BRANDS, VALUES AND CONSUMERS
THE IMPORTANCE OF VALUES IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR
Ronald J.J. Voorn
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“Values are like fingerprints. Nobody’s are the same, but you leave them all over everything you do.”

Elvis Presley
Welcome

All my life I have been intrigued by human behavior and in particular that of consumers. Especially how the values we hold dear influence our decisions, even as consumers. As a researcher and teacher of marketing and consumer psychology, I noticed that brands around us were increasingly emphasizing the values they stood for in their marketing. For example, Heineken communicated that their beer would help fraternize people, the RABO bank that they would solve world hunger, Tony Chocolonely that their goal in life is to eliminate child labor in cocoa farming, and Univé insurance that it wants to help its members find more security in life. Of course, these companies do this for a reason. Some do it from a marketing interest, Heineken and the RABO bank for example, and for others, like Tony Chocolonely and Univé, contributing more to society than just making a profit is simply part of their DNA and guides all their actions.

The question, however, is whether brands benefit from communicating values? Does communicating them lead to desired consumer behavior? How and when? These were some of the questions that prompted the writing of this dissertation, as I believed that both the literature and educational institutions and people working in marketing-related positions as well as the growing number of social entrepreneurs would benefit from a better understanding of how incorporating human values into their marketing affects consumer decisions.

These current developments in marketing and my own interest in the topic of human values have led to the topic of this PhD thesis, the role of human values in consumer decisions about brands.

I sincerely hope that this thesis can inspire practitioners, educators, and other scholars to pay more attention to the valuable role of values in consumer behavior. I wish all readers an enjoyable time reading my dissertation.

Ronald Voorn
Weesp, July 2022
# Table of Contents

Welcome 9

CHAPTER 1
General Introduction 13

CHAPTER 2
Human values as added value(s) in consumer brand congruence: A comparison with traits and functional requirements 25

*Bridging the chapters 1* 42

CHAPTER 3
It takes time to tango: The relative importance of values versus traits in consumer brand relationships. 45

*Bridging the chapters 2* 64

CHAPTER 4
Which value type promises more value in marketing communication? 67

*Bridging the chapters 3* 94

CHAPTER 5
General Discussion 97

Addendum 123
References 125
Summary 145
Samenvatting 149
Dankwoord 154
About the author 156
Chapter 1

General Introduction
Introduction of the topic

Sometimes we are faced with the question of which brand to buy. This also happened when a friend of mine wanted to switch banks a few years ago. He had strong doubts about his current bank. But which bank had the best terms, where did that bank invest its money, what kind of people worked there, did they keep their promises, were they lenient if he needed an interim bridge loan, was it a bank purely focused on making a profit or did they see their role in society more broadly? In short, who could he best trust with his money? In the end, he chose a particular bank not just because of their terms and conditions, or the fact that he felt at home with the kind of optimistic brand personality (the distinctive patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving) that the bank exuded through its award-winning advertisements. He chose this bank primarily because it expresses its values (the higher abstract guiding goals in life) in concrete activities to promote a better world that he was very excited about. He was especially positive about their investment policy which states that the bank invests in such things as affordable housing, water management, education, sustainable energy and not in such things as fossil fuels, child labor or the arms industry and countries and companies that violate human rights.

The foregoing is just one example of a choice where someone did not only rely on the functional attributes of a bank, or its brand personality, but also on what values they consider important. Values, in this context, are the higher abstract and relatively enduring goals that serve as general guides for making choices in life, such as pursuing peace, self-determination, safety, helping others, the environment, or enjoying life (Sagiv & Roccas, 2017; Schwartz, 2012). They help us chart a course when making decisions in a variety of areas. These can range from how we dress, taking time to enjoy our family and friends, which books we read or music we listen to, how we choose a partner, choose a school for our children, as well as which brands, we prefer (Hanel, Litzellachner & Maio, 2018). Incidentally, this often happens almost completely automatically, in other words, we often do not need to think about which values are most important to us in which situation (Maio, 2016). In other situations, as in the case of my friend, the decision was a very conscious one. The values of the bank he chose were very important to him. And he is not alone in this. Indeed, consumers consider values-driven brands highly desirable (e.g., Accenture, 2018; Deloitte, 2019; Hayman, 2017; Kantar, 2020; Mirzaei, Webster & Siuki, 2021; Omnicom, 2019). They are apparently more than four times more likely to buy a values-driven brand over a non-values-driven brand (Aziz,
2020). And it is not only consumers who are attracted to values-driven brands, as this is also true for company employees, potential recruits, other stakeholders (von Ahsen & Gauch, 2021) and investors (Annweiler, 2019).

Indeed, increasingly, brands seem to be paying more conscious attention to the values they want to stand for (Hayman, 2017; Rodrigues Vila & Bharadwaj, 2017; Voorn, van der Veen, van Rompay, Hegner & Pruyn, 2021), for example by choosing specific social causes they want to support as a central part of their brand (Harvard Business Review, 2015; Malnight, Buche & Dhanaraj, 2019). Examples include Patagonia which is an outdoor sports company with an integrated focus on protecting the environment, Ben & Jerry’s an ice cream company that pays special attention to environmental and social causes in everything they do or Nike which recently included the goal of protecting minorities in sport as a central theme in all their activities (Cobb, 2018; Deloitte, 2021; Voorn, van der Veen, van Rompay & Pruyn 2018). Moreover, the application of values-driven marketing is applicable to all kinds of brands, ranging from sportswear brands like Nike and Patagonia (Achabou, 2020), to industrial brands like DSM (2021). Companies like the ones mentioned here communicate their values to the world at large through their marketing activities (Rodrigues Vila & Bharadwaj, 2017). This type of values-driven marketing is increasingly called purpose marketing, where values are an integral part of a company’s mission, vision, and identity, drive all its brand activities and are central to its mindset in society (Hajdas & Kłeczek, 2021; Hsu, 2017, Kantar, 2019).

Of course, these companies apply and communicate their values in their marketing for a reason. The information about the values of a company and its brands not only generates sympathy among consumers, but also appears to improve the quality perception of their products (Chernev & Blair, 2015, 2021; Morgan & Hunt, 1994), make it easier to find staff (Amos & Weathington 2008; Edwards & Cable 2009), or even improve their financial results (Jonsen, Galunic, Weeks & Braga, 2015). However, this form of marketing does not have a long history (Buursink, 2020) but is considered a relevant and new topic in the field (Baumgarth, Boltz, Schmidt & Roper, 2020) that raises several questions for practitioners such as, how important are values in consumer behavior compared to, for example, the functional properties of a product or the brand personality, or does the importance vary, for example, according to the duration of use, as can be the case with people? After all, if you ask someone what time it is then it is only functionally important that he or she has a watch or smartphone and can tell time, but if you go biking with
other singles for a few days in Belgium then it is nice if the personality traits match. However, if you go on a six-month research trip in the Brazilian jungle with other researchers, then it becomes important that the values match well, because your personal safety may also depend on it. The question is whether the same applies to different products and services? Another question is whether the effect of brand values varies depending on their importance to people? This is relevant because according to Schwartz and Cieciuch (2021) values that transcend the self, such as benevolence and universalism are generally considered as the most important values to people. It is therefore interesting to find out whether this also applies to the use of brand values in marketing communication, e.g., does the use of self-transcendent values by a brand lead to more positive brand results than values that serve the direct improvement of the self? Little is currently known about this.

Values can be important for behavior (e.g., Hofstede, 1980; Olson and Maio, 2003; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 2018). The same may be true for consumer behavior according to popular publications (e.g., Aziz, 2020; Deloitte, 2021; Harvard Business Review, 2015; Kantar, 2019). Marketing research has shown that consumer behavior is influenced by many variables, e.g., desired functional attributes and benefits, our needs, wants, our personality traits (the individual differences in distinctive patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving, Kazdin, 2000) as well as, where we are, with whom and when (Salmon, De Vet, Adriaanse, Fennis, Veltkamp & De Ridder, 2015). The influence of brand personality (Aaker, 1997) has also received considerable attention (Eisend & Stokburger-Sauer, 2013; Radler, 2018) and has been incorporated into self-congruence theory (Sirgy, 2018), which shows that consumers select brands based on a match with their functional needs and the need to match one’s own personality with that of brands.

In comparison, however, the effect of values in buying behavior remains rather underexplored (Voorn et al., 2021), even though they may influence how we select the brands we buy (Kostelijk, 2015; Kotler & Keller, 2012). Only a small number of marketing-related studies examine whether brand values influence brand purchase behavior. For example, Alsem, Wieringa, and Hendriks (2007) show that values have an effect on the type of newspaper people choose, and Zhang and Bloemer (2008) find that values positively influence satisfaction, trust, affective commitment, and loyalty toward clothing store and bank brands. While a small number of other marketing-related studies (e.g., Allen, 2002; Lorgnier, Chanavat, Su & O’Rourke, 2020; Shokri & Alavi, 2019; Susanty & Tresnaningrum, 2018) also focus on the effects that values have on buying behavior they often limit themselves to one product category, do not compare the effect of values with that of functional
attributes or brand personality, do not distinguish between products that people use for shorter periods of time such as a soft drink or for longer periods of time such as a car, nor do they distinguish between the effect of self-transcendence, which seems so important for values-driven brands, versus self-enhancement values.

**Values**

Before providing an overview of the structure of this dissertation, it is appropriate to provide a brief introduction to the role that values play in behavior, their origins, and some of the better-known value models that exist.

The role of human values in behavior has been discussed in the literature of psychology since the beginning of the last century (Allport, 1961). In general, values are described as trans-situational and cognitively expressed goals that guide attitudes and behavior (e.g., Feather, 1995; Ferraro, Escalas & Bettman, 2011; Hitlin, 2003; Rohan, 2000; Schwartz, 2012; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987). Hitlin & Piliavin (2004, p 361) claim that values are more enduring than attitudes, are relatively stable over time, act as a compass for life decisions, and are “focused on ideals.” Values also influence a spectrum of outcomes, such as human well-being (Sagiv & Schwartz, 2000), likelihood of socially responsible consumption (Lee & Cho, 2019), degree to which consumers identify with brands (Sihvonen, 2019), and how employees think about companies they work for (Amos & Weathington, 2008; Edwards & Cable, 2009; Seggewiss, Boeggemann, Straatmann, Mueller & Hattrup, 2019). Understanding if, when, and how people prioritize different values helps to better understand consumer behavior.

Human values have evolved over the centuries as people’s biological needs eventually had to find their balance in socially accepted goals (Schwartz, 1992). Values can be classified into three groups: 1) the biological needs of humans, 2) the requirements of coordinated social interaction, and 3) the conditions for the well-being and survival of groups of people (Cieciuch, 2017). Studies have shown that internationally the most important values are those that focus on cooperation or coexistence with others, the self-transcendent group of values of which in particular benevolence is the most important (Schwartz & Cieciuch, 2021; Schwartz & Bardi, 2001). Values also appear to be universal when measured across countries but may differ significantly in their importance at the individual level (Cieciuch, 2017; Hansen, Sørensen & Eriksen, 2018) or in context (Maio, 2017).
There are several value models. Some of the more well-known ones are those of Rokeach (1973), Inglehart (1977), the Dutch values inventory of Oppenhuisen and Sikkel (2003) or Hofstede (1984). But Schwartz’s (2012) values model is one of the best known and most replicated (Roccas, Lilach & Navon, 2017). In the Schwartz model, see Figure 1.1, the 10 main values (which are subdivided into 54 more concrete sub values) are represented in a quasi-circumplex model. These are grouped into four higher-order value groups according to their main motivation: self-enhancement (southwest) or self-transcendence (northeast, and often used by values-driven brands) and openness to change (northwest) versus focus on conservation (southeast). The inner circle shows the ten most important values, in such a way that values that are related are next to each other and opposing values are opposite.

![Figure 1.1 | The Schwartz (1992) value circle.](Image)

The measure used in the studies of this thesis is based on the value modeling of Schwartz (2012), as it has been successfully replicated in many countries (Roccas, Lilach & Navon, 2017). It is also the strongest predictor of pro-social behavior (Hanel, Litzellachner & Maio, 2018) compared to the value models of Rokeach (1973), Inglehart (1977) and Hofstede (1984), among others.
Thesis overview

Given the many questions raised earlier in this chapter about the influence of values on buying behavior, this dissertation attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How relevant are perceived brand values to purchase intentions in comparison to functional attributes and brand personality traits for different goods and services (Study 1)?
2. Does the importance of brand values for purchase intentions versus functional attributes and brand personality traits differ depending on relationship duration (Study 2)?
3. Is there a difference in the effects on attitude toward the brand, perceived quality, and consideration to buy between brand messages based on different values (Study 3)?

To answer these questions, this dissertation consists of three studies divided into three chapters (2, 3, and 4) and one chapter (5) that discusses the overall conclusions, contribution to theory, recommendations for further research and recommendations for practitioners. Studies one and two have been published, and study three has been submitted for publication. A brief description of each study follows.

First study (Chapter 2)

Based on the role of values in marketing literature, the first research question was: How relevant are perceived brand values to purchase intentions in comparison to functional attributes and brand personality traits for different goods and services? For this research, self-congruence theory (Sirgy, 1982, 2018) was used, which compares the effects on purchase intentions based on functional congruence (the degree to which a product meets a consumer’s functional requirements) with trait congruence (the degree to which a brand’s personality matches a consumer’s personality) and added value congruence (the degree to which a brand’s values match those of a consumer). The initial research was conducted through a survey of 1,109 Dutch people. To this end, preliminary research was first conducted to arrive at a selection of 12 different products and services that varied in purchase frequency and degree of involvement in the choice. The services and products that were finally examined were car insurance, banks, travel organizations and mobile phone providers; for consumer goods, we selected soft drinks, newspapers, dairy
milk, and painkillers; and finally, for durables, we used cars, clothing, smartphones, and laptops. The study found that brand values are indeed an important predictor of purchase intentions, especially for services and consumer durables, but not for consumer goods.

**Second study (Chapter 3)**

Based on the results of our initial study, which showed that values are relatively more important than traits for services and durable goods, and additional literature, we hypothesized that this may be caused by duration of use (Gawronski et al., 2007; Hernandez, Wright & Fermíniano Rodrigues, 2015; Strahilevitz & Loewenstein, 1998). This led to the following research question: Does the importance of brand values for purchase intentions versus functional attributes and brand personality traits differ depending on relationship duration? We organized an online experiment among 175 Dutch people. The results confirmed our hypotheses. Brand values indeed become more important than personality traits the longer the relationship lasts. This is true for both goods and services.

**Third study (Chapter 4)**

Study three, subsequently, focused on a very important and timely question for marketers, is there a difference in the effects on attitude toward the brand, perceived quality, and consideration to buy between brand messages based on different values? Using the recent emergence of values-driven brands, also often called purpose marketing, as a new and relevant topic in the field of marketing research as a starting point (Baumgarth et al., 2020), we compared the effects of brand messages based on two higher order value types, self-transcendence values versus self-enhancement values, on attitude towards the brand, perceived quality, and consideration to purchase a new brand. The main assumptions, based on additional literature, were that self-transcendent values are considered more important than self-enhancement values. Thus, using a brand message based on self-transcending values would lead to stronger results in terms of attitude towards the brand, perceived quality, and consideration to buy than using a brand message based on self-enhancement values. An experiment (N = 1000) was organized to test our hypotheses. The results showed that a brand message based on self-transcendent values indeed leads to a stronger effect on attitude towards the brand, perceived quality, and consideration to buy than a brand message based on self-enhancement values. This is true for both products and services.
At the end of each chapter presenting a study, a summary of the chapter is given, together with a brief preview of the next chapter. The thesis overview, including all hypothesis per study, is graphically presented in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1 | Thesis overview**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Hypotheses focus on</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Intro</td>
<td>Introduction of the topic and main research questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2 Study one: The role of brand values next to functional attributes and brand personality traits in repurchase intentions for different products and services, a survey. | - The difference in effects on re-purchase intentions of value congruence, trait congruence and functional congruence  
- Mediation effects of functional congruence  
- Difference in effects on re-purchase intentions of value congruence versus trait congruence for consumer durables, services, and consumables. |
| 3 Study two: The importance of values in comparison to traits and functional attributes on purchase intentions for different products and services involving different usage durations, an experiment | - Difference in importance of values versus traits in long retrospective or prospective relationships as well as shorter retrospective or prospective relationships.  
- Difference in importance of values and traits in purchase decisions of services and products. |
| 4 Study three: The difference in effects on several brand outcomes of brand message based on self-transcendent values versus brand messages based on self-enhancement values, an experiment | - Difference in effects of brand messages based on self-transcendent values or self-enhancement values on attitude towards the brand, perceived product quality as well as consideration to buy  
- Mediation of these effects by consumer brand identification  
- Difference in effects of brand messages based on self-transcending values or self-enhancing values on brand outcomes depending on the duration of use and between services versus products. |
| 5 Conclusions, discussion, theoretical and practical contributions |
Chapter 2

Human values as added value(s) in consumer brand congruence: A comparison with traits and functional requirements


Abstract

Human values—life goals—guide our attitudes and actions. Brands such as Patagonia, TOMS, Warby Parker, Chobani, and Nike successfully position their marketing around human values such as safety, harmony, seeking pleasure, or social welfare. Evidently, consumers attach importance to brands whose values align with their own values. However, the alignment of values (value congruence) and the resulting effects on (re)purchasing behavior are scarcely discussed in the marketing literature. The effects of “traits” and “functional congruence” on purchasing behavior receive considerably more attention. Since human values are conceptually distinct from personality traits, the following question is posed: What is the role of value congruence in the process of consumer brand selection compared with that of trait and functional congruence. An online survey (N = 1,182) is conducted to study the effects of these different types of congruence on re-purchase intentions for a range of product categories. Multiple regression and mediation analyses reveal that value congruence is a significant predictor of re-purchase intentions and that it is more important than trait congruence for the categories of services and durables, but not for consumables. This study offers insights into when brand marketing should be aligned with personality traits and human values, respectively.

Keywords: Brand values, self-congruence theory, value congruence
**Introduction**

Brands commonly emphasize the importance of “fair trade,” value the environmental influence on future generations, or refer to family and friends as “priceless.” These concepts all refer to human values, which are a set of life goals that universally guide the attitudes and actions of people (Schwartz, 2012). Brands are increasingly associating themselves with human values through their marketing (Hayman, 2017; Vilá and Bharadwaj, 2017; Warc, 2018; Yoganathan et al., 2018), also known as “purpose marketing” (Hsu, 2017). For example, shoe brand TOMS projects the value of benevolence (Schwartz, 2012) in its marketing strategy. The brand routinely donates shoes to children in need. The American retailer of prescription glasses and sunglasses Warby Parker adopts a similar strategy; it has distributed more than five million pairs of glasses to people in need through its “Buy a Pair, Give a Pair” program. Likewise, Patagonia projects the value of universalism; it especially focuses on environmental issues (Schwartz, 2012). The Dutch confectionery store Tony’s Chocolonely aims to eradicate child labor in its cacao production, while personal care brand Dove supports women’s self-direction in its advertising campaigns.

This type of marketing is effective, as consumers increasingly attach importance to the human values that brands represent (Edelman, 2018; Havas, 2017). Accenture (2018) confirms this trend in its report, wherein 62% of respondents desired a match between their values and a brand’s values, and were prepared to discard brands whose values were incongruent with their own (Cone, 2017). This desire for congruence is best captured by the analogy of human relationships in similarity-attraction theory: That is, people generally prefer to befriend those similar to themselves (Aron et al., 2006; Finkel and Baumeister, 2019).

Jonsen et al. (2015) further support the importance of values-based positioning; they demonstrate that a focus on human values increases financial returns for companies. However, the marketing and brand literature rarely focuses on the effects of congruence between a consumer’s values and a brand’s values (Alsem et al., 2007; Elbedweihy et al., 2016; Lorgnier et al., 2019; Shokri and Alavi, 2019; Sihvonen, 2019; Susanty and Tresnaningrum, 2018; van Esterik-Plasmeijer and van Raaij, 2017; Zhang and Bloemer, 2008).

Therefore, the main questions guiding this research are: First, what is the role of value congruence in the process of consumer brand selection compared with that
CHAPTER 2

of trait and functional congruence? Second, does this role differ across product
categories? To answer these questions, a quantitative survey (N = 1,182) is
conducted to test whether value congruence is predictive of purchase intentions
and to what extent this effect varies as a function of product type, that is, durables
versus consumables and services. Before presenting the details of the study, the
most important theory pertaining to these questions is discussed in the next
section.

Theoretical Framework

Self-congruence theory

Self-congruence theory (Sirgy et al, 2016; Sirgy, 2018) most popularly explains the
effects of a match between brands and consumers; however, it only incorporates
two specific types of congruence. The first type of congruence is based on a match
between a brand’s personality traits—“the set of human personality traits that are
both applicable to and relevant for brands” (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003, 151, as
cited in Geuens et al, 2008)—and the consumer’s personality traits. The second
type, usually termed “functional congruence,” is the degree of congruence between
functional attributes that consumers expect, and the functional attributes
delivered. Here, values are an intrinsic part of the “self” (Hitlin and Piliavin, 2004;
Laverie et al, 1993; Mittal, 2006; Roberts, 2006). Measuring self-congruence solely
based on personality traits and functional requirements, while excluding values,
inevitably yields an incomplete picture.

Previous studies based on self-congruence theory (Sirgy, 2018) report on the effect
of the congruence level between what consumers consider important and what
brands offer; this effect influences several consumer brand selection outcomes
(Aguirre-Rodriguez et al, 2012; Johar and Sirgy, 1991; Kressmann et al, 2006; Sirgy,

Self-congruence theory proposes that consumers choose brands based on
perceived functional congruence as well as personality trait congruence (Sirgy et
al, 1991; Sirgy et al, 2000; Aguirre-Rodriguez et al, 2012; Sirgy et al, 2016; Sirgy,
2018). Functional congruence depends on whether the functional attributes and
benefits that brands offer match those that consumers desire, while personality
trait congruence is based on perceived congruence between the personality
traits of a person and of a brand. In this context, personality traits are defined as characteristic patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Costa and McCrae, 1992).

Self-congruence theory does not consider other components of what constitutes the self, such as values. While both traits and values can be inferred from brand behaviors (Aaker, 1997), personality traits only describe a person (or brand) in terms of behavior. By contrast, a person’s (or brand’s) values have the potential to reveal important motivations and goals (Roccas et al, 2002). Studies (Roccas et al, 2002; Bilsky and Schwartz, 1994; Maio, 2016) show limited overlap between personality traits and values: Parks-Leduc, Feldman, and Bardi’s (2015) meta-study confirms this finding as well; they demonstrate that personality traits and values should be considered distinct constructs. Therefore, conceptualizing self-congruence solely based on congruent traits limits the relevance of self-congruence theory, especially since consumers are more attracted to brands that are positioned based on values. Additionally, value-based brand congruence leads to stronger brand relationships with consumers compared with personality congruence alone (Zhang and Bloemer 2008). These combined findings underscore the importance of value congruence for branding and marketing practice.

**Values and their role in consumer behavior**

The role of human values in behavior has been discussed in the literature of psychology since the early 1900s (Allport, 1961). Generally, values are described as trans-situational and cognitively expressed goals that guide attitudes and actions (Allport, 1961; Feather, 1995; Ferraro, Escalas & Bettman, 2011; Hitlin, 2003; Olson and Maio, 2003; Rohan, 2000; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992, 1994, 2012; Schwartz and Bilsky, 1987). Hitlin and Piliavin (2004, 361) claim that values are more enduring than attitudes, are relatively stable over time, act as a compass for life decisions, and “focus on ideals.” Values also influence a spectrum of outcomes, such as human well-being (Sagiv and Schwartz, 2000), likelihood of engaging in socially responsible consumption (Lee and Cho, 2019), degree to which consumers identify with brands (Sihvonen, 2019), and how employees feel about companies they work for (Amos and Weathington, 2008; Edwards and Cable, 2009; Seggewiss et al, 2019). Understanding which values people consider important helps understand consumer behavior.
CHAPTER 2

Values versus traits

Values, such as caring for the family, safety, harmony, seeking pleasure, personal success, or social welfare (Schwartz, 2012), are considered important aspects of a person’s “self,” a dynamic entity, or as Fiske and Taylor (2013, 120) state, “our collection of beliefs about ourselves.” Personality traits are similarly important. However, unlike values, personality traits such as openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism are lasting dispositions (Costa and McCrae, 1992). Therefore, values and traits are both aspects of the self, but values represent motivations that are expressed as goals, while traits are descriptions of personality and typical styles of behavior (Gecas, 1982; Hitlin, 2003; Schwartz, 2012).

