

EFFICIENCY OF THE ADVERTISING USE OF CARTOON MASCOTS IN THE LUXURY FOOD INDUSTRY

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Abstract

This paper deals with the use and effect of cartoon mascots in the field of the luxury food industry. The aim of the paper is to check the efficiency of the artefact. For this purpose, the paper is divided into two areas. The first section deals with the design and effect of cartoon mascots on the child consumer in order to find out how and in what way companies in the luxury food industry influence the perception and purchasing decisions of the target group. For this purpose, secondary data from specialist literature in the fields of marketing, economics, graphics / design, pedagogy and psychology is used to prove the efficiency of the packing medium on the child market. The second area of the paper deals with the target group of adults and is intended to answer the question whether, how and to what extent the emotional relationships of the test subjects to the mascots established in childhood have withstood and had an impact on brand loyalty, as well as the perception and purchase decision of adult consumers. For this purpose, primary data will be used, which will provide the data that can be used to verify or falsify the hypotheses made about the efficiency of the medium by means of an online survey. The underlying knowledge from the first area of the bachelor thesis was used to narrow down the research framework of the survey and to design the structure and orientation of the questions.

As a result of the survey, it was shown that the efficiency and effectiveness of cartoon mascots, in the field of the luxury food industry, could be demonstrated in 3 out of 4 of the hypotheses presented, although it should be noted that the fourth hypothesis could be at least partially verified with the available data. While the representative qualities of the mascots as spokespersons of their brands, the emotional attachment of the test subjects, as well as the influence on their perception and purchase decision with regard to the mascots depicted could be demonstrated, the increased consumer behavior of the products triggered by the mascot could not be proven without exception. It turned out that several factors play a role in this area and it is not possible to say with absolute certainty which of the factors achieves which effect. Accordingly, it would be instructive to continue research in this area in order to gain more precise insights into the relationships between the individual factors and to find out what role cartoon mascots ultimately play in this process.

Keywords: cartoon mascots, nudging, child consumers, brand loyalty, emotional relationship, ethical decision making, media management, food packaging, artefact advertising

1. INTRODUCTION

Against the backdrop of increasing saturation in numerous consumer goods markets, which also affects the luxury food industry, market segmentation strategies are becoming increasingly important. In particular, the segment of children and young people is increasingly coming to the attention of advertising companies, as they offer the greatest growth potential of all target groups and are decisively decisive for the future of the brand (cf. Bimminger, 2009, p.28). Today's youth are tomorrow's adult consumers - No consumer has a higher lifetime value as a customer than a child. If you want to win brand-loyal consumers for the future, you have to start in the childhood of your customers - and this is more essential than ever before in such a highly competitive market as that of the luxury food industry, which is characterized by ever-decreasing birth rates (cf. Bayraktar, 2014, p.76). For example, gross advertising expenditure for confectionery in 2021 amounted to around 1.06 billion euros, making the confectionery industry one of the industries with the highest advertising expenditure in Germany (cf. Statista, 2022). One of the many ways to appeal to the target audience of children is through the use of Cartoon Mascots – Brand Ambassadors, which are designed specifically to meet the children's preferences and needs, in order to build an emotional relationship with them that will bind them to their

companies' products. Cartoon mascots are of immeasurable value to companies because they let their brands speak and come "alive" in front of their consumers. From their appearance to the messages, they convey in the interests of their companies, they can be individually designed in their appearance down to the last detail, so that they can not only represent the ideas and values of their brands, but also embody them visually in their own person. By relying on the use of feelings and emotional appeals, which are difficult to counter with rationality, they establish brand loyalty in young consumers that aims to last into adulthood (cf. Esmailpour & Nashtae, 2021, p.28).

This bachelor thesis aims to provide information on how efficient the advertising use of cartoon mascots is in the luxury food industry - how exactly they react to the child market and what effects they have on the now adult consumers.

2. EFFICIENCY OF THE ADVERTISING USE OF CARTOON MASCOTS BASED ON THE TARGET GROUP OF CHILDREN

2.1. Definition of the luxury food industry

The luxury food industry is the area of the food industry dedicated to the production of food that is consumed not so much for its satiety or nutritional content as for its taste or effects. Foods that generally fall under the category of luxury foods are products with high levels of fat, sugar or salt, as is the case with products such as chips, ice cream, chocolate, biscuits, fruit gums, etc. In 2022, the number of confectionery manufacturing companies in Germany was 257 with 55,000 employees employed (cf. Ahrens, 2023).

