GEORGE S. LOW and RONALD A. FULLERTON

The authors examine the history of brand management by tracing its development in the context of the marketing environment from 1870 to the present. They develop six theses regarding the evolution of brand management and its implications and substantiate them utilizing a historical approach. They demonstrate that the brand manager system originated well after the leadership of branded products was established, it was adopted following a conventional adoption curve pattern, and it has proven quite adaptable to differing firm and marketing environments over the past several decades. They then evaluate its likely fate in today's rapidly changing environment.

Brands, Brand Management, and the Brand Manager System: A Critical-Historical Evaluation

> There is no such thing as a [managerial] structure that is valid once and for all. In a rapidly changing world an effective structure is one that suits a particular company at a particular moment in its existence and development. That is to say, structures become worn like a machine or shoes and at a certain time it may no longer be viable to adapt or repair them (Krief 1975, p. 5).

Brand equity research is currently receiving considerable attention (cf. Aaker 1991; Farquhar 1989; Keller 1991; Smith and Park 1992). However, little notice has been given thus far to the question of whether the brand manager system is the best organizational structure for managing brands. Brand managers have been described as "*M*urderers of *B*rand *A*ssets"—young, inexperienced, overloaded with quantitative skills, and short-term focused (*Business Week* 1991, p. 67). Kotler (1988) suggests that brand managers are production, not customer, oriented because of their dedicated attention to one brand. In the midst of these and other criticisms of brand managers, marketing academics have noted that the marketing function itself is changing (Webster 1992) in response to rapid change in the environment (Achrol 1991).

Has the brand manager system kept pace with today's dynamic marketing environment, and is it the best way for firms to manage their precious brand assets in the future? Extant research tends to use a survey methodology to formulate practical recommendations on how to implement and administer a brand manager structure effectively (e.g., Cossé and Swan 1983; Quelch, Farris, and Olver 1987a). These studies have been based on cross-sectional data—thus overlooking the rich and varied history of brand management. For example, the role of Procter & Gamble (P&G) in establishing the brand manager prototype has been recognized but not thoroughly investigated. Why and how did the brand manager structure become the dominant organizational format in consumer-goods companies? Only by examining the history of brand management can the factors influencing the creation, change over time, and potential effectiveness of a brand manager system in today's uncertain business environment be understood completely.

Accordingly, our purposes are the following:

1. To investigate the evolution of brands as manufacturer-branded products developed from rarities to leaders in most consumer product categories,
2. To identify developments and factors affecting the major changes in the ways firms have managed their brands over time, and
3. To draw conclusions and implications for brand management today.

The "brand manager system" refers to the type of organizational structure in which brands or products are assigned to managers who are responsible for their performance. Brand managers are central coordinators of all marketing activities for their brand and are responsible for developing and implementing the marketing plan (Hehman 1984). Al-

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though the terms *brand manager* and *product manager* are used interchangeably in the literature, *brand manager* is more appropriate in a consumer packaged goods company setting (Hehman 1984) and will be used here.

Brand Management and Brand Managers

Though formal brand managers have been the norm in U.S. consumer products companies for 30 years, they are not the only way in which contemporary firms manage their brands. A minority of firms, including such well-known ones as Pepsico and Levi Strauss, employ functional and/or other managerial structures to manage their brands (*Marketing* UK 1990; Hise and Kelly 1978). Moreover, brands were developed and managed, in many cases with striking success, long before the brand manager system was devised. Brand managers, in other words, represent one way that brands can and have been managed; there are and have been others. By understanding something about these other ways of managing brands, we can evaluate better the the efficacy of the brand manager system in actual practice over time. One of the values of a historical approach is that it enables us to distinguish clearly between brand *management* and brand *managers*.

METHOD

The historical method applied to marketing as suggested by Fullerton (1987, 1988) and Nevett (1991) has been used here. Philosophically, the method suggests that historical phenomena can be rich and complex and that they can best be understood by investigating the time(s), place(s), and context(s) in which they arise and develop. Here, historical method will be employed to investigate the origin and development of branded consumer products and their management over more than a century. In keeping with the realistic propensity of historical analysis, we expected to find changes, but have let the wide range of available data studied tell us when, how much, and why the changes revealed have occurred.

Historical method emphasizes *critical evaluation*—exacting and probing analysis to detect hidden agendas, self-serving arguments, inaccuracies, and the influences of now-extinct ideas, current when the data were created. To evaluate our data sources critically, as historians would, we (1) consider each source in light of the overall business and the marketing managerial environments that existed at the time it was written and (2) intentionally use multiple data sources whenever possible to check for accuracy (see Nevett 1991). Critical evaluation, it should be noted, need not be negative in outcome. The enthusiastic advocacy of brand managers by Keith (1960), for example, was doubtless self-serving: Keith was a marketing vice president who had been a strong proponent of brand managers in his firm. Yet his arguments were also sincere, well reasoned, and reflective of ideas widely held at the time.

In this article, we follow the practice of current historical work in attempting to *assess causation*—why things have happened as well as what happened. This is done by analyzing analogous situations to see if any potentially causative factors were consistently present and judiciously applying theories or models of behavior (e.g., Roger's diffusion of innovations model) developed by social scientists.

THESES

Following historians' convention, we state several theses that represent the principal findings. The evidence and reasoning that support these theses are presented in the body of the article. Five theses emerge from the historical analysis of U.S. brand management to date; a sixth derives from an assessment of the likely future of the brand manager system. They are as follows:

1. The large-scale development and management of consumer markets dominated by manufacturer-branded goods, especially national and regional brands, has been an enormous and difficult achievement. Its enormity lies in the fact that branded goods have become the bulwarks of modern high-level dynamic economies, advantageous to consumers and marketers alike; its difficulty lies in the fact that every step, at the firm and channel level, has required overcoming dogged conservative resistance to the changes required. Moreover, there have been serious challenges from middleman brands—the prolonged "Battle of the Brands" (Borden 1946)—and "generic" products.
2. The historical development of brand management in the United States encompasses four distinct though somewhat overlapping eras.

   During the first era, from about 1870 until the early 1900s, determined firm owner-entrepreneurs and high-level managers created the first large wave of successful nationally branded consumer products. Behind this accomplishment lay dramatic improvements in product quality and consistency, advertising, and building channel relationships.

   The market leadership of manufacturer-branded products was firmly established by the first third of the second era, which extended from about 1915 to 1929 in most firms. During this period, existing brands were managed and new ones brought into being by functionally specialized midlevel managers, frequently working with advertising agencies on strategy as well as promotion. Cooperation among managers was essential to success.

   In spite of a radically changed environment during the Great Depression and World War II, existing methods of brand management appeared satisfactory to most firms during the third period, from 1930–1949. Formal brand managers were introduced at P&G and a few other firms, but were not widely copied.

   During the fourth period, which continues today, a large majority of consumer goods firms have installed formal brand managers. Significant challenges that have confronted these brand managers include renewed threats from dealer brands, generic brands, lapses in quality that threaten manufacturer brands' primary *raison d'être*, declining brand loyalty, and brand proliferation.
3. Brand management in marketing organizations has evolved, changed, and been accepted in a gradual, incremental way as opposed to a catastrophic, sudden pattern of change and acceptance, consistent with the hypotheses of Savitt (1984) involving retailing and Fullerton (1988) regarding the practice of marketing.
4. The evolution of brand management has been influenced heavily by changes in the business and marketing environment at both the macro and firm level—particularly by changes over time in managerial styles and organizational structures.

5. Although many firms adopted brand manager systems because it was highly fashionable to do so during the 1950s and 1960s—brand managers were believed to embody the Marketing Concept itself—the system in practice has proven to be basically sound and quite adaptable to individual firm circumstances. Problems that have arisen often reflect inadequacies of implementation rather than fundamental flaws in the concept.
6. Several persistent criticisms of the brand manager system—short-term focus, short tenures in the job, too little external focus, and ignorance of key matters—now raise serious questions about its continued viability in the leaner, faster-moving, and entrepreneurial enterprises that rapidly are becoming the ideal today. Can a managerial system that flourished amidst the large bureaucracies characterizing U.S. firms during the post-World War II period still serve these rapidly revolutionizing enterprises today and in the future? This will depend on the actualization of the entrepreneurial aspect, which has been more latent than realized in most brand manager positions to date.

DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL MANUFACTURER BRANDS, 1870–1914

In 1870, branded consumer goods were not new, but had been confined to a few industries such as patent medicine and tobacco products; such brands were locally or regionally distributed. "The concept of the brand as late-twentieth-century consumers understand it was still relatively new" (Strasser 1989, p. 35). During the following several decades, branded products would become familiar to most American consumers. The reason for this was that many of the aggressive and ambitious business owners who characterized the post–Civil War economic expansion realized that branded goods offered a striking opportunity for firm growth.

