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

Tam Tanjaya

Digital Marketing, School of Business Administration, Bangkok University, Bangkok, Thailand
Corresponding author, E-mail: tam.t@bu.ac.th

Abstract

This research explores how brand mascots influence consumer purchase decisions by investigating the mediating roles of brand awareness and brand image in the relationship between brand mascots and purchase decisions, specifically focusing on the cases of Nhong Mhee Noei and Butterbear brand. This study adopts a quantitative research approach with a survey design, collecting data through questionnaires from 233 respondents. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, regression, and mediation analyses. The research findings indicate that the Butter Bear mascot significantly enhances brand awareness and image, and significantly influences purchasing decisions. Meanwhile, brand awareness has an indirect effect on the brand mascot and purchasing decisions, functioning as a partial mediation. This means that even when brand awareness is considered, the brand mascot remains directly influential in purchasing decisions. Conversely, the brand image serves as a full mediation, indicating that once the brand image is taken into account, the direct influence of the brand mascot on purchasing decisions diminishes to the point of being statistically insignificant. Thus, brand image can fully explain the influence on purchasing decisions. This study contributes to a better understanding of the strategic role of brand mascots in the current market. It provides guidance for business decisions regarding investments in brand mascots and related marketing activities. Future research should focus on comparative studies of the impact of brand mascots across different industries and examine the effects of brand mascots on repeat buying behavior over the long term.

Keywords: Brand Mascot, Brand Awareness, Brand Image, Purchase Decision

1. Introduction

In recent years, brand mascots have emerged as powerful tools for businesses to connect with consumers on an emotional level. A well-designed mascot can significantly enhance a brand's image, increase brand awareness, and ultimately influence purchase decisions. Butterbear, a charming bear-shaped mascot, has become a beloved figure in Thailand. Its rise to fame is a testament to the power of the brand mascot. By embodying the bakery's brand values of sweetness, warmth, and nostalgia, Butterbear has successfully connected with consumers on an emotional level (Rapeepan, 2024). According to Thongsuk (2024), Butterbear began as a charming bakery in Bangkok during the COVID-19 pandemic. The bakery's idea stemmed from a longing for joy and comfort reminiscent of childhood trips to Disneyland. The founders aimed to create the perfect cookie and experimented until they crafted the now-famous Butterbear cookie.

A company that effectively captures and dominates its market is likely to achieve a competitive advantage. To differentiate itself, each company establishes a brand identity comprising elements such as a name, term, character, symbol, design, or a combination of these components intended to distinguish its products or services from those of competitors. A brand is more than just a label; it plays a critical role in management. While not an end goal, a brand serves as a tool for assessing an organization's overall performance. It adds value by shaping customer perceptions and generating revenue for the company (Kotler & Keller, 2009). According to Dewi & Siagian (2020), the brand image consists of tangible and intangible elements, such as ideas, beliefs, values, interests, and characteristics that make it unique. It must

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reflect the internal and external attributes that influence customers. A brand also embodies the company's commitment to delivering benefits, exclusive offerings, and services. The more firmly a brand's image is established in the minds of customers, the greater their trust and loyalty, which ultimately enhances the company's profitability (Stocchi & Fuller, 2017).

Brand awareness refers to a consumer's ability to identify and recall a brand across different contexts. It plays a significant role in shaping purchase decisions, as consumers are more inclined to select products with which they are familiar (Keller, 2013). Brand awareness helps customers identify a product's brand and guides their purchasing choices (Calvo-Porral, 2017). Products with high brand awareness often enjoy greater market share and receive more favorable quality evaluations. Additionally, brand awareness can be enhanced through advertising, particularly by using endorsers as promotional tools. Effective advertisements must be highly appealing to impact customers' purchase decisions (Kotler & Keller, 2009). The use of brand mascots or celebrity endorsers further boosts the appeal of advertisements. A mascot with a distinct character can draw customers' attention and generate more interest compared to ads without such figures. Therefore, companies should carefully design their brand mascots to effectively represent their product's image and tell a compelling story (Rapeepan, 2024).

