C. Whan Park, Bernard J. Jaworski, & Deborah J. MacInnis

Strategic Brand Concept-Image Management

Conveying a brand image to a target market is a fundamental marketing activity. The authors present a normative framework, termed brand concept management (BCM), for selecting, implementing, and controlling a brand image over time. The framework consists of a sequential process of selecting, introducing, elaborating, and fortifying a brand concept. The concept guides positioning strategies, and hence the brand image, at each of these stages. The method for maintaining this concept-image linkage depends on whether the brand concept is functional, symbolic, or experiential. Maintaining this linkage should significantly enhance the brand's market performance.

COMMUNICATING a brand image to a target segment has long been regarded as an important marketing activity (Gardner and Levy 1955; Grubb and Grathwhol 1967; Moran 1973; Reynolds and Gutman 1984; White 1959). A well-communicated image should help establish a brand's position, insulate the brand from competition (Oxenfeldt and Swann 1964), and therefore enhance the brand's market performance (Shocker and Srinivasan 1979; Wind 1973). This potential impact underscores the importance of *managing* the image over time.

In their classic paper, Gardner and Levy (1955) wrote that the long-term success of a brand depends on marketers' abilities to select a brand meaning prior to market entry, operationalize the meaning in the form of an image, and maintain the image over time. The fact that several brands have been able to maintain their image for more than 100 years (e.g., Ivory's "purity" image) supports their position.

C. Whan Park is Distinguished Professor of Marketing, University of Pittsburgh. Bernard J. Jaworski and Deborah J. MacInnis are Assistant Professors of Marketing, University of Arizona. All authors contributed equally to the article. The authors thank two anonymous *JM* reviewers and Richard Lutz for their valuable comments and suggestions. Particular thanks are extended to Editor Shelby Hunt for his encouragement during the revision process.

Despite the important relationship between a brand's image and its market performance, neither the *management* of the brand's long-term image nor the joint relationship between a brand image and sales-inducing marketing strategies has been considered fully. For example, product life cycle (PLC) based strategies, though long-term oriented, are not examined for their potential effects on the brand image. A brand image has both a direct effect on sales and a moderating effect on the relationship between PLC strategies and sales. Finally, a brand image is not simply a perceptual phenomenon affected by the firm's communication activities alone. It is the understanding consumers derive from the total set of brand-related activities engaged in by the firm. Thus, unless effects on the brand image also are considered, the implementation of PLC strategies may cause a decline in long-run market performance.

Positioning/repositioning strategies, though incorporating the notion of image (and indirectly sales), do not typically indicate how the image can be managed over time. Instead, short-term, market-driven factors such as current consumer needs and competitors are used as a basis for managing the brand's image/position (Aaker and Shansby 1982; Arabie et al. 1981; Keon 1983; Trout and Ries 1979; Urban and

Hauser 1980; Wind 1982). Because both positioning and repositioning decisions are based on current conditions, they are not strategically oriented.

The purpose of our article is to provide a long-term framework for managing the image over time. Managing the image over time necessitates the coordination of communication activities with other sales-inducing activities. We propose a normative framework that allows for such coordination. The proposed framework, termed brand concept management (BCM), is defined formally as the planning, implementation, and control of a brand concept throughout the life of the brand. A brand concept is a firm-selected brand meaning derived from basic consumer needs (functional, symbolic, and experiential).[1] A concept selected prior to market entry sets boundaries on the scope of positioning strategies, and hence influences the perceived brand image/position. After the initial concept selection task, the concept is managed over three stages: introduction, elaboration, and fortification. Thus, the identification and management of a brand concept represent the means for developing, maintaining, and controlling the brand image.

The article is organized to correspond with the proposed sequence of brand concept management. We first discuss how a firm selects a brand concept, then propose a three-stage process of introduction, elaboration, and fortification to maintain and control the concept. Finally, we discuss how the type of concept selected and the stage of the process determine specific positioning strategies. Figure 1 provides a framework for the discussion to follow. It illustrates the hierarchical relationship between the brand concept, positioning strategies (using the marketing mix), and the position/image. It also summarizes the specific sets of strategies that follow from the distinct brand concepts across the three stages.

