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Self-Brand Values Congruity and Incongruity: Their Impacts on Self-Expansion and Consumers' Responses to Brands

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Abstract

The results from a large survey ($N = 2010$) show that the positive effects of the congruity between brand values and consumers' ongoing value priorities on a variety of consumers' responses to brands can be generalized to the different value types in Schwartz's framework. More importantly, findings from this survey show that, although brands embody values incongruent with consumers' ongoing value priorities, they trigger a positive effect on the same consumers' responses when these values are associated with a cultural ideal. Results were robust and emerged for a variety of product categories and brands. Furthermore, results from a lab experiment demonstrate that, compared to brands that embody consumers' ongoing value priorities, those that additionally embody non-prioritized values associated with an ideal self induce feelings of self-expansion, which in turn leads to more favorable consumer responses to brands. The practical and theoretical implications of these findings for the branding literature are discussed.

Key words: brand values, self-congruity, self-expansion, brand responses, cultural ideals, ideal self.

1. Introduction

Companies are increasingly seeking ways to create stronger consumer-brand relationships but this is often a difficult process. Brand managers have long operated under the assumption that a key approach to creating strong consumer-brand relationships is to align the values embodied by the brand with consumers' personal value priorities (Gutman 1982). Indeed, consumers prefer brands that are closer to their self-identity (Eklund & Helmefalt 2021, Park, Jaworski & MacInnis 1986), and Self-Brand Congruity has been shown to be an important factor in promoting strong bonds with brands (Amaral & Torelli 2018, Sirgy 1982, Torelli *et al.* 2012.). However, aligning consumers' and brand values can be a complex process. Individuals can perceive particular aspects of a brand to be inconsistent with their actual self but consistent with her/his ideal self (Malär *et al.* 2011), or with cultural ideals widespread in society (Torelli 2013). Indeed, past research has demonstrated the malleability of the self-concept (Aaker 1999, Markus & Kunda 1986), which suggests that consumers in different situations express not only who they consistently are (i.e., their ongoing self-relevant traits and value priorities), but also who they wish to be (desired self), strive to be (ideal self), and believe they should be (ought self). Motivated by the finding that endowing brands with abstract meanings fosters the creation of strong links with consumers (Brown, Kozinets & Sherry 2003), and based on the idea that associating brands with human values induces favorable consumer responses (Aaker 1997), our research explores how the simultaneous embodiment of multiple brand values impacts consumers' responses to brands (brand attitude, brand recommendation, and brand purchase intentions).

Past research demonstrates that consumers perceive brands as embodying human values, and that they respond to such brand meanings (Torelli *et al.* 2012). However, this past research has mainly focused on brands' distinctive association with a single value dimension (e.g., Shepherd, Chartrand & Fitzsimons 2015, Torelli *et al.* 2012), and has explored how

consumers respond to such unidimensional brands as a function of their ongoing value priorities (e.g., congruent vs. incongruent with the salient brand values). Although important for demonstrating favorable Self-Brand Congruity effects (e.g., Sirgy 1982), this previous research overlooks situations in which brands can simultaneously embody more than one value dimension, and hence appeal not only to consumers' ongoing value priorities but also to other values that might be desirable in an expanded view of the self. Specifically, how do consumers respond to brands that not only match their ongoing value priorities, but also embody ideal values that might be incongruent with these ongoing priorities? How do consumers respond to brands embodying different values that might be congruent or incongruent with their ongoing value priorities? To address these questions, and to answer the call for research to better understand the process for building positive brand attitudes and strong brand relationships (MacInnis & Folkes 2017, MacInnis, Park & Priester 2009), we look beyond self-congruity theory (Sirgy 1982) and focus also on self-expansion theory (Aron & Aron 1986).

According to self-congruity theory, individuals prefer brands that match their personal value priorities (Sirgy 1982; Torelli *et al.* 2012). This stream of research focuses on isolating the more favorable responses to symbolic brand meanings (i.e., brand values) that match the values stated as being important for consumers, that is, the values that consumers rate as an ongoing priority (i.e., ongoing value priorities). However, self-expansion theory suggests that individuals are intrinsically motivated to seek opportunities to acquire new identities and cultivate new perspectives (Aron & Aron 1986). We then propose that consumers would not only respond favorably to the congruity between the values symbolized by a brand and their ongoing value priorities, but also to the brand's symbolism of other values that, although inconsistent with their ongoing value priorities, allow consumers to expand their self-identity in desirable directions. Thus, we hypothesize and find empirical evidence that, in addition to

documented Self-Brand Congruity effects, consumers respond more favorably toward brands that simultaneously symbolize their ongoing value priorities as well as idealized values that might be distant from these ongoing value priorities (Self-Brand Incongruity effect), compared to brands that simply embody their ongoing value priorities (i.e., that only benefit from the Self-Brand Congruity effect). In our studies, these ideal values vary from being cultural ideals (study 1) to personal ideals (i.e., associated with an ideal self, (study 2). Evidence in support of these predictions emerged across five product categories (cars, personal care, cookies, banks, and spirits), and among a variety of consumer brands. This research further demonstrates that the more favorable responses toward brands that simultaneously symbolize ongoing value priorities and personal ideals (vs. those that simply embody ongoing value priorities) are driven by the greater self-expansion that consumers experience when evaluating these value-rich brands. Thus, the present research offers a novel perspective on brand management based on self-expansion that goes beyond established Self-Brand Congruity effects.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Self-congruity theory

Self-concept refers to the theory individuals have about themselves (i.e., feelings, thoughts, beliefs, etc.) as experiencing, functioning individuals (Epstein 1973). The notion of self-concept became important in the consumer behavior literature to highlight the symbolic meaning of products (Grubb & Grathwohl 1967, Levy 1959). More specifically, self-congruity theory emerged to explain the positive effects of an alignment between the consumer's self-concept and the image of a branded product (Sirgy 1982, 1985). Past research has shown the positive effect of self-congruity not only on preferences for products and brands (Eklund & Helme Falk 2021, Tooray & Oodith 2017), but also in consumers'

preferences for locations (i.e., destination brands, Frias *et al.* 2020, Styvén, Mariani & Strandberg 2020, Wassler, Wang & Hung 2019), theme park experiences (Fu *et al.* 2020), and online celebrities (Liu, Zhang & Zhang 2020).

Past research demonstrates the importance of delineating different dimensions of Self-Brand Congruity, such as actual self and ideal self (Frias *et al.* 2020, Liu, Zhang & Zhang 2020, Malär *et al.* 2011, Rabbane, Roy & Spence 2020), or social self (Fu *et al.* 2020, Rabbane, Roy & Spence 2020). However, Self-Brand Congruity research mainly operationalizes congruity in terms of a holistic view of how consumers perceive the degree of match between their self-view and the brand image in their memory (e.g., “to what extent the brand matches your self-concept”, Aguirre-Rodriguez, Bosnjak & Sirgy 2012, Confente, Scarpi & Russo 2020, Malhotra 1988, Wassler, Wang & Hung 2019), or the match between a salient brand value dimension (e.g., self-enhancement values of power and status) and the self-importance of the same value dimension as stated by consumers (e.g., “rate the importance of self-enhancement values as a guiding principle in your life”, Allen, Gupta & Monnier 2008).

Although these approaches for measuring self-congruity are useful for explaining how the overall proximity, or the proximity according to a single dimension, between the brand and the self predicts consumers’ favorable views of a brand, it is less helpful for identifying how the extent of a Self-Brand Congruity along different value dimensions (independently or jointly) impacts consumers’ responses to brands. To address this issue, this research investigates how the prioritization (or not) of the different types of human values embodied by brands (according to Schwartz’s (1992) framework) drives consumers’ responses to brands.

2.2. Self-Brand Congruity in terms of human values and its positive effects on consumers’ responses to brands

Based on the metaphor of the brand as a person (MacInnis & Folkes 2017, Gollosenko, Pillai & Aroean 2020), brands can embody human values (Allen, Gupta & Monnier 2008, Chan & Ilicic 2019, Malone & Fiske 2013, Shepherd, Chartrand & Fitzsimons 2015, Torelli *et al.* 2012). In this view, Self-Brand Congruity (SBC) can be understood in terms of the match between the values embodied by the brand and the values prioritized by the consumer. Past research demonstrates that consumers tend to favor products and brands that embody their personal value priorities (Allen, Gupta & Monnier 2008). This positive Self-Brand Congruity effect emerges for the values that consumers prioritize on an ongoing basis (hereafter referred to as ongoing value priorities), such as the more favorable attitudes toward Pepsi by consumers who prioritize stimulation values like excitement in life (Allen, Gupta & Monnier 2008).

