LEVERAGING IDENTIFICATION: INFLUENCING CHANNEL SALESPERSON EFFORT AND BRAND PERFORMANCE

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LEVERAGING IDENTIFICATION: INFLUENCING CHANNEL SALESPERSON EFFORT AND BRAND PERFORMANCE

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To Kelli

and to Kymberli, Scott, and Ashley

For your love, encouragement, faith, sacrifice, understanding, laughter, and support: all crucial ingredients to the successful completion of my doctoral program and this dissertation. Thank you for being you, for giving me the opportunity to change course mid-career, and for embarking on this adventure with me.

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ABSTRACT

A manufacturer's success in the marketplace is contingent in part on its ability to energize its downstream channel members in support of its brands. While gaining the focused effort of the channel member's boundary spanning employees is particularly important, this has become increasingly challenging as channel members broaden their portfolios of products and brands in the wake of industry consolidation. Lurking beneath the surface, however, is a potential route to the channel salesperson's mind and heart that can be harnessed by both manufacturer and channel member – identification. This study uses a multi-level analysis to explore the sometimes conflicting impact of salesperson-brand identification, salesperson-organizational identification, and manufacturer-channel member control system alignment on brand and channel member performance. The results show that brand identification can result in increased salesperson effort behind a brand, and ultimately improved brand performance, even in the face of control systems to the contrary. Organization identification, on the other hand, strengthens adherence to control systems, and thus can either increase or decrease brand effort. In addition, favorable extra-role consequences of brand identification are considered, and managerial implications are outlined.

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INTRODUCTION

Many companies utilize a distribution network of independent intermediaries, wherein the company relies on downstream channel members, e.g., brokers, agents, wholesalers, retailers, to sell its products effectively to other channel members and/or ultimately to the end-user. While in some cases the channel member serves a single supplier, more often the channel member's product line includes products (or services) from multiple suppliers. For example, consumer products manufacturers often utilize wholesalers and/or brokers to sell to and service retailers, a wide range of industrial products are sold to companies of all sizes through distributors, and even intangible products and services are often provided through external channel entities, e.g., independent insurance agents. Not only do these intermediaries often represent multiple product lines, but in an era marked by consolidation at all levels of distribution (Fontanella, 2006; Frazier, 1999), increasingly these intermediaries represent competing products within the same product category (Gale, 2005).

As a case in point, one might look at changes that have occurred in the U.S. beer industry over the last several years. While varying somewhat by geography, ten years ago it was common that a given market would be serviced by an Anheuser-Busch (A/B) distributor, a Miller distributor, a Coors distributor, and a fourth and/or fifth distributor carrying an assortment of other brands. In smaller markets, there might be only three distributors – A/B, Miller, and all other. While the A/B and, more often, the Miller and Coors distributors might also carry a few companion brands in-house (primarily imports or specialty beers), in most cases these other brands represented a very low percentage of the distributor's revenues. Today the landscape looks different. In many markets, there is now an A/B distributor, a joint Miller/Coors distributor that also carries a large number of import and specialty brands that represent a growing part of the business, and sometimes an "all-other" distributor, while in smaller markets there may be just an A/B distributor and an all-other brand distributor. Interestingly, the recent announcement of merger plans between Miller Brewing Company and Coors Brewing Company is an example of manufacturers following a dynamic already occurring within the distribution channel (Kesmodel, Ball, Belkin, Berman, & Wilke, 2007). What has happened in the beer industry is being mirrored in many other industries as channel members seek to build scale, profitability, and market power through consolidation (Fein & Jap, 1999). The retailer is an extreme case of the multi-brand channel member, since retailers typically handle a wide assortment of competitive products.

The challenge for the manufacturer in this environment is motivating the channel member to allocate resources on behalf of its products relative to the resources allocated in support of competitive products. Because the channel member has its own agenda that may differ from that of a particular manufacturer, the extent to which manufacturer and channel member goals, plans, and control systems are aligned will have a marked impact on what ultimately is executed in market. As a result, many channel management activities initiated by the manufacturer are directed towards influencing channel member resource allocation behavior (Anderson, Lodish, & Weitz, 1987). Manufacturers typically employ managers and representatives responsible for influencing channel member management planning, direction, and work practices on an ongoing basis. In addition, manufacturers sometimes use market power and overt initiatives to pressure channel members to increase focus on their products relative to those of other suppliers. For example, in the late 1990s Anheuser-Busch introduced a "100% share of mind" program that awarded more favorable financial terms and preferential marketing support to distributors dealing exclusively with A/B brands (Mohr, Fisher, & Nevin, 1999).

One key resource allocation problem is the relative effort that channel member salespeople expend on the manufacturer's brands versus that expended against competitive (companion) brands. In essence, this is a *share of mind* issue. To illustrate, consider Scott, a salesperson for Pinnacle Distributing, a beer distributor that represents over 50 brands of beer from 8 different brewers. Similarly, consider Ashley, a salesperson for Pure Sound Electronics, a stereo system retailer that represents products from 5 different electronics manufacturers. Finally, consider Kymberli, a salesperson for Otero Fuel, a gasoline broker that sells Shell Oil products and a generic line of gasoline to independent gas stations. In each of these scenarios, an individual *manufacturer's* interests are best served if the channel member's salesperson is focused on its products relative to those provided by other manufacturers. The *channel member*, however, might have completely different priorities, whether it is to balance efforts across the portfolio or to concentrate on certain brands/products based on their relative profit contribution or other considerations.

In order to protect its own interests, the channel member typically will have formal control systems in place to direct the behavior of its sales personnel. These controls are often a combination of output controls, i.e., objective performance standards (results) that are monitored and evaluated, and behavioral or process controls, i.e., monitoring of activities that are considered important in achieving desired results

(Anderson & Oliver, 1987; Cravens, Lassk, Low, Marshall, & Moncrief, 2004a; Jaworski, Stathakopoulos, & Krishnan, 1993), Generally speaking, formal control systems have been found to be effective in reducing role ambiguity and role conflict while increasing salesperson motivation and performance (Babakus, Cravens, Grant, Ingram, & LaForge, 1996; Baldauf, Cravens, & Piercy, 2005; Cravens et al., 2004a; Cravens, Marshall, Lassk, & Low, 2004b; Jaworski et al., 1993; Piercy, Cravens, & Morgan, 1999; Piercy, Low, & Cravens, 2004). Lurking beneath the surface however is another potential route to the channel salesperson's mind and heart that potentially can be harnessed by both manufacturer and channel member – identification.

Organizational identification, the extent to which perceived organizational identity and self-identity converge, has received increasing attention in the literature across multiple business disciplines due to its anticipated, and in some cases demonstrated, positive influence on several positive work related outcomes, e.g., job satisfaction, employee retention and loyalty, organizational citizenship behaviors, work commitment, and performance (Ahearne, Bhattacharya, & Gruen, 2005; Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Christ, van Dick, Wagner, & Stellmacher, 2003; Dukerich, Golden, & Shortell, 2002; Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994; Mael & Ashforth, 1995; Meyer, Becker, & van Dick, 2006; Richter, Van Dick, & West, 2004; Riketta & Van Dick, 2005; van Dick, Grojean, Christ, & Wieseke, 2006a; van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, & Christ, 2005; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). Drawing from social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1985), organizational identification occurs when an employee forms a psychological connection with his/her organization by incorporating the attributes that he or she believes defines the organization into his or her own self concept (Dutton et al., 1994). Identification can serve as a powerful motivating influence for an individual, and thus an important one to the firm, since as self-goals and organization goals merge, the realization of the latter become more intrinsically satisfying.

An employee's identification with the company for which he or she works, however, is only one type of work-related social identification. People are apt to identify with any group that contributes to a positive sense of self (Ellemers, De Gilder, & Haslam, 2004), and there are multiple potential foci of identification within a work setting that offer an individual the self-enhancing sense of inclusion and distinctiveness derived from group membership. For example, one could identify with one's occupation, industry, company, functional area, division, department, work-unit, and even with particular projects, people, initiatives, or role relationships (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Bartels, Pruyn, de Jong, & Joustra, 2007; Riketta & Nienaber, 2007; Riketta & Van Dick, 2005; Sluss & Ashforth, 2007; Ullrich, Wieseke, Christ, Schulze, & van Dick, 2007; Van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, & Christ, 2004b; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000; Vora & Kostova, 2007).

Still other forms of social identification are particularly relevant in a marketing environment. For example, Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) propose the concept of consumer - company identification as a vehicle for understanding consumers' relationships with companies. When consumers incorporate defining aspects of a company's identity into their own self-concept, they have been shown to engage in in-role and extra-role behaviors that are supportive to the company (Ahearne et al., 2005). This is in essence an extension of the fact that companies routinely attempt to forge a bond or relationship between their brands and consumers (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000).

Less researched, however, is a notion highly relevant to the issue of capturing channel salesperson share of mind -- that *employees* also may identify to a greater or lesser degree with particular brands or products that are marketed by the firm, along with the implications of such identification. In addition, while the growing, but still relatively underdeveloped, body of literature on organizational identification focuses understandably on the company – employee link (and to a lesser extent the work group – employee link), manufacturer/brand identification within the distribution channel has to our knowledge not been investigated, i.e., a channel member employee identifying with an upstream supplier or supplier's brand.

In these situations there are both intra-company and inter-company aspects of organizational identification at play that, if inconsistent, may potentially result in self-conflict, particularly as it relates to salespeople in their boundary spanning capacity. While the organizational identification literature recognizes the existence of multiple foci, very few empirical studies consider issues that may occur when identification with different foci and/or with normative pressures conflict (Bartels et al., 2007; Richter, West, van Dick, & Dawson, 2006). An important distinction to be examined in this paper is the extent to which the salesperson identifies with his/her employing company (the channel member) and the extent to which the salesperson identifies with a manufacturer, or more specifically, a manufacturer's brand, and the corresponding role of these types of identification and their interaction with channel member control systems on salesperson in-role and extra-role behaviors.

Specifically, our research proposes that the extent to which channel salesperson identifies with his/her employer versus a manufacturer's brand is likely to have a marked effect on effort, performance, and other desirable and undesirable outcomes in the face of such control systems instituted by the channel member. This dissertation examines these influences, positing and demonstrating the role of both brand and company identification on various work outcomes important to both manufacturer and channel member, while detailing the effects of the accompanying interaction with control systems.

In so doing, this dissertation contributes to the marketing literature and practice in the following ways. First, we draw from separate research streams on organizational identification and consumer-brand relationships to propose and test the notion that *employees* may also identify with the *brands* that they sell, while investigating related consequences. More to the point, we complicate this further by exploring this in the context of a distribution channel, i.e., by considering the extent to which channel member salespeople can identify with a supplier's brand, while being among the first to explore the potential conflict that might exist when these dual forms of identification interact with the control systems a company has in place to direct its sales personnel. Our study utilizes a multi-level analysis that incorporates multiple sources of data across several companies.

