

## DEPTH VERSUS BREADTH STRATEGIES FOR GLOBAL BRAND IMAGE MANAGEMENT

Developing and maintaining a *brand* image is vital to any successful *marketing* and communication campaign. An image that clearly communicates the needs satisfied by the *brand* contributes to *brand* equity and helps combat *brand* parity. The normative model of *brand* image management suggests that *marketers* should base their images on a single set of consumer needs (depth *strategy*), rather than multiple sets of needs (breadth *strategy*). The extent to which depth *strategies* outperformed breadth *strategies* (in terms of annual change in sales volume, profit margin, and *market* share) was investigated for U.S. consumer goods exported into international *markets*. These *markets* varied in terms of level of economic development, cultural context, and competition. While the results indicate that depth *strategies* do tend to perform best, there are conditions under which breadth *strategies* perform just as well.

### Introduction

Developing and managing a *brand* image is an important part of a firm's *marketing* program. Both *advertising* practitioners (Ogilvy 1963) and *marketing* researchers (Gardner and Levy 1955) have long advocated the use of a clearly defined *brand* image as a basis for *market* success. A well-communicated *brand* image enables consumers to identify the needs satisfied by the *brand* (Park, Jaworski and MacInnis 1986) and thereby differentiate the *brand* from its competitors (DiMingo 1988; Reynolds and Gutman 1984). In fact, developing a *brand* image *strategy* has been prescribed as the first and most vital step in positioning a *brand* in the marketplace (Park, Jaworski and MacInnis 1986; Young 1972). As a long-term *strategy*, a consistent and effective *brand* image helps build and maintain *brand* equity. In addition, *brand* images can provide a foundation for extending existing *brands* (Park, Milberg and Lawson 1991).

A *brand* image can be defined as the meaning consumers' associate with the product (see Dobni and Zinkhan [1990] for a recent *brand* image review). These meanings are derived by consumers from their perceptions of the *marketing* program, which includes *advertising* as well as other *brand*-related activities, and center around the product's ability to satisfy their needs (Friedmann and Zimmer 1988; Park, Jaworski and MacInnis 1986). Park, Jaworski and MacInnis's (1986) review of consumer behavior literature revealed three distinct sets of consumer needs managers can use to develop *brand* images for consumer products: functional (e.g., problem prevention, problem removal), symbolic (e.g., group membership, role enhancement), and sensory (e.g., stimulation, variety/novelty). These are consistent with other articulations of motivating drives underlying consumer behavior (cf. Rossiter and Percy 1987).

While normative research suggests firms should select only one type of need in developing *brand* images (Park, Jaworski and MacInnis 1986), many *brands* utilize a mix of functional, symbolic, and sensory needs in their communications. Perhaps this is due to the increasingly competitive nature of many *markets*. For example, multiple *brands* may compete directly based on their high delivery on a functional need (e.g., cavity prevention in toothpaste). To avoid *brand* parity, Firm "A" may emphasize other functional benefits (e.g., plaque or tartar removal), while Firm "B" selects a symbolic or sensory benefit (e.g., white, shiny teeth or mint flavor) to go along with the functional benefit. In competitive *markets*, which *strategy* will work best? Is greater success achieved through *brand* image depth (i.e., concentrating heavily on one set of needs) or breadth

(i.e., diversifying the image with multiple types of needs)? Or, are breadth and depth secondary to effective creative executions of any salient needs?

The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between consumer product *brand* image *strategies* and various global *market* characteristics. Specifically, the success of breadth versus depth *brand* image *strategies* is examined for *brands* under varying conditions of (1) country economic development, (2) country cultural context, and (3) competition in the marketplace. Data are examined to assess the *market* success (sales volume, profit margin, *market* share) of *brand* image *strategies* implemented by U.S. firms exporting to various countries. The next section provides background on the three *market* conditions related to *brand* image performance, and is followed by a discussion of the methodology employed. The results are then presented, and their implications discussed.

### **Market Conditions Affecting Brand Image Performance**

The normative model of *brand* image management suggests that *marketers* should develop and implement a *brand* image grounded in one particular consumer need (Park, Jaworski and MacInnis 1986). Three basic reasons have been posited for adopting a single-need *brand* image approach (Park, Jaworski and MacInnis 1986, p. 136): First, a single need makes it easier for consumers to identify the *brand*'s basic meaning. Multiple needs may make this task more difficult for consumers. A second reason is that it is easier for managers to position a single-need *brand* image. Developing and implementing a *marketing* mix that conveys a single need is less difficult than managing a mix that effectively conveys multiple needs. Third, utilizing a single-need image reduces the number of direct competitors to those with the same *brand* image. When multiple needs are used, the level of competition increases to include all of the *brands* incorporating the same images. In summary, the normative model of *brand* image management suggests that using a single need (depth) approach will yield better *market* performance than a multipleneed (breadth) *strategy*.