To astute business owners, the following ongoing macroenvironmental changes were making widely distributed, manufacturer-branded products realistic and desirable possibilities:

- Improvements in transportation and communication made regional and even national distribution increasingly easy: The railroad system kept expanding until it dwarfed that of any other country; the telegraph and faster postal service facilitated long-range contact; the telephone short-range contact (see Strasser 1989, Chapter 1).
- Improvements in production processes made it possible to produce large quantities inexpensively—and with consistently good quality. Production advances spread from industry to industry.
- Dramatic improvements in packaging made individual (as opposed to bulk) packages that could be identified with the manufacturer's trademark increasingly viable. Representative improvements included the toothpaste tube (1890), an effective cap for soda bottles (1892), easily fillable cans (1898), and freshness-sealing packaging for crackers and cereal (1899) (see Alberts 1973, Chapter 12; Cahn 1969, Chapters 6–7; Foster 1975; Tedlow 1990, p. 43). High-speed lithograph presses and other printing advances made it far cheaper to reproduce colorful and distinctive labels.
- Changes in U.S. trademark law in 1870, the 1880s, and 1906, made it easier to protect trademarks, which were key to brand identity (Strasser 1989, Chapter 1).
- Advertising grew more respectable among businessmen, who previously had tended to associate it with patent medicine vendors, P.T. Barnum, and other obstreperous and somewhat disreputable entrepreneurs (Fullerton 1988). The pioneer market researcher Charles C. Parlin reported that "in the contest among manufacturers, those who adopt national advertising tend to gain the major portion of the market" (Parlin 1916, p. 84).
- The rapid shift to reliance on advertising revenue by magazines and newspapers, including the most respectable of them, provided willing and ready media vehicles through which to transmit brand advertising (see Pollay 1994).
- New retail institutions, such as the department and variety stores and national mail order houses, made shopping far more enticing for Americans—and taught them to be consumers in the modern sense.
- Increasing industrialization and urbanization raised Americans' incomes and took them away from old customs of self-production. Buying most of the things of life became the norm. But the unbranded products offered for purchase were of unpredictable—and sometimes disgusting—quality.[1] Wide revulsion at lapses in foodstuff quality led to the enactment of the first Food and Drug Act in the early 1900s. In addition to unknown quality, consumers were perplexed by the bewildering *variety* of products available in some categories. In 1906 Colgate was producing "160 different kinds of toilet soap, 625 varieties of perfume and 2,000 varieties of other kinds of products" (Foster 1975, p. 10). Characteristic of old-style job lot production methods, these products generally were sold unbranded to merchant wholesalers for resale to retailers. When "brands" did exist amidst such profusion, they were erratically distributed, weakly promoted, and had no clear identity to consumers.

All in all, then, the environment appeared to favor development of consistent-quality consumer products that, through large-scale advertising, could be made known to consumers and would be clearly identifiable by consumers—branded products, in other words.

Developing and Managing Brands

Beginning around 1870, increasing numbers of American business leaders pushed to develop branded consumer products. Among these leaders were eccentric inventor-entrepreneurs like King C. Gillette. More, however, were leaders of already large businesses, formed during the merger boom of the 1880s and 1890s, such as Quaker Oats and National Biscuit Co.

What distinguished the brand building of this from later periods was that the development and management of brands was undertaken largely by firm owners and top-level managers. Given the novelty of brands and their centrality to firms' expansion strategies, this is not surprising. Only low-level detail tasks were delegated. National Biscuit's first president was involved heavily in the development and launch of Uneeda Biscuits, the first national brand packaged cracker, in 1899 (Cahn 1969, Chapter 2). H.J. Heinz (1844–1919) dedicated much of his time to the production advances and spectacular promotions that built up the Heinz brand name (Alberts 1973). Coca-Cola became a powerful national brand because Asa G. Candler, owner and chief executive from 1891 to 1916, applied a

[1] A typical story: "This grocer dumps his oats into a bin. Sets his rat trap on top of oats. Catches two rats the first night" (Thornton 1933, p. 94–95).

near-religious fervor to building national distribution; he personally selected and then set up in business the advertising agency that promoted the brand (Tedlow 1990, Chapter 2).

Brands' Appeal to Consumers

For consumers, manufacturer-branded products had clear and distinct identities. Their distinctive packaging made them clearly identifiable on sight. Moreover, they were recognizable because they had been promoted vigorously to consumers by means of national, regional, and local advertising and plentiful sales promotions (premiums and sampling were especially popular). If consumers' experiences were unsatisfactory, they knew what to avoid in the future. "By marking their products, manufacturers took responsibility for them" (Strasser 1989, p. 30–31). This is a cliché in marketing textbooks today, but 90 years ago it conveyed a strong benefit that had been missing in most consumer product categories.

Resistance to Manufacturer Brands

In spite of their appeal to manufacturers and consumers alike and the favorable macroenvironmental conditions that seemed to encourage them, brands had to overcome considerable resistance from several sources. Brands were a marketing revolution, and revolutions do not proceed without opposition. Carrying through the revolution was as big a challenge as brand management ever has faced.

Consumer resistance. At the turn of the century, as now, consumers differed in their receptiveness to innovations; brands were innovations. Manufacturer-canned and packaged brands of food by Heinz, Quaker Oats, and others verged on being discontinuous innovations when they were introduced; hence some consumers simply distrusted them (Strasser 1989, p. 35). Furthermore, branded products such as the Gillette Safety Razor and Kodak camera required considerable consumer learning. Loyalty to their local retailers, who often would grant credit and take barter, made it seem offensive to some consumers to insist on a national brand when a shopkeeper recommended something else (see Strasser 1989, Chapter 3).

Resistance from channel intermediaries. Obviously, retailers could powerfully reinforce consumer resistance to brands. Nearly all retailers were independent and small. Self-service was still in the future (1916). Involved in the selection of each product for each customer, retailers were reluctant to relinquish their role as advisers to brightly-labeled cans and packages—whose profit margins were usually lower than those of dealer brands and unbranded goods. Until the mid-1920s, retailers believed that they themselves paid for the advertising costs of national brands (Strasser 1989, Chapter 3). Department stores, still at the height of their grandeur and influence over fashion, downplayed national brands in favor of their own brands, as much to maintain their hold over consumers as to enjoy higher profit margins (Benson 1988, p. 103).

If retailers disliked manufacturer brands, merchant wholesalers actively hated them. Merchant wholesalers had dominated American distribution for much of the 19th century, buying from manufacturers and selling to retailers on their own terms, sometimes under their own unadvertised labels (Porter and Livesay 1971). Manufacturers then changed the rules of the game by developing and promoting their own brands; merchant wholesalers retaliated by resisting, at times refusing, to distribute manufacturer brands. Had this blockage not been overcome, the new brands would have failed.

Resistance from within. From opposition to new brands on the part of partners to passive resistance and sabotage by salesmen and others, internal resistance to brands was very real and threatened the campaigns launched by firm leaders. Opposition to advertising from his partners restrained Harley Procter's urges to promote Ivory soap more vigorously during the 1880s and 1890s (Strasser 1989, p. 8). The first president of National Biscuit spent much of his time restlessly crisscrossing the United States in his private railroad car, striving to overcome resistance from the firm's far-flung bakeries to provide consistent product content and quality and sometimes to display the National Biscuit name and logo on their delivery vans (Cahn 1969, Chapter 13). The rigorous consistency requirements imposed by advertised brands threatened the established ways of many employees.

In the cases of firms formed from mergers, hard decisions had to be made about *which few* of the products from previously independent companies would be selected for brand development. Focusing on one or a few products in any category was an important element in the strategy of early brand builders. This strategic requirement led to internal strife within such firms as Quaker Oats and Colgate (Foster 1975; Thornton 1933). Firm sales forces, though rapidly being subjected to greater discipline and accountability, at times resisted being told which products to emphasize.

Overcoming Resistance

The leaders of brand-building, manufacturing firms succeeded in overcoming most active resistance—but only after time and struggle. Internal opposition was curbed by the carrot of emphasizing the benefits to all, as brands increased sales, and by the stick of authority-assertion. Retailer resistance was weakened gradually by powerful pull—and push—strategies. Consumer demand for brands was generated effectively by multifaceted pull campaigns employing sampling, premiums, product education brochures, and heavy advertising. Advertisements for manufacturer brands were everywhere. "We have used painted walls and bulletins, street cars, magazines, newspapers, posting, [and] theater programs," wrote a spokesman for National Biscuit in about 1920 (quoted in Hotchkiss and Franken 1923, p. 66).

Push activities came from manufacturer sales forces, who called on customers with big baskets of "dealer helps": in-store sampling programs, assistance in shelf maintenance, "window trims, store posters and hangers, recipe booklets, electrotypes [for newspaper ads], and moving picture slides" (Hotchkiss and Franken 1923, p. 66). These sustained push and pull efforts convinced growing numbers of retailers that manufacturer brands were good for them. The more sophisticated retailers realized the truth of an idea advanced by Charles C. Parlin (1916) and others—that even though the margins were smaller on manufacturer brands

than on the alternatives, the considerably more rapid turnover of the former made them profit leaders.

