Research Paper

The Effects of Different Kinds of Brand Mascots Used in Advertisements on Visual Attention: An Experımental Study

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ABSTRACT

Mascots, which are frequently featured in advertising campaigns, can be said to be an important visual tool that enables the brand to attract attention and differentiate itself from its competitors. In a competitive market environment, brands addressing consumers through mascots can strengthen the positive image of the brand by gaining a place in their minds and hearts. For this reason, it is an important research topic to examine the visual attraction levels of brand mascots that can represent the identity and personality of the brand. In this study, the visual attention level of consumers for different types of brand mascots used in Instagram advertisements was determined by an experimental method. In the scope of the research, Mascot samples representing four different mascot types: animal, robot, object, and fantastic hero were selected. Through these mascot samples, the visual attention levels of 30 participants were measured with the eye tracking device, which is one of the biometric measurement methods. In this context, the participants' heat map, initial focus time, total focus time, and number of looks were recorded. Accordingly, the brand mascots, Compared to the product image, product information, and campaign information images, it has been observed that low visual attractiveness levels are low. On the other hand, it was concluded that the attraction level of object and animal type mascots is higher than robot and fantastic type mascots.

Keywords: Advertising, Brand Mascots, Visual attention, Eye Tracking

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1. INTRODUCTION

Brands use both audio and visual tools to reach consumers. These tools help brands to attract attention, raise awareness, increase awareness and recall. The mess of messages created by brands in densely populated urban life has further increased the importance of these tools. Especially since visual data processing constitutes a large part of consumers' learning processes, the role of visual tools in brand communication is indispensable. Since these visual tools reflect the brand identity, they enable a strong link to be established between consumers and the brand.

Mascots, such as logo, color, and typography, are also one of the visual identity elements of the brand. Mascots are commercial characters, sometimes live and sometimes imaginary, that carry the DNA of the brand and act as communication ambassadors of the brand. Brand mascots have been involved in the marketing and advertising activities of brands for a long time.

Using mascots in marketing and advertising activities provides brands with many advantages. Mascots, which are a friendly communication tool, mediate the establishment of an emotional correlation between the consumer and the brand. Unlike other identity elements, mascots express a more holistic communication strategy for the brand. In other words, mascots are not only an element of identity but also undertake the storytelling of the brand. Thanks to the opportunities provided by design technologies, brand mascots can contain humanoid features. In this context, mascots can be presented in forms that can talk and move like humans.

These features can attract consumers' visual attention faster and more easily. Starting from here, it is aimed to reveal the visual attention-grabbing levels of different types of brand mascots. In this regard, the eye movements of the brand mascots used in Instagram advertisements to measure visual attention, one of the cognitive learning processes, were recorded and analyzed with an eye tracking device.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Brand Mascots

Today's markets have become overcrowded due to the ever-increasing number of businesses and consumers. For this reason, businesses have made intense efforts to attract the attention of their

target audience. While it was easier to attract the visual attention of consumers in the pre-digital period (Pileliene & Grigaliunaite, 2016), it can be stated that this situation has reversed due to the increase in digital technologies. An adult consumer who spends an average of four hours in front of screens in their daily lives (Kotler et al., 2017) is exposed to many commercial messages, both visual and auditory (Jones, 2007). This barrage of commercial messages that consumers are exposed to has paved the way for the emergence of various marketing problems, especially attention deficit problems for brands or products. The chaotic circumstances in consumer markets due to the density of commercial messages causes consumers to move away from brands and products, negatively affecting the interaction between the two parties. For this reason, brands use methods and tools that will attract the attention of consumers and direct their attention in order to survive in the competitive process.

Methods and tools among these with visual stimuli are frequently preferred to attract the attention of consumers. In this sense, while the consumer brain reacts faster to visual stimuli in the cognitive learning process, it has the ability to process data at a higher capacity compared to other stimuli (Carter, 2013, Canan, 2017). Therefore, it can be said that visual stimuli are more effective than auditory stimuli due to their advantages such as attracting consumers' attention and remaining in memory for a long time (Sutherland & Sylverster, 2000).

