

Running Head: Managing Social Identity

Managing Social Identity:
Strategies for Creating Brand Identification and Community

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Abstract

Given that a consumer's sense of self often influences consumption choices, understanding the nature of consumer social identity is critical to marketing practitioners and advocates alike. Building from sixty years of self-concept, functional attitude theory, social cognition and social identity research, this article develops a comprehensive framework of how brands move beyond being a collection of features and become deeply meaningful symbols to specific consumer segments. The framework conceptualizes how the development of consumers' social identification with specific groups, products, and brands develops and influences reactions to marketing stimuli. The last part of the paper translates these process insights into a strategic marketing plan for creating, monitoring and managing links between a brand and a consumer social identity.

We are not one person. There is no 'I am,'
but many 'I's' coming from numerous places within us."

- George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (1866-1949)

INTRODUCTION

Scholars have pointed out that the marketing field has long abandoned a production-oriented approach to embrace an emphasis on *individual* consumer wants and needs (cf. Wilke & Moore, 2004). This emphasis has evolved into the cornerstone of modern marketing—the strategic division of the consumer population into distinct segments that can each be served by a unique marketing mix. Useful segmentation schemes divide consumers on the basis of an important marketer-defined characteristic (e.g., a common attribute preference, usage pattern, psychological motivation, or consumption-linked demographic factor). By developing and promoting segment-specific products and services, marketers create an opportunity for consumers to affiliate on the basis of shared consumption and thereby develop consumption communities. Taken together, these processes lead consumers to categorize themselves and others on the basis of product usage (or preference) and to personally identify with particular brands or products.

The potential *bases* of consumer self-categorization are nearly limitless (Bolton and Reed, 2004). Some of these categorical bases are relatively stable (e.g., mother, daughter, friend, African-American, etc.) while others may be more transitory (e.g., Republican, athlete, Mac-user etc.). Although consumers can potentially self-identify with (or in opposition to) every possible social category, not all social categories receive significant attention from the consumer (Kihlstrom 1992). Consumers are likely to only attend to those social categories that are especially self-relevant and it is *these self-relevant social categories that constitute a consumer's **social identity***.

A fundamental premise of social identity that bridges marketing and psychology is that consumers are attracted to products and brands that are linked to their social identity (Forehand,

Deshpande, and Reed 2002; Stayman and Deshpande 1989). This linkage may come about because the brand or product symbolizes the consumer's own personality traits (Aaker 1997), reflects a desirable self-image, or embodies the "type" of person that the consumer aspires to think, feel and be like (Belk, Bahn and Mayer 1982; cf. Levy 1959). In these situations, the consumer's social identity motivates her to form, hold, and express social identity-oriented beliefs and more importantly, to select (avoid) constellations of products and services that reinforce the desired (undesired) social identity (Shavitt 1990; Katz 1960; Smith, Bruner and White 1956; Forehand, Perkins, and Reed 2004).

The power of symbolic, social identity-based preferences is often reflected in marketing practice and in academic research. In an attempt to leverage the power of such affiliation, marketers often position brands and products to *reflect* a particular social identity-oriented lifestyle and thereby hope to prompt more favorable judgments from consumers who possess that social identity (Reed 2002, see also Reed, 2004).¹ To position brands around a social identity, persuasive communications often adopt a perspective shared by those who possess the social identity, utilize actors or endorsers who are exemplars of that social identity, or develop other techniques that can create a *psychological connection* between a social identity and the brand. Academic research has suggested that such social identity-based positioning techniques are indeed influential. For example, social identity has been found to influence a wide variety of consumer behaviors and attitudes including spokesperson response (Deshpandé and Stayman 1994), advertising response (Forehand and Deshpandé 2001; Grier and Deshpandé 2001; Meyers-Levy 1988), food consumption (O' Guinn and Meyer 1984; Stayman and Deshpandé 1989; Wallendorf and Reilly, 1983; Wooten 1995), media usage (Saegert, Hoover and Hilger 1985), brand loyalty (Deshpandé, Hoyer and Donthu 1986), and information processing tendencies (Meyers-Levy and Sternthal 1991). This body of research suggests that social identification can lead consumers to link products to particular social identities and even to form

impressions of consumers who use particular kinds of products (Kleine, et. al 1993; Shavitt, Lowrey and Han 1992; Shavitt and Nelson 2000).

THREE GOALS OF THIS ARTICLE

The notion that a consumer's sense of who they are should relate to what they buy is a seductively simple premise. Given the intuitive link between identification and consumption, academics and practitioners have sought out the processes by which great symbolic brands are created (e.g., Harley Davidson, Nike, Starbucks, etc.). There are many anecdotal explanations that suggest the effectiveness of what has been referred to as Cult Marketing (Wind, 2005). But such post-hoc explanations provide little import for managers who want to successfully create or reposition a brand to transcend functional features into a deeply symbolic social identity oriented lifestyle. Is it just serendipity, or can it be managed?

The first goal of this project is to more fully articulate the concept of *social identity*. As stated earlier, a social identity is defined as a self-relevant social category. When a social category is self-relevant, an individual's beliefs about the social category become connected to the self and are organized into a knowledge structure called a self-schema (Markus 1977). The activation of these self-schemas is variable such that only a subset of one's self-schemas is active at any given time. The self-schemas that are active comprise the working self-concept, a construct that serves as a filter for perception and action (Markus and Ruvulo 1989). For example, a consumer's professional identity as a businessperson, engineer, or entrepreneur may be top of mind and important in a work setting; a consumer's identity as a parent or spouse may move to the forefront at home; and a consumer's identity as a sports fan or outdoor enthusiast may take precedent on the weekends. Identities can be thought of as "hats" that consumers put on and take off (Reed and Bolton, 2005).

In James' (1890) conceptualization of 'the social self,' it is argued that every individual has as many identities or social selves as he or she has important others whose opinion matters.

Since a consumer may adopt many different social identities as part of their overall self concept, the second goal of the project is to advance and articulate a model that can describe both when a social identity will be an active component of the working self-concept and also when a social identity will influence consumer judgment and behavior. In short, this model proposes that a social identity becomes an active component of the working self-concept when it is momentarily *accessible*. When a social identity reaches the requisite level of accessibility it may then influence judgment provided that the identity is also a *diagnostic cue* in an evaluation (Feldman and Lynch 1988). Using past research on social identity in marketing and psychology as a guide, we identify a host of marketing related factors that influence both the accessibility process and the diagnosticity process.²

The third and perhaps most critical goal of this project is to translate this basic model into managerial prescriptions that can guide the development of marketing strategy. These prescriptions inform many strategic decisions including the selection of bases for segmentation, the positioning of products to increase ego-involvement, the creation of a unique brand identity, and the development of marketing communications that garner consumer attention and increase persuasiveness. We pay particular attention to specific marketing outcomes that are intended to foster the link between a consumer social identity and a brand.

SOCIAL IDENTITY DRIVEN JUDGMENT: DEFINITIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

Defining the construct of Social Identity. Our framework starts with the premise that although a consumer's sense of self can be developed from a wide range of possible *social identities* (SI), only a subset of them will influence the consumer in any given situation or context (Markus and Ruvolo 1989; Markus and Nurius 1987; Markus and Kunda 1986; McGregor and Little 1998; McGuire, McGuire and Winton 1979). As a result, it is essential that marketers identify the factors that increase the accessibility of various SIs and increase the diagnostic value of those SIs to various judgments and consumption behaviors. Accessibility and diagnosticity become even more important

when considering the full range of SIs that can be part of a brand's meaning or that can otherwise influence consumption. A brief (but not fully inclusive) sampling of possible SIs includes objective membership groups (e.g., gender), culturally determined membership groups (e.g. ethnicity and religion), abstracted role ideals (e.g. mother), groups premised on association with a known individual (e.g., a graduate advisor), or even with an unknown individual (e.g., Tiger Woods) (Deaux, Reid, Mizrahi and Ethier 1995). The conceptual underpinnings of this typology are found in a wide range of disciplines including personality theory (Rosenberg and Gara 1985), self-concept and identity (Erikson 1964; Sirgy 1982), symbolic interactionism (Goffman 1959; Mead 1934), impression management (Schlenker 1980), social cognition (Kilhstrom and Cantor 1986), and social identity/social categorization theory (Tajfel 1959; Tajfel and Turner 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oaks, Reicher and Wetherell 1987). To provide a more comprehensive sense of the types of SIs that may be relevant to effective marketing, figure A-1 provides a typology of explicit examples.