2.2. Cartoon Mascots

2.2.1. Definition of Cartoon Mascots

A cartoon mascot is a fictional character created or licensed by the company, whose task is to represent the products, services and values of a brand and the corresponding company through its representation (cf. Brown & Ponsonby-McCabe, 2015, p.3). They are trademarks that serve as legally protected, visual units as distinguishing features for consumer goods (cf. Cook & Thompson, 2019, p.18). Spokes character usually embody the characteristics of the product and serve the brand as official brand representatives, representing the company and its values to the outside world for the consumer. They are the first point of contact with whom the customer comes into contact and the face that the brand wants to give to his company (cf. Cook & Thompson, 2019, p.18). The appearance of the brand mascots depends primarily on the brand and the corresponding target group that is to be addressed. They can appear in the form of a person, animal or object and appear animated in their representation with elaborated character profile, setting to music and movement, or simply as an unanimated symbol or coat of arms (cf. Brown & Ponsonby-McCabe, 2015, p.94). Their personality and their given aesthetic characteristics contribute significantly to how the company is perceived externally (cf. Cook & Thompson, 2019, p.20).

2.2.2. Use and Effect of Cartoon Mascots

The Cartoon Mascot's means of communication has numerous advantages that companies can use to reach consumers in a targeted manner. As brand symbols, they creatively capture the attention of the audience, establish a clear link to the product category, build awareness, recognition and memory of the brand, and develop a positive brand image for both the company and its products (cf. Brown & Ponsonby-McCabe, 2015, p.156). In addition to these effects on the perception and behavior of consumers, the communication tool of the Cartoon Mascots offers further decisive advantages for companies, among which six in particular should be mentioned at this point:

2.2.2.1. Emotional appeal to the consumer and de-rationalisation of the company

Successful brands do not simply position themselves as producers of simple consumer goods, but define themselves as a deeper entity with its own meaning, ideals, values, norms and goals (cf. Brown & Ponsonby-McCabe, 2015, p.39). Cartoon Mascots lend the company a character that can serve as a

projection surface for its corporate identity. They help to create emotional bonds between the company and its customers by reducing the distance between the human and non-human beings, the legal entity of the company. By its very nature, it is easier for humans to identify with something that, like themselves, has human characteristics, behaviors and a personality (cf. Brown & Ponsonby-McCabe, 2015, p.110). It serves to "de-rationalize" the purely economically oriented construct of the company (cf. Cook & Thompson, 2019, p.15). The consumer is more inclined to consume the advertised product and additionally begins to build a relationship with the depicting mascot and the personality of the brand (cf. Brown & Ponsonby-McCabe, 2015, p.38).

2.2.2.2.Flexible design and control over appearance and behaviour

Brand mascots can be designed exactly in the way that best serves your company. From their appearance, to their character, to their demeanor, every detail can be defined to make the mascot best embody the desired values and characteristics of the brand that best resonate with the target group. As anthropomorphized creations of their companies, they give the brand full control over its behavior and the importance given to it. (cf. Brown & Ponsonby-McCabe, 2015, p.153).

2.2.2.3.Subconscious influencing and adoption of ideas and messages

Cartoon Mascots offer companies the opportunity to insert ideas and messages under the guise of absurdity in order to present an ethical system that suits their own interests. Thus, through cartoon mascots, marketers can create a world in which their own product has beneficial properties that may not exist in reality (cf. Cook & Thompson, 2019, p.146). While the consumer generally reacts with aversion to the open praise of fictitious characteristics, the product and the manufacturer are not associated with negative values if the sales message is embedded in a narrative form similar to that of other forms of entertainment by means of a fictitious spokesperson (cf. Cook & Thompson, 2019, p.15). The Mascot makes the sales message seem less like an advertisement for a product and more like an animated adventure story in which the designers are granted artistic freedom (cf. Cook & Thompson, 2019, p.168). The consumer's resistance to dealing with the subconscious message decreases (cf. Cook & Thompson, 2019, p.15). Cartoon mascots use this technique to create emotions in the consumer, which make them more open to adopting the company's ideas and messages (cf. Bayraktar, 2014, p.54). In this way, the manipulative intention of the advertiser almost always goes unnoticed by the consumer (cf. Linn, 2004, p.51).