The dissertation is structured as follows. First, we develop a conceptual foundation by drawing from the literature on channel influence, social identity theory, organizational identification, and brand relationships. Next, we formulate hypotheses and introduce a proposed model. After discussing the methodology used in collecting and analyzing data for the study, we reveal results, and conclude with a discussion of implications, limitations, and future research considerations.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Channel Influence

While manufacturers and their distribution channel intermediaries are interdependent, challenges in coordinating activities and conflict between channel members are inevitable due to their differing perspectives and goals (e.g., Gaski, 1984; Weitz & Wang, 2004). Each entity wants to maximize its profit and the manufacturer's brand(s) typically represent only a portion of the downstream channel member's portfolio of products, giving rise to resource allocation issues (Anderson et al., 1987). Critical to the manufacturer is its ability to influence the channel intermediary to increase its effort on the manufacturer's products and brands. One potential solution is to vertically integrate, and theoretical frameworks such as transaction cost analysis have been useful in examining the advantages and disadvantages of this decision (Geyskens, Steenkamp, & Kumar, 2006; Rindfleisch & Heide, 1997). Beyond vertical integration, there are three broad channel governance strategies common in vertical channels – 1) exercise of power arising from asymmetry in resources and/or dependency, 2) contractual controls, and 3) relational norms built or reinforced via communications, monitoring systems, trust, and various other influence strategies (Weitz & Wang, 2004).

A detailed discussion of these mechanisms are outside the scope of this dissertation, however it is clear from the large stream of research on distribution channels that manufacturer – channel intermediary goals and interests are not perfectly aligned, and that control system alignment is important to the realization of the manufacturer's objectives. We define *Control System Alignment* in this paper as the extent to which the control systems a channel member puts place to direct and motivate its own sales personnel are aligned with *supplier* goals as they pertain to a particular brand during a given time frame. While there is a rich base of literature discussing manufacturer – wholesaler relational exchanges and various influence mechanisms (e.g., Anderson et al., 1987; Anderson & Weitz, 1992; Anderson & Narus, 1990; Gencturk & Aulakh, 2007; Payan & McFarland, 2005), existing research has largely focused on the channel member company level as opposed to examining supplier influences on channel member salespeople.

In a marketing and sales context, there are, however, two relevant relationships pertaining to goals and control systems with which the manufacturer must be concerned: 1) manufacturer – channel member and 2) channel member – channel salesperson. The manufacturer's first and primary point of contact is with the channel member's management team, and a key purpose of this interaction is to influence the extent to which the channel member prioritizes, supports, and puts necessary control systems in place to market the manufacturer's brand(s) effectively downstream. In either a wholesale or retail context, an important element of this is the amount of focused effort that the channel salesperson expends on each of the products or brands that (s)he is responsible for selling. Depending on any number of factors, e.g., profit contribution, channel member management might put control systems in place that encourage the salesperson to put forth more or less effort on certain brands versus others. These control systems could take the form of incentives, differential compensation, written behavioral or outcome goals, normative pressure, etc. (Baldauf et al., 2005). Influencing this process is one of the critical roles played by the manufacturer rep responsible for calling on the channel member.

Recall the scenarios introduced earlier. Scott, the beer distributor salesperson, is responsible for gaining distribution, expanding shelf space, placing point-of-sale material, and selling in displays and promotions to retailers in his territory. He represents over 50 brands of beer, involving over 300 SKUS, from 8 different brewers. Given this product-line breadth and the interest of positively managing supplier relationships while maximizing distributor profit, Scott's sales manager provides direction to Scott regarding execution priorities and tracks Scott's performance against this plan. To the extent that this performance plan coincides with the manufacturer's priorities, the manufacturer's interests are well served, since various process motivation theories predict that Scott will be motivated to act in a manner consistent with the goals and actions laid out in his performance plan.

Goal-setting theory has been one of the most widely used theories for explaining worker motivation and performance (Li & Butler, 2004; Locke & Latham, 2002). Under this theory, specific goals, particularly when feedback on progress is available and when accompanied by incentives, lead to stronger effort and performance (e.g., Ambrose & Kulik, 1999; Locke & Latham, 1990; Wofford, Goodwin, & Premack, 1992). Goals are said to influence performance by directing attention and effort toward goal-relevant activities and away from goal-irrelevant activities, by energizing workers, by positively affecting persistence, and by leading to the arousal and use of task-relevant knowledge and strategies (Locke & Latham, 2004). Other theories of motivation commonly used in a work environment predict a similarly positive influence of control systems on salesperson effort. For example, expectancy theory suggests that people choose their behavior in a way that maximizes subjective utility (Vroom, 1964) such that effort will be expended when it is perceived that the effort will result in a favorable outcome and the outcome will result in a desirable reward. In our context, the employer control systems i.e., salesperson performance plan, imply to the salesperson the effort – performance link, while formally establishing the instrumentality tying performance against objectives with various rewards. Also, reinforcement theory, holding that behavior is a function of anticipated consequences, has been extensively used in studying workplace behavior (Katzell & Thompson, 1990; Komaki, 2003; Steers, Mowday, & Shapiro, 2004). Reinforcement theory suggests that anticipated rewards and penalties are primary drivers of behavior (Osterhus, 1997). Assuming that the manager has exhibited consistencies with respect to the monitoring, evaluation, and outcome rewards associated with past performance plans, then the salesperson (Scott, in our example) will be prone to behave in a manner consistent with the current performance plan. In sum, all of these theories generally support the efficacy of control systems on directing salesperson effort and performance.

However, if the control systems put in place by the channel member are not aligned with the manufacturer's goals, then the effort placed by the salesperson against the manufacturer's brands relative to other brands is likely to be weak. Task one for the manufacturer then is working diligently to influence channel member planning. Returning to our example, say Scott's performance plan (developed by the distributor in accordance with its interests) prioritizes and rewards him to a greater extent for selling in Corona displays than Heineken displays. Chances are that the relative effort Scott expends on Heineken will be weaker than that spent on Corona, to the disadvantage of Heineken. As we will show, however, there are other pervasive but less obvious influences that could compromise these assumptions.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory asserts that an individual's self concept is derived in part by psychological membership in various social groups. Social identity refers to "the part of the individual's self concept which derives from his knowledge that he belongs to certain groups together with the values and emotional significance attached to this group membership" (Tajfel, 1978). Groups to which one might identify are innumerable, e.g., occupation, company, gender, race, religion, nationality, sports teams, clubs, cliques, music genres to name but a few. Key among the assumptions underlying social identity theory is that individuals strive for positive self-esteem, that self-esteem is in part derived from social group membership, and that a positive social identity is maintained or strengthened through in-group – out-group comparisons (Van Dick et al., 2004b). Identification with social groups satisfies multiple needs, e.g., need for affiliation, safety, and a feeling of purpose in life (Pratt, 1998). People strive to simultaneously understand their place in the world and feel good about themselves, and psychologically associating with particular groups helps fulfill these needs. "A social identity is a critical referent because inherent in its psychological acceptance is the acceptance of the values and behavioral norms of the collectivity" (Scott & Lane, 2000). To the extent that the self is viewed in collective terms, self-goals and group-goals converge, thus the more strongly one identifies with a particular group, the more likely it is that individual will think and act in accordance with that group membership (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000).

Related to social identity theory, self categorization theory is concerned with the extent to which individuals define themselves in terms of personal or various social identities and the resulting impact on behavior (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Self categorization theory proposes that a particular social identity becomes salient due to contextual factors that give rise to increased cognitive accessibility and fit of the categorization of self and others into their respective in and out groups (Oakes, 1987; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Van Dick, Ullrich, & Tissington, 2006b). As a given social identity becomes salient, self-stereotyping occurs and in-group homogeneity increases, depersonalizing individual self-perception such that individual interests subordinate to the collective interest of that particular group (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

While much of the early literature largely conceptualized identification as a cognitive process, recent research suggests that social identification includes three components - cognitive (awareness that one is part of a group) evaluative (value ascribed to group membership), and affective (emotional involvement or attachment to the group) (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Ellemers et al., 2004; Tajfel, 1978; van Dick, 2001; Van Dick et al., 2004b). Some researchers have posited a fourth dimension to identification that can be termed behavioral (willingness to engage in behaviors supportive to the group) (Jackson & Smith, 1999; Van Dick et al., 2004b).

Organizational Identification

Theories of social identity have been extensively used as a basis for understanding an individual's psychological attachment to an organization (e.g., Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn, 1995; Ellemers, 2001; Pratt, 1998; Smidts, Pruyn, & Van Riel, 2001; van Dick, 2001; van Knippenberg, 2000). Indeed, to varying degrees, a person's self-identity is derived from the organizations and work groups to which he belongs (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg & Terry, 2000). Some have suggested that work-based identification is among the strongest and most pervasive of the social identities due to the amount of time the typical person spends in a work environment and because of the importance of work to one's livelihood and well-being (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000). When an individual identifies with an organization, his or her perceptions of membership in the organization become embedded in his or her general self concept (Riketta, van Dick, & Rousseau, 2006). Thus, organizational identification can be conceptualized as the perception of oneness with or belongingness to the organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). In essence, "organizational identification occurs when one's beliefs about his or her organization become self-referential or self-defining" (Pratt, 1998).

The sense of connection between a member and his organization is derived from two images – what the member believes is distinctive, central, and enduring about the organization ("perceived organizational identity") and what the member believes outsiders think of the organization ("construed external image") (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). Other researchers have used differing terminology to refer to these same antecedent images, e.g., "organization stereotypes" and "organization prestige" (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000).

People become attached to their organizations when distinctive characteristics they attribute to the organization are incorporated into their own self concepts. The strength of this identification depends on the perceived attractiveness of the organizational entity, specifically the extent to which it contributes to one's self esteem, self consistency, and self distinctiveness (Dutton et al., 1994; Tajfel & Turner, 1985). In addition, when organization members believe that outsiders view their organization favorably, they "bask in the organization's reflected glory" (Cialdini, Borden, Thorne, Walker, Freeman, & Sloan, 1976), further bolstering self worth. A strong construed external image contributes to one's social identity and self-categorization by sustaining an enhanced sense of self that is coherent, consistent, and distinctive (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Dutton et al., 1994). Following from social identity theory, as people identify more strongly with the organization, the more likely those individuals will be intrinsically motivated to behave in a manner consistent with the interests of the organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton et al., 1994; van Knippenberg & Ellemers, 2003; van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). As identities converge, acting on behalf of the organization is congruent with one's self interests.

Identification with one's organization can take two forms – situated identification and deep-structure identification (Riketta et al., 2006; Rousseau, 1998). Deep-structure identification occurs when the relationship with one's organization alters one's self concept to the extent that the individual defines him or herself in relation to the organization. Situated identification, by contrast, is less well entrenched in one's psyche and more ephemeral in nature. It "arises when individuals perceive situational cues that signal shared interests," and is "sustained only as long as those cues persist" (Riketta et al., 2006). Situated identification is considered a precondition of deep-structure identification, and is strengthened by making group success, in-group commonality, and outgroup differences salient (Riketta et al., 2006). Indeed, salience is a key lever in activating organizational identification. Defined as the probability that a given identity will be evoked (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001), salience is determined by the identity's subjective importance, situational relevance, and extent to which the category being identified with has prior meaning and significance to the individual (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; van Dick et al., 2005). A subjectively important identity is one that is highly central to one's self-concept, while a social identity's situational relevance is defined by external norms and is context dependent. Comparative and normative "fit" are critical determinants of salience, comparative fit referring to the extent to which differences between members of a category on some dimension of importance are perceived to be smaller than differences between members of that category and a comparison group of others, while normative fit refers to the nature of these differences being consistent with the perceiver's expectations of the categories (Haslam, Powell, & Turner, 2000).

