

# Mascot effect: Analysing brand character influence on purchase intentions in Thailand's food market

**Bilal Khalid**

*King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang, Bangkok, Thailand*

---

## Abstract

### Keywords:

Brand  
Mascot effect  
Influence  
Food  
Purchase  
Thailand

**Introduction.** The aim of this research was to examine the influence of brand mascots on consumer purchase intentions in the Thai food sector. The study integrated the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) with the construct of emotional engagement.

**Materials and methods.** This study employed an empirical approach based on primary data collected through an online survey. The target population comprised consumers familiar with mascot-driven brands. 368 valid responses were obtained. Data were analyzed using confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling to evaluate model fit.

**Results and discussion.** The study's respondents were primarily male (48.9%), within the 25–34 age bracket (31.3%), held a Bachelor's degree (36.1%), and were self-employed (24.5%). This demographic profile reflects a young, economically active, and marketing-responsive consumer segment. All structural model fit indices demonstrated acceptable adequacy (e.g., CMIN/DF = 2.310), while reliability and validity metrics met the required thresholds, with the minimum Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = 0.548 and minimum Composite Reliability (CR) = 0.759, confirming strong measurement quality. The empirical results revealed that Emotional Connection ( $\beta = 0.489$ ) was the strongest positive predictor of Purchase Intention, underscoring its pivotal role in consumer decision-making. In contrast, Attitude exerted a significant negative effect ( $\beta = -0.175$ ), suggesting that rational evaluations alone may not always align with affective or behavioral outcomes. Furthermore, Emotional Connection significantly mediated the effects of Mascot Characteristics, Subjective Norm, and Perceived Behavioral Control, reinforcing its central role as an emotional bridge between perception and intention. These findings confirm that emotional engagement serves as a crucial determinant of consumer behavior, particularly in culturally expressive markets such as Thailand, where affective symbolism and brand storytelling strongly influence purchase motivation.

**Conclusions.** The findings show that food brand mascots significantly influence consumer attitudes, intentions, and behavior. Emotional resonance, rather than purely cognitive evaluation, was found to drive purchase intention. Accordingly, marketers in the Thai food sector should develop mascots that convey authenticity, relatability, and emotional warmth aligned with consumer values and cultural expectations, thereby strengthening brand loyalty and long-term engagement.

---

### Article history:

Received  
15.10.2025  
Received in revised  
form 04.12.2025  
Accepted  
19.12.2025

---

### Corresponding author:

Bilal Khalid  
E-mail:  
bilal.kh@kmitl.ac.th

---

### DOI:

10.24263/2304-  
974X-2025-14-3-13

## Introduction

In the current global, dynamic and highly competitive market environment, businesses are using every innovative way to capture consumers' attention. Among the emerging strategy being used to market a brand to consumers are mascots (Malik and Guptha, 2014; Palladino et al., 2022). A brand mascot is considered a suitable strategy of presenting a brand to the customer because of its unique characteristics, such as distinctive personalities, visual identities, and narrative potential (Kim, 2018; Min et al., 2019). As indicated by Bisht (2021) brand mascot serves as a powerful brand ambassador, capable of influencing consumer behavior through visual identity and emotional story telling. Brand mascots are defined as characters that are used to represent a company or product. This means the characters may be human, animal or cartoons and are commonly seen in ads for the brand. Besides supporting the brand's image, they play a role in giving brand human qualities, helping it stick in people's minds and making it more relatable (Reddy et al., 2024).

The usage of mascots has essentially evolved into a critical marketing tool for mass creation of corporate identity and public interest in a brand; whereas, they place a brand on the radar in the view of the market by increased brand awareness through visual engagement opportunities (Ahmad et al., 2024). In the food sector, mascots are especially impactful, as food purchasing decisions often involve emotional, habitual, and social components. Such names of mascots are The Bar B Gon for Bar B Q Plaza, Zon Zon for Cafe Amazon, Chickira for Chick-A-Boom, the Nong Noey for KFC and Ronald McDonald for McDonald's (Ares et al., 2022; Bohn and Wittenzellner, 2024; Keller et al., 2012; Kraak and Story, 2014; Reddy and Sathish, 2024; Vermeir and Roose, 2020). Nowadays, considering the media glut and the scant attention of consumers, such characters would be of greatest value in advertising campaigns. They make the brands easier to identify, recall, and understand for customers. Gupta et al. (2021) put forward that a transformed form is characters associated with brands, which would have been made a permanent long-term inexpensive medium for passing on the imagery and values of the brand to audiences. Thailand, where food is not just a need but, by itself, directly a part of identity, also has mascots that entice consumption and facilitate brand recall (Ganapathy et al., 2024; Wattanarak et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2025). The main objective of using brand mascot is to create positive emotions, views and attitudes towards a brand and its products. The positive image then would create attraction and possible buying behavior on the intended products or services (Yadav et al., 2015). Due to its potential influence on buyers' behavior, they are being applied in various sectors, from manufacturing to education.

Earlier studies have shown how mascots play a significant part in making the minds of customers lean towards the brand because of its anthropomorphic characteristics (Reddy et al., 2024), when the brand identity aligns with self-identity with respect to intended consumers that influence consumer attitudes and intentions toward the brand (Palladino et al., 2022). In another study, Sarkar et al. (2019) found that one effective way of creating human-like perceptions of a brand is through advertising, which can foster an emotional bond with consumer segments and enhance brand affinity. Such advertising is particularly effective because it can generate a deep-seated and lasting impression, strengthening consumers' emotional attachment to the brand. Despite all of the earlier studies, there are not enough empirical research results on how mascots can affect what customers buy especially in the food sector. Previous studies suggest that the presence of a mascot enhances brand visibility (Oh and Kim, 2025; Septianto and Paramita, 2021); therefore, it is important to examine whether positive affect toward mascots can also stimulate consumers' purchase intentions. It matters more now because companies are relying on experiences and emotions to get customers interested. Taking these into consideration, the main aim of this study is to investigate how mascots help shape consumers' purchase aspiration from food brands in Thailand.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) has gained considerable traction as a model for understanding decision-making and human behavior. The TPB postulates that perceived behavioral control induces the behavior of a person and subjective norms and personal attitudes (Cheng, 2019). Also mentioned within literature is the need for emotion wherein the link between consumers and the brand has formed an emerging area of focus. The study offers ideas on how mascots can be used for marketing.