2.2.2.4.Using humour to reduce resistance and increase perception

Cartoon Mascots allow companies to use the creative tool of humor to create an atmosphere in which the consumer can relax in order to reduce resistance to the message being conveyed. Humor has been shown to increase the consumer's attention to advertising messages, while at the same time creating sympathy for the source, the presenter, as well as for the brand and its product. The consumer is "rewarded" for his attention by a brief moment of entertainment and, in turn, reduces his tendency to want to fully decipher the subconscious messages. The likelihood that he will question the source or purpose of the advertisement and the willingness to put forward counter-arguments is reduced because he remains primarily focused on the apparent (cf. Brown & Ponsonby-McCabe, 2015, p.155).

2.2.2.5.Transnational value mediation through symbolism

Cartoon Mascots use symbolism to convey values and norms that exist collectively worldwide and are understood without words (cf. Schröder, 2020, p.11). A well-chosen cartoon mascot has a meaning that is easy to interpret and can be consensus. It creates a sense of familiarity through its mere representation, creating images that are immediately meaningful and familiar (cf. Brown & Ponsonby-McCabe, 2015, p.268). Much of the brand mascots and brand ambassadors in use today have their origins in older traditions and symbols that have an inherent collective understanding. They make use of the rich world of folklore, fairy tales and legends and are inspired by legends and fables. One element that occurs particularly frequently in these magical stories is the depiction of the animal, which appears as a helper, advisor or antagonist of humans. The relationship between humans and animals is long and varied. They are part of our cultural narratives and our daily lives (cf. Brown & Ponsonby-McCabe, 2015, p.158). From birth, we are cultivated in such a way that we learn, accept, and appreciate the meaning and

symbolism of these beings. Almost every animal has its own symbolism, which we have no difficulty deciphering because we learned it in our earliest childhood (cf. Brown & Ponsonby-McCabe, 2015, p. 232). Brands take advantage of this knowledge and therefore like to use animals for their brand ambassadors to give them cultural meaning and significance. In addition to the luxury and fashion industry, it is above all the luxury food industry that uses the symbolic meaning of the animal world for its purposes (cf. Brown & Ponsonby-McCabe, 2015, p.275).

2.2.2.6.Simple presentation of complex issues and/or ideas

Cartoon mascots can help to make an advertising message both informative and entertaining without losing the actual message or losing its impact. They can help simplify complex issues and make brands appear friendlier and more accessible to consumers (cf. Cook & Thompson, 2019, p. 196). The attraction of animation and its cartoon mascots is that it allows the advertiser to easily illustrate the transformative qualities of the product to the consumer, while at the same time showing them how consuming the product could magically enrich and change their lives (cf. Cook & Thompson, 2019, p.31). The MASCOT can appear as a so-called "expert" who explains the application and mode of action of the product to the non-expert consumer. It can be helpful to support the consumer in evaluating alternatives in the product category or to reduce the flood of information for the consumer by presenting the most important information bundled in simple language (cf. Cook & Thompson, 2019, p.32). In this way, the cartoon mascot can contribute to the fact that the advertising message can be processed heuristically rather than in complete detail (cf. Brown & Ponsonby-McCabe, 2015, p.153)

2.2.3. Principles of Cartoon Mascot Design

The design of an efficient mascot is divided into 6 basic steps, which apply to all mascots regardless of the target group and must be observed in order to create a stable foundation on which the target group-specific features can later be built.

Cartoon mascots are brand symbols that leave the consumer with a mental image of the brand identity, which promotes both brand awareness and brand preference. In order for the brand behind the mascot to be recognizable, the mascot must be clearly defined within the product category and identified with the brand (cf. Brown & Ponsonby-McCabe, 2015, p.154). In this way, characters can be created that not only contribute to the increase in current sales, but also provide the company with long-term profit (cf. Brown & Ponsonby-McCabe, 2015, p.103). Used correctly, they can help to influence the opinions, attitudes and behaviour of customers in a positive way for the company (cf. Mehner, 2008, p.3). They make the company a brand that consumers want to build a relationship with, rather than just making a transaction (cf. Brown & Ponsonby-McCabe, 2015, p.157).

To achieve this goal, brands should consider 6 requirements in the design of their mascot:

2.2.3.1.First MASCOT requirement: Cartoon Mascots should stand out from the crowd of spokespersons as an individual, independent personality. They must have unique, distinctive features that clearly distinguish them from the mascots of other brands.

2.2.3.2.Second MASCOT requirement: Cartoon mascots should be chosen in such a way that they have a specific utility that corresponds to the essence of the brand. Your identity should coincide with that of the brand.

2.2.3.3. Third MASCOT condition: In order to ensure a lasting bond between the consumer and the brand, there should be no constant change of advertising images.