While retailers were being cultivated, merchant wholesalers were more likely to receive the rough treatment accorded outright enemies. They were told that refusal to accept manufacturer brands could cost them their markets—a threat that some big manufacturers carried out by establishing their own wholesale operations (Cahn 1969, Chapter 8; Fullerton 1988, pp. 113–15).

From 1910–1914, manufacturers made clear headway against all sources of resistance to their brands. Department stores, whose enormous prestige gave their house brands appeal, would hold out until after World War II; other retailers featured national brands. Resistance, however, was never to disappear completely, but rather to mutate into ever-new challenges during the decades ahead.

1915–1929: NEW CHALLENGES, NEW MANAGEMENT METHODS

By the year 1915, manufacturer brands were well established in American consumer life. From about 1915 through the 1920s was their Golden Age: consumers, grateful for the improved quality they offered and more heavily influenced by brand advertising than consumers before or since, made acquisition of manufacturer brands central achievements in life (See Fox 1984; Marchand 1985). Though individual brands perished, victims of improved offerings from competing brands as well as product life cycles, new ones in greater number took their place. Manufacturers with major national and regional brands increasingly dominated their industries; ''successful brands were central to marketing schemes that built powerful companies'' (Strasser 1989, p. 52). In line with fundamental changes in firm management, brand management passed from the older owner-entrepreneurs and top general managers to functionally specialized middle and upper-middle level managers, who usually worked closely with advertising agencies.

Functional Brand Management

By 1914, according to business historian Alfred Chandler, firms that employed ''a hierarchy of middle and top salaried managers to monitor and coordinate the work of the [multiple] units under its control ... had become the dominant business institution in many sectors of the American economy'' (Chandler 1977, p. 3). These sectors included those in which manufacturer brand development had flourished—canned foodstuffs, soap, film, tobacco products, processed grain products, and metalworking (see Chandler 1977, Chapter 8).

The salaried managers who managed such enterprises ''form[ed] an entirely new class of businessmen'' (Chandler 1977, p. 3). They were trained formally in functional specialties and rational problem solving. They thought and acted quite differently than the visionary entrepreneurs and driven generalist firm presidents who had founded and built the brands that they were now hired to manage. As brands became established and the old leaders retired, died off, or simply could not shoulder the increasingly technical and complex burdens of decision making, brand management was assumed by salaried and functionally specialized professional managers. By 1914, this process was nearly complete.

Organization by function was a hallmark of the new professional management. ''Departmental organization should generally follow functional lines and be so planned that each function may be executed by highly trained specialists,'' wrote the executive-turned-marketing professor Virgil Reed (1929, p. 45). Lone wolves and unilateral decision making were not welcome: ''Policies and plans should be inaugurated not by one man but by a group of responsible executives working together. One man organizations are notably weak and hardly deserve the name 'organization''' (Reed 1929, p. 47; see also Converse 1930, pp. 1022–23). The value system stressed cooperation among managers within and across functional specialties. Reed stated that wise recruitment of ''executive material'' put ''consideration of smoothness and cooperation in the foreground'' (Reed 1929, p. 45).

The complex, multifaceted efforts of production, promotion, and personal selling that characterized brand management by 1914 now drew on the services of executives with specialized functional expertise, who held titles such as ''Advertising Manager'' and ''Sales Manager'' (Reed 1929, Chapter 5). The growing belief that advertising agencies possessed key insights into ''demand creation'' for brands led executives to call on agencies for advice and field assistance on a wide range of activities: market planning, market research, product testing, package development, preparation of sales manuals, consumer sales promotions, creating advertising, and media analysis and placement (Reed 1929, p. 256–57). Star advertising men like Claude C. Hopkins were entrusted with enormous responsibility by their clients (see Foster 1975). After developing, naming, and selecting a package for Crisco in 1912, P&G turned over the responsibility for promoting this innovative product to two rising stars of the J. Walter Thompson agency—Stanley Resor and Helen Lansdowne.[2]

Brand management by functionally specialized professional managers and advertising agency executives had solid strengths. The intuitive and commonsense approaches that previously had characterized marketing functions were giving way rapidly to systematic and knowledge-based approaches that promised more effective brand management. Methods of personal selling, to take one example, improved dramatically as salesmen were more scrupulously selected and then trained in product knowledge and selling techniques; salesmen were taught to do call reports, carefully supervised and supported with direct mailings to prospects before and after calls (see Fullerton 1988, p. 116). The success of National Biscuit's brands rested in large part on the efforts of its trained deliverymen and salesmen in maintaining spotless displays of fresh product in grocery stores (Cahn 1969, Chapter 18).

Advertising, too, was being rapidly improved along several dimensions. The crude-looking advertisements of the turn of the century gave way to the superlative artwork and powerful persuasive copy, which made the brand advertis-

[2]The first woman permitted to attend meetings of Procter & Gamble's board of directors, Ms. Lansdowne's advice on how women would respond to Crisco was sought avidly by the directors.

ing of the 1920s some of the most effective ever done (see Benson 1938). In magazine advertising, the most mundane products (e.g., stoves, crackers) appeared as magical visions, and the copy that accompanied and reinforced the illustrations carried a force of conviction unheard of today. Moreover, by the 1920s, advertising agencies were using copy testing, eye-tracking testing of layout effectiveness, media research, and systematic "market analysis" based on secondary and sometimes primary market research analyzed statistically; sophisticated demographic analyses were employed to "group," or segment, consumers (see Presbrey 1929; Reed 1929, Chapter 10; White 1927).

The severe depression of 1920–1921, in which even P&G suffered losses, had driven home to perceptive professional managers the value of systematic product planning, financial control, and forecasting of demand (Reed 1929; Sloan 1963, Chapter 8). Applying these insights to brands, advertising managers worked with ad agencies in conducting "trial markets," the term used then for test markets (Reed 1929, Chapter 17). Professor Paul Converse reported that "the present tendency is to apply cost accounting to marketing and to cut off ... unprofitable articles" (Converse 1930, p. 1022; see also Copeland 1931). Alfred P. Sloan's classic autobiography recounts how General Motors pruned its brand lineup to eliminate those with weak market potential (Sloan 1963, Chapter 4). Similar policies were followed by other brand marketers.

The Leadership of Advertised Brands

The new style of professional brand management carried on successfully the growth of manufacturer brands that had begun before 1915. For a while, successful brands stimulated proliferation of overt imitation brands, until improved trademark law protection, backed by managers' legal vigilance, put most of them out of existence.[3]

Retailers increasingly were won over to the value of manufacturer brands, according to Parlin (1916); this was especially true of smaller retailers, who were unable to mount their own dealer brands.

Early in the 1920s, the preeminence that manufacturer brands had achieved in consumers' minds was demonstrated by *The Leadership of Advertised Brands*, a classic research study of "one hundred typical" consumer product categories (Hotchkiss and Franken 1923, p. 7). The respondents were 512 male and 512 female students from a judgment sample of "fifteen representative universities" across the United States.[4] The research was based on respondents' unaided recall of brand names in the 100 product categories. Respondents recalled a great deal. A few brands, for example, Prophy-lac-tic Toothbrushes, were recalled by more than half of all respondents. Men had somewhat fuller overall brand awareness than women, which surprised the researchers; women shopped far more than men at the time.

Table 1

PRODUCT CATEGORIES WITH A HIGH DEGREE OF BRAND FAMILIARITY, 1923[a]

Category	*Familiarity With Brands in Category (% of Respondents)*	*Best Known Brand(s)*[b]
Chewing Gum	96.0%	Wrigley
Automobiles	95.3%	**Ford**
Soap	95.1%	**Ivory**
Baked Beans	93.6%	Heinz
Watches	92.6%	Elgin, Waltham
Soup	92.4%	Campbell
Toothpaste	92.2%	**Colgate**
Sewing Machines	92.1%	Singer
Pens	91.8%	Waterman
Phonographs	91.7%	Victor (RCA), Edison
Breakfast Food	91.3%	**Kellogg's Corn Flakes**
Cleanser	90.5%	Old Dutch
Cameras	90.7%	(Eastman) Kodak
Flour	90.4%	**Gold Medal**
Bacon	89.8%	Swift Premium, Beech-Nut
Chocolates	89.8%	*Hershey's*
Crackers	89.7%	National Biscuit Co.
Cocoa	89.5%	Baker's
Talcum Powder	89.0%	Mennen, Colgate
Toilet Soap	89.4%	*Palm Olive*
Candy	88.7%	*Huyler's*
Cigarettes	88.3%	Camel, Fatima
Typewriters	88.0%	Underwood, Remington
Tires	87.4%	**Goodyear**
Coffee	86.8%	**Yuban**
Shoes	86.6%	*Douglas*
Canned Milk	86.5%	Borden, Carnation
Laundry Soap	85.9%	**Fels Naptha**

[a]Source: Hotchkiss and Franken (1923), p. 107–121.

[b]Brands in boldface were mentioned by more than twice as many respondents as other brands in their categories. Italicized brands had only weak leadership. Where two brands are mentioned, both were close in familiarity but led all others.

