

# Consumer–Company Identification: A Framework for Understanding Consumers' Relationships with Companies

In this article, the authors try to determine why and under what conditions consumers enter into strong, committed, and meaningful relationships with certain companies, becoming champions of these companies and their products. Drawing on theories of social identity and organizational identification, the authors propose that strong consumer–company relationships often result from consumers' identification with those companies, which helps them satisfy one or more important self-definitional needs. The authors elaborate on the nature of consumer–company identification, including the company identity, and articulate a consumer-level conceptual framework that offers propositions regarding the key determinants and consequences of such identification in the marketplace.

**C**ustomer intimacy, customer equity, and customer relationship management (CRM) are the marketing mantras of today. In their quest for sustained success in a marketplace characterized by product proliferation, communication clutter, and buyer disenchantment, more and more companies are attempting to build deep, meaningful, long-term relationships with their customers.<sup>1</sup> Yet if the business press is any indication, only a few companies (e.g., Harley-Davidson, The Body Shop, Patagonia, Southwest Airlines) seem to have realized the ultimate promise of such relationship-building efforts: the consumer champion or advocate, who not only is utterly loyal but also enthusiastically promotes the company and its products to others.

What distinguishes the companies that have struck relationship-gold from the rest? What is the nature of the relationships they have with their customers? When and why are such relationships likely to occur? A large body of research, in domains ranging from customer satisfaction (e.g., Fournier and Mick 1999), relationship marketing (e.g., De Wulf, Odekerken-Schroder, and Iacobucci 2001), and loyalty (e.g., Reichheld 1996) to, more recently, CRM (e.g., Winer 2001), has tried to understand and delineate how firms, or the “people behind the brands” (McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig 2002, p. 50), can build deeper, more

committed relationships with customers and turn them into champions. However, as Fournier, Dobscha, and Mick (1998) point out, such relationships are likely to remain elusive for most marketers without a more precise understanding of when and why consumers respond favorably and strongly to companies' relationship-building efforts, entering volitionally into the kinds of consumer–company relationships that transform them into fervent supporters of the companies and their products (see Malaviya and Spargo, in press).

This article contributes to the growing research on consumer–company relationships by proffering the notion of consumer–company identification (C–C identification) as the primary psychological substrate for the kind of deep, committed, and meaningful relationships that marketers are increasingly seeking to build with their customers. Moreover, it draws on theories of social identity (Brewer 1991; Tajfel and Turner 1985) and organizational identification (Bergami and Bagozzi 2000; Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994; Mael and Ashforth 1992; Whetten and Godfrey 1998) to provide a coherent, comprehensive articulation of both the conditions in which consumers are likely to identify, or feel a sense of belonging (Mael and Ashforth 1992), with a company and the bases and consequences of such identification.

To date, identification research has focused primarily on elucidating employees' relationships with their employer (e.g., Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994) and members' relationships with nonprofit organizations, such as museums, theaters, and universities (e.g., Bhattacharya, Rao, and Glynn 1995; Mael and Ashforth 1992). Central to this article is the notion that identification with organizations can also occur in the absence of formal membership (Pratt 1998; Scott and Lane 2000), as with the case of consumers and companies, both for- and nonprofit. More specifically, on the basis of the well-documented, strong, positive consequences of identification (e.g., Bergami and Bagozzi 2000; Mael and Ashforth 1992), we assert that consumers become

---

<sup>1</sup>We use the term *company* in its broadest sense to refer to any organization (both for-profit and nonprofit) that operates in the marketplace and makes product offerings (e.g., goods, services, experiences, information, ideas) to satisfy consumers' needs and wants.

---

C.B. Bhattacharya is Associate Professor of Marketing, School of Management, Boston University. Sankar Sen is Associate Professor of Marketing, Zicklin School of Business, Baruch College/CUNY. Both authors contributed equally to the article. The authors thank Andrew Hoffman, Patrick J. Kaufmann, Hayagreeva Rao, and the three anonymous *JM* reviewers for their help with the article.

champions of the companies with whom they identify (e.g., Apple, Greenpeace).

We draw on prior research (Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994; Pratt 1998) to conceptualize consumers' identification with a company as an active, selective, and volitional act motivated by the satisfaction of one or more self-definitional (i.e., "Who am I?") needs. In doing so, we bring a consumercentric perspective to CRM rhetoric and suggest that identification-based consumer-company relationships cannot be unilaterally imposed by companies; they must be sought out by consumers in their quest for self-definitional need fulfillment. In other words, in addition to the array of typically utilitarian values (e.g., high product value, consistency, convenience) that accrue to consumers from their relationship with a company (Malaviya and Spargo, *in press*), we propose a higher-order and thus far unarticulated source of company-based value that consumers receive when they identify with the company. This value enhances the importance of the relationship and results in certain company-directed behaviors that are qualitatively distinct from those typically obtained in the marketplace.

In the following sections, we draw on extant research in both individual and organizational psychology to elaborate on the nature of C-C identification and articulate our consumer-level conceptual framework, which offers propositions regarding the key determinants and consequences of such identification in the marketplace. We then offer possible approaches to test these propositions. We conclude with a discussion of the theoretical significance of C-C identification and its implications for companies seeking consumer champions.

## C-C Identification

Our central assertion is that some of the strongest consumer-company relationships are based on consumers' identification with the companies that help them satisfy one or more key self-definitional needs. Such C-C identification is active, selective, and volitional on consumers' part and causes them to engage in favorable as well as potentially unfavorable company-related behaviors. Support for this assertion comes from research implicating organizations as key components of people's social identity. Social identity theory (Brewer 1991; Tajfel and Turner 1985) posits that in articulating their sense of self, people typically go beyond their personal identity to develop a social identity. They do so by identifying with or categorizing themselves in a contextual manner (Kramer 1991) as members of various social categories (e.g., gender, ethnicity, occupation, sports teams as well as other, more short-lived and transient groups).

Ashforth and Mael (1989, p. 23) were the first to examine explicitly the role of organizations in people's social identities, conceptualizing the person-organization relationship as organizational identification, or a person's perception of "oneness or belongingness" with an organization. Drawing on social identity theory, they argue that organizational identification occurs when a person's beliefs about a relevant organization becomes self-referential or self-defining (Pratt 1998). More recently, Bergami and Bagozzi (2000, p. 557) review extant research on organizational

identification to isolate it from not only its evaluative and emotional consequences but also the processes underlying it as "a cognitive state of self-categorization," the definition we adopt here. Such self-categorization into organizationally defined categories is thought to be fundamental to the process of identity construction (i.e., "Who am I?") and occurs through consumers' comparison—ranging from an atomistic attribute-by-attribute process to a holistic, gestalt match—of their own defining characteristics (e.g., personality traits, values, demographics) with those that define the category (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994).

Most research has examined such self-categorization in formal membership contexts. Yet according to social identity theory (Brewer 1991), people need not interact or even feel strong interpersonal ties to perceive themselves as members of a group. Recent organizational identification research (Pratt 1998; Scott and Lane 2000) suggests that in line with social identity theory, people seek out organizations for identification purposes even when they are not formal organizational members. We argue that in today's era of unprecedented corporate influence and consumerism, certain companies represent and offer attractive, meaningful social identities to consumers that help them satisfy important self-definitional needs. As a result, such companies constitute valid targets for identification among relevant consumers, even though they are not formal organizational members. Notably, the notion of C-C identification is conceptually distinct from consumers' identification with a company's brands (e.g., Aaker 1997), its target markets, or, more specifically, its prototypical consumer. For example, whereas brands are often emblematic of their producing organizations, a brand's identity (e.g., Marlboro cigarettes) is often distinct from that of the company (e.g., Philip Morris).

### *Constituents of Company Identity*

What constitutes a company's identity?<sup>2</sup> Consumers' knowledge structures about a company, conceptualized alternatively as corporate image, corporate reputation, or, more broadly, corporate associations (Brown and Dacin 1997; Fombrun and Shanley 1990), include consumers' perceptions and beliefs about relevant company characteristics (e.g., culture, climate, skills, values, competitive position, product offerings), as well as their reactions to the company, including company-related moods, emotions, and evaluations (e.g., Dowling 1986). Not all of these associations constitute the informational bases for consumers' identification with a company. Research suggests that people's identification with an organization is based on their perceptions of its core or defining characteristics, that is, its perceived identity

---

<sup>2</sup>Hatch and Schultz (1997) make a conceptual distinction between organizational identity, which is the internal stakeholders' perceptions of the company (i.e., the company's view of itself), and corporate identity, company image, or reputation, which is the external stakeholders' perceptions of it. However, the pertinence of this distinction, borne largely of variations in the communication of company actions to these two sets of stakeholders, is likely to diminish with increasing levels of interaction between "insiders" and "outsiders" and the media-driven transparency of company behavior. Given our focus on consumers' perceptions, we only use the term "company identity" for the sake of consistency.

(Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994). This identity is shaped by the organization's mission, structure, processes, and climate and, as do individual identities, represents possibly hierarchical constellations of characteristics or traits (Kunda 1999; Scott and Lane 2000) that are central to the organization, distinctive from other organizations, and relatively enduring over time (Albert and Whetten 1985).

We propose that consumers identify with the subset of company associations that constitutes the company's identity. This identity is likely to comprise traits that reflect (Figure 1) the company's (1) core values, as embodied in its operating principles, organizational mission, and leadership (Whetten and Godfrey 1998), and (2) demographic characteristics (Pelled, Cummings, and Kizilos 2000; Pfeffer 1983), such as industry, size, age, market position, country of origin, geographic location, and the prototypical profile of its leadership and/or employees.

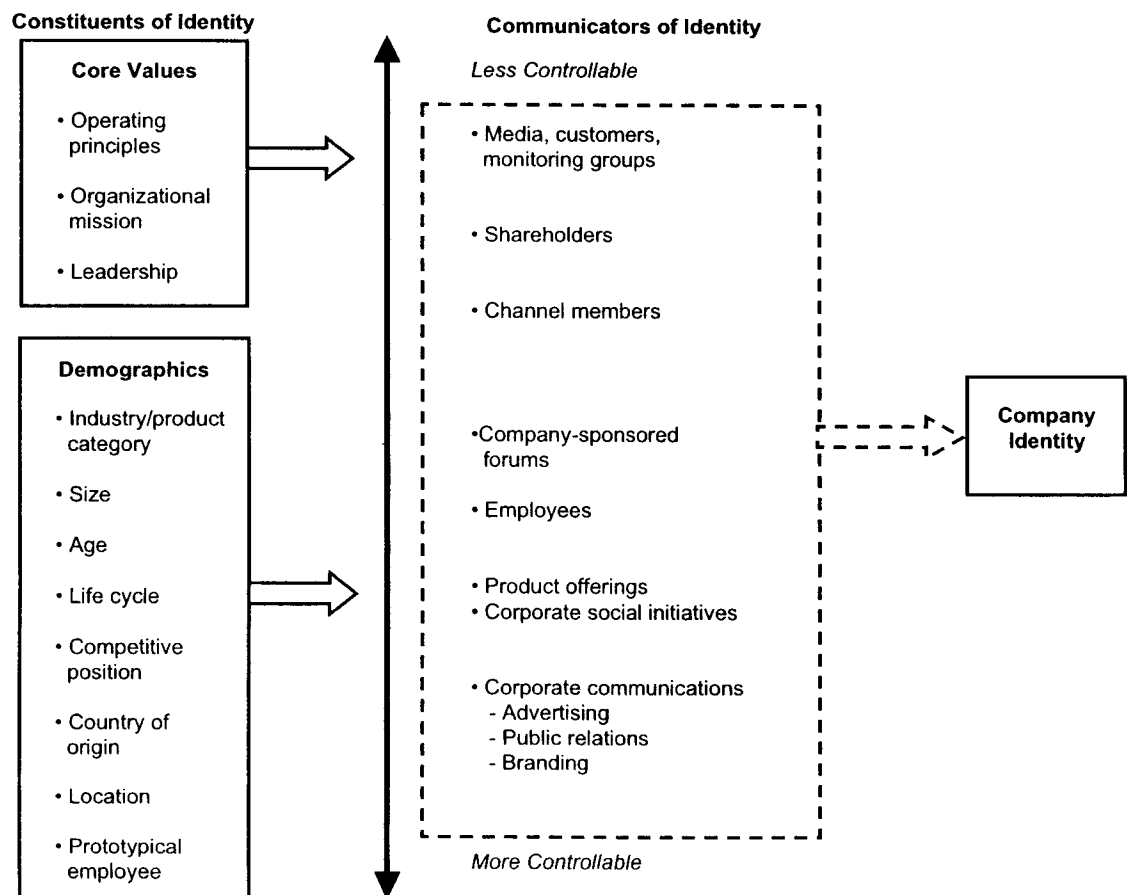
### Communicators of Company Identity

Prior research suggests that a company's identity is conveyed to consumers through a variety of communicators (Whetten and Godfrey 1998). For example, Albert and Whetten (1985) note that though identity is often disseminated through official documents, such as annual reports and press releases, it is also conveyed through signs and symbols

(e.g., logos, appearance of corporate headquarters). A counterpoint to such company-controlled internal communicators of identity (e.g., product offerings, corporate communications, corporate social initiatives, company-sponsored forums) is the large and perhaps increasing numbers of external communicators of identity (e.g., media, customers, monitoring groups, channel members) that are not entirely controlled by the company. For example, a company can control the portrayal of its identity through its own corporate communication efforts (e.g., Microsoft as a champion of innovation), but it usually has little control over how its identity is communicated in the media (e.g., Microsoft as predatory). Similarly, a company can exert greater control over the identity communicated by members of its value chain (e.g., employees, channel members) than by those who are not part of the value chain (e.g., shareholders, customers). In summary, there are many communicators of company identity, which are likely to vary in the extent to which they are controllable by the company (Figure 1).

Next, we examine the specific conditions under which C-C identification is likely to occur. A key premise underlying our consumer-level model of C-C identification is that though identification can be relatively pervasive and direct in the formal membership domain, in consumer contexts it will occur only under a specific set of contingencies.

**FIGURE 1**  
**The Constituents and Communicators of Company Identity**



# Conceptual Framework

## Overview

This framework articulates the individual-level dynamics of C–C identification in terms of two sequential relationships (Figure 2).<sup>3</sup> The first focuses on the link between perceived company identity and identity attractiveness, the key antecedent of C–C identification. We suggest that in the marketplace, as in other contexts, consumers' evaluations of a company's identity attractiveness are based on their perceptions of that identity. More important, we suggest that consumers are likely to be attracted to a company identity that helps satisfy at least one of their three basic self-definitional needs: self-continuity, self-distinctiveness, and self-enhancement. A company's identity attractiveness is likely to depend on how similar it is to consumers' own identity (i.e., identity similarity), its distinctiveness in traits consumers value (i.e., identity distinctiveness), and its prestige (i.e., identity prestige).

We also propose that the link between consumers' perceptions of a company identity and their reactions to it depends on the extent to which they know and trust the identity. Specifically, consumers are more likely to use their perceptions of company identity to make similarity, distinctiveness, and prestige judgments when they believe they know the company's identity well (i.e., identity knowledge and

identity coherence are key moderators). Similarly, we suggest that consumers are more likely to make identity attractiveness evaluations on the basis of their identity-related judgments when they perceive the identity to be trustworthy (i.e., identity trustworthiness is a key moderator).

