

Exemplars or Beliefs? The Impact of Self-View on the Nature and Relative Influence of Brand Associations

SHARON NG
MICHAEL J. HOUSTON*

This research examines whether various forms of brand associations—overall brand beliefs (e.g., Sony is high quality) versus exemplars of the brand (e.g., Sony TV)—are differentially accessible for individuals with independent self-views and those with an interdependent self-view. Since independents emphasize the “traitedness” of behavior and tend to focus on attributes of objects, brand beliefs are relatively more accessible than exemplars to them. Conversely, since interdependents focus more on the role of contextual factors and the interrelatedness of events, exemplars are relatively more accessible to them than brand beliefs. Further, examination of the implications of this difference on brand attitudes and brand extension evaluations occurs.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of global marketing has contributed to growth in research on cultural influences on consumer behavior and how members of different cultures respond to different marketing stimuli (e.g., Aaker and Maheswaran 1997; Mandel 2003; Tavassoli 1999). Much of this research focuses on the interdependent self-view of Eastern society and the independent self-view of Western society. Self-view has been shown to affect many aspects of human cognition and consumer behavior, including regulatory focus (Aaker and Lee 2001), reactions to advertising messages (Aaker and Williams 1998), sources of self-esteem (Kitayama et al. 1997), field dependency (Kühnen and Oyserman 2002), and decision making (Mandel 2003). Limited research exists, however, regarding the impact of self-view, or culture, on the way consumers organize brand knowledge. The way consumers represent brand knowledge has important implications for the way they react to branding strategies, such as brand extensions, and is fundamental to a complete conceptual picture of brand evaluation processes, as well as to

successful brand strategies across foreign markets. The purpose of the research reported here is to begin to develop an understanding of the impact of self-view on the accessibility of various forms of brand associations and their influence on brand evaluation processes.

CULTURE AND SELF-VIEW

The distinction between independent self and interdependent self captures the conflict between personal goals and group goals and whether the self is viewed as separable or inseparable from others (Singelis 1994; Triandis 1989). Individuals with a dominant independent self (henceforth termed “independents”) base their identity on traits and dispositions (Cousins 1989; Yamada and Singelis 1999). They possess stronger beliefs about the “traitedness” of behavior (Church et al. 2003) and emphasize dispositions and attitudes in the self-concept (Kühnen, Hannover, and Schubert 2001). They are also more likely to describe themselves in abstract terms or dispositions (e.g., intelligent) with few references to specific contexts (Cousins 1989). A result is a greater reliance on trait attributes in their judgments about people and events (Markus and Kitayama 1991). Since arriving at a belief about someone’s traits requires one to abstract and generalize features of behavior across contexts, the emphasis on dispositions also encourages independents to engage in a more context-independent, abstract mode of thinking (Kühnen, Hannover, and Schubert 2001). For independents, “abstraction will be a goal because categories and rules will seem to be useful just to the extent that they have wide applicability” (Nisbett et al. 2001, 306).

*Sharon Ng is assistant professor of marketing, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore 639798 (angsl@ntu.edu.sg). Michael J. Houston is Ecolab-Pierson M. Grieve Chair in International Marketing, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455 (mhouston@csom.umn.edu). Correspondence: Sharon Ng. The authors would like to express their appreciation to Roger Marshall, Hooi Den Huan, and Cindy Chung for their assistance in data collection. The authors thank Chris Joiner and Joanne Peck for their helpful comments. The authors would also like to thank the editor, associate editor, and the three reviewers for their extremely helpful suggestions.

Individuals with a dominant interdependent self (henceforth termed “interdependents”) base their identity on roles and relationships (Markus and Kitayama 1991; Singelis 1994). They possess weaker beliefs about the “traitedness” of behavior, focusing instead on the role of contextual factors (Church et al. 2003). The self is inseparable from context, leading to less emphasis on dispositions and traits in their self-concept and judgments (Markus and Kitayama 1991). Greater attention is paid to the interrelatedness of events and the contextual information that may have led to the behavior (Cousins 1989; Nisbett et al. 2001). Since the development of the interdependent self involves attention to contexts that include other people, a more context-bound and concrete mode of thinking also develops (Kühnen, Hannover, and Schubert 2001). A concrete mode of processing refers to “a tendency to perceive things as part of the real life settings . . . rather than to mentally isolate objects or their attributes” (Cousins 1989). It refers to a tendency not to abstract features from context. Thus, a fundamental difference between independents and interdependents lies in their beliefs about the traitedness of behavior and the extent to which they focus on abstract or concrete information (Church et al. 2003).

Recent research suggests that the two ways of viewing the self may coexist in every individual, independent of culture (Brewer and Gardner 1996). For example, individuals with life experiences in more than one culture, that is, biculturals, may have both a well-developed independent self and a well-developed interdependent self (Yamada and Singelis 1999). In this view, the self is a multifaceted memory structure with more than one possible conceptual representation. Each self-view encourages the learning and storage of different information and is connected to a distinct knowledge structure, containing semantic content congruent with the orientation of the particular self-view (Kühnen, Hannover, and Schubert 2001). Making a particular self-view temporarily more accessible will also make the corresponding set of semantic content more accessible. Thus, chronic exposure to two different cultures enables biculturals to build and store two distinct sets of knowledge structures. Which is used depends on the self-view more accessible at the moment. This argument is consistent with literature showing that cognitive representations may be affected by the type of information made salient (see Higgins 1996).

This relatively new paradigm is not incompatible with the traditional view that different self-views exist across cultures. Culture may be conceptualized as a chronic activation of relevant self-views. Different cultures encourage the activation and usage of different self-views in daily life, making these self-views highly accessible over time. Thus, a particular self-view may be more accessible in one culture than another. This perspective allows researchers to gain converging evidence from two different measurement methods. A cross-national study can provide external validity for the findings, while a priming study allows a test of the same issue without possible contaminations due to inherent coun-

try differences. Researchers in various domains have activated individuals’ independent self or interdependent self using a variety of priming techniques and report results paralleling that obtained in cross-country research (e.g., Brewer and Gardner 1996; Gardner, Gabriel, and Lee 1999; Kühnen, Hannover, Shah, et al. 2001). The current research builds on the existing body of literature by examining if self-view affects the accessibility of brand associations in consumers’ minds and the impact on brand attitude and brand extension evaluation. A key premise is that the way one views the self should filter down to the way one processes and stores information about the world, including brands. Specifically, different self-views should encourage the processing and storage of different associations.