Key results from the study are shown in Tables 1 and 2. In Table 1, we list the 28 product categories for which more than 85% of the respondents recalled at least one brand. These categories ranged from inexpensive, simple items such as chewing gum and canned milk to costly products such as automobiles and sewing machines. All of these categories were advertised heavily, usually for 20 or more years. In Table 2, we list categories for which less than 60% of respondents recalled at least one brand. Some of the individual brands, enumerated in the "Best Known Brands" column of Table 2, had been promoted heavily and were quite well-known, for example, Crisco.

Overall, however, the categories in Table 2 had experienced less promotion than those in Table 1; this was particularly true of those at the bottom of the list. Most of them represented, according to the study's authors, opportunities for brand development; these opportunities eventually were realized.

One conclusion of the study was that brands were valuable to manufacturers and consumers alike (Hotchkiss and Franken 1923, pp. 1, 5):

[3]Examples included "Iwanta" biscuits, in packaging identical to "Uneeda" biscuits, and "Espo-Cola," with labels in script identical to "Coca-Cola." See Strasser 1989, Chapter 2; Tedlow 1990, p. 53–55.

[4]The student population at the time was predominantly upper and upper-middle class. The sales success of brands in nearly all demographic categories at the time, however, suggests that the study's results were not atypical of the population at large.

> The good will of certain well-established names and brands is valued in the millions of dollars, and ranks high among the assets of the companies responsible for them.... In the great majority of fields ... practically every one discriminates between brands in making a purchase. The tendency to do so is far more common today than it was a few years ago. In many lines it has come to be regarded as the simplest and surest way to obtain standard quality and service.

As the 1920s went on, certain brand names became so well known and important that many firms changed the company name to the brand name. Some examples: from American Cellulose and Chemical Manufacturing to Celanese; from Douglas-Pectin to Certo; and Cellucotton Products to Kotex (*Printers' Ink* 1927b).

Problems With Functional Brand Management

As effectively as many brands were being managed, however, the functional manager system could present problems.

The coordination/cooperation issue. Because responsibility for any one brand was divided among two or more functional managers as well as advertising agency specialists, poor coordination was always a potential problem. Contemporaries were well aware of this, but believed that the problem could be minimized by communication and cooperation among managers. "It is not necessary for the manager of either [sales or advertising] department to be paramount," the advertising manager for the Calumet Baking Powder Co. assured readers of the dominant marketing magazine *Printers' Ink* (1910a, p. 58). (For other examples see *Printers' Ink* 1910b; Reed 1929, Chapter 10). Nonetheless, suspicion and conflict among managers, particularly between advertising and sales, did occur (Reed 1929, Chapter 21; *Printers' Ink* 1927a).

The early years of General Mills' Wheaties brand illustrate both the problems and virtues of the functional system (Gray 1954, Chapter 11). Firm salesmen, who believed that they had quite enough to do without a new brand, nearly sabotaged the cereal after its introduction in 1926. Three years later it was on the verge of being dropped because of falling sales, when a manager from General Mills' advertising department appointed himself its champion, setting it on its way to enormous market success during the 1930s and 1940s.

Responsibility for individual brands. There was no formal system for coordinating the strategies of similar brands in a firm. Neither this nor the related problem of assigning responsibility for individual brands had posed great difficulty when manufacturers concentrated on relatively few national and regional brands. By the late 1920s, however, a combination of increased new brand development within firms and the acquisition of more brands by the mergers so common then had given some manufacturers much larger and more diversified stables of brands (see Chandler 1977, p. 473; Reed 1929, p. 49).

A few firms did begin to concentrate more managerial responsibility on individual brands. In 1919, Libby, McNeil, Libby introduced a rudimentary version of managers dedicated to single brands, but little more is known about this (Sands 1979). After 1921, management of Listerine's advertising was assigned to one manager, and promotional spending was based on net profit for that one brand (Lambert 1927), a unique approach at the time.

Table 2

PRODUCT CATEGORIES WITH "BELOW AVERAGE" BRAND FAMILIARITY, 1923[a]

Category	*Familiarity With Brands in Category (% of Respondents)*	*Best Known Brand(s)*[b]
Gloves	59.4%	*Kayser*
Cake Shortening	57.8%	Crisco
Stoves	56.6%	*Majestic*
Canned Fruits	55.8%	Del Monte
Spaghetti	55.7%	**Heinz**
Paint or Varnish	54.0%	Sherwin Williams, Valspar
Men's Shirts	52.2%	Manhattan, Arrow
Bicycles	50.8%	**Iver-Johnson**
Jewelry	47.7%	Tiffany
Rubbers	47.5%	**Goodyear**
Boys' Clothing	46.4%	*Rogers Peet*
Flashlights	44.6%	Eveready
(Cloth) Handkerchiefs[c]	44.1%	**Sealpackerchief**
Lamps	39.2%	**Mazda**
Raincoats	37.9%	**Goodyear**
Jelly or Jam	37.8%	*Heinz*
Yarn	37.5%	Fleischer's
Women's Clothing	36.7%	*Betty Wales*
Kitchen Cabinets	35.3%	**Hoosier**
Neckties	27.9%	*Cheney*
Leather Goods	26.4%	**Cross**
Filing Cabinets	26.0%	*Globe Wernicke*
Rice	21.2%	*Comet*
Umbrellas	11.4%	*Storm King*
Ribbon	7.3%	None

[a]Source: Hotchkiss and Franken (1923), pp. 109–121.

[b]Brands in boldface were mentioned by more than twice as many respondents as other brands in their categories. Italicized brands had only weak leadership. Where two brands are mentioned, both were close in familiarity but led all others.

[c]These were considerably more popular than today, because paper facial tissues had not yet been marketed.

The launch of Camay in 1926 led to some changes in brand management at P&G. Although targeted at competitors' Lux and Cashmere Bouquet brands, Camay also would compete with Ivory, executives believed. The idea of competitor brands from the same company was unheard of at the time (Lief 1958). In 1929, senior management believed that Camay was being held back by too much "Ivory thinking" in its advertising, and a new agency was chosen (Schisgall 1981). This was another significant development, because management realized that the best way to manage similar, competing brands was to produce *distinct* advertising strategies for each of them. These changes, however, appear to have had no influence on brand management in other firms.

1930–1945: THE BRAND MANAGER SYSTEM IS BORN—AND LARGELY IGNORED

Growing Challenges to Manufacturer Brands

The Great Depression, which began in 1929, increased challenges to manufacturer brands. The "Battle of the

Table 3
DATES WHEN THE BRAND MANAGER SYSTEM WAS ADOPTED BY SELECTED FIRMS, 1919–1985[a]

Firm/Division	Date Adopted	
Libby, McNeil, Libby		1919[b]
Procter & Gamble		1931[c]
Johnson and Johnson	ca.	1935
Monsanto	ca.	1940
Merck/Chemical Division	ca.	1946
General Electric	ca.	1950[d]
Pillsbury	ca.	1950
Raytheon/Government Equipment Division	ca.	1955
Kimberly Clark/Consumer Division		1956
Heinz		1964[e]
Del Monte		1965[f]
Hasbro	ca.	1981

[a]Sources: Braznell (1982); Breggia (1992); Buell (1975); *Business Week* (1973); Fulmer (1965); Keith (1960); Lief (1958); *Printers' Ink* (1960); Sands (1979).

[b]Said to have been a very rudimentary and primitive version of the system. See Sands (1979).

[c]Development began in 1928.

[d]Used the job title "Product Manager" as early as 1894, but the position was not what is now understood by the term.

[e]Substantially modified in 1973.

[f]Heavily modified about 1968. An earlier version with considerably less responsibility for brand managers is said to have been used from the mid-1930s. See Braznell (1982).

Brands" (Borden 1946) heated up: Some wholesalers and retail chains saw opportunities to push their own dealer brands, whose lower prices appealed to economically fearful consumers. Further adding to brand manufacturers' difficulties was the policy of retail chains to cut the number of brands they carried to enhance operational efficiency (see Converse 1930, p. 633–34). Weak manufacturer brands grew weaker; many were dropped. Chain store retailing had been expanding rapidly for years, and now chains had great power. Giants like A&P (18,000 stores) used the threat of producing their own brands to keep manufacturers in line (see Tedlow 1990, p. 212–13).

Another problem was a growing distrust and cynicism about advertising among educated segments of the consumer public. This was reflected in its vigorous reception of anti-advertising books such as Ralph Borsodi's *The Distribution Age* (Benson 1938; Reed 1929, Chapter 9). Advertising, which had been essential to brand management, was now being reproached for tastelessness, manipulation, and deception; its costs were said to inflate prices.

Coping With the Depression: The First Brand Managers

In 1930 Richard Deupree was appointed president at P&G. Deupree strongly encouraged employee innovation. Neil McElroy, who had been managing Camay advertising, was assigned to launch Oxydol in England. McElroy observed that the diverse operations of European soap and margarine giant Unilever competed directly with one another, but in an inefficient fashion (Lief 1958, 1963). Returning to the United States and influenced by Deupree's call for innovative thinking, McElroy believed that each P&G brand should have its own brand assistants and managers dedicated to the advertising and other marketing activities for the brand. When Deupree approved McElroy's plan on May 13, 1931, the brand manager system was formally born.