*Brands* in competitive categories adopt both depth and breadth *strategies*. That is, some managers adhere to the single-need *brand* image approach, while others use a more diversified *strategy*. Research has yet to determine if and under what conditions the normative, single-need *brand* image *strategy* yields better *market* success. The remainder of this section discusses environmental conditions that may affect the relative performance of depth and breadth *brand* image *strategies* in international *markets*.

Conditions found in foreign *markets* often affect *marketing* communication programs. Research has indicated, for example, that consumers in different countries have similar needs, yet vary in the ways products are perceived as satisfying those needs (Green, Cunningham and Cunningham 1975). The needs products are designed to satisfy may thus affect consumers' perceptions of the products' benefits depending on where they are *marketed*. Consequently, *market* performance of a *brand* image *strategy* may be affected by country characteristics. However, little research has been done that examines the appropriate fit between *brand* images (i.e., need satisfaction) and international *market* characteristics.

Two easily identified characteristics of international *markets* that may relate well to *brand* image management are level of economic development and degree of cultural context. A third *market* characteristic, important in any country or culture, is the extent of competition within a product category. Each of these international *market* conditions may impact the importance of *brand* image *strategy* in a firm's *marketing* program.

### **Economic Development**

One of the most important environmental aspects of international *markets* is the level of economic development. A country's stage of economic growth affects consumer demand and attitudes towards goods and the *companies* offering them (e.g., Crawford and Lamb 1989; Dawson 1988). A model of economic growth proposed by Restow (1971) suggests that countries in advanced stages of economic development (referred to here as higher economic development countries--HEDs) are characterized by relatively high levels of discretionary income allocated to goods and services. Countries at lower levels of development (newly and lesser industrialized countries; referred to here as lower economic developed countries--LEDs) typically do not have the capital, nor perhaps the demand, needed to support widespread goods and service consumption. While *markets* within countries may have markedly different economic and social conditions, assessing a country's overall economic development is a useful tool for developing international *marketing strategies* (Cavusgil 1985; Douglas and Craig 1983; Kreutzer 1988). Countries grouped together economically may thus have common *market* characteristics, making them candidates for similar *advertising* and positioning approaches (Jaffe 1974). HED *markets* often tend to be highly competitive, offering consumers a wide variety of choices within a product category. Segmentation *strategies* are often required to target consumers with specific product needs and preferences. Due to the importance of competition and differentiation in HEDs, depth *strategies* seem necessary for *market* success. LED *markets*, in contrast, are often smaller (in terms of potential customers, although not necessarily whole populations), and thus typically offer a relatively narrower range of customers. Competition in LEDs also tends to be lower, and variety less available and less sought by consumers. As such, the need to develop benefit segmentation *strategies* (through strategic *brand* image management) will likely be less important in LEDs. In LEDs, where differentiation may not be as important, both depth and breadth *strategies* may fare equally well. Breadth *strategies*, then, seem suited for LEDs, but not HEDs. In summary, the following research hypotheses are offered:

Hypothesis 1a: The performance of depth *brand* image *strategies* will be greater than breadth *strategies* in HEDs.

Hypothesis 1b: The performance of breadth *brand* image *strategies* will be greater in LEDs than in HEDs.

### **Cultural Context**

The meaning consumers derive from *advertisements* and other *marketing* stimuli may be influenced by their culture (Friedmann 1986). Thus classifying foreign *markets* on cultural dimensions may also be useful. Cultural context is one aspect of culture that relates to consumer behavior. Cultural context refers to the degree of information consumers infer from implicit, contextual cues those which are non-verbal and non-written (Hall 1976). The concept of cultural context has previously been extended to *advertising* message *strategy* (Martenson 1989). Consumers from high context cultures derive more meaning from non-verbal or non-written, context cues (i.e., background, imagery, scenery, etc.) than consumers from low context cultures. The latter draw much more information from the explicit information presented in communications, and tend to pay little attention to contextual cues. For example, consumers in the U.S. (a low context culture) tend to derive *advertising* meaning from the explicit cues used in the ad, such as written text in print *advertisements*. On the other hand, Japanese consumers (a high context culture) will interpret not only the explicit messages, but also contextual cues such as the roles of the message sender and receiver. In high context cultures both the explicit and implicit cues are sources of message meaning; in low context cultures, much more of the

meaning is derived from explicit cues. As one moves from low to high context cultures, information awareness increases and more attention is paid to context (Hall 1976).

