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Meaningful entertainment experiences and self-transcendence: Cultural variations shape elevation, values, and moral intentions

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Abstract

Previous research reported that meaningful entertainment experiences are associated with elevation, mixed affect, physical indicators, and moral motivations. The importance of values, particularly altruistic values and self-transcendence, was thought to play a central role. Although the importance of values has been found to vary across cultures, little research so far has examined cultural variations in the response towards meaningful entertainment. The present study, therefore, investigated how cultural variations in self-construals and the importance of values (self-enhancement, conservation, and self-transcendence) in movies are related to meaningful entertainment experiences. An online experiment in Germany and the United Arab Emirates ($N = 245$) confirmed that meaningful entertainment elicited elevation. Elevation was associated with conservation and self-transcendence values and, via this path, increased moral motivations. An interdependent self-construal was related to elevation and to moral motivations. The results are discussed in light of current conceptualizations of inward- and outward-oriented gratifications of meaningful entertainment and the impact of values.

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Keywords

Cultural variation, elevation, independent/interdependent self-construal, meaningful entertainment, moral behaviors, self-transcendence

Throughout the last decade, research has demonstrated that consuming entertainment is not only about having fun but also related to the appreciation of values and meaning. Consequently, Vorderer (2011) and Vorderer and Reinecke (2015) proposed a two-process model of entertainment: One process is driven by the striving for enjoyment and is accordingly labeled as *pleasurable entertainment*. The other process is driven by the striving for meaningful experiences or the fulfilment of intrinsic needs and is accordingly labeled as *meaningful or eudaimonic entertainment*. Both processes can contribute to individual well-being (Janicke et al., 2018; Janicke-Bowles et al., 2018; Rieger and Hofer, 2017; Rieger et al., 2014, 2015).

Meaningful entertainment provides contemplative and moving experiences (Oliver and Bartsch, 2010). Often, it is characterized by the appreciation of human virtue (Oliver and Hartmann, 2010) and relates to the transmission of *values* within entertainment media (Oliver et al., 2012), for instance, in movies such as *Life of Pi*, *The Unbreakables*, or *Amélie*.

So far, most research on meaningful entertainment has focused only on Western societies, largely ignoring a substantial part of the cross-cultural value spectrum. Although values can be described along certain universal dimension, individuals with different cultural backgrounds, for example, from Western versus Eastern societies, tend to differ in the peculiarity with which they describe certain values as guiding principles in their life (Schwartz, 1990). Thereby, cultural differences in the macro-level (e.g., between rather collectivistic vs. individualistic cultures) can be more or less pronounced on the individual micro-level (Kitayama et al., 2009). One exemplary cross-cultural study on movies found that Eastern Asian participants preferred those with conflicting responses (inducing positive and negative affect at the same time), whereas American participants preferred unambiguous hedonically positive messages (Kim et al., 2014). However, the processes through which different entertainment experiences are evoked based on variations within cultures, for example, the perception of important values within movies, have not been explored so far. This article sought to fill this gap. By drawing upon research on cultural influences on values and meaningful entertainment, we aimed to examine how the perception of values within entertainment movies within a Western and a Middle Eastern sample plays a consequential role in responses to meaningful entertainment.

Values and cultural differences

Cultural differences can be described at a macro- and at a micro-level. On a macro-level, cultures can be distinguished on the dimension of *individualism* (oriented at the

individual) and *collectivism* (oriented on the collective) (Hofstede, 1980). Members from collectivistic as compared to individualistic cultures tend to perceive themselves and their surroundings as more strongly embedded in a larger context (Hofstede, 1980).

Notably, people within one culture also vary on the micro-level (Oyserman et al., 2002). That is, the influence of individualism/collectivism varies, for example, regarding the way people perceive objects and their surroundings (Kitayama et al., 2009), remember things (Kühnen and Oyserman, 2002), and conceptualize their selves and its social embeddedness. This is often referred to as *independent* versus *interdependent self-construal* (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Members from Western societies typically have a more independent self-construal, whereas individuals in Asian societies and the Middle East have a more interdependent self-construal (Oyserman et al., 2002).

These tendencies also relate to individuals' respective importance of values (Hofstede, 1980; Schwartz, 2012; Schwartz and Boehnke, 2004). Values represent 'guiding principles in people's life' (Schwartz et al., 2000), which influence attitudes, motivate behaviors (Boer and Fischer, 2013), and allow for judgments of actions, policies, people, and events.

