

By Jordan Pine

Two new projects give me a chance to talk about line extensions versus brand extensions, and how the recent success of both marketing strategies indicates a shift is underway in the DRTV industry.



HD VISION FOLDAWAYS

Description: Foldable sunglasses

Main Pitch: "Over 12 million sold, and now they fold"

Main Offer: \$14.99 for one pair

Bonus: Second pair (just pay S&H)

Marketer: IdeaVillage Products

Website: www.HDFoldaways.com

Rating: 3 out of 5 ★★☆☆☆

If successful, this will be the sixth rollout under the **HD Vision** brand. Pause and consider that: six rollouts under one brand. It's unprecedented, and it would have been unthinkable just a few years ago. For example, in 2007 the **Vidalia Chop Wizard** was a major hit, but three attempts to extend the line (*Slice Wizard*, *Chop It*, *Slice-It*) all failed. Even mega-hits, such as the **George Foreman Grill**, ultimately failed to extend their lines.

Only the marketer of this product seemed to have had much luck at extensions back then. In 2003 and 2004, the company launched the **Finishing Touch** hair remover for women and the **MicroTouch** hair remover for men. Both are still selling strong today. (Fun fact: The first HD Vision sunglasses came out the year before, in 2002. This recent run started with a re-boot of the original product.)

As for this specific HD Vision product, it should do fine at retail but big

TV success is unlikely. Foldable sunglasses don't seem like the sort of retro concept that's poised to make a comeback. They never had a strong rationale in the first place.

WHAT MAKES UP THE SCIMARK SEVEN (S7)?

The **PRODUCT** should be:
(1) needed; (2) targeted; and
(3) different.

The **CATEGORY** should be:
(4) un-crowded.

The **COMMERCIAL** should be:
(5) engaging; (6) motivating; and
(7) clear.



EZ POCKETS

Description: A pocket pie maker

Main Pitch: "Perfect personal pie servings every time"

Main Offer: \$19.95 for one pan with dough cutter

Bonus: 12-pocket pan, recipe guide (just pay P&H)

Marketer: National Express

Website: www.GetEZPockets.com

Rating: 2 out of 5 ★★☆☆☆

This project quickly fails the SciMark Seven because it isn't needed. For those who enjoy personal pies as opposed to traditional pies (a segment of a segment), there are plenty of options at the grocery store.

Much more interesting is why it was tried. As I've pointed out before, there is a common trap in our industry I call the "outlier/category trap." When someone has an unexpected hit, DRTV marketers immediately assume it represents a new category and jump in with both feet. But, more often than not, the hit was just an outlier. Want to avoid this trap yourself? Simply repeat this mantra: "One is an outlier; three is a category."

The non-category in this case is bakeware. In the past year or so, I've tracked at least a half-dozen, half-baked failures. The trouble can no doubt be traced back to **Perfect Brownie** — more specifically, the fact that Allstar Products was able to parlay that success into a "**Perfect**" line of cookware that is now rolling out its fourth hit (**Perfect Pancake**). As opposed to line extension (see above), this is a case study in brand extension — and it was equally unthinkable just a few years ago. For example, in 2008 **Mighty Putty** became a huge success. It was followed by **Mighty Mendit**, a brand extension that also found success. But three attempts after that all failed — **Mighty Shine**, **Mighty Blast** and **Mighty Tape/Fixit** — and the Mighty brand fell.

Four "Perfect" cookware hits; six HD Vision hits — what does it all mean? I believe we are witnessing a sea change in the DRTV industry, a gradual and inexorable shift toward a "hybrid" DRTV business model that will view ad spending in a more traditional way (already well underway) and the ability to build lines and brands will become a core competency of top players. Followers will continue to chase outliers and fall into traps. Leaders will maximize their winners with smart extensions.