Although the evidence for Self-Brand Congruity effects in terms of human values seems robust, past studies have mainly investigated, for a handful of human values, the positive effect of the congruity between a distinctive value priority and the brand's distinctive embodiment of the same value dimension (e.g., the congruity effect along a single value dimension, such as excitement in life or social status, Allen, Gupta & Monnier 2008). Insubstantial research has indirectly investigated self-congruity effects by focusing on consumers' preferences for brands associated with the ideals linked to their cultural orientations (ideal cultural values, Torelli *et al.* 2012), however this research also focused on the match along a single value dimension. Thus, there is still the need for a systematic and comprehensive investigation of how Self-Brand Congruity for different personal value priorities of consumers impacts their responses to brands that simultaneously embody these varied value priorities.

To address this issue, the present research focuses on Schwartz's (1992) framework for understanding human values, which identifies a comprehensive typology of human values,

and proposes that these values can be arranged in a circular continuum according to four higher-order value dimensions (Schwartz 1992, Schwartz & Boehnke 2004, see Figure 1). The first dimension places a higher-order value type labeled “openness to change” (integrating stimulation and self-direction values) in opposition to another higher-order value type labeled “conservation” (combining values of security and tradition). The second orthogonal dimension places a higher-order type labeled “self-enhancement” (combining power and achievement values) in opposition to one labeled “self-transcendence” (combining the values of universalism and benevolence, Schwartz 1992). These four value types can be arranged in a circular structure, whereby compatible values that are contiguous to one another can be easily pursued concurrently. In contrast, incompatible values that are opposite to each other in the circle are in motivational contrast, and hence are more difficult to being pursued concurrently (i.e., pursuing one inhibits the pursuit of the other; Schwartz 1992, Schwartz & Boehnke 2004).

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

In the hyper-competitive environment of the 21st century, brands are constantly trying to differentiate themselves from competitors by adding novel symbolic meanings that resonate with a diverse group of consumers (Torelli 2013). As a result, it is increasingly common for brands to simultaneously embody multiple human values. This is particularly the case for values that are motivationally compatible (e.g., self-enhancement and openness values, Torelli *et al.* 2012), but can also occur for incompatible ones (e.g., self-enhancement and self-transcendence values, Torelli *et al.* 2012). In addition, consumers themselves can prioritize more than a single value dimension (e.g., openness and self-enhancement, or conservation and self-transcendence).

In extending self-congruity theory to a context in which consumers can prioritize multiple value dimensions and where brands can also embody multiple values, we argue that Self-Brand Congruity along each of the four high-level dimensions in Schwartz's framework would positively impact consumers' responses to brands. Specifically, we focus on widely used consumer responses, such as brand attitude (Smith *et al.* 2007), intention to recommend (Grappi, Romani & Bagozzi 2013), and intention to purchase (Rego, Billett & Morgan 2009). Thus, consumers will have a more favorable attitude, will be more likely to recommend, and then, according to Schwartz's framework, will exhibit a stronger intention to purchase a brand embodying any of their ongoing value priorities (conservation, openness to change, self-transcendence, or self-enhancement) compared with a brand lacking such symbolism. Stated formally:

H1: The stronger Self-Brand Congruity is between brand values and ongoing value priorities such as (i) conservation ($SBC_{\text{conservatism}}$), (ii) openness to change ($SBC_{\text{openness to change}}$), (iii) self-transcendence ($SBC_{\text{self-transcendence}}$), or (iv) self-enhancement ($SBC_{\text{self-enhancement}}$), the more consumers will: a) exhibit a favorable brand attitude, b) be likely to recommend the brand, and c) exhibit a stronger intention to purchase the brand.

Thus far, this research has emphasized how Self-Brand Congruity in terms of values positively affects consumers' responses to brands. However, consumers can prioritize some values on an ongoing basis, while simultaneously focusing on some ideal values when encountering a brand (Torelli *et al.*, 2012), or when prompted by other environmental stimuli (e.g., when reminded of their personal ideals). Thus, going beyond Self-Brand Congruity effects, we argue for the importance of considering situations in which brands not only embody consumers' ongoing value priorities, but also other ideal values that might help consumers expand their self-identities (Aron & Aron 1986). We turn to this issue next.

2.3. The self-expanding role of brands that embody idealized values that are inconsistent with ongoing value priorities

Values are desirable end-states, and although people may prioritize one value over another, they may still view lower priority values as desirable and act upon them when they are accessible (Torelli 2006). Furthermore, values that are prioritized in a culture are particularly desirable and likely to serve as ideals (Triandis 1995). Values considered to be cultural ideals are not only consensually shared by members of a culture, but have also been shown to guide identity-driven behaviors, even when the individual does not personally prioritize such values (Wan *et al.* 2007a, Wan *et al.* 2007b). More relevant to marketing, past research demonstrates that consumers evaluate more favorably brands that embody values associated with a cultural ideal (hereafter referred to as ideal cultural values), such as the more favorable evaluations of brands that symbolize self-enhancement values by people high in vertical individualism (for whom self-enhancement is a cultural ideal, Torelli *et al.* 2012).

Because people have multiple selves, and can view culturally-relevant values as desirable, we propose that consumers would favor not only brands that symbolize their ongoing value priorities, but also brands that embody values consensually perceived as cultural ideals (i.e. ideal cultural values), even when such values are not their ongoing priorities. For instance, in a country like France, characterized by a vertical individualistic culture, self-enhancement values of power, achievement, and status-seeking are considered to be cultural ideals (Shavitt *et al.* 2006, Triandis & Gelfand 1998). Thus, French consumers would exhibit favorable responses toward brands that symbolize the cultural ideal of self-enhancement values, even when these consumers do not themselves prioritize self-enhancement values on an ongoing basis (i.e., self-enhancement values are not their ongoing value priority). We refer to this phenomenon as the Self-Brand Incongruity effect, given that it is triggered by the brand's embodiment of values that, although desirable as a cultural ideal (e.g., self-enhancement

values for the vertical individualistic French culture), are inconsistent with consumers' ongoing value priorities. Stated more formally:

H2: The stronger the level of Self-Brand Incongruity along ideal values ($SBI_{\text{self-enhancement}}$ and/or $SBI_{\text{Conservation}}$, and/or $SBI_{\text{Openness to change}}$, and/or $SBI_{\text{Self-Transcendence}}$), the more consumers will: a) exhibit a favorable brand attitude, b) be likely to recommend the brand, and c) exhibit a stronger intention to purchase the brand.

Although people tend to build an identity around their relevant traits, because the self-concept is highly malleable (Markus & Kunda 1986), they often desire to connect with what they wish to be (desired self), strive to be (ideal self), and believe they should be (ought self) (Landon 1974, Sirgy 1982). Extending the Self-Brand Incongruity effect just described to values associated with an ideal self, we further propose that personal ideals that people might call to mind under a multi-faceted self should also positively influence consumers' responses to brands. Thus, we propose that consumers respond more favorably toward brands that simultaneously symbolize their ongoing value priorities and idealized values that might be distant from these ongoing value priorities (Self-Brand Incongruity effect), compared to brands that simply embody their ongoing value priorities (i.e., that only benefit from the Self-Brand congruity effect).

Furthermore, we propose that the reason for the Self-Brand Incongruity effects just described is that a brand's embodiment of ideal values (cultural ideals or personal ideals) would facilitate the expansion of the self in a desirable direction, and hence elicit positive affect (Aron & Aron 1986, Strong & Aron 2006). This prediction is consistent with self-expansion theory's postulate that the central human motive for expanding the self involves the acquisition of resources, perspectives, and identities that enhance one's ability to accomplish goals (i.e., identity goals associated with an ideal-self in our case, Aron, Norman & Aron 1998). In a consumer context, a brand that embodies ideal values that are not aligned with ongoing value priorities would be seen as a means of expanding the self to include a desirable

aspect that might have been less prioritized over the long term, and hence is more “novel” (Reimann & Aron 2014, Reimann *et al.* 2012).

It is important to note that self-expansion motives differ from values in that self-expansion refers to learning, knowing new things, and having new experiences. In this regard, although self-expansion might partially overlap with openness values associated with stimulation, it is unrelated to the desirability of the power and status inherent in self-enhancement values (the focus of Study 1), or to the other value dimensions of self-transcendence and conservation. Furthermore, self-expansion is conceptually different to the values construct, in that values are desirable end-states that guide people’s behaviors across contexts, whereas self-expansion is a more transient motive triggered by exposure to new experiences or by the learning of novel facts.