Brand Concept Selection

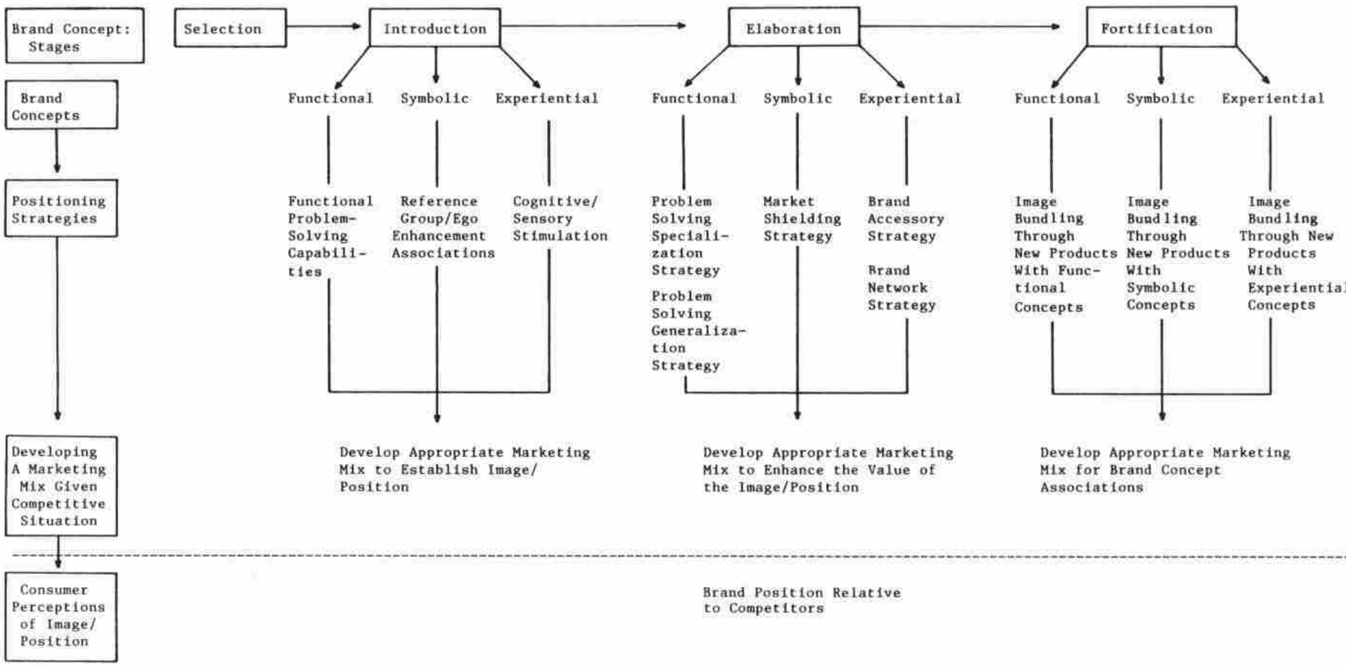
An important factor influencing the selection of a brand concept is consumer needs. *Functional needs* are defined as those that motivate the search for products that solve consumption-related problems (e.g., solve a current problem, prevent a potential problem, resolve conflict, restructure a frustrating situation; see Fennell 1978). A brand with a functional concept is defined as one designed to solve externally generated consumption needs. *Symbolic needs* are defined as desires for products that fulfill internally generated needs for self-enhancement, role position, group membership, or ego-identification. Work on symbolic consumer behavior (Levy 1959; Martineau 1958; Sirgy 1982; Solomon 1983) and the sociology of consumption (Nicosia and Mayer 1976; Wallendorf and Reilly 1983) illustrates the important relationship between symbolic needs and consumption. A brand with a symbolic concept is one designed to associate the individual with a desired group, role, or self-image. *Experiential needs* are defined as desires for products that provide sensory pleasure, variety, and/or cognitive stimulation. Work on variety seeking (McAlister 1979, 1982; McAlister and Pessemier 1982), consumer aesthetics, and experiential consumption (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Holbrook et al. 1984) illustrates the importance of experiential needs in consumption. A brand with an experiential concept is designed to fulfill these internally generated needs for stimulation and/or variety. Researchers commonly have assigned products to one of these three categories on the basis of product class membership (e.g., lawnmowers are functional products, cars are symbolic, and food is experiential; Midgley 1983; Woods 1960). However, we use the terms "functional," "symbolic," and "experiential" to refer to the image created in a brand, not a product class. The image is a perception created by marketers' management of the brand. Any product (e.g., toothpaste) theoretically can be positioned with a functional, symbolic, or experiential image (e.g., Crest, Ultra Brite, or Aqua Fresh).

Many brands offer a mixture of symbolic, functional, and experiential benefits. It therefore may be possible to develop a brand image with two or more concepts. However, we propose that managing this "generic" image may be difficult. First, as illustrated shortly, different concepts require the use of different long-term positioning strategies. A brand with multiple concepts therefore provides inconsistent guidelines for positioning. Second, a brand with multiple concepts may be more difficult to manage because it competes against more brands (e.g., those with purely functional, experiential, or symbolic concepts). Third, a brand with multiple concepts may be less effective in establishing an image/position by making it more difficult for consumers to identify the brand's basic meaning. This difficulty will increase the costs associated with implementing positioning strategies at the introduction, elaboration, and fortification stages.

Aside from general consumer needs, the selection of a concept is based also on its fit with macroenvironmental trends and relevant stakeholders. Moreover, the firm's internal environment must be considered. The firm's mission sets a limit on the type of brand concepts that can be considered. Factors such as the firm's resources, image, production capabili-

[1]The term "brand concept" differs somewhat from the term "product concept" used in the new product development literature. In that literature a product concept is considered to be a new product idea (e.g., a powdered drink mix). In contrast, a brand concept reflects a general meaning associated with the brand (e.g., symbolic). This distinction should become apparent as the discussion progresses.

FIGURE 1
Brand Concept Management



ties, and portfolio of products also set boundaries on the types of brand concepts the firm can operationalize.

Once a broad needs-based concept has been selected, it can be used to guide positioning decisions. The concept remains the same over the life of the brand, even though the brand's specific position may change with market conditions. Because the brand concept guides positioning decisions, it also determines the set of competing brands. Consumers presumably categorize brands with functional (symbolic or experiential) concepts as similar to brands with other functional (symbolic or experiential) concepts.[2] In this way a brand concept serves as a basis for determining market boundaries at the broad, strategic level (Day, Shocker, and Srivastava 1979). A specific positioning strategy is therefore necessary to differentiate the brand from those with similar concepts.

Though the brand concept does not replace positioning, it does add flexibility and guidance to positioning decisions. For example, a brand with a symbolic concept can be maintained even though specific ways of communicating symbolic associations vary over time. Likewise, a functional brand concept can guide subsequent repositioning attempts despite the fact that technological or product improvements necessitate an alteration of the brand's specific position. Just as the mission allows for changes in specific offerings as needs change (Levitt 1960), so too does the concept allow for changes in specific images as needs change.