Schwartz identified 10 distinct universal values that are dynamically related to each other (Schwartz and Boehnke, 2004) and organized in four higher order factors: *Openness to change*, *conservation*, *self-enhancement*, and *self-transcendence* (Schwartz, 2012). He pioneered the idea that certain values characterize one culture over another at the macro-level while at the same time, cultural differences exist in the peculiarity with which people endorse these values on the micro-level (Schwartz, 1990; Schwartz and Bilsky, 1990; Schwartz and Boehnke, 2004). For instance, a more interdependent self-construal was negatively associated with the importance of self-enhancement and positively associated with conservation. Associations with openness for change and self-transcendence were less consistent, suggesting the former two dimensions to be more suitable candidates for individual differences in values along the individualism/collectivism distinction (Oishi et al., 1998). Furthermore, external stimuli (such as depictions within media, e.g., movies, books, computer games, websites) can activate more individualistic or more collectivistic mind-sets (Gardner et al., 1999).

Values are thereby conceived as interindividual differences in the micro-level and cannot be transferred directly to the macro-level (Kitayama et al., 2009).

To avoid confusion with intercultural differences in the cultural macro- and the individual micro-level, we focus our argumentation on the individual level in the following. Rather than compare countries or cultures per se (and thereby follow a static, monolithic perception of cultural boundaries), we focus our attention on media users' self-construals that may be more prevalent in one culture but that also vary within individuals.

Values, (meaningful) media, and cultural differences

With regard to the focus of this article, research on cultural variations and value differences in media entertainment is relatively rare. Theoretically, the *model of*

intuitive moral intuitions and exemplars postulates that individuals select media stimuli and respond to them depending on a matching between their own (culturally coined) values and those depicted in the medium (Tamborini, 2011). On a macro-level, the staging of newscasts was found to differ along the individualism/collectivism cultural distinction. Senokozlieva et al. (2006) analyzed newscasts from the United States, the Middle East, and Germany and found that news from the Middle East, a collectivist culture, showed significantly more groups of people as compared to U.S. news, an individualistic culture, which tended to show single individuals more often.

Such subtle differences can also influence usage preferences. Trepte (2008) found that U.S. and Western individuals evaluated U.S. television formats (*Sex and the City*, *The Simpsons*, *Friends*, *The X-Files*, and *Profiler*) more similarly to each other than Asian individuals. In this case, the broad distinction between Asian versus Western culture on a macro-level was a better predictor of the evaluation of the series than individual individualism/collectivism scores. Yet, all series in this study represented rather hedonic as compared to meaningful entertainment formats, potentially obscuring differences related to meaningful entertainment experiences.

This idea is underlined by the study by Kim et al. (2014). The authors compared Korean and U.S. American participants and found that they differed with regard to their preference for mixed emotional reactions to entertainment media. In contrast to Americans, Korean participants showed a stronger preference for entertainment programs that evoked mixed emotional reactions (e.g., laughing and crying). The authors explained these differences by the concept of *naïve dialecticism* (Peng and Nisbett, 1999), describing that Asian cultures have the basic idea that harmony and balance is achieved by an interplay between positive and negative aspects, whereas Western cultures are hedonically motivated and seek to maximize positive affect. This is underlined by basic research demonstrating that Asians understand happiness as a mixed emotion (Uchida and Kitayama, 2009). The results thereby relate to the fact that meaningful entertainment is often characterized by inducing mixed affect and can be regarded as one relevant source for the transmission of values (Oliver et al., 2012).

Considering the two-process model of entertainment (Vorderer, 2011) and applying it to a cross-cultural context, Odağ (2013) found participants from collectivist cultures to show higher levels of *eudaimonic entertainment motivation*, the motivation to consume meaningful entertainment media, as compared to participants from individualistic cultures. Notably, participants did not differ regarding their interest in the consumption of hedonic media stimuli. Additionally, Odağ et al. (2016) compared participants from an individualist country (Germany) and a collectivist country (Turkey) regarding their answers on the eudaimonic/hedonic entertainment motivation scale. The results showed that hedonic and eudaimonic entertainment motivations were similarly understood across cultures, but only hedonic motivations had the same (=one common) meaning, eudaimonic entertainment motivation did not. The authors ascertained the need for a more fine-grained examination of different individualist/collectivist values that might be veiled when meaningful entertainment is perceived as uni-dimensional.

Relatedly, scholars have recently distinguished between *inward-oriented* meaningful experiences (e.g., cognitive or affective reactions of the media user) and *outward-oriented* ones (e.g., cognitive or affective reactions or behavior towards others) (Oliver et al., 2018). Regarding inward-oriented responses, meaningful media can trigger affective responses of *elevation*, that is, the feeling of being moved, inspired and touched. Oliver et al. (2012) provided evidence that elevation is associated with *mixed affect*, that is, the co-occurrence of positive and negative affect (Ersner-Hershfield et al., 2008; Slater et al., 2016). It was also associated with certain *physical indicators*, such as having a lump in the throat, chills, or tears (Oliver et al., 2012).