### Literature review

A brand mascot is a visual or verbal character that represents a brand and functions as a symbolic embodiment of its identity. Typically presented as animated or illustrated figures, mascots serve as recognizable representatives of brands. According to Deligoz and Ünal (2021), brand mascots are primarily used to strengthen brand identity and to create emotional connections between brands and their target consumers. Well-known examples such as Chikira, Nong Noey, and Ronald McDonald illustrate how mascots extend beyond promotional tools to symbolize what a brand stands for. By personifying brand attributes, mascots become more relatable, evoke emotional responses, and may motivate consumer action. These perceived characteristics reflect the set of qualities consumers associate with the mascot.

Features of these characters are their good looks, relatability and being one of a kind; these are the details that people link to the brand. Admittedly, Reddy et al. (2024) aver that mascots infuse a human touch to brands; thereby enabling personal and close association between the consumer and the brand. This, in turn, establishes the most critical point for the differentiation of any brand from others. In Chen's (2021) view, mascots that are easy to look at and express emotions have a greater effect on people's attitude and the way they make purchases. Such characteristics in advertising have been noticed to improve consumer trust and indirectly influence whether someone decides to buy from the brand. Some also believe that mascots partake in building the first impression consumers have, as well as their first feelings (Wang et al., 2025; Wu et al., 2025). This has an influence on their intention to engage with the product of purchase from the brand. From these arguments, the following hypothesis was developed:

***H1:** Mascot characteristics have a positive and significant influence on the purchase intention*

Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) provides a framework for understanding the factors that guide consumers in their purchasing decisions. The theory posits that behavior is influenced by three key components: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Attitude reflects how favorably or unfavorably consumers evaluate a particular brand. Previous studies have indicated that the presence of an appropriate and appealing brand mascot can positively influence consumer attitudes, leading them to develop stronger preferences for the brand than they otherwise would (Deligoz and Ünal, 2021; Shimpi, 2021). Using mascots can encourage people to adopt a good outlook on a brand because they amuse the public and reflect the things customers' value (Oh and Kim, 2025). If the mascot is not important or properly represents the brand, it could create a negative perception in the minds of customers (Reddy and Sathish, 2024; Tanjaya, 2025).

Subjective norm implies that the perceived social pressure that affects engagement of non-engagement in a particular behavior. In the context of mascot, it denotes the influences on or not from a brand with mascot. Other people such as facility of peers' orientation regarding the brand using mascot would influence the perception and purchase intention regarding the brand concerned. Literature has demonstrated that social pressure such as social endorsement of brand mascot strengthens subjective perspectives of a brand, and the resultant purchase intention (Attah et al., 2024; Osei-Frimpong et al., 2022; Thai and Wang, 2020).

Perceived behavioral control implies consumer beliefs regarding how easy or difficult it is to carry out a particular activity, such as purchasing from a brand (Bortne et al., 2025). According to Sathish (2023) the perspective of consumers regarding a brand mascot, for instance, its affordability, accessibility, and ease of purchase influence the resultant consumer behavior. Mascots have a life far beyond the façade of advertising lure to persuade the consumer. Brand mascots serve as organizational totems to the extent that they can rally members of an organization around a concrete presentation of its unique character. Thus, mascots assist in condensing the consumers' understanding of the organization's identity in a context far removed from the organization's own milieu (Cayla, 2013). As illustrated by Arunrangsiwed and Pairoa (2016), when a mascot is used to guide the consumers' journey and generate customer services interactions, it has a great influence on how consumers perceive the brand. Mascot symbolism creates positive views towards brands. From these arguments, the literature findings, the following three hypotheses were developed:

**H2:** *Attitude towards mascot has a positive and significant influence on the purchase intention*

**H3:** *Subjective norm has a positive and significant influence on the purchase intention*

**H4:** *Perceived behavioral control regarding mascot has a positive and significant influence on the purchase intention*

In addition to the concepts borrowed from the TPB, this study explored the literature of emotional connection. Such a link refers to the feelings and connection a person has with a certain brand (Bigné et al., 2023; Ghorbanzadeh and Rahehagh, 2021; Niharika and Yadav, 2023). According to Nasr-Esfahani et al. (2022), the bond is usually formed when a brand communicates in a humanlike way with mascots. Researchers say that following a mascot creates positive feelings in customers which leads to the formation of a close relationship with the brand (Sayin and Gürhan-Canlı, 2024; Shimpi, 2021). Being emotionally involved is a better predictor of buying a product with symbolic aspects, like a company mascot, than analyzing the facts about it. From these arguments, the following hypothesis are developed:

**H5:** *Emotional connection has a positive and significant influence on the purchase intention*

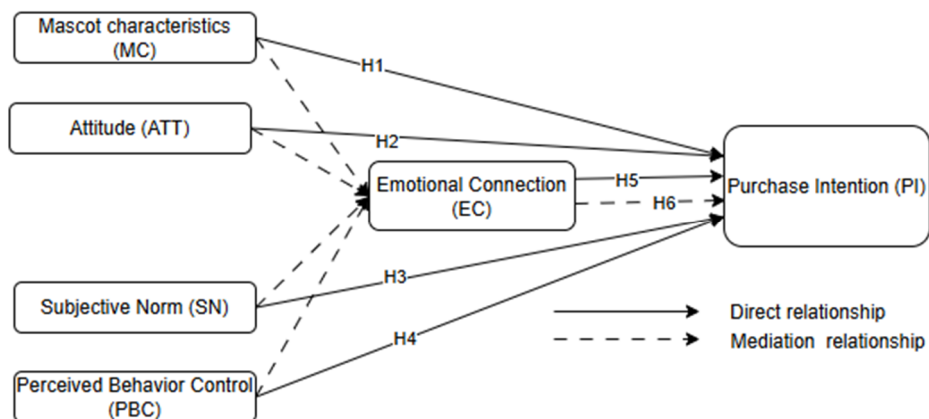
**H6:** *Emotional connection mediates the effect of Mascot characteristics, attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control has a positive and significant influence on the purchase intention.*

## **Materials and methods**

### **Conceptual framework and hypothesis**

The study has four independent variables, namely mascot characteristics, attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavior control. The mediating variable was emotional connection, while the dependent variable is the purchase intention. The conceptual framework is visualized in Figure 1.

A quantitative cross-sectional research design was utilized to scrutinize the influence of food brand mascots on the consumers' purchase intention in Thailand's food market sector. The study relied on the TPB framework, with inclusion of emotional connection as a mediating variable. The study population was Thailand food consumers above 18 years, who have been appropriately exposed to and/or interacted with brands that utilize a distinct mascot in their marketing and branding activities. These consumers were considered to have developed emotional connections, attitudes towards a particular food brand(s) using mascot.



**Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study**

*Source: own processing based on literature*

## Materials – Sample collection

The study adopted a non-probability purposive sampling technique, where only the relevant respondents were included in the study. These were the respondents with sufficient familiarity with brands that use mascot in the food market, such as The Bar B Gon mascot (from Bar B Q Plaza), The Zon Zon mascot (from Café Amazon Coffee in Thailand), Chikira mascot (from Chick-A-Boom), Nong Noey mascot (daughter of KFC founder), and Ronald McDonald (from McDonald's). The participants were recruited through online platforms including email invitations, targeted marketing forums and social media. To determine the appropriate sample size, the study adopted the sample-to-item ratio, which determines the sample size based on the number of items in the study. A ratio of 10-to-1 ratio was considered suitable (Brown and Greene, 2006). This study questionnaire had 26 items, which resulted in a minimum of (26\*10) 260 respondents. The sample size was therefore a minimum of 260 respondents.

To establish validity and reliability, the measurement scales of the questionnaire were adapted to suit the setting. Items were generated from the literature, after having identified the dimensions of the mascot characteristics from both the literature of Dellgoz and Ünal (2021) and Shimpi (2021). As for the Theory of Planned Behavior, operational definitions were hence defined; thus the measurement of attitude towards mascot as on a semantic differential scale followed literature from Ajzen (1991) and Spears and Singh (2004).; subjective norms were operationalized using scales of Taylor and Todd (1995) and Izquierdo-Yusta et al. (2022); and perceived behavioral control utilized items from Dangaiso (2023), and La Barbera and Ajzen (2021). Furthermore, the construct of emotional connection was assessed using scales adapted from research on brand relationships (Bigné et al., 2023; Ghorbanzadeh and Rahehagh, 2021). Finally, the dependent variable, purchase intention, was operationalized using a scale from Dodds et al. (1991) and Liu (2025).

The data collection was conducted using a self-administered online questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed on Google forms in English language. The questionnaire

comprised on demographic questions and constructs questions. All the constructs were measured using multiple-item scales, which were developed with reference to the previous literature. Each construct was measured using a 5-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The questionnaire was hosted on google forms, and respondents invited through various means including emails, and social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter. The study collected a total of 412 responses. Upon review and adjustment of inappropriate responses and missing data, the study was left with valid sample responses of 368. The data was collected from August 2025 to September 2025.

Data analysis was conducted using the SPSS software for preliminary descriptive statistics analysis. To evaluate the model fitness, reliability, and validity of the model, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was adopted. Path analysis was adopted to evaluate the hypothesis of the relationship among the variables. Bootstrap was used for moderation analysis, to evaluate the indirect effects through emotional connections. Appropriate ethical considerations were made as the research involved human participants. Informed consent was presented to all the respondents, informing them of their voluntary participation, and opting out of the survey. Additionally, the data collected was treated with complete confidentiality and used only for the purpose of this study.

## Results and discussion

The study first conducted analysis of the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The results are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1**

**Descriptive statistics of demographics**

| Variables         | Categories            | Frequency (n) | Percent (%) |
|-------------------|-----------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Gender            | Male                  | 180           | 48.9        |
|                   | Female                | 168           | 45.7        |
|                   | Others                | 20            | 5.4         |
| Age               | 18-24                 | 71            | 19.3        |
|                   | 25-34                 | 115           | 31.3        |
|                   | 35-44                 | 90            | 24.5        |
|                   | 45-54                 | 56            | 15.2        |
|                   | 55+                   | 36            | 9.8         |
| Educational Level | High School and Below | 54            | 14.7        |
|                   | Diploma or Equivalent | 89            | 24.2        |
|                   | Bachelor's Degree     | 133           | 36.1        |
|                   | Master's Degree       | 56            | 15.2        |
|                   | Doctoral Degree       | 36            | 9.8         |
| Employment Status | Student               | 59            | 16.0        |
|                   | Full Time Employment  | 54            | 14.7        |
|                   | Part Time Employment  | 59            | 16.0        |
|                   | Self Employed         | 90            | 24.5        |
|                   | Unemployed            | 66            | 17.9        |
|                   | Retired               | 40            | 10.9        |

Source: own processing from field data

The results indicated that males comprised the majority of respondents (48.9%), while females accounted for 45.7%. Regarding age, the largest group was 25–34 years (31.3%), followed by the 18–24 age group (24.5%), with the smallest proportion being those aged 55 and above (9.8%). In terms of education, respondents with a bachelor's degree represented the majority (36.1%), followed by those holding a diploma or equivalent qualification (24.2%). With respect to employment status, the largest group was self-employed individuals (24.5%), followed by the unemployed (17%), while retirees represented the smallest proportion (10.9%).

### Model fitness evaluation

The second analysis that was conducted was an evaluation of the model fitness, reliability and validity. Various fitness indices were tested as summarized in Figure 2 and Table 2. From the results presented, it is found that all the required thresholds regarding the fit indices were met (Bacon and Bacon, 2001). This implies that model demonstrates solid structural validity, and it is well-specified and appropriately represents the data.