Brand Concept Management

The relationship between a brand's concept and its image must be managed throughout the life of the brand. For each of the three management stages (introduction, elaboration, and fortification), we specify positioning strategies (implemented by the marketing mix) that enable consumers to understand a brand image (introduction), perceive its steadily increasing value (elaboration), and generalize it to other products produced by the firm (fortification). In subsequent sections we indicate that specific positioning strategies for managing brand images over these three stages depend on whether the brand has a functional, symbolic, or experiential concept.

Introduction Stage

The introductory stage of BCM is defined as a set of activities designed to establish a brand image/position in the marketplace during the period of market entry. The specific image/position selected by the firm

[2]For readers familiar with the categorization literature, a brand concept can be conceptualized as a superordinate level category, whereas the image represents a basic or superordinate level category (Rosch 1978).

should be within the boundaries of the selected brand concept and should be influenced by the presence of a niche in the marketplace.

The marketing mix performs two interrelated tasks that affect the brand's image/position (and hence sales at the introductory stage). The first is communication of the brand image. Each element of the mix can affect the inferences consumers develop about the brand (Frey 1961; Lindquist 1974–75; Olson 1977; Sacharow 1982) and hence the brand image. The second task is to perform activities that are transaction-oriented. Termed "operating activities," they are concerned with the removal of transaction barriers (e.g., ensuring time and place accessibility, willingness to pay, information availability). The relationship between the two tasks is interactive. Understanding a brand image facilitates the accomplishment of the operating task (i.e., enhances consumers' willingness to overcome transaction barriers themselves), which in turn enhances the effectiveness and efficiency with which the communication task is performed (e.g., greater willingness to overcome barriers, in turn, facilitates the effective performance of the communication task). When marketing mix elements are consistent with both communication and operating tasks and complementary to one another (e.g., coordinated), synergy in the marketing mix is more likely. If the mix successfully coordinates communication and operating tasks, the brand's relative advantage should be apparent to the target market.

Another goal of brand concept management during the period of market entry is to develop an image that can be extended easily and logically during subsequent stages. Without this planned introduction, positioning efforts at subsequent stages are likely to be less effective.

Elaboration Stage

During the elaboration stage, positioning strategies focus on enhancing the value of the brand's image so that its perceived superiority in relation to competitors can be established or sustained. Enhancing the brand's perceived value is essential as the competitive environment becomes more complex. For example, increasing numbers of competitors that emulate the brand's position may decrease consumers' abilities to discriminate among brands. In addition, changes in consumer needs, triggered by such factors as enhanced product knowledge or desires for better products (particularly across specific usage situations), may necessitate specific strategies for enhancing the value of the brand.

Positioning strategies implemented at the elaboration stage may require altering marketing mix components. However, positioning strategies at this stage differ from a typical repositioning strategy in two important ways. First, repositioning typically does not rely upon an overarching meaning to guide repositioning activities. In contrast, according to the BCM framework, the positioning strategies at the elaboration stage are guided by the brand concept (see Figure 1). Because the image at the elaboration stage is related logically to the brand concept, the elaborated image represents a logical extension of the initial image. Thus, potential inefficiencies associated with changing an image without a guiding framework are avoided. Second, plans for positioning at the elaboration stage should start when the brand concept is initially selected. By planning for positioning activities at the concept selection stage, the firm can create its own changes, not react to market changes as they occur. Repositioning, in contrast, usually is determined from current, short-term market conditions.

Several different positioning strategies can be used to enhance the value of the image at the elaboration stage. First, the brand can be made useful across specific usage situations (e.g., Windex, Arm and Hammer Baking Soda) or it can be made to meet a more specific need (e.g., Converse sneakers became Converse running shoes, racquetball shoes, and tennis shoes). New (old) features can be added (deleted) (e.g., Crest with tartar prevention) or a single attribute can be improved (e.g., Trident's improved flavor). Finally, maintaining the exclusivity or scarcity of the brand may enhance its perceived value (e.g., Cabbage Patch Dolls). The positioning strategy that is most appropriate for enhancing the value of a given brand image is determined by the initial concept (as discussed subsequently). Though elaborating the image might necessitate an adjustment from the initial image/position, it should not involve a departure from the initial concept. Just as at the introductory stage, elements of the marketing mix at the elaboration stage will be most effective and efficient in enhancing the value of the image when they are consistent with the operating and communication objectives and complementary to each other.

Fortification Stage

At the final stage of BCM, the fortification stage, the aim is to link an elaborated brand image to the image of other products produced by the firm in different product classes (e.g., linking Ivory Soap with Ivory Snow, Ivory Liquid, Ivory Shampoo). Multiple products, all with similar images, reinforce one another and serve to strengthen the image of each brand (including the elaborated brand). Thus, all brands can benefit from this strategy. The reinforcement of a brand's image by a fortification strategy does not imply that the brand elaboration stage has stopped. The elaboration stage should continue throughout the life of the brand. Nor is it the case that a fortification stage is necessary for the long-term success of the brand. In fact, fortification may be tied more closely to a product line management strategy than to individual brand concept management.[3]

It may be argued that a fortification stage does not necessarily apply to all firms because the decision to enter a new market and/or develop a new product should be based on such factors as (1) the firm's capacity to produce multiple products and (2) the competitive environment in the market. A firm that is financially incapable of producing and marketing multiple products thus would be incapable of implementing a fortification strategy. However, an important feature of the BCM framework is that management determines, prior to market entry, how positioning strategies at each of the three stages should proceed. By virtue of this planned strategy the firm can develop the appropriate resources during preceding stages so that a positioning strategy at the fortification stage can be implemented. Moving from one stage to another represents part of an overall plan, and decisions should be based on the entire plan.