HYPOTHESES

Brand association refers to any information, such as product category, usage situation, and other summary evaluations, linked to the brand node in memory (Keller 1993). These associations differ in the extent to which they are abstract or concrete. For instance, general descriptive or evaluative thoughts, henceforth termed “global beliefs,” that consumers may have about the brand¹ (e.g., Nike is stylish) are relatively more abstract than thoughts about specific products or subcategories (e.g., Toyota Corolla), henceforth termed “exemplars.”² Global beliefs are abstracted from prior product experiences, learned from marketing and/or word-of-mouth communications and are relatively context independent and abstract. Like individual traits, forming general beliefs about the brand requires one to aggregate information across numerous purchasing contexts. However, mental representations of exemplars are more context bound or concrete, as they tend to include more contextual and incidental details about the product (e.g., where the product is bought or when the product is generally used).

With a focus more on traits and abstract information, independents should exhibit parallel behavior toward other social phenomenon, such as brands. Global beliefs should be relatively more accessible than exemplars in their mental representation of brands. However, since interdependents focus less on trait information and more on concrete information, exemplars should be relatively more accessible than global beliefs to them. Note that it is not that interdependents do not possess any abstract beliefs. Rather, beliefs are less accessible than exemplars for them. Operationally, to test if

¹We distinguish global beliefs from product specific beliefs. Global beliefs are beliefs one attaches to the brand name (e.g., Sony). Product-specific beliefs (e.g., beliefs about Sony TV), however, may or may not be attached to the brand. We are more interested in the accessibility of global beliefs, not product-specific beliefs.

²Our characterization of brand associations is similar to that in Keller (1993). Keller differentiated associations by their degree of abstraction—attitudes, beliefs, and attributes. Relating to our characterization, attitudes and beliefs are similar to “global beliefs,” while attributes are similar to “exemplars.” However, our exemplar definition is slightly broader than the definition of attributes in Keller. Keller’s definition of attributes focuses on product features, while our definition of exemplars focuses on specific products and not just product features.

accessibility of exemplars and beliefs differ for independents and interdependents, we examine the thoughts individuals retrieve when prompted by a brand name. Associations that are more accessible should be more readily retrieved.

H1a: Interdependents will retrieve more exemplars of a brand than independents.

H1b: Independents will retrieve more global beliefs about a brand than interdependents.

H2a: Interdependents will retrieve more exemplars than global beliefs.

H2b: Independents will retrieve more global beliefs than exemplars.

Furthermore, there should be a difference in the specificity of associations people retrieve. Not only do beliefs and exemplars differ in their level of abstractness, but within each form of associations they also differ in the level of specificity. For example, “Sony stands for good quality” is more general than “Sony TV is good quality.” Similarly, “Sony Flat Screen TV” refers to a more specific exemplar than “Sony electronics,” which refers to a subcategory of Sony products ranging from televisions to computers. “Sony Flat Screen TV” refers to a specific product and evokes more concrete details about the product. Henceforth, we term the retrieval of a subcategory of products “subcategory exemplars” and the retrieval of specific products “specific exemplars.” Since interdependents’ perceptions of objects are more context bound and concrete relative to independents, the associations they store should also be more specific. This is consistent with previous research in a nonbrand context that showed that interdependents possess more concrete and specific views of traits compared to independents (Cousins 1989).

H3: Within each type of brand association, the associations stored by interdependents are more specific than those stored by independents.

Will the differential accessibility of exemplars and beliefs translate into differential influences on individuals’ brand attitudes? The literature has typically assumed that beliefs are the main driving force affecting individuals’ brand attitude and has largely ignored the role played by exemplars (with the exception of Loken et al. 2002). However, the relative influence of beliefs and exemplars on one’s brand attitude should be affected by their accessibility. Associations that are more accessible should exert greater influence on one’s brand attitude. Thus, since exemplars are more accessible for interdependents, they should exert a greater influence on their brand attitudes. However, since global beliefs are more accessible for independents, they should exert a greater influence on independents’ brand attitude.

H4a: Exemplars exert a greater influence on interdependents’ attitude than beliefs.

H4b: Beliefs exert a greater influence on independents’ attitude than exemplars.

Previous research suggests that interdependents and independents categorize objects differently (Nisbett et al. 2001). Interdependents tend to group together objects based on relationships, such as functional relationships (e.g., pencil and notebook) or social relationships (e.g., mother and children), while independents tend to group together objects that belong to the same category (e.g., newspaper and magazine; Nisbett et al. 2001). Drawing from these findings, since interdependents tend to categorize based on relationships, the greater accessibility of exemplars should make another form of relationship—usage occasion—salient to them. Their attention would focus on the contexts where the exemplars are used, leading them to group together brands that are complementary in usage situations. Conversely, the retrieval of global beliefs by independents should focus their attention on those beliefs and lead them to group together brands that share the same global beliefs.

H5: Interdependents are more likely to group together brands that are used in the same usage occasion, and independents are more likely to group together brands that share the same global associations.

If differential accessibility of brand associations translates into differential influence on brand attitude and categorization, does that mean that when an association is made equally salient to independents and interdependents, they would use the same piece of information similarly? We propose that, even when an association is made equally salient to both groups, the way this information is combined with other pieces of information will still differ. To test this proposition, the impact of exemplars on brand extension evaluation is examined. Since interdependents focus on usage occasion, when exemplar information is made salient, they should evaluate extensions into products used in the same usage occasion with the existing product mix more favorably. However, since independents tend to group together products that belong to the same product category, they should evaluate extensions into products that belong to the same product category as that of the existing product mix more favorably.

H6a: Interdependents rate extensions into products that may be used in the same usage occasions as existing products more favorably than independents.