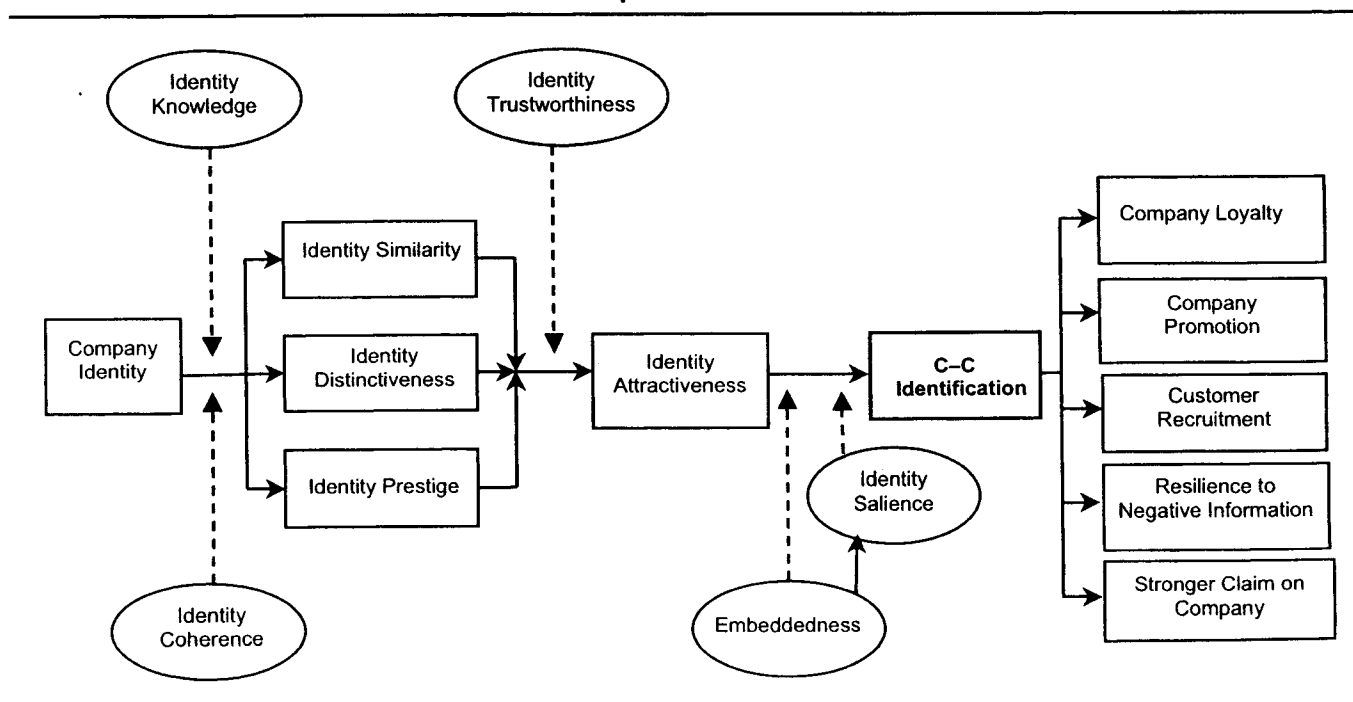
The second relationship focuses on the link between identity attractiveness and C–C identification, including its key consequences. Although this link is likely to be direct and strong among formal members (e.g., employees) of a company (Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994), we expect consumers to identify with an attractive identity only when their interactions with the company embed them in its organizational folds (i.e., embeddedness). Such interactions not only draw consumers into the center of vital company-related networks (Rao, Davis, and Ward 2000) but also increase the salience of the company identity (i.e., identity salience) in their minds, increasing the likelihood of identification (Pratt 1998). Finally, we offer several positive consequences of C–C identification (e.g., company loyalty, company promotion, customer recruitment, resilience to negative information) and one that can potentially hurt the company (i.e., greater claim on the company).

## Company Identity → Identity Attractiveness

Consumers' attractiveness evaluations of a company's identity are based on their perceptions of that identity as derived through the various communicators discussed previously. In other words, a company's perceived identity is the primary antecedent of consumers' identity attractiveness evaluations. Moreover, in consumers' efforts to satisfy their fundamental needs for self-continuity, self-distinctiveness, and self-enhancement, the attractiveness of a company's identity will

<sup>3</sup>Although we expect feedback loops from several of the downstream constructs (e.g., consequences of identification) to certain upstream ones (e.g., identity trustworthiness), we leave an explicit articulation of such second-order effects to further research.

FIGURE 2  
Conceptual Framework



depend, cumulatively, on the extent to which consumers perceive it to be similar to their own, distinctive on dimensions they value, and prestigious.

*Identity similarity.* In their efforts to understand themselves and their social worlds, consumers are motivated to maintain a stable and consistent sense of self, both over time and across situations (for a review, see Kunda 1999). Prior organizational research (Pratt 1998) suggests that this need for self-continuity is a key driver of people's choice of organizations to identify with as they attempt to construct viable, cognitively consistent social identities (Heider 1958). In other words, consumers are likely to find a company's identity more attractive when it matches their own sense of who they are. The link between identity similarity and perceived identity attractiveness is likely to occur (Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994) not only because consumers find the self-relevant information inherent to company identities that are similar to their own easier to focus on, process, and retrieve (Markus and Wurf 1987) but also because such identities enable them to maintain and express more fully and authentically (Pratt 1998) their sense of who they are (i.e., their traits and values). For example, a consumer who cares about animal rights will be more attracted to a company that has distinguished itself in this regard (e.g., a company that does not engage in animal testing or the nonprofit organization People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) than to another that focuses, say, on the arts.

P<sub>1</sub>: The more similar consumers perceive a company identity to be to their own, the more attractive that identity is to them. In other words, the relationship between consumers' perceptions of a company identity and their evaluation of its attractiveness is mediated by the identity's perceived similarity to their own.

*Identity distinctiveness.* Social identity research contends that people need to distinguish themselves from others in social contexts (Tajfel and Turner 1985). Specifically, Brewer's (1991) theory of optimal distinctiveness suggests that people attempt to resolve the fundamental tension between their need to be similar to others and their need to be unique by identifying with groups that satisfy both needs. Therefore, distinctiveness is an important organizational characteristic from an identity attractiveness perspective. Thus, while consumers' need for distinctiveness is likely to vary with cultural norms, individual socialization, and recent experience (Brewer 1991), it is likely to make the (self-relevant) distinctiveness of a company's identity a key determinant of attractiveness. Because distinctiveness is likely to be articulated relative to other companies, it in turn will depend not only on the company's own identity but also on its competitive landscape (e.g., the number of competitors; their identities, particularly the similarities among them; the company's perceived positioning relative to competition).

P<sub>2</sub>: The more distinctive consumers perceive a company's identity to be on dimensions they value, the more attractive that identity is to them. In other words, the relationship between consumers' perceptions of a company identity and their evaluation of its attractiveness is mediated by the identity's perceived distinctiveness on dimensions they value.

*Identity prestige.* People also like to perceive themselves in a positive light; self-concept research (Kunda 1999) suggests that people's need for self-continuity goes hand in hand with their need for self-enhancement, or the maintenance and affirmation of positive self-views that result in greater self-esteem. Moreover, as with self-continuity, organizational identification research (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994) suggests that a key way consumers seek to satisfy their self-enhancement need is by identifying with organizations that have prestigious identities. Prestige here refers to organizational stakeholders' perceptions that other people, whose opinions they value, believe that the organization is well regarded (Bergami and Bagozzi 2000). That is, consumers' identification with a company that has a prestigious identity enables them to view themselves in the reflected glory of the company, which enhances their sense of self-worth. Thus, the attractiveness of a company's identity is likely to be determined in part by its perceived prestige (Cheney 1983; Pratt 1998).

P<sub>3</sub>: The more prestigious consumers perceive a company's identity to be, the more attractive that identity is to them. In other words, the relationship between consumers' perceptions of a company identity and their evaluation of its attractiveness is mediated by the identity's perceived prestige.

When people are formal members of an organization and interact with it on a frequent, intimate basis (e.g., employees), their levels of understanding and trust of the organizational identity are likely to be high. Thus, if they perceive their company's identity to be distinctive, prestigious, and/or similar to their own, its attractiveness to them is virtually ensured. In contrast, consumers perceive a company's identity through cognitive and evaluative filters that often distort, fragment, or obscure its identity (Figure 1). Therefore, consumers' knowledge of a company's identity, as well as their more specific appraisals of its clarity and veracity, is likely to be more dispersed than is that of their formal counterparts, resulting in reduced veridicality in both their identity-related judgments and their attractiveness evaluations. Specifically, consumers' similarity, distinctiveness, and prestige judgments are likely to vary with two related but conceptually distinct factors: their perceptions of how much they know about the company's identity (identity knowledge) and, more specifically, the extent to which they perceive what they do know as a consistent, coherent whole (identity coherence). Similarly, consumers' perceptions of the identity's trustworthiness are likely to moderate their willingness to use these judgments as viable input into their identity attractiveness evaluations.