Insert Figure A-1 about here

The psychological purposes of Social Identity. Social identity often serves a *social adjustment function* for consumers who wish to reinforce their connection to similar real or imagined others and create separation from dissimilar real or imagined others (Smith et. al 1956, page 42). Social identity facilitates this adjustment by directing the consumer to specific beliefs and behaviors that signal identification externally to society and internally to the self. In more recent scholarly discussions, the social adjustment function has evolved into the *social identity function* (Shavitt 1990). The social identity function argues that identity-based attitudes and judgments not only help consumers classify themselves but also may become the embodiment of a unique social classification or *reference group* (Nelson, Shavitt, Schennum and Barkmeier 1997; Shavitt 1990, 1989; Shavitt and Nelson 2000). For example, a strong association of the self with “American” encourages individuals to hold attitudes

regarding American concepts such as the U.S. flag or other patriotic symbols and beliefs. Over time, these attitudes not only result from shared group beliefs, but actually come to embody group membership itself. In that regard, a consumer who possesses an “American” SI can use *evaluative content*—i.e., what they believe it means to be “American”—to facilitate product choices that will further support and reinforce the SI (e.g. purchasing a domestic automobile or avoiding French brie). This process is likely to result in a collectively anchored preference or attitude that is formed via identification processes (Kelman 1958) and is held, expressed or used as a guide for behavior in order to establish, maintain or even communicate that SI to others (cf. Shavitt 1990). In fact, these kind of identity-based judgments, attitudes and beliefs are unsurprisingly quite resistant to counter-persuasion (Bolton and Reed, 2004) and research suggests that this is due to the fact that such beliefs are perceived as having social reality in that they exist within a social network of others with similar views (Visser and Mirabile, 2004).

Necessary Conditions for Social Identity Expression. Building from this motivational conception of SI, our framework describes the factors that influence how a given SI becomes an active component of the working self-concept and how this activated concept then influences attitude, judgment formation and purchase behavior. Although a wide variety of factors affect these processes, each factor influences one of the framework’s two primary conditions: accessibility or diagnosticity. Figure A-2 depicts the model.

Insert Figure A-2 about here

Before discussing the implications of this framework for marketing practice, it is vital that the key elements of the framework be carefully defined and illustrated. Let us begin with accessibility. An accessible SI is momentarily salient to the consumer. This operationalization draws a clear contrast between accessibility and availability—all SIs are *available* to a consumer, but their

availability does not necessarily imply that they are accessible at a given moment. Rather, the accessibility of an identity is temporal and is influenced by a host of internal and external variables that may be influenced by marketing efforts. As we will describe in more detail below, the consumer's social milieu, media environment, and personal disposition all influence which specific SIs are salient at any specific point in time (Forehand et. al, 2002). As a result, SI accessibility really resides on a continuum. When the accessibility increases to the point that the SI is an active component of the consumer's working self-concept, then the SI is much more likely to influence judgments, decisions, and behaviors (Aaker 1999; Aaker and Schmitt 2001; Forehand and Deshpandé 2001; Forehand, et. al, 2002). In turn, the activation of a particular SI within the working self-concept often prompts individuals to categorize themselves along SI-oriented criteria (Turner and Oakes 1986). At that moment, the consumer is said to have adopted that particular SI—and that associated SI based frame of reference is likely to color their perceptions, judgments and behaviors. Although consumers can consciously assess their relative similarity or dissimilarity with other real and imagined consumers, a great deal of this self-categorization occurs without conscious processing (Eiser and Sabine 2001; cf. Stapel and Koomen 2000). As a result, an active SI in the working self-concept is best thought of as filter that influences perception regardless of whether the individual is aware of its activation or presence.

A second key construct in the framework is diagnosticity. Diagnosticity is defined as the degree to which a SI could direct *judgment in a particular domain*. Social identity diagnosticity is dependent on two interrelated ideas: how relevant the SI is to the domain of evaluation (e.g. an “athlete” SI would be relevant to evaluating athletic shoes, but is unlikely to be relevant to evaluating kitchen appliances) and the degree to which SI-based processing allows a consumer to discriminate between options (e.g. an “athlete” social identity might help discriminate between a pair of Nike

shoes and a pair of Keds, but may not help discriminate between a pair of Nike shoes and a pair of Adidas shoes).

The combinatorial influence of accessibility and diagnosticity is summarized in the following proposition:

Proposition 1: Social identification leads to judgment formation when a consumer a) accesses the evaluative content of a SI and b) maps its relevance to a brand or behavior.

Moving beyond this basic proposition, it is important to identify the precursors to an SI's accessibility and diagnosticity and to discuss the influence of marketing strategy on these factors. In general, a social identity is likely to influence evaluation to the extent the social identity is 1) salient, 2) self-important, 3) connected to an aspirational or "ideal" self-conception (or separated from a disliked or "avoided" self-conception), 4) relevant to the brand, and 5) relevant in the specific brand context at hand. In the next section, each of these precursors to social identity-based evaluation is discussed in more detail.

PRECURSORS TO SOCIAL IDENTITY ACCESSIBILITY & DIAGNOSTICITY

Determinants of Social Identity Accessibility

Affecting SI Accessibility with Identity Cues. Research has found that the salience of a SI can be increased by a myriad of stimulus cues in the external environment. These stimulus cues include reference group symbols (Cialdini, Borden, Thorne, Walker, Freeman and Sloan 1976; Smith and Mackie, 1995), symbols related to out-groups (Wilder and Shapiro 1984) out-group members themselves (Marques, Yzerbyt and Rijsman 1988), and even visual images and words (Hong, Morris, Chiu and Martínez 1999; Chatman and von Hippel 2001; Forehand and Deshpandé 2001, Forehand, et. al 2002). For example, the attribution styles of "multicultural" Asian students in Hong Kong became more "Eastern" if the students were first exposed to Chinese cultural icons such as a Chinese Dragon, The Great Wall and more "Western" if the students were first exposed to American cultural icons such as the United States Flag or Superman (Hong, et al. 1999). These

effects are argued to occur because the icons act as cues that increase awareness of one SI over others (Hong et al. 1999, Wyer and Srull 1986).

Marketing communications contain many identity cues and these cues are often embedded in brand logos and symbols, taglines, spokespeople, and other persuasive content. For example, visual images embedded in advertising can prime identity accessibility to the extent that the images have been previously linked to the social identity. By increasing identity accessibility, the visual images can influence evaluation of subsequently viewed advertising that targets that identity (Forehand & Deshpandé, 2001; Forehand et al. 2002). Marketers can try to alter the accessibility of particular SIs by strategically managing how consumers are exposed to these kinds of symbols. We will describe this strategic issue in more managerial detail in the second half of this article.

Affecting SI Accessibility with Consumption Contexts. A second marketing relevant aspect that may influence salience is the extent to which the *social environment* will highlight a particular basis for social identification. McGuire, McGuire, Child and Fujioka (1978) proposed that particular group memberships are salient to an individual to the extent that the individual's membership in that group is "distinctive" in the social environment. For example, McGuire, et. al (1979) asked grade school children to talk for a few minutes about themselves. Results showed that girls from households where their gender was in the minority (majority) were more (less) likely to mention gender in their spontaneous self-descriptions. A Similar study found that informal self-descriptions were affected by the salience of ethnic identity of children (McGuire, et. al 1978).

In consumption contexts, the composition of the social environment may directly influence product choice and media response (Stayman and Deshpandé, 1994; Forehand and Deshpandé, 2001; Grier and Deshpandé, 2001, Forehand, et. al 2002). For example, the self-conception of an African American man in a grocery store full of Caucasian consumers will differ markedly if he finds himself instead in a grocery store full of African American women. In the first situation, his ethnic

identity is salient and this may cause him to approach (or avoid) ethnic-associated products (e.g. Ebony magazine) depending on their social desirability. In the second situation, his gender identity is salient and this may have corresponding effects on response to gender-associated products (e.g. GQ magazine).

Proposition 2: As a SI becomes more salient due to the social situation or contextual primes, the accessibility of the SI increases and evaluative content linked to the SI is therefore more likely to influence consumer judgment.

