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研究課題名(英文) Cross-cultural empirical research on cultural differences in inconsistent brand image evaluation: The influence of dialectical thinking.

## 研究代表者

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研究成果の概要(和文)：ブランド・マネジメント研究では、一貫性が常に強調されてきた。例えばケラー(2013)は、ブランドを強化する上で必要なのは一貫性であると述べている。しかし、日本市場を俯瞰すると、一貫性が常に必要ではない可能性も浮かび上がってくる。本研究では、ブランドの(非)一貫性に対する評価には文化差がありうることを提示する。この仮説を検討するため、本研究では3つのプロジェクトを実施した。PJ1では、一貫性の概念を、さまざまな分野の文献をレビューして整理した。PJ2では、ブランドの非一貫性評価における文化差を実証的に検証した。PJ3では、非一貫性を内包したブランド・マネジメントに関する概念モデルを構築した。

研究成果の概要(英文)： Researchers in the brand management theory often emphasize consistency. For example, Keller (2013) says "without question, the most important consideration in reinforcing brands is consistency"(p. 480). However, phenomena in the Japanese market suggest that consistency may not always be necessary. This research proposes that there may be cultural differences in the consumer evaluation of brand (in)consistencies. This research hypothesis has not yet been examined in the previous literature and this research aims to fill the research gap.

Three projects were conducted to examine the research hypothesis. PJ1 explored the concept of consistency/fit based on the review of various literature. PJ2 empirically examined cultural differences in evaluation of inconsistent brand personality brands and the influence of dialectical thinking. PJ3 developed a conceptual model on managing inconsistencies in a brand.

研究分野：商学

キーワード：brand management dialecticism culture inconsistency global marketing cross-cultural

## 1 . 研究開始当初の背景

Researchers in the brand management theory often emphasize consistency. For example, Keller (2013) says “without question, the *most* important consideration in reinforcing brands is consistency” (p. 480, italic added). Indeed, past research highlights the benefit of brand consistency, such as developing and reinforcing brand equity (Keller, 1993) and nurturing a loyal customer base (Haynes, Lackman, & Guskey, 1999). However, phenomena in the Japanese market suggest that consistency may not always be necessary. For example, Universal Studio Japan has dramatically changed its brand identity and brand personality since its opening in 2001; still, the sales and number of visitors are constantly growing (Suzuki & Takemura, 2014). Furthermore, changes in logos and product packages are commonly observed in Japan (e.g., au logo and *kappa-ebisen* package), whereas they are less preferred in the U.S. (Moriyoshi & Sasaki, 2013). To summarize, the applicant proposes that there may be cultural differences in the consumer evaluation of brand (in)consistencies. This research hypothesis has not yet been examined in the previous literature and this research aims to fill the research gap.

## 2 . 研究の目的

The purpose of this research is to examine cultural differences in the evaluation of brand inconsistencies and its underlying mechanism. The focus on inconsistencies is especially important in East-Asian cultures whose thinking style is more tolerant toward inconsistencies (i.e., dialectical thinking; Peng & Nisbett, 1999). The findings of this research will propose a new theory in brand management that incorporates Asian perspectives.

This research is comprised of three projects. The objective of first project (PJ1) is to understand the concept of consistency/fit and build hypotheses for later projects. The objective of second project (PJ2) is to empirically examine cultural differences in evaluation of inconsistent brand images and the influence of dialectical thinking. Finally, the objective of third project (PJ3) is to develop a conceptual model on managing inconsistencies in a brand (namely, “more than fit”) and building strong brand over time.

## 3 . 研究の方法

This research adopts multi-method approach by incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods. The research methodology for PJ1 is a literature review

study. A vast literature in marketing, brand management, and psychology concerning the concepts of consistency and fit has been reviewed. PJ2 adopts quantitative method, survey and experimental studies in particular. The hypotheses are examined using cross-cultural samples (Americans and Japanese). PJ3 adopts qualitative method, case study in particular.