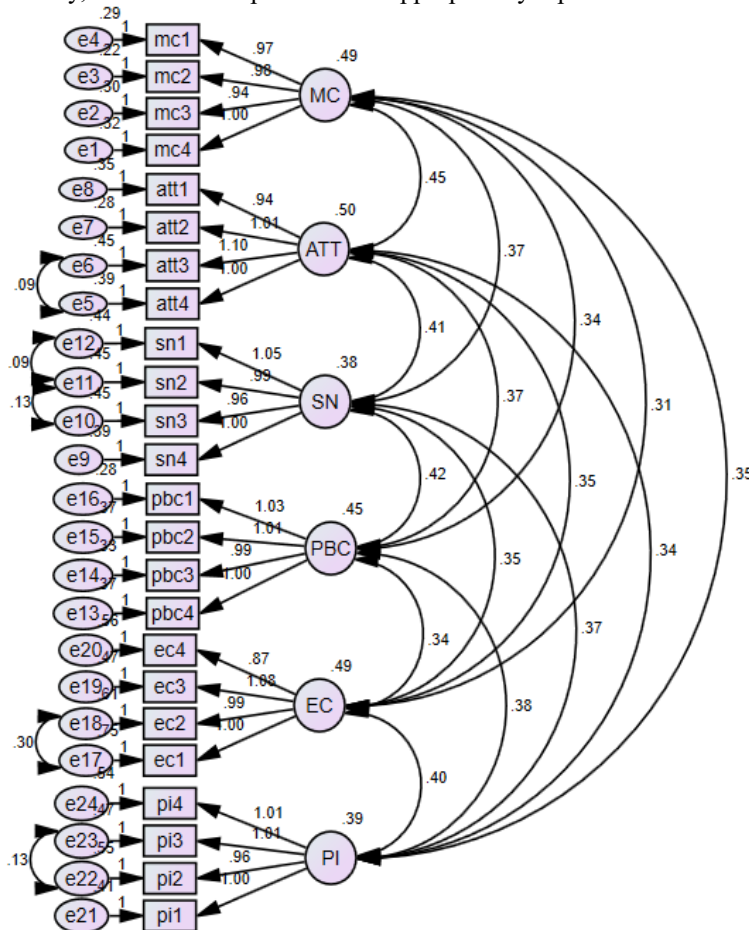


Figure 2. Model fitness evaluation  
Source: own processing in SPSS

**Table 2**

**Model fitness evaluation**

| <b>Fitness Index</b> | <b>CMIN/DF</b> | <b>RMR</b> | <b>RMSEA</b> | <b>NFI</b> | <b>IFI</b> | <b>TLI</b> | <b>CFI</b> |
|----------------------|----------------|------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Values               | 2.310          | 0.045      | 0.060        | 0.901      | 0.941      | 0.930      | 0.941      |
| Required Threshold   | <3.0           | <0.080     | <0.080       | >0.90      | >0.90      | >0.90      | >0.90      |
| Decision             | ✓              | ✓          | ✓            | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          | ✓          |

Source: own processing in SPSS

The other analysis that was conducted was the evaluation of the reliability and validity of the data. The reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR), while validity was evaluated using the average variance extracted (AVE) and standardized factor loadings. The results are summarized in Table 3.

The required threshold of Cronbach's alpha is 0.7 while the required threshold for CR is also 0.7. From the results obtained both Cronbach's alpha and CR valued met this required threshold. As a result, the reliability and internal consistency were confirmed. For the AVE, the required threshold was 0.5, and as well, the required threshold for standardized loadings is also 0.5. As seen in the values, the threshold was met, leading to conclusion that the constructs explains more than 50% of the indicators variances (Cheung et al., 2024).

**Table 3**

**Reliability and validity analysis results**

| <b>Latent Variables</b> | <b>Observed Variables</b> | <b>Standardized Loadings</b> | <b>CR</b> | <b>AVE</b> | <b>Cronbach's Alpha</b> |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|-----------|------------|-------------------------|
| ATT                     | att1                      | 0.745                        | 0.848     | 0.583      | 0.850                   |
|                         | att2                      | 0.804                        |           |            |                         |
|                         | att3                      | 0.756                        |           |            |                         |
|                         | att4                      | 0.747                        |           |            |                         |
| EC                      | ec1                       | 0.628                        | 0.764     | 0.548      | 0.770                   |
|                         | ec2                       | 0.667                        |           |            |                         |
|                         | ec3                       | 0.742                        |           |            |                         |
|                         | ec4                       | 0.634                        |           |            |                         |
| MC                      | mc1                       | 0.78                         | 0.867     | 0.619      | 0.868                   |
|                         | mc2                       | 0.823                        |           |            |                         |
|                         | mc3                       | 0.768                        |           |            |                         |
|                         | mc4                       | 0.776                        |           |            |                         |
| PBC                     | pbc1                      | 0.792                        | 0.844     | 0.575      | 0.846                   |
|                         | pbc2                      | 0.744                        |           |            |                         |
|                         | pbc3                      | 0.756                        |           |            |                         |
|                         | pbc4                      | 0.741                        |           |            |                         |
| PI                      | pi1                       | 0.698                        | 0.759     | 0.641      | 0.761                   |
|                         | pi2                       | 0.628                        |           |            |                         |
|                         | pi3                       | 0.676                        |           |            |                         |
|                         | pi4                       | 0.651                        |           |            |                         |
| SN                      | sn1                       | 0.701                        | 0.780     | 0.670      | 0.780                   |
|                         | sn2                       | 0.676                        |           |            |                         |
|                         | sn3                       | 0.661                        |           |            |                         |
|                         | sn4                       | 0.702                        |           |            |                         |

Source: own processing in SPSS

## Empirical Analysis

Having established satisfactory model fit, as well as construct reliability and validity, the study proceeded to empirical analysis to test the proposed hypotheses. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed for this purpose. The analysis was conducted in two stages: assessment of direct effects and evaluation of mediation effects. The results of the direct effects analysis are presented in Table 4.

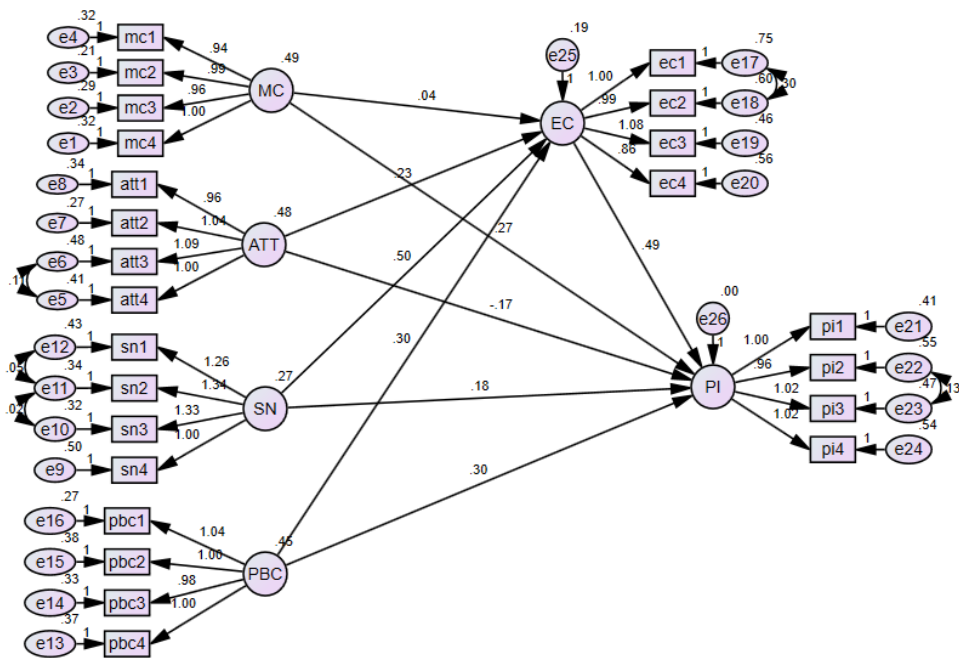
**Table 4**

**Direct effects for empirical results**

| Hypothesis | Path Relationships | Estimate | S.E. | C.R.   | p-value |
|------------|--------------------|----------|------|--------|---------|
| H1         | MC → PI            | .267     | .040 | 6.598  | ***     |
| H2         | ATT → PI           | -.175    | .043 | -4.018 | ***     |
| H3         | SN → PI            | .178     | .068 | 2.632  | .008    |
| H4         | PBC → PI           | .303     | .051 | 5.956  | ***     |
| H5         | EC → PI            | .489     | .096 | 5.099  | ***     |