A fortification stage can be important for several reasons. First, communication costs are reduced for any single brand because brands with similar images mutually reinforce one another. A firm whose products convey similar images is likely to be more cost effective in terms of communication than a firm conveying several unrelated images. Moreover, a product that fortifies an existing elaborated brand may require less time in moving from the introductory to the elaboration stage. The firm can capitalize on consumer knowledge of an existing brand in managing the image of a new one. Second, similar images may help create the perception that complementary products should be consumed as a package (e.g., Betty Crocker cake mix and frosting). Third, brands with similar images (concepts) may help to convey the image of the firm (Oxenfeldt 1966) and indicate the firm's relationship to broad consumer needs (Levitt 1960). Just as a brand image is produced by the gestalt configuration of marketing mix elements, the image of the firm is produced by the gestalt configuration of the products it markets.

Whereas the introduction and elaboration stages are accomplished by managing the marketing mix, positioning strategies at the fortification stage involve an extension of the concept/image to other products produced by the firm. During the fortification stage, the positioning strategies of new products establish the linkage to the existing brand concept (and hence to the elaborated brand image). This linkage may be achieved by a common identification (i.e., family brand names), joint promotion, or joint distribution.

Summary

Positioning strategies generally are implemented to communicate a brand image and differentiate the brand from competitors (achieve a position), but positioning provides little guidance in managing and maintaining a consistent image over time. A brand concept developed from external and internal environmental considerations and managed over several concept management stages enables the firm to devise a strategic plan for developing, maintaining, and controlling the brand image. This plan allows positioning efforts to work coherently, elaborating and fortifying the image and building up a core personality for the brand. The strategic perspective enables the firm to plan for elaboration and fortification stages before the period of market entry, and provides an opportunity to develop an introduction strategy that will logically precede elaboration and fortification efforts. A concept acts like a mission, allowing the firm to avoid marketing myopia by thinking in terms of broad needs. By virtue of the strategic plan, marketers can build on an image in a way that is consistent with the knowledge consumers already have acquired about the brand, create efficiencies in maintaining and controlling the image (cost reductions), and enhance the duration of the brand's life cycle.

Positioning Strategies Across the Three BCM Stages

It is important to differentiate the three brand concepts (functional, symbolic, and experiential) because the specific positioning strategies implemented at the introduction, elaboration, and fortification stages depend on the concept type (see Figure 1). Thus a positioning strategy appropriate for managing a brand with a functional concept may be inappropriate for managing a brand with a symbolic or experiential concept. Positioning strategies are dictated by the brand concept and the BCM stage, but the implementation of these strategies by the marketing mix also depends on the specific competitive situation facing the firm. Only general positioning strategies are offered here. They should be refined further to reflect the brand's competitive situation.

[3]Brand concept fortification has some important implications for managing a product portfolio. Namely it suggests that instead of using a "cash cow" to support the growth of unrelated products, products should be coordinated so that they are mutually sustaining and reinforcing. In this instance, removing a product from its portfolio could have important implications for the meaning attached to the portfolio as a whole. Moreover, the issue of adding new products to the portfolio may be affected by the extent to which the concepts of the new products are consistent with the concept of other products already in the portfolio.

Positioning Strategies at the Introductory Stage

For all three brand concepts, coordinating elements of the marketing mix to establish the brand's image/position is a basic goal. Moreover, positioning efforts at the introductory stage should be made with the knowledge that the image eventually will be enhanced at the elaboration stage. The positioning efforts at the introduction stage therefore should facilitate the positioning efforts at the elaboration stage. This requires that mix elements be coordinated so as to fit with the initial concept type (see Figure 1). For brands with functional concepts, mix elements should emphasize the brand's functional performance in solving consumption-related problems. Here the mix should differentiate performance from that of competitors. Clorox Bleach successfully communicated a functional concept (e.g., cleaning clothes) and a specific position (e.g., getting dirty clothes white and bright) by coordinating multiple mix elements (Table 1).

For brands with symbolic concepts, mix elements can be coordinated to emphasize the brand's relationship to group membership or self-identification (see Figure 1). The communication and operating activities for positioning brands with symbolic concepts at the introductory stage differ substantially from those followed for brands with functional concepts. For brands with symbolic concepts, the communication activities center on informing both targeted and nontargeted customers of the brand, thus creating awareness and preference in both markets. Operating activities, in contrast, attempt to minimize transaction barriers facing the target market while maximizing transaction barriers facing the nontargeted market. One way to establish a symbolic image/position is to charge a premium price. A second tactic is to make the brand difficult to obtain by limiting distribution outlets to certain areas or locations frequented only by the target segment (Martineau 1958). It is also possible to express a symbolic image on the basis of promotion. For example, language barriers might reduce the comprehensibility of an advertisement among nontargeted customers (Anderson and Jolson 1980). Finally, a symbolic image can be established on the basis of brand characteristics. For example, the brand's size or form may be limited so it is usable only by targeted individuals. As Table 2 indicates, Lenox china and Brooks Brothers suits were introduced in a manner consistent with the proposed approach.