## 4 . 研究成果

### **(1) Exploration of the concept of consistency/fit (PJ1)**

The word “consistency” and “fit” has been a somewhat vague concept in the marketing literature. Researchers have used a multitude of terms including “congruence,” “similarity,” “typicality,” “relevancy,” “expectancy,” and “match” (see Fleck & Quester, 2007 for a review). Overall, the notions of fit and similarity are recurrent ones in the brand literature, with Aaker and Keller (1990) describing as the consistency of the additional product to the existing brand. However, some researchers have tried to identify and differentiate between sources of similarity. From the literature review, three elements—product category, brand concept, and brand personality—are identified as important factors when considering brand consistency/fit. Each will be explained next.

Early studies on brand consistency focused on product category fit between the brands in the alliance (Lanseng & Olsen, 2012). Here, the relatedness of the product categories in consumers’ minds are seen as the main driver of brand alliance success. In evaluating product category fit, consumers assess whether the two products can complement or substitute each other (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Völckner & Sattler, 2006), possess the same physical product characteristics, can be used in the same consumption situations or perform the same practical functions (Park et al., 1991).

Brand concepts consist of attribute interrelations, structured product beliefs and emotions developed through product experience (Cohen, 1982; Cohen & Basu, 1987; Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Park et al., 1986; Park et al., 1991; Smith & Medin, 1981). Consumers evaluate whether the abstract-level associations of two brand concepts are similar. Very dissimilar brands in terms of product category fit may be seen as members of the same cognitive category when brought together by concepts like goals, situations, and benefits (Barsalou, 1985; Percy & Elliot, 2005; Ratneshwar et al., 1996).

Brand personality is a set of humanlike

characteristics associated with a brand (Aaker, 1997). The coherence in brand personality drives brand fit (van der Lans, den Bergh, & Dieleman, 2014), as (dis)similarity in personality ratings of human alliance partners affects marital satisfaction, likelihood of separation, and so on (see Heller et al., 2004, Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Malouff et al., 2010 for details). Van der Lans et al. (2014) argue that the observations in the human alliance literature are consistent with findings in the corporate alliance literature. Hence, the current research focuses on brand personality to empirically examine the cultural differences evaluation of inconsistent brand images and the influence of dialectical thinking. The findings of PJ1 are published in Suzuki & Akutsu (2016, #4 in the major publication list).

## **(2) Empirical examination of cultural differences in evaluation of inconsistent brand personality brands and the influence of dialectical thinking (PJ2)**

Of the five brand personality dimensions (Aaker, 1997), “Sincerity” and “Excitement” are considered fundamental to marketing because they capture the majority of variance in brand personality ratings (Aaker, 1997; Capara, Barbaranelli, & Guido, 2001). However, research finds that brands that differ in Sincerity and Excitement are perceived very differently from one another, because consumers tend to build strong, trusting relationships with Sincere brands while they tend to develop fleeting, fling-like relationships with Exciting brands (Aaker et al. 2004). An alliance of two brands (otherwise known as cobranding) where one brand is Sincere and the other is Exciting is likely to be perceived as dissimilar (Yang et al., 2014). Using 100 well known global brands, van der Lans, van den Bergh, and Dieleman (2014) find that similarity in Excitement and moderate dissimilarity in Sincerity result in more favorable brand alliance evaluations. Based on the above findings, we could hypothesize that alliance between Sincere and Exciting brands do not foster favorable evaluations of brand alliance.

When consumers evaluate brand alliances, a high cognitive work is involved (Swaminathan et al., 2015). Hence, we could assume that thinking style affects evaluations of brand alliances. Previous studies have shown that there is cultural differences in ways of thinking. Culturally shared folk epistemologies influence people’s reasoning about contradiction and their tolerance for ambiguity (Peng & Nisbett, 1999).