H6b: Independents rate extensions into products that belong to the same product category as existing products more favorably than interdependents.

To test the hypotheses, four studies were conducted. In this research, both cross-country and priming approaches were used to provide converging evidence for the predictions.

STUDY 1: NATURE OF BRAND CATEGORY

Study 1 examined whether different forms of brand associations, that is, exemplars and global beliefs, are differentially accessible for independents and interdependents and, if so, the consequences on the way people categorize brands.

Method

Participants. Ninety-six students from a Singapore University and 103 students from a university in the United States completed the study for partial fulfillment of course credit. The two countries were chosen because they vary in the individualism and collectivism dimension (Hofstede 1980), the central distinction of which is the existence of an independent self-view and an interdependent self-view, respectively. With a fairly open economy, many of the major brands found in the United States are also available in Singapore, leading to greater comparability in brand familiarity. Moreover, since Singapore students are well versed in English, research can be conducted without any need for translation. With a per capita income close to that of United States, financial factors that might affect the results can also be ruled out.

Materials and Procedure. On the cover page, participants were told that we were interested in how people view some existing brands and were asked to perform three tasks. First, a grouping task was assigned to determine how people categorize brands. Participants were given a list of 10 brands, out of which they were asked to choose any three that would form a “coherent” group with a focal brand—Nike—and to provide reasons for their choices. The meaning of “coherent” was not defined; rather participants were left on their own to decide what constitutes a coherent group. Nike was chosen because it is highly familiar to students in both countries and its ads in both countries are fairly similar in content and execution. Pretests in both countries revealed three common associations about Nike: (1) shoe, (2) sports related, and (3) prestigious. In addition, 10 other brands equally familiar to students in both countries and sharing at least one association with Nike were also identified: Wilson, Prince, Casio (used in the same sports occasion with Nike), Dr Scholl’s, Asics, Hush Puppies (in the “shoe” business), Polo Ralph Lauren, Esprit, and Timberland (similar level of prestige). Another unrelated brand, Caterpillar, was added as filler.

Next, participants were asked to complete a free association task. They were told to write down the first five thoughts that came to mind when they thought of Sony. Sony was chosen for this task as clear exemplars were associated with it, and most consumers also possessed strong beliefs about the brand. Consequently, a test of whether exemplars or beliefs were more readily retrieved can be made.

For the last task, participants were asked to draw a brand concept map of Volkswagen. Brand concept maps can pro-

vide a more complete picture of how associations are connected, as well as further evidence of brand associations’ accessibility (Joiner 1998). To minimize contamination from earlier tasks, a completely different product category, car, was chosen. Since most car models are individually branded (e.g., Toyota Corolla), using car as the target product allowed us to test if people possess different beliefs for different car models. Based on pretests, Volkswagen was selected. For this task, participants were instructed to write down as many associations as they could relating to the brand and to show the relationship among the associations through lines connecting the concepts (see Joiner 1998). A two-item, seven-point scale was included at the end to check if participants understood the instructions.

Results

To test hypotheses 1 and 2, the relative number of exemplars and beliefs evident in the free association task and brand concept maps was analyzed. Hypotheses 4a and 4b were tested using the results of the brand-grouping task. Multivariate analyses were run in both cases. Two independent judges coded the thoughts, agreeing 95% of the time. Differences between them were resolved through discussions.

Exemplars versus Beliefs. From the free association task, participants’ thoughts were coded for whether they reflected exemplars or beliefs. Thoughts referring to a specific product or product category by the brand were coded as exemplars (e.g., Sony PlayStation), while general descriptions (e.g., Sony represents good quality) were coded as beliefs. Consistent with expectations, MANOVA analysis showed a significant country effect ($F(2, 192) = 6.04, p < .01$). Singaporeans listed significantly more exemplars ($M = 2.65$) than Americans ($M = 1.85; F(1, 193) = 8.31, p < .01$), while the reverse was true for beliefs (Americans: $M = 3.02$, Singaporeans: $M = 2.22; F(1, 193) = 8.22, p < .01$). Repeated-measures analysis also showed significant differences in the number of exemplars and beliefs listed within each culture ($F(1, 193) = 7.34, p < .01$). Americans listed significantly more beliefs than exemplars ($F(1, 100) = 12.05, p < .001$). However, the number of exemplars and beliefs listed by Singaporeans did not differ significantly ($F(1, 92) = 2.33, p > .1$). Writing down exemplars may have prompted Singaporeans to think of product-specific beliefs too. Tests also showed that not only did Singaporeans retrieve more exemplars, but they also retrieved more specific exemplars (e.g., Sony flat screen TV) relative to subcategory exemplars (e.g., Sony electronics products; $F(1, 92) = 3.67, p < .05$). Conversely, Americans retrieved more subcategory exemplars than specific exemplars ($F(1, 100) = 3.94, p < .05$). Collectively, these findings provided support for hypothesis 1–3.

For the brand concept task, concepts linked directly and indirectly to the brand were analyzed. First, concepts linked directly to Volkswagen were coded as either exemplars (e.g., Beetle) or beliefs (e.g., stylish). As expected (hypothesis 1),