In summary, we propose that consumers would respond more favorably to a brand that, in addition to embodying their ongoing value priorities, also embodies inconsistent values associated with an ideal self (i.e. personal ideals), compared to a brand that symbolizes only their ongoing value priorities. Furthermore, this effect is driven by the self-expansion triggered by the additional personal ideals embodied by the brand. Stated more formally:

H3: Compared to a brand that symbolizes ongoing value priorities, a brand that simultaneously embodies ongoing value priorities as well as personal ideals would trigger: a) a more positive brand attitude, b) a stronger brand recommendation intention, and c) a stronger intention to purchase the brand.

H4: This positive effect on a) brand attitude, b) brand recommendation intention and c) intention to purchase the brand is driven by the self-expansion triggered by the brand embodiment of the additional personal ideals.

Two studies were conducted to test the hypotheses proposed in this research (see Figure 2). In Study 1, we investigated the responses from consumers residing in a vertical individualistic country: France (Triandis 1995, Triandis & Gelfand 1998) toward a variety of

brands that simultaneously embodied the different values in Schwartz's (1992) framework.¹ We analyzed how the congruity between the brand values and the ongoing value priorities (Self-Brand Congruity - SBC), as well as how the incongruity between ongoing value priorities and the brand's embodiment of values associated with the ideal in a vertical individualistic culture (Self-Brand Incongruity – SBI, self-enhancement values of power, achievement, and status-seeking, Oishi *et al.* 1998, Torelli *et al.* 2012) influenced consumers' responses toward the brand. In Study 2, we investigated more directly the self-expanding role of brands that symbolize both ongoing value priorities and inconsistent personal ideals, and their effect on consumers' responses to such brands. In both studies, we focused on brand measures widely used in branding research, such as brand attitude (Smith *et al.* 2007), recommendation intention (Grappi, Romani & Bagozzi 2013), and purchase intentions (Rego, Billett & Morgan 2009).

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

3. Study 1

Study 1 was conducted to test hypotheses H1 and H2 by recruiting a large sample of French consumers who were members of the GfK consumer panel. To reiterate, French culture is characterized by a vertical individualistic orientation that emphasizes self-enhancement values of power, achievement, and status-seeking (Triandis & Gelfand 1998, Shavitt *et al.* 2006).

3.1. Method

¹ Brands were chosen so as to cover the four higher-order dimensions in Schwartz's framework. That is, brands were intentionally included to highly embody at least one of the four dimensions, and we included brands likely to embody each of the four dimensions. Some of the brands embodied more than one value dimension. This procedure assured a high-level of variability in the embodiment of the different value types.

We collected data from GfK panelists ($N = 2010$), who evaluated a single brand randomly chosen from a larger set of 20 brands that were familiar to participants. To increase external validity, brands were chosen from five different product categories (four brands per category, see Appendix A) that varied according to their utilitarian and symbolic value, type of goods (e.g., products and services, durable vs. non-durable), and type of consumption (public vs. private). In each category, the brands were selected with a twofold objective: (1) to ensure variance in terms of their associated values (i.e., broad coverage of the 11 values in Schwartz's framework, Schwartz & Boehnke 2004), and (2) to ensure that the brands were familiar to participants, and hence maximize the likelihood that the value ratings were a fair representation of the brand's symbolic meaning. For this latter purpose, participants only rated familiar brands from familiar product categories. Based on a filter at the start of the survey that asked participants to rate their familiarity with the product category and the brands (on a 5-point scale, 1 = not familiar at all, 5 = very familiar), participants were directed to the most familiar brand from the most familiar product category in the list (until the sampling from that category and brand was completed). Familiarity ratings ranged from $M = 4.21$ to $M = 4.82$. The sample was balanced in terms of gender (50.3% women), age (11.2% [18-24]; 17.0% [25-35]; 24.0% [36-49]; 24.2% [50-64] and 23.6% [65 and older]), region of the country, profession, and income.

After being presented with the target brand, participants indicated first their ongoing value priorities using an orbital measurement that prompted them to place the 11 different values (Schwartz & Boehnke 2004) in a circle with themselves at the center of the circle (see details in Appendix B). Specifically, participants were asked to drag each of the values (presented on a table along with a brief description to clarify their meaning) into the circle to represent how close they felt to each value ("The closer to the center you place the value, the closer you feel to the value"). The Euclidian distance was calculated between the value's

position on the circle and the center of the circle to determine value priority in terms of closeness of the value to the self (i.e., a value-priority score for each of the eleven value dimensions).

Next, participants rated the brand's embodiment of each of the same 11 value dimensions using the same orbital measurement with the brand at the center of the circle. That is, participants dragged each of the 11 values to the circle and placed it according to how closely connected to the brand they felt each of the values was. The closer to the center participants placed each value, the more they perceived this value to be embodied by the brand. The Euclidian distance between the value's position on the circle and the center of the circle was calculated to determine the brand's embodiment of each value dimension (i.e., a brand's embodiment of each of the eleven value dimensions). Next, participants rated their brand attitude (as well as their intentions to recommend and purchase the brand (see the full measures in Table 1).

[Insert Table 1 about here]

3.2. Results

3.2.1. *Structure of the brand values and ongoing value priorities.*

First a multidimensional scaling analysis (MDS, Schwartz 1992; Schwartz & Boehnke 2004) was conducted to assess the structure of the brand values and ongoing value priorities. A first analysis of the Euclidean distances for the brand values shows that while the two higher-order dimensions are reasonably orthogonal to each other, openness is closer to self-enhancement than to self-transcendence, whereas conservation is closer to self-transcendence than to self-enhancement (Appendix C). These observations are consistent with the fact that openness and self-enhancement primarily reflect individual interests, whereas self-transcendence and conservation are mainly associated with collective interests (Schwartz &

Boehnke 2004). As expected, the multidimensional scaling (MDS) analysis located the self-enhancement brand values of power and achievement opposite to the self-transcendence brand values of environmental and social concerns. Similarly, the openness brand value of stimulation was located opposite to the conservation brand concepts of conformity and security.² A second multidimensional scaling analysis conducted on the Euclidean distances of the ongoing value priorities also showed that a structure of individual values can be satisfactorily arranged according to the higher-order dimensions of self-enhancement, self-transcendence, openness to change, and conservation (Appendix D).

3.2.2. Self-Brand Congruity between brand values and ongoing value priorities.

For each participant, four scores were computed for their arrangement of the brand values, and four scores for the participants' ongoing value priorities. Because people differ in the way they respond to the ratings of values, it is important to control for scale use when analyzing value ratings (Schwartz 1992). Thus, to control for this issue, as well as to assess the relative priority of each of the four aggregate value ratings relative to the rest (as perceived by the participant), we separately ipsatized the scores for the brand values and the ongoing value priorities (or centered participants' rating around their corresponding grand mean, Bardi & Schwartz 2003). We did so by computing separate within-participant grand means (one for the brand value ratings and another for the ongoing value priorities ratings), and then subtracting the grand mean from each of the value ratings (separately for the brand value ratings and the participant's ongoing value priorities ratings). Thus, for each participant, there are four scores for the participants' assessment of the brand values, and four scores for the participants' ongoing value priorities ratings. Negative ipsatized scores (i.e. centered rating around participants' corresponding grand mean, Bardi & Schwartz 2003) reflect strongly prioritized personal values or values strongly associated with the brand, whereas positive

² Please note that the structure suggests that, although contiguous brand values are highly likely to co-occur (they indeed co-occurred about 84% of the time in our data), participants often associate brands with opposing values (this occurred about 30% of the time in our data).

ipsatized scores represent values that are less prioritized or less strongly associated with the brand. To capture the extent to which the brand was congruent with the self (i.e., Self-Brand Congruity) for each of the four higher-order value dimensions, four dummy variables were created (one for each of the four higher-order dimensions of self-enhancement, self-transcendence, conservation, and openness) as follows: if both the ipsatized brand value rating and the ipsatized ongoing value priority ratings were negative (i.e., strong brand embodiment of the value and ongoing value priority), the dummy variable for the corresponding high-order value dimension congruity took the value of “1”. Otherwise, the dummy variable took the value of “0” (i.e., either the brand embodies a value that is not prioritized by the individual, or the participant prioritizes a value not embodied by the brand). To test hypothesis 1, we submitted each of the brand responses (brand attitude, brand recommendation intention, and purchase intention) to a separate regression analysis with the four dummy variables corresponding to the congruity between brand values and ongoing value priorities for self-enhancement, self-transcendence, conservation, and openness as predictors.

