomly into three lists (with four brands on each list). We randomly presented each participant with the four brands (one at a time on separate pages) from one of the three lists, asked them to think about each brand "as if it were a person" who embodies certain values (Aaker 1997, p. 350), and asked them rate the extent to which the brand was associated with or described by each of the 45 value items on seven-point scales (1 = "not at all associated with or described by," and 7 = "extremely associated with or described by"), as Table 1 shows.[2] In this and subsequent studies, all surveys were administered in the local language and translations were done using standard translation–back translation procedures.

Reliability, validity, and cross-national invariance. Exploratory factor analyses resulted in four to seven factor solutions accounting for 56% to 64% of the variance in each country. Five items (i.e., wisdom, helpfulness, cleanliness, broad-mindedness, and reciprocation of favors) either showed no clear loadings onto a single factor or loaded onto theoretically incorrect factors in at least six of the eight country samples, and thus we removed them from further analyses. The remaining 40 items loaded onto their corresponding dimensions and subscale reliabilities were all satisfactory (α = .79–.91).

We then conducted separate confirmatory factor analyses (CFA; EQS 6.1, Bentler 1995) on each country's data and tested an 11-factor baseline model. The model demonstrated good fit ($\chi^2(685)$ = 1853–4540; comparative fit index [CFI] = .90–.92, nonnormed fit index [NNFI] = .90–.92, root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = .05–.07, and standardized root mean square residual [SRMR] = .05–.06). Factor loadings were in the .60–.95 range, and all t-test values (8.3–39.8) were statistically significant (all ps < .05), providing evidence for convergent validity. In addition, a multigroup CFA showed a well-fitting model ($\chi^2(5480)$ = 23,867, CFI = .928, NNFI = .918, RMSEA = .056, and SRMR = .057), providing evidence for configural invariance. Thus, we used the 11-factor model as the basis for assessing cross-national metric invariance.

A multigroup CFA using a constrained model with equal factor loadings across countries showed a change in CFI (ΔCFI – a measure that is independent of both model complexity and sample size) $\leq$ –.01, indicating that the null hypothesis of invariance should not be rejected (Cheung and Rensvold 2002; De Jong, Steenkamp, and Veldkamp 2009). The constrained model showed a good fit ($\chi^2(5683)$ = 24,911, CFI = .924, NNFI = .917, RMSEA = .057, and SRMR = .062), and the value of ΔCFI = –.004 suggests that

the 11-factor model to measure brand concepts as representations of human values was cross-nationally invariant.

Finally, a multidimensional scaling analysis (Schwartz 1992; Schwartz and Bilsky 1990) using the Euclidean distances among variables as dissimilarity measures showed that a structure of brand concepts as representing human values can be reasonably arranged according to the higher-order dimensions of self-enhancement, self-transcendence, openness, and conservation (see Figure 2). More important, self-enhancement brand concepts of power and achievement were in the opposite quadrant to self-transcendence brand concepts of concerns with nature and social concerns. Similarly, openness brand concepts of stimulation and self-direction contrasted with conservation brand concepts of tradition, conformity, and security. The brand concept hedonism was located in between openness and self-enhancement higher-order values, and the brand concept benevolence was located in between self-transcendence and conservation higher-order values. This finding suggests that, in the case of brand concepts, self-transcendence is reflected by social concerns and concerns with nature values but not necessarily by benevolence values.

Furthermore, while the two higher-order dimensions appeared to be reasonably orthogonal to each other, openness was closer to self-enhancement (in the right half of the two-dimensional space) than to self-transcendence, whereas conservation was closer to self-transcendence (both in the left half of the two-dimensional space) than to self-enhancement. This is consistent with the observation that openness and self-enhancement reflect primarily individual interests, whereas self-transcendence and conservation promote primarily collective interests (Schwartz 1990).

Main Study

Sample and stimuli. To evaluate consumers' response to a brand's attempt to add a layer of abstract meaning that is incompatible (vs. compatible) with its existing brand concept (H_1), we presented a new sample of American (N = 539, 44% male, average age = 21.6 years), Chinese (N = 208, 41% male, average age = 30.3 years), Canadian (N = 380, 56% male, average age = 20.1 years), and Turkish (N = 380, 54% male, average age = 21.0 years) consumers with four advertising slogans for 1 of 22 target brands (36% of them matched across countries; for the list of brands shown to participants in each country, see the Appendix). The brands and slogans used as stimuli in this study emerged from two separate pretests with participants similar to those used in the main study. In the first pretest, participants in the United States (N = 165), China (N = 138), Canada (N = 95), and Turkey (N = 101) rated the brands in terms of the extent to which they were associated with the 40 items retained in the pilot study and indicated their familiarity with each of the brands. The results showed that the brands were rated high in terms of their associations with the target brand concept (overall M = 5.26) and significantly higher than with any of the other three brand concepts (overall M = 3.66, all ps < .01). All the brands were familiar to participants (M = 5.4–6.6, on a seven-point scale). In the second pretest, participants ($N_{U.S.}$ = 25, N_{China} = 23, N_{Canada} = 21,

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[2]We validated the content validity and comprehensiveness of these items to measure brand concepts as human values representations in separate pretests (N = 154) conducted in the United States and Mexico, two countries chosen according to the same criteria used in the pilot study.