For brands with experiential concepts, positioning strategies should convey the brand's effect on sensory satisfaction or cognitive stimulation (Figure 1). Thus, the experiential and fantasy aspects associated with consumption should be highlighted by using elements of the marketing mix. Barbie Dolls and Lego Building

TABLE 1
Examples of Brands with Functional Concepts

Concept Introduction	Concept Elaboration	Concept Fortification
Clorox Bleach (whiter and brighter clothes)		
In 1913 Clorox liquid bleach introduced to the market	Problem-solving generalization strategy[a]	Clorox Pre-Wash soil and stain remover used prior to laundering clothes
	Product usage extended from cottons to synthetic fibers	Tackle cleaner, a fresh-scented, all-purpose household cleaner[b]
Vaseline Petroleum Jelly (general purpose medicinal cream)		
1869 Vaseline Petroleum Jelly introduced to the market as a lubricant and as a skin balm for burns	Problem-solving generalization strategy	Vaseline health and beauty related products: Vaseline Intensive Care Lotion Intensive Care Bath Beads Vaseline Constant Care Vaseline Dermatology Formula
	Produce usage extended to multiple-usage situations: preventing diaper rash, removing eye makeup, lip balm	Vaseline baby care products: Wipe 'N Dipes Vaseline Intensive Care Baby Lotion Vaseline Intensive Care Baby Shampoo Vaseline Intensive Care Baby Powder

[a]Clorox did not follow this strategy. This strategy would be consistent with the proposed elaboration approach.
[b]Tackle cleaner should have been linked more clearly to the Clorox concept. One method to accomplish this link would be to use family names.

TABLE 2
Examples of Brands with Symbolic Concepts

Concept Introduction	Concept Elaboration	Concept Fortification
Lenox China ("A World Apart," "Let It Express Your World")		
Almost a century ago, the Lenox Company introduced a line of fine china	Market shielding A tightly controlled marketing mix to preserve the status concept	Lenox crystal Lenox silverplated holloware Candles Jewelry
Brooks Brothers (attire for the conservative, professional gentleman)		
In 1818 Brooks Brothers introduced a "gentleman's suit"	Market shielding A tightly controlled marketing mix to shield the market (e.g., only 26 stores in the U.S. and carefully controlled in-store merchandising)	Brooks Brothers shoes Brooks Brothers cologne Brooks Brothers hats Brooks Brothers valet stands

Blocks (Table 3) established a successful position at the introduction stage by following such a strategy. Moreover, this strategy facilitated positioning efforts at the elaboration stage.[4]

Positioning Strategies at the Elaboration Stage

An important part of long-term brand concept management is the continuous attempt to enhance the value of the brand at the elaboration stage. Though the goals for brands with different concepts are the same, the selected concept should affect the method of elaboration (see Figure 1). Thus, the concept affects the particular positioning strategies followed in elaborating the image.[5] The positioning strategy at the elaboration stage is an extension of positioning efforts at the introductory stage. However, at this stage the marketing mix elements are adjusted on the basis of changes in market conditions.

Two basic, related positioning strategies for brands with functional concepts are (1) problem-solving specialization and (2) problem-solving generalization strategies. A problem-solving specialization strategy enhances the value of brands with a functional concept by appealing to more specific needs. For example, Converse elaborated the functional brand concept for their sneakers by developing a variety of athletic shoes specific to certain usage occasions (e.g., tennis, running, racquetball, basketball). The same strategy has been used for Xerox copiers, IBM computers, and Robitussin cough medicine.

A problem-solving specialization strategy reduces the number of competitors to those having the same, more narrowly defined, benefits. This strategy is useful when products become technically complex, needs more specialized, and markets more fragmented. It corresponds to recent work on the situation as a basis for segmentation decisions (e.g., Dickson 1982) and benefit segmentation (Haley 1968).

Specialization of needs within a product category is effective when customers' levels of product class knowledge become high and usage experiences become specialized and focused. Thus, a problem-solving specialization strategy enables the firm to concentrate on a narrower segment with greater profit potential. However, problem-solving specialization will not insulate the brand from competitive pressures over the *long term*. A firm that produces multiple brands for specific needs will be vulnerable if competitors offer a single brand that meets the needs of several usage situations. For example, if Arm and Hammer decided to introduce several brands of baking soda for different usage situations, the separate brands would be more vulnerable than a single brand that performs all the functions. Product specialization is therefore an important but intermediate step in the long-term management of a brand with a functional concept. Eventually this strategy should be replaced by one that offers customers multiple benefits across usage situations.

Problem-solving generalization is a second strategy for enhancing the value of a brand with a functional concept. This strategy logically follows problem-solving specialization. Here the goal is to make the brand useful across a variety of previously dis-

[4]Although examples are used in the text, we are not suggesting that these are examples of brands that have deliberately followed a BCM strategy. The examples are used only to provide a more intuitive grasp of the concepts discussed.

[5]Note, however, that adding (deleting) new (old) attributes is an appropriate strategy for elaborating brands with either functional, experiential, or symbolic concepts. Likewise, all three brand concepts can be elaborated by improving the satisfaction delivered by existing attributes. In this section, primary attention is focused on positioning strategies that are *different* for functional, symbolic, and experiential concepts.

TABLE 3
Examples of Brands with Experiential Concepts

Concept Introduction	Concept Elaboration	Concept Fortification
Barbie Doll (the sophisticated teenager)		
Barbie Doll was introduced to the market in 1959	Brand accessory strategy	Barbie Magazine Barbie Game Barbie Boutique
	Accessories like outfits, houses, furniture, cars, jewelry for Barbie, Ken	
Lego Building Blocks (unbreakable safe toy emphasizing creativity and imagination)		
Lego Building Blocks for 3–8-year-olds introduced in 1960	Brand accessory strategy	Do-it-yourself furniture[a] such as Lego chairs, couches, desks, bookshelves
	Accessories like minifigures, trees, signs, idea books, storage cases	
	Accessories like large bricks for 1–5-year-olds that can link with the smaller bricks when the child gets older	
	Expert builder sets for ages 7–12 with items such as wheels, gears, axles, toggle joints, and connectors	

[a]Suggested; not actual fortification strategy for Lego.

parate usage situations. Brands such as Vaseline Petroleum Jelly, Windex, and Arm and Hammer Baking Soda have elaborated their functional images across multiple usage situations. Because each brand is shown to fulfill multiple needs, it has a competitive advantage over brands positioned to fulfill a specific need. For example, it is not difficult to imagine the competitive advantage of Windex when it performs multiple functions (e.g., window cleaning, countertop cleaning, refrigerator cleaning) in comparison with a single-function brand.