Although the relationship between values and personality traits can be empirically observed, the overlap is generally modest, and the two can be considered distinct, yet interlinked, constructs within the self (Parks-Leduc et al, 2015; Roccas et al, 2002). Values are particularly relevant when assessing which alternative might best lead to desired goal-relevant outcomes to justify or judge a course of action or opinion. By contrast, traits are primarily reflexive guiding behaviors (Roccas et al, 2002; Rohan, 2000). Although values and traits differ, one can influence the other. People can align values with observed traits or use values to adjust behavior (Roccas et al, 2002). However, this process is not reflexive. For example, a more extraverted and, thus, more socially outgoing person can either appreciate stimulation-oriented values, such as the need to lead an adventurous life, or prefer a classical concert instead (Schwartz, 2012). A more complete picture is obtained when traits combined with values are studied. Hence, it is important to incorporate values into self-congruence studies.

Values and value congruence in marketing literature

Although the influence of human values on a person’s behavior has been amply discussed in the literature on psychology, the same is not true for marketing. An extensive literature study (Randolph, 2009) of marketing and brand-related journals finds a limited number of papers on the human values construct. Sixteen studies show that human values are the driving force behind choices made with respect to a variety of product types (Allen, 2002; Allen, 2006; Allen and Ng, 1999, 2003; Batra et al, 2001; Doran, 2009; Elbedweihy et al, 2016; Grebitus and Dumortier, 2016; Lorgnier et al, 2019; Michell et al, 2001; Shim and Eastlick, 1998;

Vinson, Scott, and Lamont (1977) examine whether values influence consumers’ preferred choice of car; they show that more liberal consumers preferred compact, less polluting, and more durable cars, while more traditional consumers preferred larger and more prestigious cars, consistent with their values. Grebitus and Dumortier (2016) find that the choice for organic tomatoes was influenced more by values than by personality traits. Consumers who highly prioritized the values of safety and universalism were more inclined to choose organic than non-organic tomatoes.

Only a small number of studies investigate whether value congruence influences brand purchase behavior (Alsem et al, 2007; Elbedweihy et al, 2016; Lorgnier et al, 2019, Sihvonen, 2019; Shokri and Alavi, 2019; Susanty and Tresnaningrum, 2018; van Esterik-Plasmeijer and van Raaij, 2017; Zhang and Bloemer, 2008). Alsem et al (2007), for example, find a positive correlation between value congruence and newspaper brand loyalty. Zhang and Bloemer (2008) study the effects of value congruence in selecting banks and clothing stores, showing that it influenced satisfaction, trust, affective commitment, and loyalty. They find that value congruence can even compensate for a lower degree of perceived functional congruence. Susanty and Tresnaningrum (2018) demonstrate that value congruence significantly influences consumer brand identification—more so than brand distinctiveness, a memorable brand experience, or brand warmth. Elbedweihy et al, (2016) show that value congruence influences consumer brand identification, which, in turn, affects brand loyalty for mobile phones and TVs. Sihvonen (2019) also confirms the effect of value congruence on consumer brand identification. However, the effects of value congruence have not been studied in combination with the effects of trait and functional congruence. The re-purchase effects of these different types of congruence in relation to various product categories are also poorly understood.

Given the lacunae in research, more research on the effects of value congruence on re-purchasing intentions is warranted. In this context, this study explores the importance and potential of incorporating value congruence into self-congruence theory—alongside trait and functional congruence—and investigates its effects on re-purchase intentions for a range of durables, services, and consumables.
CHAPTER 2

Hypotheses

Based on self-congruence theory (Aw et al, 2019; Kang et al, 2012; Kressmann et al, 2006; Sirgy, 2018; Sop and Kozak, 2019), trait and functional congruence influence re-purchase intentions. As values are an important and distinct aspects of the self (Parks-Leduc et al, 2015), and also affect the evaluation of products (Allen, 2002; Allen, 2006; Lindberg et al, 1989), it is reasonable to expect that this is also true for value congruence. This expectation is further strengthened by the findings of Alsem et al (2007), Elbedweihy et al, (2016), Lorgnier et al, (2019), Shokri and Alavi (2019), Sihvonen (2019), Susanty and Tresnaningrum (2018), van Esterik-Plasmeijer and van Raaij (2017), and Zhang and Bloemer (2008). Hence, our hypotheses are as follows:

H1a: Value congruence positively influences re-purchase intentions.

H1b: Trait congruence positively influences re-purchase intentions.

H1c: Functional congruence positively influences re-purchase intentions.

However, functional congruence is not determined solely by the degree to which a brand’s perceived functional benefits align with the brand’s expected or desired functional benefits. Sirgy et al, (1991), Sirgy and Johar (1999), and Kressmann et al, (2006) demonstrate that the level of experienced trait congruence influences functional congruence as well. This effect occurs because consumers use the first impression of a brand’s “personality” as a cue or heuristic when assessing trait and functional congruence (Aaker, 1997; Aw et al, 2019; Kressmann et al, 2006; Maheswaran et al, 1992; Petty and Cacioppo, 1984; Sirgy et al, 1991; Sirgy, 2018). Studies confirm this sequence of effects whereby a higher degree of perceived trait congruence has an indirect (positive) effect on brand behavioral measures. This has been demonstrated among a spectrum of goods and services, including fashion (Erdoğmuş and Büdeyri-Turan, 2012), catering (Kang et al, 2012), hospitality (Kumar and Nayak, 2014; Sop and Kozak, 2019), coffee (Aw et al, 2019), airport lounges (Lee et al, 2017), sportswear (Lu and Xu, 2015), destination marketing (Sirgy and Su, 2000), and cars (Nikhashemi and Valaei, 2018). For example, if the “personality” of a car is perceived as more congruent with a consumer’s traits, this positively influences the appreciation of functional benefits, which leads to a more positive brand outcome (Nikhashemi and Valaei, 2018).
The current study proposes that the congruence between a brand’s perceived values and a consumer’s personal values will have a comparable effect. This value congruence can serve as a cue in determining the consumer’s choice, prior to spending cognitive effort on the assessment of functional congruence (Zhang and Bloemer, 2008). Value congruence influences re-purchase intentions by positively influencing how people feel about the functional attributes offered by the brand. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H2:** The effect of value congruence on re-purchase intentions is (fully or partially) mediated by functional congruence.

According to Sirgy et al (2016, 193), a longer relationship with the product category leads to more product knowledge, but, at the same time, to a more powerful effect of trait congruence than functional congruence; this is because many of the functional attributes are translated into self-related cognitions. For example, a well-known fast car brand is not judged on the functional attribute of its maximum speed alone, but also on what that speed means for the owner’s image. This effect is further strengthened in the case of value congruence because values are more fundamental to the self than personality traits because they are more stable (Olsen and Mayo, 2003). Thus, this study explores whether the influence of value congruence is more pronounced than trait congruence, for products with longer consumer relationships, as is the case with durables. These inquiries are supported by the observations of Hernandez et al (2015) and Soderberg et al (2015), who find that consumers making a choice spanning a longer period of time tend to rely on more abstract criteria such as values. As services such as car insurance are generally used over a longer term, it seems logical to expect a greater influence of value congruence than trait congruence. Conversely, for consumables, which are used immediately after consumption, value congruence is expected to be less important. Therefore, our hypothesis is:

**H3:** The influence of value congruence versus trait congruence on re-purchase intentions is higher for durables and services compared with consumables.

To illustrate the arguments, Figure 2.1 represents the relationships between the constructs and hypotheses.
In the following sections, the methodology and findings of our quantitative study are presented, and they examine the influence of traits, values, and functional congruence on re-purchase intentions across a variety of product categories (services, consumables, and durables).

**Methodology**

**Research setting – what, where and why**

A range of product and service types were selected to fill the gaps in the literature regarding the different roles of trait, value, and functional congruence in relation to re-purchasing intentions within different product categories. A pre-test was conducted with 82 respondents to establish a list of often-used products and services. The final list consisted of 24 different products, divided into three categories: services, consumables, and durables. Four frequently used products in each category were used. The products for services were car insurance, banks, travel organizations, and mobile telephone providers. The products for consumables were soft drinks, newspapers, dairy milk, and painkillers. The products for durables were cars, clothing, smartphones, and laptops.

**Questionnaire development**

The questionnaire presented respondents with a list of the 12 products; the respondents were asked to select one product they had used and when they had last...
re-purchased the product. A seven-point scale was used, ranging from “within the last week” to “longer than three years ago” and “never.” Each respondent answered questions concerning one product group. The respondents were subsequently asked to answer all survey questions in relation to their most frequently used brand. Unless stated otherwise, the seven-point Likert scale was used throughout the survey (1 = “completely disagree” and 7 = “completely agree”).

**Constructs used, validity, and reliability**

To ensure validity, previously validated measures from the literature were used whenever possible. The questionnaire was pre-tested with a group of 12 marketing students for comprehension. After minor changes in wording, the final questionnaire was determined (Appendix 1). Cronbach’s alphas are reported where appropriate, per measure (Field, 2013).

Functional congruence was measured by requesting respondents to report all important functional attribute requirements for the product, followed by a direct congruence measure adopted from Sirgy *et al* (1997). Specifically, respondents were asked, “How satisfied are you with how your most frequently used brand lives up to your expectations regarding the functional attributes you just listed as being important for you?” The answers ranged from “very unsatisfied” to “very satisfied.”

Following Aguirre-Rodriguez *et al* (2012), overall trait congruence was measured using “brand as a person” image items, as these are stronger predictors of trait congruence than brand-user images. In accordance with Eisend and Stokburger-Sauer (2013), measurement was achieved by using the 12-item brand personality scale ($\alpha = .87$) developed by Geuens *et al* (2009) (e.g., down to earth, stable, active, bold, simple, and sentimental).

Subsequently, respondents were asked to indicate, holistically, how congruent the items from the previous question were with their own personality traits. Sirgy and Johar’s (1999) four-item congruence scale ($\alpha = .96$) was used, from which an average was derived. The scale items were: “The personality traits of brand x are (not) similar to my own”; “I would (not) like to have these traits myself”; “These traits (do not) reflect how I think others see me”; and “These traits reflect how I would (not) like others to see me.” A seven-point Likert scale was used, ranging from “do not agree with” to “completely agree with.”
CHAPTER 2

To measure overall value congruence, a method comparable with the brand personality traits question was developed and based on an adaptation of the 21-item Schwartz (2007) values scale ($\alpha = .96$) (e.g., being creative, living in a safe and secure environment, being modest, and enjoying oneself).

To determine re-purchase intentions for brands that respondents preferred, a question from Kressmann et al., (2006) was adopted: “Taking your budget into consideration, would you buy this brand again?” To prevent order effects, the survey questions were randomized for each respondent.

Data collection

An online study ($n = 1182$ completed forms) was established via a panel provider based in the Netherlands. The aim was to arrive at a nationally representative sample in terms of gender, age (18 years or older), education, and family composition. Because of straightlining (giving an identical score on all questions), 73 respondents were removed, resulting in 1,109 usable complete responses. These were distributed among the products and services as follows: car insurance (89), banks (89), travel organizations (79), mobile telephone providers (86), soft drinks (88), newspapers (93), dairy milk (93), painkillers (94), cars (100), clothing (98), smartphones (100), and laptops (100).

Results

A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed to predict re-purchase intentions based on the level of trait, value, and functional congruence. Independent variables included in the multiple regressions were the mean scores for trait and value congruence, followed by functional congruence. Assumptions of linearity, error independence, homoscedasticity, unusual points, and residual normality were met, whilst extreme values were not found to be a problem. The results indicate a significant influence of trait congruence ($\beta = .151, p < .001$), value congruence ($\beta = .137, p < .001$), and functional congruence ($\beta = .318, p < .001$) on re-purchase intentions. Together, the three congruence types provide a significant prediction of re-purchase intentions: $F(3, 1105) = 123.9, p < .001$. All three variables contributed significantly to re-purchase intention predictions, resulting in an adjusted $r^2 = .250$, where $\Delta r^2 = .080$ with respect to functional congruence (Table 2.1). Thus, the variance for overall re-purchase intentions is dependent on trait
and value congruence (adjusted $r^2 = .172$) and, to a lesser extent, on functional congruence.

**Table 2.1 | Linear model of congruence as a significant predictor of re-purchase intentions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Congruence type</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SEB</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Adj. $r^2$</th>
<th>$\Delta r^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trait Congruence</td>
<td>.386**</td>
<td>0.169</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>0.151</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.250</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value Congruence</td>
<td>.387**</td>
<td>0.149</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>0.137</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional Congruence</td>
<td>.441**</td>
<td>0.382</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>0.318</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.080</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. ** $p < .01$, $r = \text{Pearson correlation}$, $B = \text{unstandardized regression coefficient}$, $SEB = \text{standard error of the coefficient}$, $\beta = \text{standardized coefficient}$, Adj. $r^2 = \text{adjusted variance explained}$, and $\Delta r^2 = \text{change in variance explained by functional congruence}$.

The outcomes of the multiple regression analyses confirm H1a, b, and c, where value, trait, and functional congruence are significant predictors of re-purchase intentions. Trait and value congruence provided the largest factors in explaining re-purchase intentions across all products and services.

Next, the mediation of the effect of value congruence on re-purchase intentions by functional congruence is addressed. An analysis of the overall mediation was performed using the PROCESS macro version 3.3 in SPSS by Hayes (2017).

In Step 1 of the mediation model, the regression of the independent variable, value congruence, on the dependent variable, re-purchase intention, is significant: $b = .42$, $t(1107) = 13.95$, $p < .001$. Step 2 shows that the regression of value congruence on the mediator, functional congruence, is significant: $b = .39$, $t(1107) = 16.07$, $p < .001$. Step 3 of the mediation process shows that the effect of the mediator on re-purchase intention, controlling for value congruence, is significant: $b = .41$, $t(1107) = 11.59$, $p < .001$. Step 4 of the analyses reveals that value congruence is a significant predictor of re-purchase intention: $b = .26$, $t(1107) = 8.25$, $p < .001$. This indicates partial mediation of value congruence by functional congruence, which is confirmed: $b = .16$, $CI [.17 -.20]$.

The results confirm H2 and show that the effect of value congruence on re-purchase intentions is partially mediated by functional congruence.

A multiple regression analysis was performed to ascertain whether the effect of value congruence (as opposed to trait congruence) on re-purchase intentions is
higher for durables and services compared with consumables. Value congruence significantly predicts re-purchase intentions, both for services ($M_{\text{value congruence}} = 4.31, SD = 1.44, \beta = .18, t(344) = 2.57, p < .05, 95\% CI [.046, .344]$) and durables ($M_{\text{value congruence}} = 4.65, SD = 1.23, \beta = .23, t(398) = 3.44, p < .01, 95\% CI [.107, .394]$), but not for consumables ($M_{\text{value congruence}} = 4.53, SD = 1.34, \beta = -.01, t(367) = -0.07, p = .95, 95\% CI [-.143, .133]$). Additionally, trait congruence is a significant predictor of re-purchase intentions for services ($M_{\text{traits congruence}} = 4.10, SD = 1.44, \beta = .18, t(344) = 2.67, p < .01, 95\% CI [.053, .346]$) and consumables ($M_{\text{traits congruence}} = 4.27, SD = 1.31, \beta = .17, t(367) = 2.45, p < .05, 95\% CI [.035, .321]$), but not for durables ($M_{\text{traits congruence}} = 4.53, SD = 1.14, \beta = .09, t(398) = 1.31, p = .19, 95\% CI [-.051, .254]$).

The results confirm H3, where the types of congruence most central to re-purchase intentions vary by product category. Value congruence is important for services and more important than trait congruence for durables, but not for consumables; and trait congruence is important for services and more important than value congruence for consumables, but not for durables. The results demonstrate that value congruence is important in relation to re-purchase intentions, specifically in the case of services and durables.

**Discussion**

Values are important predictors of behavioral intentions (Feather, 1995; Schwartz, 2012). Literature and practice suggest that human values are increasing in relevance to consumer choice criteria (Cone, 2017; Edelman, 2018; Havas, 2017; Hsu, 2017; Warc, 2018).

The principal and new finding of this study is that value congruence plays a key role as a significant predictor of re-purchase intentions along with trait and functional congruence, specifically in the case of durables and services; however, the relationship was weak for consumables. The results contrast earlier findings (Johar and Sirgy, 1999; Kressmann et al, 2006; Sirgy, 1982, 1985), as no significant effects of trait congruence on re-purchase intentions in the case of durables was found. Moreover, value congruence influences the effect of functional congruence on re-purchasing intentions, demonstrating that functional congruence mediates the effect of value congruence. These are new findings that add knowledge to the current literature.
The fact that value congruence was found to be an important predictor of purchase intentions in the case of durables and services might be linked to the relative influence of time. It could be argued that the longer one interacts with a brand, the more important fundamental values become in that relationship. A possible explanation for this might be found in a combination of ownership theory (e.g., Strahilevitz and Loewenstein, 1998)—which states that objects increasingly become a part of the self, when possessed over a longer period of time—and associative self-anchoring theories (Gawronski et al, 2007). The latter theory was developed to explain why sellers ascribe greater value to items that they own than the amount buyers are prepared to pay for the same items (Ye and Gawronski 2016). Research suggests that, once someone owns an object, associations with the self are transferred to the object, thereby making it literally a part of the self. In other words, “mine” becomes “me.” This might explain why this study found that value congruence with one’s most often used brands seems to affect purchase intentions particularly in the case of durables and services, both of which are product categories where a relationship may last several years, such as in the case of cars, laptops, and banks.

**Implications for practitioners**

The results confirm developments in practice, which suggest that human values such as benevolence to society, environmental consciousness, and fairness are becoming relevant (Accenture, 2018; Cone, 2017; Edelman, 2018; Havas, 2017; Warc, 2018).

As the effects of value congruence are mediated through functional congruence, communicating brand values is key, as consumers attach importance to values, because this enhances perceptions of product performance and influences repurchase intentions, just as it was shown to be the case for trait congruence in earlier studies (Kressmann et al, 2006; Sirgy et al, 1991 Zhang and Bloemer, 2008). A precondition for effectively using values in communications is that they are important to consumers and relevant to the product type to increase their credibility (Burmann and Zeplin, 2005; De Chernatology, 1999; Gotsi and Wilson, 2001; Portal et al, 2019; Schmitt, 2012; Urde, 2016), as this leads to improved product quality scores (Chernev and Blair, 2015). Product managers should communicate them in ways that are easy to understand, and they should be consistent across communications. They have to “live the brand,” as it were.
Brand managers benefit from knowing which values, in addition to traits and functional requirements, are relevant for consumers in relation to products. For example, bank managers are advised to focus on the values of responsible behavior toward society (universalism), consumer friendliness (benevolence), and modesty and authenticity (tradition). Similarly, car manufacturers should consider the values of universalism and benevolence as well as the value of conformism, that is, adhering to the rules of society. Practitioners wishing to use purpose marketing (Hsu 2017) will benefit from identifying if value congruence is a relevant predictor of purchasing intentions for their particular product category.

A topic for further research includes whether focusing on values is employed for the purpose of achieving self-enhancement or self-transcendent goals (Schwartz, 2012). Considering the appeal of purpose marketing, a focus on self-transcendent values may increase consumer approval. Brand managers of products that involve longer relationships, such as durables and services, are recommended to focus predominantly on brand values. Brand managers of consumables, on the other hand, would be wise to focus more on traits than on values.

**Limitations and Conclusions**

The current study has some limitations. It examined value congruence among different categories; a review of value congruence within categories would be meaningful as well. Another limitation of this study is scope. For practical reasons, only three product and service categories were used. Additional categories can be examined in future research, although care should be taken not to overgeneralize the importance of values. Further, we used a survey method, which relies on intentions. Gathering data on actual re-purchase behavior in relation to the level of value congruence would provide more nuanced results.

Given the outcomes of this study it is also recommended, for future study, to examine whether and how different parts of the self become more important depending on the period of time involved in product/brand relationships. This has not yet been studied. Taking ownership theory (Strahilevitz and Loewenstein, 1998) and associative self-anchoring theory (Gawronski et al, 2007; Ye and Gawronski, 2016) into consideration, it could be argued that the longer a relationship has lasted or will last, the more profound, central, and fundamental the parts of the self that are considered to determine congruence between the self and a brand will become. Because values are more fundamental elements of the self than personality traits
(Olsen and Mayo, 2003), this could mean that, in relation to purchase intentions, value congruence will become more relevant than trait congruence, especially when one’s relationship with a brand extends over a longer period. Following this line of reasoning, functional brand attributes could very well be more important in the present moment, brand personality traits could be more pertinent in reference to the near past or future, and values could be more pertinent in reference to the more distant past or future. More research on such possibilities is needed.

Finally, future research could further confirm the proposed mediation of value congruence effects by functional congruence. Our line of reasoning was informed by previous research; however, the reverse mediation cannot be ruled out (i.e., mediation of functional congruence effects by value congruence).

In conclusion, this study enriches current theoretical knowledge of the concept of “values” in relation to consumer behavior. It does so by examining value in relation to trait and functional congruence within the context of self-congruence theory and re-purchase intentions. The findings show that the proposed addition of value congruence strengthens the foundations of self-congruence theory and warrant a reconsideration of the congruence-related constructs in branding and marketing literature.
Chapter 2 presented a review of the literature on values as important predictors of behavioral intentions (e.g., Feather, 1995; Schwartz, 2012), as well as suggestions from the marketing literature and practice that suggest human values are becoming increasingly relevant to consumer behavior (Cone, 2017; Edelman, 2018; Havas, 2017; Hsu, 2017; Warc, 2018). To find out the influence of values on consumer intentions, we adopted Sirgy’s congruence theory as a basis and postulated that value congruence should be included in this theory alongside trait and functional congruence that influence consumer behavior.

Through an online survey (N = 1109), we found that value congruence indeed plays a key role as both a direct and an indirect predictor of repurchase intentions for durable goods and services over and above that of functional and trait congruence. However, in the case of consumables, trait congruence was a stronger predictor.

These findings led to the suggestion of a relationship between the importance of values and that of time. This was based on a combination of the ownership theory (e.g., Strahilevitz and Loewenstein, 1998) and the associative self-anchoring theory (Gawronski et al, 2007). The first theory posits that objects increasingly become part of the self, based on possession duration. In contrast, the associative self-anchoring theory explains that possession leads to the transfer of associations from the self to the object, literally making it part of the self. This is the reason why sellers place a greater value on objects they own than the amount buyers are willing to pay for the same objects (Ye and Gawronski 2016).
Based on this, it seems plausible that the longer a relationship lasts, the more important the fundamental and central parts of the self will become. Relatedly, values are considered more central and fundamental parts of the self than attributes (Olsen and Mayo, 2003). Since durable goods and services are product categories where a relationship can last for several years, as in the case of cars, laptops, and banks, this could explain why values are seen as more important than traits.