Western psychology has largely assumed

that individuals are uncomfortable with incongruity and that they possess a basic need to synthesize contradictory information (Festinger, 1957; Lewin, 1951; Thompson, Zanna, & Griffin, 1995). Western cultures tend to be more linear or synthetic in their cognitive orientation. They consider both sides of an opposing argument and then they search for synthesis and the resolution of incongruity (Lewin, 1951; Peng & Nisbett, 1999).

On the other hand, East Asian epistemologies tend to tolerate psychological contradiction. East Asian cultures tend to be more dialectic in their cognitive orientation. Recognizing and accepting the duality in all things is regarded as normative in East Asian cultures. Two central features of dialectical ways of knowing are moderation and balance: good is counterbalanced by evil, happiness is offset by sadness, and self-criticism is tempered by sympathy for the self (Kitayama & Markus, 1999; Peng & Nisbett, 1999). Dialecticism also discourages the adoption of extreme positions. A principal consequence of dialectical thinking is that East Asians more comfortably accept psychological contradiction (Spencer-Rodgers et al., 2009). Consequently, the Western and East Asian views of contradiction are fundamentally different (Peng & Nisbett, 1999). Hence, we argue that consumer attitude towards brand alliance between Exciting and Sincere brands would be different between the West and East Asia.

We conduct an experiment to test following hypotheses:

**H1:** Linear thinkers better evaluate similar cobrands than dissimilar cobrands.

**H2:** Dialectical thinkers show no difference in evaluations between similar and dissimilar cobrands.

### *Results*

*Brand Personality Dissimilarity.* To confirm that the combination of Sincerity and Excitement are dissimilar, a pretest was administered to 262 Japanese and 316 Americans participating in the same online consumer panels as the main study. They were asked to indicate the extent to which a pair of the five brand personality dimensions (sophistication, sincerity, competence, ruggedness, excitement) were similar on a 7-point scale (where 1 = very dissimilar and 7 = very similar). For both Japanese and Americans, the pair of Sincerity-Excitement was perceived to be most dissimilar (see Table 1 for means and standard deviations).

**TABLE 1**

	Japan		US	
	M	(SD)	M	(SD)
SINC-EXC	3.05	(1.28)	4.22	(1.78)
SINC-COMP	3.91	(1.34)	5.04	(1.42)
SINC-SOPH	3.85	(1.24)	4.28	(1.63)
EXC-COMP	3.79	(1.31)	4.51	(1.60)
EXC-SOPH	3.88	(1.30)	4.62	(1.55)
COMP-SOPH	4.11	(1.28)	4.78	(1.59)

*Cobrand Fit.* We compared the mean score for cobrand fit for dual-personality and single-personality cobrands between Japanese and Americans. As predicted, the American respondents showed higher fit for single-personality cobrand than dual-personality cobrand ( $M_{\text{single}} = 5.93$  vs.  $M_{\text{dual}} = 5.49$ ,  $t(162.58) = -2.18$ ,  $p = .031$ ), whereas the Japanese respondents showed no difference between the two ( $M_{\text{single}} = 4.74$  vs.  $M_{\text{dual}} = 4.70$ ,  $t(178.00) = -.25$ ,  $p = .807$ ).

*Cobrand Evaluations.* We averaged the responses to evaluation items to form an index (Japan = .81 and US = .86). As we expected, the American respondents evaluated the advertisement for the dual-personality cobrand more favorably than that for sophistication-only cobrands ( $M_{\text{single}} = 6.00$  vs.  $M_{\text{dual}} = 5.71$ ,  $t(174.29) = -1.77$ ,  $p = .079$ ), whereas the Japanese respondents showed no difference between the two ( $M_{\text{single}} = 4.74$  vs.  $M_{\text{dual}} = 4.84$ ,  $t(178.00) = .74$ ,  $p = .460$ ).

Our findings confirm the existence of cultural differences in cobrand response. Westerners (Americans) had more favorable evaluations toward single-personality cobrand than dual-personality cobrand, whereas Easterners (Japanese) had similar evaluations toward the two.