Regarding outward-oriented responses, Janicke and Oliver (2017) found that meaningful media fostered the expression of love towards humanity. The authors distinguished between three values related to higher power, love for close others and family and showed that all three values were related to meaningful entertainment media. Such outward-oriented effects might be particularly relevant to motivate media users to behave prosocially or to have the intention to do so. For instance, watching meaningful movies increased *moral intentions* to behave in a morally good way, mediated by elevation (Oliver et al., 2012).

Meaningful media moreover often portray values through topics such as ‘lessons in life’, perceiving human struggles, challenges and human hardship as part of life in general, the apprehension of life as a precious good, or the appreciation of human virtue and excellence (Oliver and Hartmann, 2010). Taking the Schwartz’ (1990, 2012) values into account when describing the experiences induced by meaningful media could thus be regarded as a first step in theoretically integrating outward-oriented experiences: whereas self-enhancement and openness to change resemble values more closely related to inward-oriented (individual-oriented) experiences, conservation and self-transcendence resemble more outward-oriented (collective-oriented) experiences. In concordance, research has found self-transcendence (one of the central value dimensions mentioned previously) to be particularly relevant for motivating prosocial behavior, as it relates to identifying oneself not only with one’s in-group but also with the entire world. Identifying with all humanity and willingness to self-invest globally can lead to prosocial behavioral intentions and a stronger response in favor of global harmony (Reese et al., 2015).

Notably, inward- and outward-oriented experiences through meaningful media do not necessarily oppose each other. Oliver et al. (2018) argued that self-transcendence could arise from rather individualistic experiences as well as from the heightened awareness of the universality of life’s challenges. Nevertheless, the value of self-transcendence entails a more universalist, benevolent perspective (see Koltko-Rivera, 2006). Therefore, it seems more closely tied to (a) affective responses such as elevation and (b) elements that entail interconnectedness, that is, collective-oriented experiences (Janicke and Oliver, 2017).

In summary, media were found to be a relevant transporter of (cultural) values. Research found media preferences to vary along value priorities that are more prevalent in some cultures than others. Initial evidence for a larger variability in the preference for and the response to meaningful compared to hedonic

entertainment media exists; however, the role of different values in this context is only speculative so far. It can be derived that the selection of movies or the preference for certain movies is related to cultural variation and to the perception of different values within those movies.

So far, existing studies focused on the macro-level of culture without taking individual variations on the micro-level into account. The current study sought to fill this void by employing a Western and Middle Eastern sample, assessing the variation in independent and interdependent self-construals, and examining broader array of values. It seeks to investigate how independent or interdependent self-construals relate to the perception of certain values (self-enhancement, openness to change, conservation, and self-transcendence) in movies and how these relate to inward- and outward-oriented media experiences. By doing so, it offers a new perspective of cultural variation in the interplay of self-construals and the perception of values.

Hypotheses

Based on the literature, we proposed a theoretical model (Figure 1). The first part of the model predicts the replication of prior research on meaningful entertainment media (particularly Oliver et al., 2012). We hypothesized that remembering a meaningful movie triggers elevation (H1). Elevation was expected to be associated with mixed affect (H2a) and physical indicators (H2b). Based on the results by Oliver

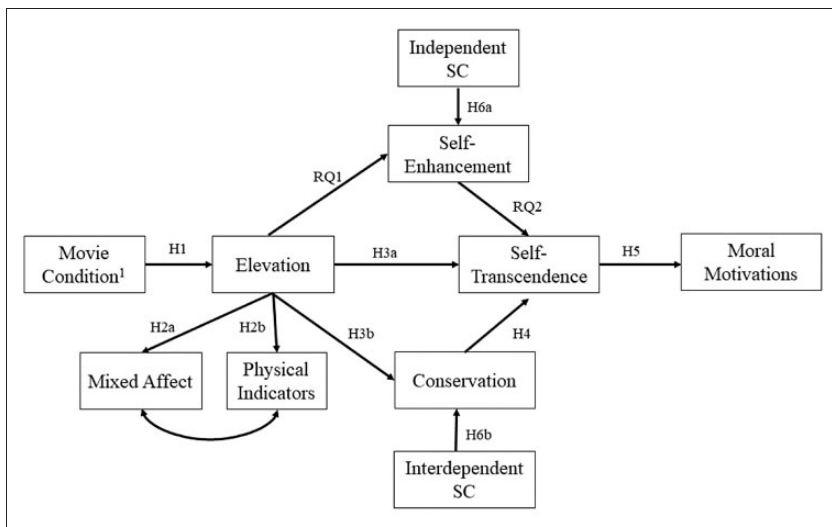


Figure 1. Theoretical model with labeled hypotheses and research questions. SC = Self-construal.

et al. (2012), we further hypothesized a direct effect from elevation to moral motivations (H7, not depicted in the model).

Extending prior entertainment research, we hypothesized that elevation comes along with remembering values of self-transcendence (H3a) and conservation (H3b). We further asked whether elevation is also associated with the depiction of individualistic-oriented values, such as self-enhancement (RQ1).