The Influence of Social Identity Self-importance on Accessibility. SI accessibility is also influenced by the degree to which the SI is personally significant, meaningful and highly important to how a consumer views him or herself (Charters and Newcomb, 1958; McGuire et. al, 1979; Bem 1981; see also Schmitt, Leclerc and Dube-Rioux 1988). A consumer may be drawn to a SI for various motivations. At one extreme, the self-importance of a SI may manifest as an impression motivated and temporary public standpoint (Schlenker, 1985). At another extreme, the social identity may serve as a "phenomenological lens" that deeply engulfs the consumer as a powerful basis for self-definition. In these cases, SIs are often "core" aspects of self-construal and are therefore chronically accessible and likely to stimulate SI-based processing of the environment, even in the absence of social or contextual cues (Markus and Nurius 1986). On the flip side, SIs that are weakly associated with the self may not influence consumer perception regardless of how many social or contextual identity cues are available.

Consider the following example. Two consumers, Alan and Rich, both think of themselves as "athletes." Alan is a former high school track star who has moved on to other things. He is now a weekend-warrior-type, playing the occasional game of tennis to stay in shape. In general, he tries to eat healthy. Rich on the other hand is also a former high school track star, but is a former Olympic silver medal winner in the 100 meters. He is a fierce competitor who anxiously awaits the opportunity to reclaim his prior days of glory. Both of these consumers probably possess "athlete"

as part of their sense of who they are. But because of past experience and future aspirations, Rich's social identity as an athlete might carry more personal consumer value to him. The fact that this SI is much more engulfing to Rich may lead to a higher likelihood that many of Rich's attitudes will be based on the "athlete" aspect of his SI. Additionally, holding all else constant, Rich is probably more likely to be more favorable toward an object (e.g., Nike brand shoes vs. Timberland) that is linked to his athlete SI.

Proposition 3: SIs that are relatively more central to a consumers' self-concept are more accessible and are therefore more likely to influence consumer judgment.

Influence of the Aspirational Self-Concept on Accessibility. The accessibility of a social identity is also influenced by the identity's connection to aspirational elements of the self-concept. Every SI is part of one possible self that an individual can actualize (Markus and Ruvulo 1989). Some of these possible selves are aspirational and may differ substantially from whom an individual objectively "is." Consumers often make choices that help them move closer to an aspirational self, even when this movement is purely hypothetical. For example, many consumers aspire to be thin and can imagine what it would be like to achieve their desired "thin and healthy" self. This desire can provide motivation to diet, exercise, or engage in other healthy activities. It can also encourage patronage of products and services that help cultivate an aspirational self. One prominent example of this is the tendency for consumers to frequent retail outlets whose clothing sizes are shifted downward from the industry average. Although the consumer's physique is presumably identical at every retail establishment, the consumer is drawn to clothing that claims to be a smaller size. By wearing this clothing, the consumer is able to move their self-conception one step closer to their aspirational "thin" self. A great deal of advertising also appeals to these aspirational self-conceptions by presenting models that symbolize what the consumer wishes to be.

Running in opposition to aspirational selves are avoided selves. Consumers actively try to avoid engaging in activities or choosing products that reinforce a self that they deem undesirable.

The desire to avoid certain self-conceptions is often apparent when individuals first become parents. Many new parents want to avoid becoming “old,” and this often prompts product selections that distance the new parent from this conception. The choice of a family vehicle is notable demonstration of this phenomenon. Although minivans are specifically designed with the needs of parents in mind, new parents frequently recoil at the thought of driving a minivan due to the negative conceptions about the “parent” self that drives such a vehicle. The desire to avoid this self contributes to the ever-expanding popularity of SUVs since these vehicles are believed to provide some of the benefits of a minivan without the corresponding negative effects on self-construal.

Proposition 4: SIs connected to either an aspirational self-concept or an avoided self-concept are more accessible. Consumers pursue (avoid) activities and choices that reinforce elements of aspirational (avoided) self-concepts.

Determinants of Social Identity Diagnosticity

An accessible SI has the potential to influence consumer judgments, but this potential is only reached when the SI informs the judgment at hand. When the consumer perceives correspondence or congruency between the brand and a SI, evaluative content linked to the SI is more easily transferred to the evaluation of the brand. Brand-identity correspondence is produced by four factors: object relevance, symbolic relevance, goal relevance, and action relevance. In addition to these relevance factors, diagnosticity is also influenced by the degree to which the social identity helps the consumer discriminate between options. Each of these forms of relevance and the general notion of discrimination are now discussed in turn.

Object relevance of a social identity. Judgments are particularly susceptible to the influence of accessible SIs when the object being evaluated is part of the symbolic constellation of products that define the SI (Solomon, 1988). As a case in point, a consumer who perceives herself as a working mother may be more favorable to an automobile that emphasizes safety and practicality. These SI-

based evaluations are particularly common with brands that come to symbolize particular user groups or “fit” with a particular SI (cf. Sirgy 1982).

This notion of correspondence between an object and a SI has been argued most strongly in the functional approach to attitudes which argues that certain objects are linked to particular SIs (Kleine, Kleine and Kernan 1993; Laverie, Kleine and Kleine 2002; Shavitt, 1989; cf. Solomon, 1983). For example, brands may possess symbolic aspects that connect them to particular SIs (cf. Sirgy 1982) or become paramorphically representative of a SI (e.g. a MacIntosh user). When the consumer perceives correspondence or congruency between the brand and a SI, evaluative content linked to the SI is more easily transferred to the evaluation of the brand. Thus, the object-relevance of a SI increases the likelihood that the attitude object will be thought of in terms of the SI:

Proposition 5: Accessible SIs are more likely to influence evaluations of objects that are relevant to the SI.

Diagnosticity Based on Symbolic Relevance. Symbolic relevance exists when the expression of a belief or the possession of an object communicates one’s SI or reinforces an important element of that SI (Shavitt and Nelson 2000). As an example, an attitude toward some issue (e.g., foreign policy) may be relevant to a consumer’s political SI if the consumer perceives that a particular stance on the issue reflects certain ideals or values endemic to the political SI (Duck, Hogg and Terry 1999; Rokeach, 1973). Observers readily make person impression judgments based on knowledge of the purchase decisions of targets (Baran, Mok, Land and Kang 1989). Hence, objects such as products can provide a “social stock of knowledge that people use in typifying those they meet” (Shavitt and Nelson 2000, page 52). Such objects are symbolic (Solomon, 1983) in the sense that they tend to be displayed publicly and are widely seen as reflecting public affiliation with a particular SI (e.g., membership in a particular real or imagined group (Shavitt 1989). Therefore, SIs can be conceived as uniting around forms of expressive symbolism (e.g., Yuppies, motorcycle gangs, or sports teams). The self-definitions of group members are derived from symbolic relevance associated with the

common symbol system to which the group is dedicated (cf. Solomon 1983). Moreover, this general concept of symbolic congruence has been used to explain consumer attraction to brands (Birdwell, 1968; Dolich 1969; Eriksen and Sirgy 1989; Grubb and Stern 1971; Malhotra 1988) and even retail environments (Sirgy, Grewal and Mangleburg 2000). In general, it has been argued that consumer attraction to these entities occurs to the extent that there is a cognitive match between value-expressive attributes of a marketing stimulus and a consumer's self-concept.

Diagnosticity Based on Goal Relevance. Goal relevance exists when a potential belief or behavior is related to an issue or outcome that is important to the consumer's accessible SI. These beliefs or behaviors could include the expression of an attitude, specific group-related behaviors, or simply affiliation with a product or brand. For example, a consumer who benefits from affirmative action would encounter greater goal relevance during an affirmative action debate than would an individual who is unaffected by its policies (Kravitz 1995). Although individuals who oppose affirmative action might also believe that affirmative action could affect their group (e.g. affirmative action "steals" opportunities from their group), this belief is less directly related to their group's overall achievement. However, the perception of relevance could still be momentarily heightened if an individual was concerned about his or her upcoming opportunities on the job market.

Diagnosticity Based on Action Relevance. Products may allow a person to perform some action related to a particular SI. For example, a "baseball player" may require a bat, glove and cleats to perform within that SI (Klein, et. al, 1992). Action relevance is determined by the extent to which a product allows an individual to perform behavioral functions associated with a particular SI. These products and or possessions have been called constellations (Solomon, 1983) because they can behaviorally "enact" a particular SI. Past research suggests that simply having the possessions or displaying the objects is not enough; what is important is how a person perceives other consumer's reactions to the *use* of those possessions. This is important in marketing, because the use of the

products and brands that embody an SI should reinforce the SI. A corollary of this idea is that the more SI related possessions a consumer has, the more empowered a consumer should feel about his ability to perform in that SI (Kleine, et. al 1993; Laverie et. al 2002) and the more confident the consumer will be that he holds appropriate opinions (Jones and Gerard 1967).