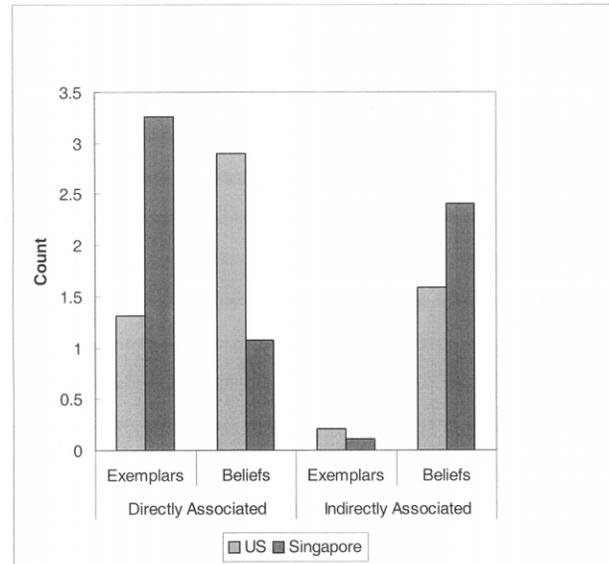
there was a significant difference in the type of associations linked directly to the brand ($F(2, 192) = 42.65, p < .001$). Singaporeans linked significantly more exemplars directly to the brand ($m = 3.26$) than did Americans ($m = 1.31$; $F(1, 193) = 47.14, p < .001$). Americans linked significantly more beliefs directly to the brand ($m = 2.9$) than did Singaporeans ($m = 1.07$; $F(1, 193) = 44.98, p < .001$). The relative presence of each type of associations in the respective samples was also consistent with hypothesis 2. Note, however, that analyses showed that Singaporeans linked significantly more beliefs indirectly to the brand ($m = 2.41$) than did Americans ($m = 1.59$; $F(1, 193) = 3.30, p < .01$), while there was no significant difference in the number of exemplars indirectly linked to the brand ($m = 0.11$ vs. 0.21 , respectively; $F(1, 193) = 0.45, p > .10$; see fig. 1). Thus, Singaporeans do possess beliefs about products and brands. The difference is that their beliefs are linked to specific products or product categories, instead of the brand (e.g., they might link “stylish” to “Beetle” but not to Volkswagen). The t -tests on the two-item task understanding scale showed that people did have a clear understanding of the instructions ($m = 5.48, p < .01$). Thus, results from the free association task and brand concept map converged, providing strong support for hypotheses 1 and 2.

Categorization Task. To test hypotheses 4a and 4b, the brands participants chose to group with Nike were coded into three categories based on the reasons participants gave. The three categories were relational (i.e., brand is used in the same usage occasion as Nike), taxonomical (i.e., brand belongs to the same product category as Nike), or attributional (i.e., brand shares some attributes with Nike). Analysis showed a significant difference in the type of brands Singaporeans and Americans chose to group with Nike ($F(3, 191) = 16.21, p < .05$). As hypothesized, Singaporeans chose more brands that were relationally linked to Nike ($m = 1.71$) than did Americans ($m = 0.43$; $F(1, 193) = 37.66, p < .001$), while Americans chose more brands that were attributionally linked to Nike ($m = 1.41$) than did Singaporeans ($m = 0.49$; $F(1, 193) = 20.88, p < .001$). Though not many people chose brands taxonomically related to Nike, among those who did, more Americans did so ($m = 1.16$) than Singaporeans ($m = 0.80$; $F(1, 193) = 2.66, p < .10$). To ensure that the results were not contaminated by data from participants who were not “purely” associated with the respective cultures (e.g., foreign students), data from foreigners were excluded and reanalyzed. We found no significant difference in the results.

Discussion

Study 1 provides support for the notion that exemplars and beliefs are differentially accessible to interdependents and independents with attendant effects on how they categorize. Exemplars are more accessible for interdependents, and they are more likely to group brands used in the same usage occasion together. Beliefs are more accessible for independents, and they are more likely to group brands that

FIGURE 1
RESULT OF BRAND CONCEPT MAP



share the same beliefs or belong to the same product category together. Results also showed that the specificity of exemplars accessible to each group differs. Specific exemplars are more accessible for interdependents, and subcategory exemplars are more accessible for independents. However, these findings were inconclusive as the choice of brand in this study made it difficult to determine whether the products participants listed were specific exemplars or subcategory exemplars. Study 2 will address this issue by using a more appropriate brand. The use of country as a proxy for self-views does not eliminate the alternative explanation that the results might be attributed to differences in availability, and not accessibility, of brand associations across countries. It also prohibits conclusions that self-view is a key factor affecting the results as the two countries differ in other dimensions. Study 2 aimed to provide more direct evidence for the role of self-view by priming individuals’ self-view directly.

STUDY 2: BRAND ATTITUDE

In study 2, participants’ independent self or interdependent self was made temporarily more accessible via priming. As discussed, people represent categories dynamically, using only a subset of information to represent a category at any one point in time (Barsalou 1992). Priming a self-view would activate a different cognitive structure in one’s mind, making information congruent with the primed self temporarily more accessible. Thus, increasing the accessibility of a particular self-view should lead one to retrieve brand associations consistent with that self-view. Obtaining results corresponding to that observed in study 1 would suggest

that self-view, even when temporarily primed, plays an important role in determining which information is retrieved. Study 2 also aimed to test if differential accessibility of exemplars and beliefs translates into differential influences on brand attitudes (hypothesis 4).

Method

Participants and Procedure. A total of 70 students from a Singapore university were paid \$5 each to participate in this study. Participants were exposed to a self-view priming manipulation adapted from Aaker and Williams (1998) and then administered a three-part questionnaire. First, they were told that a company would like to obtain their opinion about an advertisement. Half of the participants were shown a fictitious advertisement featuring a picture of a person having a quiet moment alone on the beach accompanied by the caption, "Remember the day by yourself at the beach. The warm light of sun shining down on you. The sound of the waves crashing on the beach. Nothing beats a quiet moment alone by yourself!" (independent prime). The other half saw an advertisement featuring a group of friends spending some time on the beach together accompanied by the caption, "Remember the day at the beach with your best friends. The warm light of sun shining down on all of you. The sound of the waves crashing on the beach. Nothing beats a moment with your best friends!" (interdependent prime). Participants were then asked to write down thoughts about the advertisement, a task intended to reinforce and strengthen the prime. It also served as another form of manipulation check for the cultural prime.

Participants next completed a free association task similar to that in study 1 for the Nestlé brand. Nestlé was chosen primarily because it has a major presence in a variety of product categories, and, within each category, it carries many products that are individually branded. The individual brands would help determine whether participants were thinking of a product at the subcategory level (e.g., chocolates) or specific product level (e.g., KitKat). Moreover, Nestlé is a very familiar brand in Singapore, and most consumers are knowledgeable about its products.