The next step in this thesis is an online experiment (N = 175) that was organized to shed light on this assumption. For this purpose, two preliminary studies (online surveys) were organized. In the experiment that followed, participants were randomly assigned to one of five-time settings corresponding with the average time several products and services were used: two years in the past (car insurance and cars), two months in the past (shampoo and phone top-up cards), now (softdrink and shampoo), two months in the future (shampoo and phone top-up cards), or two years in the future (car insurance and cars). Then, several questions were asked to score a total of 12 items - the randomized top two and bottom two attributes (4 items), personality traits (4 items) and values (4 items) obtained during the second survey according to how important they were to them. The next section describes the results of the experiment.
Chapter 3

It takes time to tango: The relative importance of values versus traits in consumer brand relationships

This chapter is based on the article that was published as: Voorn, R. J., van der Veen, G., van Rompay, T. J., & Pruyn, A. T. (2018). It takes time to tango: The relative importance of values versus traits in consumer brand relationships. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour, 17*(6), 532-541.
CHAPTER 3

Abstract

Brand managers have several options in their quest to connect their brands with consumers. They may stress functional brand attributes and benefits, their brand’s personality traits or their brand’s values (the human values attached to the brand). Which of these is most important to consumers is an open question, however. This article proposes that values may take on increased importance over time, as long-term relationships (in general) require more than just getting the job done (functional aspect) or a sense of recognition (trait correspondence). What is required most of all is a correspondence between long-term objectives and goals in life. Values are arguably the most relevant factor in longer relationships. An experiment was put together to determine if this is indeed the case. The results of our study suggest that values are indeed considered more important than traits in the case of longer relationships and that this is particularly true with decisions regarding prospective relationships and in the case of services.

Keywords: Brand personality traits, Brand values, Consumer preferences, Brand relationships
Introduction

Brand managers pursue different strategies in their quest to connect their brands to consumers and to maintain the brand’s presence in the minds of these consumers. Finding the strategy that will be most successful in achieving these goals is almost like the quest for the Holy Grail (De Chernatony, 2009). The current study focuses on the benefits of using either functional brand attributes, brand personality traits or brand values (the human values a brand represents (Allen, 2002)) as a starting point for building successful products or services. An experiment was conducted to investigate which of these is considered most important in relation to the length of time consumers used the products.

One of the first and oldest strategies used by managers is to stress functional brand attributes and the benefits these represent (e.g., Rokeach, 1973; Gutman, 1982). Secondly, they may position a brand as a personality with certain traits or behavioural characteristics (e.g., Aaker 1997; Aguirre-Rodriguez, Bosnjak & Sirgy, 2012; Sirgy, Johar, Samli & Claiborne, 1991). Previous research showed that when brand personality traits (“the set of human personality traits that are both applicable to and relevant for brands”, Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003, pp. 151, as cited in Geuens, Weijters & de Wulf, 2008) or functional attributes align with the needs and desires of consumers, consumer responses such as brand preference and purchase decisions are more positive (Sirgy, Lee & Grace, 2016).

A third strategy involves the adoption of human values, which are very important life goals that guide the attitudes and actions of people across different situations (Schwartz, 2012). Adopting human values and accentuating these values in the communication about the brand, is a strategy that has become increasingly popular in recent years (Hayman, 2017; Rodrigues Vila & Bharadwaj, 2017). Brand values differ in comparison to brand personality traits, in so far as they reflect more stable and durable brand motivations and intentions – such as a concern for safety, the environment or equality – whereas brand personality traits, as with human personality traits, are merely descriptions of a brand’s personality traits and typical behaviour styles (Aaker, 1997; Geuens et al., 2008). In line with research testifying to the importance of consumer-brand congruence, previous studies showed that when the perceived values of a brand match with those of consumers (i.e., when brands become part of consumers’ extended selves; Belk, 1988), this might not only lead to better financial accomplishments (Jonsen, Galunic, Weeks & Braga, 2015) but also to attracting the right employees (Amos & Weathington, 2008), stronger
staff loyalty and helpfulness (Wang, Fu, Qiu, Moore & Wang, 2017), as well as better brand results (Alsem, Wieringa, & Hendriks, 2007; Zhang & Bloemer, 2008).

This appears to be especially valid for services and products with which people have long-term relationships, such as cars, laptops, banks or insurance companies (Voorn, van der Veen, Rompay, Hegner & Pruyn, 2016). As a matter of fact, some brands successfully use the length of the relationship in their advertising strategies (e.g., “A bank for life” [German Nolthe and Lauth bank, 2017], “A Diamond is forever” [De Beers company, 2015], and “You never actually own a Patek Philippe. You merely look after it for the next generation” [Naas, 2016]). A possible explanation as to why brands might benefit from this strategy can be found in ownership theory (e.g. Strahilevitz & Loewenstein, 1998). This theory claims that objects become more valuable to owners the longer they have been in their possession. In other words, the longer someone possesses something, the more likely it is that the product becomes a candidate for the projection of values and desires (Gawronski, Bodenhausen & Becker, 2007; Ye & Gawronski, 2016).

Although the latter may be an explanation for the importance of traits and values in retrospective relationships, it does not explain the relative importance of traits and/or values in prospective relationships. We would like to put forward another line of reasoning that holds that values may take on increased importance over time, as long-term relationships (in general) require more than just getting the job done (functional aspect) or a sense of recognition (trait correspondence). What is required most of all is a correspondence between long-term objectives and goals in life. Values are arguably the most relevant factor in longer relationships.

This study explores the viability of this line of reasoning in order to provide preliminary answers to the challenges brand managers and organisations face in their brand positioning efforts. In particular, this study asks the following question: When are values more important than traits and is this different for either products or services? We studied this at the level of brand category, unless explicitly stated otherwise. To this end, we conducted an experiment that tested whether the length of the relationship increases the importance of brand values over that of brand personality traits or functional characteristics when choosing products and services. First we discuss the most important theory related to this question.
The role of values in purchasing decisions in relation to time

When discussing the relative importance of different brand identity dimensions (functional attributes, personality traits, and values) in consumer choices, it is of course true that functional attributes are primary (i.e., ‘dissatisfiers’), since utilitarian need is considered to be the main driver for most product purchase intentions (Schuitema & de Groot, 2015). However, watches tell more than time. Brand traits (‘is this watch like me?’) and brand values (‘how respectful is this brand towards the environment?’) are involved by the way they connect to the intrinsic psychological needs of people (Vargo, Nagao, He & Morgan, 2007). However, the question remains as to which of the two satisfiers (i.e., traits versus values) is more important, and which factors qualify this importance?

Values are very important, trans-situational and cognitively expressed goals that guide people’s attitudes as well as their behaviour in ways that are predictable (e.g. Allport, 1961; Bolzani, 2018; Feather, 1995; Hofstede, 1980; Maio, 2016; Rohan, 2000; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 2012). The same applies to purchase intentions regarding products and services (Allen, 2002, 2006; Batra, Homer & Kahle, 2001; Doran, 2009; Vinson, Scott & Lamont, 1977). Alsem et al. (2007) and Zhang & Bloemer (2008) were the first to show that value congruency – whereby there is a match between a person’s personal values and the perceived values of a brand – is an explanatory factor for behavioral effects. Voorn et al., (2016) subsequently showed that this may differ per type of product or service and that this mainly appears to be the case for durable products (e.g. cars and laptops) and services (e.g. banks and insurance companies) with which people have a relationship for a longer stretch of time.

However, it is as yet unclear which is most important: perceived values or perceived traits. The time factor could be of influence here, since the greater the distance regarding decisions that involve time, the greater the psychological distance and level of abstractedness. For instance, focusing on a moment in time further away in the future increases the relevance and importance of higher level abstract construct features, such as values, in comparison to more concrete construct features such as functional product properties (Eyal, Sagristano, Trope, Liberman, & Chaiken, 2009; Hernandez, Wright & Ferminiano Rodrigues, 2015; Lee & Wang, 2017; Trope & Liberman, 2010). A recent meta-analysis of 125 construal level studies confirmed the effects of psychological distance on abstractness (Soderberg,
Callahan, Kochersberger, Amit, & Ledgerwood (2015). The ensuing construal levels showed a stable moderate curvilinear relationship, suggesting that higher level features become exponentially more important as distance through time increases. Moreover, although many construal level studies adopt a binary view of construal levels (near moments versus far moments), Maglio and Trope (2019) suggest that distance can be placed along a continuous scale, as is the case in relationships.

In the current research, we assume that functional attributes will always be the most important characteristic of a product or service, regardless of the duration of the relationship that is involved (Gutman, 1981; Kotler & Keller, 2012). However, we argue that traits, which are usually exhibited in immediately observed brand behaviour (Aaker, 1997; Freling, Crosno & Henard, 2011), become more important in shorter relationships in terms of identity (‘Do I want to engage with a brand with these personality traits?’) (Sirgy, Lee & Grace, 2016). Values, by contrast, which are by nature abstract higher-level features, are the underlying drivers in long-term and abstract behaviour (Gecas, 1982; Hitlin, 2003; Maio, 2016; Schwartz, 2012) and are therefore more important as well as more predictive for longer relationships (‘Do I want a longer relationship with this brand?’). This would mean that the importance of values increases in correspondence with the duration of the relationship. Thus:

**H1a:** Values are considered to be more important than traits in long retrospective or prospective relationships.

**H1b:** Traits are considered to be more important than values in shorter retrospective or prospective relationships.

Incidentally, time appears to play a different role in retrospective or prospective decisions. For one thing, the future is unknown and based on intentions and more uncertainty. It is therefore more abstract in comparison to the past, which is based on certainties and facts (D’Argembeau & Linden, 2004). Having an impression of another’s values therefore allows one to make predictions about attitudes and behavioural intentions (De Groot & Steg, 2008), thereby reducing perceived risks and increasing trust (Zhang & Bloemer, 2008). Finally, people are more emotionally engaged with the future than the past (Levine, Lench, Karnaze & Carlson, 2018; Van Boven & Caruso, 2015). This is due to a devaluation of the emotional value of experiences in the past, compared to the emotional value of expected experiences in the future (Caruso, Gilbert & Wilson, 2008). Based on these considerations, we propose that:
**H1c:** Values will be even more important in long prospective relationships, compared to values in long retrospective relationships.

However, the question remains whether the hypotheses posed here apply equally to both products and services. After all, services differ from products in numerous ways. In contrast to products, they are intangible, inseparable, variable and perishable (Kotler & Keller, 2012). It may also be difficult to assess services by their technical or utilitarian properties (Darby & Karni, 1973; Galetzka, Verhoeven & Pruyn, 2006; Mort & Rose, 2004; Nelson, 1970, 1974; Zeithaml, 1981). Thus, because services bring along more risk and uncertainty, in so far as consumers lack tangible or concrete grounds for evaluation (Mitra, Reiss & Capella, 1999), consumers may primarily base their decisions on perceived brand values (Mort & Rose, 2004; Voorn et al., 2016). After all, finding compatibility with one’s own values can reduce the feeling of risk (Arts, Frambach & Bijmolt, 2011; Rogers, 2003; Zhang & Bloemer, 2008). That is why we propose that:

**H2:** Values are considered more important than traits in consumer purchase decisions of services than of products.

In summary, this study examined the following hypotheses: (H1a) values are considered to be more important than traits in long retrospective or prospective relationships and traits are considered to be more important than values in shorter retrospective or prospective relationships (H1b), values will be even more important in long prospective relationships, compared to values in long retrospective relationships (H1c) and (H2) values are considered more important than traits in consumer purchase decisions of services than of products. We elaborate on the experiments in more detail below.

**Materials and methods**

To facilitate the organisation of the experiments, two pre-studies were organised.

**Pre-study 1**

To organise the experiments, we first needed information on which categories of products and services are typically associated with usage for a couple of days, weeks or years. To determine this, an online survey was conducted (N = 300, $M_{age} = 48.9$, ...
**Pre-study 2**

A second online survey was organised to ascertain the top two most important functional attributes, brand personality traits and brand values. \( N = 300 \) respondents (\( M_{\text{age}} = 49.8, SD = 15.6, 51.3\% \) female) from a Dutch online panel were randomly assigned to one of the six products or services that were obtained from the first survey: cars or car insurance, shampoo or phone top-up cards, soft drinks or travel agencies. Respondents were asked to make a list of the functional attributes the product or service has to possess for them to be taken into consideration. They were subsequently asked to rank these attributes in order of importance on a 7-point Likert scale (1 not important and 7 very important).

This was followed by a request to score the importance (using the same Likert scale) of product personality traits (Govers & Schoormans, 2005), whereby, in accordance with recommendations by Eisend and Stokburger-Sauer (2013), the 12-item brand personality traits scale (\( \alpha = .86 \)) developed by Geuens, *et al.* (2009) was used (e.g. down to earth, stable, active, bold, simple and sentimental). The same procedure was followed for product values (in line with Zhang & Bloemer, 2008) whereby we used an adapted form of the 21-item Schwartz (2007) value scale (\( \alpha = .93 \)) (e.g. being creative, living in a safe and secure environment, being modest and enjoying oneself). Both the product personality traits as well as the product values were randomised to prevent order effects.

This resulted in a list of the top two and bottom two functional attributes, product personality traits and values for (each of the) the six products and services (See example for cars in Table 3.1).
Table 3.1 | Overview of the top two and bottom two attributes, product personality traits and product values for cars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAR</th>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Traits</th>
<th>Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top 2</td>
<td>Safe</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top 2</td>
<td>Economical</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Hedonism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottom 2</td>
<td>Low tax</td>
<td>Simplicity</td>
<td>Stimulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottom 2</td>
<td>Sat Navigation</td>
<td>Emotionality</td>
<td>Power</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data obtained from the two pre-studies were combined and subsequently used to set up the main study.

Participants, procedure and materials

An online experiment was organised for which $N = 175$ participants were recruited ($M_{age} = 48.2$, $SD = 19.2$; 51% female) who were randomly assigned to one of five time settings: two years in the past, two months in the past, now, two months in the future or two years in the future.

For each of the five moments, participants responded to questions about a product and a service. For both the ‘two years in the past’ and the ‘two years in the future’ moments, the questions were about cars and car insurance. For the moments ‘two months in the past’ and ‘two months in the future’, the questions involved shampoo and phone top-up cards. In the ‘now’ moment, the product was a soft drink and the service was a travel agency. For all moments, the participants were first asked which brand of product and service they used and then, as a manipulation check, they were asked how long they had already been using their current product or service. The average use of products and services confirmed our time span findings from the pre-study 1: cars $M_{\text{useyears}} = 6.7$, $SD = 4.0$, car insurance $M_{\text{useyears}} = 9.9$, $SD = 11.7$, shampoo $M_{\text{useweeks}} = 10.6$, $SD = 8.6$, phone credit $M_{\text{useweeks}} = 16.3$, $SD = 15.1$, soft drink $M_{\text{usedays}} = 4.0$, $SD = 4.1$ and travel agency $M_{\text{usedays}} = 11.0$, $SD = 6.4$.

Subsequently, respondents were asked to imagine that they bought the relevant product or service in the time frame corresponding with the moment they were assigned to, i.e. in the moments two years retrospectively or prospectively: “Now, here are some questions about the attributes that could be of importance to you when selecting a car. What was important to you when you bought your latest...
car? What attributes did you find very important, and which did you find less important? Imagine you bought your last car two years ago. Which attributes were important to you then? Please take a few moments to think about this. Press continue when you are ready.” The same questions were formulated for the two months retrospectively or prospectively as well as the now moment. After this, respondents were asked to score 12 items in total - the randomised top two and bottom two attributes (4 items), personality traits (4 items) and values (4 items) that were obtained during the second survey (see Table 1) - according to how important these were to them on a 7-point Likert scale (anchors: totally unimportant versus extremely important). The top two scoring attributes, traits and values were subsequently used to analyse the results. All top two scores were in line with those found in pre-study 2.

Results

Before we report on the outcomes in relation to the hypotheses that were formulated, we want to point out here that we first tested our general assumption that functional attributes are always considered to be the most important factor in making purchase decisions, regardless of the duration of the relationship with the products and services. In all five moments: two years ago, two months ago, now, two months in the future and two years in the future, functional attributes were indeed considered to be most important compared to traits and values (all p’s <.001) (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 | Overview of mean importance of functional attributes, traits and values for products and services per time condition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2 Years ago</th>
<th>2 Months ago</th>
<th>Now</th>
<th>2 Months future</th>
<th>2 Years future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Functional attributes</td>
<td>5,7</td>
<td>5,7</td>
<td>5,9</td>
<td>5,7</td>
<td>6,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traits</td>
<td>4,1</td>
<td>4,0</td>
<td>4,3</td>
<td>4,2</td>
<td>4,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>5,2</td>
<td>3,9</td>
<td>4,7</td>
<td>4,1</td>
<td>5,8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Next, we investigated H1a:

**H1a:** Values are considered to be more important than traits in long retrospective or prospective relationships.

A paired sample t-test was conducted to compare the difference in importance of values versus traits at a two-year retrospective and prospective moment (see figure 3.1).

![Figure 3.1](image-url)

**Figure 3.1** | Difference in importance scores for traits and values per time moment.
*Note. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001*

Values were indeed considered to be more important than traits for making purchase decisions in both the ‘two years ago’ moment as well as the ‘two years in the future’ moment (\(M_{\text{values}} = 5.2, SD = 1.0\) and \(M_{\text{traits}} = 4.1, SD = 1.5\)), \(t(69) = 7.12, p < .001, d = 0.9, 95\% CI [0.74, 1.42]\) as well as in the two years in the future moment (\(M_{\text{values}} = 5.7, SD = 0.84\) and \(M_{\text{traits}} = 4.3, SD = 1.5\)), \(t(69) = 6.98, p < .001, d = 1.2, 95\% CI [0.91, 1.91]\).

Additionally, we performed extra simple regression analyses in order to ascertain the influence of the indicated number of days that respondents used the different
products and services on the importance of values, both in terms of retrospective (from now till 2 years ago) as well as a prospective (from now till 2 years in the future) relationships. The added benefit of a regression analysis being that it also addresses differences between participants for whom the time setting manipulation largely exceeds their current consumption habit and others for which the consumption habit is exceeding the time span. Retrospectively the increase in average days of use significantly predicted an increase in the importance of values ($M_{values, days, use, retro} = 960, SD = 2257, \beta = .27, t(208) = 4.04, p < .001, 95\% CI [.0001, .0003]$). The increase in average days of use also explained a significant proportion of variance in importance scores ($R^2 = .07, F(1,208) = 16.33, p < .001$). The same was the case prospectively ($M_{values, days, use, future} = 1570, SD = 5188, \beta = .26, t(208) = 3.90, p < .001, 95\% CI [.00004, .0001]$). Also here the increase in average days of use explained a portion of the variance in importance scores ($R^2 = .07, F(1,208) = 15.23, p < .001$).

A comparable analysis of the influence of the number of days the respondents indicated using the different products and services on the importance of traits did, however, not produce any significant effects retrospectively ($M_{traits, days, use, retro} = 960, SD = 2257, \beta = .06, t(208) = .87, p < .34, 95\% CI [.00006, .0002]$) nor prospectively ($M_{traits, days, use, future} = 1570, SD = 5188, \beta = .04, t(208) = .63, p < .53, 95\% CI [.00003, .00005]$).

Overall, these outcomes confirm hypothesis H1a and show a large effect for perceived values being considered more important than perceived personality traits with regard to purchasing decisions for products and services that have been or will be used for more than two years in the past or future, respectively. The increase of the importance of values versus traits was additionally confirmed by separate regression analyses.

Next, we turn to H1b:

**H1b:** traits are considered to be more important than values in shorter retrospective or prospective relationships.

Traits are not considered to be more important than values at the retrospective 2 month moment ($M_{traits} = 4.0, SD = 1.8$ and $M_{values} = 3.9, SD = 1.8$), $t(69) = .68, p = .5, d = 0.06, 95\% CI [-.21, .42]$) nor at the prospective 2 month moment ($M_{traits} = 4.1, SD = 1.3$ and $M_{values} = 4.1, SD = 1.4$), $t(69) = .58, p = .58, d = 0.07, 95\% CI [-.21, .38]$. 
**H1c:** Values will be even more important in long prospective relationships, compared to values in long retrospective relationships.

An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the difference in importance of (the average of product and service) values in the long prospective condition (2 years in the future moment) versus the long retrospective condition (2 years in the past). Values in the ‘2 years in the future’ moment were indeed considered more important for making purchase decisions than values in the ‘2 years ago’ moment ($M_{values\,2\,yrs\,future} = 5.7$, $SD = 0.84$ and $M_{values\,2\,yrs\,ago} = 5.2$, $SD = 1.0$), $t(69) = 2.51, p = .017$, $d = 0.54$, 95% CI [0.11, 0.99]

This outcome shows that values are considered to be more important in purchase decisions in long prospective relationships, compared to long retrospective relationships. Thus hypothesis H1c is confirmed.

**H2:** Values are considered more important than traits in consumer purchase decisions of services than of products.

A paired sample t-test was conducted to compare the difference in the importance of values versus traits between services and products based on values-minus-traits scores for services and products. In all moments, with the exception of the now moment, values were considered more important than traits in consumer purchase decisions of services than of products. Thus, in most of the consumer choice moments, values are considered to be more important than traits when choosing services, compared to choosing products (see table 3.3 for details). H2 is therefore largely supported.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.3</th>
<th>Outcome of a paired samples t-test to compare the importance of values and traits between services and products in all moments based on difference scores of values-minus-traits for services and products</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2Y ago</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2M ago</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2M Future</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2Y Future</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 3

Summary

The results of our experiment show, as predicted, that perceived values are more important than perceived personality traits in longer relationships (H1a) and that the importance of values increases (in comparison to traits) as the number of days that the products and services are used increases. Additionally, we found that traits are not considered to be more important than values in shorter retrospective or prospective relationships (H1b). Our results further suggest that the importance of values is indeed stronger in the case of longer prospective relationships compared to longer retrospective relationships (H1c). Also, in most cases, perceived values are more important than traits for services than for products (H2). We wish to point out, however, that the relatively small sample size that was used in our study may have exaggerated the effect sizes of some of our findings or may have obscured some other true effects in our analysis. Combined, these results show that the duration of a relationship influences the relative importance of values over traits in the consumer decision process, especially in prospective situations, and that this is particularly pertinent in the case of services compared to products.

Discussion and conclusions

Previous studies show that brand preference is influenced by the degree of congruence experienced between brand values and one’s own values (Alsem et al., 2007; Zhang & Bloemer, 2008). However, the extent to which this applies differs between products and services and also appears to be influenced by the duration of the relationship between brands and consumers (Voorn et al., 2016). These latter predictions were investigated in the current study.

The outcomes of our study confirm that of the various product or service categories, functional attributes, regardless of time, are the most important determinants in purchase decisions. This might be different, however, when consumers select between different categories of brands that are otherwise considered equal in terms of perceived functional attributes. In such cases, brand values might play a more important role than was found in the current, category based, study. More interestingly however, the results confirm the assumption that perceived values are more important than perceived personality traits in longer relationships and that this effect is stronger in prospective rather than retrospective relationships. Furthermore, we found support for the prediction that values are overall considered
to be more important for services than for products and that this is influenced by the duration of the relationship. However, in shorter relationships, it seems, contrary to our prediction, that traits are not more important than values. Also, we found that the importance of traits versus values does not increase when the duration of the relationship increases, while the opposite is the case for values versus traits.

Our study therefore suggests that the duration of a relationship may be another way in which the length of time has been demonstrated to be of influence on the importance of values in the selection processes of products and services, as demonstrated in the construal level studies by Eyal et al. (2009) and Hernandez et al. (2015). These studies showed that the level of abstractness increases between making a decision now or in a moment in the future. This means the importance of values (versus attributes) increases with decisions involving the future. However, it is suggested (Maglio & Trope, 2019) that this is not an exclusively binary process, whereby there are only two levels of construal in concrete near moments or abstract future moments. Rather, levels of abstraction can progress as the length of time increases, regardless of whether this happens retrospectively or prospectively. The current study shows that values, which are higher order abstract features, indeed become more important as the length of time increases, although this decision can start in a near moment. Although values become more important in future decisions, and therefore more abstract situations, they can be activated in more near situations as well, by asking respondents to elaborate on future consequences of current decisions (Maio, 2017). This technique was used in this study by requesting the participants to consider the importance of functional attributes, traits or values, based on specific alternative relationship durations.