Breadth **brand** image **strategies** (based on multiple needs) may be more appropriate in low rather than high context cultures. As mentioned earlier, consumers in low context cultures focus more exclusively on explicit (rather than contextual) information. Being exposed to multiple needs (breadth **strategies**) may not be difficult since only the explicit messages will be attended to. On the other hand, consumers in high context cultures focus on both explicit and contextual cues. When they encounter a breadth-based image, both the explicit messages and the contexts used to convey the **brand's** delivery on multiple needs will require their attention, thus making effective processing more difficult. Because of differences in context attention, consumers in low context cultures would likely respond better to breadth images than would consumers from high context cultures. In summary, the following research hypotheses are offered:

Hypothesis 2a: The performance of depth **brand** image **strategies** will be greater than breadth **strategies** in high context cultures.

Hypothesis 2b: The performance of breadth **brand** image **strategies** will be greater in low context cultures than in high context cultures.

### **Competition**

A third important **market** characteristic, and one that must be considered in any country or culture, is the extent of competition within a product category. The greater the competition, the greater the risk of **brand** parity. In highly competitive **markets**, managers often strive to differentiate their **brand** from competitors. While firms may also use "me-too," or follower **strategies**, product positioning as a means of **brand** differentiation has become an increasingly important **marketing** tool (Crawford 1985). This is typically accomplished by identifying **market** structures and developing positioning **strategies** that achieve one or both of the following: (1) position the **brand** on benefits other than those offered by key competitors, and/or (2) position the **brand** distinct from competing **brands** that are positioned as doing everything well (Aaker and Shansby 1982).

Depth **brand** image **strategies** offer a means for limiting direct competition and creating a clear meaning in the customer's mind about the product's unique features (Park, Jaworski and MacInnis 1986). In highly competitive **markets**, depth **strategies** may help narrow consumers' evoked sets, more clearly differentiate the **brand**, and therefore lead to better performance than breadth **strategies**. In **markets** with relatively low degrees of competition, however, the advantages of depth **strategies** may be less crucial. As such, breadth **strategies** may be as viable as depth **strategies** in low-competition **markets**. In summary, the following hypotheses are offered:

Hypothesis 3a: The performance of depth **brand** image **strategies** will be greater than breadth **strategies** when the degree of competition is high.

Hypothesis 3b: The performance of breadth **brand** image **strategies** will be greater in low competition **markets** than in high competition **markets**.

Level of development, cultural context, and competition are all *market* conditions that can affect consumer behavior, and thus should be incorporated into a firm's *marketing strategies*. While depth *strategies* are prescribed as the best *brand* image alternative, each of these *market* conditions offers potential situations in which breadth *strategies* may be just as viable.

### Method

A field study was conducted that examined the performance of *brand* image *strategies* in various international *markets*. A questionnaire was developed that included questions about the *brand* image *strategy* used, extent of competition, and *market* performance for a *brand* in a particular *market*.

Data was collected through a series of four stages. First, U.S. firms manufacturing consumer goods in the beer, blue jean, and athletic shoe categories were identified. The product categories (beer, blue jeans, and athletic shoes) were chosen because of the diverse *brand* image *strategies* used (both depth and breadth) to *market* them. Second, *marketing* managers at each *company* were contacted by phone and asked to identify the countries to which they exported their products. The person contacted often provided the name(s) of another manager responsible for international *marketing*. For firms exporting their *brand* to one or more *markets* within a set of eleven countries, the third stage entailed asking them to participate in a *market* research study examining the performance of *brand* image *strategies* in international *markets*. The eleven countries used in this study (Argentina, Belgium, China, France, Germany, Japan, Italy, Netherlands, Peru, Romania, and Yugoslavia) were chosen due to their social, economic, and cultural diversity. The fourth stage included mailing (to the *companies* that agreed to participate) a cover letter and the questionnaire. Reminder letters and questionnaires were mailed if a response was not received after two to three weeks.

The mail survey yielded a response rate of 33% (38 managers of the 115 identified through the phone inquiries and sent a questionnaire responded). Many of the managers participating in the study were responsible for managing a particular *brand* in multiple foreign *markets*. Thirty eight (38) managers from 11 firms returned questionnaires. Collectively, they reported on 213 cases of a particular *brand's* *strategy*, *market*, and performance in a particular foreign *market*. On average, each manager participating in the study reported six cases.