The concept of salience is important because organizational identification, like social identification in general, can involve different foci. An employee can identify with the company, division, department, work unit, and any number of other formal and informal groups that exist among the work setting. Various work-related entities to which an employee might identify can be nested or cross-cutting. Nested collectives are embedded in a hierarchical fashion within others (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; Bagozzi, Bergami, Marzocchi, & Morandin, 2007; Ellemers & Rink, 2005). The job, workgroup, department, division, and organization are examples of nested collectives, from lower order to higher order. In general, research suggests that because they are more exclusive, concrete, and proximal, identification with lower-order collectives tends naturally to be more subjectively important and situationally relevant (and thus usually more salient) than identification with more distal higher-order collectives (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). However, higher-order identities can still be salient, particularly when management is skillful in substantively and symbolically engaging employees in a manner which reinforces what is central, distinctive, and enduring about the organization (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; Dutton et al., 1994). The relative salience of one's identification with various work-based entities is context-based, and while nested identities frequently overlap or generalize to other organization based entities, they may also conflict.

Unlike nested collectives, which are usually thought of as being attached to formal social categories within an organization, cross-cutting collectives can be either formal or informal. Examples of formal cross-cutting collectives include committees, task forces, unions, etc. while informal cross-cutting collectives include demographics, friendship cliques, special interest social groups, etc. Because such collectives are not necessarily dependent on one another, identifying with multiple cross-cutting collectives can be either reinforcing or diluting (Ellemers & Rink, 2005; Meyer et al., 2006). While empirical evidence is limited, researchers have speculated that the compatibility of goals, values, and norms (or lack thereof) among such collectives either support or undermine the relative identification with each collective and corresponding outcomes (Meyer et al., 2006). Moreover, the principle of functional antagonism (Turner et al., 1987) suggests that as one identity becomes more salient, others become less salient.

Brand Identification

Most research on workforce related social identification has centered on the congruence of self-identities with formal organizational identities, however it is quite possible that salespeople also identify to varying degrees with the individual brands marketed by their company. In fact, the previous discussion of social identity theory in the context of organizational identification is also relevant in the context of *brand identification*, which can be defined as the degree to which an individual defines himself/herself by the same attributes that (s)he believes defines the brand. Formal membership in a group is not required for identification to occur (Donavan, Janda, & Suh, 2006; George & Chattopadhyay, 2005; Pratt, 1998), and just as consumers prefer brands that elicit associations consistent with their own self-identities (either actual or desired), self-congruity theory would suggest that salespeople form a stronger bond with brands when brand and self-identities converge (Aaker, 1999; Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Kassarjian, 1971; Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy & Danes, 1982). Although the extent to which salespeople identify with the brands they sell has not been well researched, there is a rich literature on consumer – product and consumer - brand relationships from which to draw inferences.

What people consume, possess, and associate with contributes to their self-definitions. Consumption is central to the meaningful practice of everyday life, with product/service choices made not just on the basis of utility, but on their symbolic meanings (Wattanasuwan, 2005). An existential view is that having and being are distinct but inseparable - the self emerges from nothingness and people continually acquire things in an attempt to fill this void with meaning, symbolically creating a sense of who they are (Belk, 1988; Sartre, 1943; Wattanasuwan, 2005). Indeed, one's possessions contribute to and reflect his self-identity, knowingly or unknowingly functioning as parts of the extended self (Belk, 1988). This concept dates back at least as far as William James (1892) who asserted that "a man's self is the sum total of all he that can call his."

Individuals consume not only to satisfy particular needs, but as a self-creation vehicle with which they pursue meaning that they aspire to while avoiding meaning that they find undesirable (Douglas & Isherwood, 1996; Gould, Houston, & Mundt, 1997; Wattanasuwan, 2005). Such consumption contains both personal meaning and social meaning. People use objects to remind themselves of who they are and to indicate to others who they are (Wallendorf & Arnould, 1989), thus people consume not only to create and sustain the self but to locate themselves in society (Dittmar, 1992; Elliott, 1997). Since consumption is a crucial part of the fabric of contemporary society, with much of social life operating in the sphere of consumption, the creation, sustaining, and re-creation of self is inextricably tied to consumption behavior and thus product and brand choice (Slater, 1997; Wattanasuwan, 2005). Brands can act as symbolic resources in constructing social identity (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998). Indeed, consumer products and brands represent a particularly effective vehicle in our culture to appropriate meaning for ourselves and communicate that meaning to others (McCracken, 1988). Such appropriation is most likely to occur when the social identity linked to a brand is salient, self-important, object relevant, and evaluatively diagnostic (Reed, 2002).

Consumers can imbue brands with human characteristics that define a distinct brand personality (Aaker, 1997), leading often to the formation of deep relationships with brands that reinforce self-concept through mechanisms of self-worth and self-esteem

(Fournier, 1998). Brand identity is a set of brand associations that imply a promise to consumers while helping establish a relationship from which the consumer derives functional, emotional, and self-expressive benefits (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). There is some disagreement in the literature as to whether brand identity is created by brand strategists or co-created with stakeholders, whether it is stable or fluid, and whether it is internal or external in nature (see Csaba & Bengtsson (2006) for a good discussion). However, these seeming conflicts in perspective are to a large extent a result of inconsistencies in the use of the terms identity, image, and identification. Irrespective of these different viewpoints, *brand identification* as conceptualized here is a social construction that involves the integration of perceived brand identity (or brand image) into one's self-identity.

Following these arguments and the tenets of social identity theory, consumers (and, we suggest, employees) are prone to identify with brands that contribute positively to their self esteem, self consistency, and self distinctiveness (Tajfel & Turner, 1985), with beliefs about the adopted brands thus becoming self-referential or self-defining. Bagozzi, Bergami, Marzocchi, and Morandin (2007) propose that consumers connect with brands via a social identity-based hierarchical system of brand communities (network based, small group based, consumption subculture, and customer-company) that share a consciousness of in-group similarity and out-group distinction along with a sense of moral responsibility to act in manner consistent with the goals of the collective.

The automobile provides perhaps a particularly obvious case in point due to its conspicuousness as a product category. BMW, Ford F-series pickup, and Toyota Prius automobiles, for example each have very different attributes and symbolic meanings that might coincide with the way a consumer views himself. Clearly firms spend considerable resources attempting to build such psychological connections between their brands and consumers through advertising and other marketing communications. There is no reason to think that employees are immune to these kinds of influences and resulting attachment to the brands that their companies sell. In fact, given their higher level of involvement with the brands, and the fact that the brand's success or failure has ramifications to the employee's economic well-being, it is possible that the effect is even more pronounced.

Research Question

The preceding implies that sales control systems, organizational identification, and brand identification can all affect the amount of attention that a channel salesperson gives to a manufacturer's brand in performing his/her responsibilities. But what happens when these influences conflict with one another? In particular, can brand identification counteract contrary direction provided to the salesperson by his employer, and what are the consequences to both manufacturer and channel member? How does organizational identification affect this?

As discussed, manufacturers rely on channel members to sell their products and brands downstream, but because these channel members also represent other manufacturers, the channel member's direction to its salespeople may or may not align well with manufacturer goals. The salesperson is naturally inclined to follow the dictates of his or her employer for the reasons previously outlined, particularly if the salesperson identifies with his/her employer. Is it possible, however, that the manufacturer has in the notion of salesperson – brand identification a "secret weapon" at its disposal? The preceding has suggested that channel salesperson may identify to varying degrees with both the channel member and the manufacturer's brand. Based on this, we examine whether salesperson-brand identification can influence salesperson effort, either facilitating or detracting from the channel member sales control systems put in place to direct salesperson efforts, while factoring in the extent to which the salesperson identifies with the channel member.

We believe that these dynamics should generalize across different industries, products/services, and types of distribution channels, however, the context of our study is a 3-tier distribution system wherein a consumer products manufacturer sells its products through a wholesaler (distributor) who in turn sells to and services retail accounts in a designated territory. Irrespective of the product type, it is important to note that our focus is on the business to business exchange between manufacturer and wholesaler and between wholesaler and retailer.

DEVELOPMENT OF HYPOTHESES

Model

As shown in Figure 1, we expect that the extent to which distributor control systems are aligned with manufacturer goals (*Control System Alignment*) will affect the relative amount of effort that the distributor salesperson exerts on behalf of the manufacturer's brand. However, we posit that this effect will be moderated by the extent to which the salesperson identifies with two potentially competing organizational entities - the manufacturer's brand (*brand identification*) and the employer (*distributor identification*). We further suggest that this relative effort will impact the salesperson's brand sales performance and overall sales performance, the latter moderated by the degree to which distributor control systems are aligned with manufacturer goals. Finally, we suggest that the value of brand identification goes beyond its influence on in-role effort and sales performance. Specifically, we expect that brand identification separately leads to positive extra role behaviors that are directed at and supportive to the brand.

Below, we define each of the constructs and propose and support several hypothesized relationships.

Control System Alignment

Companies routinely put various control systems in place to direct the efforts of their boundary-spanning employees, and these generally have been found to be effective (Babakus et al., 1996; Baldauf et al., 2005; Cravens et al., 2004a; Cravens et al., 2004b; Jaworski et al., 1993; Piercy et al., 1999; Piercy et al., 2004). However, since channel members often sell products from multiple manufacturers, the channel member's control systems (and resulting salesperson efforts) are often not completely aligned with an individual supplying manufacturer's goals and interests (Anderson et al., 1987; Gaski, 1984; Weitz & Wang, 2004). We define *Control System Alignment* as the extent to which channel member control systems put in place behind a focal brand support the manufacturer's goals during a specified time period. Goal theory, expectancy theory, and reinforcement theory all suggest that salespeople will be motivated to expend effort in accordance with channel member control systems. Thus, when there is alignment between manufacturer goals and channel member control systems, one would expect the channel salesperson to work in accordance with manufacturer goals, i.e., to place an appropriate amount of effort behind the manufacturer's brand.

Defined as the "force, energy, or activity by which work is accomplished (Brown & Peterson, 1994), effort can also be thought of as the "vehicle by which motivation is translated into accomplished work" (Srivastava, Pelton, & Strutton, 2001). However, given a wide assortment of brands in a salesperson's portfolio and a finite number of hours in day and a limited number of minutes in front of a buyer, the salesperson must make choices regarding what (s)he focuses on. Time spent selling one brand necessarily means less time spent selling another brand. So, expanding slightly on the definition of effort above, *Brand Effort* is conceptualized here as the force, energy, or activity expended against the focal brand relative to that expended against all other brands.

Based on the above,

H1: Stronger Control System Alignment will result in increased Brand Effort.

However, goal theorists recognize that the extent to which people are personally committed to their goals influence behavior (Locke & Latham, 2004), and argue that externally derived goals will be less protected from competing desires and temptations than goals that arise autonomously from personal values (Meyer, Becker, & Vandenberghe, 2004) Two potential influences on the salesperson's response to company initiated goals pertaining to brand emphasis are his/her identification with the company for which (s)he works and his/her identification with the brand that (s)he represents.