The current study also demonstrates that values are more important in decisions concerning the future than those involving the past. This confirms the theory in current literature that suggests that past experiences, which are known and therefore less abstract, are devalued in comparison to the more uncertain and thus more abstract decisions involving the future (Caruso et al., 2008; D'Argembeau & Linden, 2004; van Boven & Caruso, 2015). In such cases, knowing another's values offers a way to make predictions concerning their attitudes and behavioural intentions in the future, thereby reducing uncertainty, and increasing trust. In the current study, this is particularly true for the importance of values for services.

The foregoing leaves very interesting questions open for future studies. One of these is which other determinants, besides the influence of time, exist that
influence the importance of values for services? Services are higher in intangibility, inseparability, variability, and perishability compared to products (Kotler & Keller, 2012), which makes services, in general, harder to evaluate on quality (Darby & Karni, 1973; Galetzka et al., 2006; Nelson, 1970, 1974; Zeithaml, 1981). Might it be for instance the case that the intangibility of services also influences the importance of values as these, as suggested by Zhang and Bloemer (2008), are able to increase the level of trust if there is congruence between personal values with a brand’s values?

Another possibility may be that in the case of longer relationships with a service (and especially credence services) perceived values become almost part of the dissatisfiers instead of making up part of the satisfiers (Vargo et al., 2007). Given the fact that, as psychological distance becomes greater, we have a tendency to fall back on ever more abstract information when trying to gain a hold on reality (Rim, Uleman & Trope, 2009), it could be argued that values might play this role. This implies that a brand’s functional attributes may play a more important role in selecting search services, and a brand’s personality traits in the selection of experience services, as they help determine the desirability of interaction on the basis of congruity (Sirgy et al., 2016). Brand values may mostly play a part in assessing the (even more abstract) credence services, which, by their very nature, are almost impossible to evaluate in terms of quality, compared to search and experience services (Sharma, Sivakumaran & Marshall, 2014). The distinction being, as defined by Darby and Karni (1973) and Nelson (1970), that one can judge the quality of search products and services before buying or using them, e.g., a dress (Nelson, 1970) or jewellery and furniture (Zeithaml, 1981) and that the quality of experience products and services can only be determined after buying and using them, e.g., a vacation or meals (Zeithaml, 1981). Compared to search and experience products and services, the quality of credence products and services is almost impossible to judge (by non-experts), even after buying and using them, e.g., vitamin pills, law office services (Darby & Karni, 1973) or psychotherapy (Iacobucci, 1991).

Additionaly, information on values could possibly close the trust gap for services, since their quality is almost impossible to judge based on functional attributes, as is possible in the case of products (Chernev & Blair, 2015; MacMillan, Money, Money, & Downing, 2005; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). The predictive possibilities that insights into a brand’s values offer, in terms of its intentions, might lead to an increase of the feeling of trust, which would lower the perceived higher risks in selecting credence
services versus search and experience services (Mitra, Reiss & Capella, 1999). Knowing the values that a brand demonstrates has many advantages. It has been observed in an experiment that brands that communicate their values enjoy more trust, a higher buying intention, better word of mouth intentions as well as a higher evaluation of their quality, compared to the same brands that do not communicate their values (Chernev & Blair, 2015). Since it is impossible for non-experts to evaluate credence services, even after buying and using them, communicating the brand’s values may be of particular benefit to credence services. Further research into this seems useful.

A limitation of our study is perhaps that, in our design, we have investigated the role of values in relation to products and services on a category level. This still leaves the question open as to how best to operationalize the concept of values on a brand level. At the brand level, there is direct communication with consumers, who then gain better insight into the values that are important for a brand as well as their personality traits. But what is then the scope of freedom for product managers in selecting the values they would like to adopt for their brand? To what extent can these deviate from the values deemed important for the brand category? What are the degrees of freedom? Also, can values play a prominent role for brands for which values, at product and service category level, do not appear to be important in the selection process? A final limitation concerns the relatively small sample size. We acknowledge that this may have obscured effects or produced exaggerated effect sizes for observed effects. Clearly, these combined limitations call for follow-up research in which our findings are further substantiated.

**Implications for practitioners**

Once again it has become clear that the importance of values in consumers’ choices can be more important than those of traits (Voorn et al., 2016). An additional outcome of our study is that the duration of the relationship appears to play an important part, especially in decisions involving the future and that in particular services might benefit from communicating relevant values to their consumers.

One question that remains, for practitioners, is the relevance for brands of different types of values. Traditionally, one of the fundamental principles in marketing has always been to align what a brand offers with what consumers find important. This also holds true for brand values (e.g. Aaker 1991; Alsem et al., 2007; Gutman,
1981; Rokeach, 1973; Voorn et al., 2016; Zhang & Bloemer, 2008). Increasingly, though brands seem to select issues relevant to society, they tend to find it more important to make their own value statements instead of selecting category values that consumers may find more important. For instance, Patagonia uses their own concern for the environment, (which belongs to the value group of universalism, according to Schwartz, 2012), as the basis for its advertising campaigns (Carus, 2012). Dove, with their “Real Beauty” tagline, makes a statement against the “ideal woman” image often used in fashion, beauty and the cosmetics industry, thereby advocating that all women should feel beautiful (Dove, 2016). And Heineken (2017) also recently opted to focus on values such as universalism and security in a world full of conflicts with their video commercial “Worlds Apart”. In this commercial, which received more than 11 million views on YouTube in three weeks, different people who are opposites of each other (in sexual orientation, political views or otherwise) end up in a relationship by daring to open up to each other (in line with the brand’s international slogan “Open Your World”), thereby making the world a better place.

However, there is controversy in professional circles about the effectiveness of using relevant societal values in marketing campaigns, which is also a central point of discussion in ‘purpose marketing’ (Ritson, 2017). For instance, are brands that are engaged in purpose marketing really more successful in stimulating sales, compared to more ‘traditional’ brands focusing on functional and brand personality traits (e.g., Aaker 1997; Aguirre-Rodriguez, Bosnjak & Sirgy, 2012; Sirgy, Johar, Samli & Claiborne, 1991; Sirgy et al., 2016)?

The current discussion on the effectiveness of purpose marketing highlights a distinction between brands using values that are category driven (such as in this study) or society driven, such as concern for the environment (Patagonia), self-respect (Dove) and making the world a little bit more peaceful (Heineken). These latter values are linked with issues that will remain important in the long run. And, as we have shown, as the importance of values increases under the influence of (relationship) time, it may be of interest to the field of marketing to investigate the benefits of using societal values rather than (classic) category-driven values. What would happen, for example, if consumers are offered the choice between a bar of chocolate that offers the quality assurance of a centuries old artisanal production method, versus a bar of chocolate that ensures that no child labour has been used in its production, such as the very popular Dutch brand Tony Chocolonely? Both brands use expressions of values, but how is this perceived among consumers?
Construal level theory possibly offers a few leads in finding a satisfying answer to this question, since it suggests that certain functional attributes (values that are more related to product quality) especially play a role in the present (e.g. Hernandez, Wright & Ferminiano Rodrigues, 2015, Liberman & Trope, 1998; Trope, Liberman & Wakslak, 2007), whereas more abstract constructs (such as societal values, like the fight against child labour) particularly play a part in the future (Eyal, Sagristano, Trope, Liberman & Chaiken, 2009).

It certainly seems that marketing managers would be wise to study which values are relevant for their brands, as seen from the perspective of consumers, as this may help in reaching the desired brand outcomes. Whether they should focus on values that are more product related or more abstract and “societally relevant” remains open for debate, for now.

In summary, our study supplements previous research on the importance of perceived product and service category values, versus functional attributes and traits in the consumer selection process. Our study shows that values are considered more important than traits in the case of longer retrospective and prospective product relationships. This is particularly true in the case of services. Other drivers, such as the role of values in relation to the psychological distance that is experienced towards search, experience and credence products and services, as well as the effectiveness of different value types, need to be investigated further, especially at brand level.
Bridging the chapters 2

Chapter 2 presented the results of a survey that showed that value congruence does indeed play a key role as both a direct and indirect predictor of repurchase intentions for durable goods and services, over and above those of functional congruence and trait congruence. We argued that this is related to how long one has a relationship with a product or service and that values will be more important than traits in longer relationships.

In chapter 3, we investigated this through an online experiment and found that this was confirmed. Values are indeed more important than traits in longer relationships. The experiment showed that the length of a relationship affects the relative importance of values over traits in the consumer decision process, especially in prospective situations, and that this is particularly pertinent in the case of services compared to products.

Now that values have been shown to be more important in consumer behavior situations than previously recognized in theory, especially in the case of longer prospective relationships, an interesting question that remains open for practice is what the relevance of different types of values to brands is. Given recent developments in which a growing number of brands seem to be placing more emphasis in their marketing communications on the social values they stand for, also known as purpose marketing, the choice of which values provide the best fundamental support for this becomes pertinent.
Our third study therefore focuses on the question of which types of values lead to stronger attitude towards the brand, perceived quality, and consideration to buy among consumers? We draw on the rise of purpose marketing and compare the typical social, self-transcendent values used in purpose marketing, such as universalism and benevolence, with their opposite value type, the self-enhancement values such as achievement and power. In this study, we also answer a call by Sihvonen (2019) and examine the relationship between the importance of values and the role of consumer brand identification as a mediator.

The assumption we posited was that a brand message based on self-transcending values would lead to stronger results in terms of attitude towards the brand, perceived quality, and consideration to buy than using a brand message based on self-enhancement values. This is based on other studies that show that self-transcendent values are considered more important than self-enhancement values. Additionally, we posited that this process is mediated by consumer brand identification. An experiment (N = 1000) was organized to test our hypotheses. The following section contains the report of our findings.
Chapter 4

Which value type promises more value in marketing communication?

This chapter is based on an article that has been submitted for publication as:
Voorn, R. J., van der Veen, G., van Rompay, T. J., & Pruyn, A. T. (2022). Which value type promises more value in marketing communication?
CHAPTER 4

Abstract

This study is based on research focused on the importance of values in marketing communication. It looks into the effects of self-transcendent values as used by purpose brands, in comparison to self-enhancement values. In this context, values are important life goals on which the attitudes and actions of people in various situations are based. The results of an experiment (N = 1000) set up to this end show that self-transcendental values are considered to be more important than self-enhancement values. Also, the use of self-transcendental values leads, both directly and indirectly, to stronger perceived product quality, a more positive brand attitude and increased consideration to buy than the use of self-enhancement values. The indirect and positive effect of values on the dependent variables is the result of mediation through consumer brand identification. The current study complements previous research conducted into the importance of different value types in consumer behavior and provides new insights into which value type is more beneficial for purpose marketing efforts.

Keywords: Brand values, human values, purpose marketing, values-driven
Introduction

Recent publications show that consumers place increasing importance on the values that brands represent (Accenture, 2018; Hayman, 2017; Mirzaei, Webster & Siuki, 2021; Omnicon, 2019; Rodrigues Vila and Bharadwaj, 2017; Warc, 2018; Yoganathan, McLeay, Osburg & Hart 2018). Values such as taking care of nature (universalism), looking after the wellbeing of loved ones (benevolence), leading an adventurous life (stimulation) and establishing stability and security (conservation) are important life goals on which the attitudes and actions of people in various situations are based (Schwartz, 2012). Global studies indicate, for instance, that consumers are increasingly drawn to brands that support a social purpose and are four times more likely to trust (Peters, 2021) and consider buying a purpose-driven brand in comparison to a non-purpose driven brand (Aziz, 2020). Additionally, consumers are even prepared to stop using brands supporting a cause that does not match the values they find important (Cone, 2017).

Brands with a purpose are not only more attractive to consumers, but also to investors (Annweiler, 2019) and employees. A recent study conducted by Deloitte (2019) shows that purpose brand companies experience stronger staff motivation and loyalty. And from a business perspective it also seems to make sense, with companies such as Unilever (2019) reporting that their purpose-led brands grew “69% faster than the rest of the business and delivered 75% of the company’s growth”. This form of marketing, in which brands articulate a purpose based on their own brand values (the human values a brand represents; Allen, 2002), is referred to as “purpose marketing” (Hsu, 2017). Purpose marketing is fairly new (Buursink, 2020) and is not yet widely substantiated by scientific studies (Hajdas & Kleczek, 2021). It was recently considered a new and fresh topic by marketing scholars during the 14th Global Brand Conference, organized by the Academy of Marketing in 2019 (Baumgarth, Boltz, Schmidt & Roper, 2020).

In purpose marketing, a brand’s values are at the core of a company’s mission, vision, and identity. They also are the driver behind all brand activities and are key to its mentality shown towards society (Hsu, 2017; Kantar, 2019). Examples of brands using purpose marketing are Patagonia, an outdoor sports company with an integrated focus on protecting the environment, Ben & Jerry’s, an ice cream company with a focus on environmental and social causes, and Nike, that recently adopted the objective of protecting minorities in sports as the central theme for all their activities (Deloitte, 2021). The type of values grouped together that
purpose brands concentrate on, such as taking care of the world at large and nature (universalism) or looking after the wellbeing of loved ones (benevolence), form the higher order values group of self-transcendent values (Schwartz, 2012; Voorn, van der Veen, van Rompay & Pruyn, 2018).

The amount of available academic literature on purpose marketing and values is still rather limited (Buursink, 2020; Hajdas & Kleczek, 2021). Therefore, it is not yet clear how strong the effects of self-transcendent values, as used by many purpose brands, are on consumer behavior in comparison to self-enhancement values (in which emphasis is on the \textit{self} rather than on other people and/or the environment). Voorn \textit{et al} (2021) suggest that self-transcendent values such as universalism and benevolence are potentially the most promising, since self-transcendent values are globally and consistently considered as being the most important (Schwartz & Cieciuch, 2021). Moreover, recent developments can make them even more prominent for consumers. Especially with major changes in personal conditions as well as within social groups and society taking place, due to what is happening in the world, such as wars, economic crises, and growing concerns regarding climate change. This could lead to an increase or decrease in the priority of a certain value type over time (Bardi & Goodwin, 2011).

In the case of universalism values this may be true due to e.g., increasing concerns about climate change (Egan, Konisky & Mullin, 2022; van Dalen & Henkens, 2019) or the increasing awareness and the corresponding societal debate (e.g., Black Lives Matter, Me Too) regarding equal rights and inclusivity (Holt & Sweitzer, 2020). In benevolence values we notice an increased realization among consumers that we need to support each other more due to e.g., financial crises as they occurred in the last decade (Sortheix, Parker, Lechner & Schwartz, 2019) or the recent COVID-crisis (Steinbach, Kautz & Korsgaard, 2021). When brands act based on values that consumers regard as highly important, it leads to a stronger symbolic harmony between a brand and our own “goals, feelings and self-definitions”. It also makes it easier to choose between brands (Levy, 1959, p. 120). This is partly explained by the consumer-brand identification theory, which predicts that when consumers experience a match between a brand and their “self”, it will lead to a range of positive outcomes such as brand loyalty and brand advocacy (Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar & Sen, 2012). However, it is still unsure whether this also holds true for values. That is why Sihvonen (2019) called for more empirical studies to examine whether the shared importance of values between a consumer and a brand increases brand results, mediated by consumer brand identification. Finding
out more about this, as well as understanding whether use of self-transcendent over self-enhancement values transpires in managerially relevant effects (Prophet, 2021), adds new knowledge to the literature on this particular topic.

This paper is a response to this call and shows the results of the research conducted into the effects of value-importance on the Attitude towards the Brand (AttB) (Spears & Singh, 2004), Quality Perception of a Product or service (PPQ) (Chernev & Blair, 2015) and Consideration to Buy (CtB) (Baxendale, Macdonald & Wilson, 2015). It also studies the mediating role of Consumer Brand Identification (CBI) (Sihvonen, 2019). An additional question is whether these effects appear regardless of how long products and services are being used. A recent study performed by Voorn et al (2021) indicates that corresponding value-importance between a brand and consumers results in stronger repurchase intentions for products and services that are being used over a longer period of time. Accordingly, an experiment was conducted to test these predictions.

The effect of value importance in a brand purpose statement on several consumer responses

Values and their importance

Values are important life goals that play a significant role in people’s lives in various situations (Maio, 2016; Roccas & Sagiv, 2017). They influence people’s attitudes and actions (Allport, 1961; Feather, 1995; Ferraro, Escalas & Bettman, 2011; Foad, Maio & Hanel, 2020; Hitlin, 2003; Rohan, 2000; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 2012), also when they make decisions as consumers (Hayman, 2017; Rodrigues Vila & Bharadwaj, 2017; Sihvonen, 2019; Torelli et al., 2012; Voorn et al., 2021). This effect on consumers is strengthened when there is not only a match between what consumers expect of a brand in terms of their functional needs, so what the product or service literally does for them, but also when a consumer recognizes that a brand shares the same values (Torelli et al., 2012; Voorn et al., 2021; Zhang & Bloemer, 2008).

Schwartz (2012) distinguishes 54 different values, displayed in a circular model with related values displayed side by side and opposite values displayed opposite from each other. These 54 values can be divided into ten main groups constituting
CHAPTER 4

four different higher order value types: 1) self-enhancement values such as power and achievement, 2) self-transcendent values of universalism and benevolence, 3) openness to change values like self-direction, stimulation and hedonism and lastly 4) conservation values such as conformity, tradition or security. All values are, by definition, desirable to people but they are different in terms of their relative importance (Cieciuch, 2017; Sagiv & Schwartz, 2000; Schwartz, 2012). Large studies conducted by Schwartz and Bardi (2001) and by Schwartz & Cieciuch (2021) show that people consider self-transcendent values as being the most important, and self-enhancement values as being the least important. This is most likely caused by the fact that self-transcendent values are grounded in the notion that humans are only able to survive when they also take care of the environment and society as a whole (universalism) and, especially, their loved ones (benevolence) (Schwartz & Bardi, 2001; Schwartz, 2012). As people in most cultures from a very young age are raised with the understanding of the critical importance of this value type over other types, it is also the most salient value type. It leads to a stronger need to fulfill the goals associated with self-transcendental values (Sanderson & McQuilkin, 2017).

When the importance between a brand’s and a consumer’s values matches, it coincides with the deep need and automatic behavior of people to form closer relationships with others that are similar to themselves in relevant ways, as explained by the similarity–attraction theory (Aron, Steele, Kashdan & Perez, 2006; Finkel & Baumeister 2019; McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook, 2001; Ruijten, 2020) and the brand-identification theory (Sihvonen, 2019; Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012. Moreover, a match with a brand regarding the importance of values also positively affects the consumers’ evaluation of the functional attributes of the brand. This strengthens its appeal in purchase decisions as a result (Voorn et al., 2021).

Several studies have shown that when consumers’ values are reflected in the values of a brand, it leads to tangible effects on the Attitude towards the Brand (AttB) (King, Murillo & Lee, 2017; Pérez-Villarreal, Martínez-Ruiz & Izquierdo-Yusta, 2019), Perceived Product Quality (PPQ), (Adcroft, Teckman, Kwak & Kang, 2009) and Consideration to Buy (CtB) (Alsem et al., 2007; Torelli, Özsomer, Carvalho, Keh & Maehle, 2012; Voorn et al., 2021; Zhang & Bloemer, 2008). It is however still unknown which type of brand value type will have stronger effects on these dependent variables. Is it a brand message based on self-transcendent brand values, or is it the opposite, a brand message based on self-enhancement
Which value type brand values? This is of particular interest to brands that currently use purpose marketing (or are considering this) and that base their activities mostly on self-transcendent values. Studies conducted by Schwartz and Bardi (2001) and Schwartz & Cieciuch (2021) for example, show that self-transcending values such as universalism and benevolence in particular, will probably be considered as more attractive to individuals than self-enhancement values, as those are considered to be the most important value type (Cieciuch, 2017). This idea is likely further strengthened by the major events that have occurred over the last decades, such as the attack on the twin towers in 2002, subsequent wars and global terrorism, financial crises (Sortheix et al., 2019), growing concerns about climate change and its consequences over the last ten years (Egan, et al., 2022; van Dalen & Henkens, 2019) and the recent COVID-epidemic (Steinbach et al., 2021). European Social Survey data gathered between 2002 and 2020 (ESS, 2021; Voorn, 2018a) also reflect this priority of looking after the world at large and the environment, as well as the welfare of loved ones. In other words, the priority of self-transcendent values has increased while the priority of self-enhancement values has remained very low. We therefore propose:

**H1a:** A brand message based on Self-Transcendent Values (STV) will lead to stronger results in terms of Attitude towards the Brand (AttB), Perceived Product Quality (PPQ) and Consideration to Buy (CtB) than a brand message based on Self-Enhancement Values (SEV).

Since multiple studies (e.g., Schwartz & Bardi, 2001; Schwartz & Cieciuch, 2021) indicate that in most countries the benevolence value is considered as most important followed by universalism and the other values, we additionally wish to explore:

**H1b:** A brand message based on benevolence values will generate stronger results in terms of AttB, PPQ and CtB than a brand message based on Universalism, Achievement, Power values or no values.

**Consumer brand identification (CBI)**

Consumers don’t only buy brands because of their functionality, but also because of their brand personalities (Sirgy, 1982) and brand values (Sihvonen, 2019; Voorn et al., 2021) as they help them to build their identities (Hitlin, 2003; Stockburger-Sauer et al., 2012). Belk (1988, p.160) summarized this as, “we are what we have”.
CHAPTER 4

This means that we integrate some brands into our selves, because their values match the importance we attribute to these values on a personal level (Tuškej, Golob & Podnar, 2013). Not only does this help us with contributing to society and those we care about, but also to express ourselves (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). In turn, a stronger brand identification positively influences brand results as demonstrated by Stokburger-Sauer et al., (2012). This was confirmed in a subsequent study by Tuškej et al., (2013) who, additionally, showed that CBI, generated by a match in value-importance, operates as a mediator and positively affects a consumer’s commitment towards a brand. In fact, it fully mediated the effect. A similar CBI-mediation role was also found in studies by Rather, Tehseen & Parrey (2018) and by He, Huang & Wu (2018). This leads us to the following hypothesis:

**H2:** The effect of value-based brand messages on AttB, PPQ and CtB is positively mediated by CBI.

**Influence of usage duration**

Several studies explain the influence of psychological time on consumer behavior (e.g., Hornik & Zakay, 1996). People base their decisions on near or far consequences (Eyal, Sagristano, Trope, Liberman, & Chaiken, 2009; Maglio & Trope, 2019; Trope & Liberman, 2010; Youn & Kim (2019)). The longer the relationship with a brand lasts, the more important human values will become. This was demonstrated in a recent study conducted by Voorn et al (2018), which showed that when products or services are used over a longer period of time, the importance of values does increase in comparison to products or services that are only used for a shorter period of time. And as brand values play an important role when consumers select products or services they can identify with (Sihvonen, 2019; Stockburger-Sauer et al., 2012), it can be expected that the longer the relationship lasts, it will also increase the level of brand identification. Furthermore, once consumers identify themselves with brands, it increases their loyalty according to a meta-analysis conducted by Khamitov, Wang, and Thomson (2018). This means that we can expect usage duration to further strengthen the effects of the moderator on the dependent variables. Taking this into consideration, we propose:

**H3:** A value-based brand message will have a stronger effect on AttB, PPQ and CtB for products and services that require, or allow, a longer usage duration.
**Difference between products and services**

Services are more abstract than products, as they are more intangible, inseparable, variable, and perishable than products (Kotler & Keller, 2012). It makes it therefore harder and riskier to assess services based on their technical or utilitarian properties (Darby & Karmi, 1973; Mitra, Reiss, & Capella, 1999; Zeithaml, 1981). This is in particular the case when it is not possible to assess a service, not even after it has been purchased, unless you are an expert yourself, as is the case for credence services such as insurance, bank services or notary office assistance (Galetzka, Verhoeven, & Pruyn, 2006). As services pose more risk and uncertainty to consumers than products due to their lack of tangibility and veritable grounds to evaluate them, they may base their choice of services more on brand values than when they select products (Groepel-Klein & Kobel, 2018; Mort & Rose, 2004; Voorn *et al*., 2018, Zhang & Bloemer, 2008). Compatibility in the importance awarded to values will decrease the perceived risk in such cases (Arts, Frambach, & Bijmolt, 2011; Rogers, 2003). For that reason we propose:

**H4:** The effects of value-importance on the dependent variables will be more positive for services than products.

To illustrate the arguments, Figure 4.1 represents the relationships between the hypotheses and the constructs that are used.