The first of the basic functions of visual stimuli used in the marketing communication process is to attract the attention of consumers for brands or products. It can be stressed that these visual stimuli offer different levels of effectiveness due to their properties such as color, form, texture, size and shape. Mascots, which can also gain auditory features thanks to nowadays' three-dimensional animation technologies provide significant and vital communication advantages. When the origin of the word is examined, it is derived from the French word "Mascotte", which means talisman or fascination. The word "Masco" as a concept also means magic, sorcery or witchcraft due to its root (Stevens et al., 2014). It can be said that mascots with many different shapes, materials, types, sizes, colors and smells have been produced in various cultures and beliefs since prehistoric times. According to King and Springwood (2001), the concept of it was linked with the physical characteristics of animals the in native tribes. Beside that clothes, symbols and names were identified with animals that were hunted or considered sacred. It was believed that animal hides and symbols used in religious ceremonies in Native American tribes brought luck and success to tribe members and bad luck to their enemies in times of war and illness. In ancient

times, when the focus was on animal figures as objects of good luck, the first examples of mascots can be seen on cave walls depicting animal figures and on totems used for worship (Tek, 2004). In parallel with this, Şimşek (2006) stated that the world of images that people have created by assigning meanings to objects since the Stone Age consists of "randomly and deliberately created" images. Accordingly, the meanings of luck, fate and nature are attributed to images formed by chance. In addition, deliberately created images cover the common goals of individuals. For example; the meanings of victory and success that a native tribe attributes to the humanized animal figure represent a common denominator for tribal members. In this context, mascots gain meaning for individuals and societies at the level of beliefs or traditions.

In light of the information above, the basic types of mascots are classified respectively as following: 1) commercial/non-commercial, 2) artificial/natural, 3) object/living. Commercial mascots; they are referred to as brand mascots, commercial characters, advertising mascots, spokesperson characters in the literature. And also they are considered the legal guardians of brands (Karadağ, 2015).

Figure 1. Maskot türleri – types of mascots

Source: (The brand age, 2019)

It can be said that non-commercial mascots are used in the activities of public institutions, non-governmental organizations, universities, states or sports competitions, in other words, non-commercial organizations. Artificial mascots can be defined as sculptures and various objects produced for brands or religious beliefs. With this, while mascots sometimes consist of figures that exactly reflect or evoke various living creatures, they can sometimes consist of immovable objects, vehicles and structures.

According to Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000); It ensures that consumers establish good relationships with the brand mascot and develop a positive perception of the brand and its products, thus strengthening the brand equity. Sometimes the linkage between mascots and consumers becomes so strong that the mascot is more recognizable than the brand (Haig, 2003). Kraak and Story (2015, Pairoa and Arumrangsiwed, 2016) concluded in their research that brand mascots are effective in children's increased consumption level and brand choices.

According to Brown (2014); Although there are typological confusions and problems regarding brand mascots, brand mascots are terminologically are also referred to with expressions such as "advertising character", "commercial character", "brand symbol", "brand speaker". Brand mascot; It is a way of communication that enables products and services to be introduced to potential consumers and to create positive emotions in the minds (Singh & Satyaprakash, 2014). Brand mascots are one of the crucial elements in the process of creating brand awareness. Visually strong mascots can make a difference by strengthening brand awareness in a competitive market environment (Karaşahinoğlu & Vural, 2020). Brand mascots not only give character to the brand, they also help reinforce products and services. Compared to other promotional materials, a mascot brings the brand to life and makes products appear more appealing to target audiences.

Individuals have sometimes accepted objects or people, sometimes imaginary heroes created by brands, as means of communication at a symbolic level for reasons such as personal satisfaction, self-expression, belonging to a group in their consumption process. As a result, mascots have become a very important communication tool for both brands and consumers (Barutçu & Adıgüzel, 2015). According to Özcan (2014); "Mascots are most important promotional elements that embody human-specific characteristics. In other words, thanks to mascots, brands gain soul and personality and begin to live among consumers and become a part of their lives. Brand mascots are "personalized and visualized" animals, objects or imaginary human characters that convey the spirit of the corporation to the consumer in order to give identity or personality to the brands

(Küçükerdoğan, 2012). Considering the research conducted in this context, different types of brand mascots can be mentioned.