*Identity knowledge.* Compared with that among formal members, the level of company identity knowledge among consumers is likely to be more varied and lower. Research on the effects of knowledge on information use and decision making (Alba and Hutchinson 2000; Raju, Lonial, and Mangold 1995) suggests that consumers' use of their identity perceptions as input into their familiarity, prestige, and distinctiveness judgments varies with their sense of how knowledgeable they are about the identity. Specifically, lower subjective knowledge (i.e., people's perceptions of how knowledgeable they are) about a company identity is

likely to decrease consumers' confidence in their ability to make identity-based judgments, weakening the link between their identity perceptions and such judgments. This moderating effect is underscored by the positive correlation between subjective knowledge and objective or actual knowledge (Raju, Lonial, and Mangold 1995), which diminishes consumers' ability to make meaningful identity-related judgments. Consumers' knowledge, in turn, is determined by the extent to which they learn about a company's identity through the communicators depicted in Figure 1. For example, they are more likely to be familiar with the identities of companies that actively engage in identity communication (e.g., corporate advertising) or are the subject of identity-revealing media coverage or word of mouth.

- P<sub>4</sub>: Consumers' perceived knowledge about a company identity moderates the extent to which they use their identity perceptions to make identity-related (i.e., similarity, prestige, and distinctiveness) judgments.

**Identity coherence.** Coherence, or "the organization and patterning of attributes of personality within an individual" (Beisanz and West 2000, p. 425), is believed to be the stable behavioral signature of personality, conveying the gestalt that is commonly understood as personality by laypersons. According to recent personality research (see Shoda and Mischel 2000), coherence emerges from the distinct and stable patterns of behavior variability that people display over time and plays a key role in how they perceive and understand others. Similarly, the coherence of a company identity, or how constituent traits relate to one another, is likely to play a key role in consumers' comprehension of that identity, given that it is likely to be large, complex, and unwieldy (Albert and Whetten 1985). Specifically, consumers' understanding of a company's identity, including their ability to make identity-related judgments, is likely to be greater when the company's actions in disparate domains coalesce into stable, distinctive, and meaningful connections among its defining characteristics than when no such underlying coherence is apparent (i.e., the actions seem inconsistent). In other words, when consumers comprehend a company's identity to be an internally consistent, coherent whole, they are better able to discern its distinctiveness, prestige, and similarity to their own identity (see Kristof 1996, p. 86).

Several factors determine an identity's perceived coherence. Some identities are inherently more coherent than others, such as those achieved through distinctive corporate positioning strategies that are consistent over time (e.g., Wainwright Bank's support of an array of related social issues) or for companies that have spent considerable effort articulating their own identities (e.g., Ben & Jerry's). Coherence is also likely to be affected by a range of marketplace activities, such as mergers and acquisitions (e.g., Hewlett Packard and Compaq). Finally, the greater the number of identity communicators and the lower a company's ability to control them, the more likely it is that people will receive incoherent, even contradictory identity information.

- P<sub>5</sub>: The perceived coherence of a company identity moderates the extent to which consumers use their identity perceptions to make identity-related (i.e., similarity, prestige, and distinctiveness) judgments.

**Identity trustworthiness.** Much research (e.g., Chaudhari and Holbrook 2001; Gottlieb and Sarel 1992) suggests that consumers' trustworthiness perceptions of company communications and actions moderate the extent to which their product perceptions lead to positive product evaluations. Similarly, organizational research (e.g., Kramer 1999) points to organizational trustworthiness as a key determinant of various positive organizational citizenship behaviors. Drawing on this, we suggest that the perceived trustworthiness of a company identity is likely to moderate the effect of consumers' identity-related judgments on their identity attractiveness evaluations.<sup>4</sup> Specifically, the relationship between an identity's distinctiveness, prestige, and similarity judgments and its attractiveness to consumers is likely to depend on the extent to which consumers trust their identity-related judgments (i.e., the identity), including the company's motives in defining itself thus. In other words, if consumers trust the company's identity, they are likely to perceive lower risk (Grewal, Gottlieb, and Marmorstein 1994) in using their identity-related judgments to gauge identity attractiveness.

Consumers' perceptions of identity trustworthiness are likely to vary across companies and depend, in general, on their historical experience with that company, its reputation, the type or category of company (e.g., tobacco), and, in particular, the attributions they make about the company's intentions and actions from available data. In turn, the nature of these attributions is likely to depend, at least in part, on the sources of information; consumers are less likely to trust identity information from company-controlled sources, such as corporate advertising.

- P<sub>6</sub>: The perceived trustworthiness of a company identity moderates the relationship between consumers' identity-related judgments and their evaluation of its overall attractiveness.

### **Identity Attractiveness → C-C Identification**

Most organizational identification research has focused primarily on membership contexts, in which membership in the relevant organization is not only formal but also central (i.e., plays an encompassing, defining role) to the lives of the identifying individuals (e.g., employees with employer organizations, students with colleges). Thus, it is not surprising that this research has drawn a strong, direct connection between identity attractiveness and organizational identification: "[T]he greater the attractiveness of the perceived identity of an organization, the stronger [is] a person's identification with it" (Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994, p. 244). However, companies do not typically play such central roles in consumers' lives. As a result, identity attractiveness in the consumer-company context is likely to be a necessary but not sufficient condition for identification. In particular,

<sup>4</sup>We expect identity trustworthiness, unlike identity knowledge and coherence, to be a moderator of consumers' evaluative responses to a company's identity (i.e., attractiveness evaluations) rather than of their purely cognitive ones (i.e., identity-related judgments). For example, consumers' ability to make identity-related judgments, particularly those of similarity and distinctiveness, is unlikely to be affected by identity trustworthiness.

we suggest that consumers will identify with an attractive company identity only when their interactions with that company are significant, sustained, and meaningful enough to embed them in the organizational network. Such embeddedness<sup>5</sup> (Rao, Davis, and Ward 2000) not only establishes the company as a viable social category in consumers' minds but also, more specifically, makes this category salient relative to those borne of other organizational affiliations.

*Embeddedness.* In recent years, consumers' interactions with companies have evolved from impersonal economic exchanges to participation in long-term relationships with both key internal stakeholders (e.g., senior management) and other consumers. These interactions vary in the extent to which they embed the consumer in the organizational network (Scott and Lane 2000). Research on embeddedness, or the ongoing contextualization of economic exchange activity in social structures (Granovetter 1985; Rao, Davis, and Ward 2000; for a review, see Dacin, Ventresca, and Beal 1999), suggests that in contrast to arm's-length relationships, consumers' embedded relationships with companies are likely to be strong, intricate, and trusting, resulting in consumers feeling more like insiders than outsiders.

Embeddedness places consumers closer to the center of the social network embodied by the company, making them feel more integrated in the network (O'Hara, Beehr, and Colarelli 1994). Embedded consumers are active in the organization, have easy access to other organizational members, can mediate the flow of resources or information in the organization, and have connections to central organizational members (Faust 1997). Consumers' embeddedness in a company-derived social network is therefore likely to be key to their designation of it as a viable social category capable of shaping their social identity (Rao, Davis, and Ward 2000). In other words, consumers will not identify with every company whose identity they find attractive; identification is likely to occur only when their embeddedness makes it both easier and more important for them to categorize themselves socially in terms of the company.

Embedded relationships arise when consumers engage in company-related rites, rituals, and routines (i.e., a variety of institutionalized socialization tactics) that cast them in legitimate membership roles (Kristof 1996; Pratt 2000). Such behaviors are often enacted in a "local, tribal context" (Ashforth 1998, p. 219), including "member conferences" (e.g., Holiday Inn; Cross 1992) and other such company-sponsored forums (e.g., Camp Jeep, Harley-Davidson Brandfest; McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig 2002), in which consumers meet company insiders (e.g., management). Embeddedness also increases when consumers network with other company stakeholders through on- and offline communities (e.g., the discussion forums hosted by American Cancer Society) or get involved in company decision making (e.g., Southwest Airlines

invites frequent fliers to interview prospective flight attendants; Heskett et al. 1994). Finally, embedded relationships are more likely to occur when the company and its products contribute to the satisfaction of idiosyncratic, important interests (e.g., hobbies) and provide opportunities for self-expression than when they satisfy less important needs.

P<sub>7</sub>: The embeddedness of consumers' relationship with a company moderates the relationship between identity attractiveness and C-C identification. Consumers are more likely to identify with an attractive company identity when they are embedded in the company-defined social network.

