

# **A study of young consumers' perception on mascot design characteristic with reference to Indian food brand**

## **ABSTRACT**

The instrument of brand mascot is widely used in modern marketing because of its effectiveness and ability to create the emotional attachment with customers. A lot of studies aim to identify the influence of mascots on consumers in comparison with celebrities' endorsers. At the same time, the aspect of mascots' design characteristics has not received enough attention in the academic literature. The current investigation addresses the question of how mascots' design characteristics influence consumers' perception of mascots in the Indian food industry. The objectives of this study are to identify the main characteristics of mascots as a marketing instrument, to determine the features of food brand mascots, to distinguish the differences between national and international mascots in the Indian food industry, and to explore which design characteristics of mascots have a substantial impact on the young generation's perception of the brands.

The study is based on quantitative methodology with surveys as the main research method. The thesis is composed of an introduction, literature review, methodology part, the chapters of data analysis and conclusions. The empirical part of the investigation implies conducting five preliminary studies, three pilot studies and the main experiment aimed at identifying essential characteristics of mascots' design on the example of Halidram's mascot as a hypothetical case to experiment with. This research is characterized by a comprehensive analysis of the existing studies devoted to the problem of mascots, an identification of the mascots' features which are relevant to customers, a review of the main classification of mascots, and a distinction between the national and international food brand mascots in India. To compare the national and international food mascots in the Indian food brand, two case studies were conducted, on Ronald McDonald and the Amul Girl.

The investigation significantly contributes to the understanding of mascots' role in the Indian food brand. It emphasizes that most of the successful mascots in this sector are characterized by symmetric forms and cheerful gestures. At the same time, the study concludes that there is a substantial difference between the ways in which mascots are used by national and international brands. While international mascots are entirely focused on promoting their products, some local mascots like the Amul Girl try to participate in the Indian social life and give comments on the current events. The empirical study conducted in line with this research addresses the aspects of mascots' physical, design, color, cultural and miscellaneous features. It demonstrates respondents' positive attitude towards mascots with rounded and symmetric forms and provides a premise to state that considering local specifics is crucial for creating an effective Indian food mascot. Respondents agreed that the best choice, for food brand mascots is an anthropomorphic character in traditional Indian outfits. It is recommended that this mascot would be a peculiar combination of modern and traditional looks. It is also argued that using red color as the primary color for a mascot is highly recommended as it attracts attention.

The participants of the study included 445 volunteers aged between 18 to 24 years from both genders, and they were randomly selected. The target group of this study was the young generation, and they were chosen purposely because this approach allows this study not only to analyze the current situation on the Indian food market but also to provide recommendation and formulate a forecast. This study was conducted in three phase 5 preliminary studies, 3 pilot studies, and main experiment. The main experiment was conducted with two groups (each group of 150 participants). One group was from IIT Guwahati and other from Delhi University north campus, and the participants were from the different academic levels of UG and PG. Main reason to conduct this study with these two group was that the IITG represent a cosmopolitan population, where choices were limited, compared to the second group i.e. Delhi University (NC) which represent the metro city.

To explore the role of design characteristics in mascots' perception by young customers, it was decided to use Haldiram's brand as an example. Several variations of mascots for this brand were developed during the preliminary studies. Eventually, it was found that the most efficient mascot for Haldiram was characterized by the Rajasthani origin and was associated with trust, taste, quality and ethnicity. The study deduces six features which might be embodied in mascots' design: a reference to the place of origin, content, product's emotion, trust, uniqueness and dynamics.

The study Findings support for both theoretical and practical perspectives of new advertisement strategy. From the theoretical viewpoint, it fills a research gap by examining in detail the influence of brands' design characteristics on the young generation of customers in India. From the perspective of practical applicability, it generates recommendations for marketers concerning the ways in which mascots can be effectively used in the Indian food industry.

Keywords: mascot, food brand mascot, Indian food industry, design characteristics of mascots.