To test the impact of exemplars and beliefs on attitude, the second part of the questionnaire involved attitudinal measures about Mitsubishi and its exemplars. In order to examine the influence of subcategory exemplars on brand attitude, a brand with significant presence across rather heterogeneous product categories was needed. Mitsubishi was chosen as it has presence in multiple product categories, with multiple products in each category. Moreover, pretests showed that consumers are generally familiar with their products. From pretests, we found that people associated cars and electronics most strongly with Mitsubishi. For cars, Lancer and Galant were the more popular products, while for electronics, air conditioners and refrigerators were more popular. Price, design, functionality, and quality were selected as the four most important attributes affecting pur-

chasing decisions. Thus, the following measures were obtained:

1. Attitudes toward Mitsubishi, the subcategories (i.e., Mitsubishi cars and Mitsubishi electronics), and specific exemplars (i.e., Galant, Lancer, Mitsubishi Air conditioner, and Mitsubishi Refrigerator; favorable/unfavorable, good/bad, like/dislike);
2. Perceived typicality of each exemplar (typical/not typical, similar/not similar) measured at multiple levels (see appendix);
3. Evaluations of Mitsubishi, Mitsubishi cars, and Mitsubishi electronics on price, design, functionality, and quality (unfavorable/favorable);
4. The importance (not important / important) of price, design, functionality, and quality in general purchases, car purchases, and electronic purchases (see appendix);
5. Knowledge of Mitsubishi, each subcategory, and each specific exemplar (knowledgeable/ not knowledgeable, familiar/not familiar).

Based on these measures, several attitudinal indices were computed (see appendix for a summary of the computations). A priming-manipulation check closed the measures.

Results

Manipulation Check. The manipulation check for self-view prime involved a six-item scale adapted from Aaker and Lee (2001). Three items measured the extent to which participants focused on themselves ($\alpha = 0.72$), while three items measured the extent to which they focused on friends ($\alpha = 0.79$). A repeated-measures ANOVA with self-view prime as a between-subjects factor showed that the manipulation was successful ($F(1, 67) = 8.54, p < .01$). Those in the independent prime condition thought more about themselves ($m = 4.45$) than friends ($m = 1.22$). Those in the interdependent prime condition thought more about their friends ($m = 4.87$) than themselves ($m = 2.98$). Analysis of the thoughts data supported this conclusion.

Beliefs, Subcategory Exemplars, or Specific Exemplars? To test the accessibility of different associations, a coding scheme similar to that in study 1 was used for the Nestlé task. Two independent judges coded participants' thoughts into three categories—subcategory exemplars (e.g., baby products), specific exemplars (e.g., Milo), or beliefs (e.g., healthy). The judges agreed 97% of the time, and any disagreements were resolved through discussions. Multivariate analysis was run, and results showed a significant priming effect ($F(2, 66) = 5.34, p < .001$). Specifically, independents listed more beliefs ($m = 3.01$) than did interdependents ($m = 1.54$), while interdependents listed more exemplars ($m = 3.18$) than did independents ($m = 1.72$). Moreover, independents listed significantly more subcategory exemplars ($m = 1.22$) than did interdependents ($m = 0.73$; $F(1, 67) = 5.01, p < .05$). Interdependents listed significantly more specific exemplars ($m = 2.52$) than did inde-

pendents ($m = 0.41$; $F(1, 67) = 3.43$, $p < .05$). Thus, results replicated findings in study 1.

Impact of Associations on Category Attitude. To examine the impact of associations on brand attitude, the multiexemplar, subcategory, and multiattribute indices were regressed on brand attitude. Consistent with Loken et al. (2002), the multiattribute index had the greatest influence on independents' attitude (standardized $\beta = .79$, $p < .001$), followed by the multiexemplar index (standardized $\beta = .23$, $p < .001$). The subcategory index was not significantly related to brand attitude ($p > .1$). However, the subcategory index and multiexemplar index had a significant influence on interdependents' attitude (standardized $\beta = .61$ and $.36$, respectively, both $p < .001$), but the multiattribute index was not significantly related ($p > .1$). More important, it appears that the subcategory index had the greatest influence on interdependents' brand attitude, which is an interesting finding, since we would expect specific exemplars to exert greater influence, given their greater accessibility. However, this is not necessarily contradictory to our earlier results. A factor's importance to attitude is affected by its perceived diagnosticity (Feldman and Lynch 1988). Information would be used to the extent it is perceived to be diagnostic. While information on specific exemplars is diagnostic for subcategories, information on subcategory exemplars is more diagnostic for brand attitude, as hierarchically, they are more directly related to the brand (see appendix). Thus, subcategory exemplars should exert a greater influence on interdependents' brand attitude. Supporting this argument, the multiexemplar index was indeed significantly related to interdependents' subcategories attitude (Car: standardized $\beta = .62$, $p < .01$; and Electronics: standardized $\beta = .51$, $p < .001$) when regressed on interdependents' subcategory attitude.

Discussion

The first part of study 2 replicated the results obtained in study 1. We found that independents retrieved more beliefs about a brand, while interdependents retrieved more exemplars about a brand. In addition, independents retrieved more subcategory exemplars, and interdependents retrieved more specific exemplars. Thus, results supported our hypothesis that self-view affects the accessibility of brand associations in consumers' minds. Study 2 also examined the relative influence of exemplars and beliefs on individuals' brand attitude. It is generally assumed that attitude is stable across time and context. However, recent evidence shows that people may possess multiple cognitive representations of attitudes toward an object, and which attitude they retrieve is affected by contextual factors (Ajzen 2001; Wood 2000). Consistent with this literature, the current findings show that different self-views activate different cognitive representations of attitude toward a brand, and people with different self-views differ rather markedly in the information they consider in brand evaluation.

STUDY 3: REPLICATION OF CATEGORIZATION RESULTS

Study 2 replicated the differential accessibility findings in study 1 through priming. Study 3 examined if study 1's categorization findings could be replicated using a priming methodology.

Method

Eighty students from a large midwestern university participated in this study. The procedures were similar to that in studies 1 and 2. Participants were first shown the priming manipulation of study 2, before performing the categorization task of study 1. Instructions for the categorization task were identical to that in study 1.