Based on the idea that more outward-oriented values (reflected by conservation values here) are often associated self-transcendence, we hypothesized recall of portrayals of conservation to be positively associated with recall of self-transcendence values (H4). Additionally, we also questioned whether portrayals of more individualistic-oriented values (self-enhancement) would also be associated with recall of depictions of self-transcendence (RQ2). Based on the results by Janicke and Oliver (2017), we hypothesized remembering depictions of self-transcendence to be related to moral motivations (H5).

Finally, based on the literature on cultural variations, we expected that a more independent self-construal such as typically found in Western cultures like the United States or Western Europe will be associated with a higher prevalence of remembering individualist values in movies (here: self-enhancement) (H6a). A more interdependent self-construal, such as typically found in Asian cultures or the Middle East, was hypothesized to be associated with remembering a movie with a higher prevalence of conservation values (H6b).

Methods

Design and sample

The study aimed at replicating the model presented in Oliver et al. (2012) in an intercultural context and therefore followed a 2 (Thinking about a meaningful versus pleasurable Movie) \times 2 (Cultural Group) between-subjects design. Data were collected in two countries: Germany and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Altogether, $N=245$ participants took part in an online experiment (120 females, 129 Germans, 64% students, $M_{\text{Age}}=22.93$, standard deviation (SD) $_{\text{Age}}=5.51$). Gender was equally distributed across movie conditions, χ^2 ($df=1$) $=.71$, $p=.40$, and cultural groups, χ^2 ($df=1$) $=.42$, $p=.52$. With regard to participants' nationalities, within the sample collected in Germany, 99.2% were of German nationality. The sample from the UAE was more diverse: Egyptians (12.1%), Emiratis (10.3%), and Jordanians (13.8%) were the three biggest groups. Other nationalities included Turkish, Syrian, Pakistani, Lebanese, or Iraqi. However, out of these diverse nationalities, more than half were born in the UAE (51.7%). As far as mother tongues are concerned, 96.1% of the sample collected in Germany indicated German to be their mother tongue. Within the sample collected in the UAE, 77.6% indicated Arab to be their mother tongue (although countries differ with regard to the dialect), 6.9% named Turkish as mother tongue, and 4.3% named Urdu.

Procedure

Participants were recruited for a study about entertainment media via university mailing lists at a large campus in Germany and the UAE. The UAE was chosen because previous research had indicated that Middle Easterners differed from Germans with regard to their score on individualism/collectivism (Bente et al., 2010, 2014a, 2014b; originally, see Hofstede, 1980). Students in Germany filled out the questionnaire in German; students in the UAE received the same questionnaire in English because English was the main language on campus. This procedure was chosen mainly because Arab dialects can differ significantly. The UAE additionally is a country with a huge net migration rate (KhaleejTimes, 2017) where a diverse set of nationalities (and therefore dialects) can be expected. Based on these differences, before data collection started, we asked which language would be most suitable for participants. Since they reported that they communicated in English with each other, we decided to collect the data in English.

During the online experiment, participants were first asked to fill out a questionnaire regarding their self-construal before they were randomly assigned to one of the experimental conditions. Depending on condition, they were either asked to remember a meaningful or a pleasurable movie they had recently watched. Afterwards, they were asked to name the movie they were thinking about, note down some aspects of that movie (such as brief plot), and indicate its genre (as manipulation check). Afterwards, we measured their affective responses towards the movies, their physiological reactions, the portrayal of values inside the movies, and their motivational intentions. Finally, they filled out some demographic questions (nationality, age, gender, and education), and were subsequently thanked and debriefed. In the debriefing (the last page of the questionnaire), we explained the goal of this study (intercultural variations between different movies and how they are related to values depicted within these movies and subsequent reactions). Additionally, they could contact the authors in case of questions and could leave their e-mail addresses whether they wanted to be informed about the results of this study.

Measures

Independent/interdependent self-construal. Self-construal was assessed with 20 items taken from a translated self-construal scale (Hannover et al., 2000). This scale assesses independent and interdependent self-construal with 10 items each (interdependent, e.g., 'My happiness depends on the happiness of those around me' $\alpha = .73$,¹ independent, e.g., 'I am comfortable with being singled out for praise or rewards', $\alpha = .71$) and is adapted from the original scale by Singelis (1994). Each item was answered on a seven-point scale.

Elevation and mixed affect. Affective responses were assessed with the three subscales used by Oliver et al. (2012). Each of the subscales indicated on a seven-point scale (1 = 'not at all', 7 = 'very much') how much the participants experienced positive,

negative, and meaningful affect. Elevation was reflected by the meaningful affect subscale (e.g. 'touched', 'inspired', $\alpha = .83$).