FIGURE 2
Structural Relations Among Value Dimensions from Multidimensional Scaling (Pilot: Study 1)
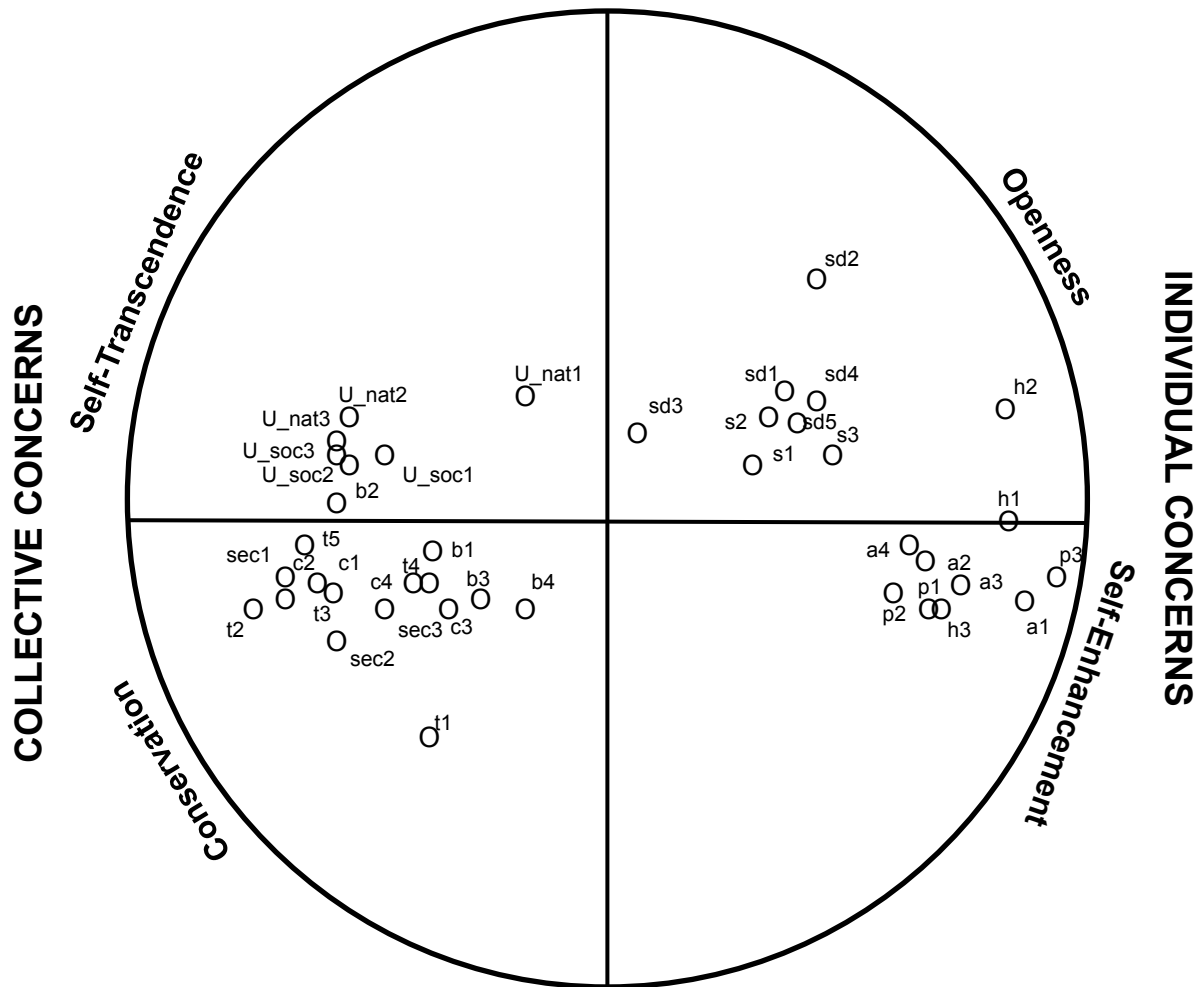
s = stimulation, sd = self-direction, h = hedonism, a = achievement, p = power
u_soc = universalism – social concerns, u_nat = universalism – concerns with nature,
b = benevolence, t = tradition, c = conformity, sec = security

and N_{Turkey} = 20) rated each of the four slogans in terms of their abstract meanings using the same 40 items (for the list of slogans used, see the Appendix). The results indicated that the slogans were strongly associated with the target abstract meaning (overall M = 5.89) and significantly higher than with any of the other three abstract meanings (overall M = 2.05, all $ps < .001$).

Procedure. Under a cover story of studying advertising slogans, participants saw one of the 22 target brands and thought about its abstract concept in memory. They were then presented, on a single screen, with four alternative slogans (in random order) for the target brand and were asked to rank the slogans, from 1 ("best") to 4 ("worst"), in terms of how well the slogan fits the image of the target brand. Each slogan was intended to distinctively communicate the abstract meaning associated with one of the four high-level brand value dimensions uncovered in the pilot study. After a series of filler tasks, participants indicated their attitude

toward the brand on a seven-point scale (1 = "very unfavorable," and 7 = "very favorable").

Ranking of the slogans. We conducted separate nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis tests on each country's data to evaluate differences in the rank order for each of the four slogans among the four types of brand concepts. In all countries, the tests were significant (the United States: all $\chi^2(3, N = 539) \geq 145.4$, all $ps < .001$; China: all $\chi^2(3, N = 208) \geq 52.8$, all $ps < .001$; Canada: all $\chi^2(3, N = 380) \geq 33.3$, all $ps < .001$; Turkey: all $\chi^2(3, N = 380) \geq 51.0$, all $ps < .001$). We pooled the data from the four countries and conducted follow-up tests to evaluate pairwise differences in the rank order of each slogan among the four brand concepts, controlling for Type I error across tests using the Bonferroni approach. The results of these tests indicated that each slogan was ranked at the top in terms of favorability when it matched the brand concept (self-enhancement brand concept: $M_{self-enhancement\ slogan} = 1.77$; openness brand

concept: $M_{\text{openness slogan}}$ = 1.80; conservation brand concept: $M_{\text{conservation slogan}}$ = 1.62; and self-transcendence brand concept: $M_{\text{self-transcendence slogan}}$ = 1.54) compared with all non-matching slogans (all Mann-Whitney Us ≥ 15,507, all ps ≤ .001), which corroborates the successful brand concept manipulation.