Distributor Identification and Brand Identification

Individuals strive for positive self-esteem, and in so doing are apt to identify with various social groups that contribute to a sense of self that is internally consistent and externally distinctive. One such social group is the organization.   As discussed earlier, organizational identification can be directed towards multiple foci within the work environment, and identification with such entities can be mutually supportive or disruptive.   In this study, we examine specifically the extent to which the distributor salesperson identifies with his/her employer (*Distributor Identification*) and the extent to which the salesperson identifies with a focal brand (*Brand Identification*).

The psychological connection between person and organization has often been discussed as a mechanism mediating corporate actions and stakeholder responses (Ahearne et al., 2005; Scott & Lane, 2000).   One possible response on the part of an employee is an increase in effort on behalf of the organization. Since organizational identification represents the cognitive link between the definitions of the organization and the self (Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974) such that perceived characteristics of the organization are integrated into the employee's self identity, it is intuitively reasonable that there is an increased linkage between organizational goals and self goals when organizational identification is high. Since self goals exercise a strong motivating effect on behavior (e.g., Brown, Jones, & Leigh, 2005; Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Marcus & Nurius, 1986; VandeWalle, Brown, Cron, & Slocum, 1999), organizational identification should moderate the impact of distributor control systems on the relative effort the salesperson places on behalf of the organizational entity. When people strongly identify with a particular brand (distributor), they become vested in its success or failure. Their sense of survival is tied to the brand's (distributor's) survival (Dutton et al., 1994). Exertion on behalf of the brand (distributor) is also exertion on behalf of the self. Therefore, Brand Identification should influence the amount of effort a salesperson places on a brand, while amplifying the positive effects of manufacturer – distributor goal alignment and accompanying control systems on the effort expended on that brand. On the contrary, if Brand Identification is low, the Control System Alignment to Brand Effort link should be weakened.

The effects of Distributor Identification on relative brand effort are likely more complex. If Distributor Identification is high, the interests and goals of the distributor become more salient, and thus relative brand effort would be contingent on whether the goals of the brand were consistent with the goals of the distributor. If control systems support the brand, then a salesperson who strongly identifies with the distributor is likely to follow suit and increase effort behind the brand. If, on the other hand, control systems do not support the brand, i.e., they are focused instead on other brand(s) within the salesperson's portfolio, then the distributor-identifying salesperson is likely to decrease effort on the brand in favor of these other brands.

Identification with brand and identification with distributor do not occur in a vacuum. Rather, the salesperson can identify with both brand and distributor to varying degrees, and this multiple identification can be reinforcing or diluting (Ellemers & Rink, 2005; George & Chattopadhyay, 2005; Meyer et al., 2006), particularly when viewed in the context of motivations naturally arising from the control systems instituted by the distributor. This implies the aforementioned interactions with Control System Alignment in influencing Brand Effort. Past research suggests that in nested or hierarchical forms of identification, identification with the lower level, or more proximal, entity tends to be stronger and thus more prescriptive of related outcomes than is identification with the subsuming entity. This in part is due to the greater distinctiveness provided by the lower order entity. For example, identification with one's work group under most circumstances will be stronger or more salient than identification with the company as a whole (van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). Also, Ashforth and Johnson (2001) suggest that identification with lower-order collectives may generalize to upper-order collectives. However, in the circumstances examined here, there is no clear nesting relationship. On the one hand, a brand is a subset of the portfolio of brands carried by the channel member. But on the other hand, the channel member is a subset of the collection of channel members that represent the manufacturer and its brands across a broader geography. Because of this, the relative strength and salience of identification is ambiguous. The extent to which identification with either brand or employer is deep-structure versus situated should play a role in the outcome (Riketta et al., 2006).

In summary, since the salesperson is prone to act in accordance with the groups to which (s)he identifies, strong identification with a particular brand and/or with the distributor give rise to desires and temptations that either support or conflict with direction provided by the employer. When the salesperson identifies with an entity, goals in support of this entity are more likely to be perceived as being more autonomous and self-controlled, resulting in stronger positive behavior in support of those goals. Goals that run counter to the identified identity, however, are likely to be perceived as less autonomous, less personally relevant, and potentially self-threatening, leading to reduced effort in support of the goals. There are parallels in the organizational commitment literature, where it has been shown that affective commitment has a more pronounced effect on performance than does normative commitment (e.g., Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993). Also, Scott and Lane (2000) point out that stakeholders who fail to identify with an entity may continue in an exchange relationship but with reduced trust such that support is limited only to the extent that it benefits the self. Indeed it is even possible to disidentify with an entity and work actively against it as a result (Scott & Lane, 2000).

Based on the preceding,

H2: Higher levels of Brand Identification will (a) result in increased Brand Effort irrespective of whether control systems are aligned with the brand, and (b) strengthen the favorable impact of control system alignment on Brand Effort, while softening the negative effect on effort when control systems are not aligned with the brand.

H3: Higher levels of Distributor Identification will amplify the impact of Control System Alignment on Brand Effort, i.e., it will strengthen Brand Effort when Control System Alignment is high, and it will weaken Brand Effort when Control System Alignment is low.

These hypotheses, along with the supporting discussion, imply a hierarchy of effects in the various combinations of control systems, brand identification, and distributor identification on brand effort. Specifically, the best case for the brand is when all three variables are high, i.e., control systems support the brand and the sales rep identifies with both the brand and the distributor (HHH). The worst case for the brand is when control systems do not support the brand and the sales rep identifies with the distributor but not with the brand (HLH). The other combinations should fall somewhere in between, with high brand identification and high control system alignment positively impacting brand effort and distributor identification further helping or hindering the brand depending on whether control systems are aligned with the brand. When control systems are not aligned with the brand, brand identification and distributor identification are in conflict and actively working against each other.

To illustrate, rewind again to the scenarios discussed earlier. An inside salesperson for a stereo system retailer Pure Sound Electronics, Ashley sells stereo components manufactured by five different electronics companies. Ashley has developed a well-entrenched affinity for Yamaha to the extent that she identifies strongly with the brand and considers herself a Yamaha salesperson. She is relatively new to Pure Sound however and while she values her job, she does not really identify with her employer. In her mind, she could just as well be working for any electronics retailer. By contrast, inside salesperson Kymberli identifies strongly with Pure Sound Electronics and while proud to be selling its line of products, she does not identify strongly with any particular brand. To round out our scenario, assume salesperson John identifies strongly with both Yamaha and Pure Sound and salesperson Rebecca does not identify with either.

Due to manufacturer pricing policies and incentives, some brands are more profitable for the retailer than others. In particular, let us assume that Pure Sound makes a considerably higher margin on its Pioneer systems and components than it does on its other brands. As a result, Pure Sound highly encourages its sales personnel to push the Pioneer brand, giving both higher quotas and more lucrative commissions in support of Pioneer stereo sales. From the perspective of Yamaha, there is low Control System alignment with Pure Sound. As a result, one would expect the relative effort expended by Pure Sound employees on behalf of Yamaha to be low. But wait – the forces of identification are at work, too.

Kymberli's situation is unambiguous – she identifies highly with Pure Sound but not Yamaha, with the result that she follows her employer's directives and pushes Pioneer at the expense of other brands including Yamaha. Thus, in line with goal theory and the tenets of organizational identification, her relative effort on Yamaha is weak. John's situation is more complex given that he identifies with both Yamaha and Pure Sound. Based on the above discussion, low Yamaha Control System alignment and high Pure Sound identification would seem to lead to low relative effort on Yamaha, but because he identifies strongly with Yamaha, this should lead to a more balanced approach. In other words, John's identification with Pure Sound strengthens his commitment to act in accordance with distributor controls, but his identification with Yamaha gives rise to competing desires that diminish this motivation. Ashley's situation is even more interesting. Her economic interests are best served by following Pure Sound's directives and the process motivation theories discussed above suggest that she would follow suit and push Pioneer. However this is at odds with both her self-identity as a Yamaha salesperson and her lack of identification with Pure Sound. To the extent that this Yamaha identification is deeply structured, we expect that Ashley's efforts towards Pioneer will be tempered in favor of Yamaha, i.e., social identity theory suggests that she will exhibit high Yamaha relative effort, even at an economic disadvantage to herself. Finally, Rebecca, who identifies with neither entity is likely to follow the dictates of her employer purely on the basis of economic self-interest, i.e., she will act in the direction of the Control System alignment, although perhaps less enthusiastically than Kymberli.

Now, let's assume that Pure Sounds plans shift, and instead of prioritizing Pioneer, the retailer puts in place control systems that strongly support Yamaha. Since they both identify with Yamaha, Ashley and John could be expected to expend particularly strong efforts behind Yamaha, John being subject to three positive forces and Ashley's lack of identification with Pure Sound being overwhelmed by the combination of high brand identification and strongly aligned control systems. Lacking intrinsic motivation supplied by brand identification, but bolstered by strong identification with Pure Sound, Kymberli's efforts are likely to balance out in favor of acting in concert with control systems. Rebecca, not identifying with either Yamaha or Pure Sound, again is prone to act purely in accordance with economic self interest that the control systems provide, although potentially with lesser effort than those who had the added motivational influence associated with identification with either or both entities.

Performance

Effort is one outcome of motivation, with performance levels varying by effort (Chonko, 1986; Churchill Jr, Ford, Hartley, & Walker Jr, 1985; Srivastava et al., 2001). Numerous studies have shown a positive relationship between effort and various performance measures (Brown, Cron, & Slocum Jr, 1997; Brown & Peterson, 1994; Krishnan, Netemeyer, & Boles, 2002; Mowen, Keith, Brown, & Jackson Jr, 1985; VandeWalle et al., 1999). We consider two types of performance measures in this study – Brand Sales Performance, and Overall Sales Performance. Brand Sales Performance is defined as the percentage of sales that the focal brand represents out of the total sales volume produced by the salesperson, therefore it is in a sense a "share of portfolio" or "share of total sales" measure that reflects the relative success of the brand versus other brands sold by that salesperson. While share of market is a measure more routinely used by manufacturers to judge the relative strength of a brand in the marketplace, a share of portfolio approach provides an indication as to the importance of the brand to the channel member's business and thus can serve as a source of manufacturer power or leverage over the channel member. The distributor is less concerned about the sales of a particular brand or supplier than it is the sales of its entire collection of brands in the aggregate. Thus, Overall Sales Performance is introduced as an outcome of greater interest to the distributor, conceptualized here as the sales trend improvement of the salesperson's entire portfolio of brands during a defined time period.

In general, strong sales performance on one brand should have a favorable impact on overall sales performance, however if the effort placed on that brand took away effort from other brands that were more important to the distributor during that time frame, it is conceivable that Brand Sales Performance actually could have an adverse effect on Overall Sales Performance. Since it is assumed that the profit-maximizing distributor will align its control systems with a given brand only when doing so is in its best interests, higher Brand Sales Performance is likely to result in higher Overall Sales Performance only when Control System Alignment is high. In other words, if a salesperson focuses on a brand that the distributor is not supporting, the impact of that brand's results on the salesperson's overall sales will be weakened.

Therefore,

H4: Greater Brand Effort will result in increased Brand Sales Performance

H5: Brand Sales Performance will interact with Control System Alignment to affect Overall Sales Performance such that greater Brand Sales Performance will result in increased Overall Sales Performance only when Control System Alignment is high.

