



RESEARCH PAPER

Lucrative Role of Animated Spoke and Brand Character to Brand Awareness in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to explore the lucrative role of animated spoke and brand character to brand awareness in Pakistan. Pakistan is a developing country where the strategies regarding brand awareness through animated role, and brand character should be focused. In this regard, the data was collected through survey method from 400 students of different Universities in Lahore during the year of 2022. In this study, linear regression was applied for data analysis. The results reveal that role of animated brand character and its discernment relationship with brand awareness matter significantly/positively. The findings underscore specifically character attraction, trust and nostalgia which should accelerate the behavior of marketers to stay zealously in developing brand awareness. This study is a valuable flight for the marketing managers, policy makers of branding strategies, and investors etc. Moreover, it would encourage to stakeholders for work on animated brand characters as this element of consideration is still scant about efficacy of animated characters awareness of brands in Pakistan.

Keywords: Animated Brand Character, Attraction, Brand Awareness, Nostalgia and Trust

Introduction

The recent war of trade nationally and international have explored a multiple strategic plan to increase the value of products and services via advertisement. The stakeholders of the products & services accelerate their communication through valuable social & media campaign networks being the latest technique to increase the market share. The animated object promotes, communicate benefits for products, and service features which can be used as promotional campaign (Phillip et. al., 2019). The animated spoke brand and characters which encompasses for brainstorming and opinion development through network members (Akar & Topcu, 2011; Kim & Ko, 2012), to promote product (Callcott and Lee, 1995), to provide a visibility popper; act as a memory cue to choose product, aid in brand identification (Rossiter & Percy 1987) and particularly, great resource to foster bond with target audience in product awareness. The recent study explored the persuasive effects of brand characteristics (Kim et. al., 2018). The determinants of character through animated brand/spokes are important to make the character attractive, stylish, charming and sparkling which put a long-lasting impression on the mind of consumer.

Technological innovation and new marketing trends have affected the way now it is used to sell the products and people (especially children) love to see the characters from which they are inspired (Hassan & Daniyal, 2013). The use of animated character in advertising is an effective approach in developing the brand-consumer relationship. Technological advancement not only made animation more reliable, flexible and artistic tool as compared to conventional marketing but also the concept is emerging because of its attractiveness and entertainment (Callcott & Lee-Na-Lee, 1994). The popularity of this

concept (i.e., marketing/advertising through animated brand/spoke character) is sky raping in the last few years and it is believed that it is the most successful and pivotal marketing strategy for the organization striving for differentiation and brand recognition (Neely & Schumann, 2004).

The concept of animated character in advertising is not new and organizations in developed countries are using these animated brands/pokes characters in their marketing and advertising campaigns from decades for the purpose of product recognition and differentiation. However, despite the wide spread use of animated characters a little research on the content of characters and its effects on the audience has been done. A very few researchers directly targeted the animation and their lucrative role in developing the product/brand recognition, awareness and purchase intensions. Marketing/advertising trough these animated characters is considered cost effective and reliable as compared to conventional but a very little is known about consumers' acuity about these characters (Scott & Batra, 2003).

In Pakistan the marketer of food products, beverages, confectionary and anti-germs soups are using animated charters in their advertising campaigns (e.g., Commander Safeguard, Dettol Warriors, Gillu of Colgate Herbal, Dentonic, Ding Dong Bubble, Tiger Bubble, Prince Biscuits, Fido of 7UP and Cocomo). However, no proper evidence has been found regarding their effectiveness which could help and encourage the industrialist/marketers to use the same as determinant of brand awareness. All this pops up the need of academic research particularly considering the scarcity of local research studies. Thus, a combination of all these factors and focuses would yield a tripartite study on animated brand character and their role in developing the brand awareness. The study will begin with a closer look at the important determinants of animated brand/spokes character (will be extracted from literature review) and variables to better explain the research questions and objectives.