The survey asked managers to characterize their *brand's* image in each particular *market* by allocating 100 points across three types of *strategies*: functional, social, and sensory, with more points being allocated to the more emphasized images. Each image *strategy* was defined in the questionnaire as follows:

\* Functional *brand* image: problem solving, problem preventing.

\* Social *brand* image: conveys status, social approval, accreditation.

\* Sensory *brand* image: provides variety, stimulation, sensory gratification.

Managers could allocate 100% of the points to one *brand* image (a depth *strategy* approach), or allocate the points across two or three of the *strategies* (breadth approach).

Managers also reported the extent of competition, relative to other *markets* they have served in the same product category, encountered in each *market*. This item was measured using a seven point Likert-type scale. In addition, managers indicated the most recent annual percentage

increase/decrease in sales volume, profit margin, and *market* share for the *brand* in each *market*. Through the use of actual performance measures, *brand* image *strategy* could be related to *market* performance, an important yet neglected approach in international *marketing* research (Jain 1989; Keegan, Still and Hill 1987). While these are different from typical measures of communication effectiveness (e.g., *brand* awareness, *brand* attitude), the images being reported are a function of the firm's entire *marketing* program--not just their *advertising* (Park, Jaworski and MacInnis 1986). As such, sales and profit measures that better account for the entire *marketing* program's performance were used.

The data represent *strategies* employed in 11 international *markets*. These *markets* were placed into economic development and cultural context categories in the following manner. Countries were grouped into economic categories using the World Bank's (1989) income (GNP per capita) classification of countries. Six of the countries were in the World Bank's "high-income countries" category, four were in the "medium-income countries" category, and one (China) was in the "low-income countries" category. Subsequent analysis showed results from Chinese *markets* to be very similar to those from the "middle-income countries." Countries were thus categorized as HED (for the high-income countries) and LED (for the middle and low-income countries).

Hall (1976) and others (Cateora 1990; Martenson 1989) classify the following cultures, Asian, Hispanic, and European, as descending in cultural context. In general, Hall (1976) concludes that Western European cultures exhibit similar degrees of low-context information awareness and processing (i.e., little attention to context), while Asian cultures are similar in their propensity to attend to high context information. Hispanic cultures are considered to fall somewhere between Western and Eastern ones in terms of cultural context. In an empirical study of *advertising* information processing, Martenson (1989) found significant processing differences between consumers in Sweden and Japan. In addition, Martenson (1989) found that Mexican consumers processed information very similarly to Japanese consumers, and markedly different from Swedish ones. Thus, Hispanic consumers tend to focus relatively highly on contextual information in *marketing* communications. Based on Hall's (1976) and Martenson's (1989) findings, the eleven countries were classified into high (Asian and Hispanic) and low (European) context categories.

Finally, the responses regarding extent of competition were split (at the median) to develop high and low competition categories.

Table 1 shows the countries included in the sample, their response frequencies, and corresponding economic development and cultural context classifications. Also included in Table 1 is information on degree of competition. In addition, Table 1 shows the extent of correlation between the three *market* condition (independent) variables. The extent of inter-correlations was not significantly high for any pair of environmental variables.

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics for the performance (dependent) variables. The sales volume, profit margin, and *market* share values represent the average annual percentage change for each variable. Here, as expected, inter-correlations were positive and quite high.

### **Results**

The results are presented in two parts: first, the extent of depth versus breadth *brand* image *strategies* used by managers of consumer goods products; and second, the relative performance of depth versus breadth *strategies* under the three *market* conditions.

#### **Extent of Depth and Breadth *Brand* Image *Strategies***

The use of functional, social, and sensory *brands* images are shown in Table 3. Most firms placed a greater emphasis on functional-need images than either social or sensory ones. The mean scores for each image were: functional (49.2%), social (18.2%), and sensory (32.7%). While functional image was negatively correlated with the other two, social and sensory images were positively related.

Most interesting, however, was the fact that no one need ever accounted for 100% of the total *brand's* image. In other words, no firms implemented the normative, one-need (depth) *brand* image *strategy*. The most any firm emphasized a single need was 67%.

While the normative model of *brand* image *strategy* (Park, Jaworski and MacInnis 1986) suggests firms will benefit from depth *strategies* that emphasize only one type of need (functional, social, sensory), the managers sampled here apparently do not concur. While some managers developed *brand* images that clearly favored one image over another (e.g., a 67% 33% split), at a minimum all of the reported *strategies* included two, if not three, types of needs. These results (although limited in that they account for 11 firms in three consumer products industries) raise some doubt regarding how depth and breadth *brand* images should be defined. It appears that the single-need *strategy* may be too limiting for many firms. Rather, the relative emphasis on various needs is how managers attempt to position and differentiate their *brands*. For example, Palmolive dish washing detergent is positioned as a very functional *brand* (it prevents a problem--hands from becoming dry as a result of dish washing), However, it also makes hands soft. Thus in addition to having a functional benefit, it also offers sensory gratification.