Other Consequences

The literature points to other desirable consequences of organizational identification beyond effort and performance, e.g., heightened job involvement (Riketta, forthcoming), increased job satisfaction (Van Dick, Christ, Stellmacher, Wagner, Ahlswede, Grubba, Hauptmeier, Hohfeld, Moltzen, & Tissington, 2004a), reduced employee turnover (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Dutton et al., 1994; Mael & Ashforth, 1995), enhanced cooperation (Dukerich et al., 2002; Richter et al., 2006) and organizational citizenship behaviors (Ahearne et al., 2005; Dukerich et al., 2002; van Dick et al., 2006a; van Dick et al., 2005; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000).

Organizational citizenship behaviors are defined as discretionary behaviors beyond formal job requirements that promote the effective functioning of the organization (Organ, 1988), and are generally thought to include three dimensions – sportsmanship, civic virtue, and helping behaviors – although the latter also includes such subcomponents as altruism, courtesy, peacekeeping, and cheerleading (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Ahearne, 1998). The relationship between organizational identification and OCBs stems from a desire to protect, support, and improve the organization that surfaces when organizational identities and self-identities converge (Ahearne et al., 2005; Dukerich et al., 2002; Dutton et al., 1994; Scott & Lane, 2000). Organizational identification aligns the interests of the organization with self-interest and thus engaging in positive extra role behaviors is a natural extension of the self.

This raises an interesting question in the context of this study, and one of great importance to the manufacturer in particular. One contribution of this dissertation is its elucidation and examination of salesperson-brand identification as an important type of organizational identification within the context of a distribution channel. Along similar lines, could it be that there are corresponding brand-oriented extra role behaviors (separate from company-oriented OCBs) that might result from brand identification? This seems both plausible and worthy of testing. For example, it is likely that the salesperson who identifies with a particular brand, for the same self-enhancing and self-protecting reasons discussed above for OCBs, would be prone to personally consume the brand at home and in public settings, to make the brand available at parties/gatherings where appropriate, to recommend it to friends and defend it from criticism, to encourage other employees and management to focus on the brand, to confront or report colleagues for behavior detrimental to the brand, to report competitive initiatives that threaten the brand, to (for a consumer packaged good) correct out of stock situations, pull up facings, rebuild displays, and place POS when shopping on personal time, etc. All of these things are of great benefit to the manufacturer, if not immediately, then certainly over the long term. We thus define *Brand Extra Role Behaviors* as proactive behaviors on the part of the salesperson that are outside the scope of the job description but that contribute to the viability and vitality of the brand. The notion of separate extra-role behaviors relating to a specific organizational identity is consistent with Ullrich et al's "identity-matching principle" (2007), which suggests that the relationship between identifications and relevant behavioral outcomes will be stronger when they address the same level of categorization. The existence of such brand extra-role behaviors also would be consistent with Bagozzi et al (2007), who found that consumers who identified strongly with Ducati motorcycles exhibited a number of positive post-purchase behaviors on behalf of the brand, including enhanced word of mouth communication, dissemination of brand materials, proactive communication with the company, and resistance to negative information. While in most cases, such extra role behaviors could be expected to benefit both brand and distributor, it is possible that such behaviors could be supportive to the brand but not maximally effective for the distributor (if those behaviors could instead have been directed at more important brands within the distributor's portfolio) or in extreme cases even counterproductive to the distributor, e.g., offering excessive brand promotional support to retailers. While this latter point is worthy of further investigation, here we focus only on the positive benefits of the extra role behavior to the brand.

Therefore,

H6: Brand Identification will be associated with salesperson demonstration of Brand Extra Role Behaviors.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

Data were gathered from eighteen large sales organizations (distributors), located in metropolitan areas across the United States. The distributors represent a shared set of consumer products manufacturers operating in the same product category, and perform the function of warehousing the various manufacturers' brands and selling them to retailers in assigned geographic areas. Among the distributor salesperson's brand-building responsibilities are securing and increasing distribution, expanding shelf space, selling product displays, placing point-of-sale materials, selling promotions, etc. While the distributors selected for the study were largely homogeneous with respect to the primary suppliers that they represent, externalities pertaining to company and geographic differences were controlled for. In particular, we controlled for brand market share and the number of suppliers each distributor represents by including them as covariates in the analysis. The organization structure was consistent across organizations, with each salesperson reporting to a route supervisor who in turn reports to a distributor sales manager. Surveys were administered to the salespeople, route supervisors, and sales managers in each operation, and objective sales performance data were obtained from company records for outcome measures as described below.

In total, survey questionnaires were delivered to 260 salespeople, 59 route supervisors, and 18 sales managers, with a response rate of 81%, 100%, and 100% respectively. The surveys were distributed to the sales force at company offices; sales personnel were asked to complete the survey at their leisure and then return the survey directly to the researcher using provided self-addressed postage-paid envelopes. Merging all three data sets with company records (brand and company sales performance data) resulted in a data set containing 192 full data records, for a usable response rate of 74%. Because each salesperson rated four separate brands, there were a total of 768 (4 X 192) possible observations. However, since 25 sales reps were responsible for selling (and thus reported on) only 3 of the 4 focal brands, there were a total of 743 actual usable observations. The average respondent was 33 years of age with 8.5 years of experience in sales, 5.8 years with his/her company, and 3.5 years in his/her current position. Ninety-three percent were male, not atypical for this particular industry, with an ethnicity breakdown as follows: 60% white, 25% Hispanic, 6% African American, 9% Asian/other. Thirty-four percent of respondents had a college degree or higher.

Construct Measures

Constructs were assessed via a combination of proven and new scales, the latter of which were developed in accordance with the procedures outlined by Churchill (1979). For each of the new scales, an initial pool of items was developed using exploratory research, refined after expert feedback from academic researchers and distributor general managers, and pre-tested with a small sample of distributor sales personnel.

Control System Alignment refers to the extent to which distributor control systems are aligned with manufacturer brand goals. To assess this construct, distributor sales managers were surveyed using a new scale, shown in Table 1, asking the managers to assess the extent to which incentives, commissions, performance plan objectives, sales meetings, and ride-withs for a designated time period (month) focused on a particular brand. This was completed for each of four brands, with the sales manager having to allocate 100 points among the four brands and “all other brands” carried by the distributor.

Distributor Identification and Brand Identification were individually rated by self-report (salesperson) using an 8-pt visual and verbal representation of the perceived overlap of salesperson and distributor/brand identity that was developed by Bergami and Bagozzi (2000). This was completed separately for identification with the distributor and with each of the four brands included on the survey. Pre-tests showed that an example was helpful in ensuring consistent interpretation of the scale by respondents, so an example was included on the survey before respondents were asked to answer.

Brand Effort refers to the force, energy, or activity expended by the salesperson against the focal brand relative to that expended against all other brands. This was assessed by the line manager overseeing each salesperson, i.e., the route supervisor, using a new 7-point Likert scale (see Table 1) that taps into the execution responsibilities of the salesperson. Here the supervisor rated each of his/her sales reps on the effort expended against certain brands in performing particular selling and merchandising activities that are part of the salesperson’s ongoing responsibilities, e.g., selling promotions, selling/building displays, expanding shelf space, increasing distribution, placing point-of-sale material. This assessment was completed for each of the four brands included on the survey. Given the low span of control for each supervisor, the strong emphasis on ride with activity in each distributor operation, and managerial expectations that the route supervisor will be monitoring salesperson selling and merchandising activities, the route supervisor is in a particularly good position to assess salesperson effort on these tasks. At the same time, the multi-source nature of the data minimizes the risk of common method bias.

Brand Extra Role Behavior was measured via a new 5-point Likert scale (see Table 1) that asked salespeople to rate the extent to which they engage in various brand-supportive activities that are beyond the scope of the job description but that promote the brand in some way, e.g., “I serve this brand at parties/gatherings,” “I encourage other employees to focus their efforts on this brand,” “I correct out of stock situations, pull up facings, rebuild displays, place POS, etc. in retail accounts on personal time for this brand, e.g., when shopping while off work.”

Brand Sales Performance is an objective measured gleaned from distributor sales reports that assesses the proportion of the salesperson’s total monthly volume that is accounted for by the brand. In other words, it is defined as the percentage of sales that the focal brand represents out of the total sales volume produced by the salesperson for the time period of interest in the study – in this case a specific month, and thus can be considered a brand’s “share of total sales” for each salesperson. A similar approach has been used to assess constructs such as share of customer or share of wallet (Ahearne, Jelinek, & Jones, 2007). As discussed earlier, this is an important measure from the perspective of the manufacturer as it indicates the relative performance of its brand versus that of other brands sold by the salesperson.

Overall Sales Performance, an outcome of greater interest to the distributor, is an objective measure obtained from distributor sales records that computes the sales trend improvement for the salesperson’s entire brand portfolio during the time period defined by the study.

Because there was geographic variation in market share among the focal brands, as well as some differences in the total number of brands carried across distributors, and since it is possible that these variables could influence both brand effort and brand sales performance for a given salesperson, we also included *Brand Market Share* and *Number of Suppliers* as covariates in the model.

Measurement Model

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted in SPSS to evaluate the reflective scales, using principal components analysis and a Varimax rotation. All items loaded onto their factors as anticipated, although Brand Extra Role Behavior split into two separate factors – one reflecting Brand Usage (e.g., "I personally consume this brand at home," "I serve this brand or make it available at parties/gatherings") and one reflecting Extra Role Brand Support (e.g., "I encourage other employees to focus their efforts on this brand," "I correct out of stock situations, pull up facings, rebuild displays, place POS, etc in retail accounts on my own personal time for this brand"). Given the result of the EFA and the fact that this notion of brand-specific extra role behaviors is to date un-researched and worthy of exploration, we elected to treat the two factors as two separate latent variables, so that we could assess potential differential effects of Brand Identification on them.

Factor loadings for all constructs ranged from .66 to .91 with no unusually high cross-loadings. Reliabilities for each scale were calculated and deemed acceptable (all above .86 - see Table 2).

Next, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to test the discriminant validity of the measures. Although the CFA chi-square statistic (1886, 306 d.f.) was significant, an examination of the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and Standard Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) estimates (.94, .08, and .04 respectively) suggests that the measurement model fits the data well. CFI values greater than .90 have historically been considered desirable, while RMSEA estimates less than or equal to .08 and SRMR values below .10 are considered indicative of a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2005). All factor loadings of the indicators to their respective latent constructs were significant. Moreover, all individual reliabilities were larger than .86, the lowest composite reliability was .83, and the lowest average variance extracted was .56, providing evidence that all constructs possess adequate reliability and convergent validity (Bagozzi, 1980; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In addition, all squared correlations between the latent constructs were smaller than the average variance extracted from the respective constructs (see Table 2), further supporting the measures' discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Analytic Approach

Because some of the data could vary across the 70 distributor-brand clusters as well as among salespeople within clusters, and thus violate the assumption of independence, it was important to test for the suitability of a multi-level analysis. To determine whether a two-level approach was warranted, interclass correlation coefficients (ICC) and corresponding design effects were examined in order to ascertain the extent of systematic group level variance (Duncan, Duncan, Alpert, Hops, Stoolmiller, & Muthen, 1997). The resulting ICCs indicate that the proportion of total variance accounted for by between cluster variation is of sufficient size to substantiate a multi-level approach. In addition, design effects, calculated by multiplying the ICC by (average cluster size-1) and adding 1, were generally greater than 2, suggesting that a multi-level structure should not be ignored (Muthen & Satorra, 1995). Consequently, a multi-level structural equation model, using MPlus 5 and estimated with full maximum likelihood, was utilized for the analysis in order to take into account the hierarchical structure of the data (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). This has the advantage over other hierarchical linear modeling methods of enabling one to model both structural and measurement models simultaneously. In our study, Control System Alignment will vary by distributor-brand cluster; therefore it is modeled as a level 2 variable. The remaining constructs are modeled as level 1 variables.