Celebrity endorsers, while often effective in drawing attention and creating a connection with consumers, come with the risk of human error. This could include personal controversies, scandals, or behavior that conflicts with the brand's image, which can negatively impact the company's reputation. Since celebrities are real people, their actions and choices in their personal lives may not always align with the values or image of the brand they endorse. This unpredictability makes them a potential liability (Erdogan,1999). In contrast, brand mascots are entirely controlled by the company and free from human error issues. They are fictional or animated characters created to consistently represent the brand's values and message without the risk of unpredictable behavior. A mascot is a stable and reliable promotional tool, as it can be designed to perfectly embody the desired traits of the brand and avoid negative associations that might arise with human endorsers. This makes mascots a safer, long-term brand-building strategy, as they offer continuity and reliability (Brown & Stayman, 1992). However, there is no research about the Nhong Mhee Noey and Butterbear brands in terms of brand awareness and brand image.

A purchase decision involves an integration process where consumers combine their knowledge to evaluate multiple behavioral alternatives and select one. In the absence of prior experience with a product, consumers tend to depend on established brands. This motivates companies to strengthen their brand positioning by cultivating a robust brand image and a favorable brand mascot in the perceptions of consumers (Kotler & Keller, 2016). A strong brand image enables consumers to recognize a product, assess its quality, reduce the perceived risk of the purchase, and derive satisfaction from the product's unique features and differentiation (Woo, 2019).

2. Research objective

This research aims to explore how brand mascots influence consumer purchase decisions by investigating the mediating roles of brand awareness and brand image in the relationship between brand mascots and purchase decisions, specifically focusing on the cases of Nhong Mhee Noei and Butterbear brand.

3. Literature Review
3.1 Brand Mascot

Mascots are vital promotional tools that represent specific personality traits. They help strengthen brand awareness by fostering a close connection with consumers, making the brand's products more likely to be chosen during the buying process (Çakir, Çakir, and Solak, 2018). Marketing managers need to carefully consider the use of mascots, as consumers don't just purchase a product for its physical attributes but also for the entertainment, experience, and identity it offers (Crilly et al., 2004).

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Research on mascots shows they provide significant benefits for helping consumers recognize and remember the products and brands they represent (Callcott and Lee, 1994). Mascot and cartoon-based advertisements aim to boost brand awareness by promoting products. Like all ads, caricature ads are designed with a slogan or unique positioning in consumers' minds, giving the brand its own character and identity (Çakir, Çakir, and Solak, 2018). These animated characters, functioning as brand symbols and icons, are employed to symbolically represent the brand's personality or key benefits (Garretson and Burton, 2005). The impact of mascots on brand awareness can be attributed to three key factors. Firstly, mascots that are unique, appealing, and fun to be more memorable to consumers. Second, mascots help to build a strong emotional connection with consumers. Lastly, they make advertising campaigns more enjoyable and shareable through social media and other mass media platforms (Wilkinson and Patterson, 2014).

3.2 Brand Image

Brand image refers to the consumer's perception of a brand, which is formed through associations in their cognitive framework (Kotler & Keller, 2009). It represents a network of associations that arise in consumers' minds when they contemplate a particular brand. It encompasses the thoughts and emotions triggered by the brand and the knowledge and experiences consumers have acquired about it (Lee & Lee, 2018). Also known as schematic brand memory, brand image encompasses how the target audience perceives the product's attributes, benefits, usage contexts, and market-related characteristics. It reflects a lasting impression in the consumer's mind, built from their memories and experiences with the brand (Prayag, 2010). As consumers gain more experience with a brand or as a brand increases its advertising presence, the associations and impressions related to that brand grow stronger. A well-established brand can maintain a competitive edge if it has various strong associations supporting it. The more relevant associations are connected to the brand, the stronger the brand image becomes. Ultimately, brand image is the collection of brand associations that form in the consumer's mind (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2018).

3.3 Brand Awareness

Brand awareness refers to a customer's ability to recognize and recall a brand associated with a specific product (Kotler & Keller, 2009). It reflects the consumer's capacity to recognize the brand across different contexts, as evidenced by brand recognition or recall. Brand awareness is the likelihood that a brand comes to mind when consumers think about a particular product and how easily the brand name is remembered (Shimp, 2010). To measure brand awareness, indicators include how easily consumers can recognize and remember a brand, their awareness of its existence, and how frequently they encounter the brand's advertisements in the media (Sadrabadi, Saraji, and Monshizadeh, 2018).

