STRONG RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BRANDS AND BRANDS MASCOT

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Abstract

A fictional non-human character that personifies a brand's beliefs and traits is known as its mascot. Mascots are capable of doing more than just giving business a moniker. Additionally, they help you establish a connection with your target market. Mascots come with a lot of benefits. The purpose of utilising a brand mascot in advertising is to spread favourable perceptions of the brand among consumers. The substantial association between brands and brand mascot has been examined in the current study. This study has adopted descriptive research design. The present study was performed on 100 study subjects selected using a combination of random and practical sampling. A questionnaire was used to gather the primary data. In the study, both primary and secondary data were employed. The study discovered a significant connection between brand and brand mascots. The findings show that brand mascots have a big impact on customers' purchase decisions. The mascot is crucial in helping to promote the product, but brand ambassadors have more of an impact on consumers today. According to the study, mascots are an effective form of communication, and customers are drawn to company mascots because of their expression, appearance, simplicity, and colour. The findings show that the majority of research participants (81%) believe that mascots aid in building a brand. The study came to the conclusion that there is a strong link between a brand and its mascot.

Keywords: Mascots, brand, marketing, advertisement

Introduction

A brand mascot is a non-human fictional character that represents the impersonation of the values and personalities of a brand (Cayla, 2013; Cohen, 2014). The goal of using a brand mascot in advertising is to transmit positive feelings and opinions to the consumers about the brand (Cohen, 2014). A brand mascot is a type of spokes-character. Just like a brand mascot, spokes-characters are non-human characters created by a firm that serve as a tool to communicate with the consumers (Garretson & Niedrich, 2004). However, whereas spokes characters always promote the brand by verbally communicating to the consumers, a brand mascot does not always do this (Cohen, 2014). Moreover, brand managers use a brand mascot for one brand only whereas they may apply the same spokes-character for multiple brands (Cohen, 2014).

Association Between Brand and Mascot

A strong brand communicates to consumers an image that, hopefully, builds trust and loyalty. In a service industry, a strong brand should ensure consumer satisfaction.

A brand is created by merging "what the company says the brand is, what others say, and how the company performs in the eyes of the consumer" (Berry, 2000). It is important to understand how a brand is created. Also, it is important to understand the effects of a positive or negative brand image. The company's presented brand is ultimately the controlled message that is presented to consumers by the company itself through logos, mascots, and advertisements. External brand communications refer to message's consumers receive that are not controlled by the company such as word-of-mouth and unsolicited media. Customer experience with the company is direct interaction between a consumer and the company. Brand awareness is the customer's ability to recognize a brand when given a cue. Brand awareness is directly impacted by the company's presented brand while being impacted by external brand communications as well. Brand meaning is the customer's dominant perceptions of a brand and is directly impacted by the customer's experience although it is shaped by the company's presented brand, as well as, external brand communications. Brand equity is the positive or negative impact brand awareness and meaning have on a company's marketing ventures.

Therefore, it is important to be successful in all three of the key areas in order to create a positive brand. A strong brand is an important aspect in being able to build strong relationships with consumers and the communities they live in. Strong brands will help brand awareness and can be a driving factor in engaging consumers. There are four essential steps to developing a strong, unique brand: 1) dare to be different, 2) determine your own fame, 3) make an emotional connection, and 4) internalize the brand (Berry, 2000). These strategies can help a utility company build a strong reputation in order to build lasting relationships with consumers. See appendix 2 for the interactions between all four strategies.

The next step in developing a strong brand is "determining your own fame". In essence, this means a company should fill a need to consumers and fill that need well. In order to be successful in "determining your own fame", a company should not only provide unmatchable service but also communicate those services to consumers in a way that is effective and stimulating. Developing an emotional connection with consumers is, essentially, developing a relationship with them. "Great brands always make an emotional connection with the intended audience...They reach beyond the purely rational and purely economic level to spark feelings of closeness, affection, and trust" (Berry, 2000).

Finally, the last step in developing a strong brand is "internalizing the brand". Employees and brand characters are the median between the company and its consumers. If one employee does not act in accordance with the company's values, then every consumer that employee interacts with will not receive the proper brand image of the company. It is imperative to instill core values in all employees. It is even more important to instill the same core values in a brand character or mascot because they will usually interact with more consumers than any one employee will.