Results

Results obtained replicated the findings in study 1 and showed a significant difference in the type of brands independents and interdependents chose to group with Nike ($F(3, 75) = 4.62$, $p < .001$). Specifically, those in the independent prime condition chose more brands that were attributionally linked to Nike ($m = 1.66$) than did those in the interdependent prime condition ($m = 0.78$; $F(1, 77) = 4.23$, $p < .001$). However, participants in the interdependent prime condition chose more brands that were relationally linked to Nike ($m = 1.43$) than did those in the independent prime condition ($m = 0.32$; $F(1, 77) = 3.46$, $p < .05$). There was no difference in the number of taxonomically related brands chosen ($F(1, 77) = 1.96$, $p > .1$). Thus, both studies 1 and 3 provided strong support for hypothesis 5.

STUDY 4: IMPLICATIONS FOR BRAND EXTENSION EVALUATION

The finding that exemplars are differentially accessible and exert differential impact on independents' and interdependents' attitudes is intriguing, especially since the brand literature has largely ignored the role of exemplars (except Loken et al. 2002). Given the lack of research on exemplars, study 4 probed deeper into the impact of exemplars on brand attitude. Specifically, it examined whether exemplars, if made equally accessible to independents and interdependents, would exert the same influence on their attitudes? We argue that even when exemplars were made equally salient, they would still use the information differently.

To this end, a fictitious brand, whereby people have no prior beliefs, was used, and brand variance was manipulated. "Brand variance" is defined as the extent to which a brand has a broad or narrow range of products (Boush and Loken 1991). For example, a brand that is associated exclusively with cereals (e.g., Kellogg's) has a narrower brand variance than one that is associated with cereals, coffee, and ice cream (e.g., Nestlé). Generally, a brand with low variance is associated with very narrowly defined product categories, but the situations where its products may be used are clear.

However, a brand with high variance is linked with a variety of product categories, but the situations where the products may be used are also more varied. By varying brand variance, we were able to manipulate the salience of different fit dimensions that might appeal to independents and interdependents. Since independents focus more on product category similarity, an extended product would be perceived to fit better and be more favorably viewed when brand variance is high. However, since interdependents focus on the extent to which a product is used in the same usage occasion as the existing product mix, they should perceive higher fit and exhibit more favorable attitudes when brand variance is low.

Method

Design and Procedure. A total of 58 students from a Singapore University participated in this study for partial fulfillment of course credit. A 2 (Self-View prime: Independent vs. Interdependent) \times 2 (Brand Variance: Low vs. High) between-subjects design was used. The priming procedure was similar to that in study 2. After the priming task, participants were given information about a fictitious brand X. To generate favorable attitudes toward the brand, participants were told that it was very popular, and *Consumer Reports* had consistently rated the brand highly on various indicators. Next, information on products sold by the brand was given. Those in the high variance condition were given a list of sports products: treadmills, tennis rackets, ten-speed bikes, basketballs, and jogging shoes. Those in the low variance condition were given a list of exercise equipment products: treadmills, weights, stationary bikes, rowers, and step-pers. Participants were then asked to provide ratings of their attitude toward the brand and their perception of the brand's variance. Next, information about an extended product, a heart rate monitor (HRM), was given. The HRM was chosen because pretests showed that, though the HRM was considered to be more of a sports product than exercise equipment, it was perceived to be used more frequently in the gym than in other sports occasions. Thus, independents in the high brand variance condition should possess a more favorable attitude toward the HRM relative to those in the low brand variance condition, and the reverse should be true for interdependents. Next, participants completed measures of their attitude toward the HRM, perceived similarity of the HRM with existing products, knowledge about the HRM, and the manipulation checks.

Results

Manipulation Checks. Analysis showed that the self-view prime was successful ($F(1,56) = 22.29, p < .001$). There was also no significant difference in initial attitude toward the brand across the four cells ($F(1,56) = 0.17, p > .1$). Checks on brand variance also showed that participants in the low variance condition viewed the existing product mix as significantly more similar ($m = 5.67$)

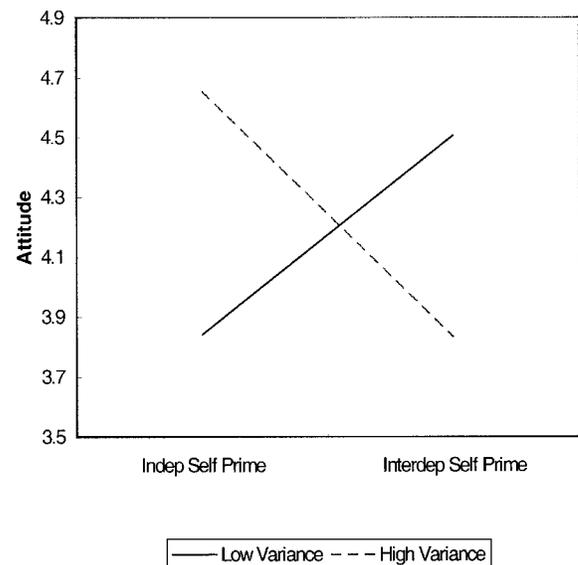
than did those in the high variance condition ($m = 4.52; F(1,56) = 3.00, p < .05$).

Analyses. MANOVA with self-view prime and brand variance as between-subjects factors revealed a significant interaction effect ($F(2,53) = 2.85, p < .01$), but the main effects were not significant ($p > .1$). Separate ANOVAs for each dependent variable showed similar patterns of results. For attitude toward the extended product, the significant interaction effect ($F(1,54) = 3.17, p < .01$) showed that, consistent with expectations, relative to independents, interdependents exhibited more favorable attitudes toward the extended product when brand variance was low. Conversely, independents exhibited more favorable attitudes toward the new product than interdependents when brand variance was high (see fig. 2). An identical pattern of results emerged for perceived fit between the extended product and the parent brand. A significant interaction effect ($F(1,54) = 8.69, p < .01$) showed that, when brand variance was low, interdependents rated the extended product as having higher fit ($m = 4.6$) than when the variance was high ($m = 3.9$). However, independents rated the extended product as having higher fit when brand variance was high ($m = 4.8$) versus low ($m = 3.9$).