Influences behind the brand manager idea. P&G's authorized firm histories (Lief 1957; Schisgall 1981) mention only McElroy's experience as a possible influence of his decisive memo. Other influences could have been at play, however, if not in influencing McElroy then certainly in motivating Deupree to act on McElroy's memo (see Fulmer 1965). The idea of departmental division of responsibility had been used by department stores since before 1900. During the early 1920s, both General Motors and Dupont had reorganized into semi-autonomous divisions. In the GM case, Chevrolet, Buick, and other divisions marketed their products as clearly identifiable "brands."

Why Were Brand Managers Not Adopted By Other Firms?

P&G's 1931 move had little or no effect on other firms for years. As shown in Table 3, Johnson & Johnson introduced brand managers in about 1935, Monsanto in about 1940. But few other firms followed suit until after 1950. Even then, the idea was adopted more by business-to-business than consumer-goods manufacturers (*Printers' Ink* 1960, p. 28). Most companies continued to use several functional specialists in managing their brands. Product or brand managers were not mentioned in a special section on significant trends in marketing in 1941 in the *Journal of Marketing*, nor are they mentioned in articles or American Marketing Association conference papers on brands from 1945 and 1946 (Borden 1946; Buckingham 1946; Slator 1945).

Given the renown of P&G in the marketing community, the potential for brand managers to improve coordination and ensure that promising brands did not die of neglect, and the pressures experienced by manufacturer brands during the Depression, why did so few other firms follow suit? It is possible that P&G's innovation was not widely known at first; we did not find any articles about it appearing during the 1930s or 1940s. But the grapevine surely was letting some news out. On an abstract level, the fact that firms did not adopt brand managers can be illuminated by Roger's famous diffusion of innovations model, which shows that some time must pass before *any* innovation enters a phase of large-scale adoption (Rogers 1962).

At the specific levels of industry or firm, in some cases functional brand management performed less than effectively but conservatism at the top precluded change. An example was National Biscuit Company, whose management system had grown absurdly cumbersome,[5] but whose president abhorred change (Cahn 1969, Chapter 19). The firm's brands stayed alive because of their long-established reputations, their still-good quality, and their luck in not having to face powerful innovative competition.

Other firms may have believed that their existing brand management organization was suitable to meet the challenges. In any number of cases this may well have been true. Writing during one of the worst years of the Depres-

[5]There was a vice president in charge of sales of Fig Newton, and a vice president in charge of ingredients and manufacturing of Fig Newton, and so forth (Cahn 1969, Chapter 19).

sion, Professor Harry Tosdal (1933, p. 161) of Harvard commended marketing executives' "increasing emphasis on product planning and product research ... so as to meet the needs and wants of consumers ... in order to make products which are easier to sell." Tosdal enthused about the attractively redesigned packages and restyled products of the period, a point affirmed by recent business historical studies (see Fullerton 1988, p. 120). At General Mills, the "Director of Sales and the Director of Advertising worked together as a team and introduced several new products with considerable success" (Lewis, Holloway, and Hancock 1964, p. 30). Such examples are not difficult to find; much of a brand's success depended on the personal traits and interactions of managers rather than merely the formal structures in which they worked.

The strong comeback of manufacturer brands immediately after World War II was another indication of the basic effectiveness of existing brand management. Dealer brands had gained on manufacturer brands during the 1930s, but had by no means won the "Battle of the Brands." During the war, the diversion of resources to the military effort had made name brands scarce. Nonetheless, numerous companies continued to advertise during the war to maintain brand awareness. Wartime research by Nielsen showed that manufacturer brands were gaining preference on dealer and no-brand products despite their widespread scarcity (Buckingham 1946).

When the war ended, some marketers (e.g., Slator 1945) suggested that many consumers had gotten out of the habit of purchasing manufacturer brands during the conflict and might not return. Others (e.g., Buckingham 1946) asserted that the fundamental quality and "producer responsibility" of these brands that were known to consumers, had led to enormous pent-up demand, and would spur consumers to return to them en masse now that peace had returned. Advocates of this argument pointed to the recent awakening of manufacturer branding in industries in which it previously had been dormant—women's apparel, furniture, and home furnishings were examples (Buckingham 1946). These advocates cited research done by the Brand Names Research Foundation in 1945, which found that 78% of consumer purchases were selected on the basis of brand insistence or recognition (Buckingham 1946).[6] This argument turned out to be the correct one.

THE ERA OF BRAND MANAGERS, 1950–PRESENT

The economic boom following World War II fueled increases in personal income, the birth rate, and the growth of the suburban middle class. Regional shopping centers sprang up. An explosion of new products, soaring demand for national brands, and the impact of television advertising increased the importance of brands and advertising to support them. Manufacturer brands enjoyed a second golden age. Continuing the pre-World War II trend, branding spread to more of the categories in which its presence had been weak in the early 1920s (see Table 2). The rise of discount houses at the expense of department stores aided manufacturer brands, because the discounters lured consumers with lower prices for national brands (Wedding 1957). To remain competitive, department stores abandoned their prewar policy of slighting such brands in favor of house brands.

From Innovators to Late Majority: Firms Institute Brand Managers

Beginning slowly after World War II, picking up steam in the early to mid-1950s, and then cresting from about 1957 to the mid-1960s, the move toward adopting brand managers gripped firm after firm. Some representative adoption dates are shown in Table 3.

By 1967 in the United States, 84% of large consumer packaged goods manufacturers had brand managers (Buell 1975). Only among producers of large consumer durables was usage comparatively low—about 34% in 1967 (Buell 1975). "The brand manager form of organization has been so widely adopted in the United States that it is now considered the norm for multi-product consumer goods companies," wrote Dietz (1973, p. 127).

Why did so many consumer products companies suddenly institute brand managers? Why did they gravitate to a system that, until the late 1950s, had been adopted more by industrial than consumer marketers? As often is found in historical analyses, there was a complex interplay of factors at work; these are discussed in the following sections.

Fit with multiproduct marketing needs. In the 1950s, the trend toward multiple consumer brands reached new peaks. "A flood of new products," wrote the General Electric marketing executive J.B. McKitterick in 1957 (p. 75), "[has] poured forth to meet the rising discretionary spending power [of consumers]." Product proliferation and diversity had become a fundamental element of corporate strategy (McKitterick 1957, p. 75):

> Few businesses today seem to be able to undertake the risk of staying in a single market with a single product.... As new product applications emerge, as new categories of customers come into the market, as new technologies compete to answer the old need, the corporation is inclined to embrace each in turn, forfeiting no opportunity, straddling all risks.

Certainly McKitterick's perspective was influenced by his General Electric experience—his firm was known for its immense number of products. Yet the enthusiastic response to his report suggests that his thinking reflected widely held views.

Fit with organizational structural needs. Product proliferation, McKitterick further argued, led inevitably toward ever more complex organizational structures (McKitterick 1957, p. 77). Weigand (1961, p. 478) found that "the marketing organization [had] become much more complex between 1950 and 1959." Continuing the long trend toward large management bureaucracies staffed with functional specialists who advised and participated in decision-making, major U.S. firms had continued to add formal departments such as product planning and market research. The approach of General Motors was believed to be a paradigm of organization and management. Increasingly, firms added brand managers to their bureaucracies. During the 1950s, ad-

[6]The 78% was an overall average; by product category, brand-based decision making varied from a high of 94% for dentifrices to a low of 37% for men's hosiery.

vertising agencies relinquished most of their traditional role as counselors and almost-equal partners in brand management (Buell 1975). They concentrated instead on media analysis, negotiation, and creative work.

Difficult as it is to understand today, the immense corporate bureaucracies of which McKitterick wrote were then and for at least two decades thereafter considered sources of firm efficacy. Moore (1957, p. 109) explicitly linked the emergence of a marketing orientation in firms with "the tremendous proliferations of staff functions and horizontal authority." Big staffs were thought to enable "greater accuracy of business decisions" (Weigand 1961, p. 478), for example, through their knowledge of sophisticated mathematical decision-making techniques.

At the same time, business leaders were aware that larger corporate organizations heightened previous problems of focus and coordination. McKitterick noted that the big organizations were peopled by specialists who were perforce "unable to adequately see the whole business and its environment" (McKitterick 1957, p. 77). One trend during this period was toward integrating advertising and sales into one department (*Printers' Ink* 1957). This, however, did not solve the "special organizational problem" of putting "the greatest marketing effort behind each product when there are so many products and markets" (*Printers' Ink* 1960, p. 25). According to Clarence E. Eldridge, whose long career as a marketing executive spanned much of the history of brand management, only the brand manager system made sense by the 1960s (Eldridge 1966, Chapter 15, p. 4; Chapter 16, p. 2):

> The growth of marketing enterprises and the proliferation of product lines and products made it imperative that the marketing director cease trying to manage, supervise and coordinate the marketing of so many products.... [Their] sheer number ..., to say nothing of their diverse character, made it a physical impossibility ... to formulate and execute marketing plans for all [of them].... Much less did he have time to become familiar with the needs of all those products.
>
> Something had to give: either he had to find some way to divest himself of part of the responsibility, or the marketing function would suffer from too little attention.... To have divided it functionally ... would not have solved the problem because the marketing director would still have to coordinate all of those separate activities. *The only alternative seemed to be to assign total marketing responsibility for a group of products to one aide, another group to another, and so on. These aides became what is known as ... brand managers* (italics added).