More important, as H_1 predicted, participants ranked each slogan lowest in terms of favorability when it symbolized human values opposing that of the brand concept (self-enhancement brand concept: $M_{\text{self-transcendence slogan}}$ = 3.35; openness brand concept: $M_{\text{conservation slogan}}$ = 2.91; conservation brand concept: $M_{\text{openness slogan}}$ = 3.03; and self-transcendence brand concept: $M_{\text{self-enhancement slogan}}$ = 3.43) compared with all other conditions (all Mann-Whitney Us ≥ 15,507, all ps ≤ .01). Participants ranked slogans with non-matching symbolic meanings that were orthogonal to that of the brand concept in the middle (M = 2.16–2.81), often non-significantly different from one another (38% of the time).

Discussion

The results from Study 1 confirm our prediction that representing brand concepts as human values helps to uncover brand meanings that can be more (vs. less) successfully added to an established brand concept. Consumers from four countries (the United States, China, Canada, and Turkey) reacted negatively to a brand's attempt to add a layer of abstract meaning that was opposed to the already established brand concept. In particular, they evaluated least favorably slogans with self-transcendence (openness) meanings for brands with an already established self-enhancement (conservation) brand concept, and vice versa. In contrast, participants consistently evaluated slogans with nonmatching symbolic meanings that were orthogonal (vs. opposing) to that of the brand concept (e.g., self-enhancement or self-transcendence slogans for openness or conservation brand concepts) more favorably and often nonsignificantly different from one another. This suggests that marketers might consider adding orthogonal brand meanings to an already established brand concept. Although the (in)compatibility of brand concepts emerged in all the countries, when pairing the conservation slogan with the opposing openness brand concept, Chinese consumers reacted less unfavorably than American consumers did (M = 2.77 vs. 3.30, p < .05). It is possible that the congruity of this message with conservative values deemed important in Chinese culture (Triandis 1995) might have attenuated the negative reaction toward a message with a meaning that was incompatible with that of the brand concept. We explore these issues further in the next two studies.

Study 2: Brand Concept–Cultural Orientation Congruity

Method and Procedure

We designed Study 2 to investigate cultural patterns in consumers' attitudes toward the self-enhancement, self-transcendence, openness, and conservation brand concepts (H_2 and H_3). Participants were college students (N = 1469, 48% male, average age = 21.6 years) enrolled in different academic programs in universities in the United States (N = 349), Norway (N = 105), Canada (N = 190), China (N = 384), Turkey (N = 314), and Brazil (N = 127), who participated in exchange for course credit.

Following well-established procedures used in past research to investigate consumers' brand preferences as a function of the human characteristics symbolized by brands (e.g., Aaker 1997, 1999), participants thought about their favorite brands as if they were people who embodied certain values and identified the values that would describe their favorite brands. We included this procedure so participants would elicit their favorite brand concepts as representations of human values and to make such relevant values salient. Because making relevant values salient increases the likelihood that a person will behave in value-congruent ways and make value-congruent judgments (Schwartz and Inbar-Saban 1988), we reasoned that this procedure would facilitate the matching of the elicited brand concepts with the liking measures that followed. Participants were then presented with a table in which the 40 items retained in Study 1 were grouped by the corresponding 11 value dimensions and rated their liking for brands that were described or symbolized by each of the 11 value dimensions.[3] For example, participants rated their liking for brands that symbolize "power"—that is, power, authority, and wealth"—on a seven-point Likert scale (–3 = "I dislike a lot brands described by 'power' values," and 3 = "I like a lot brands described by 'power' values"), and repeated the process to indicate their liking for brands that symbolize each of the other value dimensions. After a filler task, participants completed a 16-item cultural orientation scale (four items per subscale; Triandis and Gelfand 1998), answered demographic questions, and then were debriefed and dismissed.

Results

Multilevel analyses. To examine the simultaneous effects of individual- and group-level cultural orientation scores on brand evaluations, we estimated separate compositional multilevel models (one for each of the brand concept-preferences linked to the four cultural orientations in H_2 and H_3: self-direction and stimulation for openness, power, and achievement for self-enhancement; concerns with nature and social concerns for self-transcendence; and tradition, conformity, and security for conservation) in which participants (Level 1) are nested within the six cultural groups (Level 2). These models are useful to estimate the effect of the predictor (i.e., cultural orientation) on the dependent variable (i.e., brand evaluations) at the two levels (Enders and Tofighi 2007).

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[3]We were interested in the higher-level relationship between people's cultural orientations and their favorite abstract brand concepts. It was easier for participants to describe these brand concepts by focusing on the value dimensions, which would also reduce respondent fatigue from having to make 40 liking judgments. This form of administration of the values survey, also named the short Schwartz's value survey (Lindeman and Verkasalo 2005), is more suitable for situations in which broad-level relationships, such as those in Study 2, are of special concern. We validated this reduced form of brand concept measurement in a separate pretest with 116 participants from the same pool of participants used in the study.

This enabled us to assess whether country-level cultural orientation scores predict brand evaluations beyond individual endorsement of given cultural orientations. The models decompose the cultural orientation predictors (HI, VI, HC, or VC, depending on the model) into a within-level and a between-levels component by using the cultural group means (i.e., HI_j, VI_j, HC_j, and VC_j) as predictors in the Level 2 intercept equations.