2.2.3.4. Fourth MASCOT requirement: Cartoon mascots should be targeted in order to address them effectively.

2.2.3.5. Fifth MASCOT requirement: Cartoon Mascot should be designed in line with the consumption framework in order to address the target group effectively.

2.2.3.6. Sixth MASCOT requirement: Cartoon mascots should be defined with a strong personality in order to be able to react flexibly to environmental influences.

2.2.4. Target group-specific design of cartoon mascots

In order to create an efficient cartoon mascot for a brand, it is essential to have a good knowledge of the specific idiosyncrasies and preferences of the target group. Especially when addressing children, sociological, psychological and pedagogical knowledge of their stage of development is crucial if you want to secure your brand success and establish long-term brand loyalty. As many as 90% of all children's products flop, because marketers usually do not succeed in finding their way into the world of thoughts of a 6 to 9-year-old child (cf. Bimminger, 2009, p.39). Especially in the food sector, it is hard to see that loveless packaging and wrong product argumentation quickly lead to pre-school children rejecting the respective products and brands.

Children perceive the world differently than adults – they have wants, needs and ideas that in most cases do not correlate with our image of reality. Although we live with them in such a confined space, we don't speak the same language and see the world with completely different eyes. Cartoon mascots can be used to build a bridge to this child's world of experience and make a significant contribution to building an emotional relationship with the child consumer; but this can only be achieved by those who show a keen sense of children's needs and know how to design their mascots in a way that is appropriate for the target group.

2.3. Children as a target group

2.3.1. Definition of the target group "child"

It is not easy to define the target group "child", because technically there is no such thing as THE target group of children or adolescents – it is much more necessary to speak of different target groups, all of which require a differentiated approach (cf. Mehner, 2008, p.2). The transitions between these individual target groups are fluid and therefore cannot be clearly delineated, since ultimately everything depends on the individual development of the individual child (cf. Mehner, 2008, p.11). Every human being goes through different phases of life in his or her development, which are characterized by changes in personality and body. They have serious effects on the development of cognitive abilities as well as the way in which people perceive their environment visually and emotionally (cf. Bimminger, 2009, p.4). In addition, there are the effects of acceleration, which is understood to mean the advance of the child's physical and psychological maturation processes into adolescence. Today's generations are developing much faster than previous ones, so that there is more and more a shift in the age groups (cf. Mehner, 2008, p.11). No clear boundary can be drawn, as children and adolescents do not represent a homogeneous group (cf. Bayraktar, 2014, p.25). There will always be exceptions to the limits of the age classification (cf. Acuff & Reiher, 1999, p.14).

Nevertheless, in the following we will try to narrow down the different groups and subgroups of children and adolescents on the basis of their developmental characteristics.

We divide the target group child into the 5 subgroups; Babies and toddlers: (0 - 2 years), pre-schoolers (3 - 5 years), school beginners (6 - 9 years), pre-teens (10 - 12 years) and teenagers (13 - 17 years). In order not to go beyond the scope of the paper, the detailed presentation of the developmental differences of the individual target groups as well as their specific address by Cartoon Mascots will be omitted at this point.

2.3.2. Fundamentals of Children's Advertising Literacy

The term advertising competence refers to the consumer's knowledge of the meaning and purpose of advertising and the understanding of distinguishing it from other program content. Especially in the segment of children, the question must be asked whether they understand who the clients behind the advertising messages are and what intentions they pursue with them (cf. Bayraktar, 2014, p.90). It is about the question of when children understand that the statements made in advertising are aimed at persuading them to buy the advertised products and brands and at what point they acquire the competence to rationally compare the relative benefits and risks of different goods (cf. Marshall, 2010, p.146).

Nowadays, children come into contact with the world of media at a very early age. Their emotional, cognitive, linguistic and social development is already shaped by advertisers in the first years of life (cf. Mehner, 2008, p.26). The processing and emotional reaction to the depicted content takes place analogously to the areas of life and experience of children in phases - from the concrete to the abstract. What begins with the collection of only small units of information develops over the years into the ability to capture ever larger and more complex information and to put them in a context (cf. Mehner, 2008, p.27). What the child understands and can perceive depends on his age and his cognitive development (cf. Mehner, 2008, p.53). The children's initially pictorial perception does not know how to correctly classify abstract content - illusory world and reality cannot be distinguished from each other (cf. Mehner, 2008, p.27).