Brand managers offered a way of focusing the efforts of corporate specialists on brands as needed, as well as coordinating corporate resources to ensure the most effective marketing possible for each of the firm's many brands. They enabled "concentrated fire power in each market segment;... greater efficiency through greater liaison and coordination; [and] ... increased profitability" (*Printers' Ink* 1960, p. 25–26). Moreover, it was believed that brand managers could act as "little general managers," restoring to large corporations some of the entrepreneurial flair that had been stifled by narrow specialization and functional barriers (Ames 1963, p. 141; Buell 1975, p. 6; Fulmer 1965, p. 68).

Fit with the Marketing Concept. "The Product Management Concept, executed well, is the Marketing Concept in its finest form," wrote the marketing research executive Reginald Collier in 1964 (Collier 1964, p. 45). Keith's (1960) famous *Journal of Marketing* article, "The Marketing Revolution," also posited a link between brand managers and the Marketing Concept. "The brand manager idea is the very backbone of [revolutionized] marketing at Pillsbury," asserted Keith (1960, p. 37).

The explicit coupling of brand managers with the Marketing Concept in these and other papers and speeches explains much of the fervor with which firms adopted brand managers during the late 1950s and early 1960s. The Marketing Concept, as articulated by McKitterick (1957) and others in the 1950s, stressed the dominant role of marketing in firm strategy. For marketers, the Marketing Concept was (and is) an article of faith; because brand managers were linked to it, the halo around the Marketing Concept came to surround the brand manager idea as well.

The persuasiveness with which the brand manager-Marketing Concept connection was asserted powerfully stimulated the adoption of brand managers. So too did the widely publicized use of brand managers by such exemplars of the Marketing Concept as P&G and General Electric (see *Printers' Ink* 1960, 1962).

The brand manager fad. "The product manager is the man of the hour in marketing organizations.... Modern marketing needs the product manager," raved a 1960 article in *Printers' Ink* (p. 25). Because it had so much to recommend it, introducing the brand manager system became a marketing panacea, an extended managerial fad analogous to such later fads as zero-based budgeting and Theory Z management during the 1970s and early 1980s—and to corporate downsizing today.

Corporate leaders rushed to get brand managers. In their frenzy some neglected to think carefully about why such managers might be needed and exactly how their positions might be configured successfully (Ames 1963, 1970; Bund 1963; Eldridge 1966). Some imitated what they thought to be the Procter & Gamble system—without fully understanding either it or its relationship to P&G's unique corporate culture. P&G's brand managers were relatively young, yet had several years of solid experience before assuming their posts. Careless imitators assumed brand managers should be young and inexperienced (Bund 1963, p. 23):

> All one has to do is open the pages of most newspapers to find instance after instance in which a corporation is trying to recruit young, relatively inexperienced men for product managers. With inadequate knowledge and short on judgment, too many of these promising young men fall sooner or later.

The brand manager system was a basically sound idea that was too often mandated in haste and with unrealistic expectations of its immediate impact (see *Printers' Ink* 1966, p. 21).

Challenges That Slowed Brand Manager Acceptance

Complaints, confusion, and doubts. Even as numerous firms still were implementing brand managers, a chorus of complaints swelled. Mutterings about arrogant and callow incompetents were common, as was the belief that the main result of adding the new managers was to create more bureaucratic bloat (Eldridge 1966, Chapter 16, p. 11–12). Discontent with brand managers came through clearly in the marketing literature of the time.

Table 4 summarizes the literature on brand managers since 1960. The enthusiastic tenor of the earliest articles (e.g., Keith 1960) soon was replaced by reports of widespread disenchantment (e.g., Ames 1963; Luck and Nowak 1965; *Sales Management* 1967). These culminated in 1973 with *Business Week*'s proclamation that disgruntled corporations were abandoning the system in number; the article generalized heavily from John Sculley's overthrow of the system at Pepsico (*Business Week* 1973). Pepsico and a handful of other major firms had dropped brand managers amidst widespread publicity. A somewhat larger group of firms—including Pillsbury—drastically modified their brand manager systems, actions believed at the time to show the weaknesses of the system.

What had happened to tarnish so badly the image of the brand manager system? It is clear from the articles summarized in Table 4 that brand managers were not the optimal system for every consumer products company; the defections represented the realization of this truth by top managers. Pepsico, for example, had relatively few brands around 1970, and hence lacked one of the strongest reasons for brand managers. Heinz, to take another example, had strong long-established family branding and concentrated on foodstuffs—there was little need for separate brand managers for different Heinz pickles or even relishes. The majority of firms, however, were believed to benefit from brand managers. Their difficulties were largely problems of implementation, according to such authorities as Collier (1964), Eldridge (1966), and *Sales Management* magazine (1967).

Implementation problems. The concept of brand managers can be expressed quite simply. Introducing such a position into the corporate organizations of the 1950s through early 1970s, however, was not a simple task (Alexander and Berg 1965, p. 318): "Product managers present one of the most difficult problems in an organization, not only as it applies to the marketing area, but to the entire structure of the firm." Other marketing management jobs were clearly either line—decision making—or staff—advice giving; brand managers were classified as staff by some authorities (e.g., Jacobs 1961), line by others (e.g., Eldridge 1966, Chapter 16), and hybrids by still others (e.g., *Printers' Ink* 1966). Hence it was hard to know just what kinds of activities brand managers were to undertake. Firms had to muddle through.

The biggest problem, all contemporaries agreed, was how to apportion authority and responsibility. Did responsibility for the welfare of one's assigned brand bring responsibility for its profits, and if so, how much responsibility? Custody of a brand would bring a brand manager into interaction with functional specialists throughout the firm—accounting, advertising, production, research, and sales, perhaps others as well. What authority would the brand manager have to ensure the compliance of these functional managers in supporting his brand? Rarely did authority fully match responsibility (*Printer's Ink* 1960b), but the issue of how close it should come stumped many adopting firms at first. If brand managers had little authority, how could they be held responsible for their brand's sales, let alone its profits? Furthermore, what talented young executives would want such a job? But if, however, brand managers' authority approached their responsibility, then "their authority is apt to collide with that of the operating executives, with resulting confusion and frustration" (Alexander and Berg 1965, p. 319).

Unresolved issues of authority and responsibility led to vague job descriptions, which in turn made it difficult for new hires to understand what they were to do (Ames 1963; Fulmer 1965). Such job descriptions also confused the recruitment process, helping to prompt the then-common complaint that too many new hires were inadequate to do the job (Ames 1963; Eldridge 1966, Chapter 16).

Internal resistance, again. In several firms, the openly expressed enthusiasm for the "marketing revolution" and the Marketing Concept was little more than lip service. As Winer (1965, p. 8) perceptively wrote, "When a new idea or concept is presented to the business world, its *form* often receives more attention than its *substance*. While attempts are made to adopt the new concept, old habits of thought and procedures are continued even though they may not be consistent with the new idea." A study of the adoption of the Marketing Concept by Minnesota firms (Lewis, Holloway, and Hancock 1964, p. 46), for example, found that "because marketing affects every area of the business, and ... invades the areas of finance, production, engineering, and research, there is a strong likelihood that marketing people will run headlong into the strongly held views of other executives." Brand managers might have been introduced to help realize the Marketing Concept, but beneath the corporate surface, still guiding everyday practice, were older beliefs about the primacy of sales, the idea that only functional advertising managers understood advertising, and the conviction that marketing wisdom could come only with age and decades of experience. In addition, experienced managers could argue with some justification that the prior system of brand management had worked well.

Often there was resistance to the brand manager idea on the part of existing managers, especially sales personnel and entrenched senior managers (Luck and Nowak 1965). Powerful brand managers would threaten their turf as well as the professional self-justification that was enshrined in the company mythology. Very likely many of the stereotypes about brand managers originated in the gripe sessions of those who resisted the new system.

Resistance to brand managers during the 1960s had psychological and organizational similarities to internal opposition to the creation of national brands at the turn of the century. Just as then, overcoming opposition required strong and sustained commitment from top management. That, however, was not always forthcoming: "The majority of corporations ... have been either unable or unwilling to implement it fully," reported Luck and Nowak in 1965 (p. 154).