Literature Review

Animated Brand/Spokes Character

Companies are using innovative and unique spokes character to influence the consumers Chiu et al. (2009). A likeable character is a proficient way to create a positive brand image as it establishes personal connections with consumers Wells et al. (2000). The role of animated characters has been changing since the past decade and these characters are being used to present high involvement products to adult audiences Callcott & Lee (1994). As compared to human spokesperson the creative use of cartoon spokespeople in print ads leads to more positive outcomes like positive attitude towards the ad, positive attitude towards the brand and positive purchase intensions towards the advertised brand Haiser et al. (2008). Cartoon characters appearing in magazines have a have higher share of younger readers and have appeal to youth market Kelly et al. (2000). In advertising human-like characters are likeable, appropriate and trust worthy while cartoon-like characters have more positive effects on the web site interface McGoldric et al. (2006).

Characteristics/Determinants of Animated Brand/Spokes Character

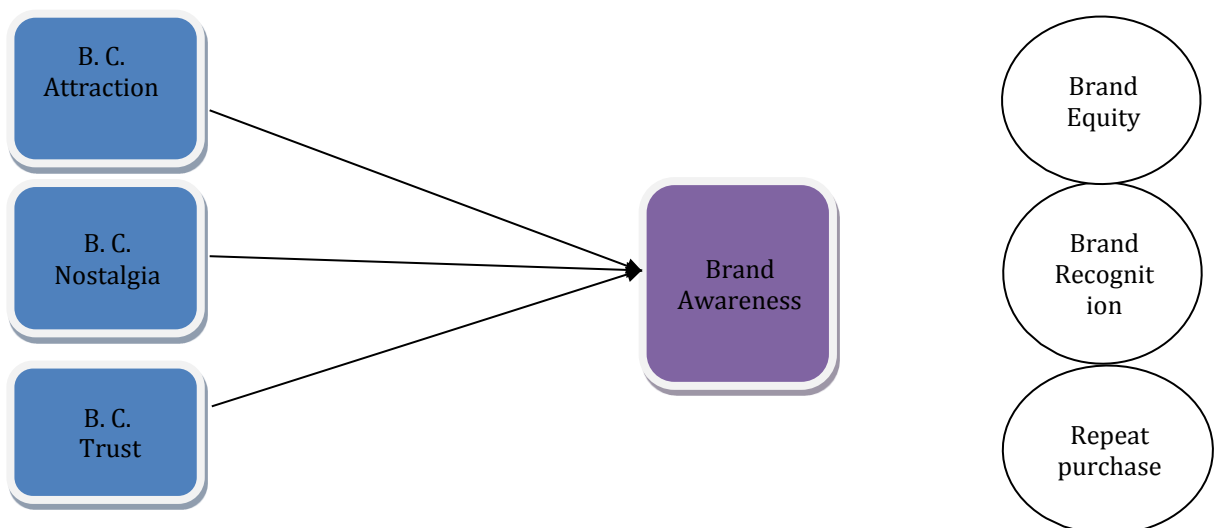
The most important characteristic of animated brand character is their physical appearance and style advertisers prefer to choose animated characters which have colourful and pleasant appearance Hassan & Daniyal (2013). Humour significantly to the character' likeability Callcott & Phillips (1996) recommended that physical features of the spokes characters are the main basis of their appeals. The actions and voice of animated character may influence a young children attention, product recognition and even a positive attitude towards the product Neely & Schumann (2004). Consumers are associated with spokes characters which have distinct personality profiles LeBel & Cooke (2008). Spokes-character

trust is an important mediator of the effects of spokes-character on brand attitude Garretson & Niedrich (2004). The colourful appearance, gesture/posture and design of characters usually attract the attention of children Shah et al. (2015). Character’s humour helps to remember the character for a long time and its attractive animation help to create a direct link between product features and consumer choice Callcot & Phillips (1996). As compared to human characters, non-human characters win more confidence and respect Callcot & Lee-Na-Lee (1994).