Given the lack of true depth *strategies* (i.e., 100% use of a single need), an alternative method was used to classify depth and breadth images. The most any one need was emphasized was 67%. In addition, there were some cases where two needs were used, and others where three types of needs were incorporated into one *strategy*. As such, two conditions could be used to differentiate the *brand* image *strategies*: (1) the most any one need was emphasized, and (2) the number of needs incorporated into the *strategy*. Examination of the data showed that when (1a) a *brand* image consisted of 67% of one need, at the same time (2a) only two needs were incorporated into the *brand* image. Hence, when a firm strongly emphasized one image, only one other secondary type of need was also included. In contrast, when (1b) no one need was highly dominant (i.e., no one need was emphasized as much as 67%), it also held that (2b) all three types of needs (regardless of emphasis) were incorporated into the overall *brand* image. Thus, if all three needs were incorporated into the *brand* image, no one need dominated the other two. There were no instances of overlap between the two sets (1a and 2a versus 1b and 2b) of conditions.

Using these conditions, depth and breadth images were defined. Depth *strategies* have one dominant need that is always at least twice as prevalent as the only other incorporated need. Breadth images have no one need dominating the other two also incorporated into the *brand* image *strategy*. The depth and breadth images were discrete groups. There were 88 cases of depth images and 125 cases of breadth images used by the firms *marketing* their consumer products internationally.

#### **Performance of Depth and Breadth *Brand* Image *Strategies***

The procedures used to assess the relative performance of the depth and breadth *brand* image *strategies* were t-tests and analysis of variance. Because the dependent variables (performance measures) were highly correlated (refer to Table 2), MANOVA was used. MANOVA permitted

assessing the independent variable differences across the multiple dependent variables simultaneously (Hair, Anderson and Tatham 1987). Hotelling's T<sup>2</sup> statistic provided a single overall test of the group differences across the linear combination of the dependent variables. Interactions between **brand** image and each of the other independent variables (economic development, cultural context, and degree of competition) were examined to assess the **market** conditions' impact on **brand** image performance. Each independent variables had two levels. For each statistically significant interaction found via MANOVA, the group means were plotted, and post-hoc analyses (Scheffe tests) were conducted to determine the exact nature of the differences in performance.

The significance level (alpha) for the hypothesis tests was set at 0.10 to help prevent the possibility of type II error (not rejecting a false hypothesis). While typical significance levels in **marketing** research are 0.05, the managerial nature of this research makes the cost of incurring a type I error less costly than a type II error (Cox and Enis 1969; Kinnear and Taylor 1991). The findings reported throughout the paper show significant p-values less than 0.10 and 0.05.

Analyses were first conducted to see if, in general, the use of depth **strategies** (following the normative model) leads to better performance. Table 4 shows three t-tests, each indicating that the mean scores of depth images led to significantly ( $p < .05$ ) higher sales revenue, profit margin, and **market** share than did the breadth images. In general, the single-need **brand** image **strategy** does lead to better performance across all of the dependent measures.

Next, analyses were performed to see which **strategies** led to better performance for each of the **market** conditions outlined in the previous section. A MANOVA was conducted, entering the independent variables first (main effects), followed by **brand** image-**market** condition interactions. The effects on the linear combination (as shown by the Hotelling's T<sup>2</sup> statistic F-value) and all three dependent variables were used to indicate the extent of main and interaction effects on the different performance measures. The results are shown in Table 5.

As expected, the **brand** image used (depth or breadth) had a significant effect on performance. The significant ( $p < .10$ ) Hotelling's T<sup>2</sup> statistic indicates that depth **brand** images performed better than breadth **strategies** across all three performance measures combined.

**Marketing** products in LEDs also led to significantly better ( $p < .10$ ) performance than those **marketed** in HEDs. **Brands marketed** in low context cultures also exhibited significantly better ( $p < .10$ ) performance than ones found in high context cultures. Also, **brands** in **markets** with relatively low degrees of competition performed significantly better ( $p < .10$ ) than those in highly competitive **markets**. Interestingly, all of the main effects were highly significant in terms of sales volume. The more elusive and long-term goals of profitability and **market** share were less likely to be affected by the **market** condition variables.