We used the following model to predict liking for openness brand concepts: $Liking_{ij} = (\gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}HI_j + u_{0j}) + (\gamma_{10} + u_{1j})HI_{ij} + (\gamma_{20} + u_{2j})VI_{ij} + (\gamma_{30} + u_{3j})HC_{ij} + (\gamma_{40} + u_{4j})VC_{ij} + r_{ij}$, where $Liking_{ij}$ is the corresponding liking score for favorite brands that symbolize openness brand concepts for participant i in country j (j = 1–6); HI_{ij}, VI_{ij}, HC_{ij}, and VC_{ij} are the cultural orientation scores of the same participant i in country j; HI_j is the mean HI score of all participants in country j; and r_{ij} is the Level 1 residual. The term $(\gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}HI_j + u_{0j})$ is the intercept for country j and is composed of a mean intercept (γ_{00}), the effect of the country mean HI score on the dependent variable (γ_{01}) at Level 2, and a random component (u_{0j}) that captures group j's deviation from the mean. The coefficients γ_{10}, γ_{20}, γ_{30}, and γ_{40} represent the slopes of the linear relationships at Level 1 between the liking measure and HI (α = .69–.74), VI (α = .73–.80), HC (α = .71–.78), and VC (α = .70–.76), respectively. Finally, the random components u_{1j}, u_{2j}, u_{3j}, and u_{4j} represent group j's deviation from the mean slope of the linear relationship between the corresponding cultural orientation and the liking measure. We included this term to assess cultural group differences in the slopes that could undermine the generalizability of the relationships hypothesized in this research. We used similar models for predicting liking for self-

enhancement, self-transcendence, and conservation brand concepts, and we included VI_j, HC_j, or VC_j (instead of HI_j) in the intercept term for cultural group j.

Substantively, our interest lies in the slope coefficients (γ_{10}, γ_{20}, γ_{30}, or γ_{40}, depending on the model) that measure the degree to which the hypothesized linear relationships between the liking measure and individual cultural orientation scores are warranted. We were also interested in the slope coefficients of the relationships between the dependent variables and group-level mean HI, VI, HC, or VC scores (γ_{01}) that could point to a contextual effect of country-level scores on the liking measures. Finally, we evaluated deviations of the group-level slopes from the mean slope (u_1, u_2, u_3, or u_4, depending on the model) to assess the generalizability of the hypothesized relationships across countries. For each of the four models, we estimated all parameters using Raudenbush and Bryk's (2002) software package.

Relationships between brand concepts favorability and cultural orientations. Table 2, Panel A, depicts the estimated coefficients for each of the models. In support of the cultural matching effects, all the cultural orientation–brand concept favorability relationships in H_2 and H_3 were fully supported. The slope coefficients of the linear relationship between individual HI scores and liking for openness brand concepts were positive and significant ($b_{self-direction}$ = .26, $b_{stimulation}$ = .16; ps < .05), whereas those between HI and liking for self-enhancement were not (b_{power} = .02, $b_{achievement}$ = .05; not significant [n.s.]). This suggests more positive brand evaluations of openness (and not self-enhancement) brands as a function of HI scores (H_{2a}). Similarly, consistent with H_{2b}, VI predicted positive attitudes toward self-enhancement

TABLE 2
Coefficients from Linear Models and Means (Study 2)

A: Estimated Coefficients for the Compositional Multilevel Models

High-Level Brand Concept Dimension	Brand Concept Value Dimension	Slope Coefficient Level 1				Context Effect Level 2
		HI	VI	HC	VC	
Openness	Self-direction	.26*	−.04	.20*	−.05	1.03*
	Stimulation	.16*	.04	.20*	−.06	1.05
Conservation	Tradition	−.09	−.02	.14	.39*	.48
	Conformity	−.15*	−.01	.11	.36*	.78
	Security	−.05	.00	.16	.22*	.42
Self-enhancement	Power	.02	.42*	−.01	.04	1.05*
	Achievement	.05	.26*	.13	.05	.51
Self-transcendence	Concerns with nature and social concerns	.07	−.17*	.22*	.13	.28

B: Average Cultural Orientation Scores by Country

Country	HI		VI		HC		VC	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
United States	5.61	.93	4.76	1.22	5.42	.92	5.43	1.01
Canada	5.66	.77	4.87	1.09	5.40	.92	5.33	1.03
China	5.35	1.01	5.00	1.13	4.98	.95	5.75	.90
Norway	5.14	.71	4.06	1.24	5.62	.87	5.13	.95
Brazil	5.68	.85	4.00	1.43	6.03	.82	6.08	.77
Turkey	5.69	.98	4.94	1.19	5.38	1.04	5.44	1.11

*Coefficient is significant at *p* < .05.

brand concepts (b_{power} = .42, $b_{achievement}$ = .26; ps < .05) but not toward openness brand concepts ($b_{self-direction}$ = −.04, $b_{stimulation}$ = .04; n.s.). An HC orientation was positively related to liking a self-transcendence brand concept (b = .22, p < .05) but not a conservation one (as predicted in H_{3a}; $b_{tradition}$ = .14, $b_{confirmity}$ = .11, $b_{security}$ = .16; n.s.). Finally, as H_{3b} predicted, a VC orientation positively predicted liking conservation brand concepts ($b_{tradition}$ = .39, $b_{conformity}$ = .36, $b_{security}$ = .22; ps < .05) but not self-transcendence ones (b = .13, n.s.). These findings reinforce the usefulness of linking the uncovered structure of brand concepts with the value priorities of multicultural consumers, in terms of the V/H distinction nested within the IND–COL classification, to identify the culturally congruent brand concepts that these consumers prefer.