Table 4
THE BRAND MANAGER SYSTEM IN THE MARKETING LITERATURE

Reference	*Title*	*Summary*
Keith 1960	The Marketing Revolution	Introduction of brand managers helped usher in a consumer-centered marketing revolution at Pillsbury. Brand managers are the "backbone" of true marketing.
Printers' Ink 1960	Why Modern Marketing Needs the Product Manager	Product managers (PMs) enable multi-product companies to concentrate firepower in each segment, achieve greater efficiency through better liaison and coordination, and increase profit. The job provides excellent training for promising young executives. PMs have advertising/promotions orientation in consumer product firms, sales orientation in industrial market firms. A few top firms have PMs with general manager orientation.
Jacobs 1961	The Effective Use of the Product Manager	A product manager is "a staff job whose sole responsibility ... is to secure wider sales for one or more items in the line." PMs can ensure adequate attention to all of a firm's products; previously some slipped through the corporate cracks. The PM job needs careful definition and should encourage contact with production, accounting, sales, and major accounts.
Ames 1963	Payoff from Product Management	Key reasons the product manager system often fails are discussed, and managerial recommendations are made to use it effectively. The author suggests that many companies are adopting the system simply because it is what the competition is doing, without carefully determining if brand managers best suit the organizational needs of the company.
Collier 1964	The Product Management Concept in Marketing	Effective execution of PM idea "is the Marketing Concept in its finest form." Effective implementation requires complete commitment from top management, else old-school diehards will thwart it.
Luck and Nowak 1965	Product Management—Vision Unfulfilled	Product management is referred to as a "management innovation," born from a need for managerial specialists in diversified product companies. The main problem companies implementing a brand management system encounter is how much and what kind of authority brand managers should have.
Berrow 1966	The Functions of Product Management Past, Present, and Future	PM system has completed growth phase and entered maturity. Growth phase problems centered on the need for appreciation and understanding of the system by those who work with PMs, especially top management. The future will be characterized by better information technology enabling PMs to make better decisions.
Eldridge 1966, Chapter 16	The Role of the Product Manager	The PM system unfortunately has become "the favorite whipping boy of nearly everybody who bemoans the imperfections of today's marketing system"— yet it is indispensible. The main problem is implementation: firms fill posts with young, inexperienced people. Effective PMs need advertising (especially field research), not sales experience; they need at least five years experience, then training as PMs. PM is a *line* job that needs decision-making authority.
Sales Management 1967	Has the Product Manager Failed? or the Folly of Imitation	PM system is "more abused than used by the companies adopting it." Some firms are now abandoning it. The system is basically sound, but is often poorly implemented—top management doesn't structure PM jobs to mesh with its unique culture, they have "wrongheaded hiring practices," and failed to delegate sufficient authority.
Luck 1969	Interfaces of a Product Manager	The number of interfaces required of product managers frequently result in problems that are addressed. Product managers should focus their efforts on relationships with advertising agencies, the sales force, product development, and marketing research, resulting in a more effective market orientation.
Ames 1970	The Consumer Product Manager	The concept is "difficult to make ... work" and not needed by all consumer goods firms. Properly implemented, however, it is "a powerful organizational tool for managing ... large number[s] of brands." The PM's "core responsibility" is to develop and recommend annual marketing plans to expand share and profit of assigned product(s). The PM should be accountable for his product's profits.
Ames 1971	Dilemma of Product/ Market Management	The advantages of product management and the more traditional market management systems are discussed in the context of industrial marketers. A dual system is suggested, combining both systems.
Gemmill and Wilemon 1972	The Product Manager as an Influence Agent	25 product managers were interviewed to determine how they influenced other company departments in the absence of formal authority. Four types of power were identified—reward power, coercive power, expert power, and referent power.
Lucas 1972	Point of View: Product Managers in Advertising	Results of a survey of brand managers to investigate the degree of their authority in making marketing decisions showed that most have full control of their products' advertising and sales promotion strategy and copy. Implications of this influence for advertising managers and for advertising efficiency are discussed.

Table 4—(Continued)

Reference	*Title*	*Summary*
Business Week 1973	The Brand Manager: No Longer King	Pepsico and other major firms are abandoning or drastically modifying the brand manager system, whose problems include short-run thinking, pursuit of volume thus neglecting segmentation, and excessive preoccupation with internal functions. Uniquely superb recruitment and training make the system work for P&G, but cannot necessarily be replicated elsewhere. Pepsico's John Sculley foresees the end of brand managers.
Dietz 1973	Get More Out of Your Brand Management	Senior managers are encouraged to determine how they want their brand management system to function, and the relative importance of entrepreneur versus bureaucrat. Three approaches are suggested—brand coordinator (bureaucrat), brand champion (entrepreneur), and brand director (hybrid).
Clewett and Stasch 1975	Shifting Role of the Product Manager	A survey of product managers' decision-making authority for various tasks was analyzed to isolate possible reasons for variations in the role of product managers. These factors were: number of distinct products, number of management levels involved in decision making, number of marketing mix elements used, number of product managers within the firm, and the growth of resources and support services.
Buell 1975	The Changing Role of the Product Manager in Consumer Goods Companies	The degree of control product managers have over advertising is the focus of an interview-based study. Since the concept was originally started, the role of product managers has changed in the following areas: responsibility for advertising (from advertising managers) and planning (from ad agencies) and increased levels of management (removal from authority). Suggestions for better use of the system are given.
Krief 1975, Chapter 14	Product Manager	Detailed European generic job description covering job functions, personal and educational qualifications, assessment criteria, and working relations. Recommends defining the job carefully, delegating enough authority to permit success, examining the profit he or she makes and not his or her conversation, and not letting incumbent fall into a rut.
Morein 1975	Shift from Brand to Product Line Marketing	Developments such as the proliferation of brands, lower advertising impact, and the influence of consumerism are cited as reasons for changing from a brand management system to a product line marketing structure in which lines of related products, sold under the same name, are managed by product line managers. Examples of companies such as Welch's, Sara Lee, and Merrill Lynch are used to support these suggestions.
Venkatesh and Wilemon 1976	Interpersonal Influence in Product Management	Surveyed PMs and group PMs in consumer package goods firms. Factors enabling PMs to elicit support (most to least important): PM's expertise and interpersonal skills, respect for PM position by others, perceived authority, formal authority, indirect rewards, punishment, direct rewards. Interpersonal skills are found to be crucial to success.
Hise and Kelly 1978	Product Management on Trial	198 product managers were surveyed to determine their decision-making authority, contact with other company departments, and personal characteristics. The study revealed that product managers have much more contact with internal departments than with the market (customers). Most were responsible for advertising and profits for their products.
Sands 1979	Is the Product Manager Obsolete?	A number of weaknesses in the brand management system are discussed, including the authority-responsibility dilemma, lack of senior management support, unqualified people assigned to the job, and high turnover rate. Suggestions for more effective use of the concept are given.
Duker and Laric 1981	The Product Manager: No Longer on Trial	Survey of advertising, sales, research, and ad agency personnel who work with consumer goods' PMs. Results: (1) most considered PMs successful; (2) PMs rely on interpersonal diplomacy, not power; (3) PMs generally over 30 years of age but less than 4 years in their posts. Neither the PM position nor the manner in which it operates is in trouble.
Giese and Weisenberger 1982	Product Manager in Perspective	Survey of backgrounds and career paths of consumer product PMs. Results: (1) PMs 90% male, mostly (private) college graduates with business degrees, ages are 26–35 with most over 30 years of age; (2) PM a midcareer position staffed with experienced personnel; (3) most common background is sales, which a majority believed to be the best pre-PM experience.
Cossé and Swan 1983	Strategic Marketing by Product Managers—Room for Improvement?	176 product managers responded to a survey asking questions related to their strategic planning methods. The results showed that most product managers are focused on short-term results, not long-term strategy. No significant differences were found on the basis of personal characteristics of the product managers.
Lysonski 1985	A Boundary Theory Investigation of the Product Manager's Role	The authors study 170 product managers to investigate the nature of relationships among factors such as environmental uncertainty, role ambiguity, product managers' perceived performance, and job satisfaction, on the basis of boundary spanning and role theories. The results indicated that many product managers believe that company objectives are not clearly communicated to them.

Table 4—(Continued)

Reference	*Title*	*Summary*
Quelch, Farris, and Olver 1987a	The Product Management Audit	A method for analyzing the effectiveness of a company's product management system is presented. By asking product managers how they feel about their responsibilities, senior managers can make changes that will help improve the firm's marketing performance.
Skenazy 1987	Should Brand Managers Be Shelved?	Increased trade concentration, declining brand loyalty, media fragmentation, and changing consumer purchasing habits all suggest that the traditional brand management system may be ill-suited to these changes in the marketplace. The new customer of manufacturers should be retailers, and a system with key account managers and market segment managers should be used as a replacement for the brand management system.
Howley 1988	Is There a Need for the Product Manager?	Problems that have plagued the product management system for many years, such as inadequate authority to match responsibility, are analyzed in light of recent developments in the marketing environment such as concentration of retail buying power and information technology. The author suggests that the product management system is not suitable for today's market—a traditional function-based structure is recommended.
Marketing (UK) 1990	Brandstand	An "outdated organizational system," the brand manager system is ill-suited to today's environment, in which (1) marketing cannot dominate but rather must share power with other firm functions to ensure competitive advantage and (2) the key determinant of success is no longer brand image or position but rather dominance in local markets as shown by share and service delivery. The brand manager system has encouraged brand proliferation, which in turn has led to debilitating cannibalization and resource constraints.