*Identity salience.* The organizational identification literature (Hogg and Terry 2000; Pratt 2000; Scott and Lane 2000) implicates identity salience, or the extent to which specific identity information dominates a person's working memory, as a key determinant of identification. In particular, research suggests that when an organizational identity is salient, it is likely to be evoked across a wider range of situations and increase consumers' propensity to focus and elaborate on its implications for their social identity over other, possibly competing identities. When consumers can easily access attractive, self-relevant identity information from memory, the likelihood of their identifying with it is higher. In the employee-employer context, the salience of the employer's identity is likely to be uniformly high, driven by daily interaction, continual following of organizational routines, and a myriad of other socialization tactics (Scott and Lane 2000). In the consumer-company context, however, there is likely to be significant variation among consumers in the extent to which the company identity is salient, thereby making it a key moderator of the identity attractiveness → C-C identification relationship.

Although embeddedness is likely to increase identity salience, it is not the only determinant; salience is also heightened by factors such as the intensity of the company's corporate image communication efforts. Specifically, initiatives such as corporate advertising and public relations not only educate consumers about the company's identity but also make it more salient relative to other competing organizational identities. Moreover, salience is likely to be particularly high when in-group/out-group differences are heightened (Pratt 1998), such as in Apple's "Computers for Everyone Else" and "Think Different" campaigns. In general, corporate branding is likely to increase identity salience, because some of the strongest associations of corporate brands (Keller 1998) are intangible and identity related (e.g., innovative, market leader, environmentally conscious). Also, some identities are likely to be inherently more salient, particularly if they are more distinctive or novel than their competition's (Pratt 1998). Over time, these factors increase an identity's share of mind and help consumers internalize its relevance to their social identity (Scott and Lane 2000), making it more salient and accessible.

P<sub>8</sub>: Identity salience moderates the relationship between identity attractiveness and C-C identification. Consumers are

<sup>5</sup>Embeddedness may also influence consumers' perceptions of identity knowledge, coherence, and trustworthiness. However, as with feedback loops, we leave an articulation of these second-order effects to further research.

more likely to identify with an attractive company identity when it is more salient.

### **C–C Identification: Consequences**

A central question guiding our perspective on consumer–company relationships is: What benefits accrue to a company when consumers identify with it? Virtually all organizational identification research points to the multitude of positive consequences that stem from people’s self-categorization into organization-based social categories (Bagozzi and Bergami 2002; Mael and Ashforth 1992; Scott and Lane 2000). Identification causes people to become psychologically attached to and care about the organization, which motivates them to commit to the achievement of its goals, expend more voluntary effort on its behalf, and interact positively and cooperatively with organizational members. We discuss the implications of these consequences for the consumer–company domain next.

*Company loyalty.* Researchers (e.g., Bagozzi and Bergami 2002) have established a strong link between identification and identifier commitment in terms of reduced turnover in the employer–employee context and greater financial and membership-related support in the context of educational and cultural institutions (Bhattacharya, Rao, and Glynn 1995; Wan-Huggins, Riordan, and Griffeth 1998). In addition, research (e.g., Bergami and Bagozzi 2000; Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994) has suggested that among organizational members, identification leads to increased competition with and even derogation of nonmembers. Because consumption is the primary currency of consumer–company relationships, such identification-based commitment is likely to be expressed through a sustained, long-term preference for the identified-with company’s products over those of its competitors. In other words, company loyalty is a key consequence of C–C identification. Because the consumer identifies with the company rather than its products, this loyalty is likely to be somewhat immune to minor variations in product formulation and extend, *ceteris paribus*, to all the products produced by the company. Moreover, consumers’ commitment and desire to increase the welfare of the company (e.g., Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994) are likely to manifest in their more specific efforts to support the company in its inherently risky endeavor of new product introduction. The consumption of new products gives identified consumers yet another opportunity to support the company and enables them to feel like they are bearing some of its risk.

P<sub>9</sub>: The higher the level of C–C identification, the more likely consumers are to be loyal to the company’s existing products and try its new products.

*Company promotion.* Research (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Dutton and Dukerich 1991) suggests that identifiers have a vested interest in the success of the company and, because of their self-distinctiveness and enhancement drives, want to ensure that their affiliation with it is communicated to relevant audiences in the most positive light possible. Such communication also helps consumers socially validate their identity claims so that they can be internalized

(Ashforth 1998). Thus, consumers’ support of the company is likely to be expressed through avenues other than just consumption (Scott and Lane 2000). In other words, consumers are likely to promote the company to significant others. Conversely, in their efforts to manage “outsider” impressions of the company (Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994), they are likely to defend the company and its actions, should either come under adverse scrutiny in the media or among relevant publics.

Such promotion can be both social and physical. In the social domain, consumers are likely to initiate positive word of mouth about the company and its products (e.g., First Direct, the U.K. retail bank, is recommended by its customers every four seconds, gaining more than one-third of its new business from referrals; Smith 2001). They will also defend the company when it is attacked by others, particularly nonmembers. When identification is especially strong, consumers may adopt visible, more chronic proxies or “markers” of their internal psychological state (Schlenker 1986). Such physical promotion takes the form of consumers bearing markers of the company identity (e.g., logo, name) through the collection of memorabilia, apparel choices, and even tattoos (Katz 1994). It is not surprising, then, that companies such as Ben & Jerry’s and Harley-Davidson have a variety of collectibles that consumers can purchase (Allen 1993). Such physical promotion is most likely when identification is driven by the needs of self-enhancement or distinctiveness, for which need fulfillment is particularly contingent on the social validation of identification.

P<sub>10</sub>: The higher the level of C–C identification, the more likely consumers are to promote the company, both socially (i.e., talk positively about it and its products) and physically (i.e., adopt company markers).

*Customer recruitment.* Identified consumers have a clear stake in the company’s success (Ashforth and Mael 1989). From the identifier’s perspective, an effective path to long-term success, beyond consumption of the company’s product, lies in recruiting new consumers for the company. Thus, customer recruitment is likely to be a key manifestation of identified consumers’ voluntary efforts (O’Reilly and Chatman 1986) to contribute to the company’s long-term welfare. Such recruitment efforts are also likely to be informed by the heightened in-group/out-group distinctions that result from identification (Scott and Lane 2000; Tajfel and Turner 1985), driving consumers to strengthen the in-group with more like-minded people (e.g., friends, family, coworkers), as in the case of Virgin Atlantic (Smith 2001). In addition to helping the company, a large in-group helps legitimize and reaffirm each member’s company-based social identity while bringing the recruiter closer to the center of the organizational network. Finally, because identified consumers are motivated to engage in helpful and supportive behaviors toward in-group members (Scott and Lane 2000), which results in intragroup cohesion, cooperation, and altruism (Ashforth and Mael 1989), recruiting people they like or care about to be part of the company-based in-group enables consumers to maintain an overall coherence among the different social domains in which they operate. In summary, we



expect consumers to be actively involved in recruiting customers for the company they identify with, but such recruitment is likely to be enacted primarily among extant social networks of family, friends, and colleagues.

- P<sub>11</sub>: The higher the level of C-C identification, the more likely consumers are to recruit people from their extant social networks to be new customers of the company.

*Resilience to negative information.* We expect identified consumers to overlook and downplay any negative information they may receive about a company (or its products) they identify with, particularly when the magnitude of such information is relatively minor (Alsop 2002). For example, focus groups of Tom's of Maine customers (Chappell 1993) suggest that when customers share a company's values, their relationship with it is not tarnished by their disappointment over the performance of a single product. The likelihood of such resilience to negative information is underscored by Bergami and Bagozzi's (2000) finding that identification with an organization causes people's interactions with it to be characterized by courtesy, altruism, and sportsmanship. In the consumer context, these characteristics are likely to cause consumers to make more charitable attributions regarding the company's intentions and responsibility when things go wrong and to be more forgiving of the company's mistakes if its culpability is established. In other words, just as consumers are likely to forgive themselves for minor mistakes, they will forgive the companies they identify with, particularly because identification leads them to trust the company and its intentions (Hibbard et al. 2001; Kramer 1991).

- P<sub>12</sub>: Within a zone of tolerance, the higher the level of C-C identification, the greater is consumers' resilience to negative information about the company.