Notably, there was a significant, negative relationship between conservation (conformity) and HI (b = −.15, p < .05), suggesting that high-HI consumers, who emphasize openness values in their self-definition, dislike conservation brand concepts. Similarly, there was a negative relationship between self-transcendence (concerns with nature and social concerns) and VI (b = −.17, p < .05), suggesting that high-VI consumers, who emphasize self-enhancement values in their self-definition, dislike self-transcendence brand concepts. These negative relationships are consistent with our framework but were not significant for the four cultural orientations (though they appear directionally in all cases). This could be attributed to participants being prompted to think about the abstract image of their favorite brand concepts and not about disliked brand concepts, which facilitated the matching of the favorable abstract images but not the mismatching of the unfavorable ones.

Group-level cultural orientation scores and brand concepts favorability. As Table 2, Panel B, predicts, Norwegians and Brazilians had the lowest VI scores, whereas Brazilians and the Chinese had the highest VC scores (all ps < .001). Brazilians and Norwegians showed the highest HC scores, whereas Americans, Canadians, Turks, and Brazilians showed equally high levels of HI, which were significantly higher than the Chinese (p < .001). Notably, the Chinese scored the highest in VI (significantly higher than Americans, p < .001), and Norwegians scored the lowest in HI. Thus, the findings confirm that our samples not only had distinct cultural orientations but also behaved in many respects in accordance with past research (Nelson and Shavitt 2002; Triandis 1995). Nevertheless, there were some discrepancies in terms of the actual and expected cultural orientations of participants in the different countries, which is not a rare event in the literature (e.g., Shavitt et al. 2006; Torelli and Shavitt 2010). After all, nationality is not always a reliable predictor of individualism and collectivism scores (Oyserman, Coon, and Kemmelmeier 2002). Triandis and Gelfand (1998) argue that all four cultural orientations will be present in any culture and, for any individual person, constraints in the society will determine what cultural aspects of the self will be sampled. It is important to keep in mind that individual and group differences in cultural values need not operate in the same way to influence people's judgments (Torelli and Shavitt 2010). Indeed,

expecting that group-level and individual-level cultural effects will be isomorphic risks committing the ecological fallacy (Shavitt et al. 2006).

The contextual effect of group-level cultural orientation scores (i.e., cultural contexts high in HI, VI, HC, or VC) on brand evaluations can be inferred from the size of the γ_{01} coefficients. As we depict in Table 2, Panel A, the slope coefficient of the linear relationship between group-level HI scores and liking for the openness brand concept of self-direction was positive and significant, as was the coefficient of the relationship between group-level VI scores and liking for the self-enhancement brand concept of power. Furthermore, these slope coefficients were significantly different from those obtained at the individual level ($\chi^2(2)$ = 30.5 and 121.0, respectively; p < .001). These findings suggest that membership in a cultural group that is high in HI (VI) positively predicts liking for openness (self-enhancement) brand concepts beyond individual endorsement of an HI (VI) orientation. For self-transcendence and conservation brand concepts, the slope coefficients of the linear relationship with the corresponding group-level HC or VC scores were positive but nonsignificant.

Generalizability of cultural orientation–brand concept relationships. The random component of the slope coefficients for VI (u_2), HC (u_3), and VC (u_4) were not significantly different from zero, suggesting that the relationship between liking for self-enhancement, self-transcendence, and conservation brand concepts and the corresponding VI, HC, and VC scores do not vary across the six country groups. However, we found evidence for a significant variation in the slope coefficient (u_1) of the linear relationship between HI and liking for the openness brand concept of self-direction. Although the slope coefficients for all the countries were significantly different from zero, they tended to be relatively larger for the individualist countries (the United States, Norway, and Canada) than for the collectivist countries (China, Turkey, and Brazil). Overall, these findings show that the favorability of brand concepts that symbolize culturally relevant values holds true across the six countries.

Discussion

Taken together, the results of Study 2 show that marketers can effectively use representations of brand concepts as human values to predict which brand concepts will be favorably evaluated by consumers as a function of their cultural orientation. Specifically, in support of H_2 and H_3, an HI cultural orientation was associated with liking for openness (and not self-enhancement) brand concepts representing individual interests of being free and living an exciting life. A VI cultural orientation predicted liking for self-enhancement (and not openness) brand concepts representing individual interests in achieving status. An HC orientation was positively associated with liking for self-transcendence (and not conservation) brand concepts representing collective interests in the welfare of others. Finally, a VC orientation predicted liking for conservation (and not self-transcendence) brand concepts representing collective interests in maintaining traditions. There was also a tendency among participants to dislike brand concepts with meanings opposing

those consistent with their value priorities, in line with the structure of brand concepts uncovered in Study 1. Although some countries did not exhibit the level of cultural orientation scores shown in past research, we found cultural patterning of brand evaluations at both the individual and the country levels. Overall, the results in Study 2 show that a structure of brand concepts as representations of human values can predict which brand concepts are likely to resonate among consumers (individual people as well as entire societies) with different cultural orientations.