3.4 Purchase Decision

A purchase decision is the process through which a consumer identifies a problem, seeks information about products or specific brands, and evaluates how well each option can address their needs, ultimately leading to a decision to buy. This process involves several steps consumers go through before purchasing (Kotler & Keller, 2009). It involves selecting between two or more purchasing alternatives, meaning a decision is made after considering multiple choices. A purchase decision is essentially a problem-solving approach where consumers engage in activities to acquire goods or services that fulfill their needs and wants. This process involves recognizing needs and desires, gathering information, assessing alternatives, making the purchase decision, and exhibiting post-purchase behavior (Woo, 2019). The purchase decision encompasses these stages, starting with problem recognition, gathering product information, assessing how well each alternative meets the consumer's needs, and culminating in the final purchase choice (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019: Solomon, 2020).

3.5 The Relationship Between Research Concept

Using a brand mascot in advertisements can encourage consumers to engage with the ad more favorably compared to those featuring an unfamiliar figure. Additionally, brand awareness is reflected in consumers' ability to recognize and recall a brand in various situations (Pairoa & Arunrangsiwed, 2016). This research assumes that the use of a brand mascot has a significant impact on enhancing Butterbear's brand awareness on social media. Similarly, brand mascots have been shown to influence brand awareness for Butterbear in Thailand positively.

H1: The brand mascot significantly influences brand awareness.

The effectiveness of a brand mascot is evaluated based on how well the mascot's traits and personality align with the brand it represents in advertisements. The core idea of using a brand mascot is to ensure congruity between the mascot's character and the brand identity (Greenwood, 2013). Brand image, which is a collection of associations formed in the consumer's mind, improves when there is harmony between the brand and the mascot's character. The mascot must also be a good fit for the product, as it represents the brand image (Kotler & Keller, 2009). This study posits that the use of a brand mascot significantly enhances the brand image of the Butterbear brand in Thailand.

H2: The brand mascot significantly influences brand image.

Companies use brand mascots to influence consumers. A brand mascot is carefully designed to establish a connection with the public and enhance product sales (Greenwood, 2013). This demonstrates the vital role of brand mascots in driving sales. This research posits that the brand mascot significantly affects purchase decisions for the Butterbear brand in Thailand.

H3: The brand mascot significantly influences purchase decision

Brand awareness refers to how well a brand comes to mind when a consumer thinks about a particular product (Kotler & Keller, 2009). Consumers who place a brand at the "top of mind" level are more likely to choose that brand over others. Products with strong brand awareness tend to capture a larger market share, which in turn influences purchase decisions (Wang & Hariandja, 2016).

H4: Brand awareness positively influences purchase decisions.

A brand signifies the company's commitment to offering consumers benefits, privileges, and services. The more robust the brand image in consumers' perceptions, the higher their confidence and loyalty, consequently impacting their purchasing decisions. (Kotler & Keller, 2009).

H5: Brand image positively influences purchase decisions.

This research examines the roles of brand image and brand awareness as mediators in the relationship between brand mascots and consumer purchase decisions. Specifically, it will investigate how effective storytelling strategies associated with the Nhong Mhee Noei (Butterbear) mascot influence brand awareness and brand image and how these factors subsequently impact consumer choices.

H6: The brand mascot positively influences purchase decisions through brand awareness.

H7: The brand mascot positively influences purchase decisions through brand image.

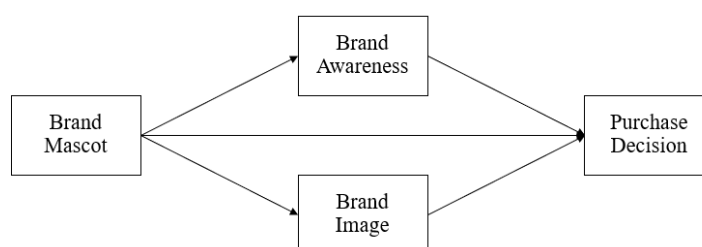This leads to the development of the research framework, as shown in Figure 1

Figure 1 Conceptual framework

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4. Research Methodologies

4.1 Research Design

This research is quantitative research using survey research. The data was collected from a population sample using an online questionnaire as a data collection tool. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics to answer the research questions and hypotheses. IBM SPSS v.29.0.2.0 was used to conduct multiple regression analysis and moderation analysis, employing the Hayes Process Macro technique in this study (Hayes, 2018).