As predicted in H1, a congruity between the brand’s embodiment of the four value types and the ongoing value priority generally predicted favorable brand responses (see Table 2). The effects were particularly strong for the congruity in terms of self-enhancement and self-transcendence values (which emerged for the three dependent variables), but they also emerged for the congruity in terms of openness values (which emerged for one dependent variable). Interestingly, the effects were absent (for all dependent variables) for the congruity in terms of conservation values.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

3.2.3 Incongruity between the ongoing value priorities and the brand values associated with a cultural ideal.

To test the prediction in hypothesis H2 that, apart from the Self-Brand Congruity effects just described, individuals would also favor brands that embody a cultural ideal (i.e., self-enhancement values for the French sample in this study) that are not an ongoing value priority (i.e., Self-Brand Incongruity effect), a set of four different Self-Brand Incongruity dummy variables was computed (one for each of the four higher-order dimensions of self-enhancement, self-transcendence, conservation, and openness). If the ipsatized brand value rating was negative (i.e., the brand was strongly associated with the corresponding value) and the ipsatized ongoing value priority rating was positive (i.e., the value was not an ongoing value priority), the dummy variable for the corresponding value took the value of “1”. Otherwise, the dummy variable took the value of “0”. In other words, the Self-Brand Incongruity dummy variables reflected the extent to which the brand is associated with a value that is not an ongoing value priority. The Self-Brand Incongruity (SBI) score “1” means that the brand embodies a value (i.e. self-enhancement, self-transcendence, conservation, or openness) that the participant does not prioritize; the SBI score “0” represents the 3 other cases (i. a value non-prioritized by the participant and non-embodied by the brand, ii. a value prioritized by the participant and embodied by the brand, iii. a value prioritized by the participant but not embodied by the brand). To test hypothesis H2, we submitted each of the brand responses (brand attitude, brand recommendation intention, and purchase intention) to a separate multiple regression analysis with the four dummy variables for the Self-Brand Congruity (SBC) between brand values and ongoing value priorities for self-enhancement, self-transcendence, conservation, and openness as predictors, as well as the four Self-Brand Incongruity (SBI) dummy variables as additional predictors (a total of eight predictors). This allowed us to assess the incremental effect of Self-Brand Incongruity over and above the effect of an alignment between the brand symbolism and the consumer’s ongoing value priorities (i.e., Self-Brand Congruity effect). As shown in Table 2, results reveal that, in

addition to the Self-Brand Congruity effects reported earlier, there is strong evidence for the Self-Brand Incongruity effect indicated in hypothesis 2. A brand's embodiment of the non-prioritized ideal cultural value of self-enhancement (associated with the vertical individualism that characterizes French culture) positively impacts brand attitude, brand recommendation, and purchase intention. This was not the case for the brand embodiment of the other non-prioritized values, presumably because these values are not broadly-shared ideals that the individuals aspire to embrace in a vertical individualistic culture. We also conducted further analyses to rule out the possibility that the Self-Brand Incongruity effect just reported is an artifact of the embodiment of a higher number of values. Results showed non-significant or low correlations between the number of values embodied by the brand and the brand response measures (brand attitude: $r = .03$, $p = .15$; brand recommendation intention: $r = .05$, $p = .01$; and brand purchase intention: $r = .02$, $p = .24$). These findings suggest that participants did not favor more brands that embody a higher number of values.

3.3 Discussion

Results from Study 1 support the predictions in hypotheses 1 and 2. Using a variety of brands from different product categories, and different brand responses (brand attitude, brand recommendation intention, and purchase intention), the results confirm that consumers rate brands that are congruent with their ongoing value priorities more favorably. This effect was particularly strong for brands that embody self-enhancement and self-transcendence values, but it also emerged (although more weakly) for brands that embody openness values. However, the effect was unexpectedly absent for brands that embody conservation values. In addition to these Self-Brand Congruity effects, the results show a Self-Brand Incongruity effect for a value associated with a cultural ideal. Indeed, participants rated more favorably

brands that symbolize the self-enhancement values (a cultural ideal in the vertical individualistic French culture) which is not consistent with their ongoing value priorities. We argue that this effect emerges because the cultural ideal embodied by the brand triggers an expansion of the self, which generates a positive affect directed toward the brand. We explore this possibility in Study 2.

4. Study 2

In Study 2, we conducted a lab experiment to demonstrate that, compared to a brand that embodies only consumers' ongoing value priorities (and hence benefits only from a Self-Brand Congruity effect), a brand that additionally embodies an ideal value that is inconsistent with consumers' ongoing value priorities receives a more favorable brand attitude, and there is a greater likelihood that the consumer will recommend and purchase the brand (i.e., benefits from an additional Self-Brand Incongruity effect). Furthermore, this effect is mediated by a higher level of self-expansion triggered by the brand.

4.1. Method

We conducted a between-subjects experiment with the following two conditions: (1) a brand that embodied only participants' ongoing value priorities (Self-Brand Congruity condition), and (2) a brand that embodied both participants' ongoing value priorities, as well as values that, although inconsistent with these priorities, were associated with an ideal self-view (Self-Brand Congruity + Self-Brand Incongruity condition). Two hundred and ten students at a large French university (52.6% female, $M_{age} = 30.08$, $SD = 9.16$) participated in the study. They were first asked to think about their ongoing value priorities (instructions: Think about how you see yourself. What kind of person are you? How would you describe yourself in terms of values? Which values do you embody in your life?"). Next, participants

were asked to think about personal ideals that they do not currently pursue but would like to pursue in the future (Instructions: “Now think about how you would like to see yourself”. Which value(s) would you want to defend, which value(s) would you want to embody? What kind of person would you like to be?”). In order to help the participants to detail their values, we presented them with the list of 11 values in Schwartz’s framework (Schwartz & Boehnke 2004), and they freely wrote down their thoughts about more or less important values (achievement, power, pleasure, stimulation, self-direction, social concerns, concerns with nature, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security, see details in Appendix B).

After this, participants were randomly divided into two groups. Participants in one group were asked to think about brands that strongly embody only their ongoing value priorities (i.e., values that are important to them today), but not the personal ideals that they might want to pursue in the future (Self-Brand Congruity condition, $N = 96$); whereas those in the other group were asked to think about brands that strongly embody both their ongoing value priorities and the inconsistent values associated with their ideal self (i.e., values they would like to pursue in the future, Self-Brand Congruity + Self-Brand Incongruity condition, $N = 111$). To facilitate the process of thinking about the brand, we also provided participants with a list of sixty brands from six different product categories (fashion, cars, food, care & beauty, watches, and services & entertainment) that varied widely in terms of their embodiment of the values in Schwartz’s framework. Participants were prompted to write down the name of the brand that aligned best with the instructions (See the brand lists in Appendix E).

After these steps, participants rated the extent to which they admired the brand, and their intentions to recommend and purchase the brand. Finally, participants completed a 10-item measure of self-expansion adapted from Lewandowski and Aron (2002), and on the scale (adapted from Sirgy *et al.* 1997) they rated their degree of congruity between the values

embodied by the brand and both their ongoing value priorities and their ideal view of their self. Finally, they completed several ancillary measures (i.e. brand familiarity and product involvement, see the full measures in Table 1).

4.2. Results

We first assessed the reliability and discriminant validity of the measured variables. Overall, all constructs exhibited Cronbach's alpha values greater than 0.7 (from .82 to .94) and their composite reliability also exceeded 0.7 (Fornell & Larcker 1981). As summarized in Table 3, each construct showed an average variance extracted (AVE) score greater than .5 (Fornell & Larcker 1981).

[Insert Table 3 about here]

4.2.1. Manipulation check

To verify that participants followed the instructions as planned, we first determined the extent to which those asked to think about brands that reflected both their ongoing and their personal ideals (Self-Brand Congruity + Self-Brand Incongruity condition) indeed incorporated their ideals values in their brand selection more than those asked to focus only on their ongoing value priorities (Self-Brand Congruity condition). This was indeed the case, as participants who had thought of a brand that embodied both their ongoing values priorities and personal ideals rated the brand higher in congruity with their personal ideals ($M = 5.55$, $SD = .89$) than those who had thought of a brand that embodied only their ongoing value priorities ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 1.06$; $F(1, 208) = 267.71$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .537$). And as expected, both groups thought of brands that similarly embodied their ongoing value priorities ($M_{SBC + SBI\ condition} = 5.18$, $SD = 1.04$ and $M_{SBC\ condition} = 4.95$, $SD = 1.05$; $F(1, 208) = 2.47$, $p > .10$). There were also no differences between conditions in terms of brand familiarity ($M_{SBC + SBI$

$condition = 5.12$ vs $M_{SBC\ condition} = 5.31$; $F(1, 208) = 1.29, p > .30$), however there was a difference between conditions in terms of product involvement ($M_{SBC + SBI\ condition} = 5.60$ vs $M_{SBC\ condition} = 5.24$; $F(1, 208) = 6.66, p = .01$).