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**Figure 4.1** Hypothesized model of the relationship between brand value-importance and attitude towards the brand, perceived product quality and consideration to buy mediated by consumer brand identification and moderated by brand usage duration
CHAPTER 4

Materials and methods

For the experimental conditions in the main study, both an example of a product and a service are used that also reflect different average usage times (short-term use and long-term use). This was based on the findings of Voorn et al., (2018). A soft drink was selected as a short-term product and a travel agency as a short-term service. For the long-term use conditions, a car and a bank were respectively selected.

To facilitate the setup of the experiment, we organized an online pre-study (N = 108, $M_{age} = 53.3, SD = 18.5$, 53% female) to obtain information on the most attractive value-based purpose goal for the two self-transcendence values 1) universalism and 2) benevolence (Schwartz, 2012). Additionally, we needed information on the level of fit between the value-based purpose goals and the product and services selected for the main study, as it was important to prevent extreme differences between outcomes from occurring on this point.

The most attractive universalism value-based purpose goal was the donation of a sizable part of the profits towards a fund for the organization of access to clean drinking water for all. This was well recognized as an example of a universalism value ($M_n = 5.9, SD = 1.1$ on a 7-point Likert scale with left representing very unrecognizable, and right very recognizable) and fitted well with all products and services. The most attractive benevolence value-based purpose goal was the donation of a sizable part of the profits towards a fund to fight child labor. This was well recognized as a benevolence goal ($M_n = 5.6, SD = 1.1$) and fitted well with all products and services. Both selected self-transcendent value-based purpose goals were subsequently used to determine two of the five different brand scenario paragraphs for the main study; also check out Table 2 for details on the other three conditions.

Participants, procedure, and materials

An online 2(purchase type: product vs. service) x 2(usage duration: short-term use vs. long-term use) x 5(brand value-based message: benevolence vs. universalism vs. achievement vs. power or vs. no human value brand message for the control group) between-subjects design experiment was organized via a panel provider based in the Netherlands. The goal was to arrive at a nationally representative sample in terms of gender and age (18 years or older).
N = 1000 participants were recruited ($M_{age} = 51.7, SD = 18.5, 50\%$ female) who were randomly assigned to one of the (in total 20) experimental conditions; check out Table 4.1 for an overview.

Table 4.1 | Experimental set-up of 20 conditions. In all conditions a product or service attribute was used that was either complemented with a value-based message, or, in the control condition, no value message.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>Products</th>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Short:</td>
<td>Long:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>softdrink</td>
<td>Car</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>holiday travel</td>
<td>organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-transcendent</td>
<td>N = 50</td>
<td>N = 50</td>
<td>N = 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universalism</td>
<td>N = 50</td>
<td>N = 50</td>
<td>N = 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benevolence</td>
<td>N = 50</td>
<td>N = 50</td>
<td>N = 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-enhancement</td>
<td>N = 50</td>
<td>N = 50</td>
<td>N = 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>N = 50</td>
<td>N = 50</td>
<td>N = 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>N = 50</td>
<td>N = 50</td>
<td>N = 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>N = 50</td>
<td>N = 50</td>
<td>N = 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where relevant, the survey questions were randomized for each respondent to prevent order effects from occurring. The survey was pre-tested for comprehension among a group of 10 marketing students. After minor changes in wording, the survey was finalized. Cronbach’s alphas are reported where appropriate (Field, 2013).

In all conditions, the participants were first asked which brand of product and service they used and then, as a manipulation check, they were asked how long they use their product or service brand on average. The average use of product and service brands confirmed the time span findings that were based on Voorn et al., (2018): soft drink $M_{usedays} = 6.4, SD = 11.4$; travel agency $M_{usemnth} = 7.4, SD = 12.8$; cars $M_{useryears} = 6.9, SD = 5.8$; Bank $M_{useryears} = 30.3, SD = 18.5$.

Subsequently, respondents were asked to read one of the brand messages based on one of the four different values or the no values-brand message for a new brand called “NOVO”. The following are examples that were used for the car scenario. First, we presented an introductory paragraph as well as a relevant product or service attribute of the new brand. For an example of all five car-related conditions check out Table 4.2.
“NOVO is a new car brand that will soon also appear on the Dutch market. NOVO makes cars that are above all very safe and very economical.”

Next, a value statement was added to the introductory paragraph that varied per value condition, or the no values-condition was applied in the control group.

Table 4.2 | Value statement per value condition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value Condition</th>
<th>Value message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Universalism</td>
<td>And NOVO is not just any car brand because a large part of the profit will be spent on setting up a fund that will help to give everyone access to clean drinking water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benevolence</td>
<td>And NOVO is not just any car brand because a large part of the profit will be spent on setting up a fund to combat child labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>NOVO is a car brand intended for people who, based on their own performance, at work but also in private, want to be seen as successful by their social environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>NOVO is a car brand intended for people who like it when others do what they say. Earning a lot of money, getting rich and having nice things is also very important to them in life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control condition, without value statement</td>
<td>NOVO is a new car brand that will soon also appear on the market in the Netherlands. NOVO makes cars that are above all very safe and very economical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the soft drink, travel agency and bank an identical setup was used, but with different product or service attribute paragraphs. Check out Table 4.3 for a specification. All product attributes were based on an earlier pre-study conducted by Voorn et al., (2018).

Table 4.3 | Product attribute sentences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Product attribute sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Softdrink</td>
<td>NOVO is a new softdrink brand that will soon also appear on the market in the Netherlands. NOVO is available in various refreshing flavors and is very thirst-quenching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday travel organization</td>
<td>NOVO is a new holiday travel organization that will soon also appear on the market in the Netherlands. NOVO specializes in long-distance holiday travel and wants to be known for its reliable and clear conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank</td>
<td>NOVO is a new bank that will soon also appear on the market in the Netherlands. NOVO wants to earn a reputation for its outstanding reliability and customer-friendliness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Following the scenario paragraph, another manipulation check took place to ascertain which value the participants had recognized: “You have just read information about the NOVO brand. To what extent do you recognize the following message in this paragraph?” This was followed by four descriptions of the values that had been presented, with each a 7-point Likert scale (anchors: left, totally unrecognizable versus right extremely recognizable). The four descriptions of human values, which are based on Schwartz (2012), were as follows: a) It is very good to want to help other people. Their well-being is important (benevolence value), b) It is very good if you can show what you are good at and receive recognition for it from others (achievement value), c) It is very important to consider the effect we have on the environment and nature (universalism value) and, lastly, d) Being well regarded by others and making a lot of money is very important in life (power value). Overall, all values were well recognized in each condition (\(M_{\text{benevolence}} = 5.2, SD = 1.4, M_{\text{achievement}} = 4.5, SD = 1.6, M_{\text{universalism}} = 5.0, SD = 1.3\) and \(M_{\text{power}} = 4.0, SD = 1.8\)). In the no values-group outcomes were lower on all values.

Subsequently, it was explained to the participants that the previous messages were in fact descriptions of human values and they were asked to indicate how important these were to them personally; “You have just indicated to what extent you have recognized a particular message in the paragraph about NOVO. That message contained a human value or, in other words, one of the important goals that one can have in life. We would like to know how important that value is in your personal life.” A 7-point Likert scale was used to indicate the value-importance on the same four value statements as in the previous question (anchors: left, totally unimportant in my personal life versus right, very important in my personal life).

Next, we checked for message relevance, distinctiveness and credibility of the different scenario paragraphs using three 7-point semantic differential scale items: “Please indicate below what your opinion is about the message of the NOVO brand. In my opinion, the message of the NOVO brand is: not at all relevant to me-very relevant to me, not at all distinctive-very distinctive and not at all credible-very credible (\(\alpha = .82\)). All score means for all 20 scenarios were acceptable with means above 3.6 and a maximum of 4.4.

Next, a question on message fit was asked: “To what extent do you think the message that the new brand, NOVO, wants to communicate fits the type of product they want to sell?” A 7-point Likert scale was used (anchors: left, does not fit at all
versus right, fits very well). All means were acceptable with means above 3.4 and a maximum of 4.8.

Subsequently, several follow-up questions were asked; check out Table 4.4 for more details.

Table 4.4 | Question items and Cronbach alpha score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consumer Brand Identification</td>
<td>7-point Likert scale, anchors: left, completely disagree versus right, completely agree</td>
<td>- I could feel connected to the NOVO brand, - I can identify strongly with the NOVO brand, - the NOVO brand embodies what I believe in, - the NOVO brand could have a lot of personal significance to me</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stokburger-Sauer et al., (2012), how well does this brand fit into your own live?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude towards the brand, Spears &amp; Singh (2004)</td>
<td>7-point semantic differential scale</td>
<td>In my opinion, the brand NOVO is - not friendly- friendly, - negative-positive, - not appealing-appealing, - not interesting-interesting, - not attractive-attractive, - not nice-nice</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived quality, Chernev &amp; Blair (2015),</td>
<td>7-point Likert scale, anchors: left, very bad versus right, very good</td>
<td>- What is your impression of the product quality of NOVO?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand purchase consideration, Baxendale, Macdonald, and Wilson (2015)</td>
<td>7-point Likert scale, anchors: left, would certainly not consider versus right, would certainly consider</td>
<td>- If you would have to buy/select a softdrink/holiday/car/bank today how likely would it be you will consider NOVO?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

Consequences of value importance

First, a simple regression analysis was performed to ascertain the effect of value-importance on attitude towards the brand (AttB), perceived product quality (PPQ) as well as consideration to buy (CtB) in all conditions (N = 1000). The analysis showed that an increase in value-importance (Mn = 4.6) predicted a significant increase in AttB, PPQ as well as CtB and also explained a significant proportion of the variance of the dependent variables (see Table 4.5 for an overview of the results).
Secondly, a paired sample t-test was conducted to analyze the assumption underlying H1a, that self-transcendent values are considered more important than self-enhancement values. The results indicate that self-transcendent values ($M_{\text{self-transcendent values}} = 5.3$, $SD = 1.1$) were indeed regarded as significantly more important ($t(999) = 29.7$, $p < .001$) than self-enhancement values ($M_{\text{self-enhancement values}} = 3.9$, $SD = 1.3$).

Then, we investigated H1a via a one-way between subjects ANOVA to compare whether a brand message based on self-transcendent values (STV) leads to a stronger result in terms of AttB, PPQ as well as CtB than a brand message based on self-enhancement values (SEV). There was a significant main effect of value type on all three dependent variables, AttB, $F(1,798) = 51.35$, $p < .001$, PPQ, $F(1,798) = 23.567$, $p < .001$ as well as CtB, $F(1,798) = 34.90$, $p < .001$. Post hoc comparisons, using Fishers Least Significant Difference (LSD) test, indicated that the mean score of STV messages on AttB ($M_{\text{AttB}} = 4.49$, $SD = 1.21$) was significantly stronger, $p < .001$, than in the case of SEV messages ($M_{\text{AttB}} = 3.81$, $SD = 1.43$). This was also the case in relation to the effect of STV messages on PPQ ($M_{\text{PPQ}} = 4.51$, $SD = 1.11$, $p < .001$) versus the effect of SEV messages on PPQ ($M_{\text{PPQ}} = 4.10$, $SD = 1.29$) as well as for the effect of STV messages on CtB ($M_{\text{CtB}} = 4.07$, $SD = 1.21$, $p < .001$) compared to the effect of SEV messages on CtB ($M_{\text{CtB}} = 3.37$, $SD = 1.43$).

Subsequently we performed an additional analysis to determine how many people in the values brand message condition ($N = 800$) regard STV as more important than SEV and how this impacts the effect of the corresponding brand messages on the dependent variables. STV were regarded as more important by 72.4% ($N = 579$) of the participants, SEV by 9.8% ($N = 78$) and 17.8% ($N = 143$) considered them equally important. A one-way between subjects ANOVA showed that self-transcending values-based brand messages lead to stronger results in terms of AttB, PPQ and CtB than self-enhancement values-based brand messages for participants that consider self-transcending values as more important than self-enhancement values (see Figure 4.2 for the detailed outcomes). There was a significant main

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**Table 4.5 | Regression analyses of the influence of value importance on AttB, PPQ and CtB**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent</th>
<th>Mn</th>
<th>Sd</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$F (1,998)$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AttB</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>.206</td>
<td>205.99</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.454</td>
<td>16.10</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPQ</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>.233</td>
<td>303.31</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.483</td>
<td>17.42</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CtB</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>.158</td>
<td>187.07</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.397</td>
<td>13.68</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The effect of value type on all three dependent variables, AttB, $F(2,726) = 43.93, p<.001$, PPQ, $F(2,726) = 20.19, p<.001$ as well as CtB, $F(2,726) = 22.81, p<.001$. Post hoc comparisons, using Fishers Least Significant Difference (LSD) test, indicated that the mean score of STV messages on AttB ($M_{AttB} = 4.62, SD = 1.17$) was significantly stronger, $p<.001$, than in the case of SEV messages ($M_{AttB} = 3.67, SD = 1.43$). This was also the case in relation to the effect of STV messages on PPQ ($M_{PPQ} = 4.61, SD = 1.06, p<.001$) versus the effect of SEV messages on PPQ ($M_{PPQ} = 4.0, SD = 1.29$) as well as for the effect of STV messages on CtB ($M_{CtB} = 4.12, SD = 1.67, p<.001$) compared to the effect of SEV messages on CtB ($M_{CtB} = 3.21, SD = 1.77$).

For the other two groups no significant differences were measured in the effects of self-transcending values-based brand messages versus self-enhancement values-based brand messages in terms of AttB, PPQ and CtB.

![Figure 4.2](image)

**Figure 4.2 |** Difference in effects of self-transcending and self-enhancing values-based brand messages depending on the difference in importance of the values involved for participants.

**Note.** ***$p < 0.001$, ST text = self-transcending values-based brand message, SE text = self-enhancement values-based brand message.**

These outcomes confirm hypothesis H1a and demonstrate that an increase in value-importance predicts an increase in AttB, PPQ and CtB, that self-transcendental values are considered as being more important and by more people than self-enhancement values. The results also show that a brand message with self-transcendental values will therefore have stronger results in terms of AttB, PPQ and CtB than a brand message based on self-enhancement values for the people, which is the majority, that consider these values more important than self-enhancement values. For people that consider self-enhancement values as most
important or of equal importance to self-transcending values the effects of self-transcendent values-based brand messages lead to equal effects on AttB, PPQ and CtB as the use of self-enhancement values-based brand messages.

For Hypothesis H1b, a paired sample t-test was conducted to analyze the assumption underlying H1b that benevolence values are considered as most important. This was indeed the case when compared to achievement and power, but only in one of the five conditions (the power value condition, $M_{\text{benevolence}} = 5.34$ vs $M_{\text{universalism}} = 5.05$, $p<.001$) when compared to universalism (see Table 4.6 for the overall results).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.6</th>
<th>Importance benevolence compared to the other values, overall results (N = 1000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value importance</td>
<td>$M_n$ vs $M_n$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benevolence</td>
<td>5.4 Universalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benevolence</td>
<td>5.4 Achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benevolence</td>
<td>5.4 Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universalism</td>
<td>5.3 Achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universalism</td>
<td>5.3 Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>4.5 Power</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subsequently, a one-way between subjects ANOVA was organized to compare whether the effect of a brand message based on benevolence values will generate stronger results in terms of AttB, PPQ and CtB than a brand message based on Universalism, Achievement, Power values or no values. There was a significant main effect of the value-based brand messages on all three dependent variables, $\text{AttB, } F(4, 995) = 19.12$, $p<.001$, $\text{PPQ, } F(4, 995) = 10.53$, $p<.001$ as well as $\text{CtB, } F(4, 995) = 10.52$, $p<.001$.

Post hoc comparisons, using Fishers Least Significant Difference (LSD) test, indicated for the effect on AttB that the mean score for the benevolence value-message ($M_{\text{AttB}} = 4.54$, $SD = 1.23$) was significantly stronger, $p<.001$, than the achievement value-message ($M_{\text{AttB}} = 4.03$, $SD = 1.33$) as well as $p<.001$, the power value-message ($M_{\text{AttB}} = 3.59$, $SD = 1.51$). This was, however, not the case, $p<.417$, in comparison to the universalism value-message ($M_{\text{AttB}} = 4.43$, $SD = 1.19$) nor, $p<.449$, for the no values-message ($M_{\text{AttB}} = 4.45$, $SD = 1.12$).
A post hoc comparison for the effect on PPQ indicated that the mean score for the benevolence value-message ($M_{PPQ} = 4.58, SD = 1.14$) was significantly stronger, $p < .01$, than the achievement value-message ($M_{PPQ} = 4.27, SD = 1.17$) as well as $p < .001$, the power value-message ($M_{PPQ} = 3.92, SD = 1.39$). This was, however, not the case, $p < .198$, in comparison to the universalism value-message ($M_{PPQ} = 4.44, SD = 1.08$) as well as $p < .637$, the no values-message ($M_{PPQ} = 4.53, SD = 1.0$).

The final post hoc comparison for the effect on CtB indicated that the mean score for the benevolence value-message ($M_{CtB} = 4.15, SD = 1.59$) was significantly stronger, $p < .001$, than the achievement value-message ($M_{CtB} = 3.50, SD = 1.76$) as well as $p < .001$, the power value-message ($M_{CtB} = 3.25, SD = 1.73$). This was, again, not the case, $p < .343$, in comparison to the universalism value-message ($M_{CtB} = 3.99, SD = 1.59$) as well as $p < .119$, the no values-message ($M_{CtB} = 3.92, SD = 1.49$).

The results show that benevolence is considered to be more important than achievement and power but not compared to universalism, and that hypothesis H1b is partially correct since a brand message based on benevolence values indeed results in stronger effects on AttB, PPQ and CtB than achievement or power values, but not compared to universalism values or messages with only product attributes.

**Mediation by consumer brand identification**

Next, we investigate hypothesis H2, whether the effects of a brand message based on values on AttB, PPQ and CtB is mediated by CBI by using the PROCESS macro version 3.3 in SPSS by Hayes (2017).

**Mediation effect on AttB**

In Step 1 of the mediation model, the regression of the independent variable, value-importance, on the dependent variable AttB, is significant: $\beta = .453, t(800) = 14.35, p = < .001$. Step 2 shows that the regression of value-importance on the mediator, CBI, is significant: $\beta = .486, t(800) = 15.70, p = < .001$. Step 3 of the mediation process shows that the effect of the mediator on AttB, controlling for value-importance, is significant: $\beta = .756, t(800) = 31.14, p = < .001$. Step 4 of the analyses reveals that value-importance is a significant predictor of AttB: $\beta = .086, t(800) = 3.54, p < .001$. This indicates partial mediation of value-importance by CBI, which is confirmed: $b = .562$. 
**Mediation effect on PPQ**
The same type of analysis was applied to the question whether the effects of value-importance on PPQ is mediated by CBI. In Step 1 of the mediation model, the regression of the independent variable, value-importance, on the dependent variable PPQ, is significant: $\beta = 0.647$, $t(800) = 15.95$, $p < .001$. Step 2 shows that the regression of value-importance on the mediator, CBI, is significant: $\beta = 0.486$, $t(800) = 15.70$, $p < .001$. Step 3 of the mediation process shows that the effect of the mediator on PPQ, controlling for value-importance, is significant: $\beta = 0.566$, $t(800) = 19.51$, $p < .001$. Step 4 of the analyses reveals that value-importance is a significant predictor of PPQ: $\beta = 0.217$, $t(800) = 7.46$, $p < .001$. This indicates partial mediation of value-importance by CBI, which is confirmed: $b = 0.377$.

**Mediation effect on CtB**
Finally, the mediation effect of CBI on the relation between value-importance and CtB is also analyzed in the same way. In Step 1 of the mediation model, the regression of the independent variable, value-importance, on the dependent variable CtB, is significant: $\beta = 0.756$, $t(800) = 12.21$, $p < .001$. Step 2 shows that the regression of value-importance on the mediator, CBI, is significant: $\beta = 0.486$, $t(800) = 15.70$, $p < .001$. Step 3 of the mediation process shows that the effect of the mediator on CtB, controlling for value-importance, is significant: $\beta = 0.774$, $t(800) = 30.75$, $p < .001$. Step 4 of the analyses reveals that value-importance is a non-significant predictor of CtB: $\beta = 0.021$, $t(800) = 0.84$, $p = .403$. This indicates full mediation of value-importance by CBI, which is confirmed: $b = 0.716$.

The results confirm H2 and show that the effect of value-importance on AttB and PPQ, is partially mediated by CBI. The effect of value-importance on CtB is, however, fully mediated by CBI.

**Moderation by brand usage duration**
For the analysis of hypothesis H3, the effects of value-based brand messages on the dependent variables being moderated by brand usage duration, a moderation analysis was performed using the PROCESS macro version 3.3 in SPSS by Hayes (2017). This analysis resulted in a non-significant result for all three dependent variables, indicating that brand usage duration does not moderate that effect of value-based brand messages on the dependent variables, AttB ($p = .169$), PPQ ($p = .365$) and CtB ($p = .468$).
**Effects of value-based brand messages differ between services and products**

Lastly, to analyze H4, the effects of value-based brand messages on the dependent variables being stronger in the case of services versus products, the hypothesis was investigated by a one-way between subjects ANOVA. No significant differences were found between services and products, AttB ($p = .338$), PPQ ($p = .954$) and CtB ($p = .351$). Value-importance does not produce stronger effects for services than products.

Next, we discuss the main outcomes, learnings and recommendations for theory and practice.

**Discussion**

The current research focused on finding answers to the following questions: do people appreciate a brand more, in terms of attitude towards the brand, perceive product quality as well as consideration to buy, when the communication is based on self-transcendent values (as is advocated by proponents of purpose marketing) compared to self-enhancement values? Additionally, this study was geared towards finding answers on the question whether this is mediated by consumer brand identification and whether this is different for a product or services brand. Finally, the influence of usage duration was investigated as a potential moderator.

The results show (1) that an increase in value-importance does predict an increase in AttB, PPQ and CtB, (2) that self-transcendental values are considered as being more important than self-enhancement values and by the majority of people, and (3) that brand messages with self-transcendent brand values have stronger effects for the majority of participants on the attitude towards the brand, the perceived product quality of the brand and the consideration to buy than self-enhancement value-based brand messages (H1a) and equal effects compared with brand messages based on self-enhancement values for participants that consider self-enhancement as more important or of equal importance. In line with these findings, brand messages based on benevolence values do indeed lead to stronger effects on AttB, PPQ and CtB than those based on achievement or power values, but not when compared to messages based on universalism or brand messages that were not value-based (H1b). We also found that the effect of value-based brand messages on AttB, PPQ and CtB is, as predicted, mediated by CBI, partially in the case of AttB and PPQ but fully in relation to CtB (H2). Contrary to our expectations, however,
we found no significant evidence for the hypothesized moderation effect of brand usage duration (H3), nor for the hypothesized difference in effects for services in comparison to products (H4).

Some new questions arise from the current study. Firstly, why was benevolence not found to be more important than universalism, and by extension, why did a benevolence-based brand message not result in stronger outcomes in terms of AttB, PPQ, and CtB than a brand message based on universalism? Secondly, why wasn't the effect of a benevolence-based brand message stronger in relation to AttB, PPQ and CtB, than a brand message in which no values were used?