It is only with time that children begin to understand who pays for the advertisement, who makes the advertisement and why it is broadcast on certain channels. Only gradually do they learn the ability to question the intention of advertisers and to understand the persuasive intent of advertising (cf. Esmaeilpour & Nashtae, 2021, p.21). Before this process has taken place, they view advertisements and the cartoon mascots that appear in them as a form of entertainment with the sole purpose of entertaining them. Their messages and ideas are neither consciously perceived nor questioned by them. Mascots usually resort to cheerful and funny appeals to draw children's attention to the aspects of the advertising messages associated with a positive affect (cf. Esmaeilpour & Nashtae, 2021, p.20). When children perceive a positive effect, they need fewer processing resources, which lead to affect-congruent evaluations, and thus arrive at a judgment more quickly. Instead of weighing the pros and cons of an argument or even an entire product, the child simply decides whether he or she has been entertained or not and likes or dislikes the product accordingly. Such positive affects offer the child consumer a short-term reward, which, coupled with an underdeveloped advertising knowledge, increases the likelihood of a biased product evaluation in favor of the company. The child thinks the product is good – even if he doesn't know why (cf. Esmaeilpour & Nashtae, 2021, p.21). They are not given the basis of real advertising competence - but the basis for long-lasting brand loyalty has been laid (cf. Bayraktar, 2014, p.91).

3. EFFICIENCY OF THE ADVERTISING USE OF CARTOON MASCOTS BASED ON THE ADULT TARGET GROUP

3.1. Performance

The online survey was opened on 22.01.2023 and had a duration of 24 days until 15.02.2023. The selection of the sample was carried out according to the Snowball (Referral) Sampling System in order to address the largest, heterogeneous group of subjects possible. The survey was closed on 15.02.2023 at 6 p.m. local time. A total of 179 subjects took part in the survey. 100% of them met the requirement to be 18 or over 18 years old and provided a valid email address, which could be used to confirm the authenticity of their person and to draw the winner of the survey on 16.02.2023 at 10 a.m. local time. An Amazon merchandise voucher in the amount of 60 euros was raffled off among all valid participants. All 97 questions of the survey were answered appropriately. From the data sets obtained from Google Forms, 105 graphs and diagrams were created by hand in order to ensure better clarity, flexibility and comparability of the data. They were used to verify or falsify the hypotheses about the efficiency of the medium.

3.2. Evaluation

In terms of age, the 179 subjects are divided into the following segments: 60% of them stated to be 18-25 years old (107 subjects), 22% between 26-35 (39 subjects), 8% between 36-55 (14 subjects) and 10% between 56-65 years old (19 subjects). None of the subjects claimed to be older than 66 years. In terms of gender, the survey is composed of 65% women (116 subjects), 33% men (59 subjects) and 1% diverse (2 subjects). Another percent of the participants did not want to provide any information about their gender (2 subjects).

In view of the theoretical treatment of the topic in the first part of the bachelor thesis, four hypotheses about the use and effect of the medium "Cartoon Mascots" are derived, which, if they are valid for the child consumer, could theoretically also be applied to the adult consumer. The results of the survey are intended to provide more detailed insights into this and to help verify or falsify the hypotheses put forward.

3.2.1. Hypothesis 1: Cartoon mascots are designed to represent the goods and services of their brands as spokespersons and symbolize the values, norms and ideas of the company (verified)

Hypothesis 1 was verified by questions 5-28, section 3, questions 29-50, section 4, and questions 89-91, section 10. It was found that the brand recognition of the 22 cartoon mascots depicted is extremely high in all three levels (first stage: recognition of the mascot / second stage: recognition of the product category / third stage: recognition of the advertised brand). The test subjects had no difficulty in perceiving the mascots as spokespersons for their brands and linking them to their brands. The identification between the values, norms and ideas of the company with regard to the mascot depicted can be considered high. The cartoon mascots, which were designed in the subjects' childhood, are still perceived as spokespersons for their brands and effectively represent the values, norms and ideas of their companies. Hypothesis 1 can therefore be considered verified.