4.2.2. Brand Responses and mediating role of self-expansion

We conducted a mediation analysis to estimate the direct and indirect effect of brand condition on the brand responses via self-expansion (Preacher & Hayes 2004) using the PROCESS macro (model 4) for each of the dependent variables (three times), and including the covariates brand familiarity and product involvement. First, when the mediator self-expansion is not present in the model, the brand condition (Self-Brand Congruity + Self-Brand Incongruity condition vs. Self-Brand Congruity condition) has a significant effect on brand admiration ($b = .73, t(206) = 3.96, Bca\ CI [.36, 1.09], R^2 = .14$), brand recommendation intention ($b = .30, t(206) = 2.37, Bca\ CI [.05, .55], R^2 = .22$), and brand purchase intention ($b = .39, t(206) = 2.59, Bca\ CI [.09, .70], R^2 = .28$). These results support hypothesis 3 showing that participants in the Self-Brand Congruity + Self-Brand Incongruity condition exhibited more positive responses towards the brand than participants in the Self-Brand Congruity conditions.

Second, we assessed the extent to which the brand condition affects participants' levels of self-expansion. The positive influence of the brand condition on the self-expansion index ($b = 1.05, t(206) = 6.91, Bca\ CI [.75, 1.35], R^2 = .26$) shows that participants in the Self-Brand Congruity + Self-Brand Incongruity condition exhibited greater self-expansion. Finally, the results reveal that the brand condition (Self-Brand Congruity + Self-Brand Incongruity condition vs. Self-Brand Congruity condition) has a significant indirect effect on brand admiration ($X-M \times M-Y = .47, Bca\ CI [.27, .71]$), brand recommendation intention ($X-M \times M-Y = .17, Bca\ CI [.02, .33]$), and on the intention to purchase a brand ($X-M \times M-Y = .31,$

Bca CI [.16, .48] through self-expansion. These results support the H4 set of hypotheses. Moreover, when the self-expansion mediator is included in the model, the direct effects of the brand congruity condition on the three dependent variables are no longer significant (see Table 4). These results suggest a full mediation of self-expansion. Finally, the brand familiarity and the product involvement have a significant influence on the brand recommendation intention and on the intention to purchase a brand (see Table 4). The different results remained significant when the covariates were excluded.

[Insert table 4 about here]

5. General Discussion

Overall, this research makes several contributions. First, this research documents Self-Brand Congruity and Self-Brand Incongruity effects on consumers' responses to brands. Second, our findings suggest that consumers have more positive responses towards brands symbolizing both their ongoing value priorities and cultural ideals that they do not currently prioritize, compared to brands that symbolize only their ongoing values priorities. Third, this research highlights that brands embodying not only ongoing value priorities but also ideal values (cultural or personal) trigger higher levels of self-expansion, which generates more positive responses to brands. Finally, this research reveals that self-expansion is a new mechanism driving consumers' favorable responses to brands.

5.1. Theoretical contributions

Past research demonstrates that consumers respond favorably to brands congruent with their self-image (Sirgy 1982, Tooray & Oodith 2017, Rabbane, Roy & Spence 2020) or a value priority (Torelli *et al.* 2012), based on studies conducted along a single value

dimension. However, this past research has not systematically explored the Self-Brand Congruity effects based on the simultaneous congruence with the different value types in Schwartz's framework (Schwartz & Boehnke 2004). Our findings contribute to the literature on the human values symbolized by brands (Torelli *et al.* 2012) by showing favorable Self-Brand Congruity effects emerging from the simultaneous brand embodiment of self-transcendence, self-enhancement, and openness value types (Schwartz & Boehnke 2004). Except for openness values, the effects were very robust and emerged when considering a variety of brand measures—including brand attitude, brand admiration, brand recommendation intention, and purchase intentions. Unexpectedly, the effects were absent for brands that symbolize conservation values of tradition and security. This might be attributed to the fact that conservation values are less of a priority in the modern and vertical individualistic French culture, which might make it less likely for brands to incorporate these values, and hence for the effects to emerge. Nonetheless, future research should investigate this anomaly.

More importantly, beyond the systematic documentation of Self-Brand Congruity effects triggered by the simultaneous embodiment of different value types in Schwartz's framework (i.e. openness to change, conservation, self-enhancement, self-transcendence), our research provides evidence for a Self-Brand Incongruity effect, by which consumers evaluate more favorably brands that symbolize values that, although inconsistent with their ongoing value priorities, are considered as cultural or personal ideals. In other words, beyond Self-Brand Congruity effects, our findings demonstrate that a brand's embodiment of idealized values (i.e., cultural ideals in Study 1 or self-reported ideals in Study 2) that are inconsistent with consumers' ongoing value priorities also has a positive effect on a variety of consumers' responses. Specifically, participants in Study 1 evaluated more favorably, and intended to recommend and to purchase, more brands that symbolize the ideal cultural of self-

enhancement values, even when such values were inconsistent with their ongoing value priorities. This novel finding echoes psychological research suggesting that individuals often act according to cultural ideals that they might not personally endorse (Wan *et al.* 2007a, Wan *et al.* 2007b), as well as research showing that brands that symbolize cultural ideals can more easily become icons that resonate broadly with consumers (Torelli 2013, Torelli, Oh & Stoner 2021).

Furthermore, an additional contribution of our research is to show that the positive effect of the brand's embodiment of personal ideals on consumers' brand responses is driven by the self-expansion triggered by the embodiment of personal ideals that are not currently pursued by the consumer. Specifically, the results demonstrate that brands that embody not only ongoing value priorities, but also personal ideals, triggered higher levels of self-expansion, which in turn resulted in more positive brand attitude, higher brand admiration, and greater brand recommendation and purchase intention. These findings suggest that brands that embody (vs. not) ideal values (cultural ideals in Study 1, or personal ideals in Study 2) might provide an exciting consumption experience and might open up new perspectives that allow consumers to enhance their ability to achieve their goals (Aron & Aron 1986). These findings make a contribution to research on the drivers of stronger self-brand relationships (Fournier & Alvarez 2012) by uncovering self-expansion as a mechanism by which consumers connect with brands. In this vein, our research contributes to the limited literature on the role of self-expansion motives in consumer behavior. Indeed, while past research demonstrates that luxury brands, with their capacity to provide multi-dimensional experiences, can trigger levels of self-expansion to promote developing relationships with luxury brands (de Kerviler & Rodriguez 2019), our findings suggest that the positive effects of self-expansion on consumers' brand responses are not exclusive to luxury brands, but might extend more generally to brands that symbolize cultural ideals, or that embody personal

ideals (Appendix F highlights the contribution of this present research compared to previous research).

Findings in this research complement past research on brands as part of an extended self (Belk 1988). Indeed, the results are slightly different in that self-extension often implies the control and mastery of an object (Connell & Schau 2013), whereas the self-expansion mechanism suggests that brands can also generate self-expansion through the embodiment of personal ideals. In that respect, our research deepens the self-expansion theory in the brand management area and promises a richer understanding of the brand relationship at various points in the brand lifecycle (Fournier & Alvarez 2012, Bennett & Hill 2012).

Finally, our research used a broad representative sample of consumers, as well as a controlled lab experiment in which the variables were manipulated to demonstrate a causality relationship. This multi-method approach provides confidence regarding the robustness of the uncovered effects, which contributes to the branding literature in different ways.