Developing a corporate mascot is a great way to develop a positive brand image, which will drive positive brand connotations with consumers. The mascot must still incorporate all four steps in creating a strong brand. Creating a brand character or mascot is a great way to build a corporate identity and to generate attention from the public. A mascot can give limitless opportunities to drive consumer interest and recognition. The design and implementation of the mascot is imperative to its success. "To be visually effective, the vehicles or mascots must be properly designed, satisfying both the viewer's preferences and perceptions" (Lin, Lin & Ko, 1999).

The character should embody the spirit of the company and encapsulate the company's mission and goals. The mascot must have symbolic color associations, a name with positive connotations, appealing associations, and convey a certain message to its consumers. These characters must be carefully developed and cannot be just casual investments. A poorly developed character could be a failing venture or, worse, have significantly debilitating effects on a company's brand image. "Brand characters are created to promote a brand by establishing brand identity and favorable brand association...they also help brands come alive with human qualities of emotion, thought and personality" (Weszka, 2011). These human qualities make it easier for a consumer to relate to. Brand characters bring the company to life in the minds of consumers. Personification is essentially giving human characteristics to inanimate objects. There are three basic categories of personification: 1) anthromorphism, 2) zoomorphism and 3) teramorphism. Anamorphism is where the product or brand is given the name and characteristics of a human. Zoomorphism is where the product or brand is aligned with a wild or domesticated animal. Finally, teramorphism is where the attributes of an imaginary, supernatural or prodigious creature are bestowed on goods or services.

There are also three different types of figurative relationships between the brand and mascot: 1) metaphorical, 2) metonymical and 3) simile. Metaphorical is a relationship where the brand name and embodiment are one and the same. The relationship can also be metonymical where the personification is an endorser rather than the embodiment of the brand. Finally, the relationship can be a simile, a looser, less long-lasting linkage or association. Similes are usually just faces of a brand that are replaced on a regular basis. It is important for companies to design a mascot that appeals to a certain target market. Mascots or brand characters are powerful ways to personify a brand, as well as, strengthen brand image. Carol Phillips, president of consulting group Brand Amplitude, says "Mascots are the gift that keeps on giving...They never get in trouble with the law. They don't up their fees. You can use them for a long, long time."

Once a mascot is created, a company must devise a strategy for implementation. There are many interactive platforms for a mascot to engage consumers. No matter the marketing platforms for a newly created mascot, the content must always be engaging.

Objectives of the study

This research paper has tried to explore the relationship between brands and brands mascot.

- To study the relationship between brands and brands mascot.

Literature Review

Silva (2021) explored various attitudes towards brands, enhanced by two different strategies of market approaches. Analysing and comparing mascots, as brand's identification, and celebrities, as brand's endorsement, it was possible to understand the impact on consumers' affective response, related to these implementations. Firstly, based on theoretical background, presented by previous authors, it is explained where mascots and celebrities "fit" in a brand's plans and what it generates, not only on the company side, but also on consumers' perceptions. With this, it was developed quantitative research to investigate the different responses, by the audience. The majority of the results were clear and in congruence with past research, but there were some cases of in conclusion, or disagreement, related to the studied authors. In an overall evaluation, brand mascots and celebrity endorsements have different impacts on consumers. Therefore, managers and marketers, should define their goals and comprehend how these strategies can help them.

Bhowmick & Dutta (2020) Explained that Mascots experience things for audiences, and various ad ads of varying features strive to intrigue viewers' attention. This study investigates the impact of mascot designs on improving connectivity and, as a result, creating long brand awareness among consumers. This paper takes a qualitative method to mascot creation as an advertisement tool, and it employs a quantitative technique in its study. The research shows that mascots have the capacity to effectively convey meaning; even if they are simplistic in terms of the structural and design style, they have the effect of enhancing favorable feedback. Brand mascots are animated figures that are primarily used for ads or other commercial ventures. Numerous brand mascots have become increasingly common because of their use in promotional commercials. Brand Mascots can cause users to connect with the brand image and brand mascots, which may induce users in becoming repeat buyers and embrace the brand identity. The current study's aim is to investigate the impact of brand mascots on customer decisions and intentions to buy a product. According to the descriptive study, using a company mascot increases customers' optimistic outlook toward the brands while also increasing the possibility of product recall. The current research proposes a new method of marketing approach called brand fandom. This research has also added to the body of expertise in the fields of marketing communications and structural functionalism.