Mixed affect was computed by using the procedure described in Ersner-Hershfield et al. (2008): This procedure takes the minimum score of either the positive (e.g., 'cheerful', 'happy', $\alpha = .82$) or the negative affect subscale (e.g., 'sad', 'depressed', $\alpha = .82$). Mixed affect is thus low when a person's positive or negative affect is low and increases if one of the both affective responses increases.

Physical indicators. Physical reactions were measured by 10 items measuring bodily reactions from Oliver et al. (2012). All bodily reactions (e.g., 'lump in the throat', 'chills', $\alpha = .72^2$) were answered on a seven-point scale (1 = 'not at all', 7 = 'very much').

Values. We measured the values within the movies by an adapted version of the value inventory by Schwartz and Bilsky, 1990 and Schwartz and Sagiv, 1995. The value-inventory measures interculturably stable patterns of values by means of 56 items forming 10 value dimensions and four higher order factors (Schwartz and Bilsky, 1990). Scales were supplemented by five key words representing those cultural value scales included in the scale by Chan (1994) that differed from the original items (Schwartz and Sagiv, 1995). The German items were based on the translation by Boehnke and Welzel (2006) and supplemented by own translations from a professional German-English translator. To shorten the workload for the participants and to prevent a fading of the movie salience, all items were shorted to one single word.

Participants were asked, 'How important is each of the following values in the movie you named before?' on a seven-point scale (1 = 'not at all', 7 = 'completely').

Following the suggestion by Schwartz (1990: 144), we expected the items to load onto four higher order factors: *Self-enhancement* (11 items representing values of power and personal achievement), *conservation* (18 items representing values of tradition, security and conformity), *self-transcendence* (18 items representing values of universalism and benevolence), and *openness to change* (15 items representing values of hedonism, stimulation, and self-direction). To test this solution, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). As the assumption of multivariate normality was violated, we conducted robust maximum likelihood estimation and computed Satorra-Bentler (SB) corrected test statistics (cf., Brown, 2015). The initial CFA revealed a poor model fit. Thus, the instrument was optimized by purposefully selecting items for each subscale based on the theoretical considerations of the item content and considering empirical fit based on the modification indices. The items of factor *openness to change* showed many cross loadings with other factors and were theoretically less convincing than the other three factors. We therefore decided to exclude this factor. The model fit indices for the three-factor solution showed an acceptable model fit, SB $\chi^2 = 299.03$, $df = 239$, $p < .01$, $\chi^2/df = 1.25$, robust root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .036, 90% confidence interval (CI) of robust RMSEA (.021, .049),

standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = .056, and robust confirmatory fit index (CFI) = .933.

In the final solution eight items represented *self-enhancement* (success, competence, influence, power, authority, wealth, image, and popularity), eight items represented *self-transcendence* (helpfulness, honesty, responsibility, friendship, environment, tolerance, equality, and peace), and 8 items represented *conservation* (family, reciprocity, devotion, humility, respect, distance, politeness, and honoring). Means were aggregated based on the CFA results.

Moral intentions. Moral intentions were assessed with a list of actions the movie might have motivated (see Oliver et al., 2012). These moral motivations represented in part a reflection of focus in life (or changing this focus, e.g., ‘seek what really matters in life’). Other intentions emphasized more individualistic motivations (e.g., ‘to make a lot of money’). The full scale included 11 items, answered on a seven-point scale (1 = ‘not at all’, 7 = ‘very much’, $\alpha = .81$).

Methodological considerations for intercultural research

Scores obtained from culturally different samples are not necessarily comparable directly (Fischer, 2004). One problem researchers have to deal with are culturally coined *response biases*. These are defined as

systematic tendency to distort responses to rating scales so that observed scores are unrelated to the true score of the individual by either selecting extreme or modest answers (extreme or modesty response bias) or a shifting of responses to either end of the scale (acquiescence response bias). Fischer (2004, p. 263)

There are only few studies comparing response biases between cultures, but these studies indicate that Middle Eastern respondents tend to use more extreme response styles (Soueif, 1968), whereas Western European nations do neither show marked acquiescence nor extreme response biases (van Herk et al., 2004).

To account for such response biases, several methods exist (see Fischer, 2004 for an overview). Fischer (2004) and Fischer and Milfont (2010) recommend the use of within-group or within-culture standardization (i.e., *grand mean centering*) to remove mean differences. We therefore grand mean centered our data prior to the analyses.

Results

Preliminary analyses

First, to check our manipulation, we calculated chi-square tests on the indicated movie genres in the two conditions (see Table 1). Results confirmed that participants recalled dramas, sad films, or documentaries significantly more often in the meaningful condition, whereas they recalled comedies more often³ in the

Table 1. Percentage of respondents identifying their named film with specific genres.