5.2 Managerial Implications

This research provides new insights into how imbuing brands with human values can help to build brands that connect more strongly with consumers. Consumers often look for meaning in their consumption experiences (Michel 2017), and our findings demonstrate that brands that embody ideal values can provide such meaning through an expanded self. A brand congruent with both ongoing value priorities and ideal values is in a better position to trigger favorable consumer responses than one that is simply congruent with the ongoing value priorities of an individual. Thus, building brands that embody ideal values (e.g., cultural ideals) means that these brands are better positioned to appeal to broad audiences. For instance, in a turbulent context, such as the Covid-19 crisis, self-transcendence values of benevolence and altruism appear as a new ideal, impelling people to fight and overcome

difficult times. According to the findings in this research, brands embodying these values can trigger more positive consumer responses than brands ignoring these ideal values. The positive comments, within social media, towards brands engaged in social causes during the Covid-19 crisis support this recommendation. For instance, during the lockdown when Burger King offered its Instagram account to small restaurants to help them to survive, giving them more visibility, consumers posted positive comments: *“Very good initiative! Save our little restaurants”, “You are a good guy”, “Generous, Effective, Clever, Well done!”*, *“Wow! What a great idea! McDonalds would never have done that!”*, etc.

Our research also highlights how brands that embody not only ongoing value priorities, but also inconsistent values that are associated with an ideal trigger greater self-expansion, which in turn leads to stronger consumer responses to the brands. Thus, brand managers would be well advised not only to focus on segmentation models that estimate consumers’ ongoing value priorities (e.g., VALSTM segments, strategicbusinessinsights.com), but also to incorporate into their brands symbolic meanings that might seem inconsistent with these priorities, but that align with emerging cultural ideals. Including these symbolic meanings would prompt consumers to expand their vision and their knowledge, and to reveal new aspects of themselves. Consequently, the findings here can guide brand managers in their segmentation-targeting-positioning strategy. Indeed, brand managers can target not only individuals who prioritize the values associated with their brands, but also individuals who do not prioritize such brand values but who can be inspired by cultural ideals or by values representing an ideal to which they aspire. If a brand manager follows this targeting strategy, the brand can play a specific role for individuals looking for new horizons or expecting to accomplish things which differ from their habits. On the other hand, in the context of corporate social responsibility, where companies look to being more committed to environmental or social concerns, our results suggest that brands can successfully embody

ethical values or defend causes not prioritized today by their clients. For example, according to our findings, the environmental values put into practice by brands, such as Nespresso's emphasis on recycling coffee capsules, can fulfill consumers' needs for self-expansion to help them grow even if they do not currently prioritize environmental values—and are simply attracted by the self-enhancement value associated with Nespresso.

Moreover, our research suggests that to build a lasting consumer brand relationship, managers can surprise their clients by offering new perspectives far removed from their habits. Successful co-branding efforts, such as those between the luxury brand Louis Vuitton and the skateboarding and clothing brand Supreme, could be examples of how the apparent incongruity between the world of luxury and street culture could lead to the creation of strong connections with consumers who are driven by novel experiences and perspectives (Michel and Willing, 2020).

5.3 Limitations and future research

Although the multi-method approach adopted in this research, and the variety of products and brands included in our studies suggest the robustness of our findings, there are several limitations that should be acknowledged, and that open the doors for future research. First, our studies focused on the vertical individualistic French culture, so it would be important to replicate the research to see whether the findings are similar in cultures with different ideals (e.g., vertical collectivistic cultures associated with conservation values, or horizontal individualistic cultures associated with openness to change values). This would seem to be particularly useful in order to further explore the null effects we obtained for Self-Brand Congruity based on conservation values. It might be expected that these effects would emerge in a culture where such values are more commonly embraced (e.g., a vertical collectivistic culture like China).

Results in Study 2 suggest that, in addition to Self-Brand Congruity effects, there is a positive effect of values that, although inconsistent with consumers' ongoing value priorities, are associated with an ideal self. This is consistent with the Self-Brand Incongruity effect associated with the embodiment of the cultural ideal of self-enhancement values in Study 1. Nonetheless, it is possible that the Self-Brand Incongruity effect that emerged in Study 2 might be partially attributed to the fact that participants considered more positive values when thinking about the brand. Although the association with a higher number of values did not explain the findings in Study 1, future research should be conducted to compare our results in Study 2 with a condition in which consumers think of brands that embody inconsistent values that are desirable, but unrelated to an ideal.

Third, the effect sizes in study 1 are relatively modest, suggesting that additional variables beyond those included in the study have an influence on the dependent variables. It is important to note that, in Study 1, we used a range of brands from different product categories that varied in level of involvement, usage situations, etc. Although we controlled for the level of product involvement (Malär *et al.* 2011), without finding a moderating role for this variable, the variety of products and brands investigated might have introduced additional variance that partially explains the size of the effects. Thus, future research could investigate the role of other potential moderators of our findings, such as the level of product symbolism (utilitarian vs. symbolic products) or the bicultural experience of consumers (Rodas, Roedder John & Torelli 2021). Another potential moderator might be the level of approach motivation. Indeed, individuals high in approach motivation are especially attracted to targets that offer various expansion opportunities; in contrast, self-expansion is unrelated to avoidance motivation (Mattingly, McIntyre & Lewandowski 2011). Thus, future research could investigate differences in self-expansion between consumers who differ in approach and avoidance motivations.

Finally, our research investigated the influence of Self-Brand Congruity and Incongruity on consumers' general responses to brands, without considering a specific context for the usage of the product. Our findings could be extended by analyzing how the congruity and incongruity between brand and consumers' values within the context of a specific new product extension, or a novel co-branded product, impact the perceived self-expansion of consumers and their concomitant brand responses. We hope that our research will kindle renewed interest in the dynamic processes underlying brand responses and consumer-brand relationships.

6. References

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Web Appendices

Appendix A - Brands used as stimuli (Study 1)

| Product category | Brand name |
|--------------------|------------------|
| Personal Care | Dove |
| | Nivea |
| | Ushuaïa |
| | Chanel |
| Automobiles | Toyota |
| | Peugeot |
| | Smart |
| | Audi |
| Snacks | Bjorg |
| | Saint-Michel |
| | Milka |
| | Ladurée |
| Financial Services | Crédit Agricole |
| | Caisse d'Épargne |
| | ING Direct |
| | HSBC |
| Spirits | Get 27 |
| | Ricard |
| | Absolut Vodka |
| | Chivas |

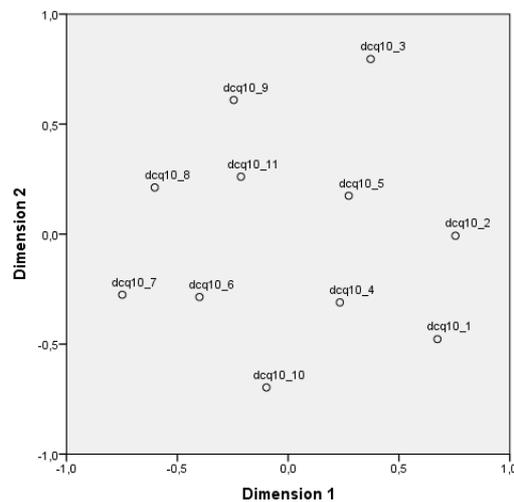
Appendix B – Table used to present the 11 values (Study 1)

| Value name | Value description |
|----------------------|---|
| Achievement | Prestige and control |
| Power | Ambition and achievement |
| Pleasure | Gratification for myself |
| Stimulation | Stimulation and challenge in life |
| Self-direction | Self-direction and independence |
| Social concerns | Tolerance and protection of all people |
| Concerns with nature | Protection of nature |
| Benevolence | Concern for the people close to me |
| Tradition | Respect for traditional ideas and practices |
| Conformity | Adherence to social norms |
| Security | Safety, security, and stability of society |

Source: Schwartz & Boehnke (2004)

Appendix C – Data analysis of brand values (Study 1)

Aggregation of value scores into the four higher-order value dimensions. We conducted a multidimensional scaling analysis (MDS, Schwartz 1992; Schwartz & Boehnke 2004) using the Euclidean distances for the brand values as dissimilarity measures. Results showed that a structure of brand values in France can be satisfactorily arranged according to the higher-order dimensions of self-enhancement, self-transcendence, openness, and conservation. Based on the above results, we aggregated the value ratings into four aggregate scores (conservation: conformity, security, and tradition; openness: stimulation and freedom; self-transcendence: environmental and social concerns; and self-enhancement: power, achievement, and pleasure) by averaging the Euclidean distance for the value dimensions included within each of the four higher-order dimensions.