Diagnosticity Based on Discrimination Ability. Even if a SI is salient, self-important and object relevant, it might not be the basis by which a consumer forms an attitude. The term “discriminability” refers to the extent to which the evaluative content of the social identity has sufficient clarity and specificity to inform the consumer’s evaluation of the object or brand and to guide a behavioral response. As a case in point, when an “urban youth” evaluates shoe brands, he or she may find several brands that have co-opted young, urban imagery in their advertising and are thus not differentiable on this identity dimension. In this situation, the absence of a clear identity-related norm provides her with an inadequate basis for choice (Kallgren, Reno and Cialdini 2000) and her SI therefore fails to discriminate between the options available.

Proposition 6: If a SI is discriminating as a basis for judgment, there is an increased likelihood that the evaluative content linked to that SI will impact the formation of a consumer judgment.

Summary of the key factors. A consumer may think about herself in terms of various SIs (see Figure A-1) that can connect her to a brand, product or behavior. She might then 1) access the evaluative content of a particular SI, 2) consider its relevance to an object brand or behavior to be evaluated and 3) form a response. This process is affected by several key accessibility and diagnosticity factors: SI salience (is the consumer momentarily thinking about herself along the SI dimension), SI self-importance (does the consumer strongly identify with the SI), relevance of the SI to the object of evaluation (is the SI functionally linked to the object), and the discrimination value of the SI in the domain (does the SI provides a basis for response). In the next section, we discuss

the influence of various marketing contexts and communication strategies on the accessibility and diagnosticity of an SI.

TRANSLATING THE FRAMEWORK INTO A STRATEGIC PLAN

Brands and products are often specifically created or positioned to embody a particular SI-oriented lifestyle. However, there has been little empirical research that examines the methods through which firms successfully build identity-relevant brands, and the circumstances under which such a marketing strategy is likely to be successful. Yet, these issues hold important theoretical implications for academic researchers, as well as practical relevance for marketing managers. We propose that an effective use of SI in a firm's marketing strategy must *simultaneously* consider *both* conditions of the current framework. The goals of the remainder of this article is to operationalize the framework's two conditions and to describe the process of forming effective product-SI connections. These goals are organized around a three-part strategic plan: 1) Pre-Positioning Analysis 2) Congruency Analysis 3) Reinforcement and Post-Positioning Analysis (see Figure A-4).

Insert Figure A-4 about here

Pre-Positioning Analysis

Characteristics and Image Confirmation: The purpose of the pre-positioning analysis is to identify relevant social identities that represent profitable segments, and to assess whether a brand's "personality" (Aaker, 1997) could fit one of these segments. Every consumer's self-concept is comprised of identities that are associated with a subset of traits, characteristics and other associations that thereby define the SI. To begin the pre-positioning analysis, one must assess what characteristics and traits a prototypical member of the identity group would possess (see Figure A-1 for a useful starting point in this regard). For example, the SI "Young Urban Professional" may be linked to the following characteristics: thrill seeking, technologically savvy, intelligent, hard working,

successful, ambitious, etc. Moving beyond interpersonal characteristics, a SI may also be linked to specific product classes and brands (e.g., a “Young Urban Professional” may be visualized holding a black berry in one hand and a Starbuck’s coffee in the other). By identifying these characteristics and products, brand managers can identify the SIs that might be relevant to a given brand, or if a new brand could be profitably introduced to this SI. Several target SIs should be identified during this pre-positioning phase – in much the same way that the “funnel” process in new product development starts with the generation of as many ideas as possible.

Validation of Identity Schema After identifying relevant social identities during pre-positioning, marketers should evaluate whether the identities will reinforce key elements of the brand’s positioning. To assess the potential value of a social identity to a particular brand, both qualitative and quantitative research should be conducted. On the exploratory end of the spectrum, focus groups can be conducted to determine how the social identity is perceived among both target and non-target consumers. A particularly useful strategy to this end is to assemble focus groups that are homogeneous across the selected identity dimension. By pre-selecting members of a given identity group, the focus group can serve as a proxy for the larger segment, thus helping to reveal elements of the shared culture to the researcher. Such a homogeneous sample is particularly useful when the consumption experience is visible and social (Wooten and Reed, 1999). When consumption occurs privately, more personal research methodologies such as depth interviews are more appropriate.

Once some basic insights about a social identity have been gleaned from exploratory contact with consumers, marketers can then assess how well a given brand meshes with the social identity. When properly developed, a brand can become a badge for specific identity groups, or may even become the foundation of its own identity group. This process begins with an analysis of the brand’s personality (Aaker, 1997; Aaker, et. al 200X) via survey and projective techniques. For example, potential consumers may be asked to describe the prototypical consumer of a given brand, product

category, or other usage variable. Participants might also be asked to imagine what products a member of a social identity group would use, where they would use them, and with whom. In this way, one can identify the key traits associated with the brand (e.g., the typical “Cadillac driver.”).

The results of the projective questions help reveal perceptions of both one’s own brand and relevant competitors (e.g. Starbucks customer vs. the typical Wawa customer). For example, projective research on Army enlistment found that the “be all you can be campaign” was highly memorable, but that it neither communicated a specific identity for Army volunteers nor did it distinguish the Army from other branches of the military. In response, The Army of One® campaign was developed as an attempt to highlight the individual autonomy of its soldiers while communicating the importance of the individual as one link in the chain of the group (<http://goarmy.com/>). This re-designed campaign also created a much clearer image of a soldier-identification group.

Self-Importance Analysis Consistent with the propositions in our conceptual framework, it is also useful to understand the deeper associations that consumers have with an SI. To this end, there are several “strength of identification” measures that assess the self-importance of a particular SI. For example, Luhtanen and Crocker (1992) have developed a psychometric measure of “collective group self-esteem” and Phinney (1992) has developed a more general measure of identity importance (in this case written for ethnicity). These measures can help one ascertain how self-important a target SI is to prospective consumers. Identity self-importance can also be assessed using implicit measurement techniques such as the Implicit Association Test (IAT) (Greenwald, McGhee and Schwarz 1998). The IAT uses a series of computer-based paired categorization tasks to reveal how strongly individuals associate concepts (in this case identity groups) with a given attribute dimension. This allows researchers to assess a vast array of associations in memory including stereotypes ties to particular identity groups, prevailing associations with target brands, and the

extent to which specific identity groups or brands are connected to the consumer's self-concept (Greenwald et. al. 2002; Greenwald and Farnham 2000). Since this measure of association is built from the speed with which consumers can categorize concepts, it is highly resistant to many of the presentation biases found in explicit measures. This makes the IAT particularly useful for studying consumer's reactions to identity groups that may engender negative or socially inappropriate associations. For example, although most individuals outwardly claim to not possess stereotypes about specific ethnic or racial groups, research using the IAT often reveals that these associations still exist in memory.

Assessing the self-importance of a consumer's social identity is predictive of how they will respond to products that leverage a strongly held identity, as well as to products that leverage identities not possessed by the consumer. In situations where a SI is made accessible to consumers, the SI may prompt either approach (a positive reaction) or avoidance (a negative reaction). When viewing communications utilizing a specific SI, individuals that possess that SI may react with avoidance to the extent that they want to avoid standing out or fear that embracing the SI might hamper assimilation. In addition, individuals who do not possess the SI used in the communication may react with avoidance to the extent that they label the communication as "not for me" (Aaker, Brumbaugh, and Grier 1999; Forehand and Deshpande 2001). Indeed, research on persuasion effects suggests that any variable that leads individuals to make similarity judgments between themselves and an advertisement source (e.g., cultural orientation, Aaker and Williams 1998; social class, Williams and Qualls 1989, ethnicity, Wooten, 1995) should influence the degree to which both target and non-target market effects occur.

Since most products may serve more than just a single demographic or lifestyle group, marketers should evaluate whether there is any potential for a negative reaction from non-target members (Aaker, Brumbaugh, and Grier 2000; Forehand, Deshpande, and Reed 2002). For example,

although Trekkies strongly associate Star Trek with their self-concept, most nonetheless understand that the Trekkie identity is valued in some instances and not others. Consequently, a Trekkie may immerse him or herself in the Star Trek culture at a convention, but hide this identity in the workplace. This highlights the importance of knowing not only whether an individual possesses a certain identity, but also whether that identity is favorably viewed in the social context.