According to Kirkpatrick (1952), brand mascots are divided into three groups. The first of these is animated characters consisting of living people, animals, and plants. The second are animated mascots created by inanimate objects. Finally, brand mascots can be chosen from characters with commercial value. Using the Mickey Mouse cartoon character as a brand mascot can be given as an example. Another classification made regarding brand mascot types is Phillips (1996), who examined brand mascots in four different types. The first of these; animated and non-animated mascots. This distinction made regarding the physical evaluation of brand mascots means that mascots are living characters or objects that come to life. The second most common mascot types are branded or unbranded mascots. According to Phillips, some mascots carry elements of the brand's identity in their names, body colors or costumes. Another type of brand mascot; they are imaginary and real characters. It is often seen that brands create imaginary mascot characters. The female character in the red dress on the packaging of the Kelloggs brand "Special K" product is a living, real person (Bergh & Behrer, 2011). The last distinction made by Phillips regarding brand mascot types is related to famous and non-famous characters. Generally, brand mascots consist of imaginary or living ordinary characters. However, the animated character named "Michelin Man" (Bibendum), which is the mascot of the Michelin brand, is a cartoon character recognized by people before becoming the mascot of the brand (Keller, 2013).

In addition, famous people who are known and loved by the society are also used as brand mascots (Karadağ, 2015). Callcott and Lee (1995) stated that brands create various characters to develop good relationships with their customers, and these consist of animals, objects, people and mythological figures. On the other hand, Beirao et al. (2007) stated that humanized products can also be mascots. When the classifications in the literature on brand mascots and application examples in the sector has been detected, different types of mascots were also identified. Accordingly, when a comprehensive classification of brand mascot types is made, they can be listed as follows:

1- animal;

2 - robot;

3 - object;

4 - fantastic heroes.

Pecheaux and Derbaix (1999 cited in Beirao et al., 2007) defined two types of mascots used in advertisements. According to them; human-based mascots are used for products such as candy. These product brands are symbolically supported by the adventures and imagination of the mascots. Mascots of the M&M brand are often seen in different adventures in daily life. Other mascots defined by the authors are mascots that emphasize movement and energy, as in the advertisements of energy-giving and high-nutrient food products.

While mascots are given human characteristics, humor is frequently used in the process of making warm, sincere and emotional link with consumers (Özcan, 2014). According to Bennet and Thompson (2016), brand mascots are presented in advertisements with humor types that are accepted by different target audiences, such as intelligence, nonsense, funny stories, and disagreements, in order to make brands loved and build trust. Kirkpatrick (1952) also stated that humor was created by giving brand mascots an extraordinary personality.

2.2 The relationship between brand mascots and visual attention

Thanks to modern neuroscience methods, it is possible to determine which parts of the brain are activated regarding attention and the cognitive processes related to attention (Yakob, 2015). As stated before, attention occurs in cooperation with the thalamus in the limbic system and the neocortex, to which it transfers data (Keleş & Çepni, 2006). Carter (2013) explains the neurological process of attention as follows:

> *"The frontal lobe keeps attention on the target; It also controls the frontal eye fields, which allow the eyes to navigate objects or areas. Areas in the parietal lobe contain spatial "maps" and direct attention to the area appropriate to the associated goal. Cortical involvement receives input from different areas of the cortex and sensory organs, including the frontal and parietal lobes, and directs attention to any eye-catching stimulus. The superior colliculus is part of the network in the brain that directs eye movements. Signals originating from the retina reach this area via the optic nerve; Activity in this area causes attention to be directed in response to meaningful stimuli. If the brain registers unexpected movement, such as a loud sound or another potentially meaningful stimulus—such as turning the eyes in the direction of the sudden movement—it orients the sensory organs toward it. This occurs automatically in lower parts of the brain and does not require conscious perception of the stimulus per se. However, attention causes increased activity in neurons that are engaged with the stimulus. For example, if that stimulus is a person,*

activation increases in the visual areas that monitor the person's location in the space, the face recognition area, the amygdala, the temporal-parietal areas that deal with intentions, and the supplementary motor area that deals with what to do with them. "If neurons reach a firing level above a certain point, consciousness is activated."