Note: \*\*\* = 99% confidence level; \*\* = 95% confidence level; PI = purchase intention; MC = mascot characteristics; ATT = attitude; SN = subjective norms; PBC = perceived behavioral control; EC = emotional connection

Source: own processing in SPSS



**Figure 3. Direct effects for empirical results**

Source: own processing in SPSS

The results of direct effects indicated that mascot characteristics have a positive and significant influence on the purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.267$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), hence confirming hypothesis 1. The attitude towards mascots has a negative and significant influence on the purchase intention ( $\beta = -0.175$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), hence rejecting the second hypothesis.

The third hypothesis was confirmed by the findings that subjective norm has a positive and significant influence on the purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.178$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Additionally, perceived behavioral control regarding mascot was found to have a positive and significant influence on the purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.303$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This confirmed hypothesis 4. Lastly, the emotional connection was found to have a positive and significant influence on the purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.489$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

The other analysis that was conducted was the mediation analysis. The mediating effect of emotional connection between the independent variables (mascot characteristics, attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control) and purchase intention was evaluated. The results are presented in Table 5. The results indicated that the emotional connection significantly mediated the effect mascot characteristics, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control on purchase intention, but did not mediate the effect of attitude on purchase intention.

**Table 5**

**Mediation analysis of emotional connection**

| Hypothesis | Path relationships |   |    |   |    | Total effects | Direct effects | Indirect effects |
|------------|--------------------|---|----|---|----|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| H6         | PBC                | → | EC | → | PI | 0.450**       | 0.303**        | 0.147**          |
|            | SN                 | → | EC | → | PI | 0.422**       | 0.178          | 0.244**          |
|            | ATT                | → | EC | → | PI | -0.065        | -0.175**       | 0.110            |
|            | MC                 | → | EC | → | PI | 0.289**       | 0.267**        | 0.022**          |
|            | EC                 | → | EC | → | PI | 0.489**       | 0.489**        | 0.000**          |

Note: \*\*\* = 99% confidence level; \*\* = 95% confidence level; PI = purchase intention; MC = mascot characteristics; ATT = attitude; SN = subjective norms; PBC = perceived behavioral control; EC = emotional connection

Source: own processing in SPSS

The study pertains to food brand mascots that can be said to speak to commitment with regard to their effect on consumer purchase intention and use TPB as its base and emotional connection as a mediating variable. It takes different perspectives on how mascots are leveraged and, in the ever-evolving marketplace, how they influence selection for brand purchase. Interesting results were obtained regarding the relationships between food brand mascots, emotional and behavioral constructs, and consumers' purchase intentions. Emotional connection with mascot was found to have the highest significant positive influence on the purchase intention of the consumers.

The results are largely consistent with previous research on the influence of brand mascots on consumer behavior. Hypothesis 8 was confirmed, indicating that mascot characteristics have a significant positive effect on purchase intention. This finding aligns with Reddy et al. (2024), who emphasized that mascots infuse a human touch that fosters personal associations with brands. Similarly, Chen (2021) reported that visually appealing and emotionally expressive mascots positively influence consumer attitudes and purchase decisions, reflecting the direct effect observed in this study. Overall, the positive relationship supports the view that well-designed mascots create favorable first impressions and emotional responses that enhance purchase intention (Wang et al., 2025; Wu et al., 2025).

The confirmation of Hypothesis 3 indicates that subjective norms have a significant positive effect on purchase intention, consistent with prior research. Studies by Attah et al. (2024), Osei-Frimpong et al. (2022), and Thai and Wang (2020) demonstrate that social pressure and social endorsement of brand mascots shape consumers' subjective evaluations and subsequently strengthen their purchase intentions. These findings reinforce the critical role of social influence in consumer decision-making for brands employing mascots.

The positive and significant influence of perceived behavioral control has been supported in the literature, and this was confirmed by Hypothesis 4. Sathish (2023) argued that consumers' perceptions of a brand mascot's affordability, accessibility, and ease of purchase affect their behavior. The findings of the present study further suggest that the greater a consumer's sense of adequacy and control when interacting with a brand represented by a mascot, the stronger their intention to make a purchase.

Hypothesis 5 confirms that emotional connection has a strong positive influence on purchase intention, fully aligning with the study's theoretical framework and prior empirical evidence. Previous research has consistently emphasized the importance of emotional ties in consumer-brand interactions (Bigné et al., 2023; Ghorbanzadeh and Rahehagh, 2021; Niharika and Yadav, 2023). Nasr-Esfahani et al. (2022) highlighted human-like communication through mascots as a mechanism for strengthening consumer bonds, while Sayin and Gürhan-Canlı (2024) and Shimpi (2021) demonstrated that mascots evoke positive emotions that enhance brand attachment. The strong effect observed in the present study underscores the pivotal role of emotional connection in purchase decisions, particularly for symbolic brand elements such as mascots.

Perceived behavioral control towards mascot was found to also have a significant influence on the purchase intention. It implied the ease or difficulty of purchasing a product associated with a mascot is a critical aspect of consideration. Mascot is therefore found to be easy to make the consumers decision making process through intuitive branding, identification and clear messaging (Yoon, et al. 2016). This emphasizes the importance of inculcating the aspect of accessibility, confidence and affordability when designing the brand mascot. One interesting thing that caught attention during investigation was the characteristics of the mascot. Key elements in a mascot, for example, being attractive, having an identity others recall and being easy for people to relate to influence the decision to make a purchase. Deligoz and Ünal (2021) highlight similar points and show that mascots play a vital role in how consumer behavior is shaped. Additionally, Reddy and Sathish (2024) indicated that a brand's mascot helps to persuade consumers and guide their decisions when buying.