Cultural differences were expected to emerge as a result of cultural differences in styles of thinking, with Easterners portrayed as dialectical thinkers more likely to be tolerant toward dissimilarity between parent brands. To rule out the alternative explanation that Japanese consumers are simply not familiar with the concept of brand personality and thus cannot evaluate the difference, we conducted Study 2 where brand personality thinking was primed.

Our results provide support for style of thinking as the driver of cultural differences in cobrand extension response. Priming brand personality thinking did not change the patterns in results that Japanese show no difference in evaluations between single- and dual-personality cobrands. The findings of PJ2 were presented at SCP-JACS Collaborative Conference, Tokyo, Japan (Suzuki, Sood, & Akutsu, 2017, #1 in the major conference

presentation list).

### **(3) Development of a conceptual model on managing inconsistencies in a brand (PJ3)**

PJ2 has confirmed that cultural differences exist in attitudes toward brand inconsistencies. Hence, although brand management researchers have often emphasized consistency in reinforcing brands, there may be a factor besides consistency that determines the brand management success. This study explores the brand management that accepts inconsistencies.

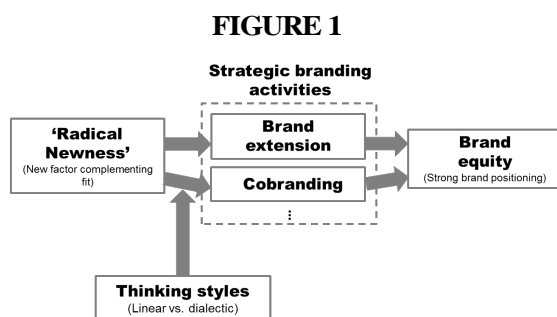
#### *Findings*

The Japanese global retailer X, having 260 years of history, has been faced with a continuous change in their brand. After rebuilding their brand in 2004, they experienced both strong and weak brand positioning, although they had maintained consistency in their branding strategy over years. The brand manager reflects that when their brand was strong, followings existed: (1) continuous hit products, (2) strong promotion campaign, and (3) increase in sales and profit. In contrary, when their brand was weak, followings were apparent: (1) no hit product (lack of innovation), (2) continuous loss in profit, and (3) lack of brand penetration among employees (lack of internal brand communication) due to continuous M&A and diversification. We could hypothesize that for brands to remain strong in the market, having innovation is more important than maintaining consistency (**P1**).

The retailer X also self-assessed that they were not meeting the changes – changes in consumers, competitors, and company. We could hypothesize that for brands to remain strong in the market, meeting the environmental change is more important than maintaining consistency (**P2**).

Much of branding theory has been heavily influenced by psychology and economics; therefore neglecting the socio-cultural aspects (Holt, 2004). Holt (2004) summarizes that “conventional models assume that managing a brand is the art of insisting on consistency in the face of organizational and competitive pressures that push for zigging and zagging. Brand management is about stewardship: finding the brand’s true essence and maintaining this compass point, come hell or high water” (p. 41); however, he points out to the importance of addressing shifting currents in the society. He concludes “mind share assumes that brands exist outside of history, as transcendental entities. Managing a mind-share brand thus requires consistency, staying above

the fray of changes in culture and society. Iconic brands apply precisely the opposite philosophy: The brand is a historical entity whose desirability comes from myths that address the most important social tensions of the nation. For identity brands, success depends on how well the brand's myth adjusts to historical exigencies, not by its consistency in the face of historical change" (p. 42). The current research takes similar stance. We hypothesize that, for brands to remain strong in the consumers' mind, fitting to the changing environment is more important than maintaining consistency. For instance, having continuous innovation to meet the changing market may be more important than fit/consistency. We hypothesize that perceived 'radical newness' may lead to successful brand extension or cobranding; however, this effect may be moderated by the thinking styles (linear versus dialectical) (see Figure 1). This hypothesis will be further explored and refined in the future studies.



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#### 6. 研究組織

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