Patil (2019) Explained that Promotion of brands by marketers is carried out with the help of advertising, sales promotion and different promotional tools. Promotion of brands by endorsing a famous personality is one of the prominent strategies followed by marketers nowadays. Companies sign contracts with celebrities for endorsement. Celebrities have mass appeal; they are popular and have other attributes which impacts customers. Movie actors, sportspersons are utilized as endorsers for promotion of brands. Apart from movie actors, sportspersons and other real celebrities, mascots are also utilized for it. Unlike real celebrities marketers need to bring in to existence mascots. So it becomes interesting to research regarding mascots for promotion. The work is exploratory in direction and selective examples are taken into consideration for analyzing. The work tries to identify mascots endorser associated with companies for promotion, identify brands and inception of these mascots. Study concludes that

mascots are utilized by companies for promoting both brands belonging to product and service category since a long time ago; usage duration of mascot for promotion is longer in period and they can be studied as alternative endorsers to real celebrities for promotional purpose.

Wandel (2018) This chapter addresses brand anthropomorphism, in particular how sports mascots can be utilized on social media to increase emotional connectivity with fans and their affiliated teams. The history and role of mascots and present day usage encourages understanding of how narratives are a positive and promising tool for marketing communication professionals and those in the sports and entertainment industry. Interviews were conducted with personnel associated with mascots to gain insights into the concept of brand anthropomorphism. Also, an online survey was conducted on mascot brand attributes and results were presented. The ability to personify a brand has significant managerial implications, and this chapter demonstrates how social media platforms may drive brand loyalty.

Yadav et al., (2017) In this, study shows that Mascots are a popular way of promoting brands. A study was conducted in India compromising of 150 students to understand the spokes influence the way young consumers perceive products. Based on the information collected, alternative spoke-mascot relationships have been tried out. Experiments confirm that effective mascots should consider the combinations of physical design elements, color, and cultural preferences of the targeted audience.

Methodology

This chapter addresses the research methodology and procedure will be use in this study to investigate the research problem. The main purpose of the study will be to examine the relationship of performance of college students with some selected variables of school age. Following procedure will be adopt for study.

Research Design

The research design is defined as, "the plan for collecting and utilizing the data so that desired information can be obtained. This study has adopted descriptive research design. Descriptive research studies are those studies which are concerned with describing the characteristics of a particular individual, or of a group, concerned with specific predictions. It is a pre-planned design for analysis and structured or well throughout instruments for collection of data and advanced decisions about operational procedure.

Data Collection

The present study supposed to collect first hand and relevant information from selected respondents. So, the study used Primary and Secondary; both sources for the purpose of collection the data. The Researcher used questionnaire method, observation and unstructured interview method (where it is required).

Primary Data Collection

The source of primary data used in my project is the questionnaire.

The researcher will collect data from the students personally. The researcher will visit the sample consumers to Art Directors and mascot designers and made it possible to collect the

required number of filled questionnaires. The questions covered the through Five Rating scale (called likert Scale)

Secondary Data Collection

The secondary data is collected about the study is from various sources where information is available like, organizational web site, company past records, internet, books and magazines.

Population and Sampling

Population

Population or universe means the entire mass of observation, which is the parent group from which a sample is to be formed. The sample observations provide only an estimate of the population characteristic. The respondents included everyone, from consumers to Art Directors and mascot designers to marketing professionals of brands who had or still do have a brand mascot.

Methods of Sampling

Sampling methods vary in type and number. The selection of sampling method is determined by the purpose for which sampling is sought and the nature of the population. The basic idea, the representative character of the sample, should always be ensured by various methods. Probability sampling method was used in this study. In the present study, multistage sampling has been used by the researcher.

Sample

The respondents included everyone, from consumers to Art Directors and mascot designers to marketing professionals of brands who had or still do have a brand mascot. The questionnaire was shared with 150 respondents. Convenience sampling is used to select the respondents. The participants were given adequate time to respond. The objective of this research was never fully revealed to respondents to control for social desirability or biases. Total 150 samples are recorded out of which 100 samples were useful as remaining were incomplete so those are not considered for the analysis. The data was collected in June 2022.