3.2.2. Hypothesis 2: Cartoon mascots establish brand loyalty that helps ensure that the brands they advertise are still consumed in adulthood (partially verified)

Hypothesis 2 was partially verified by questions 71-77 from section 7 and questions 78-82 from section 8. In order to find out whether, thanks to the Cartoon Mascots, brand loyalty developed that could last into adulthood, the subjects were asked about their attitude towards the products and their consumption using the example of Haribo. Their current consumption behaviour was then in turn compared to their children's consumption behaviour in order to check whether consumption had increased or decreased. It turned out that the consumption of Haribo products had generally decreased, but this was not necessarily due to a reduced interest of the adult test subjects. Rather, it can be assumed that the reduced consumption is accompanied by direct effects of the changed family environment. It turned out that some of the main players who provided him with Haribo products in the subject's childhood more or less "broke away" with the onset of adulthood, which inevitably influenced the subject's overall consumption. Hypothesis 2 can therefore neither be fully verified nor completely falsified. Further research is needed at this point in order to analyze the underlying patterns in more detail and to be able to clearly determine the influencing factors. Hypothesis 2 was partially verified, as brand loyalty could be perceived in the subjects, even if consumption did not increase.

3.2.3. Hypothesis 3: Cartoon mascots establish a positive, emotional relationship with the child user that lasts into adulthood (verified)

Hypothesis 3 was verified by questions 52-64 from section 5, question 83 from section 8 and questions 92-95 from section 10. In order to collect valid data on this topic, the subjects were asked to ascribe various attributes to the mascot (gold bear), all of which are characteristics that can occur in emotional relationships between humans or between humans and animals. They provide information about the subject's emotional attachment to the mascot and help determine whether and to what extent the subject can identify emotionally with the cartoon mascot. The characteristics that the subjects attributed to the "person" of the mascot were all extremely positive – in general, the mascot is perceived as alive and in relation to one's own person. 75% of respondents said they associate the MASCOT with early memories of their childhood, which they said would be positive (52%) or even very positive (25%). This form of emotional connection from childhood goes so far that 64% of respondents said that they would only consume the advertised products of the Mascot as adults today because they did so in their childhood. Accordingly, hypothesis 3 can be considered verified.

3.2.4. Hypothesis 4: Cartoon mascots act on a subconscious level and influence the perception, purchasing decisions and preferences of the consumer without their knowledge (verified)

Hypothesis 4 was verified by the data from question 51, section 5, questions 65-70 from section 6, questions 84-88 from section 9 and questions 96-97 from section 10. It turned out that the subjects' own

individual ability to influence was generally assessed as too low when it manifested itself in practice. Although, in the opinion of the test subjects, the depicted mascot would only have an effect on children's purchasing decisions, it was shown that adults were also influenced to a large extent subconsciously in their perception. While the vast majority of all respondents previously stated that cartoon mascots had little (14%), little (22%) or even very little (35%) influence on their purchasing decisions, the further course of the survey showed that this assessment is generally considered to be inflated. In a comparison of two product ranges, one of which used cartoon mascots and the other did not, it turned out that 80% of the subjects always preferred the product with the mascot instead of the products without the mascot. This was also reflected in their purchase decision. 81% of respondents said they would rather buy the product advertised by Mascot than the one without, which is in total contrast to their self-assessment. Hypothesis 4 can therefore be considered verified.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The medium of cartoon mascots has proven to be an efficient advertising tool for the luxury food industry, capable of appealing to consumers' emotions and building a relationship with them that lasts far beyond childhood and into adulthood. This was proven in both sub-areas of the research question for the child as well as the adult target market. Cartoon Mascots, as spokespersons of their companies, can be designed to represent the goods and services of their brands in their essence and symbolize the values, norms and ideas of their companies. They have a subconscious influence on the consumer, which affects their perception, purchasing decisions and preferences and helps to establish a brand loyalty that lives on in the consumer many years after childhood, even if their own preferences and life circumstances have changed in the meantime.

Now that the impact of Cartoon Mascots on the target population has been demonstrated, the next step would be to conduct the survey nationwide and, with a significantly larger budget and timeframe, organize the necessary resources, channels, and platforms needed to target a probability sample. This could also be used to further investigate hypothesis 2 by further investigating the underlying influence of family relationships on the increased or decreased consumption of the target population. Furthermore, a further survey could provide more differentiated information about influencing factors such as character development, emotion appeal, storyline, etc. and clarify how this affects the perception of the mascots and which design hints can be derived from it to increase the popularity of existing and new cartoon mascots. It would also be instructive to find out how high the influence of anthropomorphic product mascots is on the perception and product recognition of brands. Further surveys or experiments in this field could provide more insights into this economically interesting field of research.

Cartoon mascots touch the consumer on an emotional level and create brands with which the consumer wants to have a relationship instead of a transaction. They are an efficient advertising medium in the highly competitive market of the luxury food industry and will probably be an integral part of the market and our lives as consumers in the future.

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