However, such resilience is likely to be nonlinear. When the negative information is of a relatively major magnitude and is identity related (e.g., a socially responsible company is exposed for using sweatshops), identified consumers are likely to react more strongly and more permanently than nonidentified consumers (Bagozzi and Bergami 2002), perhaps by boycotting the company's products and engaging in negative word of mouth. Such a heightened response is particularly likely in the face of a perceived betrayal of identity authenticity and trust, as when the domain of the company's "failure" is perceived to be controllable by the company and is the central basis for identification (e.g., an environmentally conscious consumer's reaction to Ford's alleged failure to live up to its own "green" principles; Hakim 2002).

- P<sub>13</sub>: Beyond a zone of tolerance, the higher the level of C-C identification, the stronger and more permanent are consumers' reactions to negative information about the company, particularly when such information is identity related.

*Stronger claim on company.* Although identification is likely to benefit companies in many ways, prior research (Dukerich, Kramer, and Parks 1998; Hibbard et al. 2001; Kristof 1996) suggests that from the company's perspective, there is a potential risk to identification as well. When con-

sumers identify with a company, their company-borne social identity becomes more important to them (Boldero and Francis 2000). With this importance, consumers perceive their claim on the organization as more legitimate and urgent (Mitchell, Agle, and Wood 1997), and they are likely to press this claim more actively and consistently. This is particularly key when a company's efforts at long-term success result in identity-related changes. Dutton and Dukerich (1991) suggest that when such changes threaten identified consumers' sense of self, they are likely to resist them and lobby the company to be consistent with its original, less viable identity. More generally, in trying to induce identification, companies may unwittingly boost consumers' power by embedding them too deeply into the organization. In other cases, consumers may identify more with one another than with the organization and act collectively to further their own agendas. Overall, these actions may result in consumers having greater power over the company, which reduces its autonomy in relevant spheres of endeavor.

- P<sub>14</sub>: The higher the level of C-C identification, the stronger are consumers' claims on the company.

## Model Testing

Empirical testing is the logical next step in establishing the validity of our model and its propositions. Such testing must be based on multiple companies, with methods ranging from laboratory experiments to field surveys. Because of the number of constructs in the model and the complex relationships among them, it is best to test it in two or more parts before testing the entire model. Moreover, regardless of the method employed, extensive qualitative research (e.g., focus groups, depth interviews) is a key first step. Such research would not only help generate a list of companies with which consumers are likely to identify but also help develop new or refine existing measures of the model's key constructs. Examples of such measures are presented in Table 1. Some measures (e.g., C-C identification, identity coherence) can be obtained or adapted from prior work in the domain. Of those that must be developed, several (e.g., identity knowledge, trustworthiness) are subjective in nature and can be measured by means of multi-item Likert scales (for examples, see Table 1). Others (e.g., the consequences of C-C identification) can be operationalized by means of either subjective or objective measures or a combination thereof.

After the measures are finalized, we propose separate tests of the two submodels that constitute our conceptual framework (i.e., company identity → identity attractiveness and identity attractiveness → C-C identification, including the consequences of the latter). Because of the relatively time-independent nature of the company identity → identity attractiveness submodel, it is particularly amenable to experimental tests involving the manipulation of company identity information and the measurement of the dependent variable, the mediators, and the moderators. The two submodels can also be tested by means of surveys administered to relevant populations regarding their relationships with one or more focal companies from first the same, but eventually different, industries. Possible approaches to estimat-

**TABLE 1**  
**Potential Measures of Model Constructs**

Construct	Measure Type
<b>Company Identity → Identity Attractiveness</b>	
Company identity	Trait adjective ratings (see O'Reilly, Chatman, and Caldwell 1991; Sen and Bhattacharya 2001)
Identity attractiveness	Likert-type multi-item scale (e.g., "I like what Company X stands for"; "Company X has an attractive identity")
Identity similarity	Likert-type multi-item scale (e.g., "I recognize myself in Company X"; "My sense of who I am matches my sense of Company X")
Identity distinctiveness	Likert-type multi-item scale (e.g., "Company X has a distinctive identity"; "Company X stands out from its competitors")
Identity prestige	Likert-type multi-item scale (e.g., "Company X is a first-class, high-quality company")
Identity knowledge	Likert-type multi-item scale (e.g., "I feel like I know very well what this company stands for") Objective knowledge test about company traits
Identity coherence	Likert-type multi-item scale (e.g., "It's difficult to get a clear sense of what this company stands for from its actions") Objective coherence measure (e.g., idiographic analysis of company identity; see Shoda, Mischel, and Wright 1994)
Identity trustworthiness	Likert-type multi-item scale (e.g., "I don't trust this company")
<b>Identity Attractiveness → C-C Identification</b>	
C-C identification	Two-item identification measure (Bergami and Bagozzi 2000) Implicit association measures (see Brunel et al. 2002)
Salience	Likert-type multi-item scale (e.g., "I think about company X often") Objective salience measures (e.g., free recall, recognition and recall reaction times)
Embeddedness	Likert-type multi-item scale (e.g., "My interactions with Company X make me an important player in the organization") Objective centrality measure (e.g., degree centrality or eigenvector centrality; see Faust 1997)
Product loyalty	Likert-type multi-item scale
<i>Existing products</i>	(e.g., "I am loyal to the products Company X makes")
<i>New products</i>	(e.g., "I like to try every new product Company X introduces")
	Product purchase behavior (e.g., number of Company X product purchases in a specified time period)
<i>Existing products</i>	(e.g., number of new product purchases from Company X in a specified time period)
<i>New products</i>	
Company promotion	Likert-type multi-item scale
<i>Social</i>	(e.g., "I often talk favorably about Company X and its products to my friends and colleagues")
<i>Physical</i>	(e.g., "I often wear clothing with the Company X logo")
	Promotion behavior (e.g., number of times in a specific time period respondent generated positive word of mouth about Company X)
<i>Social</i>	(e.g., number of Company X souvenirs, memorabilia, tattoos)
<i>Physical</i>	
Customer recruitment	Likert-type multi-item scale (e.g., "I try to get my friends and family to buy Company X's products") Recruitment behavior (e.g., number of people recruited by respondent to buy Company X's products)
Resilience to negative information	Likert-type multi-item scale (e.g., "I forgive Company X when it makes mistakes"; "I will forgive company X for [specific negative information]") Resilience behavior (e.g., reaction to specific unfavorable media coverage)
Stronger claim on company	Likert-type multi-item scale (e.g., "I feel I have a right to tell Company X what it should do") Claim behavior (e.g., number of demands made on Company X in a specified time period)

ing these submodels include path analysis or structural equation modeling (Mullen 1995).

## Discussion

This article contributes to several different research streams. By implicating consumer-company similarity perceptions as a key driver of identification, this research complements that on consumer-brand congruity (Aaker 1997; Fournier 1998; Kleine, Kleine, and Allen 1995). Specifically, we argue that akin to consumers' brand congruity perceptions on self-relevant dimensions, their perceptions of congruence between their own identity and that of relevant companies can be a source of self-definition. Of course, consumers' relationships with a company are also likely to be influenced by their relationships with its brands. However, a theoretical contribution of this research lies in highlighting the role of the nonproduct aspects of a company (Brown and Dacin 1997), such as its values and demographics, its social responsibility efforts, and the networking opportunities it provides in building the consumer-company bond. In general, by positing that consumers can express themselves vicariously through their identification with select companies, this research also adds to the notion of the extended self (Belk 1988). The extended-self literature has thus far focused primarily on the role of material possessions in identity formation. We suggest that consumers' identification with companies can also contribute to such self-extension.

By contrasting the dynamics of identification in the consumer-company realm to that in formal membership contexts (e.g., employees), this research adds to the organizational identification literature. Whereas organizational identification research has focused on the antecedents, mediators, and moderators of identification within formal membership, our framework underscores the likelihood of identification in non- or pseudomembership situations and pinpoints the roles of several individual-specific factors in driving such identification. An understanding of these dynamics may be particularly important for organizational researchers in an era of flexible location and work schedules, in which the lines between organizational insiders and outsiders are increasingly blurred. More important, we suggest that, differences apart, encouraging identification may be not only a good employee retention strategy but also, under certain conditions, a good customer retention one.

By clarifying the consumer-based contingencies under which advocacy or championing behavior is likely to occur, our research adds an important new dimension to managers' understanding of the possibilities and limits of their customer relationship-building strategies. In particular, our framework suggests that in harnessing the power of identification in their own company-consumer contexts, managers must ask themselves the following questions: (1) Do we want consumers to identify with our company? and (2) If so, how can we get consumers to identify with our company? Specifically, what do managers need to do in terms of identity articulation, identity communication, and identification management?