The results indicate that mascots effectively trigger emotional connections with consumers, increasing their propensity to purchase from the brand (Shimpi, 2021). These findings are consistent with Reddy and Sathish (2024), who identify mascots as emotional branding tools that foster brand loyalty and nostalgia. Similarly, Hoolwerff (2014) reported that consumers who form emotional bonds with brand mascots exhibit stronger brand commitment. Together, these insights underscore the importance of designing mascot representations that evoke affection, trust, and empathy among target consumers.

The emotional connection as the mediating effect per Hypothesis 6 for mascot's characteristics, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control on purchase intention seems to be further supported in the literature. This shows that while these factors directly affect purchase intention, their impact is augmented when a person has created a strong emotional bond with the mascot of the brand. The fact of mascots mustering organizational members and concentrating their understanding of an organization into a single cue (Cayla, 2013) and leading consumer journeys (Arunrangsiwed and Pairoa, 2016) states the deeper connection these emotions can fashion.

How individuals perceive what others think about mascot plays a big role in making them want to purchase it. In other words, the way peers, family or leader figures react to the mascot is seen to influence whether consumers decide to buy the brand's product. According to the findings mentioned, Sartore-Baldwin and McCullough (2019) suggest that brands using mascots can influence consumers' intentions to make purchases in social media settings. Additionally, emotional connection was identified as an important and significant factor affecting the relationship. Therefore, mascot may draw in customers by helping them feel supported. According to the study, components of a mascot help form a bond with consumers that positively influence their desire to buy the product.

An important divergence from the anticipated findings was concerned with accepting and rejecting the second hypothesis, which proposed that the attitude towards the mascot would exert a positive and significant influence upon purchase intention. The results of this study found, contrary to our hypothesis and contrary to some literature (Deligoz and Ünal, 2021; Shimpi, 2021), a negative and significant influence ( $\beta = -0.175$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This mark makes this finding rather intriguing to probe deeper. Some studies suggest a suitable mascot can lead to favorable brand attitudes (Oh and Kim, 2025; Reddy et al., 2024), whereas our finding might suggest that in some conditions a negative attitude towards a mascot could directly deter purchase intention without the mediation of emotional connection that could have produced a positive impact on intention. Alternatively, it is possible that a highly distinctive one, perhaps too polarizing for an average perception, could induce strong negative attitudes among some sections of the populace, hence overtaking whatever good intentions accrued toward purchase intention. The finding may throw some nuance into the relationship between attitudes toward mascots and purchase intention, an attitude that may not convert into actual purchase behavior but one which will actively block the purchase behavior once in the negative.

Consequently, emotional attachment was found to moderate the relationships between mascot characteristics, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, but it did not moderate the relationship between attitude and purchase intention. This lack of moderation suggests that attitude toward the mascot may influence purchase intention through a pathway that does not involve emotional connection, or that negative influences may strongly counteract any potential positive mediating effects. These findings highlight a promising area for further exploration in future research.

### **Implications from the results**

From this research, both practical and theoretical recommendations were developed. To start, this research looked at the concept of brand mascot in the food sector together with the TPB. Thus, the findings should be found quite important by organizations and advertisers who use or intend to use brand mascots in their marketing, especially in the food industry. Most studies conducted thus far have investigated the TPB concepts separately. This study adds to the literature by focusing on how the involvement of emotions in relation to mascot can affect the impact of the TPB concepts. Furthermore, it presents a serious challenge to what TPB is generally expected to do. This might be mostly due to some complexities in how mascots influence how customers view food brands. It provides many suggestions for brand managers, advertising experts and marketing experts. Firstly, the study suggests that they create mascots that appeal strongly to people's feelings. This happens because of the strong emotional attachment to buying the product. Consequently, it is important for a mascot to form an emotional bond with its audience. That means composing stories with people who can talk and feel realistic. It is also recommended to use the power of social influence. Such

factors are important due to their effects on what people plan to buy. Hence, marketers might want to try initiatives such as sharing with others or using testimonials and partnering with influencers. Besides, it's a good idea for marketers to use mascots to spark emotional responses in their audiences. Along with using the mascot as a design element, it could form a connection with the target audience.

The validity of the construct "purchase intention" is thereby made more difficult, and considerable importance must now be placed on careful design decisions and consistent portrayals of mascots. Indeed, marketers believe that an appealing mascot should be easy for the average person to identify with, and possess the requirements for the brand personality. According to Min et al. (2019) and Kim (2018), these are also different personalities and appearances, as well as storytelling abilities of the mascot that determine the success. Other forms are subjective norms that can be applied as examples of social influence. To achieve this purpose, it is necessary for companies to build environments capable of producing positive word of mouth and social actions in support of their mascots, employing tools, for example, social media campaigns, influencer marketing, and community development. Massive social buzz around the mascot could significantly elevate purchase intentions.

The perceived control behavior, by positively affecting the ease of interaction and access to a brand, generates more influence toward the brand. In order to ground the mascot into consumers' perception of all brand activities involving the mascot, the mascot must exist at diverse consumer interaction points- i.e., online interactivity, clear communication of messages, and easy access to product-related information linked to the mascot.

A very big lesson to learn is that these connections can be emotional, and these emotions affect consumers' decision when buying. The connection between the mascot and the consumer must be a very close and very deep emotional connection to the point that it suffices for recognition purposes only as it will be tied to special story development with unique relevant background stories, feelings, or experiences that have been brought into being by mascots. Almost all independent variables have emotional connection as mediator: That is, there will be incremental increases resulting from other causes affecting purchase intention.

Lastly, the unexpected inverse relationship whereby a person might form some attitude toward a mascot tends to be an ominous sign needing caution and in-depth scrutiny; to identify and counteract any negative perceptions that might arise; businesses need to appraise customer attitudes on a regular basis in relation to their mascots. Most probably, this should include market research and an analysis of social media conversation to prepare for the adaptation or refinement of mascot strategies if they attract unfavorable reactions. Hence, it could be said that the very perspective with which a mascot can create positive feelings may sometimes, at a clumsy attempt, pull an apathetic audience away from the consumer.

## **Conclusions**

This study demonstrates that brand mascots play a significant strategic role in shaping purchase intentions in the food industry by fostering emotional connections with consumers. Mascot characteristics, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control positively influenced purchase intentions, while emotional connection strongly mediated these effects. However, attitude toward mascots showed an unexpected negative relationship with purchase intention, highlighting the complexity of mascot-driven consumer responses. Overall, the findings emphasize the importance of managing mascots as dynamic branding tools and suggest the need for further research into non-rational drivers of consumer behavior, including authenticity, trust, and mascot fatigue.