DISCUSSION

The influence of self-view on consumer behavior has been frequently investigated. Using both cross-country and priming approaches, researchers have provided convincing evidence that self-view affects the way one processes information (e.g., Aaker and Lee 2001; Mandel 2003). Building

FIGURE 2
BRAND EXTENSION EVALUATION



on this stream of literature, four studies reported here provide initial evidence that self-view may also affect the type of representations stored in memory and the resulting impact on the way people categorize and evaluate brands. Specifically, our findings show that various forms of brand associations are differentially accessible for independents and interdependents, translating into differential influences on brand attitude and categorization strategies. We also showed that when an association is made equally accessible to both groups of individuals, they still use the same piece of information differently. Collectively, these studies provide new evidence of the impact of culture and self-view on consumers' mental representations of brands. Important theoretical and methodological implications emerge from the findings.

Theoretically, the findings presented here offer new insights into how people represent and store information across cultures. The literature has traditionally focused on the impact of self-view on information processing but has largely been silent on how self-view may affect one's representational system. Exceptions include articles in linguistics (Ji, Zhang, and Nisbett 2004; Luna and Peracchio 2002), which have argued that different representations are associated with different languages. For instance, Luna and Peracchio (2002, 45) showed that bilinguals "possess language-specific cognitive structures." Our key finding that different self-views encourage the development of separate representational systems goes beyond language and shows that self-view may be another important variable affecting representational systems. Though the focus is on the brand context, the theoretical areas informing the research coupled with the findings suggest implications for the way one stores information in general.

Furthermore, the finding that various forms of mental representations are differentially accessible to independents and interdependents may help to explain the categorization differences found in earlier research. Although previous research has shown that Easterners and Westerners categorize differently, it is unclear what mechanisms led to this result. One mechanism proposed in the literature is language structure. Schmitt and Zhang (1998) argued that the presence of classifiers in language affects the way people categorize objects. However, their findings focus more on how people categorize natural objects (e.g., tables and chairs) and do not speak to the categorization differences found in the social contexts (see Nisbett et al. 2001). Our findings, however, suggest that differential accessibility of mental representations may explain the categorization difference. To categorize, one needs to retrieve some information about the objects to be categorized. Representations that are more accessible are more likely to be retrieved and used in the

categorization process. Since attributes and product category information are more accessible to Westerners, it is only logical that they categorize attributionally or taxonomically. Alternatively, exemplars and related usage occasions are more accessible to Easterners, explaining why they tend to categorize relationally.

Finally, our findings shed further light on the results of Loken et al. (2002) by demonstrating the importance of exemplar evaluations in affecting consumers' brand attitude. The brand literature has traditionally ignored the role exemplars play in one's brand attitude or evaluation. The lack of research in this area may be attributed partially to the general view that beliefs are the key drivers of one's attitude. Though Loken et al. (2002) argued that exemplar evaluations matter, they still agreed that beliefs contributed the most to brand attitudes. Our findings challenge this assumption and suggest otherwise. Specifically, we showed that exemplar evaluations matter the most to interdependents' brand attitude.

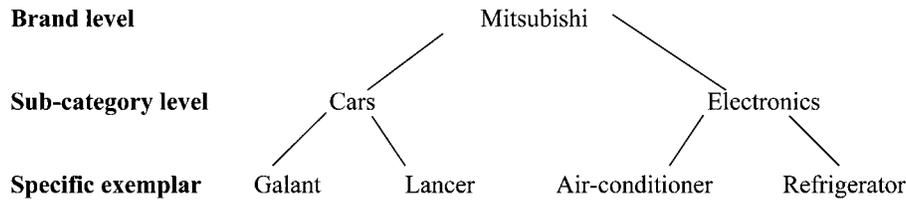
Finally, there are potentially important methodological consequences suggested by the findings. A careful consideration of the nature of survey research questions about brands should be made when conducting surveys in different cultures. If a researcher is measuring overall brand image in an Eastern culture and simply asks for beliefs regarding Sony, for example, and the name Sony prompts an exemplar such as Sony TV, the image that is measured is likely to be for Sony TV rather than the overall brand. Therefore, it would be important to carefully indicate that the focus is on the overall brand image. Easterners may possess an overall image of the Sony brand, but it is less accessible than the image of one or more exemplars, and it would be important to take steps to insure that they access what is intended to be measured.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Certain limitations in the reported research suggest opportunities for future research. In study 2, interdependents retrieved more specific exemplars, but subcategory exemplars were more influential in affecting their brand attitude. A proposed explanation is that differential diagnosticity of the cues led to this pattern of results. Future research might test this explanation. Also, studies 1 and 2 found that interdependents categorize objects attributionally. The question remains whether independents will perceive greater fit for an extension attributionally versus taxonomically related to the parent brand. Further research should try to examine the differential effect of beliefs and exemplars on individuals' fit perceptions across cultures.

APPENDIX

MEASURES FOR STUDY 2



Subcategory attitude (Cars and Electronics)^a
Mean of three-item scale ($\alpha = 0.85$ and 0.89 , respectively)

Multisexemplar index^b

$$\sum_{i=1}^n SE \times Typ,$$

where *SE* = specific exemplar evaluation, *Typ* = extent specific exemplar is typical of the subcategory, and *n* = number of exemplars

Multiattribute index

$$\sum_{i=1}^n Impt \times Eval,$$

where *Impt* = importance of attribute in subcategory purchase, *Eval* = evaluation of subcategory on the attribute, and *n* = number of attributes

Brand attitude
Mean of three-item scale ($\alpha = 0.82$)

Multisexemplar index^b

$$\sum_{i=1}^n SE \times Typ,$$

where *SE* = specific exemplar evaluation, *Typ* = extent specific exemplar is typical of the brand, and *n* = number of exemplars

Subcategory index^b

$$\sum_{i=1}^n Sub \times Typ,$$

where *Sub* = subcategory evaluation, *Typ* = extent subcategory is typical of the brand, and *n* = number of subcategories

Multiattribute index

$$\sum_{i=1}^n Impt \times Eval,$$

where *Impt* = importance of attribute in general purchase, *Eval* = evaluation of brand on the attribute, and *n* = number of attributes

NOTE.—All measures are on seven-point scales.