Study 3: Adding Culturally Congruent, Opposing Meanings

Method and Procedure

We designed Study 3 to investigate whether the erosion in brand message favorability caused by the addition of an incompatible abstract meaning to an existing brand concept (as found in Study 1) can be compensated for by the gain resulting from this added brand meaning being congruent with consumers' value priorities (as found in Study 2). Study 3 used a mixed sample consisting of a consumer panel (87% U.S. participants) and college students (47% male, average age = 34.6 years, median income = US$32,000) from the same countries investigated in Study 1 ($N_{U.S.}$ = 137, N_{China} = 81, N_{Canada} = 205, and N_{Turkey} = 102). Participants were introduced to a consumer study in which they indicated their opinions about four fictitious self-enhancement brands of luxury watches. They were first told that the four brands were of French origin and offered similar luxury attributes (18-karat yellow gold case, crown protector set with a diamond, sapphire crystal, silvered dial with sunray finish set with eight round diamonds, and 18-karat yellow gold bracelet). We did this to position the four brands at par in terms of their symbolism of self-enhancement values (verified in a separate pretest). Participants were then presented, on a single page, four advertisements of different brands (with fictitious French names that we determined to be believable and equally likeable in a separate pretest: Emile, Bertrand, Gerard, and Antoine). The layout of each advertisement contained a headline at the top combining the corresponding brand name with "Luxury watches" (e.g., "Emile Luxury Watches") followed by an ad concept copy developed by expanding the slogans used in Study 1 (see the Appendix), set against a background image descriptive of the ad concept (e.g., two people sailing for the openness concept). Specifically, we designed the four advertisements as follows: (1) the Gerard brand matching the self-enhancement concept, (2) the Bertrand brand matching the incompatible self-transcendence concept, (3) the Emile brand matching the conservation concept, and (4) the Antoine brand matching the openness concept.[4] After reviewing the four advertisements, participants indicated

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[4]We validated that the advertisements were distinctively associated with the target brand concept in separate pretests conducted in the four countries (N = 134) following the same procedure used in Study 1. We also checked that the advertisements were perceived similarly in terms of message strength.

their likelihood of choosing each of the brands (seven-point Likert scale, where 1 = "very unlikely" and 7 = "very likely") and their actual brand choice. After a filler task, participants completed the same 16-item cultural orientation scale used in Study 2 and answered demographic questions.

Results

Brand choice likelihood. We first fit a mixed linear model to participants' ratings for their likelihood of choosing each of the brands with the type of advertisement (self-enhancement, self-transcendence, openness, or conservation) as a within-subject factor, country as a between-subjects factor, and participants' mean scores for the four cultural orientations (α = .74–.77) as continuous predictors. Consistent with H_1 and Study 1's findings, the results yielded a significant effect for the type of advertisement (F(3, 1485) = 27.66, p < .001), driven by a lower likelihood of choosing the brand in the incompatible self-transcendence advertisement (M = 3.84) compared with those in the openness (M = 4.10, p < .05), conservation (M = 4.35, p < .001), and self-enhancement (M = 4.91, p < .001) advertisements. More important, as H_2–H_4 predicted, this effect was qualified by significant type of advertisement × country interaction (F(9, 1485) = 4.78, p < .001), as well as by significant type of advertisement × HI (F(3, 1485) = 6.66, p < .001), type of advertisement × VI (F(3, 1485) = 11.22, p < .001), type of ad × HC (F(3, 1485) = 6.05, p < .001), and type of advertisement × VC (F(3, 1485) = 2.91, p < .05) interactions. All three-way interactions with country were nonsignificant (ps > .20).

Chinese participants reported a significantly higher likelihood of choosing the brand in the conservation advertisement (M = 4.77) than those in the other advertisements ($M_{self-transcendence}$ = 4.15, $M_{self-enhancement}$ = 4.10, and $M_{openness}$ = 4.13; ps < .05). In the three other countries, participants reported a significantly higher likelihood of choosing the brand in the self-enhancement advertisement (M = 5.03–5.31) than those in the other advertisements (M = 3.54–4.41; all ps < .05). Participants in Canada and Turkey also reported a significantly lower likelihood of choosing the brand depicted in the self-transcendence advertisement (M = 3.54 and 3.61) than those depicted in the openness (M = 3.90 and 4.04; both ps < .05) and conservation advertisements (M = 3.93 and 4.41; both ps < .05).

We conducted simple slope analyses to further interpret the type of advertisement × cultural orientation interactions. As we depict in Table 3, the likelihood of choosing the brands depicted in the different advertisements varied as a function of participants' cultural orientation. As we predict in H_2, an HI (VI) cultural orientation was positively related to the likelihood of choosing the brand depicted in the openness (self-enhancement) advertisement. Similarly, consistent with H_3, an HC (VC) cultural orientation was positively related to the likelihood of choosing the brand depicted in the self-transcendence (conservation) advertisement. More important, although the brand in the incompatible self-transcendence advertisement (i.e., going against the self-enhancement concept of a luxury watch) was the one with the lowest likelihood of being chosen, the negative reaction toward this brand was attenuated among high- (vs. low-)

TABLE 3
Likelihood of Choosing the Brand Depicted in the Advertisement by Type of Advertisement and Cultural Orientation Score (Study 3)

	Cultural Orientation							
	HI		VI		HC		VC	
Type of Ad	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
Self-enhancement	4.61_a	5.50_b	5.03_a	5.08_a	5.03_a	5.09_a	5.11_a	5.01_a
Openness	3.99_a	4.14_a	3.72_a	4.41_b	4.07_a	4.06_a	4.01_a	4.12_a
Self-transcendence	4.04_a	3.46_b	3.71_a	3.79_a	3.37_a	4.13_b	3.56_a	3.94_b
Conservation	4.14_a	4.34_a	4.46_a	4.02_b	4.16_a	4.32_a	3.95_a	4.52_b

Notes: High and low scores based on +1 and –1 SD above and below the mean cultural orientation scores. For each cultural orientation column, cells not sharing the same subscript within the same type of ad row differ significantly at $p < .05$.

HC consumers for whom the incompatible self-transcendence image matched their cultural orientation. This provides support for H_4. Significantly, we also found that high- (vs. low-) VI consumers evaluated the self-transcendence advertisement less favorably, possibly because this advertisement not only was incompatible but also offered a mismatch with their self-relevant values.