Evaluating the neurobiological functioning of the brain in the context of consumer behavior, Haykır Hobikoğlu (2014) draws attention to the importance of the first moment when the limbic system encounters the stimulus. At the beginning of the communication between the stimulus and the brain, attention is at the highest level because the limbic system is alert and defensive. For this reason, the message promise must be given first in order to attract consumers' attention to the brand or product. In this way, "orientation", the most basic action of attention, begins. In other words, turning the body to an object or event with an attractive stimulus in order to perceive more things starts with attention (Gellatly & Zarate, 2007).

Attention occurs on the focused target in two ways. The first of these is target-directed selection, and the other is stimulus-driven capture (Yantis, 1993). Considering the relationship between the two processes, it can be said that stimulus-driven capture precedes target-directed choices. Goal-directed choice is when an individual makes a choice by directing his attention to his goals. For example, if you plan to buy a red car, red cars attract attention. Stimulus-driven capture is attention that occurs depending on the characteristics of the stimulus (Zimbardo & Gerrig, 2016). An example is when a person in a black sweater suddenly appears among people in white sweaters and our attention is drawn to her. Attention ensures that the most important emotional stimulus is selected and that it rises to the level of consciousness fully and sharply (Carter, 2013). Visual attention refers to a series of cognitive processes that mediate the selection of relevant information from complex visual scenes and the filtering of irrelevant information. (McMains & Kastner, 2009). The brain's response to these emotional stimuli has five natural stages: "rejection, skepticism, over-optimism, realism and adoption" (Haykır Hobikoğlu, 2014). It is vital that the eye-catching stimuli used in advertising trigger the targeted emotional response stages in order to guide purchasing decisions. The "rejection" reaction, as well as the adoption reaction, regarding the remarkable stimuli used in advertising messages can be considered as an influencing factor in the decision-making process. For example, in general elections in which political parties participate, the attention stimuli used in the messages sent by party A to party B may cause the target audience to reject party B.

In the brand dimension, the attention stimuli used in advertising can cause consumers to have an emotional reaction that will cause them to approach the brand with suspicion. However, Heath (2012) mentions some factors that affect attention other than emotional stimuli. These:

- Previous exposure to advertising.
- Conveying the brand or product itself or its use that is the subject of the advertisement.
- The ad was liked

According to Erdemir and Yavuz (2016); "In neuromarketing research, attention is at the beginning of the road to purchase." However, Heath (2012) states that before attention, the creativity and emotional content used in advertising instantly trigger unconscious emotional reactions. In other words, it can be stated that a brand mascot used in an advertisement attracts attention as a result of subconsciously affecting its target audience emotionally. In support of this situation, an experimental study on visual attention on labels can be given as an example. According to the results obtained; while the participants did not pay attention when the labels were presented, the attention process started at the 1020th millisecond. However, researchers found that emotional effects began in the participants at the 1000th millisecond (Althaus & Mareschal, 2014, Barnhat et al., 2018).

Stating that measuring consumer attention is one of the first topics addressed within the scope of neuromarketing, Erdemir and Yavuz (2016) stated that human faces, moving objects and fields of view used in advertisements are the most striking elements. In their experimental study where Pileliene and Grigaliunaite (2016) investigated the effect of visual complexity created in print advertisements on visual attention, they concluded that visual complexity has a positive effect on attention. However, it has been determined that brand perception is negatively affected in print advertisements with a high level of complexity.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Purpose and procedure of the study

Brand mascots, which are important instruments of modern marketing communication and advertising strategies, not only attract the attention of the target audience to the advertisement or brand/product, but also have the power to create emotional bonds between consumers and the brand. Mascots, which create a "somatic cursor" for brands, in other words, a point of association in the consumer's mind, play an important role in attracting the attention of consumers who are

exposed to many commercial messages in both local and global markets. This has become vital for brands in the tough competitive struggle, especially since advertising works need very short periods of time to attract the attention of consumers. Mascots, which reflect the corporate identity of the brand, convey the brand promise to consumers, differentiate the brand from its competitors and act as brand advocates when necessary, have a deep-rooted history and will continue to be used in the future.

Visual attention, one of the most important cognitive activities of consumers, can be defined as activations that start with the eyes for visual stimuli and develop in the relevant regions of the brain. In this context, brand mascots are also seen as an important stimulant in consumers' visual attention functions. Although consumers sense many stimuli during the day, they filter them through perception and pay attention to and process a certain part of them (Girişken, 2015). In this direction, the main purpose of the study is to determine the visual attention-grabbing levels of different types of brand mascots prepared for Instagram ads through an experimental study.