Adopting a multibrand strategy (e.g., offering multiple brands that serve the same general purpose) is regarded here as an inappropriate strategy for brands with functional concepts. First, producing three or four brands, all of which are used in different situations but share the same basic function, provides less value to consumers than producing a single brand that generalizes across multiple usage situations. This reduced value makes the brands more vulnerable to competition. Second, consumers may have more difficulty distinguishing the unique contribution of each brand when a multibrand strategy is used. This is particularly true when brands in the multibrand set differ only in intangible benefits. Third, a multibrand strategy increases management and resource allocation costs. Though within-firm interbrand cannibalization may be a short-term benefit of a multibrand strategy, it is more likely to lead to a weakening of each brand's market position over the long run. The steady decline of Procter & Gamble's Tide market share over the years may be partly attributable to this multibrand strategy.[6] Instead of enhancing the value of any single brand, a multibrand strategy may actually reduce the value of each brand by minimizing the unique contribution each makes in solving a functionally based problem.

A major positioning strategy for a brand with a symbolic concept is to *maintain* group- or self-image-based associations. Thus, positioning strategies at the elaboration stage center on protecting the target segment by making consumption more difficult for nontargeted customers (e.g., people for whom the desired reference group affiliation is inconsistent). Positioning efforts at the elaboration stage therefore should be an extention of positioning efforts at the introduction stage. However, tighter control on the nontargeted market's consumption of the brand must be established. The methods used in positioning the product during the period of market entry should be augmented by introducing additional constraints on access.

This positioning strategy is best described as a "market shielding" strategy (see Figure 1 and Table 2). Market shielding is a positioning strategy that maintains the exclusivity of the brand by continuously marketing to both targeted and nontargeted segments

[6]A multibrand strategy and a problem-solving specialization strategy are not the same. In the former case, brands compete with one another, whereas in the latter case they do not.

on the demand side while demarketing from the nontargeted segment on the supply side. It is distinct from selective demarketing (Kotler and Levy 1971) in that the image is communicated to the nontargeted segment in a way that makes the brand simultaneously desirable and unattainable. The primary aim of a market shielding strategy is to maintain the brand's image/position. A firm that uses all four mix elements to shield the market can be most effective in implementing this strategy.[7] Lenox and Brooks Brothers product lines have been successfully elaborated by means of a market shielding strategy (Table 2).

Maintaining the image is often difficult given competitive pressures and pressures to increase short-term profits. However, maintaining the image may be the only way of extending the life of a brand with a symbolic concept. Though handling competitive pressures and sustaining profit are important objectives, the means to achieve them should not be based on strategies that debilitate the effectiveness of the initial image (e.g., price reduction, distribution extension, target market expansion, etc.), but on strategies (e.g., market shielding) that strengthen its position. Long-run success is unlikely without a market shielding strategy.[8] One reason why certain (symbolic) fashion products have such a short life cycle may be that they rarely follow this positioning strategy (e.g., Izod shirts). Symbolic fashion brands that have been successful for many years (e.g., Brooks Brothers suits) have implemented this market shielding strategy.

Experiential brands, with their emphasis on sensory/cognitive stimulation, encourage frequent consumption. This heightened level of use may lead to satiation and weaken the experiential image unless consumption is controlled. For functional brands satiation is less serious given that the brands continue to fulfill functional needs. Satiation is also less likely for brands with symbolic concepts as long as the brand's association with the group or self-image is properly maintained. Consumption itself does not generate satiation for these brands.

Two positioning strategies can be used to elaborate brands with experiential concepts (see Figure 1). Providing brand accessories is one method of maintaining desired levels of stimulation while controlling satiation. A brand accessory strategy entails the introduction of accessories that can be used in conjunction with the elaborated brand. For example, Barbie dresses, friends (e.g., Ken), furniture, houses, and cars serve to accessorize Barbie's experiential concept (see Table 3). In a positioning sense, a brand accessory strategy enhances the value of the brand's concept by creating satellite products used in a complementary fashion with the elaborated brand. Note that this is different from a general fortification strategy because the satellite brands may be considered as additional attributes (or appendages) of the main brand. In contrast, a fortification strategy extends the meaning to other product classes (e.g., Barbie Magazine).

A second positioning strategy is to produce a network of brands, each of which provides a somewhat different type of stimulation. Multiple offerings for a given product class (e.g., Kellogg's variety pack) reduce satiation with any one brand. The use of a brand network strategy implies that a positioning strategy and marketing elements explicitly focus on the availability of multiple alternatives. The use of multibrand strategies is favored in this situation because they reduce the likelihood of satiation by encouraging brand switching.

The use of a multibrand strategy for brands with experiential concepts encourages cannibalization. Interestingly, cannibalization in the case of experiential brands is *desirable* because it helps to retain target customers within the firm while simultaneously reducing the likelihood of satiation with any one brand. As indicated before, however, use of a multibrand strategy for brands with functional concepts is discouraged because the value of each brand is reduced.