Measures

The literature review regarding factors which led to extinction of brand mascots identified outdatedness, variety in advertising methods, limited time for advertising, and bad messaging. The researcher has adapted five-point Likert scale to conduct the research. However, the researcher has further tested the questionnaire's validity and reliability for conducting this research. The 5-point Likert scale ranged from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The questionnaire consisted of 21 items.

Statistical Tools

Cronbach alpha and pilot study were computed and conducted to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. The researcher conducted correlation analysis to study the association between each identified factor and the extinction of brand mascots. The hypotheses were tested using multiple regressions. These tests were carried out using SPSS software.

Results

Consumers Survey:

**1.Are you aware of the following mascots?**

	Frequency	Percent
Amul- Polka Girl	84	84.0
Air India- Maharaja	2	2.0
Asian Paints- Gattu	1	1.0
ICICI- Chintamani	0	0.0
Vodafone- Zoo-Zoo	13	13.0
Total	100	100.0
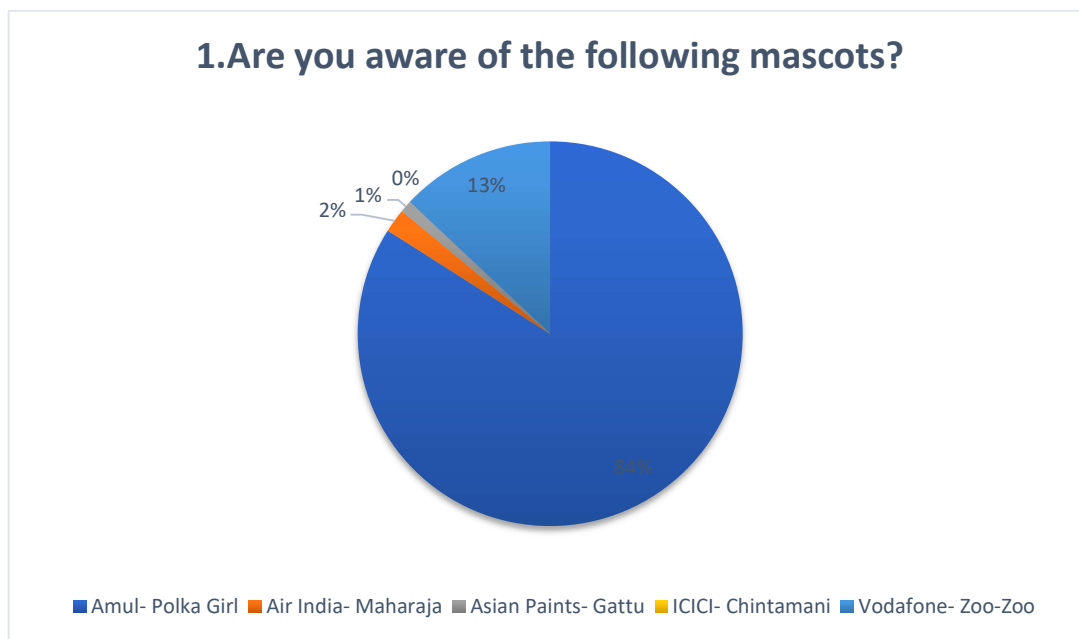
The study found out that study subjects were aware of the mascots. From the above table and pie chart it was found that Amul-Polka girl (84%) followed by Vodafone Zoo-Zoo (13%) were the most famous mascots among the study subjects. However, the results signified that people are not that much aware of other mascots such as Air India- Maharaja, Asian Paints- Gattu and ICICI- Chintamani.
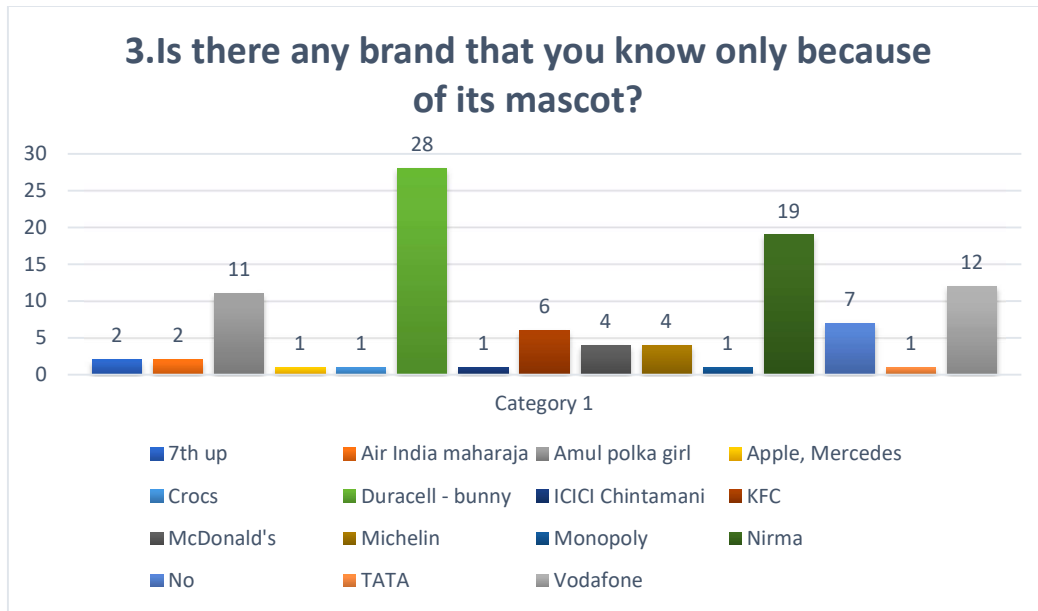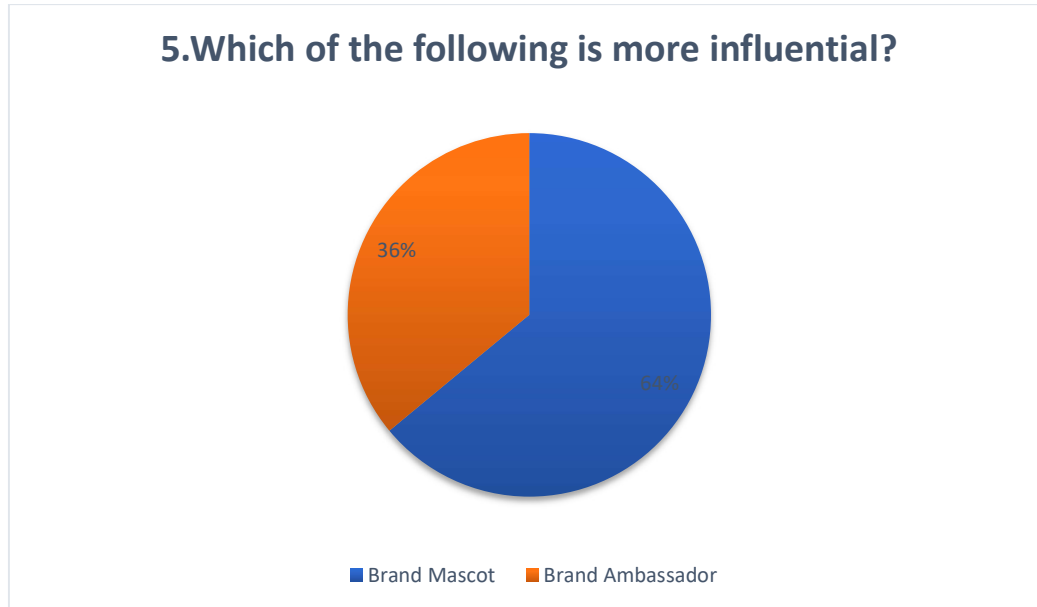
From the above table and pie chart it was found that Duracell – bunny (28%), Nirma (19%), Vodafone (12%), and Amul Polka girl (11%) were the brand that people know only because of their brand.
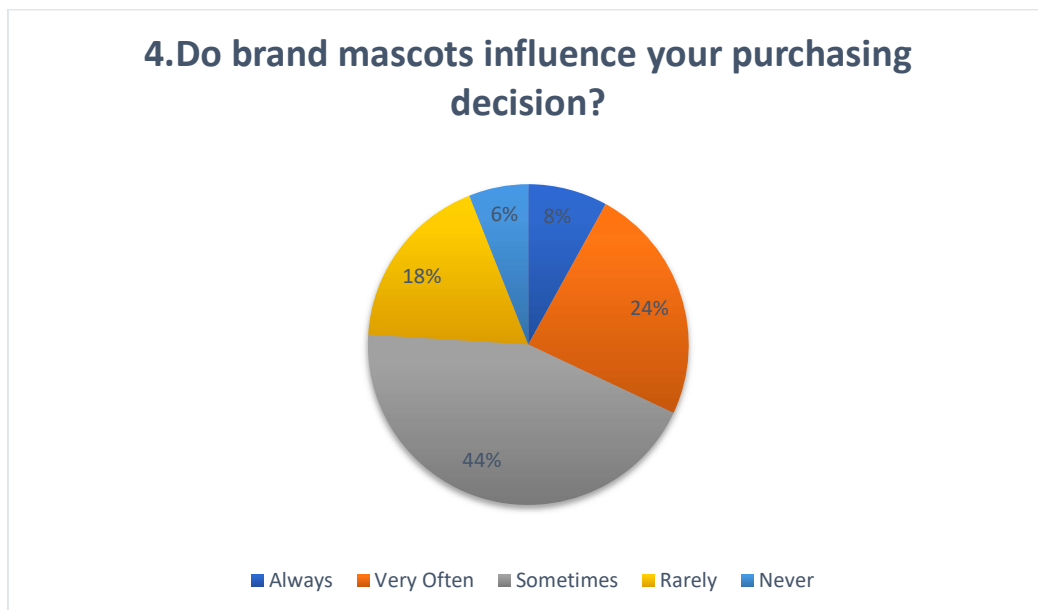
From the above table and pie chart it was found that majority of the study subjects (44%) think that sometimes brand mascots influence their purchasing decision. However, it was found that 24% study subjects think that very often and 8% think that always mascots influence their purchasing decision.