4.2 Population and Sample Selection

The researcher used the G*Power program to calculate the sample size by selecting "Linear multiple regression: Fixed model, R^2 deviation from zero" and setting the effect size at 0.15, error probability at 0.05, power (1-β error probability) at 0.95, and number of predictors at 3. Due to the lack of prior parameter estimates, a medium effect size (0.15) was chosen as a standard measure, and a confidence level of 0.95 was specified, accepting a maximum error tolerance of 0.05. This calculation resulted in a required sample size of 119 participants. For this study, participants were selected through convenience sampling. The researcher collected 233 complete responses from individuals with diverse backgrounds, including students, corporate employees, government officials, business owners, and independent professionals familiar with Nhong Mhee Noey and Butterbear. The researcher believes this diverse sample is representative, encompassing individuals from various backgrounds and professions.

4.3 Data Collection

The researcher employed an online questionnaire as the data collection instrument. This questionnaire consisted of closed-ended items with predefined response options for participants to select from. It was designed based on a review of relevant literature and previous studies. The reliability and validity of the measurements were evaluated prior to conducting the regression analysis. The questionnaire was organized into five sections: **Section 1:** General information about the respondents. **Section 2:** Questionnaire on the role of brand mascot. **Section 3:** Questionnaire on brand awareness. **Section 4:** Questionnaire on brand image. **Section 5:** Questionnaire on purchase decision.

4.4 Research Analysis

Once the data is collected accurately, the researcher will code the questionnaires according to statistical research methods, process the data using SPSS, and then perform statistical analysis to interpret the results. Descriptive statistics are employed to analyze demographic characteristics and describe the general features of the sample group, using measures such as percentages, arithmetic mean, and standard deviation. Additionally, inferential statistics are applied, including Pearson's Correlation Coefficient, to measure the relationship between variables such as Brand Mascot, Brand Awareness, and Brand Image, and Multiple Regression Analysis to examine the relationship between variables related to Purchase Decisions and test the research hypothesis.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Results

5.1.1 Results of Personal Data Analysis of the Respondents

The demographic analysis reveals a young, predominantly female (70.8%, n=165), student-oriented sample with relatively low-income levels (61.4%, n=143). These characteristics suggest that Butterbear's target market might be limited to a younger audience with modest purchasing power, and their engagement with the brand appears to be low. Most respondents do not currently purchase Butterbear products (85.8%, n=200), but a sizable portion remains open to future purchases (72.8%, n=170). The minimal purchasing frequency and low expenditure on Butterbear products suggest potential opportunities for the brand to increase awareness, improve product appeal, or adjust pricing strategies to better suit this

demographic. Given the strong student presence in the sample, marketing strategies that focus on affordability, convenience, and alignment with student lifestyles may resonate better with this group.

5.1.2 Results of Opinion Levels Regarding Brand Mascot, Brand Awareness, Brand Image and Purchase Decision

The analysis reveals a generally positive perception of Butterbear's brand attributes, highlighting strengths in fostering connections through its Brand Mascot, which effectively enhances customer loyalty and engagement despite some concerns about believability. High Brand Awareness, driven by strong recall and social media visibility, indicates successful digital marketing efforts, though the brand's identity as a bakery could be reinforced. Butterbear's Brand Image is persuasive and credible, with distinctive packaging, but affordability and product variety require improvement to appeal to more price-sensitive consumers. The Purchase Decision analysis underscores the role of engaging social media content in driving sales and positive post-purchase feelings noting opportunities to build greater trust and solidify competitive advantages through enhanced reliability and quality.

5.1.3 Analysis of Correlation Coefficients Between Factors: Brand Mascot, Brand Awareness, Brand Image, and Purchase Decisions

Initially, the study will analyze the relationships between the variables used, including Brand Mascot (X), Brand Awareness (M_1), Brand Image (M_2), and Purchase Decisions (Y). This will be assessed based on correlation coefficient criteria (Best, 1977), where r represents the correlation coefficient value. The correlation presents the relationships between Brand Mascot (X), Brand Awareness (M1), Brand Image (M2), and Purchase Decisions (Y) based on data from 233 participants. The Pearson correlation coefficients show significant positive correlations at the 0.01 level for all pairs. Brand Mascot (X) has a moderate positive correlation with Brand Awareness (M1) at 0.654 and Brand Image (M2) at 0.658, both with p-values less than 0.001. Brand Mascot (X) also correlates moderately with Purchase Decisions (Y) at 0.551, suggesting a notable link between mascots and consumer purchasing behavior. Brand Awareness (M1) and Brand Image (M2) are positively correlated with each other (0.635) and with Purchase Decisions (Y) at 0.555 and 0.797, respectively, indicating that these factors are strongly associated with purchase intentions. Overall, it was found that the correlation coefficients between the variables range from 0.551 to 0.797, indicating a moderate level of correlation between the variables.