Perceptual Identity Maps: A final step in a repositioning analysis of social identity is the development of a *perceptual identity map* that quantifies initial exploratory analyses. In much the same way that a perceptual map is generated from perceived functional benefits (e.g., price vs. quality) of various products, a perceptual identity map is generated from the traits and associations of various social identities. This perceptual map is critical since individuals belong to multiple identities and their overall self-concept is therefore an amalgam of SIs (see figure A-1). This complexity creates the potential for conflicting prescriptions from one's various SIs that occur when brands become linked to opposing SIs. For example, a white teenager from the suburbs may generally associate himself with mainstream American culture yet be fanatically devoted to hip-hop music. These different SIs might impose inconsistent demands upon that person (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Kriesberg 1949) or conflict with the individual's personal identity (Cheeks and Briggs 1982; Leary, Wheeler and Jenkins 1986). As a result, the teen's clothing preferences may be torn between Abercrombie and Fitch and Phat Farm. Hence, a company should closely monitor how consumers resolve these conflicts and how resolution influences brand attitudes and behaviors.

Congruency Analysis

Assess the link between the brand and the consumer social identity. Once a marketer has assessed the prevailing associations consumers have with an identity, a congruency analysis should be conducted to assess the value of potential brand-identity links (see Figure A-4). There are two situations in which a congruency analysis is particularly relevant: 1) when establishing a link between a new brand

and an SI, and 2) when repositioning an already existing brand. Where pre-positioning analysis analyzes which social identities are generally relevant to a category, a congruency analysis assesses the degree of fit between specific brands and SIs. In short, high fit facilitates the transfer of associations, images, and characteristics from the social identity to the brand and vice versa. The exact methodologies used in a congruency analysis are dependent on the results of the pre-positioning analysis. For example, when pre-positioning analyses leverage quantitative approaches, a congruency analysis can assess direct correlations between the SIs and various offerings.

Reinforcement and Monitoring

In general, brands become associated with an SI through *consistent* promotion of the brand with SI imagery and through actual use of the brand by visible members of SI. Moving beyond these observational effects, the most powerful way of connecting a brand to an SI is through personal use or evaluation of the brand. These interactions increase consumer affiliation with the brand and can reinforce the consumer's self-association with both the brand and the SI. In a recent demonstration of this phenomenon, college-age consumers evaluated vitamin advertisements that were either targeted to children, college students, or senior citizens (Forehand, Perkins and Reed, 2004). Outside of user imagery, the ad content was identical in all three versions. As one might expect, college-age consumers responded less favorably to the vitamin brand when the advertisement featured either children or seniors. More interestingly, viewing an ad targeting children or seniors also influenced the degree to which the consumers associated themselves with their own age-identity group. Specifically, college students who viewed ads featuring either children or seniors spent more time evaluating age appropriateness and this reinforced their pre-existing association with youth. Evaluating a brand on an SI dimension reinforced the consumer's dominant self-association with the SI. We briefly discuss several identifiable marketing strategies which if used in concert, may serve to reinforce the link between the brand and the chosen SI.

Identity Cues. Exposure to environmental cues in the market place can activate SI related concepts in memory and thereby increase the likelihood that consumers will use their SI in the evaluation of marketing stimuli (cf. Forehand and Deshpandé 2001; Forehand, Deshpandé, and Reed II 2002; Hong et al. 2000; Wyer and Srull 1986). For example, Mitchell, Banaji and Nosek (1998) found that attitudes toward Michael Jordan were positive (negative) when the category of athlete (African American) had been made salient to the evaluator. Similarly, LeBoeuf and colleagues found that the car and food preferences of Chinese-Americans were more stereotypically American when an American as opposed to Chinese SI was made salient through the content and language of self-elicitation tasks (LeBouef and Shafir, 2003; study two).

The linking of a brand to a SI through market cues serves many benefits. First and foremost, it can improve the attitude of identity members toward the brand. Since the brand can become a reflection of the group itself, the association inclines identity members toward positive evaluation and can thereby influence purchase intentions. Even absent this positive generalization, identity can still influence choice if consumers use the SI as a choice heuristic. For example, SIs based on one's country of origin are often powerful heuristic inputs to choice.

The association of a brand with an identity cue can also increase the likelihood that the brand will be included in a consideration set. The subset of products that come under consideration is often influenced by which products happen to come to mind at the moment of product choice. By associating itself with an identity, a brand can effectively increase its likelihood of consideration set inclusion in two ways. First, to the extent that the product category is consumed in social situations with other members of the identity group, a brand that is tied to the identity is more likely to be activated than one that is not. Second, the association of a brand with a consumer's SI is effectively an association between the brand and the consumer's self concept. Since research has repeatedly shown that consumers have better recall of concepts that are associated with the self-

concept (Markus 1977, Markus and Sentis 1982; Symons and Johnson 1997), the linking of a brand to an identity group can dramatically increase the extent to which the brand is top of mind. Indeed, media tip their hand to their desired audience through many subtle (and not so subtle) cues in their content. Identity cues should influence all consumers to some degree, but it is likely that consumers with social identity-driven self-concepts will be much more sensitive to these cues.

Taken together, these findings suggest that carefully placed primes in the marketplace can differentially activate specific social categories and thereby alter which SI a consumer brings to bear in an evaluation. Researchers who have theorized about the brand-building process have often argued that brands develop a host of associations over time and that these associations include beliefs about the typical user, usage occasion, and other consumer-related information (Keller, 2003). In general, these brand-building strategies suggest that brands should *repeatedly pair* themselves with visual and verbal images of their desired user to build these associations over time.

Spokespersons: Our framework suggests that SI salience leads to more positive evaluations of same-identity actors and spokespeople by highlighting the similarity between the consumer and the spokesperson. In turn, this heightened similarity increases the likelihood that the consumer will classify the spokesperson as a member of his or her “in-group” (a classification of similar others). Once same-identity actors are classified into the consumer’s in-group, a host of positive biases toward the actors should follow (c.f. Chatman & von Hippel, 2001). For example, prior research has found that, compared to out-group members, in-group members are perceived to be more similar to the evaluator (Taylor et al. 1978) as well as more interesting and varied (Linville, Fischer & Salovey, 1989). Similar others also are usually more persuasive (Berscheid, 1966) and liked more than dissimilar others (Neimeyer & Mitchell, 1988). Evidence that identity primes should magnify these positive effects is indirectly provided by research demonstrating that evaluation of in-group members improves when attention is focused on the evaluator’s group memberships (Abrams,

1985). Moreover, research on racial similarity (Whittler 1989), role congruence (Meyers-Levy 1989) labeling (Tepper 1994), intensity of ethnic identification (Williams and Qualls, 1989), shared cultural knowledge (Brumbaugh 1997), and ethnic salience (Deshpande and Stayman 1994) all evoke positive effects and reactions among the respective target markets. In general, these targeting strategies work by influencing consumers' perceptions of congruency between characteristics of the marketing mix element (e.g., source pictured, language used, lifestyle represented) and characteristics of themselves (e.g., reality or desire of having the represented lifestyle) (Whittler 1989; Whittler and DiMeo, 1991).

Retail Environment. Retail environments offer a unique opportunity to implement experiential marketing that combines all sensorial elements (sight, hearing, touch, taste and even smell) to help heighten the accessibility of a particular SI and reinforce it. Consumers may develop relationships with these brick and mortar environments both to shape their expressed SI and also to bolster the esteem via the “reflective glory” that these places can provide (Cialdini, et. al). In its mildest form, consumer identification with retail establishments fosters loyalty; in its most extreme, evangelism. These fanatical identifiers latch on to membership symbols including logos, badges, bumper stickers (Oliver, 1999), special uniforms (Trekkies), or even extensive travel (Dead heads).

Group Events, Online Websites and Chatrooms: A great deal of research suggests that the self-concept is shaped through interaction with groups (Allport 1955; Baumeister 1987; Cooley 1902; Mead 1934; Rosenberg, 1979; Schlenker 1985; Shweder and LeVine 1984; Tajfel 1972 1981). In addition to strengthening the SI components of the self-concept, interaction with groups is also likely to influence the goals individuals pursue and deem important. Individuals learn what it means to hold group memberships through social interaction with other group members and by the roles they adopt within those groups (see figure A-1). These interactions need not be personal--online chat rooms give identity members feedback on appropriate identity-based beliefs and thereby reinforce an individual's tie to the SI without requiring close geographic proximity.