As depicted in Figure 1, three of the hypothesized relationships reside within level 1 and thus can be represented as simple linear regressions, i.e.,

(1) Brand Effort → Brand Sales Performance

$$BP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 RE + r$$

(2) Brand ID → Brand Extra Role Support

$$BrdERS = \beta_0 + \beta_1 BI + r$$

(3) Brand ID → Brand Usage

$$BrdUse = \beta_0 + \beta_1 BI + r$$

Outcome variable Overall Sales Performance, however, is a function of not only Brand Sales Performance but of level 2 variable Control System Alignment. Here the analysis can be thought of as including two steps, although the MPlus two-level modeling technique incorporates these steps into a single model. Step one is to regress Overall Sales Performance on the level 1 predictor variable Brand Sales Performance, i.e.,

$$OP_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}(BP_{ij}) + r_{ij}$$

where OP_{ij} is salesperson i's overall sales performance across cluster j, BP_{ij} is the brand sales performance of salesperson i in cluster j, and r_{ij} is an error term assumed to be distributed $N(0,\sigma^2)$.

In the second step, the regression parameters (intercept and slope) from step one become the outcomes variables, and are regressed on Control System alignment, i.e.,

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}CS_j + u_{0j}$$

$$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{11}CS_j + u_{1j}$$

where CS_j represents the Control System Alignment for cluster j. Thus, these two equations capture the variation present at level two.

Combining the two sets of equations yields the following:

$$OP_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}CS_j + u_{0j} + (\gamma_{10} + \gamma_{11}CS_j + u_{1j})(BP_{ij}) + r_{ij}$$

$$= \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}CS_j + \gamma_{10}(BP_{ij}) + \gamma_{11}CS_j(BP_{ij}) + u_{0j} + u_{1j}(BP_{ij}) + r_{ij}$$

Thus, the effects of Control System Alignment, Brand Performance, and the cross-level interaction of Control Systems Alignment and Brand Performance on Overall Sales Performance are captured by γ_{01}, γ_{10}, and γ_{11} respectively.

Predicting Brand Effort, i.e., the impact of Control System Alignment, Brand Identification, Distributor Identification, and the cross-level interaction of Control System Alignment with Brand Identification and with Distributor Identification, involves a similar hierarchical approach.

$$RE_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}(BI)_{ij} + \beta_{2j}(DI)_{ij} + r_{ij}$$

$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}CS_j + u_{0j}$

$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{11}CS_j + u_{1j}$

$\beta_{2j} = \gamma_{20} + \gamma_{21}CS_j + u_{1j}$

Therefore,

$RE_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}CS_j + u_{0j} + (\gamma_{10} + \gamma_{11}CS_j + u_{1j})_j(BI)_{ij} + (\gamma_{20} + \gamma_{21}CS_j + u_{1j})_j(DI)_{ij} +$

$(\gamma_{30} + \gamma_{31}CS_j + u_{1j})\ (DI{*}BI)_{ij} + r_{ij}$

$= \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}CS_j + \gamma_{10}(BI)_{ij} + \gamma_{11}CS_j(BI)_{ij} + \gamma_{20}(DI)_{ij} + \gamma_{21}CS_j(DI)_{ij} + u_{0j} +$

$u_{1j}(BI)_{ij} + u_{1j}(DI)_{ij} + r_{ij}$

RESULTS

Model Comparison and Tests of Hypotheses

In accordance with procedures suggested by Mathieu and Taylor (2007), MacKinnon, Lockwood, West, and Sheets (2002), and Baron and Kenny (1986), we fit several structural models to test the direct and intervening effects represented in our conceptual model. To assist with the interpretation of cross-level interactions and the magnitude of effects among differently scaled variables, we first standardized the independent variables in the model, i.e., control system alignment, brand identification, and distributor identification variables, with higher values representing greater amounts of each variable.

Because standard fit indices are not available with the numerical integration procedure utilized by MPlus to estimate a multi-level model with cross-level interactions, a log likelihood difference test (-2 * difference in log likelihoods ~ χ^2 , *df* = # freed paths) was employed to compare the fit of evaluated nested models, while Akaike's information criterion (AIC) and Bayesian information criterion (BIC) were used to compare the fit of selected non-nested models. To begin, we fit a model that estimated only the direct effects of control systems alignment and of brand identification on brand performance by eliminating the paths to and from mediating variable Brand Effort, while retaining Brand Effort in the model. The results indicate positive relationships between Control System Alignment and Brand Performance ($\beta = .32$, $p <.05$) and between Brand Identification and Brand Performance ($\beta = .35$, $p <.05$), supporting the overall framework of the model. Next, we estimated the hypothesized model minus the interactions. A comparison of AIC and BIC values confirms that this less restricted model fits better than the direct effects only model (5948 lower AIC, 5966 lower BIC for the less restricted model). This improved model reflects positive relationships between Control System Alignment and Brand Effort ($\beta = .45$, $p < .05$), Brand Identification and Brand Effort ($\beta = .17$, $p < .05$), and between Brand Effort and Brand Performance ($\beta = .34$, $p < .05$), fulfilling additional requirements for a mediated structure, i.e., significant antecedent – final outcome and mediator –final outcome relationships (Baron & Kenny, 1986) .

The hypothesized model was estimated next, and a log likelihood difference test confirmed that the inclusion of the cross-level interactions provides a stronger fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 2120$, $df = 3$, $p < .05$) than the nested model that did not include these moderating effects. The results of this model, shown in Table 3, are summarized as follows in the context of our hypotheses.

Consistent with the more restrictive models, there is a positive relationship between Control System Alignment and Brand Effort, supporting H1. In other words, when the distributor puts sales controls in place behind a particular brand, there is an accompanying increase in the effort a salesperson places on that brand relative to other brands in the portfolio. Moreover, the significant positive interaction between Distributor Identification and Control System Alignment, as represented by a positive corresponding slope coefficient (γ_{21}) in the equations above, suggests that this relationship is strengthened when the salesperson identifies with the distributor, supporting H3. A non-significant γ_{11} coefficient and significantly positive γ_{10} coefficient in the above equations indicate a positive relationship between Brand Identification and Brand Effort across all levels of Control System Alignment, and of Control System Alignment across all levels of Brand Identification, supporting H2(a), but not supporting H2(b). Thus, when a salesperson identifies with a given brand, (s)he is more likely to expend effort against that brand relative to other brands in the portfolio, irrespective of whether distributor control systems support the brand. The interpretation of the interactions (or lack thereof) will be discussed in the next section.

The positive relationship between Brand Effort and Brand Performance substantiates H4. The significant positive interaction between Control System Alignment and Brand Performance, combined with the negative relationship between Brand Performance and Overall Sales Performance lends support to H5, which posits that Overall Sales Performance will result from strong Brand Performance only when Control System Alignment is high.

Finally, H6 pertains to another favorable outcome predicted to be positively associated with Brand Identification – the performance of brand-specific extra-role behaviors that over time potentially could enhance the brand's viability in the marketplace. Consistent with H6, Brand Identification was positively related to both the personal use of the brand (Brand Usage) and the exhibiting of various non-usage oriented extra-role behaviors (Extra-Role Brand Support).

Two more saturated models, incorporating both direct and intervening effects, were run, with corresponding log likelihood difference tests examined, to assess whether the mediation present was full or partial. A model including the direct effect of brand identification on brand performance resulted in no improvement over the hypothesized model ($\chi^2 = 3.32$, $df = 1$, non-significant). However, a model including the direct effect of control system alignment on brand performance exhibited a superior fit to the hypothesized model ($\chi^2 = 11.58$, $df = 2$, $p<.05$), while retaining a significant relationship between control systems and brand performance. Therefore, we find that brand effort partially, rather than fully, mediates the control systems – brand performance link. Results of this final model are shown alongside that of the hypothesized model in Table 3. As suggested by Becker (2005) , we conducted the analyses with and without the control variables, and the results were virtually identical, with no differences in the significance of relationships among the variables of interest.

Cross-Level Effects and Interactions

An important aspect of this study is its multi-level effects and interactions involving the three focal independent variables on the relative effort that a salesperson chooses to expend against a particular brand. In order to more fully interpret our findings, we conducted an ANOVA after first performing a median split on the Control System Alignment, Brand Identification, and Distributor Identification variables. This enabled us to examine the various high-low combinations of each of the three variables as they relate to the corresponding effort put forth behind the brand. As depicted in Figure 3, upward sloping lines represent the consistently positive effect of control systems on salesperson brand effort. Moreover, in concert with our earlier arguments, there is a cross-over interaction between Control System Alignment and Distributor Identification, suggesting that strongly identifying with the distributor results in heightened effort behind the brand when control systems support the brand, but work against the brand when control systems do not support the brand. In other words, Distributor Identification serves to strengthen the salesperson's adherence to the control systems put into place by his/her employer, and this can work either for or against the brand. If control systems are focused on a particular brand, then the salesperson who identifies with the distributor falls in line with the dictates of the distributor and expends effort against the brand. If, however, control systems are directing efforts elsewhere, the salesperson lessens effort on the brand, choosing instead to expend effort elsewhere in accordance with the controls. Since the slope of the high Distributor Identification line is steeper than the low Distributor Identification line, another interpretation is that control systems' positive influence on salesperson brand effort is stronger when the salesperson identifies with the distributor.

The lower half of Figure 3 depicts the interaction between Brand Performance and Control System Alignment in influencing Overall Performance for the salesperson, revealing that a salesperson's performance on a particular brand is beneficial to the salesperson's overall sales performance only when that brand is one that the company is supporting with its control systems. In other words, if a salesperson is performing strongly on a brand not being prioritized by the company, (s)he is likely to be less attentive to brands that are bigger contributors to the company's overall success.

DISCUSSION

Conclusion and Implications

Our finding that control systems are effective in driving salesperson behavior is consistent with both economic theory and the literature on sales force controls. When normative pressure and financial incentives support the exertion of effort on a particular brand, the self-interest of the salesperson is facilitated by acting in accordance with those controls. Recognizing this, upstream suppliers spend considerable resources attempting to directly and/or indirectly influence the control systems that downstream channel members put in place to direct their sales forces, and as evidenced by the results of this study, such an emphasis is well-placed. However, as the balance of power shifts in the wake of consolidation at all levels of the distribution channel, supplier influence on downstream channel members' sales force controls can become more challenging to attain, particularly in the case of a supplier who is relatively small to begin with. This is a huge issue to the supplier, since the channel member's sales force is in a very real sense also the supplier's sales force as the channel member sells its products further downstream, whether this is to consumers, business end-users, or other intermediaries.