Before formulating and implementing an identification-building strategy, managers must ascertain whether they actually want their consumers to identify with their company. As Malaviya and Spargo (in press) point out, not all

companies will benefit from going beyond satisfying consumers' basic utilitarian needs to fulfilling their higher-order self-definitional needs; the rewards are likely to depend, among other things, on a company's industry, its customer base, its competitive positioning, and its overall strategy. For example, for companies with a broad consumer base, identification among one consumer segment might lead to disidentification among others (Elsbach and Bhattacharya 2001). In general, facilitating identification is not only costly in terms of resources but also potentially risky in terms of limiting a company's strategic degrees of freedom with regard to future business decisions, which makes a clear cost-benefit analysis an essential precursor to the pursuit of C-C identification.

What types of companies are likely to benefit from identification? Compared with business-to-business companies, business-to-consumer companies may benefit more because they are better known to the general public and provide opportunities for direct consumption, with concomitant opportunities for self-expression. Also, because company attributes are likely to play a greater role in contexts of low product differentiation, companies in such product categories may benefit more from identification. In light of the role played by consumer-company interactions in facilitating embeddedness and thus identification, service companies are perhaps more likely to benefit from identification than are those that sell products. Finally, because identification is expected to engender loyalty to the company rather than to a specific brand, providers of multiple products targeted to the same segment are likely to benefit to a greater extent.

If C-C identification is deemed desirable, companies must articulate and communicate their identities clearly, coherently, and in a persuasive manner. A thoughtfully designed and executed communications strategy is essential: Marketers must communicate clearly, through controllable channels, the identity dimensions that their consumers are likely to perceive as distinctive, prestigious, and similar to their own, as well as continually monitor identity information that is disseminated through uncontrollable channels, to address discrepancies in a prompt and persuasive manner.

Finally, companies must devote significant resources to identification management. This task is likely to be easier for companies with small, relatively homogeneous target markets (e.g., niche markets) or those that have targeted specific consumer subgroups for identification. In either case, companies must devise strategies for sustained, deep, and meaningful consumer-company interactions that embed consumers in the organization and make them feel like insiders. Notably, such interactions should not necessarily be mediated through the product (e.g., brand communities), because such efforts might highlight the instrumentality that characterizes most consumer-company relationships. Instead, these interactions should focus on bringing consumers face to face with the organizational identity, while drawing them closer to the center of the organization through co-creation activities (Malaviya and Spargo, in press; Sheth and Parvatiyar 1995) that are focused on the organization (e.g., company policies, personnel recruitment) rather than on its output (e.g., product design, advertising).

## Further Research

Of the many research issues that can be pursued in this area, the most pressing is the need for empirical testing. It is important to articulate the longitudinal, higher-order effects, including feedback loops, that are likely to occur in our proposed model. For example, embeddedness is likely to facilitate the identity attractiveness → C-C identification link and lead to greater identity knowledge. In other words, the mechanisms underlying identity attractiveness and identification are likely to be iterative, and over time, identification itself may affect some of

the independent variables in our model. For example, identification may alter consumers' perceptions of identity similarity and prestige, as well as their desire for greater embeddedness. Similarly, consumers engaging in company promotion may intensify their identification over time. Relatedly, it is important to delineate the interactions among the independent and mediator variables in the model. For example, the three identity-related judgments and the three moderators (identity knowledge, coherence, and trustworthiness) may interact positively in their cumulative effect on identity attractiveness.

## REFERENCES

- Aaker, Jennifer (1997), "Dimensions of Brand Personality," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34 (August), 347-56.
- Alba, Joseph W. and J. Wesley Hutchinson (2000), "Knowledge Calibration: What Consumers Know and What They Think They Know," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27 (September), 123-56.
- Albert, Stuart and David A. Whetten (1985), "Organizational Identity," *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 7, 263-95.
- Allen, Hayward (1993), "Sweet Ride to Success: America's Premiere Motorcycle Manufacturer Owns the Road in Employee and Customer Loyalty," *Corporate Report Wisconsin*, 9 (4), 8.
- Alsop, Ronald (2002), "For a Company, Charitable Works Are Best Carried Out Discreetly," *The Wall Street Journal*, (January 16), B1.
- Ashforth, Blake E. (1998), "Becoming: How Does the Process of Identification Unfold?" in *Identity in Organizations: Developing Theory Through Conversations*, David A. Whetten and Paul C. Godfrey, eds. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 213-22.
- and Fred Mael (1989), "Social Identity Theory and the Organization," *Academy of Management Review*, 14 (1), 20-39.
- Bagozzi, Richard P. and Massimo Bergami (2002), "Antecedents and Consequences of Organizational Identification and the Nomological Validity of the Bergami-Bagozzi Scale," working paper, Marketing Department, Jones Graduate School of Management, Rice University.
- Beisanz, Jeremy C. and Stephen G. West (2000), "Personality Coherence: Moderating Self-Other Profile Agreement and Profile Consensus," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79 (3), 425-37.
- Belk, Russell W. (1988), "Possessions and the Extended Self," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15 (September), 139-68.
- Bergami, Massimo and Richard P. Bagozzi (2000), "Self-Categorization, Affective Commitment and Group Self-Esteem as Distinct Aspects of Social Identity in the Organization," *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 39 (4), 555-77.
- Bhattacharya, C.B., Hayagreeva Rao, and Mary A. Glynn (1995), "Understanding the Bond of Identification: An Investigation of its Correlates Among Art Museum Members," *Journal of Marketing*, 59 (October), 46-57.
- Boldero, Jennifer and Jill Francis (2000), "The Relation Between Self-Discrepancies and Emotion: The Moderating Roles of Self-Guide Importance, Location Relevance, and Social Self-Domain Centrality," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78 (1), 38-52.
- Brewer, Marilyn B. (1991), "The Social Self: On Being the Same and Different at the Same Time," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17 (5), 475-82.
- Brown, Tom J. and Peter A. Dacin (1997), "The Company and the Product: Corporate Associations and Consumer Product Responses," *Journal of Marketing*, 61 (January), 68-84.
- Brunel, Frederic, Cathleen M. Collins, Anthony G. Greenwald, and Brian C. Tietje (2002), "Making the Private Public, Accessing the Inaccessible: Marketing Applications of the Implicit Association Test," working paper, Marketing Department, School of Management, Boston University.
- Chappell, Tom (1993), *The Soul of a Business: Managing for Profit and the Common Good*. Des Plaines, IL: Bantam.
- Chaudhari, Arjun and Morris B. Holbrook (2001), "The Chain of Effects from Brand Trust and Brand Affect to Brand Performance: The Role of Brand Loyalty," *Journal of Marketing*, 65 (April), 81-93.
- Cheney, George Carroll C. (1983), "On the Various and Changing Meanings of Organizational Membership: A Field Study of Organizational Identification," *Communication Monographs*, 50 (4), 342-62.
- Cross, Richard H. (1992), "The Five Degrees of Customer Bonding," *Direct Marketing*, 55 (6), 33-37.
- Dacin, Tina M., Marc J. Ventresca, and Brent D. Beal (1999), "The Embeddedness of Organizations: Dialogues and Directions," *Journal of Management*, 25 (3), 317-56.
- De Wulf, Kristof, Gaby Odekerken-Schroder, and Dawn Iacobucci (2001), "Investments in Consumer Relationships: A Cross-Country and Cross Industry Exploration," *Journal of Marketing*, 65 (October), 33-50.
- Dowling, Graham (1986), "Managing Your Corporate Image," *Industrial Marketing Management*, 15 (2), 109-15.
- Dukerich, Janet M., Roderick Kramer, and Judi McLean Parks (1998), "The Dark Side of Organizational Identification," in *Identity in Organizations: Building Theory Through Conversations*, David A. Whetten and Paul C. Godfrey, eds. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 245-56.
- Dutton, Jane E. and Janet M. Dukerich (1991), "Keeping an Eye on the Mirror: The Role of Image and Identity in Organizational Adaptation," *Academy of Management Journal*, 34 (3), 517-54.
- , ———, and Celia V. Harquail (1994), "Organizational Images and Member Identification," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 39 (3), 239-63.
- Elsbach, Kimberly D. and C.B. Bhattacharya (2001), "Defining Who You Are by What You're Not: A Study of Organizational Disidentification and the NRA," *Organization Science*, 12 (4), 393-413.
- Faust, Katherine (1997), "Centrality in Affiliation Networks," *Social Networks*, 19 (2), 157-91.
- Fombrun, Charles and Mark Shanley (1990), "What's in a Name? Reputation Building and Corporate Strategy," *Academy of Management Journal*, 33 (2), 233-58.
- Fournier, Susan (1998), "Consumers and Their Brands: Developing Relationship Theory in Consumer Research," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24 (4), 343-73.
- , Susan Dobscha, and David Glen Mick (1998), "Preventing the Premature Death of Relationship Marketing," *Harvard Business Review*, 76 (January-February), 42-51.
- and David G. Mick (1999), "Rediscovering Satisfaction," *Journal of Marketing*, 63 (October), 5-23.
- Gottlieb, Jerry B. and Dan Sarel (1992), "The Influence of Type of Advertisement, Price, and Source Credibility on Perceived Quality," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 20 (3), 253-60.