Positioning Strategies at the Fortification Stage

The goal in fortifying a brand concept is to reinforce and strengthen the elaborated brand image by extending its meaning to products outside the initial product class. Here the positioning strategies of the new products should emphasize their linkage to the original brand concept/image. The strategy for linking the brand image to that of brands outside the product class is termed "image bundling" (see Figure 1). The goal is to create a single, overarching image (consistent with the concept) that pulls together the individual brand images. In some cases this overarching image may represent the image of the firm, whereas in other cases it may reflect a general image for all products within a product line (e.g., Sears Craftsman tools). The positioning implication of this strategy is that the firm must think broadly in terms of positioning the unit of products, not simply individual brands. Abrupt changes in one image could have implications for the global image. The marketing mix activities performed by new brands

[7]Market shielding raises several ethical issues. The targeted and nontargeted segments conflict in their desires. The target segment wants a product that makes them feel unique. Responding to their wishes requires that the brand be shielded from others who also desire the brand. However, satisfying the desires of the nontargeted segment will make the brand less valuable to members of the target segment. The ethical issues associated with a market shielding strategy are beyond the scope of this article.

[8]Here we assume the firm's goal is long-term brand management. If the firm's goal is to maximize short-term benefits, this argument is not appropriate.

are used to create the desired linkage and hence develop image bundles.

The basis for reinforcing the image of brands with a functional concept via an image-bundling strategy should be the brand's relationship to other performance-related products. For example, Arm and Hammer Baking Soda's image is fortified by Arm and Hammer soap powder, deodorant, and all-purpose cleaners. As indicated in Table 1, Vaseline fortified the image of its petroleum jelly brand by linking the brand name to beauty care products (such as Vaseline Intensive Care Bath Beads) and baby care products (such as Vaseline Wipe 'N Dipes and Vaseline Baby Powder).

For brands with symbolic concepts the image is generalized to referent-based products. For example, Lenox fortified its china products by introducing crystal, candles, soaps, and jewelry (see Table 2). Brooks Brothers has done the same with its line of suits, hats, shirts, and umbrellas (see Table 2). The image-bundling strategy for products with symbolic concepts helps to create a lifestyle image, an image consumers then use to communicate information about themselves or to make inferences about others.

A brand with an experiential concept can be reinforced by a bundling strategy that links the brand image to that of other experiential products. For example, Lego could fortify its line of children's building blocks by introducing a line of do-it-yourself desks, chairs, and bookshelves for the teenage consumer (see Table 3). Barbie is an example of a brand that appeared to follow a fortification strategy with the introduction of Barbie Magazine and the Barbie game. In all these cases the initial brand was fortified by its linkage to other products. Their complementary relationship helps to reinforce the meaning of each individual brand.

Discussion

A brand concept should be viewed as a long-term investment developed and nurtured to achieve long-run competitive advantage. Whereas previous treatments of brand image generally have been restricted to discussions of positioning, the BCM provides a long-term framework for the *management* of a brand image. Management of the image is a process of selecting a general brand concept (functional, symbolic, or experiential) and then introducing, elaborating, and fortifying the concept over time.

In the course of selecting a concept the firm must consider resource capabilities, the firm's image, and current product offerings. At the introductory stage, the firm considers how best to operationalize the concept using elements of the marketing mix. As markets and needs change, elaborating the brand concept becomes important. Through positioning strategies at the elaboration stage, management can convey a consistent yet more valued image, insulate the brand from competition, and directly influence the financial performance of the brand. Finally, the image can be reinforced at the fortification stage by extending it to new, complementary products. Thus, the successful development of an initial brand image can have lasting effects on both the life of the brand (e.g., long-term sales) and other products produced by the firm. The images of these other products, in turn, reinforce the image of the elaborated brand. They also contribute to the formation and reinforcement of the image of the firm and/or the entire product line. Synergies are thus realized in the management of brand images.

When a particular brand image is introduced, elaborated, and fortified, the costs associated with introducing other products become lower and the time required to move from introduction to elaboration for the new products is reduced. Consider, for example, the ease with which Ivory Shampoo and liquid Tide have been established given their linkage to Ivory Soap and powdered Tide. In general, the relative time from implementing introduction to fortification strategies depends on such factors as the effectiveness and efficiency of positioning efforts and the competitive environment.

It has been proposed that adopting a BCM framework enhances the long-term viability of a brand in the market, but this does not mean that every properly managed brand can or will have an indefinite life. Even a brand whose image has been managed successfully can decline if the brand concept ceases to be valued by target customers. Thus, the concept itself sets an upper limit on the life of a given brand. For example, a brand of jeans that has been associated with a functional concept and valued by target customers as fitting that concept may have a problem if customers' preferences change from functional to symbolic needs (e.g., designer jeans). When the value of the brand concept changes, the firm has two options. One is to change the brand concept and reposition the brand. Changing the concept is a formidable task because it requires changing strongly entrenched brand perceptions that may be very resistant to change. A second option is to remove the brand from the market and introduce a new brand whose concept is consistent with market trends.

REFERENCES

Aaker, David A. and J. Gary Shansby (1982), "Positioning Your Product," *Business Horizons,* 25 (May–June), 56–62.

Anderson, Rolph E. and Marvin A. Jolson (1980), "Technical Wording in Advertising: Implications for Market Segmentation," *Journal of Marketing,* 44 (Winter), 57–66.

Arabie, Phipps, Douglas Carroll, Wayne DeSarbo, and Yoram Wind (1981), "Overlapping Clustering: A New Method for Product Positioning," *Journal of Marketing Research,* 18 (August), 310–17.

Day, George S., Allan D. Shocker, and Rajendra K. Srivastava (1979), "Customer-Oriented Approaches to Identifying Product Markets," *Journal of Marketing,* 43 (Fall), 8–19.