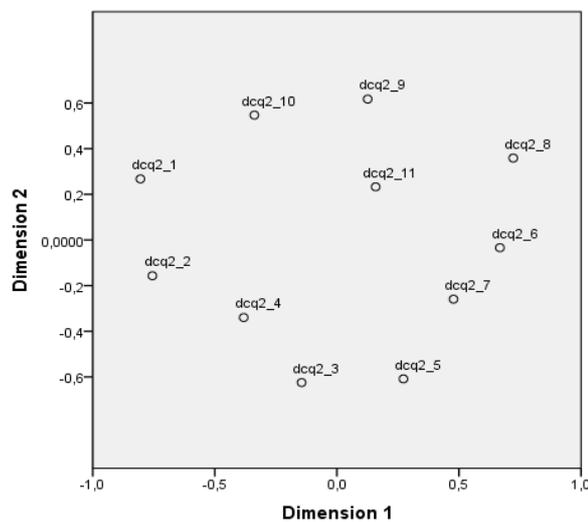


1 = Social Status, 2 = Success, 3 = Pleasure, 4 = Stimulation, 5 = Freedom, 6 = Social concern, 7 = Environmental concern, 8 = Benevolence, 9 = Tradition, 10 = Respect for norms, 11 = Safety

Structural relations among brand values from multidimensional scaling

Appendix D – Data analysis of ongoing value priorities (Study 1)

Aggregation of value scores into the four higher-order value dimensions. We conducted a multidimensional scaling analysis (MDS, Schwartz 1992; Schwartz & Boehnke 2004) using the Euclidean distances for the ongoing value priorities as dissimilarity measures. Results showed that a structure of ongoing value priorities in France can be satisfactorily arranged according to the higher-order dimensions of self-enhancement, self-transcendence, openness, and conservation. Based on the above results, we aggregated the value ratings into four aggregate scores (conservation: conformity, security, and tradition; openness: stimulation and freedom; self-transcendence: environmental and social concerns; and self-enhancement: power, achievement, and pleasure) by averaging the Euclidean distance for the value dimensions included within each of the four higher-order dimensions.



1 = Social Status, 2 = Success, 3 = Pleasure, 4 = Stimulation, 5 = Freedom, 6 = Social concern, 7 = Environmental concern, 8 = Benevolence, 9 = Tradition, 10 = Respect for norms, 11 = Safety

Structural relations among ongoing value priorities from multidimensional scaling

Appendix E – Brands mentioned by the participants (Study 2)

| Brands mentioned for the Self-Brand Congruity condition | Brands mentioned for the Self-Brand Congruity + Self-Brand Incongruity condition |
|---|--|
| AIR FRANCE | ADIDAS(2) |
| AMAP | ALVERDE |
| AMAZON | AMAZON(3) |
| APPLE(2) | APPLE(4) |
| ARBRE VERT | AROMAZONE |
| AUDI | AUDI(5) |
| BARILLA | BIO C'BON(2) |
| BIO C'BON | BIOCOOP(4) |
| BIOCOOP (3) | BONNE MAMAN |
| BIODERMA | CARTIER |
| CARITAS | C'EST QUI LE PATRON(2) |
| CAUDALIE | CHANEL |
| C'EST QUI LE PATRON | CITROEN |
| CHA LING (LUNH) | DAG BD DAY |
| COCA-COLA | DANONE(2) |
| CRUESLI | DECATHLON(6) |
| DANONE | DICKIES |
| DECATHLON(4) | DIESEL |
| DIOR | DISNEY |
| DISNEY(6) | EATALY (2) |
| DOVE(2) | ECOSIA |
| EASTPACK | ETHIQUABLE |
| ECOSIA | HARLEY |
| FNAC | HERMES(3) |
| HERMES(3) | HOLLISTER |
| LACOSTE(2) | HUGO BOSS |
| LANCOME | KOKOPELLI |
| L'OCCITANE | LA ROCHE POSAY |
| L'OREAL(3) | LACOSTE(3) |
| LUSH | LADUREE |
| MAIF | LE BON COIN |
| MERCEDES | L'OCCITANE |
| MICHEL ET AUGUSTIN(3) | L'OREAL(2) |
| MICHELIN(2) | LUSH |
| NATURALIA(3) | MERCEDES(4) |
| NIKE (6) | MICHEL & AUGUSTIN |
| NINTENDO | MONOPRIX |
| NUTELLA | MONTBLANC |
| NUXE | MY LITTLE PARIS (NEWSLETTER) |
| OFF-WHITE | NATURALIA(4) |
| PATAGONIA(2) | NATURE ET DECOUVERTE(2) |
| PETIT BATEAU | NIKE(5) |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p> PICARD (2) PORSCHE(2) RENAULT(2) RESPIRE ROLEX SAMSUNG TESLA THE BODY SHOP(3) UBER UGC CINEMA VEJA(6) VESPA VINTED VOLKSWAGEN YAMAHA YVES ST LAURENT ZARA (3) </p> | <p> PACHAMAMAI PATAGONIA(3) PETIT BATEAU PEUGEOT PICARD PICTURE ORGANIC CLOTHING PORSCHE(2) ROLEX(5) SEZANNE STELLA McCARTNEY TESLA(2) TOMMY HILFIGER TOYOTA UCPA UGC CINEMA VELEDA VICTORIA'S SECRET VOLKSWAGEN WWF(2) ZARA(3) </p> |
|--|---|

Appendix F - Main articles on Self-Brand Congruity

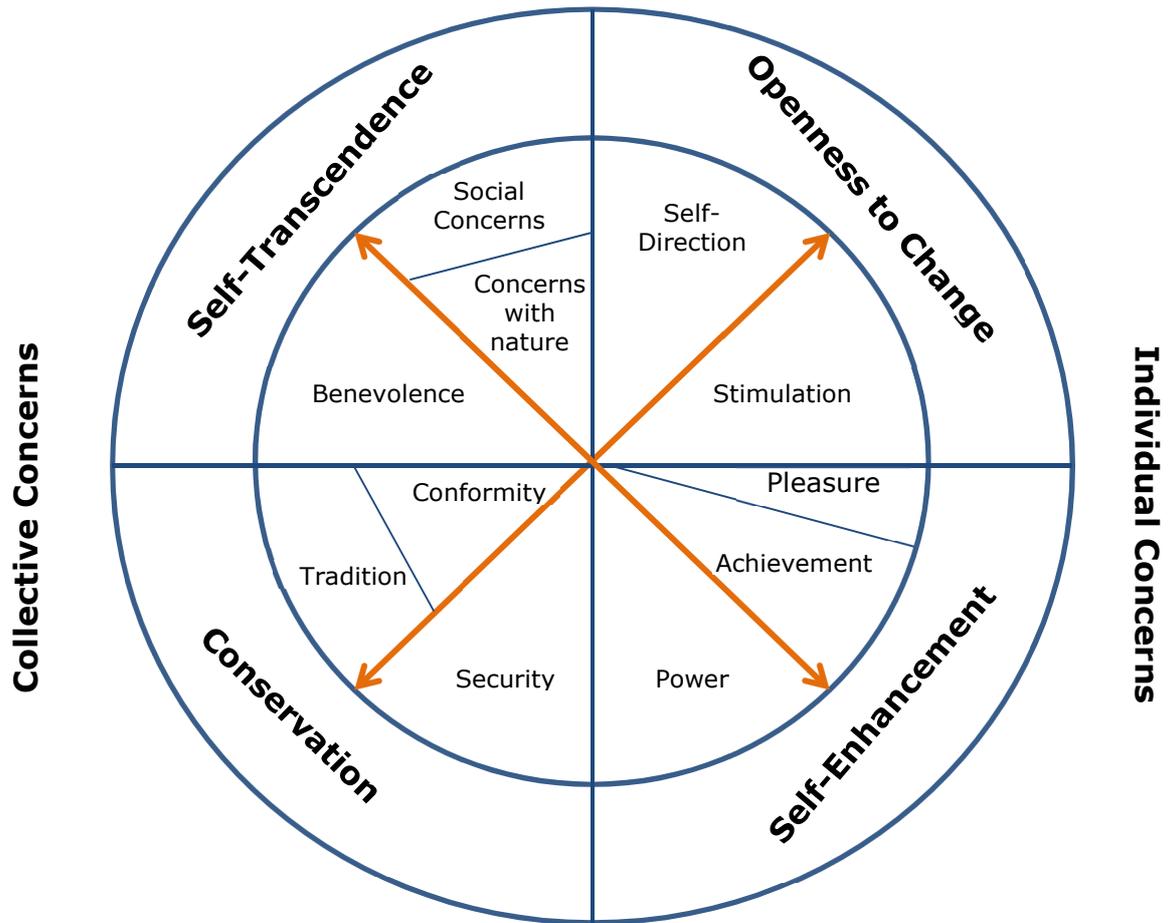
| Article | Main independent variables | Self-congruity measure | Main dependent variables | Method | Results |
|-----------------------------|---|--|---|-----------------------------|---|
| Allen, Gupta & Monnier 2008 | Congruence and incongruence between the human values symbolized by the product with the consumer human values | Social Power Value Endorsement score for each participant, which was his or her mean ratings in Schwartz's (1992) social power domain | Favorable taste evaluation, positive attitude, behavior intention | Experiment, regressions | When there is value-symbol congruency, consumers experience a better taste and aroma and develop a more favorable attitude and behavior intention towards the food products. |
| Malär et al. 2011 | Actual and ideal self-congruity / Product involvement, Self-esteem and Public self-consciousness (moderators) | Scale from Sirgy et al. (1997) | Emotional brand attachment | Structural Equation Model | Actual self-congruence has a greater impact on emotional brand attachment compared to the ideal self-congruence. Product involvement, self-esteem, and public self-consciousness increase the positive impact of actual self-congruence but decrease the impact of ideal self-congruence on emotional brand attachment. |
| Torelli et al. 2012 | Congruity between brand concepts and cultural value priorities / Cultural orientation | The match between slogans from 1 ("best") to 4 ("worst"), in terms of how well they fit the image of the brand concept (one human value) | Brand message evaluation, Brand choice | Multiple regressions, ANOVA | The 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. |