**5.Which of the following is more influential?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Brand Mascot	64	64.0	64.0
Brand Ambassador	36	36.0	
Total	100	100.0	100.0

5.Which of the following is more influential?

36%

■ Brand Mascot   ■ Brand Ambassador

From the above table and pie chart it was found that majority of the study subjects (64%) think that brand mascot is more influential while 36% think that brand ambassador is more influential. These findings suggest that brand mascot is more influential as compared to brand ambassador.

6.Is a mascot a good way of communication?		
	Frequency	Percent
Yes	78	78.0
No	1	1.0
Maybe	21	21.0
Total	100	100.0

6.Is a mascot a good way of communication?

■Yes ■No ■Maybe
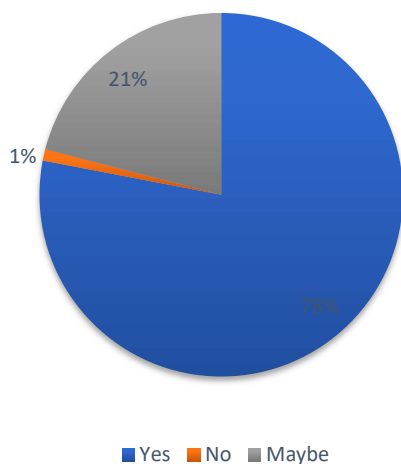
From the above table and pie chart it was found that majority of the study subjects (78%) affirmatively responded that mascot is a good way of communication.

| 7.What qualities attract you to any mascot?		
	Frequency	Percent
Simplicity	15	15.0
Colour	4	4.0
Expression	42	42.0
Appearance	39	39.0
Total	100	100.0

From the above table and pie chart it was found that majority of the study subjects (42%) think that expression followed by appearance (39%) attract them towards mascot. There were 15% study subjects who think that simplicity attract them to any mascot.

9.Do you think mascots help in establishing a brand?		
	Frequency	Percent
Yes	81	81.0
No	4	4.0
Maybe	15	15.0
Total	100	100.0

9.Do you think mascots help in establishing a brand?
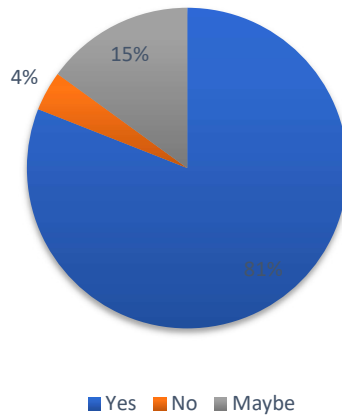

Legend: ■ Yes ■ No ■ Maybe

From the above table and pie chart it was found that majority of the study subjects (81%) think that mascots help in establishing a brand. These findings suggest the effect of mascot on consumers and brand.