Dickson, Peter R. (1982), "Person-Situation: Segmentation's Missing Link," *Journal of Marketing,* 46 (Fall), 56–64.

Fennell, Geraldine G. (1978), "Perceptions of the Product-In-Use Situation," *Journal of Marketing,* 42 (April), 39–47.

Frey, Albert W. (1961), *Advertising,* 3rd ed. New York: The Ronald Press Company.

Gardner, Burleigh B. and Sidney J. Levy (1955), "The Product and the Brand," *Harvard Business Review,* 33 (March–April), 33–9.

Grubb, Edward L. and Harrison L. Grathwhol (1967), "Consumer Self-Concept, Symbolism and Market Behavior: A Theoretical Approach," *Journal of Marketing,* 31 (October), 22–7.

Haley, Russell I. (1968), "Benefit Segmentation: A Decision Oriented Research Tool," *Journal of Marketing,* 32 (July), 30–5.

Hirschman, Elizabeth C. and Morris B. Holbrook (1982), "Hedonic Consumption: Emerging Concepts, Methods and Propositions," *Journal of Marketing,* 46 (Summer), 92–101.

Holbrook, Morris B., Robert B. Chestnut, Terence A. Oliva, and Eric A. Greenleaf (1984), "Play as a Consumption Experience: The Roles of Emotions, Performance and Personality in the Enjoyment of Games," *Journal of Consumer Research,* 11 (September), 728–39.

——— and Elizabeth C. Hirschman (1982), "The Experiential Aspects of Consumption," *Journal of Consumer Research,* 9 (September), 132–40.

Keon, John W. (1983), "Product Positioning: TRINODAL Mapping of Brand Images, Ad Images, and Consumer Preference," *Journal of Marketing Research,* 20 (November), 380–92.

Kotler, Philip and Sidney J. Levy (1971), "Demarketing, Yes Demarketing," *Harvard Business Review,* 49 (November–December), 74–80.

Levitt, Theodore (1960), "Marketing Myopia," *Harvard Business Review,* 38 (July–August), 45–56.

Levy, Sidney J. (1959), "Symbols for Sale," *Harvard Business Review,* 37 (July–August), 117–24.

Lindquist, Jay D. (1974–75), "Meaning and Image," *Journal of Retailing,* 50 (Winter), 29–38.

Martineau, Pierre (1958), "Social Class and Spending Behavior," *Journal of Marketing,* 22 (October), 121–30.

McAlister, Leigh (1979), "Choosing Multiple Items from a Product Class," *Journal of Consumer Research,* 6 (December), 213–24.

——— (1982), "A Dynamic Attribute Satiation Model of Variety Seeking," *Journal of Consumer Research,* 9 (September), 141–50.

——— and Edgar Pessemier (1982), "Variety Seeking: An Interdisciplinary Review," *Journal of Consumer Research,* 9 (December), 311–22.

Midgley, David F. (1983), "Patterns of Interpersonal Information Seeking for the Purchase of a Symbolic Product," *Journal of Marketing Research,* 20 (February), 74–83.

Moran, William T. (1973), "Why New Products Fail," *Journal of Advertising Research,* 13 (April), 5–13.

Nicosia, Francesco and Robert N. Mayer (1976), "Toward a Sociology of Consumption," *Journal of Consumer Research,* 3 (September), 65–75.

Olson, Jerry C. (1977), "Price as an Informational Cue: Effects on Product Evaluations," in *Consumer and Industrial Buyer Behavior,* Arch G. Woodside, Jagdish N. Sheth, and Peter Bennett, eds. New York: North-Holland Publishing Company, 267–86.

Oxenfeldt, Alfred R. (1966), *Executive Action in Marketing.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co.

——— and Carroll Swann (1964), *Management of the Advertising Function.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co.

Reynolds, Thomas J. and Jonathan Gutman (1984), "Advertising as Image Management," *Journal of Advertising Research,* 24 (February–March), 27–38.

Rosch, Eleanor (1978), "Principles of Categorization," in *Cognition and Categorization,* Eleanor Rosch and Barbara Lloyd, eds. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 27–48.

Sacharow, Stanley (1982), *The Package as a Marketing Tool.* Radnor, PA: Chilton Books.

Shocker, Allan D. and V. Srinivasan (1979), "Multiattribute Approaches for Product Concept Evaluation and Generation: A Critical Review," *Journal of Marketing Research,* 16 (May), 159–80.

Sirgy, Joseph M. (1982), "Self-Concept in Consumer Behavior: A Critical Review," *Journal of Consumer Research,* 9 (December), 287–300.

Solomon, Michael R. (1983), "The Role of Products as Social Stimuli: A Symbolic Interactionism Perspective," *Journal of Consumer Research,* 10 (December), 319–29.

Trout, Jack and Al Ries (1979/81), "Positioning: Ten Years Later," in *The Great Writings in Marketing,* 2nd ed., Harvard A. Thompson, ed. Tulsa, OK: Pennwell Books, 565–75.

Urban, Glen L. and John R. Hauser (1980), *Design and Marketing of New Products.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Wallendorf, Melanie and Michael D. Reilly (1983), "Ethnic Migration, Assimilation and Consumption," *Journal of Consumer Research,* 10 (December), 292–302.

White, Irving S. (1959), "The Functions of Advertising in Our Culture," *Journal of Marketing,* 23 (July), 8–14.

Wind, Yoram (1973), "A New Procedure for Concept Evaluation," *Journal of Marketing,* 37 (October), 2–11.

——— (1982), *Product Policy: Concepts, Methods and Strategy.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co.

Woods, Walter A. (1960), "Psychological Dimensions of Consumer Decision," *Journal of Marketing,* 24 (January), 15–19.