Brand choice. First, a frequency analysis of the brand choices indicated that the brand in the self-enhancement advertisement was the most preferred (48%), followed by those in the conservation (23%) and openness (15%) advertisements. The brand in the self-transcendence advertisement was the least frequently preferred (14%). This pattern of choice preferences is fully consistent with the likelihood ratings discussed previously. We used multinomial logistic regression to investigate people's brand choices as a function of their cultural orientation and country location (three dummy variables with the United States as the reference), with the brand in the self-enhancement advertisement as the reference. The likelihood ratio test revealed significant effects for HI ($\chi^2(3) = 14.79, p < .005$), VI ($\chi^2(3) = 13.10, p < .005$), HC ($\chi^2(3) = 13.27, p < .005$), and the China dummy ($\chi^2(3) = 20.76, p < .001$). The multinomial logit estimates (β) showed that for a unit increase in HI (HC) scores, the multinomial log-odds of preferring the brand depicted in the openness (self-transcendence) advertisement to that in the self-enhancement advertisement increased by .42 units, $p < .05$ (.57 units, $p < .001$). In contrast, for a unit increase in VI scores, the multinomial log-odds of preferring the brand depicted in the self-transcendence (vs. self-enhancement) advertisement decreased by .42 units, $p < .001$. In addition, Chinese (vs. American) participants were more likely to choose the brands depicted in the conservation or self-transcendence advertisement than that in the self-enhancement advertisement ($\beta = 1.67$ and 1.09, both ps $< .05$).

Discussion

Overall, Study 3's findings build on and reinforce those of the previous studies and provide further support for H_1–H_3, using brand choice as the dependent variable. As H_{1a} predicted, a self-enhancement brand's attempt to promote an incompatible self-transcendence meaning (compared with more compatible openness or conservation ones) was the least likely to be chosen. Consistent with the predictions in

H_2 and H_3, an HI (VI) cultural orientation was associated with a higher likelihood to choose a brand promoting an openness (self-enhancement) brand concept, whereas an HC (VC) orientation was positively associated with the likelihood to choose a brand promoting a self-transcendence (conservation) brand concept. In addition, the negative effect from promoting an incompatible brand meaning is mitigated by a match between the brand meaning and the cultural orientation of the consumer (H_4).

General Discussion

Theoretical Contributions

Building on research indicating that abstract brand concepts established on the basis of emotional and motivational meanings induce more favorable consumer responses than those established on the basis of functional attributes (Hopewell 2005; Monga and John 2010), we propose and provide empirical evidence that a structure of abstract brand concepts as representations of human values can be successfully applied to a wide spectrum of culturally distinct markets. Specifically, our framework can be used to predict (1) brand meanings that are compatible (vs. incompatible) with each other and, consequently, more (vs. less) favorably accepted by consumers when added to an already established brand concept; (2) brand concepts that are more likely to resonate with consumers with differing cultural orientations; and (3) consumers' responses to attempts to imbue an established brand concept with new, (in)compatible abstract meanings as a function of their own cultural orientations.

These findings are new and contribute to the literature. In particular, we contrast our findings against the established literature on brand personality and the five-factor model. Previous research suggests that the brand personality structure lacks cross-cultural generalizability. In addition, studies using the five-factor model lack indigenous or emic measures of personality and have been restricted in types of societies investigated (McCrae and Costa 1997). Taken together, as cross-cultural studies in personality psychology continue to be relatively scarce (Benet-Martinez 2007), the literature lacks a systematic documentation of cultural patterns in personality traits. In comparison, our findings are robust and generalizable across culturally distinct markets and overcome limitations in previous research.

Managerial Implications

Increased competition in world markets and the joint forces of globalization and localization are forcing MNC managers to creatively localize their promotional messages by adding new meanings to existing brand concepts. The expectation is that a cultural matching between the promoted brand concept and consumers' value priorities will create brands that can resonate with local consumers (Shavitt et al. 2006; Shavitt, Lee, and Torelli 2008). However, variations in value priorities across cultures (Triandis 1995) make such localization decisions challenging, yet frequently encountered. We provide an actionable framework that MNC managers can use to localize their promotion strategies, particularly when introducing an existing brand into a culturally distinct market.

First, using the items retained in the pilot study, companies can assess the existing brand concept in terms of its human values representations. Next, after understanding the cultural orientation of consumers in the new market, managers can determine whether to add a novel abstract meaning, as well as the extent to which this novel meaning is (in)compatible with the existing brand concept. If compatible, the marketer can confidently commit advertising resources to promoting the new meaning. However, if incompatible (i.e., adding the new meaning may adversely affect brand preference), it might still be viable if there is a match with consumers' value priorities.

In addition to fine-tuning localization strategies, our findings are also helpful for planning a brand's global expansion. For example, an American brand promoting a self-enhancement brand concept that appeals to high-VI American consumers can penetrate not only foreign markets that are culturally similar (i.e., having large pockets of high-VI consumers, such as the United Kingdom) but also other markets in which the existing brand concept might be culturally compatible with the prevalent value priorities (e.g., markets with large pockets of high-VC consumers, such as China, as the self-enhancement concept is contiguous to the culturally preferred conservation concept). Furthermore, designing a standardized strategy that incorporates compatible brand meanings (e.g., combining conservation and self-enhancement meanings) may lead to greater acceptance in culturally distinct markets.

In contrast, a standardized global strategy may not be advisable when planning to penetrate markets that are culturally opposing (e.g., markets with large pockets of high-HC consumers). Rather, using a sub-branding strategy, which entails separating the new meanings from the parent brand (Milberg, Park, and McCarthy 1997) and localizing the communication strategy may be advisable.