To develop a link between a consumer's SI and the brand identity, firms should create corporate programs, local clubs, and events that allow the consumer to express affiliation with the brand. For example, Harley-Davidson encourages symbolic relevance among its buyers by promoting local H.O.G. (Harley Owners Group) chapters. Membership in such patronage groups serves as a feedback mechanism that enhances the importance of the SI. Such patronage groups are not limited to the marketing lifestyle brands—even simple utilitarian products can develop resonance with patronage groups. For example, Garnier Fructis, a highly successful shampoo offering, began with a particular consumer image in mind and constructed a marketing campaign emphasizing values that resonated with a distinct consumer identity. The product launch also strived to create brand communities and other peripheral marketing symbols (e.g., “Fru-crew” t-shirts and other clothing) that helped reinforce the customer identity and values. What matters is not the level of product or decision involvement but that the marketer can link their brand to images, values, or lifestyles that appeal to one or more of their customers' multiple identities.

Advertising communications: Advertising provides a unique opportunity to convey consistent images and messages connected to a targeted SI. Consumers are particularly receptive to these images to the extent that they believe in their own self-efficacy and are therefore able to assimilate the directives of a newly-presented SI. Self-efficacy is defined as “an individual's beliefs about his or her capabilities to produce levels of performance that exercise influence over events” (Gollwitzer 1999). Current theory suggests that self-efficacy exerts its effect on behavior through the formation of behavioral intentions (goal setting) and the translation of these intentions into actual behavior. As a result, individuals with high degrees of self-efficacy are more likely to incorporate the perceived goals of a SI into their consumption decisions. Indeed, the formation of implementation intentions, often defined more broadly as how, when and where a behavior will be initiated, is strongly correlated with consumer behaviors (Sheeran and Orbell 2000, Sheeran and Orbell 1999,

Verplanken and Faes 1999). Through advertising, marketers can reinforce self-efficacy in connection with an SI and model appropriate SI-oriented behaviors. In addition, marketers may be able to increase self-efficacy by providing consumers with mastery experiences that focus consumers on both real-life success and “virtual” success (e.g. mentally “seeing” a SI oriented behavior being accomplished). This is a domain rich with potential avenues of study.

Advertising can also help individuals construct norms of behavior should they wish to embrace a particular SI. Although these goal-based norms are sometimes enforced by the formal sanction of rewards and punishments, norms are often followed merely because consumers who possess a particular SI internalize these proscriptions for behavior as useful and appropriate guides for action (cf. Festinger 1954). Moreover, when the salience of an SI is heightened, the alignment of judgments with group membership norms increases, particularly when the membership group possesses a clear position on the issue (Cohen and Reed 2001). Group members may also construct guidelines pertinent to specific behaviors via group-anchored attitudes. For example, a group of female business executives may determine that they should stand strong against affirmative action because it undermines their credibility in the workplace. In this way, their SI as women in business may become linked to negative evaluative information regarding this particular attitude object.

Monitor Effectiveness of Marketing Mix Elements: Of course, as with any marketing strategy, it is very important to monitor the extent to which identity appeals are effective over time and to assess potential anti-SI reactions. For example, Viagra® advertising was initially characterized by a positioning based on the effectiveness of the product and persuasive communications aimed at communicating benefits (and overcoming reluctance to seek medical assistance). The later entry of Cialis® and Levitra® heightened competitive pressures, with both brands claiming superior product benefits but also emphasizing the importance of the product for personal relationships. The latter reflects an identity appeal (i.e., being an intimate, thoughtful and loving romantic partner) and has

been a powerful basis for differentiating the later entrants and for building attitudes that reflect a deeper sense of self. More recently, Viagra® has responded by emphasizing how the product can restore the vibrancy of one's lost youth identity (e.g., "get back to the mischief").

Such symbolic relevance must be strategically monitored and managed in an effective marketing effort. Too often, brands position themselves close to a particular SI, and that SI may fall out of favor, become antiquated or a competitor might make use of a "counter-identity" that undermines the symbolic aspects of a salient SI. A good example of this is Coca-cola (Foust, 2004). Coca-cola has been touted for being one of the most successful iconic brands of the twentieth century. Originally built around "Norman Rockwell" type "Americana" imagery, the soft drink giant has been criticized for not being able to keep step with competitors like Pepsi. More specifically, Coke's marketing elements have become "too conservative...with ads that don't resonate with the teenagers and young adults that make up its most important audience" (Foust, 2004 page 79). Contrast this with Pepsi, whose "new generation" campaign and imagery has been able to link the Pepsi brand to a much hipper, and cooler set of identity based associations.

Monitoring the social acceptability of a SI is particularly important given the difficulty of removing associations from a brand. The difficulty of removing these associations is epitomized by BMW's inability to distance itself from the "yuppie" associations it helped develop in the 1980's. Starting in the early 1990's, BMW eliminated excessive yuppie imagery from its advertising and began promoting BMW solely around performance and the "Ultimate Driving Machine." Over a decade later, "yuppie" is still one of the dominant associations consumers have with BMW, despite BMW's attempts to shift away from that SI. BMW's efforts are also undercut by competing automakers who try to reinforce links between BMW and yuppies in their advertising. In a notable example of this, one advertisement featured an Audi driver and a BMW driver sitting in their cars in parallel driveways. As the Audi driver adjusted his controls and pulled onto the road, the BMW

driver adjusted his mirror and preened. The tagline that followed was “What kind of driver do you want to be?”

Other Long Term Benefits of Successful Identity Appeals

Although each of the aforementioned benefits of brand-identity association is helpful to marketers, perhaps the most important benefit of this association is the potential for the brand itself to become an identity. When brands become closely associated with a consumer’s self-concept, the brand can come to symbolize who the individual is. When consumers share this brand-self association with others, a very powerful and loyal constituency can develop. Nowhere is this more evident than in the development of the MacIntosh personality. Consumers who use products made by Apple often define themselves as a “Mac person.” From their perspective, their usage of a particular brand communicates something important about whom they are, whether it be anti-establishment, creative, young, or fun. “Mac” has come to summarize those self-associations and effectively has become bonded with the self-concept in a very powerful way. This bond not only creates unusually strong brand loyalty, but also encourages product evangelism. Much like missionaries, these individuals feel driven to convert other consumers to their way of thinking, to spread the philosophy of the brand.

The association of a brand with an identity can also influence the extent to which new information about the brand is interpreted favorably. Research on selective perception and biased assimilation has shown that individuals generally interpret new information so that it is consistent with their preexisting notions of the world. In so doing, they will tend to interpret information about in-group members in a more favorable light than they would if the new information regarded out-group members. As a result, a brand that is closely tied to a consumer’s identity group often receives the benefit of the doubt when new information arises. This can help insulate the brand from experience with product failure and can increase satisfaction with new product introductions or

brand extensions. For example, recent research (Bolton and Reed, 2004) has shown that consumers who strongly identified with an SI tried to resist social influence by rejecting or discounting negative social influence (that was inconsistent with their SI). Such resistance was evident during the release of the most recent film in the Star Wars franchise. Despite mediocre critical response, the film generated millions of dollars in box office revenue from its fan base; these customers (who possess an identity rooted in affiliation with the Lucas mythology) quickly dismissed negative reactions, which instead appeared to reinforce and polarize their identification. Thus, a carefully chosen SI may serve as a filter that leads consumers to discount negative information and seek out positive information that reinforces their identity.

CONCLUSIONS

Marketing practitioners certainly understand the value of targeting consumers, segmenting markets and positioning products based on the evaluative implications of SIs. From an applied standpoint, if a brand comes to represent the consumer's social identity, then the consumer would say that the object is "part of me" or an extension of the self (cf. Kleine, Kleine and Allen 1995; Belk, 1988). We believe the successful execution of such SI-oriented marketing strategies is aided by a framework that elucidates the key mechanisms of identity-driven processing and its marketing implications. This research attempts to make two contributions to consumer attitude formation and consumer judgment and decision making: 1) to provide a better understanding of the role of SI as a mechanism leading to consumer judgments and attitudes, and through explication of the research implications implied by the framework 2) to provide a managerial roadmap of the interplay of strategic factors that are likely to determine when social identity will affect how consumers respond to brands, products or consumption behaviors.