Genre	Film condition		χ^2 (df = 1)	Cramer's V
	Meaningful (%)	Pleasurable (%)		
Drama	74.0	43.0	24.43***	.32
Sad film	48.9	28.9	10.10***	.20
Romance	34.4	41.2	1.23	.07
Action	72.8	27.2	0.24	.03
Comedy	31.3	67.5	32.98***	.36
Thriller	12.2	11.4	0.04	.01
Classic	29.8	25.4	0.57	.05
Documentary	16.0	5.3	7.21**	.17
Science fiction	12.2	13.2	0.05	.10
Horror	2.3	2.6	0.03	.01

pleasurable movie condition (Table 1). Examples of pleasurable movies named by participants (more than once) were, for instance, 'We are the Miller's', 'Up', 'Moonrise Kingdom', or 'Fast and Furious'. Examples of meaningful movies are 'The Untouchables', 'Titanic', 'Pride and Prejudice', 'Schindler's List', or 'Remember Me'.

Second, we tested whether our German (Western European) and our Middle Eastern sample differed with regard to their degree of independent and interdependent self-construal. The independent self-construal did not differ between Germans ($M_{\text{German}} = 5.09$, $SD = 0.65$) and Middle Eastern participants ($M_{\text{Arab}} = 5.25$, $SD = 0.84$), $t(216.89) = -1.61$, *ns*. However, as expected, Middle Eastern participants ($M_{\text{Arab}} = 4.59$, $SD = 0.86$) reported higher levels of interdependent self-construal than German participants ($M_{\text{German}} = 4.42$, $SD = 0.64$), $t(211.12) = -1.72$, $p < .05$ (one-tailed). Although these differences are only small, they demonstrate cultural variations in self-construals (at least for interdependent self-construals).

Hypothesized model

Testing our hypothesized model⁴ yielded an acceptable model fit, χ^2 (df = 25) = 46.46, $p < .01$, $\chi^2/\text{df} = 1.85$, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .059, 90% CI (.032, .086), and SRMR = 0.066.

An inspection of the modification indices suggested the addition of a direct path from interdependent self-construal on elevation. We believe that this direct path has important theoretical implications, and we will address them in the 'Discussion' section. The inclusion of this direct path (not depicted in the figure in the interest of clarity) increased model fit, χ^2 (df = 24) = 39.44, $p = .025$, $\chi^2/\text{df} = 1.64$, CFI = .970,

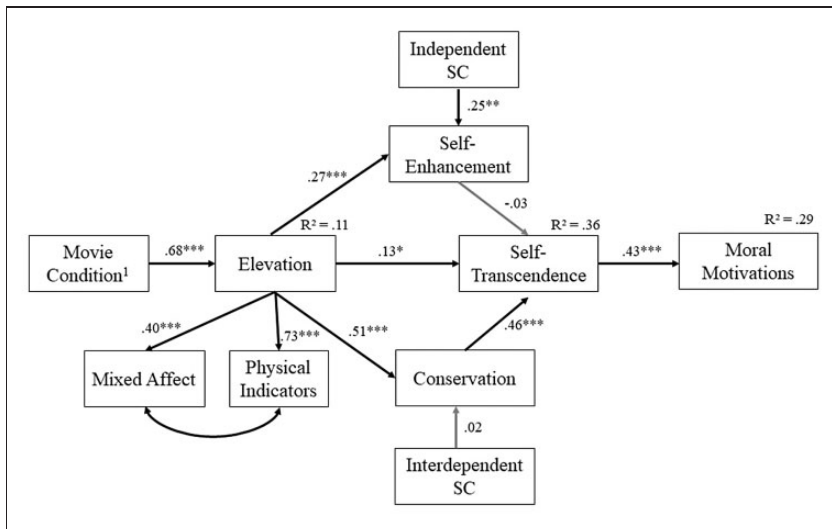


Figure 2. Resultant path model. χ^2 (df = 24) = 39.44, $p = .025$, $\chi^2/df = 1.64$, CFI = .970, RMSEA = .051, 90% CI (.019, .079), SRMR = 0.049.

Direct path from interdependent self-construal to elevation: $\beta = .25$, $p = .01$, from elevation to moral motivations: $\beta = .40$, $p < .001$. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. SC = Self-construal.

¹Movie condition was dummy-coded: 1 = meaningful movie, 0 = pleasurable movie.

RMSEA = .051, 90% CI (.019, .079), and SRMR = 0.049 (see Figure 2 for paths associated with this revised model and Table 2 for an overview of zero-order correlations among all variables).

The observed model confirmed that those who named a meaningful movie reported feeling higher levels of elevation ($\beta = .68$), which, in turn, was characterized by mixed affect ($\beta = .40$) and physical indicators ($\beta = .73$).

With regard to the impact of self-construals and values, a more independent self-construal was positively related to naming a movie containing greater self-enhancement values ($\beta = .25$), whereas an interdependent self-construal was not significantly related to naming a movie with greater conservation values ($\beta = .02$), although the zero-order correlation showed a positive relationship, $r = .11$, $p = .07$. Instead, an interdependent self-construal was positively associated with elevation ($\beta = .25$, not shown in the model).