In relation to the first question, previous research by Schwartz and Bardi (2001) and Schwartz & Cieciuch (2021) shows that benevolence is valued as more important than universalism. There may be a number of reasons why this is not the case in the current study, however. First, social context can change the importance of some values if a crisis occurs (Bojanowska, Kaczmarek, Koscielniak & Urbańska, 2021; Daniel, Fortuna, Thrun, Cioban & Knafo, 2013; Sortheix et al., 2019). This may apply to the current study since the data collection took place in the second half of 2020, when people in the Netherlands found themselves in a second lockdown because of COVID-19. This may have temporarily increased the importance of universalism, because there is evidence showing that people began to value nature conservation more during this period of time (Morse, Gladkikh, Hackenburg & Gould, 2020). People also spent more time outdoors during COVID-19 and really felt that this helped them in staying physically and mentally healthy (Robinson, Brindley, Cameron, MacCarthy & Jorgensen, 2021). There was also significantly more online searching for nature-related topics in European countries (Rousseau & Deschacht, 2020). These developments are particularly relevant due to how the importance of universalism was measured in this study and specific emphasis was placed on the nature component of universalism: “it is very important to take into account the environment and nature”. This may be a substantive explanation for why the importance of universalism in this study did not differ from the importance of benevolence or the brand messages based on both value types.

To the second question, why wasn't the effect of a benevolence-based brand message stronger in relation to AttB, PPQ and CtB, than a brand message in which no values were used, several possible explanations can be given. First, other studies, such as Sirgy, Lee and Grace (2016) and Voorn et al (2018), show that product attributes will always be of eminent importance, especially to new brands.
In this case, this is further ensured by the fact that, based on information obtained in previous pre-studies (Voorn et al., 2018 and 2021), the most desirable functional attributes per product and service category were used.

In addition, the brand message from the no values-conditions also consisted of fewer components compared to the brand messages used in the other conditions since the value-statements were not used. This may have helped the processing fluency of the no values-brand messages, increasing their attractiveness and effectiveness (Alter, & Oppenheimer, 2008; Nahon, Teige-Mocigemba, Reber & Greifeneder, 2021). These are interesting topics for future studies. Future studies could then also apply a “within subject” design to ascertain the comparative strength of effects of value-based brand messages versus no values-based brand messages on AttB, PPQ and CtB, since the current design still leaves the option open that, when directly compared, a brand message based on important values will also result in stronger results on the dependent variables in comparison to a no values-brand message.

With respect to the call from Sihvonen (2019) for more empirical studies to examine whether brand results based on the shared importance of values between a consumer and a brand are positively mediated by consumer brand identification, we can state that this is indeed the case for a consumer’s attitude towards the brand and perceived product quality as well as for their consideration to buy. Value-importance assists in the formation of people’s identity in the same way that value congruence does (Rather et al., 2018; Tuškej et al., 2013). This adds new knowledge to the literature on this topic. It also points to a difference in the way value-importance is connected to the consumer brand identification mediation process, depending on which dependent variable is involved. In the case of CtB, all of the effect of value-importance is absorbed into identifying oneself with the brand. To the best of our knowledge, there are however no published studies involving the effects of value-importance on CtB and mediation by CBI. But these results are in line with earlier findings where value congruence had a similar effect on brand self-identification and its full mediation effects on brand outcomes such as brand loyalty (e.g., He et al., 2018; Lam, Ahearne, Mullins, Hayati & Schillewaert, 2013; Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012; and Susanty & Tresnaningrum, 2018) or purchase intention (Graham & Wilder, 2020). This, together with the different role of consumer brand identification as a partial mediator of value-importance in the case of AttB and PPQ, deserves further attention through conducting future studies, since literature on this subject is absent.
Contrary to expectations and in contrast with previous studies conducted by Voorn et al., (2018 and 2021), no difference was found in the effects of value-based messages between different usage durations (H3) nor between products and services (H4). Based on these previous studies it was expected that values would become more important once the relation with the product or service would last longer (H3) and in the case of services as compared to products, because of a higher perceived risk (Darby & Karni, 1973; Galetzka, Verhoeven, & Pruyn, 2006; Mitra, Reiss, & Capella, 1999; Zeithaml, 1981). A possible explanation for the current findings may be that the values used in both earlier studies were based on non-branded products and services and not on a brand, as was the case in the current study, since branded products or services can invoke stronger brand effects than unbranded products (Fetscherin & Heilmann, 2015; Iazzi et al., 2016; Mundel et al., 2018).

Another difference is the use of branded values in the current study as compared to the use of the most desired non-branded product and category values in the earlier studies. As a result, some values in the earlier study were therefore power, hedonic or security values, which are considered as being lower priority values than self-transcendent values. So it may be the case that self-transcendent values, as used in the current study, have such attractiveness due to their importance to people, that they transcend differences because of perceived risk in longer relationship duration as well as between products and services.

**Implications for practitioners**

Brands that are already engaged in value-based marketing or that are considering it, can benefit from the findings of the current study. As the number of brands already engaged is growing (e.g., Accenture, 2018; Hayman, 2017; Mirzaei et al., 2021; Omnicon, 2019; Rodrigues Vila and Bharadwaj, 2017; Warc, 2018; Yoganathan et al., 2018), selecting the right purpose and communicating the appropriate brand values to increase brand effects is an important decision. This is particularly important for the rapidly increasing number of brands that have determined that they not only have a responsibility to their consumers and shareholders, but also to society and the environment (Diez-Busto, Sanchez-Ruiz & Fernandez-Laviada, 2021; World Economic Forum, 2019). Fortunately for these brands, an equal trend is taking place amongst consumers. A recent global study conducted by Nielsen (Bowler, 2021) stressed the fact that consumers are becoming equally interested...
in the values that brands represent and what they mean for the world, than solely in the functional benefits their products or services have to offer. Managers, in search of finding the right purpose for their brand, are therefore recommended to carefully select a purpose that not only fits best with their brand but also with the universalism or benevolence value priorities of their consumers, since this potentially generates the best brand outcomes.

The fact that there is still an ongoing debate between practitioners on the effectiveness of purpose-driven brands (e.g., Ritson, 2021) shouldn’t worry marketing managers too much. Especially not given the fact that consumers seem to react positively to purpose-driven brands (Accenture, 2018; Hayman, 2017; Mirzaei, Webster & Siuki, 2021; Omnicon, 2019; Rodrigues Vila and Bharadwaj, 2017; Warc, 2018, Yoganathan, McLeay, Osburg & Hart 2018). However, brand managers and their companies are recommended to really fulfill their purpose and to make sure not to overclaim and run the risk of being perceived of greenwashing or purpose washing, as this has a negative effect on brand trust among all stakeholders (Pimonenko, Bilan, Horák, Starchenko & Gajda, 2020; Torelli, Balluchi & Lazzini, 2020; Voorn, 2018b). Whether it is wise for brands to communicate their results of supporting their selected purpose is not yet known and offers therefore an interesting topic for further study. Some final words of wisdom though: being modest about the results of purpose activities is key, since a recent study conducted by Viererbl and Koch (2022) demonstrated that it may otherwise negatively affect the perception of a company’s social responsibility.

Limitations, future studies, and conclusions

A reason why the benevolence-based brand message has not resulted in stronger outcomes in terms of AttB, PPQ, and CtB than a brand message based on universalism, may have been the fact that these two brand messages did not sufficiently differ from one another. In the benevolence paragraph it was emphasized that “a large part of the profits will be spent on setting up a fund through which child labor will be combated” and in the universalism paragraph it was “a large part of the profits will be spent on setting up a fund giving everyone access to clean drinking water”. It could be, although there were no indications for this in the pre-study, that in both cases the brand contributing a large part of its profits to a cause was in itself interpreted as an act of benevolence and that the purpose to which those profits would be spent was not clear enough.
The current study was limited to self-transcendent and self-enhancement values, since it was geared towards values used in purpose marketing activities. It is, however, interesting to investigate the effects marketing can have when based on the other two value-types of openness to change and conservation values.

Another topic for further study is the gaining of more insights into the effects of value-based communication in different cultures. For instance, is the value of self-transcendence even more relevant in cultures that are more socially oriented versus individually oriented? Or is self-enhancement more relevant in achievement-oriented cultures such as in the USA, versus more collective cultures such as in Japan (Yamagishi, Hashimoto & Schug, 2008)? Another topic in this respect concerns the weaker effect of achievement and power value-brand messages on AttB, PPQ and CtB, in comparison to those of benevolence, universalism, and the no values-condition. The product and service attributes that were used in these brand messages were equal to the other conditions per product and service, but the lower priority of power and achievement (Schwartz & Bardi, 2001; Schwartz & Cieciuch, 2021) may have weakened the effectiveness of the proposition. As the study took place in the Netherlands, this may have had a stronger negative effect since power values in particular, which are connected to hierarchical social status as well as achievement, have a very low priority in Dutch culture (Hofstede, 2018). This is an interesting topic for further study as self-enhancement is considered more important in other countries such as in China, the United Arab Emirates, or the United States (Hofstede, 2018). This is particularly important for international brands, as they must find the right balance between having a meaningful international marketing proposition and the local relevance between different cultures.

Another limitation of the current study is the use of a non-existing brand. The main reason to opt for a non-existing brand was to not bias the results. Using an existing brand could have already had, for example, a strong brand attitude, perceived product quality or consideration to buy. It may, however, have also influenced results with regards to the mediation effect by CBI, as it is plausible that consumer brand identification with a new or fictitious brand is harder to achieve compared to an existing brand (Lam et al., 2013). This is a topic for future investigation.

In summary, the current study supplements previous research on the importance of different value types in consumer behavior and adds new knowledge on which value type appears to be more beneficial to purpose marketing efforts. Engaging in
purpose marketing by using self-transcendental values does not deliver stronger brand effects than messages only focusing on product benefits, as was measured in this study based on a new and fictitious brand and in isolation of competitors. It will, however, lead to potentially desirable outcomes such as more persuasive value communication, positive effects on the selected purpose itself, staff motivation, shareholder attitudes and attractiveness of the brand’s company on the labor market (Golob & Podnar, 2021; Jonsen et al., 2015; Story & Neves, 2015). Additionally, it could give brands competing in highly competitive real market situations, where functional attributes are often comparable, an attractive competitive edge (Vilá & Bharadwaj, 2017) as well as a better response to a greater consumer need for symbolic brand meaning as expressed in brand values (Torelli, 2013). That is why brands offering a good quality product or service and additionally caring for others and the environment, have a brighter future ahead (Bowler, 2021; Michel, Torelli, Fleck & Hubert, 2022; World Economic Forum, 2019).
Bridging the chapters 3

Study one showed that value congruence indeed plays a key role, both as a direct and an indirect predictor of repurchase intentions for durable goods and services over and above of those of functional and trait congruence. Based on ownership theory (e.g. Strahilevitz and Loewenstein, 1998) and associative self-anchoring theories (Gawronski et al, 2007), we argued that this is related to how long one has a relationship with a product or service and that values will be more important than traits in longer relationships.

In study two, we confirmed that the importance of category values in consumer behavioral intentions is greater than that of category traits when one has a longer relationship with a product or service and that values will be more important than traits in longer relationships. Now that values have been shown to be more important than traits, especially in longer relationships as is the case for durable goods and services, an open question that remains is which value types hold more promise for marketers.

In study three we used the recent emergence of purpose marketing (Baumgarth, Boltz, Schmidt & Roper, 2020) to investigate this. An experiment (N = 1000) was organized to study whether a brand message based on self-transcending values would lead to stronger results in terms of attitude towards the brand, perceived quality, and consideration to buy than using a brand message based on self-enhancement values. This was based on the premise that self-transcendent values are considered more important than self-enhancement values. Additionally, we posited that this process is mediated by consumer brand identification.
The results show that, as predicted, self-transcendent values are considered more important than self-enhancement values. Thus, self-transcendent values-based brand messages indeed lead to stronger effects in terms of attitude toward the brand, perceived quality, and consideration to buy than a brand message based on self-enhancement values. Consumer brand identification indeed acts as a mediator in this process. This is equally important in the case of services and products, does not depend on the length of the relationship and is also effective for a new brand.

In the next chapter we discuss the general conclusions, the contribution to theory and recommendations to marketeers as well as the limitations of the studies and suggestions for further research.
Chapter 5

General Discussion
**Introduction**

This final chapter concludes a journey that began in 2014. Since 2010, I saw a business trend emerge where the importance of values in how companies market their brands increased. Among other developments, there was Simon Sinek (2009) with his “Golden Circle, Start with Why”, who was gaining traction with his view that companies should base their operations on a clear purpose or, in other words, why they actually exist and why that matters to others? There was also Jim Stengel (2011) with his book “Grow” in which he presented a study that showed that there is a direct relationship between the financial success of brands and the extent to which their purpose aligns with what people really hope to achieve in life, their dreams, and their values. Brands started to follow this philosophy. Values-driven marketing, or purpose marketing started to grow. Driven by my interest in human values as drivers of behavior, I wanted to look for answers to how values influence consumer behavior.

Although values are important for behavior (e.g., Feather, 1995; Ferraro *et al.*, 2012; Hofstede, 1980; Olson and Maio, 2003; Rokeach, 1973; Sagiv & Roccas, 2021; Schwartz, 2012), the role of values in consumer behavior had, surprisingly, not been extensively studied in the marketing literature. However, recent literature and practice suggest that human values are becoming increasingly relevant as consumer choice criteria (Cone, 2017; Edelman, 2018; Havas, 2017; Hsu, 2017; Nielsen, 2021; Porter Novelli, 2021; Warc, 2018). This leaves very relevant questions unanswered, such as, what role do values play in consumer behavior towards products and services compared to their functional attributes or brand personality, does the importance of values differ between durables, consumer goods or services, and are brand messages based on self-enhancement values less persuasive than brand messages based on self-transcendent values? Little is currently known about this (Minakshi, Pandey and Rathi, 2021), in part because of the short history of values-driven marketing (Buursink, 2020).

This gap in knowledge is quite unfortunate as more and more companies are trying to define their goals more broadly than only in terms of achieving more sales and profits. In recent years, a growing number of companies are also trying to formulate clear goals for how they want to contribute to the society as a whole by, for example, becoming more sustainable or more inclusive, or otherwise contributing to the social development goals of the United Nations (Deloitte, 2019). Both the literature and practitioners (Baumgarth, Boltz, Schmidt & Roper, 2020) would therefore benefit from more insights into this. Therefore, the aim of this dissertation is to
increase our understanding of the influence of values in consumer behavior. Thus, the central theme of this dissertation is: whether, when, and what type of brand values help consumers decide which products, services, and brands to consider, buy, or remain loyal to.

The specific research questions that we set out to find answers to were:

1. How relevant are perceived brand values to purchase intentions in comparison to functional attributes and brand personality traits for different goods and services (Study 1)?
2. Does the importance of brand values for purchase intentions versus functional attributes and brand personality traits differ depending on relationship duration (Study 2)?
3. Is there a difference in the effects on attitude toward the brand, perceived quality, and consideration to buy between brand messages based on different values (Study 3)?

In the following sections of this concluding chapter, we answer the research questions of this dissertation and what this means for the theoretical knowledge about how human values influence consumer behavior. Next, we discuss what our findings mean for the daily practice of brand management. Finally, we discuss the limitations of the studies organized for this dissertation, make suggestions for future research, and present a closing conclusion.

**Main findings**

To find the answers to our research questions, we organized three studies.

*RQ 1: How relevant are perceived brand values to purchase intentions in comparison to functional attributes and brand personality traits for different goods and services?*

In the first study (see Chapter 2), we used Sirgy’s (1982) self-congruence theory as a basis for gauging for which products and services perceived brand values would be important in comparison to functional attributes and personality traits. We argued that congruence theory is incomplete without measuring value congruence, as values are an integral part of what is considered the self (Baumeister, 1997; VandenBos, 2007; Zhang & Bloemer, 2008).
A survey was organized to answer the research questions. The results showed that values are more pertinent predictors of purchase intentions than traits in the case of durable goods and services, but the relationship was weak for consumables. Moreover, we found that value congruence influences the effect of functional congruence on repurchase intention, showing that functional congruence mediates the effect of value congruence. In other words, once consumers experience stronger value congruence, it positively influences their perception of functional congruence, which in turn further increases their repurchase intention. An explanation for this, according to Kressmann et al. (2006), is that it is easier for people to process the symbolic features of brands, such as brand personality and brand values, first and then the functional features. When trait or value congruence is experienced people successively judge the functional attributes. An interesting follow-up question is of course whether a mismatch in values also leads to a negative evaluation of the product properties. Almost no research has been done on this yet.

This means the role of values in the consumer selection process is highly pertinent as brand values have a stronger effect on repurchase intentions than brand personality for more product/service categories than previously assumed. This is particularly true for services and consumer durables. However, in the case of consumables, trait congruence was a stronger predictor of repurchase intention than value congruence, suggesting that there may be a difference in the influence of values on purchase intentions depending on the type of product and service. A possible cause of this, other than the often-made distinction between high and low involvement goods and services, may well have to do with the degree of abstraction of the good or service involved in such a purchase. And relationship time may be one of the enablers of this abstraction.

Based on our results, there are a number of other points that may be of interest. The first is that a possible reason for the higher relevance of values for products and services with which one enters into a longer relationship may be caused by the fact that they become real possessions of us. In this way, products give people the opportunity to fulfill their desire to expand their self (Michel, Torelli, Fleck & Hubert, 2022) and even become a part of their identity. Indeed, according to self-expansion theory, people strive to achieve their own ideal selves (Leary, 2007). In this process, possessions can also play a role. The foregoing is also in line with the idea Belk (1988) put forward earlier, namely that our possessions become part of our extended self through which we propagate our identity to ourselves and others.
CHAPTER 5

This does not only apply to products, but also to services and even to all kinds of online activities that we undertake (Belk, 2016).

The second point is that brand values, as a motivation for a purchase intention, are probably less important for consumable goods because, due to their short-term use, they do not become part of our extended self. However, what argues against this is that people do not just buy a consumable as a product, but they can also form relationships with consumables as brands (Batra, Ahuvia & Bagozzi, 2012). These relationships can then also be for a longer period of time. However, there may then still be a difference in the extent to which a brand says something about a consumer's identity. For example, the symbolic value for identity formation of a hair care brand like Pantene may be higher than if one buys the same toothpicks from an unknown brand for years.

Our research showed that values can give people guidance in choosing brands in many more types of products and services than was previously known. And this becomes even more relevant in situations where there is little difference between actual product features. So, it is maybe no coincidence that in practice you regularly see examples nowadays of brands that take a stand or react on developments in society based on the values they hold dear. Recent examples include for example NIKE which very consciously portrays all kinds of people of different cultures, backgrounds, sex, race, and abilities in its advertising in order to stand up for the importance of inclusiveness, or the Dutch Jumbo supermarket who opened a mobile Pick Up Point at the Jeroen Bosch hospital to support nurses during Corona. But also, the opposite takes place by brands withdrawing as sponsors or advertisers around TV programs in which things happen that are not in line with their values. Dutch Stella bikes and the Toto lottery organization, among others, recently withdrew as sponsors from a Dutch TV program in which aggressive sexually explicit behavior was expressed.

In conclusion, the findings show that the proposed addition of value congruence strengthens the foundations of self-congruence theory and warrants a reconsideration of the congruence-related constructs in branding and marketing literature. Since values were, however, more important for services and durables, but not for consumables this raises the question, why is this the case? We proposed that the longer one interacts with a brand, the more important fundamental values become in that relationship. This could help explain why the first study for this thesis found that value congruence with one's most used brands seems to influence
purchase intentions, especially in the case of durable goods and services, where a relationship can last for several years, as in the case of cars, laptops, and banks.

RQ 2: Does the importance of values for purchase intentions versus functional attributes and personality traits differ depending on relationship duration?

Now that our first study showed that value congruence leads to stronger purchase intentions in the case of durable goods and services, we wanted to know if the explanation for this could be that values are considered more important than traits when the relationships are longer. For our second study (see Chapter 3), we drew on the construal level theory (Liberman, Trope & Stephan, 2007) to argue that time is influential here, as the longer one uses or will use a product or service, the more important the abstract brand attributes will become. This was in line with an earlier experiment by Hernandez, Wright, and Ferminiano Rodrigues (2015) that showed that abstract product benefits become more persuasive than functional attributes when a choice occurs in the future. For example, in one of their experiments, they asked participants to rate an advertisement for a laptop that they should buy next week or in six months. The focus in the ad was then placed on a concrete attribute such as, for example, “The notebook has an Intel Core i3 2.26 GHz processor” or on an abstract benefit of this, “Intel’s latest processor enables this notebook to perform multiple tasks simultaneously, in an efficient and reliable manner.” In the condition where the laptop was to be purchased in six months, the abstract benefits proved more persuasive than the concrete product attributes.

We posited that this difference in importance not only occurs in a discrete choice setting but will also occur when a product or service choice involves a longer relationship over time, as is the central proposition in ownership theory (e.g., Strahilevitz & Loewenstein, 1998). This theory claims that objects become more valuable to owners the longer they are in their possession. In other words, the longer someone owns something, the more likely it is that the item becomes a candidate for the projection of values and desires (Belk, 2016; Gawronski, Bodenhausen, & Becker, 2007; Ye & Gawronski, 2016).

In addition, we argued that functional attributes would always be considered most important and that values are more abstract than personality traits and therefore would be considered more important than personality traits the longer the relationship with a product or service lasted. This finding may be similar to how we select people we have relationships with. After all, when you ask someone for
the quickest way to an attraction in a strange city it is only, functionally, important that he or she can show us the right way, but when you go on a short vacation with other singles it is nice if the personality traits match. However, if you are going to do six months of research at the North Pole with other researchers then it becomes important that the values match up well as your personal safety may depend on it too. Or as Strohminger and Nichols (2014) point out, “a person’s moral character – compared to, say, their personality or shared interests – is the ultimate dimension by which we judge friends, business partners, and buddies,” p.169.

We further argued that time seems to play a different role in retrospective or prospective decisions (D’Argembeau & Linden, 2004; van Hagen, 2011) and that values may become even more important than traits in consumer decisions affecting their future (Caruso et al., 2008; De Groot & Steg, 2008; Levine et al., 2018; Van Boven & Caruso, 2015). This would be especially true for services compared to products, as they are more abstract and therefore more difficult to assess than products (e.g., Darby & Karni, 1973; Galetzka et al., 2006; Mort & Rose, 2004; Nelson, 1974; Zeithaml, 1981). Information about a brand’s values may then reduce uncertainty and risk (Arts et al., 2011; Rogers, 2003; Zhang & Bloemer, 2008).

Using an experiment, the main findings of study two were that perceived values are more important than perceived personality traits in longer relationships and that this effect is indeed stronger in prospective than in retrospective relationships. Furthermore, we found support for the prediction that values are generally perceived to be more important for services than for products and that this is influenced by the length of the relationship. Finally, and as predicted, functional attributes were considered more important than traits and values regardless of time, although their importance became weaker as the prospective duration of use increased.

Surprisingly, we did not find that traits are considered to be more important than values in shorter retrospective or prospective relationships. This may be due to the fact that we used the ideal functional characteristics, properties, and values for each of the products and services categories. These are often more general in nature and less important than the personality traits of brands as shown in an earlier study by Batra, Lenk, and Wedel (2006). In other words, we cannot rule out that if we had conducted a study with brand personalities at the brand level, it might lead to a different result.
The time spent in a relationship with a product or service is important for consumer choices, our second experiment shows. Values, indeed, take on greater importance compared to traits as the relationship lengthens and especially in relation to future relationships versus past relationships. This is consistent with other studies showing that time can be experienced in different ways. For example, Van Hagen (2011) showed that time can be fast for you when you enjoy something or very slow when something is boring or too slow when you are on a train and in a hurry or have to wait. The explanation lies in the fact that there can be a difference between real and objective time, and subjective or psychological time (Galetzka, Pruyn, Van Hagen, Vos, Moritz & Gostelie, 2018). In our second study, we built on this insight by suggesting that people also differ psychologically in how they experience time when it comes to a retrospective or prospective relationship with a brand. Here, we hypothesized that values would play a more important role in a prospective relationship than in a retrospective relationship because people are more emotionally involved in the future (Levine et al., 2018; Van Boven & Caruso, 2015) than in the past (Caruso, Gilbert, & Wilson, 2008). The main reason for this is that people already know the past and not yet the future. A brand’s values then provide more certainty and direction than in retrospective relationships. This hypothesis was indeed confirmed.