FIGURE A-1
TAXONOMIC CATEGORIZATION OF SOCIAL IDENTITIES

Type of Social Identity	Abstracted Referent(s)		Individual Referent(s)		Group Referent(s)		
	Fictitious Characters	Roles	Known	Not Known	All Members Known (Small)	All Members Not Known (Large)	Large Social Collective(s)
Description	Imaginary social constructions created by marketers, culture, and the popular media	Social construction of action patterns of consistent behaviors defined within membership in a particular self categorization	Actual individuals with which the person has personal contact with and wishes to maintain a self-defining relationship	Actual individuals with whom the person has no personal contact, but wishes to emulate in certain ways	Small actual membership reference groups typified by interaction amongst all group members	Large membership groups characterized by limited interaction, may be personified by a particular exemplar	Extremely large, amorphous and abstract groups of individuals, not likely to be personified by a particular exemplar
Relevant Extant Literature(s)		Role Identity theory	Identification based influence	Impression management theory	Reference Group theory	Self-Categorization Theory	Social Identity Theory
Example(s)	Comic book, Cartoon, story, film characters (e.g., Robin Hood, Superman, Neo from the Matrix) Gap Kids	Familial Roles (e.g., Mother, Father, son, daughter) Occupational Roles, relational roles (e.g., husband, girlfriend, etc.)	Ph.D. Advisor Big Brother Mentor High School Counselor Other individual role models	Spokespersons (e.g., Tiger Woods) musicians and artists, other pop cultural icons (e.g., The Pope Britney Spears	Peer Group(s) Immediate Family Graduate Student Cohort Neighborhood / Community Associations “Trench coat Mafia”	Gender Identity (Male, females) Athlete Identity Ethnic Identity, Political Identities	National Identities (e.g., European, American, Self as Human being, etc.)

FIGURE A-2: MANAGERIAL ROADMAP OF KEY SI FACTORS ON CONSUMER JUDGMENTS

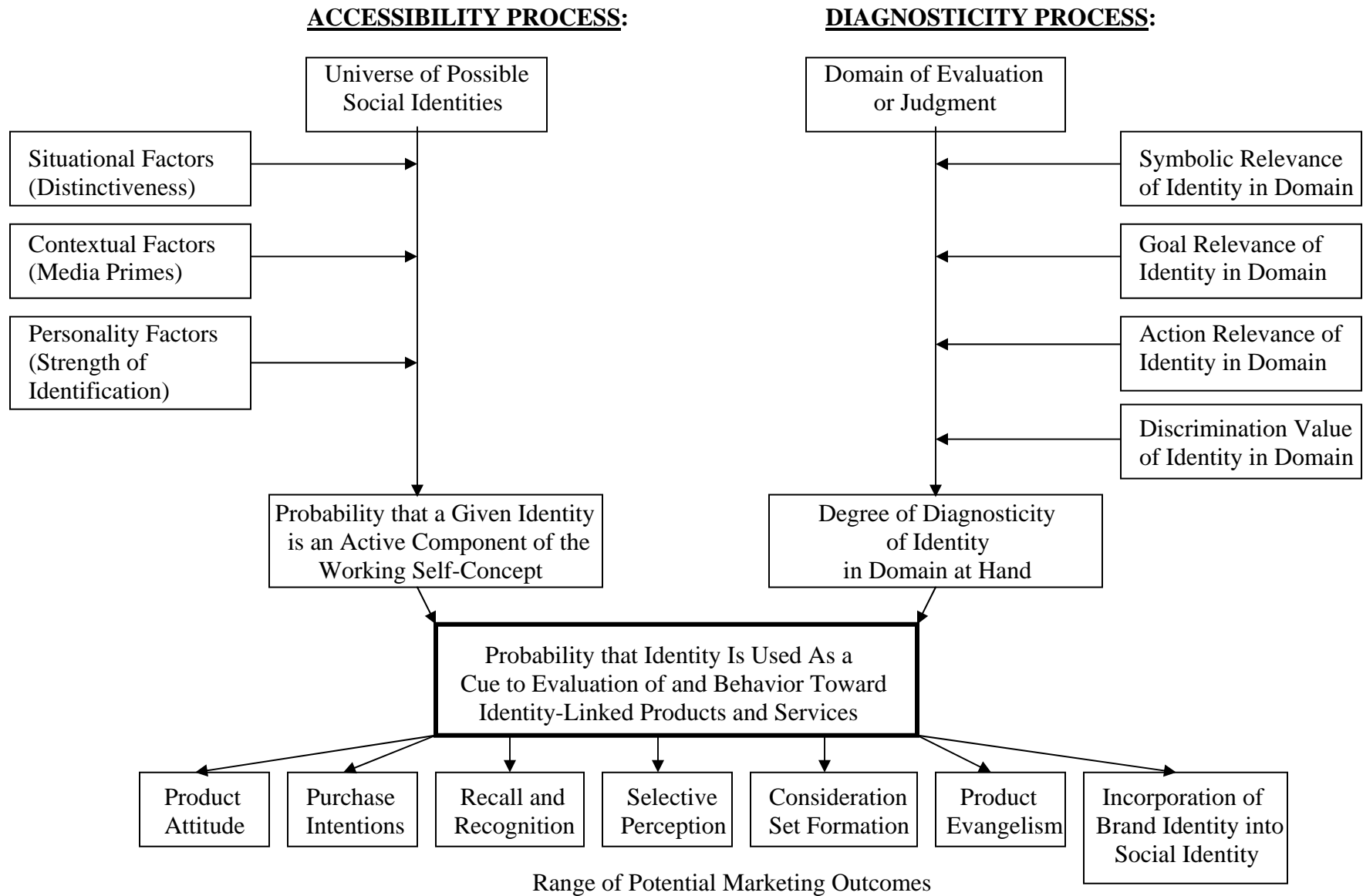


FIGURE A-3
AN OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL IDENTIFICATION RESEARCH
IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

<i>Condition</i>	<i>Existing Research</i>
<i>Accessibility</i>	
<i>Situational Factors (Social Distinctiveness)</i>	<p>Numerical Distinctiveness (Grier and Brumbaugh, 2002; McGuire and Padawer-Singer, 1976; McGuire, McGuire, Child and Fujioka, 1978; McGuire, McGuire and Winton, 1979)</p> <p>Social Status (Grier and Deshpande, 2002)</p> <p>Interacts with primes (Mandel and Johnson, 2002; Forehand, Deshpande and Reed 2002; Brumbaugh, 2002)</p> <p>Spokesperson Response (Deshpande and Stayman, 1994)</p> <p>Product response (Wooten 1995)</p>
<i>Contextual Factors (Media Primes)</i>	<p>Identity Salience and Product Choice (LeBoeuf and Shafir, 2003)</p> <p>Spokesperson Similarity Research (Kelman, 1961)</p> <p>Priming and Ad response (Forehand, Deshpande and Reed 2002; Forehand and Deshpande, 2001)</p> <p>Reference Group Symbols and identity activation (Cialdini et al 1976, Smith and Mackie 1995, Wilder and Shapiro 1984)</p> <p>Visual Images and processing (Hong et al. 2000, Chatman and von Hippel 2001 Aquino and Reed 2002; Brumbaugh 2002)</p> <p>Category primes and content processing (Mitchell, Banaji, and Nosek 1998)</p>
<i>(Self-Importance Research)</i>	<p>Spokesperson response (Mathur, Mathur and Rangan, 1997; Saenz and Aguirre 1991; McCracken, 1989; Deshpande, Hoyer and Donthu, 1986; Hirschman 1981; Williams and Qualls 1989; Ellis et al 1985)</p> <p>Reflected Appraisals strengthen social identities (Laverie, Kleine and Kleine, 2002)</p> <p>Products cluster around important social identities (Kleine, Kleine and Kernan, 1993)</p> <p>Shared Cultural Knowledge (Brumbaugh 1997)</p> <p>Felt Ethnicity (Wooten and Galvin, 1993)</p> <p>Strength of Identity affects processing (Markus and Nurius, 1986; Markus and Wurf, 1987; Symons and Johnson 1997; LeBoeuf and Shafir, 2002)</p>

FIGURE A-3

AN OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL IDENTIFICATION RESEARCH
IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Diagnosticity

Self-importance of identity and out-group judgments (Reed and Aquino, 2003)
Social Identity Function (Shavitt 1990)
Lifestyle Brands (Reed 2002)
Cultural meanings in ads (Grier and Brumbaugh, 1999)
Brand Personality (Aaker 1997)
Possession and Self-image congruence (Kleine, Kleine and Allen, 1995)
Identity Expression (Solomon 1983)