^aSeparate indices were computed for Cars and Electronics.

^bSince products perceived to be more typical of a category should exert greater influence on one's evaluation (Loken et al. 2002), exemplar evaluations were weighted by the appropriate typicality rating.

[Dawn Iacobucci served as editor and Durairaj Maheswaran served as associate editor for this article.]

REFERENCES

- Aaker, Jennifer L. and Angela Y. Lee (2001), "'I' Seek Pleasures and 'We' Avoid Pains: The Role of Self-Regulatory Goals in Information Processing and Persuasion," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28 (June), 33–49.
- Aaker, Jennifer L. and Durairaj Maheswaran (1997), "The Effect of Cultural Orientation on Persuasion," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24 (December), 315–28.
- Aaker, Jennifer L. and Patti Williams (1998), "Empathy versus Pride: The Influence of Emotional Appeals across Cultures," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 25 (December), 241–61.
- Ajzen, Icek (2001), "Nature and Operation of Attitudes," *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52 (February), 27–58.
- Barsalou, Lawrence W. (1992), *Cognitive Psychology: An Overview for Cognitive Scientists*, Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Boush, David M. and Barbara Loken (1991), "A Process-Tracing Study of Brand Extension Evaluation," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 28 (February), 16–28.
- Brewer, Marilyn B. and Wendi Gardner (1996), "Who Is This 'We'? Levels of Collective Identity and Self Representations," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71 (1), 83–93.
- Church, Timothy A., Fernando A. Ortiz, Marcia S. Katigbak, Tatyana V. Avdeyeva, Alice M. Emerson, José de Jesús Vargas

- Flores, and Joselina Ibáñez Reyes (2003), "Measuring Individual and Cultural Differences in Implicit Trait Theories," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85 (2), 332–47.
- Cousins, Steven D. (1989), "Culture and Self-Perception in Japan and the United States," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 56, 124–31.
- Feldman, Jack M. and John G. Lynch (1988), "Self-Generated Validity and Other Effects of Measurement on Belief, Attitude, Intention, and Behavior," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 73 (3), 421–35.
- Gardner, Wendi, Shira Gabriel, and Angela Y. Lee (1999), "'I' Value Freedom but 'We' Value Relationships: Self-Construal Priming Mirrors Cultural Differences in Judgment," *Psychological Science*, 10, 321–26.
- Higgins, Tory E. (1996), "Knowledge Activation: Accessibility, Applicability, and Salience," in *Social Psychology: Handbook of Basic Principles*, ed. Tory E. Higgins and Arie W. Kruglanski, New York: Guilford, 133–68.
- Hofstede, Geert (1980), *Culture's Consequences, International Differences in Work-Related Values*, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Ji, Li-Jun, Zhiyong Zhang, and Richard E. Nisbett (2004), "Is It Culture or Is It Language? Examination of Language Effects in Cross-Cultural Research on Categorization," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87 (1), 57–65.
- Joiner, Christopher (1998), "Concept Mapping in Marketing: A Research Tool for Uncovering Consumers' Knowledge Structure Associations," *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 25, ed. Wesley Hutchinson and Joseph Alba, Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, 311–17.
- Keller, Kevin L. (1993), "Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity," *Journal of Marketing*, 57 (January), 1–22.
- Kitayama, Shinobu, Hazel Rose Markus, Hisaya Matsumoto, and Vinai Norasakkunkit (1997), "Individual and Collective Processes in the Construction of the Self: Self-Enhancement in the United States and Self-Criticism in Japan," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 72 (6), 1245–67.
- Kühnen, Ulrich, Bettina Hannover, and Benjamin Schubert (2001), "The Semantic Procedural-Interface Model of the Self: The Role of Self-Knowledge for Context-Dependent versus Context-Independent Modes of Thinking," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 80, 397–409.
- Kühnen, Ulrich, Bettina Hannover, Ashiq Ali Shah, Benjamin Schubert, Arnold Upmeyer, and Saliza Zakaria (2001), "Cross-Cultural Variations in Identifying Embedded Figures," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 32 (3), 365–71.
- Kühnen, Ulrich and Daphna Oyserman (2002), "Thinking about the Self Influences Thinking in General: Cognitive Consequences of Salient Self-Concept," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 38 (5), 492–99.
- Loken, Barbara, Christopher Joiner, and Joann Peck (2002), "Category Attitude Measures: Exemplars as Inputs," *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 12 (2), 149–61.
- Luna, David and Laura A. Peracchio (2002), "Uncovering the Cognitive Duality of Bilinguals through Word Association," *Psychology and Marketing*, 19 (6), 457–75.
- Mandel, Naomi (2003), "Shifting Selves and Decision Making," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 30 (June), 30–40.
- Markus, Hazel R. and Shinobu Kitayama (1991), "Culture and the Self: Implications for Cognition, Emotion and Motivation," *Psychological Review*, 98 (2), 224–53.
- Nisbett, Richard E., Kaiping Peng, Incheol Choi, and Ara Norenzayan (2001), "Culture and Systems of Thought: Holistic versus Analytical Cognition," *Psychological Review*, 108 (2), 291–310.
- Schmitt, Bernd H. and Shi Zhang (1998), "Language Structure and Categorization: A Study of Classifiers in Consumer Cognition, Judgment, and Choice," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 25 (September), 108–22.
- Singelis, Theodore M. (1994), "The Measurement of Independent and Interdependent Self-Construals," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 20 (5), 580–91.
- Tavassoli, Nader T. (1999), "Temporal and Associative Memory in Chinese and English," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 26 (September), 170–81.
- Triandis, Harry C. (1989), "The Self and Social Behavior in Differing Cultural Contexts," *Psychological Review*, 96 (3), 506–20.
- Wood, Wendy (2000), "Attitude Change: Persuasion and Social Influence," *Annual Review of Psychology*, 51 (February), 539–70.
- Yamada, Ann-Marie and Theodore M. Singelis (1999), "Biculturalism and Self-Construal," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 23 (5), 697–709.