13.Do you recall their mascot while purchasing from a brand?		
	Frequency	Percent
Yes	92	92.0
No	8	8.0
Total	100	100.0

13.Do you recall their mascot while purchasing from a brand?


Legend: ■ Yes ■ No
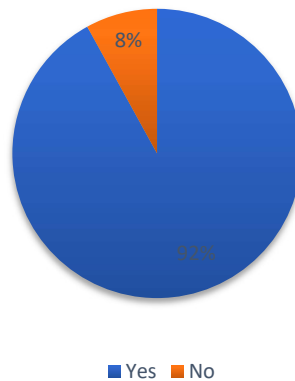
From the above table and pie chart it was found that majority of the study subjects (92%) said yes, they recall their mascot while purchasing from a brand.

Advertising and Branding Industry Professionals and Academicians Survey
The present study has also surveyed 100 advertising and branding industry professional and academicians regarding identify the factors responsible for the extinction of mascots. The findings are as follows:

3.Do you think mascots can survive in today's Advertising market?		
	Frequency	Percent
Yes	88	88.0
No	12	12.0
Total	100	100.0
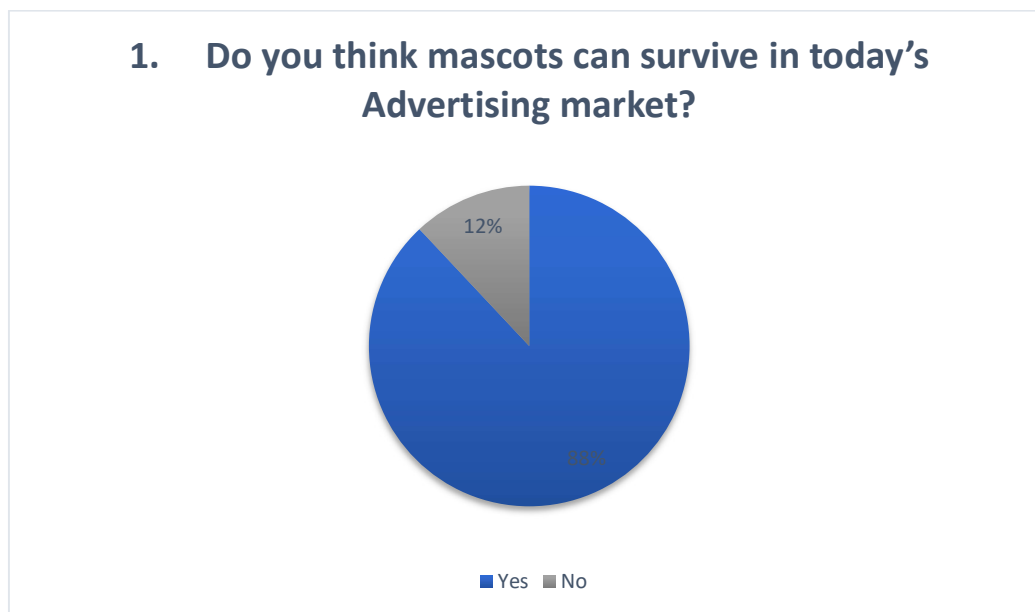
From the above table and graph it was observed that majority of the study subjects (88%) think mascots can survive in today's Advertising market. The study found out that there were only 12% who think that it can survive in today's Advertising market.

6.Do you suggest your clients to use a mascot?		
	Frequency	Percent
Yes	67	67.0
No	33	33.0
Total	100	100.0

6.Do you suggest your clients to use a mascot?

33%

67%

■ Yes ■ No
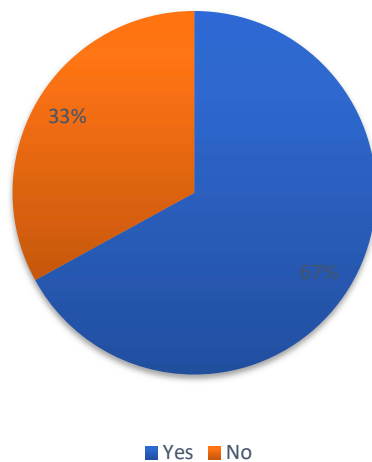
From the above table and graph it was observed that majority of the study subjects (67%) said yes to suggest their clients to use a mascot.