A key argument in this paper is that there are other psychological forces that a company might leverage to positively influence the effort that a downstream channel member's sales force places on its brand relative to the host of other brands that the salesperson is responsible for selling. At the same time, downstream channel members ought to be aware of these potential influences so that their own interests are maximized. Our study makes a number of contributions to both theory and practice in this regard. First, to our knowledge we are the first to explore the forces of organizational identification within the context of a distribution channel, testing the extent to which a salesperson identifies not only with his/her own company but also with an upstream supplier's brand. The results of this study clearly establish that not only do salespeople identify to varying degrees with brands that they sell, but that the effort expended against a brand is increased as identification with the brand strengthens. Beyond the theoretical value of this finding, there are important implications to both upstream and downstream companies. For the supplier, an alternative route to influencing the behavior of downstream channel member's salespeople is revealed and substantiated. In addition to the myriad of tactics utilized by suppliers to affect sales controls, the results of this study suggest that suppliers can attain incremental effort behind their brands, and ultimately increased brand sales, by forging a strong bond between brand and salesperson such that the salesperson incorporates the brand's defining attributes into his/her own self-concept. There are potentially even longer term, positive benefits to such brand identification, as evidenced by the positive relationship between brand identification and brand-specific extra role behaviors that may over time further contribute to the brand's strength in the marketplace. This demonstrated notion of brand extra role behaviors, and the delineation of two distinct types of such behaviors – brand use and extra role brand support - is another contribution to theory, marrying the well-established literature on organizational citizenship behaviors with the developing work on brand communities in the context of a sales force, while opening the door for further exploration of its potential longer term consequences.

We also contribute to both theory and practice by investigating the simultaneous and sometimes conflicting influence of two different forms of identification within an organizational setting – the extent to which a salesperson identifies with his/her company, and the extent to which the salesperson identifies with a supplier's brand. Whether these forces support or conflict with one another depend on the nature of a third variable, control systems. When control systems support the brand, then brand identification and distributor identification work in concert to further strengthen brand effort. However, when control systems do not support the brand, these two forms of identification are at odds with one another. The salesperson is motivated to act in a manner consistent with the interests of the entity to which he or she identifies, but brand identification is prompting action in favor of the brand, while distributor identification is urging the salesperson to expend efforts in a different direction.

These findings reinforce, for the downstream company, the value of engendering high levels of organizational identification, since salespeople who identify with the company more closely follow the dictates of its control systems, i.e., they more closely follow the direction of management in performing their responsibilities. On the other hand, our study suggests that downstream companies might be well served by casting a wary eye at the extent to which its salespeople identify with any particular supplier's brand, particularly those suppliers that are less important to the channel member's business. Such brand identification works in favor of both supplier and channel member when control systems are aligned with the brand, but when the channel member wants its sales force focused on other products, brand identification can influence salesperson effort in a direction counter to that dictated by the controls. For the supplier, high organizational identification is also a "good news – bad news" situation. When control systems are aligned with a brand, then high distributor identification has a favorable affect on brand effort and ultimately brand performance; but when control systems are not aligned with the brand, then high distributor identification further detracts from brand effort and brand performance. The bottom line for both supplier and channel member is that they should strive to build salesperson-brand and salesperson-channel member identification respectively, while viewing with caution the extent to which the salesperson identifies with the other entity.

Limitations and Future Research

As with any research undertaking, it is important to recognize the limitations imposed by the study design. First, this study is cross-sectional in nature, so while theoretical rationale was provided in support of the directional relationships proposed and tested, there is no statistical evidence of causality. Future research could add value in this regard by taking an experimental or longitudinal approach. A longitudinal study would also enable one to test possible lags between salesperson attributes, behaviors, and performance outcomes, including the potential cumulative effect of brand extra role behaviors on brand performance. Common method bias is a frequent concern in survey research, however we took great pains to minimize this risk by obtaining measures from four separate sources – salesperson (identification, OCBs, brand extra role behaviors), route supervisor (brand effort), sales manager (control system alignment) and company records (brand and overall sales performance). Finally, this study was conducted using several firms in the same industry, and while we believe that our results, supported by a strong theoretical foundation, should generalize to other settings, additional studies are needed to confirm this.

In fact, the results of this study pave the way for many additional avenues of research. This study represents an important start, but we have only begun to scratch the surface on the idea and ramifications of conflicting forms of identification within an organizational setting, and this topic could be extended even further to consumer – brand and customer – company relationships. An examination of the resilience and salience of competing forms of identification under different conditions, along with an exploration of possible adverse consequences of identity conflict to both salesperson and company could be fruitful. Also, additional investigation within the current context of a distribution channel, with the introduction of appropriate moderators, could shed light on related questions such as whether identification under certain conditions could serve as a complete functional substitute for controls.

An important question, given this study's demonstrated positive impact of brand identification on brand effort and performance, is what are the antecedents of brand identification across a distribution channel? In other words, what steps can a manufacturer take to facilitate the development of brand identification among channel member salespeople? A number of potential tactics come to mind, e.g., internal marketing communication initiatives, relationship marketing efforts targeting the channel salesperson, increased direct contact between supplier reps and channel sales reps, supplier hosted orientation programs, distribution of brand-identified apparel. Moreover, suppliers likely engender (or not) brand identification among channel salespeople through the latter's observation of other externally directed activities such as consumer advertising, public relations coverage, and the selection and behavior of supplier representatives. From a resource allocation perspective, future research is needed to instruct companies as to the relative emphasis that should be placed on building salesperson - brand identification versus more traditional efforts to influence channel member control systems.

In addition, while this study focused on inter-company relationships within a distribution channel, it could be interesting to explore the competitive nature of brands within a single company. Brand managers within the same company often compete for resources and for the attention of the sales organization. An examination of how brand identification influences resource allocation and sales-related decisions could be worthwhile, factoring in other forms of organizational identification. Finally, in this study, the supplier and the supplier's brand were one in the same, i.e, they shared the same name and the brand was the supplier's flagship. It would be useful to investigate, in cases where there is not as close an overlap, the extent to which the channel salespeople identify with the supplier itself versus identifying with an individual brand, along with accompanying ramifications.