Character-Brand Association

Spokes characters often represent the personality of the brand and convey the intangible benefits of the product or brand and thereby help to gain the consumer trust Aaker (1997). Characters play an important role in kids’ lives as brand icon and are useful vehicle to communicate brand values and build likeness Lawrence (2003). Perception of spokes-characters is properly reflected by likeability and relevance of brand and it influence brand awareness/association and perceived quality which in turn influence brand loyalty Chang (2013). Animated commercials significantly contribute to the viewers’ understanding and stimulate viewers and affect their emotional responses and behavioural expectations Jin (2011). Watching animated ads is positively correlated with intentions to purchase Manaf & Alallan (2017). There is strong association between animated character and product recognition and this association is associated with age factor positively Mizerki (1995). The use of glittering characters helps to increase product recognition as well as liking Keillor, (2007).

The closer review of the literature reveals that there are many factors which affect the consumers’ liking, purchase decisions and product recognition but character’s attraction (i.e., style, persona and colour), trust and nostalgia are the most important ones and best represent the personality of animated brand character. These factors are considered as face of the animated brand character and need to be studied to investigate their role in developing the brand awareness. Similarly, there is a close association between animated brand character and brand loyalty, intentions to purchase and product recognition. However, little research has focused these important character’s factors (i.e., character attraction, trust and nostalgia) and their impact and role in developing brand awareness and brand equity. Therefore, this paper will present a content analysis of animated brand characters and their role in developing the brand awareness and these important factors/determinants will be considered as independent variables and their role in developing the brand awareness will be accessed, by way of which the overall role of animated brand character in developing the brand awareness will be determined.



Research Hypotheses

Based on conceptual framework following are the hypotheses which need to be tested.

H1: Brand Character's attraction has a significant positive lucrative role in developing brand awareness.

H2: Brand Character's nostalgia has a significant positive lucrative role in developing brand awareness.

H3: Brand Character's trust has a significant lucrative role in developing the brand awareness.

Material and Methods

Quantitative measure has been employed and was enriched with primary data, collected through already developed questionnaires on available literature in a cross-sectional field survey (Huang et. Al., 2011). Simple random technique has been used to collect the data from students of major universities in Lahore. University students were selected as subjects because they have the knowledge and are commonly exposed to the animated brand characters used for advertising and promotional campaigns.

A pre-existing research instrument (questionnaire) was used based on available scale to collect the data adopted from Huang et al. (2011) for constructs B.C. attraction, B.C. Nostalgia and B.C. Trust and from Lee & Leh (2011) for Brand Awareness. All the items were measured on a five item Likert Scale with "1" being strongly disagree, "2" as disagree, "3" as neutral, "4" as agree and "5" as strongly agree. The questionnaire consists of two parts: the first part has personal memoranda of respondents and second part consists of research questions.

In total 400 university students participated in the study and Questionnaires were distributed among the respondents and were requested to fill. During the year of 2022, out of 400, 340 valid responses received back with 172 male respondents and 168 female respondents. 37 of the respondents were post graduate, 185 were graduates and remaining 118 were intermediate or equivalent. Multiple linear regression, ANOVA and t-Test were used to test out the developed hypotheses which already have assumed the role animated brand character (by way of B.C. Attraction, B.C. Nostalgia and B.C. Trust) in developing the brand awareness.

Results and Discussion

There were four constructs in the proposed model: Brand Character's attraction, nostalgia, trust and brand awareness. Before testing the model fit for analysis; relationship between independent and dependent variables was checked with the help of multiple linear regression analysis. The results in the regression table demonstrate two key findings: first it indicates moderate positive relationship between independent and dependent variables with a value of .577, secondly the 32.7% variance is explained by determinants brand character in brand awareness as depicted by the value of adjusted R square. These findings confirm that determinants of brand character (i.e., attraction, nostalgia and trust) have positive association with brand awareness which better help to achieve the secondary objective of research.

Table 1
Summary for Goodness of Fitness of Model

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.577 ^a	.333	.327	.5418

Table 2
ANOVA^b

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	49.191	3	16.397	55.857	.000 ^a
	Residual	98.635	336	.294		
	Total	147.826	339			

From the short review of Analysis of variance (ANOVA) table, the key values which need to be painstaking are F-value and sig. level related to F-Value which provides the findings for model fitness. The values of F and corresponding p-value of F-statistics in the ANOVA table are 55.857, .000 respectively and these values fall in acceptance region by fulfilling all the conditions of acceptance which generally predict that the model is fit for the data and consistent with the basic findings of research showing that on average respondents are agree that independent variables, B.C. attraction, B.C. Nostalgia and B.C. Trust have positive role in developing the brand awareness.