| Article | Main independent variable | Self-congruity Measure | Main dependent variable | Method | Results |
|--|---|---|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| Aguirre-Rodriguez, Bosnjak & Sirgy, 2012 | Actual, ideal, social, ideal social-self congruity and moderators (self-motives, socialness, degree of self-enhancement sought, brand personality, product stimulus, cognitive elaboration, cognitive process type) | Scales used in the previous research included in the meta-analysis | Consumer attitudes, intentions and behaviors | Meta-analysis | Self-congruity effects are a function of underlying self-motives, socialness, the degree of self-enhancement sought, the brand personality facet, the judgment object's abstraction level, cognitive elaboration, and the underlying impression formation process |
| Tooray & Oodith, 2017 | Actual and ideal self-congruity | Likert Scale (7 items) ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) | Brand loyalty, customer-brand satisfaction, brand preference, brand personality | ANOVA, t-test, multiple regressions | Actual and ideal self-congruity do influence purchase intentions significantly and a positive relationship exists among students' actual and ideal self-congruity, brand preference, customer-brand satisfaction and brand loyalty. |
| Wassler, Wang & Hung, 2019 | Brand self-congruity | Likert Scale from Hohenstein et al. 2007 | Brand attitude, brand ambassador Behavior | Structural Equation Model | Brand self-congruity is an indicator of destination brand attitude and of subsequent ambassadorial behavior among residents. |
| Frias and al. 2020 | Actual and ideal self-congruity; tourist motivations | Likert scale from Chon (1992) | Consumer-based destination brand equity (awareness, perceived quality, image, revisit loyalty, recommendation loyalty, perceived value) | Structural Equation Model | Self-congruity and tourist motivations exert an effect on brand equity, albeit in distinct ways: motivation is essential in attracting clients to the destination, while self-congruity is vital for retaining them. |
| Fu et al. 2020 | Self-congruity, brand experience | Scale from Sirgy and Su (2000) | Flow, brand commitment, active engagement | Structural Equation Model | Theme park customers' internalization of brand experience influences their attitudinal and behavioral tendency with regard to the brand through self-congruity and flow |

| Article | Main independent variable | Self-congruity Measure | Main dependent variable | Method | Results |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|---|---|---|
| Liu, Zhang & Zhang, 2020 | Actual and ideal self-congruity | Scale from Wang et al. (2015) and Choi & Reid (2016) | Brand Awareness, brand image, brand loyalty, purchase intention | Structural Equation Model | Customers' perceived self-congruity with online celebrities' image and virtual interactivity positively impact the brand equity of online celebrities. Additionally, compared with virtual interactivity, the effect of customer perceived self-congruity on a brand is more significant. |
| Rabbanee, Roy & Spence, 2020 | Actual, ideal and social self-congruity | Scales from Malär et al. (2011) and Sirgy et al. (1997). | Brand attachment, social network behaviors | Structural Equation Model and PROCESS macro Model 4 | All three self-congruity dimensions influence brand attachment, which in turn influences social networking behaviors. The influence of self-congruity types on brand attachment is moderated by self-extension tendency |
| Confente, Scarpi & Russo 2020 | Green self-identity, self-congruity with green products (moderator) | Scale from Mazodier & Merunka (2012) | Perceived value, purchase switch intention | PROCESS macro model 7. | Green self-identity positively impacts perceived value, leading to higher behavioral intention. In addition, the relationship is moderated by self-congruity but not by differences in product involvement. |
| Styvén, Mariani & Stranberg, 2020 | Place ad-brand congruity | Single item Does not fit at all (0) - Fits very well (6) | Sharing the message online | Structural Equation Model | Place ad-brand congruity influences positively the residents' intention to share a place brand message online |
| Tran et al. 2021 | Actual and ideal self-congruity | 3 items from Kumar's scale (2016). | Perceived destination quality, tourist satisfaction and destination brand loyalty | Structural Equation Model | Self-congruity influences positively perceived destination quality, tourist satisfaction and destination brand loyalty. Visit frequency moderates their links. |
| This present research | Self-Brand Congruity with ongoing value priorities, Self-Brand Incongruity with ideal values (i.e. cultural or personal) | Distance (dummy variable) between multiple brand values and personal values (Schwartz 1992) | Brand attitude, brand admiration, brand recommendation, brand purchase intention | Regressions, ANOVA and PROCESS macro model 4 | Documenting Self-Brand Congruity and Self-Brand Incongruity effects by simultaneously measuring all the human values in Schwartz's framework. Compared to brands that embody consumers' ongoing value priorities, those that additionally |

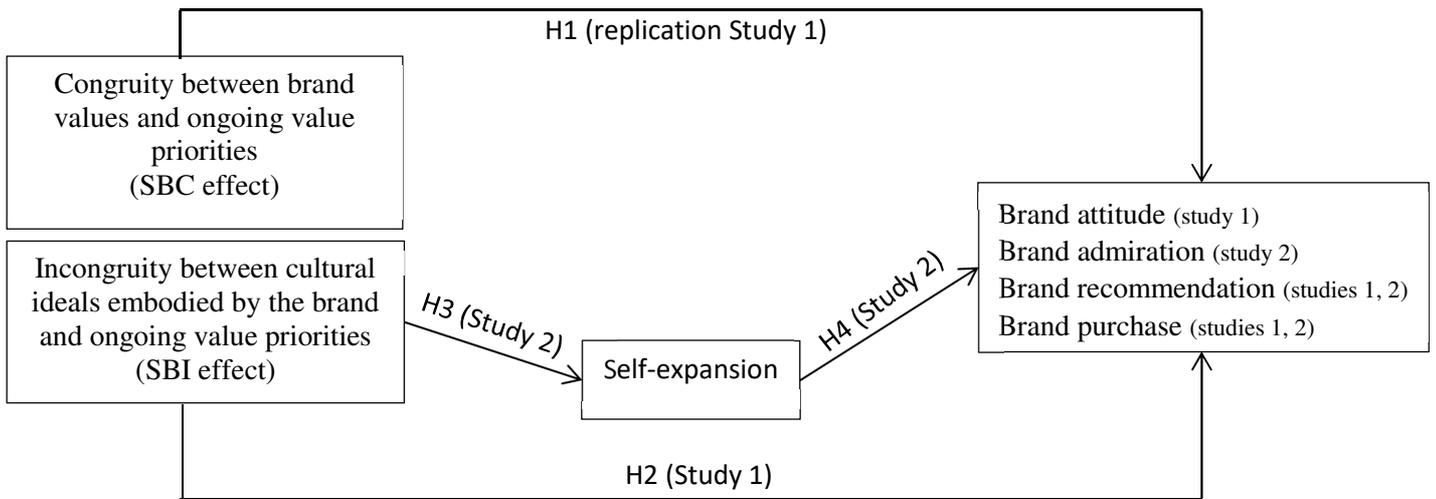
| | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|---|
| | | | | | embody non-prioritized values associated with an ideal (cultural or personal), induce feelings of self-expansion, which in turn leads to more favorable consumer responses to brands. |
|--|--|--|--|--|---|

Figure 1 – The Schwartz Human Values Model



Source: Torelli et al. (2012)

Figure 2 – Theoretical Model



SBC: Self-Brand Congruity; SBI: Self-Brand Incongruity