5.1.4 Multiple Regression Analysis and Analysis of Mediating Variable Effects using Hayes Process Macro

The researcher analyzed the results using a questionnaire and conducting a questionnaire and statistical analysis through IBM SPSS software. The analysis involved descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation (S.D.), and inferential statistics. The inferential statistics included Pearson's correlation coefficient, multiple regression analysis, and moderation analysis using the Hayes Process Macro.

Table 1 Displays the regression analysis results to test the mediating role of Brand Awareness between Brand Mascot (X) and Purchase Decisions (Y).

Equation 1: X → Y (Purchase decisions)					
Variable	**(X)**	**Coeff**	**se**	**t**	**p**
Brand Mascot	(c)	0.7107	0.0708	10.0427	0.000*
Equation 2: X → M (Brand Awareness)					
Variable	**(X)**	**Coeff**	**se**	**t**	**p**
Brand Mascot	(a)	0.7660	0.0583	13.1311	0.000*
Equation 3: X, M → Y (Purchase decisions)					
Variable	**(X)**	**Coeff**	**se**	**t**	**p**
Brand Mascot	(c')	0.4249	0.0892	4.7640	0.000*

Brand Awareness	(b)	0.3732	0.0761	4.9028	0.000*

N = 233, P<0.01*

From Table 1, the analysis shows Brand Awareness as a mediating variable between Brand Mascot and Purchase Decisions. It appears that Brand Mascot has a statistically significant direct influence on Awareness, path coefficient (a), with a regression coefficient of 0.7660 (P < .01). When considering the influence of Brand Awareness on Purchase Decisions, it is also statistically significant, path coefficient (b), with a regression coefficient of 0.3732 (P < .01). To estimate the indirect effect, a bootstrap method was applied, revealing that the 95% confidence interval for the estimated effect ranges from 0.1528 to 0.4294, which does not include zero. Therefore, the analysis concludes that Brand Awareness is a mediating variable between Brand Mascot and Purchase Decisions. Regarding the direct effect of Brand Mascot on Purchase Intention, path coefficient (c'), the results indicate that this effect is statistically significant as well (regression coefficient of 0.4249, P < .01). Thus, it can be concluded that Brand Awareness serves as a partial mediator in the influence of Brand Mascot on Purchase Intention. This means that the direct influence of Brand Mascot on Purchase Decisions is reduced but it remains statistically significant after including Brand Awareness.

Table 2 Displays the regression analysis results to test the mediating role of Brand Image between Brand Mascot (X) and Purchase Decisions (Y).

Equation 1: X → Y (Purchase decisions)					
Variable	**(X)**	**Coeff**	**se**	**t**	**p**
Brand Mascot	(c)	0.7107	0.0708	10.0427	0.000*
Equation 2: X → M (Brand Image)					
Variable	**(X)**	**Coeff**	**se**	**t**	**p**
Brand Mascot	(a)	0.6963	0.0524	13.2975	0.000*
Equation 3: X, M → Y (Purchase decisions)					
Variable	**(X)**	**Coeff**	**se**	**t**	**p**
Brand Mascot	(c')	0.0608	0.0682	0.8917	0.3735
Brand Image	(b)	0.9334	0.0644	14.4835	0.000*

N = 233, P<0.01*

From Table 2, the analysis shows Brand Image as a mediating variable between Brand Mascot and Purchase Decisions. It appears that Brand Mascot has a statistically significant direct influence on Brand Image, path coefficient (a), with a regression coefficient of 0.6963 (P < .01). When considering the influence of Brand Image on Purchase Decisions, it is also statistically significant, path coefficient (b), with a regression coefficient of 0.9334 (P < .01). To estimate the indirect effect, a bootstrap method was applied, revealing that the 95% confidence interval for the estimated effect ranges from 0.5257 to 0.7919, which does not include zero. Therefore, the analysis concludes that Brand Image acts as a mediating variable between Brand Mascot and Purchase Decisions. Regarding the direct effect of Brand Mascot on Purchase Intention, path coefficient (c'), the results indicate that this effect is not statistically significant (regression coefficient of 0.0608, P = .3735). Thus, it can be concluded that Brand Image serves as a full mediator in the influence of Brand Mascot on Purchase Decisions. This means that the presence of Brand Image completely nullifies the direct influence of Brand Mascot on Purchase Decisions to the point of becoming statistically insignificant after including Brand Image.