In this study, consumers' visual attention levels were measured with eye tracking, one of the biometric measurement methods frequently used in neuromarketing studies. The research questions to be answered within the scope of the purpose of the study are as follows:

- What is the levels of visual appeal of brand mascots used in Instagram advertisements?
- What is the levels of visual appeal of brand mascots used in Instagram advertisements compared to other visual elements?
- What is the difference in visual salience of different types of brand mascots in Instagram ads?

Experimental research carried out within the scope of the study; Mascot examples that reflect four different mascot types: animal, robot, object and fantastic hero were selected. The fact that the brands in question are already using these mascots in their communication activities was effective in determining the sample.

Table 1. Mascot types and brand examples used in the research

Types of Mascots	Brand
Animals	Dominos
Robot	Arçelik
Object	Aras Kargo
Fantastic hereos	Yapı Kredi

3.2 Sample of the study

A total of 32 volunteer participants, 24 (75%) women and 8 (25%) men, aged between 30 and 55, with at least one child over the age of three, with high school education or above, were selected as the sample of the study. Existing research in the eye tracking literature was taken as a basis when determining the number of participants. In these studies, the number of participants ranged from 7 to 250 (Zhang & Yuan, 2018, Zhang et al., 2015, Zelinsky & Neider, 2008, Huff et al., 2010, Fehd & Seiffert, 2008, Hillmann et al. 2015, Reale & Flint, 2016, Song, 2013, Boerman et al., 2015, Goldberg & Kotval, 1999, Poole et al., 2004, Birmingham et al., 2007, Nisiforou and Laghos, 2013, Bebko et al., 2014, Johnston & Leek, 2008), a frequently used number of 30 participants was determined.

On the other hand, in accordance with the economic distribution rates of the Turkish society, the participants; ABC1 and C2 represent SES groups. During the measurements performed with 32 participants, the focus scores of 2 participants were below the average (50 ms) and were not included in the research results. All participants were determined among the people registered in the database of ThinkNeuro company (Neuromarketing research company) in accordance with the research criteria and were invited to participate in the research.

3.3 Data collection procedures

Consumers' responses or comments regarding the attractiveness of an advertisement are directed towards the advertisement as a whole and do not reflect reality. However, while the attention-grabbing levels of each element used in the advertisement can be determined separately by eye tracking method (Zhang et al., 2015), the findings obtained are based on biometric data rather than objective declaration of the person. Based on this, eye tracking, which is frequently used in somatic nervous system measurements and is one of the neuromarketing research methods, was determined as the basic data collection method of the research.

In the experimental research to be carried out in the laboratories of the Thinkneuro company, it is planned to make measurements with a desktop eye tracking device with the brand and model name Tobii - T 120 Eye Tracker. The device consists of a front screen on which the participant's eye movements are monitored, a camera on which stimuli (advertisements) are projected, a computer and a second screen where general settings are made, all data recording and calculation processes are performed.

In addition, the device has a 17-inch TFT screen, a data processing speed of 120 Hz, a camera that can record images at 640x480-30 fps resolution with head tracking of 25 cm per second and eye tracking of a maximum of 300 milliseconds (https://www.ssllc. com).

In line with the main purpose of the study, the most appropriate focus metrics were selected to determine the attention-grabbing levels of brand mascots used in television advertisements and to find answers to the questions determined in the research. The metrics in question are presented together with their measurement purposes in Table-2.

Table 2. Focus metrics determined within the scope of the study

METRIC	MEASURED
Heat map	Participants' areas of focus
Eye Tracking Path	Participants' focus aspects
First Time to Focus	The item/region that participants focused on most quickly
Number of Visits	Frequency of participants looking (focusing) on items/regions
Total Focus Time	The element/region that participants focused on for the longest time
Percentages Focused on	Percentage of participants focusing on visual elements

Before starting the measurements, each participant was seated alone in a private room, in front of the front screen of the eye tracking device, and a distance of 65 cm was set. The distance between the participant and the screen is important to accurately record the camera's eye movements and focus. Following this, calibration was made between the camera and the participant's eye movements in order to avoid data loss during measurement, as per the operating principle of the device. During calibration, participants were allowed to follow the white dot moving to 12 different regions on a black background for 60 seconds. Calibration was performed again for each participant. Following these procedures, the eye movements and focusing times/numbers of the participants regarding the advertisements projected on the screen were recorded on the computer for analysis. Finally, the measurement results were stated statistically and graphically with the software called Tobii Studio.