Another new question that arises is whether it also makes a difference how important the values are that are involved in those decisions? In other words, does it, for example, make a difference whether a prospective relationship involves values such as the safety of yourself or your family, as in buying a car, or values that have to do with your own self-development, such as choosing a university, or values that have to do with hedonism such as choosing an online movie streaming service? In short, is the degree of importance of the values involved in a choice different once the prospective relationship with a brand increases? If so, it is not only important to pay attention to the brand values for brands with which one enters into a relationship with over a longer period of time, but especially then for those products and services whose associated values are seen as of a higher priority. Given the relative importance attached to the various values (Schwartz & Cieciuch, 2021), these would mainly be products and services related to the top five values such as benevolence, self-direction, universalism, security, and hedonism. This would include products and services such as insurance, school choice, political party, clothing choice or a streaming service.
In conclusion, study two of this thesis showed that values are indeed more important than traits in longer relationships. The experiment showed that the length of a relationship affects the relative importance of values over traits in the consumer decision process, especially in prospective situations, and that this is indeed particularly pertinent in the case of services compared to products. One question that remains, and is particularly relevant to practitioners, is whether it makes a difference what type of brand values are used. Traditionally, a fundamental principle in marketing has always been to align what a brand offers with what consumers care about. This also applies to brand values (e.g., Aaker 1991; Alsem et al., 2007; Gutman, 1981; Rokeach, 1973; Voorn et al., 2016; Zhang & Bloemer, 2008). Increasingly, however, brands seem to be choosing social goals that they themselves find important and that reflect self-transcendent values. How these values relate to other values in the eyes of consumers and influence different brand outcomes is as yet unknown.

**RQ 3: Is there a difference in the effects on attitude toward the brand, perceived quality, and consideration to buy between brand messages based on different values.**

Now that studies one and two had shown that values play a more important role in consumer behavior than previously known, the next and third research question was whether there was also a difference between the effects on consumer behavior of different values. For this purpose, we used the recent rise of value-driven purpose marketing (Baumgarth et al., 2020) as an opportunity to examine how the effects of self-transcendent values, often used in this context, relate to those of their opposite, and non-purpose, the self-enhancement values. We organized an experiment to study this (see chapter 4). The starting point was that several studies show that self-transcendent values are considered more important than self-enhancement values (Schwartz & Bardi, 2001; Schwartz & Cieciuch, 2021). Based on this, we assumed that a brand message for a new brand based on self-transcendent values would have a stronger effect on attitude towards the brand, perceived product quality and consideration to buy than a brand message for a new brand based on self-enhancement values. We further argued that the results would differ between products and services and between products and services that would be used for shorter or longer periods of time.

In addition, based on Sihvonen (2019), among others, we proposed that this process would be mediated by consumer brand identification. After study 1 had
shown that stronger value congruence resulted in stronger functional congruence, which in turn strengthened purchase intention, it seemed plausible to us, on the basis of additional literature, that this effect could also be caused by the degree to which value importance, between brands and consumers could lead to stronger identification with a brand. In other words, if one has the feeling that a brand values the same values as we do, then we feel more connected to that brand. As it embodies more of what we believe in, it has more personal meaning for us and we can, therefore, identify with it more. When this is the case, it reinforces different brand results such as purchase intentions, brand loyalty and also word of mouth. For example, you can regularly see people who have very consciously chosen a Dutch bank like ASN that positions itself as very sustainable, or a chocolate brand like Tony Chocolonely or an apparel brand like Patagonia communicating very enthusiastically on social media about their personal choice to others.

The results of our third study confirmed our hypotheses that self-transcendent values are considered more important than self-enhancement values, that brand messages based on the former have a stronger effect on attitude toward the brand, perceived product quality, and consideration to buy and for the majority of people, than a brand message based on the latter, and that this process is indeed mediated by consumers’ brand identification. This is equally true for services and for products and does not depend on the duration of the relationship.

Contrary to our expectations we found no difference in effect of the brand value messages on the dependent variables between products and services that people use for a short versus long time. A possible explanation for this could have to do with the design of our third study. We used a fictitious brand name in this study because we wanted to rule out the possibility that using an existing brand could have influenced the results by already having a strong brand attitude, perceived product quality, or purchase consideration. We also did not specifically incorporate the relationship duration into our questions, something we did in our second study. The relationship duration in our third study was an implicit one by selecting products and services that are used normally or for a short or long time. We also cannot exclude the possibility that the choice of the brand name “Novo” also had an unwanted and unintended side effect on the subjective time experience of the relationship with the different products and services in that it might have acted as a prime for the feeling of “not a long relationship”. In a future experiment, the latter could be overcome by choosing a fictitious brand name that cannot in any
way induce the subjective experience of relationship duration. In addition, it would also be interesting to organize an experiment with existing brands that are very new or have existed for a very long time.

Another unexpected result was that brand messages based on self-transcendent values did not outperform messages that did not include values but only desired product attributes. Based on the findings of Chernev and Blair (2015), among others, this is unexpected. Brands that also do well for their social environment are generally preferred to brands that do not. However, it would be conceivable that if consumers had to choose between a brand that does communicate its self-transcendent values in addition to the desired product attributes and a brand that only uses the latter, they would prefer the brand with the value-based proposition. This is certainly relevant in real market conditions since the differences between the product attributes in a category are often very small. In such cases the total brand proposition makes the difference and not only the brand’s product attributes.

However, there may be different motives, why consumers, as well as brands, communicate their values to the world. These may be motivated by intrinsic or extrinsic needs to prioritize certain values over others (Ryan & Deci, 2000). For consumers who value safety above all else, the choice to live in a gated community is motivated by an internal need, while for consumers who need the approval of others, the choice to live in the same, usually expensive, gated community may be motivated by their extrinsic need for social status or recognition. When consumers choose this latter kind of value signaling to others, for example showing how woke they are by always very visibly sharing new NIKE tv inclusiveness commercials on social media it is a question however whether this kind of virtue signaling also means that these people actually buy the brands they use for the signaling themselves. Indications are that virtue signaling has a negative relationship with purchase intention (Wallace & De Chernatony, 2020). It is therefore positive when people share values-based branded content with others for a brand’s saliency and social proof, but it is beneficial for brands and their managers when this sharing takes place as much as possible from intrinsic motives, and not as virtue signaling.

For consumers, it is equally a question of whether companies are sincere in communicating their values. When this is not the case it is for example called greenwashing, woke-washing, or purpose-washing. In this context greenwashing is when companies claim to offer environmentally sound products whilst this is not, or only partially the case (de Freitas Netto, Sobral, Ribeiro & da Luz Soares,
2020), woke-washing is when brands take a stand on social issues whilst there is no connection of the issue with the companies' values, purpose or its daily behaviors (Vredenburg, Kapitan, Spry & Kemper, 2020) and purpose-washing is when companies claim a purpose only in name and for commercial reasons (Leape, Zou, Loadwick, Nuttall, Stone & Simpson, 2020). Due to all kinds of negative examples consumer may become cynical about brands that are guilty of any of these three behaviors. Some recent examples are the use of Kendal Jenner in a commercial for Pepsi at the time of the Black Lives Matter protests in the USA in which the message seemed to be that the brand can bring peace (Dozé, 2018), a commercial for the Dutch RABO bank in which they promised to solve world hunger or the brand Tony Chocolonely of which the CEO suddenly wanted to invest millions in his own amusement park instead of in the always communicated social purpose to fight child labor in the cacao industry.

When consumers feel that brands are inauthentic in their advocated social claims this leads to lower purchase intentions (Pittman, Oeldorf-Hirsch & Brannan, 2022). Authenticity is, therefore, key for brands that wish to support social or environmental goals. Even then it can be a hard sell though. On the one hand since consumers do not yet consider social (including sustainability) goals for brands as a basic condition. Brands therefore have to make it clear, in very crowded media environments, both how good their products and services are and which social goals they have. In fact, these brands are building whole new categories in which social goals must go hand in hand with product or service requirements that are considered relevant for that category. If more and more brands then also pick up on this in an authentic way and support it, this could perhaps set a movement in motion. However, if there are also more and more brands doing the same but in a visible or tangible inauthentic way then this could make the mission of the authentic brands considerably more difficult. This development will be interesting to follow in the coming years.

Summarizing, we advocate for brands to not only look at the deployment of values from a purely persuasive or commercial perspective. Consumers, quite apart from other stakeholders, make a distinction for what is seen as authentic and true and what is seen as inauthentic, green washing, woke washing or purpose washing. Multiple studies, e.g., (Lahtinen & Närvänen, 2020; Szabo & Webster, 2021; Vredenburg, Kapitan, Spry & Kemper, 2020) show that when consumers suspect the latter is the case it leads to negative outcomes for brands. Similarly, when companies communicate about their support of social causes and consumers get
the impression that this serves the company’s interests more than the purpose, positive effects should certainly not be expected (Chernev & Blair, 2015, 2021). When applying values-based marketing for brands, sincerity and authenticity is always a key starting condition (Gilmore & Pine, 2007), not least because values have a strong moral component and this makes them susceptible to assessment by others, as this is how we measure each other (Goodwin, Piazza & Rozin, 2014) before we decide whether to enter into a relationship.

In conclusion, this study confirmed that self-transcendent values are definitely considered more important than self-enhancement values. This was subsequently demonstrated by the effects of brand messages based on them. These resulted in significantly stronger results in terms of attitude toward the brand, perceived product quality, and consideration to buy for brand messages based on self-transcendent values.

Taking the outcomes of all three studies together our findings imply that values are more important, for more products and services than was known before. They, thus, deserve more attention in consumer behavior science and practice. In the next section this will be discussed in terms of the theoretical and practical implications.

**Theoretical implications**

The main theoretical contribution of the three studies in this thesis is that marketing theory involving the role of values in consumer behavior can now be extended to include the following insights. First, that adding values to a brand’s architecture and communication can have a direct positive effect on purchase intentions in more product and service categories than previously known (Alsem et al., 2007; Zhang & Bloemer, 2008). This positive effect is, subsequently, indirectly enhanced by stronger functional congruence, if there is value congruence and by stronger brand identification among consumers, if the brand values are also personally perceived as important. Both, in turn, also lead to a strengthening of purchase intent.

Indeed, our first study showed that value-congruence was a better predictor of repeat purchase intentions than trait congruence. This was especially true for services and durable goods. Therefore, it is recommended to adapt Sirgy’s (1982) self-congruence model by including value-congruence. Our second
study confirmed the stronger positive effect of values versus traits on purchase intentions. Its results showed that values were perceived as more important than traits and that the addition of values to a brand proposition therefore led to stronger purchase intentions than traits.

Second, we have also shown in the second study that the time factor plays an important role in this since the longer the relationship with a product or service lasts the more important brand values become as predictors of purchase behavior. And this is even more so for services than products. These findings confirm construal level theory (Liberman et al., 2007), which is related to the present as well as past and future moments, but also extends this theory. In the case of construal level theory, our results validated a suggestion by Maglio and Trope (2018) that this is not an exclusively binary process. Indeed, in many construal level studies, only two alternative choices are presented. One choice then relates to a decision in the present and the other to a moment in the future or past. In the present, more importance is then attached to concrete properties and at a moment in the future or past, more abstract properties play a greater role. Maglio and Trope (2018) theorized that levels of abstraction can also progress as part of a continuum e.g., like in a relationship. Indeed, the experiment in study two demonstrated this by making values active even when people have to consider a choice that may have longer-term consequences. This was achieved by applying a technique suggested by Maio (2017) to ask respondents to elaborate on future consequences of current decisions.

Third, and finally, in study three we showed that self-transcendent values are indeed perceived as more important and by the majority of people, than self-enhancement values, and this translates into how people respond to a values-based brand message, in the extent to which people prefer a brand in terms of attitudes toward the brand, perceived product quality, and consideration to buy. Thus, this study confirms the findings of previous studies by Schwartz and Bardi (2001) and Schwartz and Cieciuch (2021) that self-transcendent values are indeed considered more important than self-enhancement values. We however add new knowledge to marketing theory by demonstrating that brand messages based on self-transcendent values (as applied by purpose brands) do indeed lead to stronger brand outcomes than brand messages based on self-enhancement values. Also, following Sihvonen’s (2019) call, we were able to demonstrate and confirm in study three that consumer brand identification indeed acts as a mediator in this process. This shows that the values people care about and that brands apply in
their brand proposition do lead to an identification process in which a brand adds to a consumer’s sense of identity which in turn, among other things, not only leads to stronger effects on perceived product quality, their attitude towards the brand as well as their consideration to buy a brand.

In summary, thus, our findings help to fill the gap in the literature regarding the role of values in consumer behavior.

**Practical implications**

Based on the results found in this thesis, it makes sense for those responsible for managing brands to pay conscious attention to the choice of their brand values and how they deploy them. Understanding what the value priorities of your target group are, is therefore very useful for brand managers. In the next section we will address some of the important issues that brand managers have to address and resolve to use values 'by design'.

**Will values-based marketing help all kinds of different products and services?**

There are several factors to consider in order to find the most appropriate answer to this question. Some of these include the following.

- Does it involve a product or service that will last you longer? If this is the case, then this thesis shows that the use of values is recommended.
- So, does this mean that if you sell products or services that people don’t have a longer relationship with, that values can’t help in your marketing? For multiple reasons, it may then still be beneficial to use values in marketing. First, the use of values offers the possibility of expressing an intrinsic need to address social or human issues that the founders, companies, or brands themselves consider to be of great importance. This can be nature, inclusion, diversity, wanting to do good for people close to you, wanting to contribute to self-expression, happiness or any other goal that can be linked to human value systems. Second, it can allow brands to position themselves distinctively. This can be especially useful in situations where the differences between competitors’ product features are small. A third argument is that the use of values also makes brand and companies
more attractive to stakeholders other than potential consumers. This could include, e.g., one’s own staff or job applicants, suppliers, investors, government organizations, and distribution channels.

**Are values more important to consider for my brand than brand personality?**

This is not what we would like to suggest. All actions taken by brands and their representatives (Aaker, 1997; Fournier 1998), as well as their consumers (Babić Rosario, Sotgiu, De Valck & Bijmolt, 2016), are likely to contribute to the formation of brand personalities (for in-depth literature reviews, see for example Ghorbani, Karampela & Tonner, 2022; Saeed, Burki, Ali, Dahlstrom & Zameer, 2021; Eisend & Stokburger-Sauer, 2013). It, therefore, is wise to develop the desired brand personality consciously and apply it consistently in all the brand’s communications and behaviors.

Also, we would argue that brand values should be actively managed, regardless of the kind of product or service involved. After all, people can also enter into longer relationships with brands. This, in turn, may be particularly relevant for brands with symbolic meaning that can also contribute to a desired personal identity. However, this thesis shows that managing brand personality is especially important for consumables and brand values for products and services one has a longer relationship with.

An interesting question for follow-up research for brands then is how to manage a brand personality along with the brand values. After all, they are distinct, yet interconnected, constructs within the self (Roccas et al, 2002). According to a meta-analysis by Parks-Leduc et al., (2015) the interconnection between traits and values is especially true for the traits, openness to experience, agreeableness and, extraversion but less so for conscientiousness and emotional stability. For brand managers, it would be interesting to know the degrees of freedom they have to design values and brand personality traits in combination. For example, to what extent does a brand with conservative values such as security and tradition go together with an extroverted brand personality or a brand with hedonism values with an introverted brand personality. When do the two reinforce each other and where do the areas of tension run? Follow-up research could help in mapping which values, and personality traits reinforce or weaken each other.
In the light of this section, we would also like to include, however, the suggestion that brand managers continue to pay attention to designing and managing the functional attributes and benefits of their products and services. After all, these will always be of great importance (as this dissertation has shown), regardless of the practical problem of always being able to stand out from the competition in this regard.

**Does the use of values also generate additional revenue for brand management?**

Based on the results of this thesis, it can be stated that value congruence leads both directly and indirectly to stronger purchase intentions. This is an important condition to achieve more turnover. In addition, the use of self-transcendent values also leads to higher purchase intention compared to the use of self-enhancement values. Compared to the non-use of values, the latter did not apply, but here again, if the difference in functional characteristics with your competitor is small, then the previous statement applies again. What the difference in effect of the use of self-transcendent values with the other two value groups, conservation, and openness to change, offers for opportunities must be examined by subsequent research.

**How to select brand values?**

A prerequisite for using values effectively in communication is that they are important to consumers and relevant to the product type to increase their effectiveness (e.g., Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; De Chernatony, 1999; Gotsi & Wilson, 2001; Portal et al, 2019; Schmitt, 2012; Urde, 2016; Voorn et al, 2018). For the first two studies of this dissertation, we solved this question by organizing research to find out which values people consider highly desirable in the product and service categories used in our studies. We also recommend this to brand managers. But this only gives a generic picture of the category. This is of course a good starting point, but then values are only used to meet the minimum requirements of a consumer’s choice (Keller, Sternthal & Tybout, 2002). If one wants the brand to stand out from competitors on its values then obviously more needs to be done, just as is the case for attributes (Batra et al, 2006).

Two of the possible ways to do this are by choosing values that the company or brand itself considers important or by choosing values that are important to
people but not yet claimed by competitors. Here, however, greenwashing should be avoided, as it can harm not only the brand but also, for example, the category (Winston, 2010). Regardless of which values companies choose the results of our third study show some of the potential consequences. Indeed, for this study we used the extent to which people consider different values important in their lives according to research by Schwartz and Cieciuch (2021), among others. This shows, for example, that the top five values, based on research in 32 countries, in order of importance are benevolence, self-direction, universalism, security, and hedonism. The other values are all given a lower priority with the lowest being the power value. The results of our third study, an experiment, confirmed this, with respect to the values we used in it. This also meant that the brand messages we based on them did indeed lead to stronger results for the values that were considered more important.

But whatever the choice, the way one presents the value(s) in the communication can still make them more unique.

**How to make brand values effective?**

When considering the evidence of brands in the marketplace, it is notable that there is an increasing interest in what values brands represent (e.g., Edelman, 2018; Havas, 2017; Nielsen, 2021; Porter Novelli, 2021; Warc, 2018). This already helps, as an increased interest in the values that brands represent means that values as subjects become more important in consumer behaviour. This “natural” salience can have a direct impact on behavior (Sagiv & Roccas, 2021). This is an important condition for their effectiveness because in order to influence behavior, values must first be activated, even if some values are more central to an individual’s self (Verplanken & Holland, 2002). When they are activated then indeed the influence values have on behavior will become stronger depending on their importance (Lee, Bardi, Gerrans, Sneddon, Van Herk, Evers & Schwartz, 2021).

Another way in which values can have an effect on behavior is when people are encouraged to reflect on values, this enhances the (moderator) effect of those values on behavior (Karremans, 2007). For example, in a series of experiments, Karremans (2007) showed that when participants were prompted to think about the values honesty and loyalty, they helped others more than participants who were prompted to think about reasons against honesty and loyalty. This technique
can be directly applied in marketing communications and was used in our values-based brand messages in study three. Brands apply this method by bringing values issues to the forefront, such as NIKE with anti-discrimination values topics like Black Lives Matter or LBGTI acceptance. Another way is by starting conversations with consumers in social media or by helping an audience think about values by having a voice-over ask a question, like in a TV commercial of the RABO bank where the voice-over says ‘Imagine...that we solve the world food problem together. That we produce more food without depleting the earth?’

In addition, it is possible to activate central values for a person by stimulating self-focus through priming, which was demonstrated by Verplanken and Holland (2002) in their study 5. In that experiment, they showed that participants for whom altruistic values were central and who were manipulated to focus more on the self in a short travel narrative were more likely to donate to a human rights organization than people who were asked to focus on Dutch verbs. Priming methods are widely used in marketing (see for a review Minton, Cornwell, & Kahle, 2017) and advertising (e.g, Levrini, Schaeffer & Nique, 2019; Moorman, Neijens, and Smit, 2002; Smith & Weinberg, 2016; Yi, 1993).

In our studies we asked people to reflect on the values of their preferred brand (study 1), to judge the importance of a certain value for a brand (study 2), to think about the importance of a value to themselves (study 3) or to judge the importance of a value-based brand message (study 3). This does activate values, but this does not answer the question on the basis of what brand signals consumers infer a brand’s values. Literature on this issue is scarce. More on this topic can be found in the section about limitations and ideas for future studies in this thesis.

**How to keep brand values relevant over time?**

Do values change over time? The short answer is no. All values are inherently positive (most value models don’t measure negative values), although they do vary from one individual to another in terms of priorities. However, these priorities are also fairly stable over time. This is true for both children (Cieciuch, Davidov & Algesheimer, 2016) as well as adults (Bardi, Lee, Hofmann-Towfigh & Soutar, 2009; Schwartz, 2012). This does not mean that there can be no change at all. Major changes in personal circumstances such as, for example, marriage, having children, divorce, deaths, or societal changes such as war, famine, major weather, economic
or nuclear disasters and other impactful fundamental changes can change value priorities (Bojanowska, Kaczmarek, Koscielniak & Urbańska, 2021; Daniel, Fortuna, Thrun, Cioban & Knafo, 2013; Sortheix et al., 2019). In general, as people age, the priority of self-improvement and openness to change becomes less important and the priority of self-transcendence and conservation values may increase slightly (Schwartz, 2007).

Given the above, how permanent should a brand’s values be? From a marketing perspective, it seems sensible to treat brand values as part of positioning (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Managing consistent meaning is therefore key (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020; Whan Park, Jaworski & MacInnis, 1986) by only changing the communication of the values over time, keeping the expression of them current and relevant.

**Could a brand also change its values through repositioning if it really wanted to?**

This is an open question. Any repositioning is risky (Aaker, 1997; St-James, 2001; Tybout & Calkins, 2019). This is different from lightly adjusting a positioning by slightly changing not so essential parts of a positioning, such as an insurance company that has always communicated that it prefers to speak to people in person and is now also creating the possibility of doing so digitally via image connections. A repositioning is more fundamental, for example a brand like Liga that was almost extinct and had to become attractive again for a whole generation of young people (and their mothers) or Heineken that was found less and less attractive in the Netherlands in the early nineties and had to reposition itself all over again. However, there are plenty of examples of brands that failed to do so. Just look at the unsuccessful repositioning of the Tropicana brand by removing a very important visual image of its values of naturalness and hedonism, a natural orange with a straw, which led to a loss in revenue of $27 million (Lee, Gao & Brown, 2010) or the repositioning of Miller by introducing the line extension Miller Lite, framing it as less filling because of its lower calories in a category in which hedonic values, usually taste, are most important (Tybout & Calkins, 2019).

So repositioning is risky and one of the reasons is that existing customers can become alienated from your brand. It, therefore, seems obvious that a repositioning on values can never be too rigorous from one value to an opposite value, for
example switching from a value like self-determination to power values or from stimulation to security. With value theory (Schwartz, 2012) as a starting point, it seems plausible that a small shift to adjacent values can be a safer choice, so from self-determination to universalism or stimulation and from security to, for example, tradition or conformity. This is an interesting topic for further study.

Important questions remain, however. This will be discussed in the next section.

**Limitations of the studies and suggestions for further research**

This thesis advances the understanding of the role that values play in consumer behavior. We have shown that values play a larger role in more product and service categories than previously known. Brand managers would therefore be wise to better manage the values that their brands represent. In this section, we address some of the limitations of this thesis and offer ideas for future studies.

To measure the effects of values in our three studies, we chose to make them salient in order to examine them at the conscious level, whereas in real life they usually function at an unconscious level. However, there is compelling research (e.g., Lee et al., 2021; Schwartz, 2007) that shows that there is a high correspondence between value priorities and real-life behaviour, especially when a particular human value is contextually relevant and highly prioritized.