The authors described brand managers as fettered by organizational constraints on their information gathering, planning, resources, authority, access to product expertise, and even responsibility. Could such a system possibly have worked? The answer is one often revealed by historical analysis: It probably shouldn't have, but it did.

The Brand Manager System Prevails

In spite of widespread internal opposition and lukewarm support, the brand manager system did take root in most multiproduct consumer goods companies. By 1975, Buell (p. 6) asserted that "if a trend exists it would appear to be in the continued adoption of product [i.e., brand] managers."

Two reasons explain the trend. The first was that firms learned how to adapt the brand manager system to their own needs and cultures—which usually included toning down the power of the position to mollify internal resisters. The second was that many of those who became brand managers were able to function in spite of the disproportion between authority and responsibility that characterized most positions.

Brand manager system adaptability. By the mid-1970s, variations in the brand manager system across firms were "the rule rather than the exception," even within the same industry (Clewett and Stasch 1975, p. 69). However, there were few firms in which the position of brand manager had the potency and entrepreneurial aspect envisioned by advocates of brand managers up until the early 1960s (Buell 1975; Clewett and Stasch 1975). "We've gotten away from the concept of the guy who runs his own little company," a paper products executive told Buell (1975, p. 6). That concept would have been simply too disruptive for most firms; the term executives in the mid-1970s preferred to use was "unrealistic" (Buell 1975). In practice, brand managers had not only less authority than originally envisioned, but less responsibility—few were held fully responsible for brand profits (Buell 1975). This may seem suboptimal today, but it ensured the survival of the brand manager concept in the corporate bureaucracies of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s.

In subdued form, the brand manager system proved as adaptable to companies at which a sales ethos prevailed as those at which an advertising ethos was predominate. Among the Minnesota manufacturing firms studied by Lewis, Holloway, and Hancock (1964), brand manager positions varied in their place within the organizations and in their responsibilities. Those at the large companies, such as Green Giant, did not supervise field sales people, whereas those at smaller Toro did to some extent.

In addition, the system proved adaptable to changing environmental conditions over time. Most adaptations appear to have lessened the power of brand managers while retaining the positions. Morein (1975), for example, argued that product line managers could help master the challenge posed by firms' brand proliferation; brand managers probably would remain, but with smaller roles than previously.

At the firm level there were numerous examples of temporal adaptability. In 1987, to reduce competition among P&G brands and increase coordination with increasingly powerful retailers, P&G added category managers to its brand management structure. Groups of brand managers responsible for brands in the same category (for example, beverages) now report to a category manager, who coordinates marketing efforts to benefit the brand category group (*Advertising Age* 1987; *Fortune* 1989). P&G also increased its use of "business teams," particularly in planning new product strategies (*Harvard Business Review* 1985). Ford formalized a "program manager" structure, similar to the brand management system, in 1987 (Clark and Fujimoto 1990). Campbell Soup added "brand-sales managers" by region

in 1986 to respond to local marketing needs more effectively (*Business Week* 1987).

The brand manager's solution: effective influence without authoritative power. Several studies done between 1972 and 1982 suggest that the caliber and personal adaptability of brand managers improved after the flurry of complaints during the mid-1960s to early 1970s.[7] Gemmill and Wilemon (1972), Venkatesh and Wilemon (1976), and Duker and Laric (1981) showed that brand managers generally had good interpersonal skills, which enabled them to exert influence without coercive power. In other words, they were able to fulfill their responsibilities without possessing formal authority. The only drawback was that they devoted more effort to internal interactions than to those with suppliers and customers (see Cossé and Swan 1983). Both inside personnel and outside suppliers who worked with brand managers found them effective (Duker and Laric 1981). Brand managers were found to be educated appropriately and well, possess solid experience before assuming their posts, and average slightly over 30 years of age (Duker and Laric 1981; Giese and Weisenberger 1982).

By 1988, some form of brand manager structure had been adopted by almost every U.S. consumer products company (*Business Week* 1988). Simultaneously, however, the managerial and organizational environments of these firms were beginning to change dramatically under a variety of pressures. These changes call into question the future of the brand manager system.

DOES THE BRAND MANAGER SYSTEM HAVE A FUTURE?

One of our theses is that U.S. brand management has been and will continue to be influenced heavily by changes in overall managerial styles and organizational design. Corporations now ''reengineer'' themselves by radically reshaping work processes (see Hammer and Champy 1993), downsize by slashing layers of middle management, or become ''virtual'' organizations that farm out key tasks on an ad hoc basis; the giant corporate bureaucracies that characterized the post-World War II era have been shrunk or otherwise altered beyond recognition.

Not surprisingly, the continued viability of the brand manager system, which thrived in these business bureaucracies, has been questioned during the past few years. Examples are given in the last three entries of Table 4. The internal focus and emphasis on the short run that enabled brand managers to function effectively within corporate hierarchies today are believed to undercut strong marketing. The short job tenures, which enabled brand managers to ascend fast career tracks, today are considered detrimental to maintaining brands' continuity. Also, there are far fewer upward career tracks now. Information that once was gathered and analyzed by brand managers today can be accessed readily and analyzed by top managers whose personal computers tie them into sophisticated information networks and analytical software.

There are other reasons to question the future of the brand manager system. Consumer brand management could be on the verge of another historic restructuring. P&G reportedly is reorganizing to eliminate managerial positions, assign more than one brand to brand managers—and ''deproliferate'' by eliminating or selling off brands with small market shares (Riddle 1993a, b, c). Should deproliferation be adopted by large consumer product firms generally, one of the classic rationales for brand managers would no longer exist.

Can the brand manager system survive? We believe that it can, but that only with significant modifications *should* it. One such modification would be to follow the pattern of industrial market product managerships, which are held longer and by more experienced people, that usually deal with several products and have considerably more external contact (Hise and Kelly 1978; Tietjen 1970). Another would be to stress communication with external constituents. A periodic product management audit, as suggested by Quelch, Farris, and Olver (1987b), would permit senior executives to determine the type of brand manager that would be most suitable for their company's specific needs and circumstances.

The most important modification would be to realize the entrepreneur/little general manager potentiality envisioned decades ago in brand manager positions, yet rarely permitted to flourish in consumer products companies. This would be in line with Kanter's (1989, p. 353) argument regarding the current shift away from bureaucracies in organizations:

> Bureaucracy tends to be position-centered, in that authority derives from position, and status or rank is critical. [Post-bureaucratic] organizations tend to be more person-centered, with authority deriving from expertise or from relationships.

If liberated from its bureaucratic shackles, a brand manager system would have much to offer. Brand managerships have been a good training ground for future top managers, some of whom still will be needed. As long as consumer goods companies still have a multiplicity of brands, to abandon brand managers now would be to risk neglecting some of these brands.

A heavily modified brand manager system ideally would be positioned to offer companies the entrepreneurial flexibility, creativity, and relationship-building skills that are key success factors today. To realize these benefits, top management should encourage brand managers to function as entrepreneurs by removing the hierarchical layers that surround them and giving brand managers both more responsibility and the authority to pull together resources to further brand development. Teamwork and the building of relationships inside and outside the organization should be encouraged. The negotiating skills that incumbents have honed in the position should now be directed outwardly. Brand managers would focus less on advertising and internal log-rolling and more on retail customers and end consumers. An entrepreneurial brand manager system as envisioned here meshes

[7]These studies were empirical, whereas previous ones had been argument centered, based mainly on personal experience. Empirical work in today's sense was much more common after 1970 than before. Hence, the mid-1960s complaints about brand managers were not empirically-based. However, because they were numerous and articulated by diverse sources, we accept their overall accuracy.

well with the requirements of "corporate reengineering" (Hammer and Champy 1993, especially Chapters 3 and 4).

Hence, just as the brand manager concept adapted to the corporate bureaucracies of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, it also can adapt to the leaner organizations of the 1990s. The adaptation envisioned here, however, is so fundamental that in effect it would open up a new era of brand management.

CONCLUSION: THE HISTORICAL ACHIEVEMENT OF BRAND MANAGEMENT

For all the questions and problems manufacturer brands have encountered in recent years, including a precipitous decline in advertising's believability to consumers, the current Yankelovich Monitor reports that these brands still represent quality as well as simplified decision making to American consumers (*Brandweek* 1992). Miller (1993) recently reported that U.S. consumer brands are doing very well. Name brands remain fundamental to American consumer life. Americans may not be as loyal to one brand as were their ancestors, but they are loyal to *brands*. In spite of the short-term emphasis that has characterized the brand manager system, nearly every brand shown in Tables 1 and 2 to have been important in 1923 is still a market leader and rich in brand equity today, 70 years later.

The continued presence of name brands testifies to the overall effectiveness of brand management over long spans of time, through all three of the major historical forms that have been elucidated here. The historical reality that three distinct forms of brand management have existed over the past century should tell us that no form of management is—or should be—permanent. Though the brand manager system as we know it could come to an end, brand management itself almost certainly will continue to thrive.

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