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**BRANDS AND
THEIR PETS FOR A
RELATIONAL BRANDING
THAT HUMANIZES**

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Abstract: In search of activating emotions in their audiences, brands report evidence from the last century, even before the currents of relational branding, an area that is responsible for generating affective exchanges with consumer companies. As an example, the case of Michelin with his character of tires that swallowed all kinds of glass and nails (1898). The history of pets has been building a marketing tactic of empathy with audiences. The opportunity for the humanization of brands seems to have been a great success, as in the case of Michellin and Dr. Simi, which has even had an impact on the entertainment industry. However, in other cases it becomes a difficult challenge to overcome, as has been the case with M&M'S where the conflict exceeds the limits of the strategy. Finally, brands must consider the following trends when designing their corporate mascot strategy: audiences are no longer passive, loyalty is not only to the brand but to extensions such as corporate mascots, audiences change but at the Sometimes they are not so willing to change. **Keywords:** Relational branding, brand loyalty, corporate mascot, brand humanization.

INTRODUCTION

In search of audience loyalty in brands, active and social listening as well as business intelligence become the basis of relationship management to create super segmented content and achieve a strong and lasting connection that means reference and loyalty in brands (Valarezo, 2020). From the above, then there is the evolution of marketing that has been characterized by new trends because recent economic conditions have demanded new ways of relationship with customers and in search of methods that add value to goods and services, companies They offer each segment a trend that is the humanization of brands.

The current communication context is

characterized by the existence of multiple relational networks. The brand emphasizes viewing the individual as a relational entity, with recurring terms like “engagement” and “conversation.” In this sense, there are more and more theoretical proposals that consider the relationship between people and brands, but in recent years the trend has extended in the direction of thinking about the relationship between people and brands (Fernández-Gómez & Gordillo-Rodríguez, 2015).

Based on the above, it can be affirmed that brands are the asset that occupies the most important place after people. Branding is, therefore, a very valuable tool since it consists of building and managing them correctly (Handayani & Herwany, 2020). Therefore, every company must create a rational process to know and apply the basic principles of branding (Manzur, 2018).

It must be said that the different markets need to develop strategies that put them at the forefront of loyalty. This is evidenced in the need to build closer relationships with customers, as is the case with relational branding and corporate mascots, whose mission is not simply to satisfy the specific needs for which the products are created, but to create relationships based on humanize brands by bringing them emotionally closer to different audiences.

This research exposes a methodology consisting of a theoretical review, where in the *first section* it shows the concepts and approaches to relational branding and the importance of significant relationships in brands; In a *second section*, the humanization of corporate mascots is analyzed by answering the questions of what, how and where, with successful examples. As a third section, a reflection is made, taking up where the conflicts can arise on which the design of relational branding strategies must be stopped, and finally, where are the guidelines of the

symbolisms of corporate mascots in relation to more audiences going? currently involved.

RELATIONAL BRANDING, BRANDS AND SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS

At present, the priority of brands is focused on building more significant relationships, seeking customer loyalty and achieving a lasting differentiation over time through relationships that become true experiences (Mendoza 2018).

A corporate mascot that embodies the spirit and essence of a company can be an interesting resource in branding strategies to identify partners, consumers and users with a brand. The use of a mascot can be a very effective marketing element of companies for loyalty (Sangil Boronat, 2021). Understanding brand loyalty as López (2013) maintains, it refers to the clients retained and acquired by companies that continue to use their services due to the positive experiences obtained with the company.

In conclusion, speaking specifically of visual identity in brands, Costa (1989) for his part affirms that identity is the presentation of things directly and speaking of the visual with its mere presence, manifesting an integrated unit of its substance, function and form, whose evidence is the signs that are manifested in perception and memory calling these passive, on the other hand, producing an identification as an act of perceiving and recognizing, which the author calls active experience.

Humanizing corporate mascots

Corporate mascots, by humanizing brands, promote values as stated by Serra Leiva (2016):

- Transmit the values of the brand, what it is and represents.
- Your message has a positive tinge.
- Forges greater brand loyalty.