Table 3 Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	**Coeff**	**S.E.**	**t**	**P-value**	**Result**

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H1: Brand Mascot → Brand Awareness	0.7660	0.0583	13.1311	0.000*	Accept
H2: Brand Mascot → Brand Image	0.6963	0.0524	13.2975	0.000*	Accept
H3: Brand Mascot → Purchase Decision	0.7107	0.0708	10.0427	0.000*	Accept
H4: Brand Awareness → Purchase Decisions	0.3732	0.0761	4.9028	0.000*	Accept
H5: Brand Image → Purchase Decisions	0.9334	0.0644	14.4835	0.000*	Accept
H6: Brand Mascot → Brand Awareness → Purchase Decisions					Accept
H7: Brand Mascot → Brand Image → Purchase Decisions					Reject

From Table 3, the hypothesis testing results indicate that the Brand Mascot has a significant effect on brand awareness, brand image, and purchase decisions, leading to the acceptance of research hypotheses 1, 2, and 3. Additionally, brand awareness and brand image also positively influence purchase decisions, supporting the acceptance of research hypotheses 4 and 5. Furthermore, this study conducted tests on mediating variables, specifically examining the positive effect of brand mascots on purchase decisions via brand awareness and brand image.

The mediation hypothesis test results are provided as follows. The results of the mediation hypothesis testing show that the brand mascot has a positive influence on purchase decisions through the mediating variable of brand awareness. Since brand awareness serves as a partial mediator, Hypothesis 6 is supported. In contrast, the Brand Mascot does not positively influence purchase decisions through the mediating variable of brand image, as brand image acts as a full mediator, leading to the rejection of Hypothesis 7.

5.2 Discussion

5.2.1 The effect of Brand Mascot, Brand Awareness, Brand Image, on Purchase Decision
According to the direct effect of brand mascot on brand awareness is accepted in this research, which correspond to Pairoa & Arunrangsiwed (2016) that using a brand mascot in advertisements can encourage consumers to engage with the ad more favorably compared to those featuring an unfamiliar figure. Therefore, brand awareness is reflected in consumers' ability to recognize and recall a brand in various situations. Dewi & Siagian (2020) found the same effect that brand ambassador has affects brand awareness. This research also found that the use of a brand mascot has a significant impact on enhancing Butterbear's brand awareness on social media. It can be concluded that brand mascots have been shown to influence brand awareness for Butterbear in Thailand positively. Therefore, H1 is accepted

According to Kotler & Keller (2009) said, that Brand image, which is a collection of associations formed in the consumer's mind, improves when there is harmony between the brand and the mascot's character. The mascot must also be a good fit for the product, as it represents the brand image. The work of Greenwood (2013) also explained that the effectiveness of a brand mascot is evaluated based on how well the mascot's traits and personality align with the brand it represents in advertisements. The core idea of using a brand mascot is to ensure congruity between the mascot's character and the brand identity. Therefore, the research of Greenwood (2013) and Dewi & Siagian (2020) found that using a brand mascot significantly impacts improving the brand image. This research also found the same effect that a brand mascot has a significant impact on improving the brand image of Butterbear brand in Thailand. Therefore, H2 is accepted.

Greenwood (2013) explained that companies' use of brand mascots aims to influence consumers. A brand mascot should be carefully designed to establish a connection with the public and enhance product sales. The purchase decision process involves selecting between two or more purchasing alternatives, meaning a decision is made after considering multiple choices. A purchase decision is essentially a problem-solving approach where consumers engage in activities to buy goods or services to satisfy their needs and desires. This process includes recognizing needs and desires, searching for information, evaluating alternatives, making the purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior (Woo, 2019). This

research found that brand mascot significantly impacts purchase decisions, which is the same as the work of Dewi & SIagian (2020), for Butterbear in Thailand. Therefore, H3 is accepted.