Retail Selection (Sirgy et al 2000)
Brand Choice (Erikson and Sirgy 1989; Malhotra 1988; Birdwell 1968; Dolich 1969)
Identity and Brand Loyalty (Oliver 1999)
Sports Teams (Cialdini, et al.)
Inference of attitudes/affirmative action (Kravitz 1995)
Social norms dictate appropriate goals (Thibaut and Kelley 1959; Kelman 1958, 1961; Pruitt and Rubin 1986)
Goals create social reality (Turner and Killian 1972)
Product constellations are products needed to embody social identity (Solomon 1983)
Norm adherence (Cohen and Reed, 2000; Terry and Hogg, 1996)

FIGURE A-4: OVERVIEW OF STRATEGIC PLAN TO MANAGE SOCIAL IDENTITY MARKETING

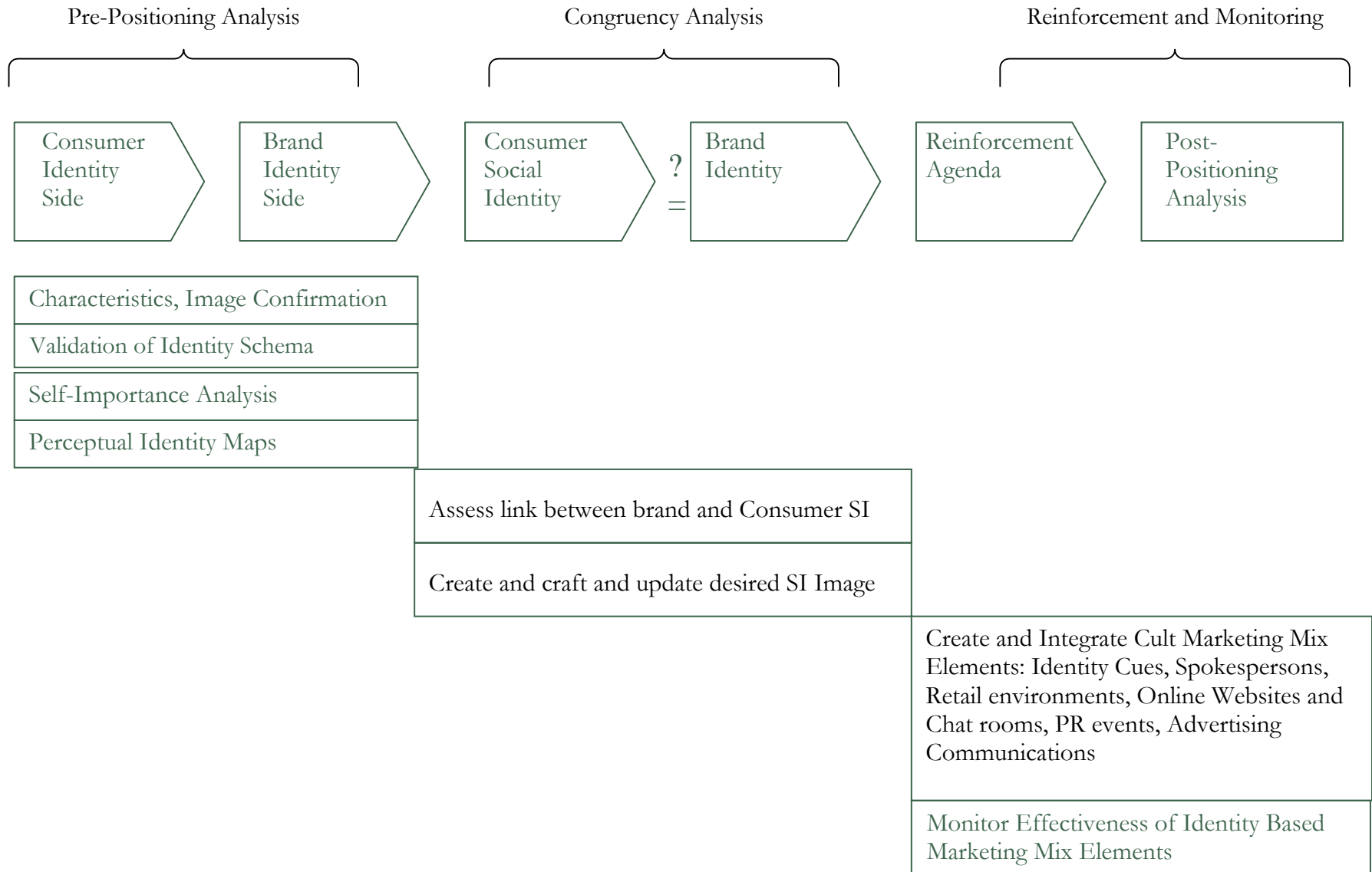


EXHIBIT 1
BASIC THEORETICAL ASSERTIONS OF THE FRAMEWORK

Overall Proposition of the Framework	Proposition 1: Social identification leads to judgment formation when a consumer a) accesses the evaluative content of a SI and b) maps its relevance to a brand or behavior.
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Conditions	Key Factors	Sub-Propositions
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Accessibility	Saliency	Proposition 2: As a SI becomes more salient due to the social situation or contextual primes, the accessibility of the SI increases and evaluative content linked to the SI is therefore more likely to influence consumer judgment.
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P2a: Saliency of a social identity is a function of stimulus cues in the environment. These cues direct attention to the particular basis for self-definition.

P2b: Saliency of a social identity may prompt the consumer to consciously or unconsciously self-categorize along identity-oriented criteria.

P2c: Saliency of a social identity is a function of the social environment when it heightens the distinctiveness of the person's social identity within the immediate social context.

Self-importance	Proposition 3: SIs that are relatively more central to a consumers' self-concept are more accessible and are therefore more likely to influence consumer judgment.
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P3a: Self importance is driven by an iterative feedback process based on past experience and future aspirations associated with maintaining a particular social identity

P3b: Self importance lies on a continuum ranging from pure impression management motivations to deeply rooted internalized motives.

P3c: Self importance is a direct function of appraisals

EXHIBIT 1**BASIC THEORETICAL ASSERTIONS OF THE FRAMEWORK**

		from the self and others in terms of how well the consumer is maintaining a particular social identity.
	Aspirational and Avoided Self-Concept	Proposition 4: SIs connected to either an aspirational self-concept or an avoided self-concept are more accessible. Consumers pursue (avoid) activities and choices that reinforce elements of aspirational (avoided) self-concepts.
Diagnosticity	Relevance	Proposition 5: Accessible SIs are more likely to influence evaluations of objects that are relevant to the SI. P5a: Goal relevance of an object or issue is triggered by current concerns of the in-group associated with the social identity in question. P5b: Symbolic relevance is enhanced by the extent to which the object or issue is value expressive of the social identity in question. P5c: Action relevance is enhanced by the extent to which the object allows the consumer to perform within the social identity in question.
	Discrimination	Proposition 6: If a SI is discriminating as a basis for judgment, there is an increased likelihood that the evaluative content linked to that SI will impact the formation of a consumer judgment. P6a: Evaluative content of a social identity emerges from norms that are associated with that particular social identity in question. P6b: Norms that represent the evaluative content may be either learned or constructed depending on the level of abstraction of the social identity in question P6c: Discrimination is a direct function of the clarity of the norms that are linked to the social identity in question.

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Endnotes

¹ A question that may arise is how is marketing along a social identity oriented life-style is different from “Psychographic segmentation.” Psychographic segmentation assumes that consumers’ stable personality traits can be identified and linked to particular broad lifestyle orientations which can be linked to certain kinds of broad product categories. However, as the opening quote suggests and based on more recent views of how consumers self define—summarized in the first part of this article—academics and practitioners are beginning to realize that consumers have many selves—not just one “broad” lifestyle category bucket they may fit in. (cf. Reed and Bolton 2005).

² The notion of accessibility / diagnosticity—that information affects judgments when it is available and relevant—can be easily criticized as a self-evident assertion. Although the premise is simple, what determines when a *social identity* is accessible and diagnostic is the focus of this paper and may not be obvious. Accessibility and diagnosticity of a particular social identity comes in many forms, therefore, we develop propositions as to when certain kinds of social identity based accessibility and diagnosticity is likely to occur and the marketing implications of it. Hence this paper applies the accessibility diagnosticity framework to the specific case of social identity. Moreover, like the analysis advanced by Feldman & Lynch (1988); accessibility and diagnosticity are not intended to indicate an ordered sequence of psychological processes.