- Act as a brand ambassador,
- Provides the voice of the company's social conscience
- Become the icon of a community, the identifier of your followers.

The case of Michellin's corporate mascot, during 1900, the French tire brand MICHELIN, with a workshop in Clermont-Ferrand and commercial offices in Paris, displayed an evolution of internationalization. Subsidiaries were created in the nerve centers of the main markets: in Great Britain and, finally, in the United States of America. The advertising principles deployed in the European territories form the feats of the program and of the poster design, highlighting especially the origin of BIBENDUM, the tire-man, the corporate and promotional phylactery of Michelin that, in 1998, turned a century old and that equally continues in haste as publicity messenger of the office. The corporate mascot that represented in its beginnings a being made of tires that gobbled up nails and glass, whose initial motto was a great opportunity for relational branding because through this mascot, rescue stories were told to different vehicle drivers based on their comics (Medrano-Bigas, 2015).

Today, the Michellin mascot has lost several tires and changed its color to white to symbolize greater confidence and consider itself to be more fit, noble character and friendly face make this strategy a success to approach the brand with more human characteristics.

In this same sense, Dr. Simi has become a successful phenomenon that has spread to the entertainment industry. Initially, it began as a strategy that would represent a good-natured and kind doctor, who transmitted experience in a few years due to his hair, eyebrows and white mustache, which, as the company affirms, was taken as a reference to Joaquín Pardavé, an actor from the golden age of

cinema. Mexican for being a well-known face and representative of humor and experience as relationship factors with his public. There are several of the artists who, as an expression of affection from the fans, where some followers throw Dr. Simi's stuffed animal to artists such as Rosalía, Lady Gaga, Cold Play and Chemical Romance among others, which by the way is made in an inclusive company by the hands of disabled artisans and the filling is recycled pet. (CNN in Spanish, 2022)

CONFLICTS IN CORPORATE MASCOTS

However, there are brands whose corporate mascots had managed to convey an empathetic message with the public, during the image reengineering of these same characters, just as conflicts arise in companies in the face of changes, not all audiences are open to said changes.

Such is the case of M&M's whose characters appeared in 1954, together with their slogan "chocolate melts in your mouth", not in your hand. However, the current conflict, when the green window of the girl in which her boots were exchanged for tennis shoes was updated, contemplating making it more inclusive, unleashed a wave of attacks from the American conservative right on the internet, judging the brand as "progressive". (I am.Entrepreneur.com)

RELATIONAL BRANDING AND MANAGEMENT OF SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE

Symbolic language cannot represent in a unique way a fragment of the reality of society, hence the image of pets gives an initial presence through their style, morphology and particular values, where the gestalt concept is manifested throughout. its extension, however, it must be considered that the whole is more than the sum of the parts, because the

communication of relational branding is not unidirectional.

It is necessary to consider in the new trends in the design of the relational strategy of pets, that the public have abandoned their traditional passive role for the media, and this is evident in many areas, such as persuasive communication. Recognizing the new role and benefits that increasingly active consumers play, brands must now design strategies and communication channels to encourage participation and build lasting relationships based on shared stories (Hernández & del Mar Rubio, 2014).

CONCLUSIONS

As part of this analysis, the corporate mascots reviewed in this document show that either because of their sex or their psyche (daring beings, full of vitality, and rebelliousness), or their clothing (use of sportswear, sunglasses, etc), or their hobbies (interest in music, television, sports) and their motivation to act and behave (rescue of female characters), corporate mascots are characterized, in general, by having common patterns that are repeated from time to time. constantly and that fit with relational branding strategies that seek to improve loyalty with their community, and mostly represent a youthful audience, currently fitness and with a clear break with the symbols of previous generations.

Finally, it is important to consider that the humanization of brands tends to make them part of the community, where the audiences feel and symbolize them as their own, therefore, it is necessary in the case of image reengineering of corporate mascots to take into account all these emotions, feelings and ideas that have been generated in the minds of the public to avoid conflict in their relational branding strategies.

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