Many research papers found that brand awareness & brand image has a direct effect on purchase decisions, such as Kotler & Keller (2009), Wang & Hariandja (2016), and Switala et al. (2018). This research also found that brand awareness positively influences purchase decisions, and brand image positively influences purchase decisions. Therefore, H4 and H5 are accepted.

5.2.2 The Mediation Effect of Brand Awareness and Brand Image on Purchase Decision

The H6 of this research shows the analysis of Brand Awareness as a mediating variable between Brand Mascot and Purchase Decisions. Brand Mascot appears to have a statistically significant direct influence on Awareness and purchase decisions. Moreover, the analysis of Brand Awareness as a mediating variable between Brand Mascot and Purchase Decisions shows that Brand Awareness serves as a partial mediator in the influence of Brand Mascot on Purchase Intention. This means that the direct influence of Brand Mascot on Purchase Decisions is reduced but remains statistically significant after including Brand Awareness. It appears that there has been little to no research examining brand awareness as a mediator. Thus, the findings from this research are relatively novel.

The H7 of this research shows the analysis of Brand Image as a mediating variable between Brand Mascot and Purchase Decisions. Brand Mascot appears to have a statistically significant direct influence on Brand Image and purchase decision. Moreover, the analysis Brand Image as a mediating variable between Brand Mascot and Purchase Decisions shows that Brand Image serves as a full mediator in the influence of Brand Mascot on Purchase Decisions. This means that the presence of Brand Image completely nullifies the direct influence of Brand Mascot on Purchase Decisions to the point of becoming statistically insignificant after including Brand Image. It appears that there has been little to no research examining brand awareness as a mediator. Thus, the findings from this research are relatively novel.

This research on Butterbear's brand mascot highlights its role in shaping consumer behavior, focusing on the emotional connection it fosters through attributes like charm, relatability, and relationship-building, which contribute to brand loyalty. It demonstrates that a well-designed mascot can significantly boost brand awareness and positively influence the brand image, with traits that enhance consumer recall being crucial to success. The study also offers valuable insights for refining Butterbear's branding, specifically within the bakery sector, providing guidance for targeted marketing strategies aimed at improving brand positioning and recognition. In the academic landscape, this research aligns with contemporary models of consumer behaviour that emphasize the importance of emotional engagement and brand storytelling. Furthermore, it provides a practical framework for businesses to leverage mascots as powerful tools for building strong brand identities and cultivating lasting customer relationships.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, The Brand Mascot indirectly influences the Purchase Decision through Brand Awareness as a partial mediator. This implies that the Brand Mascot has direct and indirect effects on Purchase Decision Brand Awareness as an enhancing intermediary. In this case, while the Brand Mascot can directly stimulate the Purchase Decision, its ability to effectively foster Brand Awareness further strengthens customers' brand recognition, making it more salient and memorable. Consequently, heightened Brand Awareness reinforces customers' propensity to make a purchase, amplifying their Purchase Decision. Conversely, the Brand Mascot impacts the Purchase Decision indirectly through Brand Image in the form of complete mediation. This indicates that the Brand Mascot does not exert a direct effect on the Purchase Decision but instead relies on the creation of Brand Image as a complete intermediary. Here, Brand Image fully mediates the relationship between the Mascot and the Purchase Decision, serving as the connecting variable. Thus, if Brand Image functions as a full mediator, enhancing the Purchase Decision through the Brand Mascot is contingent upon the Mascot's ability to build a positive and congruent Brand Image. In other words, the Brand Mascot alone does not directly influence the Purchase Decision. Instead, it exerts an indirect effect by reinforcing a favourable Brand Image, which positively impacts the Purchase Decision.

Future research should build upon the foundation established by this study, particularly by exploring the effectiveness of brand mascots across different industries. A comparative study examining the impact of brand mascots in various sectors, such as food and beverage, cosmetics, or fashion, would provide valuable insights into how product categories influence brand perception and purchasing decisions. Understanding how mascots resonate differently with consumers based on industry type will help refine mascot strategies tailored to each market. Additionally, future research should investigate the sustainability of brand mascots, focusing on how mascots can foster long-term relationships with consumers and influence repeat purchase behavior. Exploring the role of mascots in building brand loyalty and maintaining consumer engagement over time will offer deeper insights into their potential as long-lasting brand ambassadors. This research could provide brands with strategies for enhancing consumer retention and establishing deeper emotional connections with their audiences.

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