The interaction terms were used to test the hypotheses stated earlier. For statistically significant interactions, plots of the group means were analyzed. Post-hoc analyses (Scheffe test) were used to determine which group mean differences were indeed significant.

Hypothesis 1a stated that depth **strategies** would outperform breadth **strategies** in HEDs.

Hypothesis 1b stated that breadth **strategies** would work better in LEDs than in HEDs. While the **brand** image-economic development interaction was significant for changes in sales volume ( $p < .10$ ), the results did not confirm either hypothesis. However, two significant effects were found (Scheffe tests,  $p < .10$ ). These effects (on annual change in sales volume) can be seen in part A of the Figure, which compares the group means. First, depth **strategies** had higher sales volumes than breadth **strategies**, but in LEDs (not in HEDs as hypothesized). Second, depth

*strategies* had higher sales volumes in LEDs than in HEDs. There was no significant difference in breadth *strategies* across the different economic *markets*. The significant results did not carry over to profit margin or *market* share, nor for the linear combination of the three dependent measures.

A possible explanation for these findings is that the more clearly focused and concentrated depth *strategies* work better when there are fewer *brands* in the marketplace, but when the number of offerings increases (as is typically the case in HEDs), consumers may demand "more" from the product. Breadth *strategies*, which can serve multiple consumer needs, may thus be attractive in HEDs. Hence depth *strategies* appear to be the most effective *strategy* for LED *markets*. There does not seem to be any relative advantage in either *strategy* (depth or breadth) when the *market* is HED. As such, managers may want to consider the use of both breadth and depth *strategies* for HED *markets*.

The second set of hypotheses stated that (2a) depth *strategies* would outperform breadth *strategies* in high context cultures, and that (2b) breadth *strategies* would perform better in low context rather than high context cultures. Table 5 shows a statistically significant *brand* image-cultural context interaction for both sales volume ( $p < .05$ ) and profit margin ( $p < .10$ ). Part B of the Figure shows a comparison of the group means for annual change in sales volume. The Figure and the post-hoc Scheffe tests (significant at  $p < .10$ ) show support for both hypothesis 2a and 2b. In high context cultures, depth *strategies* had higher sales increases than did breadth *strategies*. Furthermore, breadth *strategies* yielded better sales growth when cultural context was low as opposed to high. As with the economic development results, no significant *brand* image-cultural context interaction effects were found for *market* share or the linear combination measures. As hypothesized, consumers' ability to focus on multiple-need images may be facilitated when they pay less attention to context and more to explicit messages. In low context cultures, where less emphasis is placed on context, more attention is focused on the verbal/print messages, and a greater number of non-context based needs may be easily understood by consumers. But for consumers in high context cultures, who focus on both contextual and non-contextual messages, simpler communications (ie., fewer needs incorporated) may lead to better processing and *brand* image understanding. Hence depth *strategies*, with less varied context and non-context cues, would make it easier for consumers to infer meaning. In summary, it appears managers should consider using depth *strategies* in high cultural context *markets*, and either breadth or depth images in *markets* lower in cultural context.

The third set of hypotheses suggested that (3a) depth *brand* image *strategies* would outperform breadth *strategies* when degree of competition was high, and that (3b) breadth *strategies* would perform better in *markets* with low rather than high degrees of competition. The *brand* image-competition interaction shown in Table 5 was significant for changes in sales volume ( $p < .10$ ). However, as shown in part C of the Figure and in the Scheffe tests, the results countered hypothesis 3a. Depth *strategies* had higher sales volume growth than breadth ones, but in *markets* with low degrees of competition (not high competition as hypothesized;  $p < .10$ ). These results were found for sales volume only (not for profit margin, *market* share, nor the linear combination of the dependent measures). Hypothesis 3b was not supported, as breadth *strategies* performed about the same in *markets* with both high and low degrees of competition. The results do not indicate that either *strategy* (depth or breadth) has any relative advantage when competition is high. This is interesting given that the normative model suggests depth *strategies* can be used to decrease competitive threats and improve performance (Park, Jaworski and

MacInnis 1986). Depth *strategies* do not appear to provide the intended advantage of diminishing competitive forces affecting *brand* performance. However, when degree of competition is low, depth *strategies* do outperform breadth ones. Thus *marketers* may want to consider both breadth and depth *strategies* for highly competitive *markets*, but only depth *strategies* when competition is low.