Conclusion

The goal of the study is to explore relationship between brand and brand mascots. The research has assessed previous and recent use of mascots in the brand and found the reasons of declining in mascots. The present study was performed on 100 study subjects and the data was collected using a pre-structured questionnaire. In this study some of the industry professionals were also interviewed in order to assess the aim and objectives of the study.

The study found out that consumers were aware of the mascots. Amul-Polka girl (84%) followed by Vodafone Zoo-Zoo (13%) were the most famous mascots among the study subjects. The study reported that majority of the consumers recall a brand mascot while purchasing from a brand. During the study it was found that Duracell – bunny (28%), Nirma (19%), Vodafone (12%), and Amul Polka girl (11%) were the brand that people know only because of their brand.

The study found out that brand mascots influence their purchasing decision significantly. The study reported that there were 64% (majority) of the study subjects think that brand mascot is more influential than brand ambassador. The mascot plays an important role in promoting the product but today's people are influenced by brand ambassadors that companies are preferring to hire to promote their brand and what happens in the contacts. However, according to the respondent considering the advertisement part on social media, they were restrictions on promoting N95 masks. So, they were not allowed to pay for or promote the product. The mascot is the product itself (N95 mask). Hence, by this mascot and visual itself, they are trying to make people aware and understand the use of masks, especially N95 masks. The reason behind designing the mask (Product) itself as a mascot is that it would help a lot rather than anybody saying to wear masks. They created masks and tried to explain things about the pandemic

through the mascot, but it was the best seller, so the client didn't much focus on the promotion of the mascot.

The study also found out that majority of the people (78%) think that mascot is a good way of communication. People are attracted towards a brand mascot because of its expression, appearance, simplicity and colour. Majority of the study subjects (81%) think that mascots help in establishing a brand. These findings suggest that people are well aware of brand mascots and easily recall a brand with its mascot. The study reported that mascots help in establishing a brand signifying a strong relation between brand and brand mascots.

Advertising and Branding Industry Professionals and Academicians were also surveyed in this study. The study found out that 88% of them think that mascots can comfortably survive in today's advertising market. Majority of the branding industry professionals (67%) agree that they suggest their client to use a mascot. The effectiveness of using a mascot and people believe behind a mascot that it helps in establishing a brand can be the possible reason behind this. The results of the study have signified that not only industry professional and academicians but also the consumers are much aware of the value and effectiveness of using a brand mascot. The study found out that there is a significant relation between a brand and brand mascot.

In conclusion, the study has explored the strong correlation between brand and brand mascot. In marketing, brand managers use brand mascots in their advertising to boost sales instead of to bring luck (Cohen, 2014; Garretson & Niedrich, 2004). Since the end of the nineteenth century, brand managers of all kinds of industries make use of brand mascots in their advertising (Garretson & Niedrich, 2004). Examples of such brand mascots are Ronald McDonald of McDonald's in the fast-food industry (Eisend & Stokburger-Sauer, 2013), Mickey Mouse of Walt Disney in the film industry, Pardoes of the Dutch theme park de Efteling and Bibindum the Michelin Man in the transport industry. Also within the music festival industry brand managers are deploying brand mascots. Examples are Rapid Razor Bob who is the brand mascot of the Dutch festival Lowlands (Hengeveld, 2012), and the owl of the corporate firm of the festival brand Insomniac (Matthews, 2015). Because of new technological possibilities, the number of brand mascots in advertising over the internet is increasing (Stafford et al., 2002). Reasons for this growth are the potential advantages that come with using a brand mascot in advertising. One advantage of having a brand mascot in advertising is that it allows brand managers to communicate with consumers through a character (Cohen, 2014). Moreover, the design of the brand mascot is within the firm's control. Therefore, the thoughts and feelings consumers have when they think about a brand are easier to manage by using a brand mascot than by using an endorser in advertising (Keller, 2005). Brand managers use the brand mascot as a tool to link positive thoughts and feelings to the brand, in order to improve the consumers' attitude towards the brand (Keller, 2005). Another advantage of using a brand mascot within advertising is that consumers can more easily remember a brand because the brand mascot provides a source of tangibility to intangible products (Eisend & Stokburger-Sauer, 2013). In turn when a brand is more on top of mind of the consumers, consumers are more likely to purchase products from it (Keller, 2001).

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