Elevation was significantly associated with self-enhancement ($\beta = .27$), conservation ($\beta = .51$), and self-transcendence ($\beta = .13$). While self-enhancement was not related to self-transcendence ($\beta = -.03$), values of conservation were significantly positively associated with self-transcendence ($\beta = .46$). Self-transcendence, in turn, increased moral motivations ($\beta = .43$). Further, elevation showed a significant direct relationship with moral motivations ($\beta = .40$).

In order to examine our argument that meaningful movies are characterized by values of self-transcendence and motivate moral intentions, we examined three indirect paths using bootstrapping based on 1,000 bootstrap samples and

Table 2. Zero-order correlation among all variables.

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
1. Condition (0 = pleasurable, 1 = meaningful)	—	-.02	.00	.30**	.10	.27**	.09	.19**	.07	.12
2. Independent SC		—	.00	-.02	-.03	.06	.16*	-.05	-.01	.04
3. Interdependent SC			—	.16*	.14*	.09	.10	.11	.16*	.18**
4. Elevation				—	.41**	.56**	.27**	.55**	.42**	.43**
5. Mixed affect					—	.38**	.17**	.39**	.41**	.27**
6. Physical indicators						—	.22**	.43**	.35**	.26**
7. Self-enhancement							—	.41**	.23**	.28**
8. Conservation								—	.60**	.34**
9. Self-transcendence									—	.44**
10. Moral motivations										—

SC: Self-construal

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

bias-corrected CIs. The results revealed that meaningful movies were associated with perceiving that the movies depicted values of self-transcendence, mediated by elevation, $\beta = .09$, $p < .05$, CI (.011, .160). Further, meaning movies motivated the intentions to behave in a morally good way, mediated by elevation and portrayals of self-transcendence, $\beta = .04$, $p = .050$, CI (.004, .076). Finally, thinking about a meaningful movie increased moral motivations mediated by elevation, the assumed prevalence of conservation values within movies and self-transcendence, $\beta = .07$, $p = .001$, CI (.031, .114).

As mentioned above, higher levels of interdependent self-construal were positively correlated with depictions of conservation values in the zero-order correlations (see Table 2). This relationship dropped below significance in the path model. However, a fourth indirect path revealed that interdependent self-construal was related to higher levels of moral motivations mediated via elevation, conservation values, and self-transcendence, $\beta = .03$, $p < .05$, CI (.005, .055).

Discussion and limitations

In previous research, meaningful entertainment experiences were associated with feelings of elevation, mixed affect, physical indicators, and moral motivations. The current study aimed at investigating this relationship in an intercultural context addressing the role of different values. The results suggest that remembering a meaningful movie is able to elicit elevation (H1) which is associated with mixed affective responses (H2a) and physical indicators (H2b). In addition, in this study, the same genres are associated with meaningful versus pleasurable movies as in the study by Oliver et al. (2012). As such, our results replicate the model by Oliver et al. (2012) in an intercultural setting.

Recently, research on meaningful entertainment experiences started to distinguish between inward- and outward-oriented experiences (Oliver et al., 2018). Bridging this distinction with research on values, self-enhancement and openness to change resemble more inward-oriented experiences, whereas conservation (tradition, security, and conformity) and self-transcendence (benevolence and universalism) ultimately resemble more outward-oriented experiences. Such experiences are associated with elevation (Janicke and Oliver, 2017). Confirming our extended model, elevation was associated with portrayed values of self-transcendence (H3a) and conservation (H3b). The perceived depiction of conservation and self-transcendence in movies was also positively associated with each other (H4).

Finally, elevation (H6) and the perception of self-transcendence (H5) were positively related to moral intentions. Indirect effects further emphasize that remembering a meaningful movie can be enough to trigger moral motivations either mediated through elevation and self-transcendence or through elevation, conservation, and self-transcendence. However, since these results were obtained from cross-sectional survey data, the direction of effects can only stand as theoretical consideration that still needs empirical (experimental or long-term) evidence. Nevertheless, our results provide meaningful insights, as they confirm the assumption that meaningful entertainment can elicit outward-oriented responses while simultaneously showing that portrayals of self-enhancement do not play a predominant role in this context (RQ1 and RQ2).

With regard to meaningful media experiences, Oliver et al. (2018) suggest a continuum, with self-related, egoist gratifications on one end, and self-transcendent experiences on the other. While zero-order correlations found no direct relationship between watching a meaningful movie and values of self-enhancement ($r = .09$), there was a significant effect between elevation and the value of self-enhancement ($r = .27$). Thus, values of self-enhancement can co-occur with elevation which is—in turn—elicited when viewing meaningful entertainment. However, taking the suggested continuum metaphor into account, meaningful media seem to simply be better able to trigger outward-oriented experiences, such as values of conservation and self-transcendence (Janicke and Oliver, 2017).