In summary, the results indicate that depth *brand* image *strategies* generally lead to better *market* performance than breadth *strategies*. More specifically, depth *strategies* outperform breadth *strategies* in LED and high cultural context *markets*, and when the extent of competition is low. On the other hand, firms that use breadth *brand* image *strategies* have better results when cultural context is low (as opposed to high). Perhaps equally useful is the finding that neither approach provides a performance advantage in many conditions. As such, both breadth and depth *strategies* seem equally viable in HED and low cultural context *markets*, and in *markets* with relatively high degrees of competition. In general, these findings hold for annual changes in sales volume, but in most cases not for the other performance measures.

### Discussion

This study investigated the performance of consumer product *brand* image *strategies* in global *markets*. The normative model, which suggests firms should focus on depth rather than breadth *brand* images, was examined in *markets* varying in economic development, cultural context, and degree of competition. No firms in the U.S. based sample of consumer goods firms adopted a "true" depth *brand* image *strategy* (use of only one type of need). Rather, the use of depth versus breadth *strategies* was based upon the relative number of and emphasis placed on needs incorporated into the *brand's* image.

In general, depth *brand strategies* yield better performance than breadth *brand* image *strategies*. However, the performance of depth and breadth *brand* image *strategies* did vary depending on the *market* environment. Economic development affected the performance of *brand* image *strategies*. In LED *markets*, depth *strategies* yield their best performance, and achieve higher sales volumes than do breadth *strategies*. Cultural context also impacted *brand* image performance. When *marketing* to high context cultures, depth *strategies* achieve higher sales and profitability. On the other hand, breadth *strategies* performed better than when cultural context was low rather than high. Competition had slightly less impact on *brand* image performance. Depth *strategies* yielded better performance than breadth ones when the degree of competition was low. While breadth *strategies* never performed better than depth images, there appear to be conditions under which they do equally well. These conditions are HED, low cultural context, and highly competitive *markets*.

The results indicate various *market* conditions for which depth *strategies* should be used. However, some of the conditions differed from those hypothesized. The two conditions for which depth *strategies* outperformed breadth *strategies* were LED and low competition *markets*. However, the normative model suggests that depth *strategies* will be particularly useful as a differentiating tool in competitive *markets*. The results presented here do not show marked differences in the performance of depth and breadth *strategies* in HEDs and highly competitive *markets*. So while the normative model is correct in suggesting depth *strategies* can offer greater success, the conditions for which this is true appear limited to less-developed, high cultural context, and low competition *markets*. Managers evaluating *brand* image *strategies* for such *markets* should strongly consider using a depth *brand* image approach. Unfortunately, little

advice can be offered for managers developing *strategies* for more developed, low cultural context, and highly competitive *markets*.

While the research presented here offers empirical insights into the use and success of *brand* image *strategies*, future research in this area is needed. Further insights into *brand* image management would be gained by examining performance differences across different types of images (functional, social, sensory) under various *market* conditions. For example, do functional depth *strategies* perform differently in LED *markets* than social or sensory images? Furthermore, *markets* that do not benefit from depth *strategies* in general (e.g., HED *markets*) may in fact be good candidates for a particular type of need-based *brand* image. Positioning on one type of consumer need (functional, social, or sensory) over another may lead to better *market* performance. The same may be true for *markets* where breadth *strategies* perform well (e.g., low cultural context *markets*). Here, finding the right mix or sets of images will be an important managerial concern.

Further research could also provide insight into why the findings reported here occurred. For instance, are processing difficulties (e.g., information overload) the reason why multiple-need, breadth *strategies* appear more difficult than single-need depth *strategies* for consumers in high context cultures? Or is there another explanation for why breadth *strategies* had lower performance than depth ones in high context cultures? Also, what makes breadth *strategies* as appealing as depth images in highly competitive and HED *markets*? Do diversified, multiple-need images provide greater value to consumers when many alternatives are available? Is *brand* parity best avoided through such diversification as opposed to differentiation?

An important limitation of the findings reported here is that *brand* image content was measured using manager assessments of the intended image. While managers develop programs to create specific images in consumers' minds, consumers may actually perceive *brand* images differently (in terms of type and number of needs) than intended by managers (Johnson and Zinkhan 1990; Park, Jaworski and Macinnis 1986). What consumers believe to be the meaning of the *brand* is arguably more important than what managers believe those perceptions to be. A better assessment of *brand* image would be consumer evaluations of *marketing* programs (such as *advertising* content). The dependent measures for such an assessment would need to be changed to ones that capture *marketing* program (e.g., communication, *branding*, pricing) as opposed to overall effectiveness. Since no single approach has been developed for measuring *brand* image (Dobni and Zinkhan 1990), alternative measures offer an important direction for future research on global image management.