## References

- Ahmad M., Khandekar K., Wasankar V., Pancholi D., Singh, S. (2024), A study on the consumer buying behavior as an effect due to brand puffery, *Prayukti – Journal of Management Applications*, 4(1), pp. 72–78, <https://doi.org/10.52814/pjma.2024.4109>
- Ajzen I. (1991), The theory of planned behavior, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), pp. 179-211.
- Ares G., Velázquez A. L., Vidal L., Curutchet M.R., Varela P. (2022), The role of food packaging on children's diet: Insights for the design of comprehensive regulations to encourage healthier eating habits in childhood and beyond, *Food Quality and Preference*, 95, pp. 104366–104366, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodqual.2021.104366>
- Arunrangsiwed P., Pairoa I. (2016), The effect of brand mascots on consumers' purchasing behaviors. *World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology International Journal of Social, Behavioral, Educational, Economic, Business and Industrial Engineering*, 10(5), pp. 1629-1632.
- Atta H., Ahmad N., Tabash M.I., Al Omari M.A., Elsantil Y. (2024), The influence of endorser credibility and brand credibility on consumer purchase intentions: Exploring mediating mechanisms in the local apparel sector, *Cogent Business & Management*, 11(1), 2351119, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2024.2351119>
- Bacon L.D., Bacon L.D. (2001), *Using Amos for Structural Equation Modeling in Market Research*, Chicago, IL, Lynd Bacon & Associates Limited and SPSS Incorporated.
- Bigné E., Ruiz-Mafé C., Badenes-Rocha A. (2023), The influence of negative emotions on brand trust and intention to share cause-related posts: A neuroscientific study. *Journal of Business Research*, 157, 113628, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.113628>
- Bisht S. (2021). Topical advertisements & brand mascot - A strategic combination for brand positioning: Study of amul, *Turkish Journal of Computer and Mathematics Education*, 12(7), pp. 732–737, <https://doi.org/10.17762/turcomat.v12i7.2645>
- Bohn A., Wittenzellner H. (2024), Efficiency of the advertising use of cartoon mascots in the luxury food industry, *Economy & Business Journal*, 18(1), pp. 205–213, <https://ideas.repec.org/a/isp/journal/v18y2024i1p205-213.html>
- Bortne Ø., Bjørnstad J., Arnestad M.N., Tjora T., Brønnick K. K. (2025), Self-efficacy or perceived behavioral control: Which influences bank-switching intention? *Journal of Marketing Analytics*, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41270-025-00408-4>
- Brown S.C., Greene J.A. (2006), The wisdom development scale: translating the conceptual to the concrete, *Journal of College Student Development*, 47(1), pp. 1- 19.
- Cayla J. (2013), Brand mascots as organisational totems, *Journal of Marketing Management*, 29(1–2), pp. 86–104, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2012.759991>
- Cheng E.W. (2019), Choosing between the theory of planned behavior (TPB) and the technology acceptance model (TAM), *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 67, pp. 21-37, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-018-9598-6>
- Cheung G.W., Cooper-Thomas H.D., Lau R.S., Wang L.C. (2024), Reporting reliability, convergent and discriminant validity with structural equation modeling: A review and best-practice recommendations, *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 41(2), 745-783, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10490-023-09871-y>
- Cintya H.A.B. (2024), Mascot and brand sustainability in pandemic era: Systematic literature review, In: M.N. Tunio, A. Sánchez, Y.M.L. Hatem, A.M. Zakaria (Eds.), *Sustainability in Creative Industries*, Springer, Cham, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-48453-7\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-48453-7_5)
- Dangaiso P. (2023), Extending the theory of planned behavior to predict organic food adoption behavior and perceived consumer longevity in subsistence markets: A post-peak COVID-19 perspective, *Cogent Psychology*, 10(1), 2258677, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311908.2023.2258677>

- Deligoz K., Ünal S. (2021), The effect of anthropomorphic mascot on the purchasing intention of consumers: An experimental study, *Sosyoekonomi*, 29(50), 229-254.
- Dodds W.B., Monroe K.B., Grewal D. (1991), Effects of price, brand, and store information on buyers' product evaluations, *Journal of Marketing Research*, 28(3), pp. 307-319, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224379102800305>
- Ganapathy V., Gupta C., Arora R. (2024), The enduring power of a brand mascot: The Utterly Butterly Amul Girl, *Journal of Informatics Education and Research*, 4(3), pp. 63-80.
- Ghorbanzadeh D., Rahehagh A. (2021), Emotional brand attachment and brand love: The emotional bridges in the process of transition from satisfaction to loyalty, *Rajagiri Management Journal*, 15(1), pp. 16-38, <https://doi.org/10.1108/RAMJ-05-2020-0024>
- Gupta A., Kumar J., Tewary T., Virk N.K. (2021). Influence of cartoon characters on generation alpha in purchase decisions, *Young Consumers: Insight and Ideas for Responsible Marketers*, 23(2), pp. 282-303, <https://doi.org/10.1108/YC-06-2021-1342>
- Hoolwerff D. (2014), Does your mascot match your brand's personality? An empirical study on how visual characteristics of a brand mascot can function as a tool for transmitting an archetypical brand personality, Master's thesis, University of Twente.
- Izquierdo-Yusta A., Martínez-Ruiz, M.P., Pérez-Villarreal, H.H. (2021), Studying the impact of food values, subjective norm and brand love on behavioral loyalty, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 65, 102885, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102885>
- Keller K.L., Kuilema L.G., Lee N., Yoon J., Mascaro B., Combes A.L., Deutsch B., Sorte K., Halford J.C.G. (2012), The impact of food branding on children's eating behavior and obesity, *Physiology & Behavior*, 106(3), pp. 379-386, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.physbeh.2012.03.011>
- Kim M. (2018), The effect of familiarity and brand attitude of mobile character products on consumers' purchasing behavior - focusing on kakao friends characters, *Asia-Pacific Journal of Convergent Research Interchange*, 4(4), pp. 1-10, <https://doi.org/10.14257/APJCRI.2018.12.01>
- Kraak V.I., Story M. (2014), Influence of food companies' brand mascots and entertainment companies' cartoon media characters on children's diet and health: A systematic review and research needs, *Obesity Reviews*, 16(2), pp. 107-126, <https://doi.org/10.1111/obr.12237>
- La Barbera F., Ajzen I. (2021), Moderating role of perceived behavioral control in the theory of planned behavior: A preregistered study, *Journal of Theoretical Social Psychology*, 5(1), pp. 35-45, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jts5.83>
- Liu S. (2025), Exploring purchase intention in online influencer marketing campaigns through an integrated model, *SAGE Open*, 15(3), pp. 1-13, <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440251355184>
- Malik G., Gupta A. (2014), Impact of celebrity endorsements and brand mascots on consumer buying behavior, *Journal of Global Marketing*, 27(2), pp. 128-143, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08911762.2013.864374>
- Min J., Chang H. J., Jai T.M. C., Ziegler M. (2019), The effects of celebrity-brand congruence and publicity on consumer attitudes and buying behavior, *Fashion and Textiles*, 6(1), pp. 1-19, <https://doi.org/10.1186/S40691-018-0159-8>
- Nasr-Esfahani D., Soltan Hoseini M., Rahbari S., Shams H. (2022), Presenting the model of the impact of brand mascot on brand awareness, brand recall, and intention to purchase among sporting goods consumers, *Sport Management Journal*, 14(1), pp. 307-285, <https://doi.org/10.22059/jsm.2021.309727.2571>
- Niharika K., Yadav R. (2023), Influence of emotional branding on consumers' purchase intention: A study on scale development and mediating role of celebrity endorsement, *FIIB Business Review*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/23197145231177578>