FIGURE 1: HYPOTHESIZED MODEL

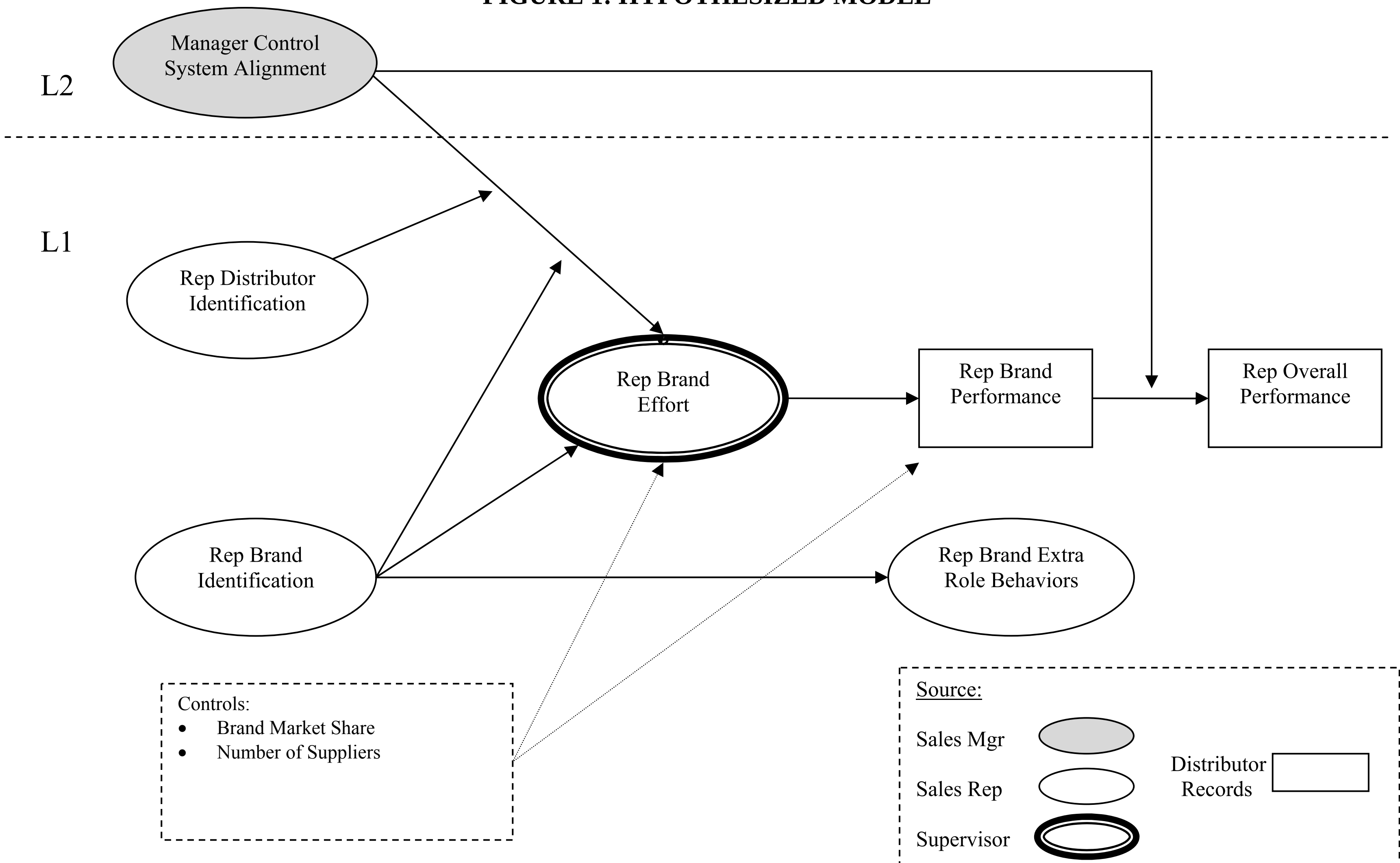


FIGURE 2: FINAL MODEL

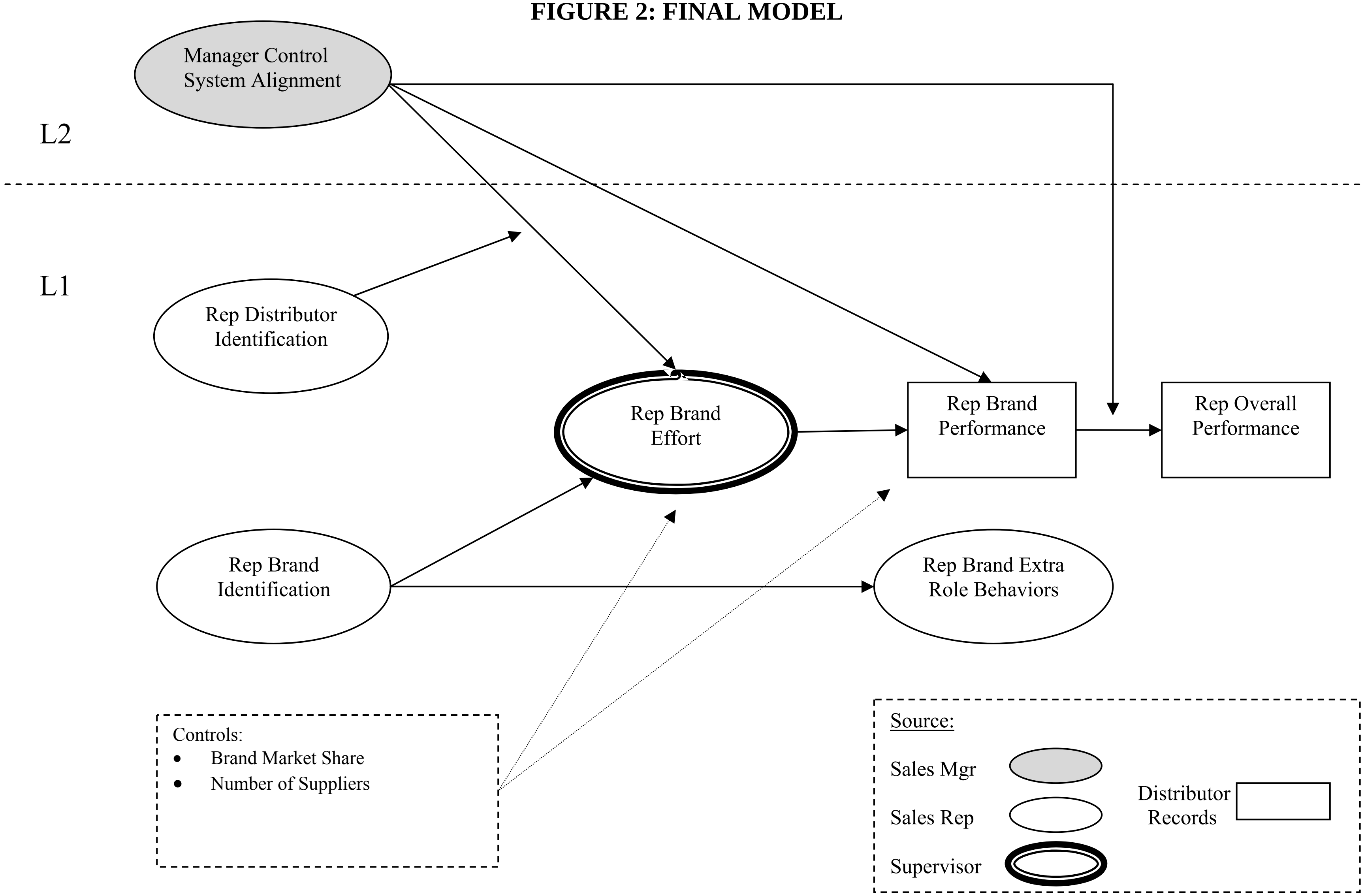
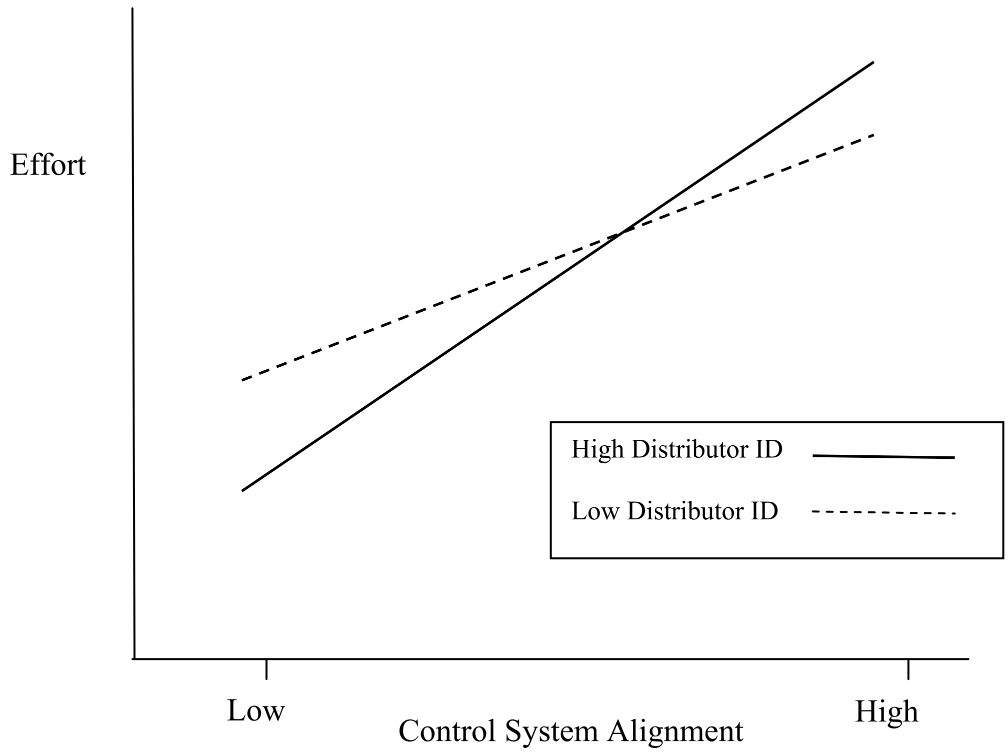


FIGURE 3: INTERACTIONS



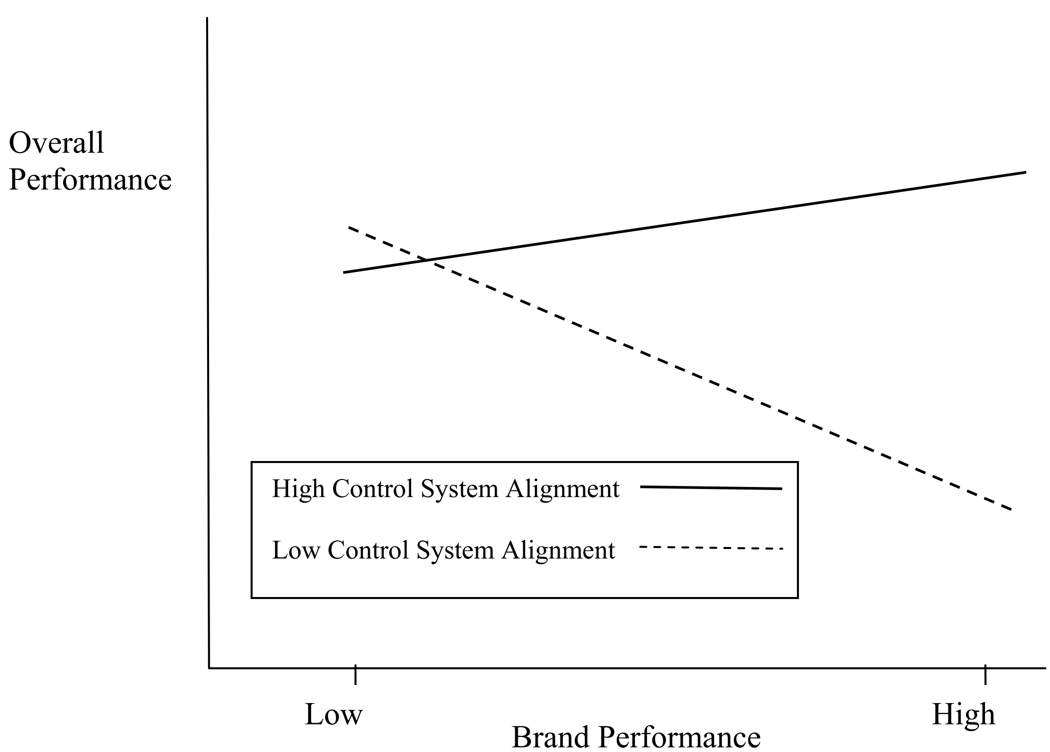


TABLE 1

NEW CONSTRUCT SCALE MEASURES AND LOADINGS

Control System Alignment New scale - Source: Sales Manager
Managers were asked to allocate 100 points among four named brands and "all other brands" in rating the relative emphasis that was placed on each brand for the following items during a particular month: Incentive Programs (.90) Commission Payout (.87) Monthly Performance Plan Objectives (.91) Sales Meeting Focus (.90) Ride With Focus (.91) Overall (.91)
Brand Effort New scale - Source: Route Supervisor
Using a 7-pt Likert scale with 1 being no effort and 7 being very strong effort, Route Supervisors were asked to rate the effort that each of their salespeople expended on four named brands relative to other brands that the distributor carries and other salespeople the supervisor oversees, specific to the following activities and circumstances Selling in promotions (.85) Selling/building displays (87) Expanding shelf space (.86) Increasing distribution (.86) Placing point-of-sale material (.81) Overall (.89) When specifically directed to by management (.81) When supported by incentives (.73) In the absence of incentives or direction from management (.82) When instructed to focus on other brands and not this one (.78)
Brand Extra Role Behaviors New scale - Source: Sales Representative
Using a 5-pt Likert scale with 1 being Never, 2 being Rarely, 3 being Occasionally, 4 being Frequently, and 5 being Always, Sales Reps were asked to rate the the extent to which they do the following: Brand Use: Personally consume the brand at home (.82) Personally consume the brand in public settings (.82) Serve the brand or make it available at parties/gatherings (.70) Extra Role Brand Support: Recommend this brand to friends (.66) Defend this brand from criticism (.66) Encourage other employees to focus their efforts on this brand (.83) Encourage distributor management to support this brand (.83) Report to management competitive initiatives that might impact this brand (.80) Correct out of stock situations, pull up facings, rebuild displays, place POS, etc. in retail accounts on personal time for this brand, e.g. when shopping or in a retail establishment while off work (.69)
*Loadings in parentheses

TABLE 2

CONSTRUCT RELIABILITIES AND CORRELATIONS

	α	ρ	AVE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Control Systems	.99	.95	.61	1.00							
2. Brand Identification	--	--	--	.30	1.00						
3. Distributor Identification	--	--	--	.06	.34	1.00					
4. Brand Effort	.97	.94	.56	.55	.35	-.02	1.00				
5. Extra-Role Brand Support	.87	.83	.56	.39	.45	.21	.38	1.00			
6. Brand Usage	.92	.87	.78	.50	.47	.07	.45	.58	1.00		
7. Brand Performance	--	--	--	.72	.32	.09	.51	.34	.52	1.00	
8. Overall Performance	--	--	--	.02	-.01	-.01	.01	-.02	-.02	0	1.00

α = Cronbach's index of internal consistency reliability, ρ = Bagozzi's (1980) composite reliability index, and AVE = Fornell and Larcker's (1981) index of the average variance extracted by the construct.

TABLE 3

HYPOTHESIZED AND FINAL MODEL EFFECTS

Relationships	**Hypothesized Model**	**Final Model**
CSA → Brand Effort	.37*	.37*
Brand Identification → Brand Effort	.18*	.18*
CSA X Distributor Identification → Brand Effort	.13*	.13*
CSA X Brand Identification → Brand Effort	NS	NS
Brand Identification → Extra Role Brand Support	.39*	.39*
Brand Identification → Brand Usage	.59*	.59*
Brand Effort → Brand Performance	.34*	.32*
CSA X Brand Perf. → Overall Performance	.18*	.18*
CSA → Brand Performance		.25*

Covariates		
Brand SOM → Brand Effort	.04*	.04*
Brand SOM → Brand Performance	1.06*	.86*
Suppliers → Brand Effort	NS	NS
Suppliers → Brand Performance	NS	NS

*p<.05

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