- Granovetter, M. (1985), "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness," *American Journal of Sociology*, 91 (3), 481-510.
- Grewal, Dhruv, Jerry Gottlieb, and Howard Marmorstein (1994), "The Moderating Effects of Message Familiarity and Source Credibility on the Price-Perceived Risk Relationship," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21 (1), 145-53.
- Hakim, Danny (2002), "Talking Green vs. Making Green," *The New York Times*, (March 28), C1.
- Hatch, Mary Jo and Majken Schultz (1997), "Relations Between Organizational Culture, Identity and Image," *European Journal of Marketing*, 31 (5-6), 356-66.
- Heider, Fritz (1958), *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Heskett, James L., Thomas O. Jones, Gary W.W. Loveman, W. Earl Sasser Jr., and Leonard A. Schlesinger (1994), "Putting the Service-Profit Chain to Work," *Harvard Business Review*, 72 (March-April), 164-74.
- Hibbard, Jonathan D., Frederic F. Brunel, Rajiv P. Dant, and Dawn Iacobucci (2001), "Does Relationship Marketing Age Well?" *Business Strategy Review*, 12 (Winter), 29-35.
- Hogg, Michael A. and Deborah J. Terry (2000), "Social Identity and Self-Categorization Processes in Organizational Contexts," *Academy of Management Review*, 25 (1), 121-40.
- Katz, Donald R. (1994), *Just Do It: The Nike Spirit in the Corporate World*. New York: Random House.
- Keller, Kevin Lane (1998), *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring and Managing Brand Equity*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Kleine, Susan Schultz, Robert E. Kleine III, and Chris T. Allen (1995), "How Is a Possession 'Me' or 'Not Me'? Characterizing Types and Antecedents of Material Possession Attachment," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22 (December), 327-43.
- Kramer, Roderick M. (1991), "Intergroup Relations and Organizational Dilemmas: The Role of Categorization Processes," *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 13, 191-207.
- (1999), "Trust and Distrust in Organizations: Emerging Perspectives, Enduring Questions," *Annual Review of Psychology*, 50, 569-98.
- Kristof, Amy L. (1996), "Person-Organization Fit: An Integrative Review of Its Conceptualizations, Measurement, and Implications," *Personnel Psychology*, 49 (1), 1-49.
- Kunda, Ziva (1999), *Social Cognition: Making Sense of People*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Mael, Fred and Blake E. Ashforth (1992), "Alumni and Their Alma Mater: A Partial Test of the Reformulated Model of Organizational Identification," *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 13 (2), 103-23.
- Malaviya, Prashant and Sarah Spargo (in press), "Relating to Customers: How and When to Strengthen Your Customer Relationships," in *Next Generation Business Series*, Subir Chowdhury, ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Financial Times Prentice Hall.
- Markus, Hazel R. and Elissa Wurf (1987), "The Dynamic Self-Concept: A Social-Psychological Perspective," *Annual Review of Psychology*, 38, 299-337.
- McAlexander, James H., John W. Schouten, and Harold F. Koenig (2002), "Building Brand Community," *Journal of Marketing*, 66 (January), 38-54.
- Mitchell, Ronald K., Bradley R. Agle, and Donna J. Wood (1997), "Toward a Theory of Stakeholder Identification and Salience: Defining the Principle of Who and What Really Counts," *Academy of Management Review*, 22 (October), 853-86.
- Mullen, Michael R. (1995), "Diagnosing Measurement Equivalence in Cross-National Research," *Journal of International Business Studies*, 26 (3), 573-90.
- O'Hara, Kirk B., Terry A. Beehr, and Stephen M. Colarelli (1994), "Organizational Centrality: A Third Dimension of Intraorganizational Career Movement," *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 30 (2), 198-216.
- O'Reilly, Charles, III, and Jennifer Chatman (1986), "Organizational Commitment and Psychological Attachment: The Effects of Compliance, Identification and Internalization on Prosocial Behavior," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 71 (3), 492-99.
- , ———, and David Caldwell (1991), "People and Organizational Culture: A Profile Comparison Approach to Assessing Person-Organization Fit," *Academy of Management Journal*, 34 (3), 487-516.
- Pelled, Lisa H., Thomas G. Cummings, and Mark A. Kizilos (2000), "The Influence of Organizational Demography on Customer-Oriented Prosocial Behavior: An Exploratory Investigation," *Journal of Business Research*, 47 (March), 209-216.
- Pfeffer, Jeffrey (1983), "Organizational Demography," *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 5, 299-357.
- Pratt, Michael G. (1998), "To Be or Not to Be: Central Questions in Organizational Identification," in *Identity in Organizations: Building Theory Through Conversations*, David A. Whetten and Paul C. Godfrey, eds. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 171-207.
- (2000), "The Good, the Bad, and the Ambivalent: Managing Identification Among Amway Distributors," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 45 (3), 456-93.
- Raju, P.S., Subhash C. Lonial, and W. Glynn Mangold (1995), "Differential Effects of Subjective Knowledge, Objective Knowledge, and Usage Experience on Decision Making: An Exploratory Investigation," *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 4 (2), 153-80.
- Rao, Hayagreeva, Gerald F. Davis, and Andrew Ward (2000), "Embeddedness, Social Identity and Mobility: Why Firms Leave the NASDAQ and Join the New York Stock Exchange," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 45 (June), 268-92.
- Reichheld, Frederick F. (1996), *The Loyalty Effect*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Schlenker, Barry R. (1986), "Self-Identification: Toward an Integration of the Private and Public Self," in *Public Self and Private Self*, Roy Baumeister, ed. New York: Springer-Verlag, 21-55.
- Scott, Susanne G. and Vicki R. Lane (2000), "A Stakeholder Approach to Organizational Identity," *Academy of Management Review*, 25 (1), 43-62.
- Sen, Sankar and C.B. Bhattacharya (2001), "Does Doing Good Always Lead to Doing Better? Consumer Reactions to Corporate Social Responsibility," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 38 (May), 225-44.
- Sheth, Jagdish N. and Atul Parvatiyar (1995), "Relationship Marketing in the Consumer Markets: Antecedents and Consequences," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 23 (4), 255-71.
- Shoda, Yuichi and Walter Mischel (2000), "Reconciling Contextualism with the Core Assumptions of Personality Psychology," *European Journal of Personality*, 14 (4), 407-428.
- , ———, and Jack C. Wright (1994), "Intraindividual Stability in the Organization and Patterning of Behavior: Incorporating Psychological Situations into the Idiographic Analysis of Personality," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67 (4), 674-87.
- Smith, Shaun (2001), "Profiting from the Customer Experience Economy," working paper, The Forum Corporation.
- Tajfel, Henri and John C. Turner (1985), "The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior," in *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, Steven Worchel and William G. Austin, eds. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 6-24.
- Wan-Huggins, Veronica N., Christine M. Riordan, and Rodger W. Griffith (1998), "The Development and Longitudinal Test of a Model of Organizational Identification," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 28 (8), 724-49.
- Whetten, David A. and Paul C. Godfrey (1998), *Identity in Organizations: Building Strategy Through Conversations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Winer, Russell S. (2001), "A Framework for Customer Relationship Management," *California Management Review*, 43 (Summer), 89-105.