- Oh J., Kim D. (2025), The impact of animated mascot displays on consumer evaluations in e-commerce, *Administrative Sciences*, 15(6), 203, <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci15060203>
- Osei-Frimpong K., McLean G., Islam N., Otoo B.A. (2022), What drives me there? The interplay of socio-psychological gratification and consumer values in social media brand engagement, *Journal of Business Research*, 146, pp. 288–307, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.03.057>
- Palladino A., Lee M., Zhou X. (2022), An analysis of Olympic mascot design toward attitude and purchase intention, *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 15(3), pp. 190–196, <https://doi.org/10.1123/ijsc.2022-0052>
- Reddy B.V.V., Sathish A.S. (2024), Creating connections through characters: A study of brand mascots and their influence on consumer purchase intentions, *Advances in Decision Sciences*, 27(4), pp. 72-89, <https://doi.org/10.47654/v27y2024i4p72-89>
- Reddy B.V.V., Hemanth Y., Ganesha K.S., Jayashree K., Amruta N., Saravanan R. (2024), The role of mascots in branding and consumer engagement: Insights from Indian advertising, *Multidisciplinary Reviews*, 8(5), 2025151, <https://doi.org/10.31893/multirev.2025151>
- Reddy B.V.V., Sathish A. S. (2022), Delineation on celebrity endorsement and brand mascot towards attitudes, beliefs, purchase intention and behaviour of the consumers, *International Journal of Academic and Practical Research*, 1(2), pp. 77 – 89, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4330745>
- Sarkar A., Sarkar J. G., Bhatt G. (2019), Store love in single brand retailing: The roles of relevant moderators, *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 37(2), pp. 168–181, <https://doi.org/10.1108/MIP-05-2018-0148>
- Sartore-Baldwin M., McCullough B. (2019), Examining sport fans and the endangered species who represent their affiliated team mascots, *Society & Animals*, 29(3), 268-286, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685306-12341605>
- Sathish A.S. (2023), Creating connections through characters: A study of brand mascots and their influence on consumer purchase intentions, *Advances in Decision Sciences*, 27(4), pp. 72-89, <https://doi.org/10.47654/v27y2024i4p72-89>
- Sayin E., Gürhan-Canlı Z. (2024), The influence of self-brand connection on consumer reactions to symbolic incongruency and perceived betrayal, *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 48(2), e13011, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.13011>
- Septianto F., Paramita W. (2021), Cute brand logo enhances favorable brand attitude: The moderating role of hope, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 63, 102734, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102734>
- Shimpi S.S. (2021), Impact of brand mascot in advertising on brand image among Indian consumers, *International Journal of Applied Management Science*, 13(4), pp. 322-338.
- Spears N., Singh S.N. (2004), Measuring attitude toward the brand and purchase intention, *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, 26(2), pp. 53–66, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10641734.2004.10505164>
- Tanjaya T. (2025), The roles of brand mascot: Exploring the mediating effects of brand awareness and brand image on purchasing decisions in the context of Nhong Mhee Noey mascot and Butter Bear brand, *Proceedings of the RSU International Research Conference*.
- Taylor S., Todd P. (1995), Decomposition and crossover effects in the theory of planned behavior: A study of consumer adoption intentions, *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 12, pp. 137–155, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0167-8116\(94\)00019-K](https://doi.org/10.1016/0167-8116(94)00019-K)
- Thai T.D.H., Wang T. (2020), Investigating the effect of social endorsement on customer brand relationships by using statistical analysis and fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA), *Computers in Human Behavior*, 113, 106499, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2020.106499>

- Vermeir I., Roose G. (2020), Visual design cues impacting food choice: A review and future research agenda, *Foods*, 9(10), pp. 1495–1495, <https://doi.org/10.3390/foods9101495>
- Wang J., Yao W., Su S., Zhang J., Wang L. (2025), Research on the aesthetic sensitivity evaluation of tourism mascots based on semantic differential method, *PLoS ONE*, 20(2), e0318715, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0318715>
- Wattanak S., Kheokao J., Pichetphan A. (2021), An analysis of the communication of provincial identities in mascots to promote tourism in Thailand, *Journal Komunikasi Pembangunan*, 19(1), pp. 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.46937/19202133399>
- Wu X., Lai I. K. W., Deng Q. (2025), How the characteristics of destination mascots build the affective destination image: The mediating role of emotional value and destination intimacy, *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/13567667251331631>
- Yadav P., Bisoyi D., Chakrabati D. (2015), Anthropomorphic brand mascot serve as the vehicle: To quickly remind customers who you are and what you stand for in Indian Cultural context, *International Scientific Research and Experimental Development*, 3(10), pp. 1814–1818.
- Yoon Y., Sato S., Goldsmith A., Tsuji Y. (2016), Sport team mascots as communication tools: Determinants of mascot Twitter followers, *Global Sport Business Journal*, 4(3), pp. 11–23.

---

**Cite:**

UFJ Style

Khalid B. (2025), Mascot effect: Analysing brand character influence on purchase intentions in Thailand's food market, *Ukrainian Food Journal*, 14(4), pp. 775–791, <https://doi.org/10.24263/2304-974X-2025-14-4-13>

APA Style

Khalid, B. (2025). Mascot effect: Analysing brand character influence on purchase intentions in Thailand's food market. *Ukrainian Food Journal*, 14(4), 775–791. <https://doi.org/10.24263/2304-974X-2025-14-4-13>

---