Our findings can help explain why repositioning brands that have culturally incompatible abstract brand meanings can be an immensely difficult task. Consider, for example, GM's failure to successfully associate the Oldsmobile brand, with a traditional image of respectability and middle-class achievement (i.e., conservation concept) with newly emerging cultural concepts of sexiness and hipness (i.e., openness concept) using the "This is Not Your Father's Oldsmobile" campaign (Thomas and Kohli 2009). In contrast, our research suggests that marketers may successfully add brand meanings that are orthogonal to an established brand concept. This would help to explain Apple's success combining slogans that convey self-enhancement values of power (e.g., "The Power to Be Your Best") with slogans that convey openness values of self-direction (e.g., "Think Different") (Brooks 2006).

Limitations and Future Research Directions

While the use of lab experiments and college students as participants helped us control for the potential effect of extraneous variables (and thus increased the internal validity of our research), it may limit the scope of our claims to that particular population. Nonetheless, the inclusion of consumer panels in Study 3 provided external validity for our findings. Researchers could further examine the robustness of our findings using a more diversified population.

An intriguing possibility when there is simultaneous activation of opposing values by the brand and the message is that the consumer may experience information processing disfluency, which affects brand evaluation. However, in this research, we do not provide evidence for the process. Although we demonstrated that the effects emerge both when ranking slogans and when presenting participants with ad concepts in a choice context, it would be worthwhile to see how consumers react to more elaborate brand messages that include attribute information and supporting reasons. We suspect that this may elicit counterargumentation, based on brand message–image inconsistency, which could undermine persuasiveness. Further research could explore the process underlying the brand concept–cultural orientation (in)compatibility effects on brand evaluations and determine its boundary conditions.

Finally, this research focuses primarily on consumers' reactions to marketers' attempts to add a specific value image (e.g., self-transcendence, openness) to an existing abstract brand concept (e.g., self-enhancement). This increased the internal validity of our findings by enabling more controlled experimental designs. However, in the real world, the boundaries between the symbolism of marketing messages and that of existing brand concepts are likely to be more blurred. A marketer may want to communicate more than one value image in a single brand message (e.g., simultaneously promoting self-enhancement and openness). Our findings indicate that messages that simultaneously communicate more (vs. less) compatible value images would be more likely to elicit favorable consumer reactions. However, would this be more effective than communicating a single novel value image? What if the target market is more (vs. less) culturally diverse? These issues await further investigation.

Appendix
Product Categories, Brands, and Selection Criteria: Study 1's Pilot

Through a set of pretests, we selected, for each country, a balanced set of brands according to the following criteria: (1) They were very familiar to participants (to facilitate having a brand concept in mind), (2) the brands were

described by a wide spectrum of brand concepts (to enhance the scope of the analysis), and (3) the brands belonged to a range of product categories classified as symbolic (S), utilitarian (U), or both (U-S) (by more than half the pretests' participants; Dhar and Wertenbroch 2000). This was done to enhance the representativeness of the brand stimuli (Aaker, Benet-Martinez, and Garolera 2001) given past findings suggesting that even brands in utilitarian categories often attempt differentiation by building symbolic associations (LeBoeuf and Simmons 2010). The stimuli used in the pilot were the following:

- Product Categories: Jeans (U-S), sports shoes (U-S), credit cards (U-S), fashion goods (S), luxury cars (U-S), cold beverages (U-S), hot beverages (U), food snacks (U), breakfast foods (U) over-the-counter medications (U), laundry detergents (U), and computers (U-S)
- Brands: Levi's, Nike, American Express, Gucci, BMW, Coke, Tim Hortons, Cheetos, Cheerios, Tylenol, Tide, Apple, Starbucks, Uncle Tobys, Panadol, Omo, Chanel, Quaker, Dell, Visa, Louis Vuitton, Huiyuan, Evian, Lipton, Master Kong, New Contac, Mercedes Benz, Friele, Bixit, Kellogg's, Paracet, Abuelita, Marinela, Bayer, Ariel, Bonus, Cola Turka, Eti, Sütaş, Mastercard, Richester

Brands Used as Stimuli (Study 1)

- Self-enhancement brand concept: The United States: Gucci, BMW, Louis Vuitton; China: Gucci, Louis Vuitton; Canada and Turkey: Gucci, BMW
- Self-transcendence brand concept: The United States: Salvation Army, United Way, Toms Shoes; China: Peaceworks, The Hope Project; Canada: Salvation Army, United Way; Turkey: Greenpeace, Tema

- Openness brand concept: The United States: Coke, Apple, Patagonia; China and Turkey: Coke, Nike; Canada: Coke, Apple
- Conservation brand concept: The United States: ADT Security, Amish furniture showcase; China: Quanjude Peking Duck restaurant, Tong Rentang; Canada: Autopac, Manitoba Hydro; Turkey: Tikveşli, Ülker

Slogans Used as Stimuli (Study 1)

- [Target brand], status and prestige to enhance your own personal outcomes and interests (self-enhancement slogan)
- [Target brand], transcend your personal interests and promote the welfare of others (self-transcendence slogan)
- [Target brand], freedom to pursue your own goals in exciting ways (openness slogan)
- [Target brand], the certainty provided by the norm in [product category] (conservation slogan)

Advertisement's Copy (Study 3)

- Self-enhancement advertisement: An exceptional piece of adornment that conveys your status and signifies your exquisite taste.
- Openness advertisement: A travel companion to help you live an exciting life full of adventures waiting around every corner.
- Self-transcendence advertisement: Supporting humanitarian programs in developing countries because we care about building a better world.
- Conservation advertisement: The status quo in luxury watches. A tradition of classic designs and impeccable workmanship for 115 years.

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