Table 3
Summary of Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	1.109	.196		5.668	.000
	BCA	.305	.056	.290	5.410	.000
	BCN	.089	.041	.120	2.164	.031
	BCT	.264	.046	.298	5.694	.000

The analysis of coefficients reveals the evidence for statistical significance of predictors and direction of relationship. Brand character's attraction (BCA) is significant (.000) and have positive association (.305) which dictates that; by using an attractive character in marketing and advertising campaign not only leads to better brand awareness but also have significant positive role in developing the brand awareness. Similarly, the brand character's nostalgia (BCN) and brand character's trust (BCT) are also significant (.031 & .000) and have positive association which provide enough evidence for choice to use a character which have consumer trust and past belongings;

These results of multiple linear regression analysis provide clear support and evidence to achieve the research objectives and help to accept the developed hypotheses as all the determinants/factors of animated brand character (i.e., brand character's attraction, nostalgia and trust) not only have positive association but also have significant positive role in developing the brand awareness.

The use of animated brand characters to promote the products is highly admired by the viewers Garreston & Nadrich (2004) and these sparkling and lively characters are being adopted by a large number of companies to grab the attention of consumers. Spokes characters can enhance and maintain consumer-brand relationship because of its ability to humanize and personify a brand and these characters can create better brand desire based on their association. The current study was taken into consideration with the intensions to

evaluate the role of animated brand characters in developing the brand awareness. Three most influential determinants of animated brand character were extracted from past literature (on the basis of their impact and effectiveness) and by way of these determinants the by and large role of animated brand characters has been evaluated in developing the brand awareness.

To the best of researcher's knowledge, this study is first of its kind to empirically examine the relationship between animated brand character and brand awareness.

Conclusion

The results of the study yield insight into the determinants accounting for the lucrative role of brand character in developing the brand awareness. In sum, three hypotheses were developed to investigate the significant positive role of brand character (by means of determinants) in developing brand awareness. All hypotheses were supported as significant positive role has been found by B.C. attraction, nostalgia and trust in developing the brand awareness. The results also confirmed the positive association of these characters with brand awareness. In the line with previous discussion and studies, these determinants/factors have been considered as face of animated brand character and best represent the character. Therefore, the association and impact of these determinants/factors reveal the overall role animated brand character in developing the brand awareness. Findings of this research complement prior research illustrating the prolific use of animated brand character in promotions campaign for brand recognition as conducted by Sabrina & David (2004), Neely & Schumann (2004), Kelly et al. (2000) and Neeley et al. (2000). The distinct contribution of the current research is to provide the empirical evidence that animated brand not only have a positive role in developing the brand awareness but also have positive association as consumers appear to rely on character's features like attraction, nostalgia and trust.

Implications

Marketing and advertising effectiveness are measured through achieved results and objectives and primary objective of every marketer is to develop the brand awareness for long lasting impression in the mind of consumer and best way to do that is via animated brand character because of their charming style and sparkling appearance.

Organizations attempt to differentiate their brands in competitive market; the use of these human friendly characters might prove fruitful in developing commitment to brand. Therefore, it is recommended that marketers should use character that has attraction in term of colour, style and persona to attract the consumers. The advertisers should also appeal and maintain the character's nostalgia and trust to build the emotional bond that can help for brand recognition and recall.

Apart from the limitation of survey research, study focused only on limited variables like brand character's attraction, nostalgia and trust and brand awareness, in future research, there might be other variables that can be part of future research like role of animated character in developing purchase intension, buying behaviour, product choice and attitude towards product/brand. A new study with the intensions to measure the effectiveness of animated brand character in developing the brand awareness, when compared with conventional marketing is recommended with a more heterogeneous sample for greater applicability.

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