With regard to the cultural variation dimension of our research, the results showed that a more independent self-construal was predominantly associated with remembering self-enhancement within movies (H6a), whereas a more interdependent self-construal was weakly associated with conservation ($r = .11$) and self-transcendence ($r = .16$). The interdependent self-construal directly influenced the feeling of elevation. This matches research by Kim et al. (2014) who found Eastern cultures to experience mixed and more complex affective states, such as elevation more often than Western cultures.

Based on these findings, one might want to conclude that people from collectivist cultures are ‘the better people’ because they more often experience elevation, conservation, and self-transcendence and thereby are more prone to engage in morally good intentions. However, cultural differences in individual value preferences are not innate but transmitted via socialization (Gudykunst et al., 1996), whereby culture and selves mutually influence each other. Also, self-construals

can vary within one culture as well as within one individual (Markus and Kitayama, 2010). That is, perceiving culture and specific cultural values as static and monolithic entities might not be the best ground to investigate intercultural differences when in reality values seems to be much more flexible, and macro- as well as micro-levels have to be taken into account. Additionally, making people think with a collective 'We'-focus vs. a more individual 'I'-focus is able to activate an interdependent and independent self-construal, respectively (Gardner et al., 1999). Aspects that are more closely associated with a 'We'-focus, such as an interdependent self-construal, self-transcendence, and moral behaviors, are more prone to be tackled in meaningful entertainment and have direct relationships with elevation. This finding could therefore cautiously be interpreted in the sense that certain stimuli (e.g., meaningful media fare) can activate a more interdependent worldview. Future studies should more directly test this idea.

Our results are limited in the sense that they make assumptions based on variations in self-construal by only assessing participants from two cultures (in two student samples). That is, the study does not provide evidence on intercultural differences in a macro-level but rather on cultural variation on the micro-level. Additionally, the terms 'Middle Eastern' or 'Arab' can only be regarded as umbrella terms with a lot of national and ethnic diversity subsumed below it. Therefore, the results should not be generalized to the Middle East per se but rather be interpreted within the framework of students from a Western-oriented atmosphere in the UAE. By choosing this sample, our study was able to broaden the variance in different self-construals but should still be regarded as biased towards Western values and ideals. This is further apparent when considering that the found differences in independent and interdependent self-construals between both samples are rather negligible. Thus, this study should be replicated in a more traditional Middle Eastern country in which the Western influence might be lower.

From a methodological point of view, cross-cultural survey studies often have to deal with the limitation that the survey is translated and this by researchers who only come from one of the surveyed countries (Ervin and Bower, 1953). Additionally, in our study, the data in the UAE were gathered in an English survey (due to the internationality of the campus in the UAE). It can also not be guaranteed that translated surveys have the same meaning (in the respective language). Therefore, it has to be acknowledged as one limitation that translated surveys might not grasp the same meaning for both cultural groups as a function of study language and mother tongue (see, e.g., Odağ et al., 2016).

To conclude, results for meaningful entertainment experiences speak for the assumption that they can remind viewers of elements of a shared humanity. The current study adds to this evidence by demonstrating that even thinking about seen movies can elicit inward-oriented responses (such as elevation, mixed affect and physiological indicators, and self-enhancement) but can also trigger more outward-oriented responses (such as conservation, self-transcendence, and moral motivations). An individual's interdependent self-construal contributes to enhancing moral motivations by making one feel elevation.

To conclude, results for meaningful entertainment experiences speak for the assumption that they can remind viewers of elements of a shared humanity. The current study adds to this evidence by demonstrating that even thinking about seen movies can elicit inward-oriented responses (such as elevation, mixed affect and physiological indicators, and self-enhancement) but can also trigger more outward-oriented responses (such as conservation, self-transcendence, and moral motivations). An individual's interdependent self-construal contributes to enhancing moral motivations by making one feel elevation.

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Notes

1. The 10-item scale yielded a non-satisfying Cronbach's alpha, 2 items were thus excluded in order to increase the reliability: 'In my own personal relationships, I am concerned about the other person's status compared to me and the nature of our relationship', 'Depending on the situation and the people that are present, I will sometimes change my attitude and behavior'.
2. The Cronbach's alpha for physical indicators and motivational intentions is based on the same selection of items that Oliver et al. (2012) used to test their model. Physical indicators: lump in throat, tears, rising, and chills; motivational intentions: be a better person, do good things for others, live my life a better way, seek what really matters in life, and make people laugh.
3. These significant differences between genres replicate Oliver et al. (2012) results, except for the genre romance.
4. We also added a direct path from elevation to moral motivations since previous research found elevation to be directly associated with the intention to behave morally (see Oliver et al., 2012). This direct path is not depicted in the model in the interest of clarity, but path coefficient is given below the figure.

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