The research questions of study one were: what is the role of value congruence in the consumer brand selection process compared to that of trait and functional congruence and does this role differ across product categories, i.e., consumer durables versus consumables and services. We used a quantitative survey (N=1,182) to solve the main questions, based on congruence theory (Sirgy, 1982). Since surveys usually rely on intentions, future studies may therefore study the effects of value congruence based on actual sales data, as this would potentially yield more nuanced results. Furthermore, a future study of the effects of value congruence within categories would also be useful, as we approached value congruence from the perspective of a difference between categories. Another limitation of this study was its scope. For practical reasons, only three product and service categories were used. Additional categories or criteria within categories could be examined in future research. For example, are there any differences in the extent to which
values are important between B2C and B2B brands? In the insurance industry, but also in pension funds, it is becoming increasingly common to consider not only the expected financial results when making investments, but also to what extent the funds in which they invest try to contribute to the sustainable development goals targets (SDG) of the UN. An insurance company such as Univé, for instance, uses the services of Sustainalytics, a company that measures the SDG compliance of investment products on more than 80 indicators, to assess this. A recent good example of the consequence of this is how the largest Dutch pension fund, the ABP, distanced itself from investments in fossil fuels, as is the case with SHELL. With this, it seems that a value such as universalism in the decisions of B2B companies may already have become a more important precondition for making purchase decisions than is the case with consumers.

But perhaps there are also differences in the extent to which brand values are important depending on whether it is a question of search, experience or credence goods and services? For instance, with regards to credence goods and services, like lawyers, notary services or surgeons, it is almost impossible for consumers to determine their quality, in contrast to search and experience goods and services, because only experts can do this. Trust in a person or brand then becomes more important. When this is the case value congruence can positively influence trust to a significant extent (Zhang & Bloemer, 2008). More insights into this could then be especially useful for credence goods and services.

Study two and three were experiments. This method allows researchers to establish causal relationships between the variables studied without explicitly asking participants, as they are not informed of the purpose of the study nor of the various manipulations of the variables. In study two, we investigated the importance of values versus attributes and functional attributes in relation to products and services at the category level and not at the brand level. How brands can best operationalize their values deserves further study, as it is particularly interesting to gauge the degree of freedom managers have to deviate from the most desired category values. In addition, it would be interesting to explore what the effects would be for consumers or other stakeholders if consumable brands were also positioned based on values. In study two (and also study one), the functional attributes were considered most important, regardless of the time factor. However, the latter could be different when consumers are choosing between different brands within a category that are otherwise considered equal in terms of perceived functional attributes. In such cases, brand values may play a more important role.
than was found in the current category-based study. This is a topic for further study. A final limitation concerns the relatively small sample size of our study two. This may have obscured effects or produced exaggerated effect sizes for observed effects.

In study three, we increased the sample size to obtain more robust results. Nevertheless, three possible limitations should be mentioned. The first concerns the choice of a non-existing brand instead of an established brand. The main reason for this was to avoid biasing the results by using an existing brand that may already have a strong brand attitude, perceived product quality or purchase consideration. Second, this may have led to an increase in the importance of the functional attributes, as they are especially important in the case of new brands (Sirgy, Lee & Grace, 2016) and third, this may have also influenced the results regarding the mediation effect by CBI, as it is plausible that brand identification of consumers with a new or fictitious brand is more difficult to achieve compared to an existing brand (Lam et al., 2013). This is a topic for future research. In addition, we have focused on studying the difference in effects of brand messages based on only two higher order value types, the self-transcendent and their opposite, the self-enhancement values. It would therefore be interesting to examine the influence of brand messages based on the openness to change (self-direction, stimulation and hedonism) and conservation groups of values (security, conformity and tradition).

Since the current studies all took place in the Netherlands, another topic for further study is to gain more insight into the effects of values-based communication across cultures. For example, are the anti-discrimination and inclusion values, or, in other words, the universalism values that an international brand like NIKE adopts and communicates always equally appealing in all countries where they are communicated? Or are the tradition values that a watch brand like Patek Philippe communicates equally relevant in all countries? Based on research by Fischer and Swartz (2010), the answer to the question for NIKE is likely to be basically yes because there is little variance across countries regarding the importance of values such as universalism, benevolence, self-direction, and stimulation values. For Patek Philippe it is a different story because on the values of tradition, security and especially conformity there is indeed greater variance in importance between different countries. In addition, the way in which values are communicated by brands can also influence their acceptance and appreciation. Research by Hanel, Vione, Hahn & Maio (2017) into examples of typical behavior associated with values shows that when Brazilians think of a value such as family security, they
immediately think of the security of their own home, for example with electrical fences, while English people are more likely to think first of a safe car to take their children to school. Knowing more about this is particularly important for international brands, as they need to find the right balance between having a meaningful international values-based marketing proposition and local relevance across cultures.

As mentioned in section 4.3.5. on practical implications, an intriguing, and final, question that remains is based on which brand signals consumers infer the values of a brand and which of these then has a greater influence on the mental formation of what the values of a brand are? Literature on this question is scarce. In this thesis, the values of brands have been presented as text. However, it is to be expected that values can also be inferred based on seeing or hearing the behavior of brands, just as people infer the values of others not only from what they say but also from what they do or how they act. There is some research available on how people infer values of others based on their behavior. In their study, Coelho, Hanel, Johansen and Maio, (2021), for instance, showed that the examples of behaviors per value that had been compiled in previous research were indeed, for the most part, classified by respondents according to the Schwartz model of values. Some examples of behaviors per values include, nurses taking care of patients in hospital, mothers looking after their children at home, volunteers providing food for homeless people in the community, and workers helping each other at workplace as examples of the benevolence value. Another example is environmentalists planting new trees in the forest, social workers helping people in their local communities, zookeepers taking care of animals and teachers helping students at school as examples of behavior belonging to the value of universalism. The only complication that occurred from time to time is that the same behavior sometimes, depending on the respondents, seemed to apply to different values. For example, the universalism behavior “teachers helping students at school” seemed to some respondents to be an example of behavior that fits conservation values more because they were just doing their job. This demonstrates that it is possible to reliably map typical behaviors to Schwartz’s (2012), rather abstract, values model. This enriches the theory of how concrete actions are meaningfully interpreted as human values. This has not yet been investigated for brands and would be an interesting topic for future studies as this would provide more insight into what brand signals and behaviors lead to the inferring of which brand values among consumers. It could help brands to communicate their values more successfully.
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ADDENDUM


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Aim of the research

The values we have are by definition positive in themselves and vary in the degree they are important to us. They are our higher abstract goals in our lives, for example, the pursuit of security, self-development, entertainment, recognition, or wanting to do good for your loved ones, the world, or others. Our values are also a kind of personal lens through which we view, experience, give meaning to, and judge the world, other persons, ideologies, situations, and objects. Thus, they also influence our behavior. Much is known about this in science. However, less is known about the role that values play in consumer behavior, i.e., how our values relate to the choice of brands, and that is quite a pity, especially given the phenomenon that the values of brands, see for example the rise of purpose marketing, seem to become increasingly important for both consumers as well as brands. The aim of this dissertation is therefore to increase our understanding of the influence of values on consumer behavior by finding answers to the following three research questions:

1. How relevant are perceived brand values to purchase intentions in comparison to functional attributes and brand personality traits for different goods and services?
2. Does the importance of brand values for purchase intentions versus functional attributes and brand personality traits differ depending on relationship duration?
3. Is there a difference in the effects on attitude toward the brand, perceived quality, and consideration to buy between brand messages based on different values?

Study one

In study one we presented a review of the literature on values as important predictors of behavioral intentions (e.g., Feather, 1995; Schwartz, 2012), as well as suggestions from the marketing literature and practice that suggest human values are becoming increasingly relevant to consumer behavior (e.g., Cone, 2017; Edelman, 2018; Warc, 2018). To find out what the influence of values on consumer intentions is, we adopted Sirgy’s congruence theory as a basis. This theory assumes that consumer behavior is influenced by the degree to which a product satisfies the desired functional product characteristics of consumers, called functional
congruence, and the degree to which the brand personality characteristics match their own, called self-congruence. In the first study we postulated that this model should actually also include value congruence, the degree to which brand values match those of consumers, because values are an inseparable part of the self. Some evidence for this had also been found in previous studies for a limited number of products and services.

Through an online survey (N = 1109), we found that value congruence indeed plays a key role, alongside functional congruence, as a predictor of repurchase intentions for consumer durables and services. However, in the case of consumable goods, trait congruence was a stronger predictor alongside functional congruence. There was also an indirect effect of value congruence on repurchase intentions. This was via functional congruence because stronger value congruence also improves the congruence of the functional attributes of a product or service, which in turn resulted in stronger purchase intentions. Value congruence thus appears to be important for many more goods services than previously known. But do consumers really find values more important than trait congruence and if so, what is the reason for this? That’s where study two takes a closer look.

**Study two**

The findings of study one led to the suggestion of a relationship between the importance of values and that of time. We argued that this is related to how long one has a relationship with a product or service and that values will be more important than traits in longer relationships. This was based on a combination of ownership theory (e.g., Strahilevitz & Loewenstein, 1998) and associative self-anchoring theory (Gawronski et al., 2007). The first theory posits that objects increasingly become part of the self, based on possession duration. In contrast, the associative self-anchoring theory explains that possession leads to the transfer of associations from the self to the object, literally making it part of the self. This is the reason why sellers place a greater value on objects they own than the amount buyers are willing to pay for the same objects (Ye & Gawronski 2016).

Based on this, it seems plausible that the longer a relationship lasts, the more important the fundamental and central parts of the self will become. Relatedly, values are indeed considered more central and fundamental parts of the self than attributes (Olsen and Mayo, 2003). Since durable goods and services are product categories where a relationship can last for several years, as in the case of cars,
laptops, and banks, this could explain why values are seen as more important than traits.

We investigated this through an online experiment and found that this was confirmed. Values are indeed more important than traits in longer relationships. This was especially the case in prospective situations, and particularly pertinent in the case of services compared to products. Functional product characteristics proved again, as predicted, to be the most important of the three. The next question became whether the importance of the type of value that was involved would make a difference in consumer behaviour. Study three was organized to delve deeper into this.

**Study three**

With study two showing that values are indeed more important in consumer behavior than previously recognized in theory, particularly in the case of longer-term prospective relationships, an interesting question remained for practice, namely what the relevance of different types of values for brands is? Given recent developments in which a growing number of brands seem to be placing more emphasis in their marketing communications on the social values they stand for, also known as purpose marketing (Baumgarth, Boltz, Schmidt & Roper, 2020), the choice of which values provide the best fundamental support for this becomes relevant.

An experiment (N = 1000) was organized to study whether a brand message based on self-transcending values, which are often used by purpose brands, would lead to stronger results in terms of attitude towards the brand, perceived quality, and consideration to buy than using a brand message based on the opposite self-enhancement values, which are not used by purpose brands. This was based on the premise that self-transcendent values are considered more important than self-enhancement values. Additionally, we posited that this process is mediated by consumer brand identification.

The results showed that, as predicted, self-transcendent values are indeed considered more important than self-enhancement values. Thus, brand messages subsequently based on self-transcendent values indeed lead to stronger effects on brand attitude, perceived quality, and purchase consideration than brand messages based on self-enhancement values. Additionally, consumer brand identification did
act as a mediator here, further reinforcing the aforementioned effects. This proved to be equally important in the case of services and products, does not depend on the length of the relationship and is also effective for a new brand.

**Theoretical and practical contributions**

Chapter 5 describes the findings in relation to the research questions and elaborates on what this means for theory and practice. The chapter also discusses recommendations for follow-up research. This dissertation shows, with the help of empirical research, including a number of experimental studies, that values are indeed important to consider when it comes to consumer behavior for more products and services than was known before. Besides the functional attributes, which are very important for all products and services, values are particularly important for products and services with which one has a longer relationship. Of the values that we studied, subsequently, the use of self-transcendent values in marketing communication indeed lead to stronger brand effects than the use of self-enhancement values. These effects are further strengthened when there is value congruence. It also turns out that the personal importance of the values communicated by a brand lead to consumer brand identification, which in turn further reinforces brand attitude, quality perceptions and buying intentions.

Brand managers can make good use of this knowledge. The chapter elaborated on this by answering a number of questions that are important with regard to the role of values in daily brand management practice. Central in this is that the functional attributes are always important but even their congruence can be further enhanced by the use of the right values in a brand’s marketing. However, as a brand manager, it is wise to always manage brand personality as well, regardless of the type of product or service. But, given our studies, brand personality is especially important for consumer goods and durable consumer goods and services should pay particular attention to their brand values. Taking all of our findings together, we conclude that the proper use of brand values can indeed deliver more value to consumers, brands, and purposes than previously known.
Samenvatting

Doel van het onderzoek

De waarden die wij hebben zijn allemaal, in meer of mindere mate, belangrijk voor ons. Het zijn onze hogere abstracte doelen in ons leven, bijvoorbeeld het streven naar veiligheid, zelfontplooiing, genieten, erkenning, of goed willen doen voor je geliefden, de wereld, of anderen. Onze waarden zijn ook een soort persoonlijke lens waardoor wij de wereld, andere personen, ideologieën, situaties en voorwerpen bekijken, ervaren, er betekenis aan geven en beoordelen. Zij beïnvloeden dus ook ons gedrag. Hierover is in de wetenschap veel bekend. Over de rol die waarden spelen in consumentengedrag, dus hoe onze waarden zich verhouden tot de keuze van merken, is echter minder bekend, en dat is best jammer, zeker gezien het verschijnsel dat de waarden van merken, zie bijvoorbeeld de opkomst van purpose marketing, steeds belangrijker lijken te worden voor zowel consumenten als merken. Het doel van dit proefschrift is dan ook om ons begrip van de invloed van waarden op consumentengedrag te vergroten door antwoorden te vinden op de volgende drie onderzoeksvragen:

1. Hoe relevant zijn waargenomen merkwaarden voor aankoopintenties in vergelijking met functionele producteigenschappen en merkpersoonlijkheidskenmerken voor verschillende goederen en diensten?
2. Verschilt het belang van merkwaarden voor aankoopintenties versus functionele producteigenschappen en merkpersoonlijkheidskenmerken afhankelijk van de relatieduur?
3. Is er een verschil in de effecten van merkboodschappen die gebaseerd zijn op verschillende waarden op de houding ten opzichte van het merk, de waargenomen kwaliteit, en de overweging om te kopen?

Studie 1

In studie één presenteerden we een overzicht van de literatuur over waarden als belangrijke voorspellers van gedragsintenties (bijv. Feather, 1995; Schwartz, 2012), evenals suggesties uit de marketingliteratuur en -praktijk die suggereren dat menselijke waarden steeds relevanter worden voor consumentengedrag (o.a. Cone, 2017; Edelman, 2018; Warc, 2018). Om de invloed van waarden op consumentenintenties te achterhalen, namen we de congruentietheorie van Sirgy als basis. Deze gaat ervan uit dat consumentengedrag beïnvloed wordt door de mate
waarin een product voldoet aan de gewenste functionele producteigenschappen, functionele congruentie genaamd, en de mate waarin de merkpersoonlijkheid kenmerken overeenkomen met die van henzelf, de zelfcongruentie genaamd maar in onze onderzoeken aangeduid als trait congruentie. In het eerste onderzoek stelden wij dat de congruentietheorie de waarde congruentie, de mate waarin de merkwaarden overeenkomen met die van consumenten, eigenlijk ook zou moeten meenemen, want waarden vormen immers een onlosmakelijk deel van de eigen zelf. Hier waren namelijk ook al enige aanwijzingen voor in relatie tot een beperkt aantal producten en diensten.

Via een online enquête (N = 1109) vonden we dat waarde congruentie inderdaad een sleutelrol speelde naast functionele congruentie, als directe voorspeller van heraankoopintenties voor meerdere duurzame consumptiegooederen en diensten. In het geval van verbruiksgoederen was trait congruentie echter een sterkere voorspeller naast functionele congruentie. Hiernaast was er ook een indirect effect van waarde congruentie op de heraankoopintenties. Een sterkere waardencongruentie leidde namelijk tot een sterkere functionele congruentie en dit resulteerde vervolgens ook in sterkere heraankoopintenties. Waardencongruentie lijkt dus belangrijk voor veel meer goederen en diensten dan tot nu toe bekend was. Maar vinden consumenten waarden ook echt belangrijker dan trait congruentie en als dat zo is waar komt dit dan door? Daar gaat onderzoek twee dieper op in.

Studie 2

De bevindingen van studie één leidden tot de suggestie dat er een verband bestaat tussen het belang van waarden en dat van tijd. Wij stelden dat dit verband houdt met hoe lang men een relatie heeft met een product of dienst en dat waarden belangrijker zullen zijn dan persoonlijkheidseigenschappen in langere relaties. Dit was gebaseerd op een combinatie van de eigendomstheorie (bv. Strahilevitz & Loewenstein, 1998) en de associatieve zelfverankeringstheorie (Gawronski et al., 2007). De eerste theorie stelt dat objecten steeds meer deel gaan uitmaken van de eigen zelf, op basis van de duur van het bezit. De associatieve zelfverankeringstheorie verklaart vervolgens dat bezit leidt tot de overdracht van associaties van de eigen zelf naar het object, waardoor het letterlijk een deel daarvan wordt. Dit is de reden waarom verkopers een grotere waarde lijken te hechten aan objecten die zij bezitten dan het bedrag dat kopers bereid zijn te betalen voor dezelfde objecten (Ye & Gawronski, 2016).
Samenvatting

Op basis hiervan lijkt het aannemelijk dat hoe langer een relatie duurt, hoe belangrijker de fundamentele en centrale delen van de eigen zelf worden. Hiermee samenhangend worden waarden inderdaad beschouwd als meer centrale en fundamentele delen van het zelf dan attributen (Olsen en Mayo, 2003). Aangezien duurzame goederen en diensten productcategorieën zijn waarbij een relatie meerdere jaren kan duren, zoals in het geval van auto’s, laptops en banken, zou dit kunnen verklaren waarom merkwaarden als belangrijker worden gezien dan merkpersoonlijkheid kenmerken.

Wij onderzochten dit door middel van een online experiment en vonden dat dit werd bevestigd. Waarden zijn inderdaad belangrijker dan merkpersoonlijkheid kenmerken in langere relaties. Dit was vooral het geval in prospectieve situaties, en bijzonder pertinent in het geval van diensten in vergelijking met producten. Functionele producteigenschappen bleken opnieuw, zoals voorspeld, de belangrijkste van de drie te zijn. De volgende vraag was of het belang van het soort waarde dat erbij betrokken was een verschil zou maken in het gedrag van de consument. Studie drie werd georganiseerd om hier dieper op in te gaan.

Studie 3

Nu studie twee aantoonde dat waarden inderdaad belangrijker zijn in consumentengedrag dan eerder in de theorie werd onderkend, met name in het geval van langer durende toekomstige relaties, bleef er een interessante vraag over voor de praktijk, namelijk wat de relevantie van verschillende soorten waarden voor merken is. Gezien de recente ontwikkelingen waarin een groeiend aantal merken in hun marketingcommunicatie meer nadruk lijkt te leggen op de maatschappelijke waarden waar zij voor staan, ook wel purpose marketing genoemd (Baumgarth, Boltz, Schmidt & Roper, 2020), wordt de keuze welke waarden hiervoor de beste fundamentele ondersteuning bieden relevant.

Een experiment (N = 1000) werd georganiseerd om te onderzoeken of een merkboodschap gebaseerd op zelfoverstijgende waarden, die vaak gebruikt worden door purpose brands, tot sterkere resultaten zou leiden in termen van attitude ten opzichte van het merk, gepercipieerde kwaliteit, en overweging om te kopen dan het gebruik van een merkboodschap gebaseerd op de tegenovergestelde zelfversterkende waarden. Dit was gebaseerd op de veronderstelling dat zelfoverstijgende waarden als belangrijker worden gezien dan zelfversterkende
waarden. Hiernaast stelden wij dat dit proces wordt gemedieerd door de merkidentificatie van de consument.

De resultaten toonden aan dat, zoals voorspeld, zelfoverstijgende waarden inderdaad belangrijker worden geacht dan zelfversterkende waarden. Merkboodschappen die vervolgens gebaseerd zijn op zelfoverstijgende waarden leiden dus inderdaad tot sterkere effecten op de merkattitude, de gepercipieerde kwaliteit en de aankoopoverweging dan merkboodschappen die gebaseerd zijn op zelfversterkende waarden. Merkidentificatie van de consument fungeerde hierbij inderdaad als mediator waardoor de hiervoor genoemde effecten nog verder werden versterkt. Dit bleek net zo belangrijk te zijn in het geval van diensten als producten, hangt niet af van de lengte van de relatie en is ook effectief voor een nieuw merk.

### Hoofdstuk 5: Theoretische en praktische implicaties

Hoofdstuk 5 beschrijft de bevindingen in relatie tot de onderzoeksvragen en gaat in op wat dit betekent voor theorie en praktijk. Het hoofdstuk gaat ook in op aanbevelingen voor vervolgonderzoek. Dit proefschrift laat met behulp van empirisch onderzoek, waaronder een aantal experimentele studies, zien dat waarden inderdaad voor meer producten en diensten belangrijk zijn om rekening mee te houden als het gaat om consumentengedrag dan tot nu toe bekend was. Naast de functionele producteigenschappen, die voor alle producten en diensten van groot belang zijn, zijn waarden vooral van belang voor producten en diensten waarmee men een langere relatie heeft. Van de waarden die we vervolgens bestudeerden in merkcommunicatie leidde het gebruik van zelfoverstijgende waarden inderdaad tot sterkere effecten dan het gebruik van zelfversterkende waarden. Deze effecten worden nog verder versterkt wanneer er sprake is van waardencongruentie. Ook blijkt dat de persoonlijke belangrijkheid van de waarden die door een merk worden gecommuniceerd, tot een verhoging van de merkidentificatie bij de consument, wat op zijn beurt de merkattitude, kwaliteitspercepties en koopintenties verder versterkt.

Merkmanagers kunnen deze kennis goed gebruiken. In het hoofdstuk is hier verder op ingegaan door een aantal vragen te beantwoorden die van belang zijn met betrekking tot de rol van waarden in de dagelijkse merken managementpraktijk. Centraal hierin staat dat de functionele attributen altijd belangrijk zijn, maar dat zelfs hun congruentie verder kan worden versterkt door het gebruik van
Samenvatting

de juiste waarden in de marketing van een merk. Het is echter verstandig om als brand manager ook altijd de merkpersoonlijkheid actief te managen ongeacht het type product of service. Vervolgens geldt, op basis van onze studies, dat merkpersoonlijkheid met name belangrijk is voor verbruiksgoederen en dat het belangrijk is dat duurzame consumptiegoederen en diensten in het bijzonder aandacht besteden aan hun merkwaarden. Al onze bevindingen bij elkaar genomen, concluderen we dat het juiste gebruik van merkwaarden inderdaad meer waarde kan opleveren voor consumenten, merken, en doeleinden dan tot nu toe bekend was.
ADDENDUM

Dankwoord

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ook te halen. Misschien heb je dat niet altijd doorgehad daarom wil ik dat hier even speciaal benoemen. Dankjewel fijne vent!

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ADDENDUM

About the Author

Ronald Voorn worked with brands throughout his whole career after obtaining a bachelor’s degree in communication from the Utrecht University of Applied Science in 1982. He subsequently obtained a master’s degree in communication science at the University of Twente in 2013. He was then able to start his PhD project thanks to a scholarship for lecturers from the Utrecht University of Applied Science.

Ronald teaches advertising and consumer psychology in the master year at the University of Twente. In addition, he is a non-executive board member at Univé Dichtbij, the Dutch Marketing Association (NIMA) and Plantation PortoMari in Curaçao.

Ronald is happily married to Marian since 1983 and together they have three lovely daughters, Marije, Sanne and Charlie, a super son in law Diederik and two fantastic grandchildren, Elin and Lewis.
UITNODIGING voor het bijwonen van de openbare verdediging van mijn proefschrift BRANDS, VALUES AND CONSUMERS, THE IMPORTANCE OF VALUES IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR op vrijdag 20 januari 2023 om 12:30 uur precies in de Prof. dr. G. Berkhoffzaal (gebouw Waaier, nr 12), Universiteit Twente Drienerlolaan 5, 7522 NB, Enschede. De verdediging is ook online te volgen: https://vimeo.com/event/107744/

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