The *brand* images assessed in this study were for athletic shoe, blue jean, and beer products. Although these are all consumer goods, the findings may not be generalizable to other categories. Future research is needed to extend the results reported here. While the number of product categories examined was limited, the number of countries in which the surveyed firms *marketed* their products was fairly broad. Another extension of this research, however, would not necessarily come from examining *brand* image performance in more countries, but in more narrowly defined *markets*. As mentioned earlier, *markets* within countries are often quite heterogeneous. Certain *markets* across countries may exhibit more similarities than do *markets* within the same country. Thus it would be useful to examine the effectiveness of specific *strategies* in regional *markets* that are more country-specific, such as cities, towns, or provinces. Nonetheless, the findings reported here provide a starting point for empirical research on *brand* image management. Managers developing and maintaining *brand* images in global *markets*

should carefully consider emphasizing one set of clearly defined consumer needs, and be aware of the *market's* conditions when assessing the merits of depth and breadth *brand* image *strategies*.

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**Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Environmental Variables**  
Classification of Countries

Country	Frequency	Economic Development	Cultural Context
Belgium	8	High	Low
France	36	High	Low
Germany	27	High	Low
Italy	27	High	Low
Netherlands	15	High	Low
China	5	Low	High
Japan	42	High	High
Romania	4	Low	Low
Yugoslavia	21	Low	Low
Argentina	16	Low	High
Peru	12	Low	High
Total:			
11 countries	213 cases	155 HED 58 LED	138 High C.C. 75 Low C.C.
Degree of Competition (7-point Likert-type scale)	Mean S.D. High Low	3.62 1.05 5 1	

Variable Correlations

	Cultural Context	Degree of Competition
Economic Development	.278[*]	0.02
Cultural Context		.194[*]

\* Pearson correlation coefficient, significant with  $p < .01$

**Table 2 Descriptive Statistics for Dependent Variables**

Sales Volume	Profit Margin	<i>Market</i> Share
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<b>Market</b> Share	0.6868[*]	0.6052[*]	
Profit Margin	0.8975[*]		
Mean[**]	6.33	5.64	3.5
S.D.[**]	4.22	3.97	3.69
Range:			
High	15	15	20
Low	-3	-8	-5
n	213	204	188

\* Pearson correlation coefficient, significant with p<.01

\*\* Mean, S.D., and range values represent annual percentage changes.

**Table 3 Use of Brand Image Strategies**

	Functional Image	Social Image	Sensory Image
Mean	49.155	18.193	32.653
S.D.	23.582	14.501	16.191
Range:			
High.	75	60	65
Low	0	0	0

\* Percent of each type of *brand* image *strategy*, allocated across total of 100 points.

**Table 4 Depth Versus Breadth Brand Image Performance**

T-Tests

Performance Measure	Image <i>Strategy</i>	Mean	t-value	p-value <
Sales Volume	Depth	7.06	2.12	0.05
	Breadth	5.82		
Profit Margin	Depth	6.18	1.7	0.05
	Breadth	5.23		
<b>Market</b> Share	Depth	4.21	2.38	0.05
	Breadth	2.93		

**Table 5 Effects of Environmental Conditions and Brand Image on Market Performance**

The following chart reads as follows:

Row 1: Independent Variable  
 Row 2: MANOVA F-Values: Hotelling's T; Sales Volume; Profit Margin; **Market** Share  
 Row 3: Relative Performance

**Brand** Image

3.249[\*]      5.342[\*\*]      2.87[\*]      3.085[\*]

Depth>Breadth

Economic Development

2.610[\*]            4.852[\*\*]            2.283            0.750

LED>HED

Cultural Context

3.090[\*]            4.134[\*\*]            3.201[\*]            0.188

Low Context>High Context

Competition

2.598[\*]            2.745[\*]            1.298            1.052

Low Competition>High Competition

**Brand** Image X Economic Development

1.590            3.566[\*]            1.755            0.146

Depth & LED>Breadth & LED  
Depth & LED>Depth & HED

**Brand** Image X Cultural Context

2.054            4.214[\*\*]            2.731[\*]            2.436

Depth & High C.C.>Breadth & High C.C.  
Breadth & Low C.C.>Breadth & High C.C.

**Brand** Image X Competition

1.603            2.740[\*]            0.742            0.387

Depth & Low Comp>Breadth & Low Comp

All F values have (1,172) degrees of freedom

\* Significance level p<.10

\*\* Significance level p<.05

Relative performance of interactions assessed using post-hoc Sheffe tests, p<.10

GRAPHS: Figure: Plots of Interaction Group Means

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