3.4 Limitations of the study

The design differences and brand awareness levels of Instagram ads of the brands included in the research process vary in their visual appeal levels. This situation constitutes the limitation of the research.

4. RESULTS

Eye-tracking data collected from the subjects regarding the Instagram ads determined within the scope of the study are shown below with visuals and infographics.
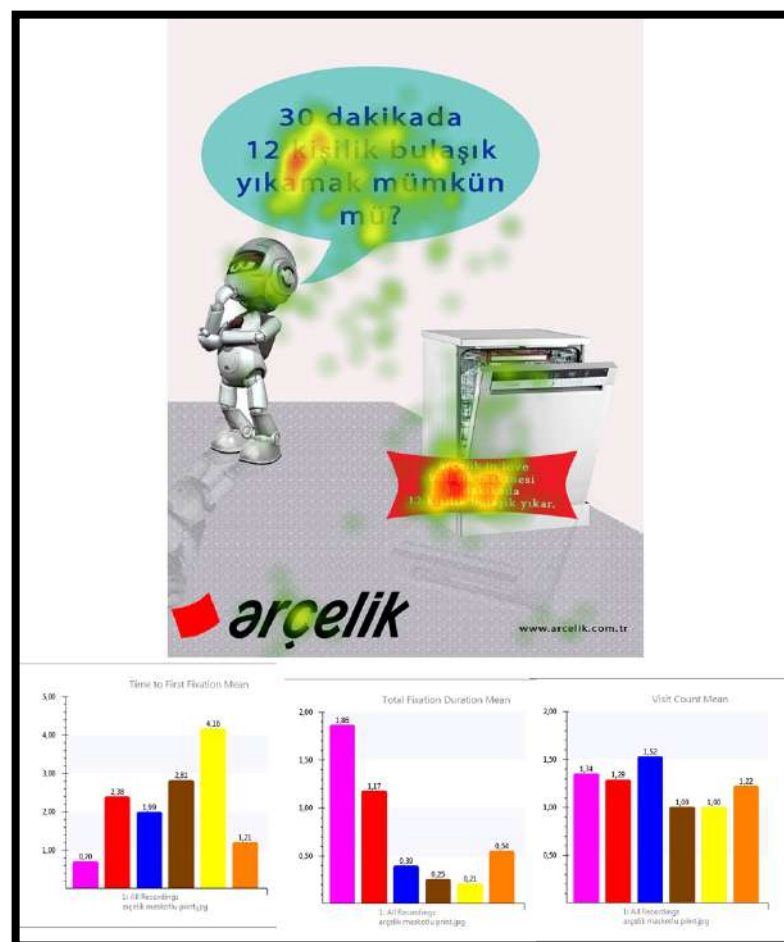

Visual 1. Heat map and metrics of Domino's Advertisement

In the heat map created regarding the eye tracking measurements made for the advertising study of the Domisno's Pizza brand, it was determined that the subjects focused intensely on the logo, slogan and product. Although the focus on the mascot and contact information is low, the focus is intense only on the middle part of the product. In this advertising study of the Domino's brand, the subjects focused highly on the middle, left and upper right corners.

When the initial focus times regarding the advertisement of the Domino's brand were examined, it was determined that the participants focused on the product first. In terms of Visual-1, the mascot came first with 0.52 seconds, followed by the logo with 0.99 seconds, the product with 102 seconds, the slogan with 1.92 seconds and contact information with 3.16 seconds respectively.

In line with other eye tracking findings regarding the advertising visual of the Domino's brand, the number of times participants looked at the stimuli was determined. According to Visual– 2, the product ranks first with an average of 2.17. The number of views for other visual elements was 1.66 for the mascot, 1.48 for the logo, 1.15 for the slogan, and 1.00 for contact/communication information.
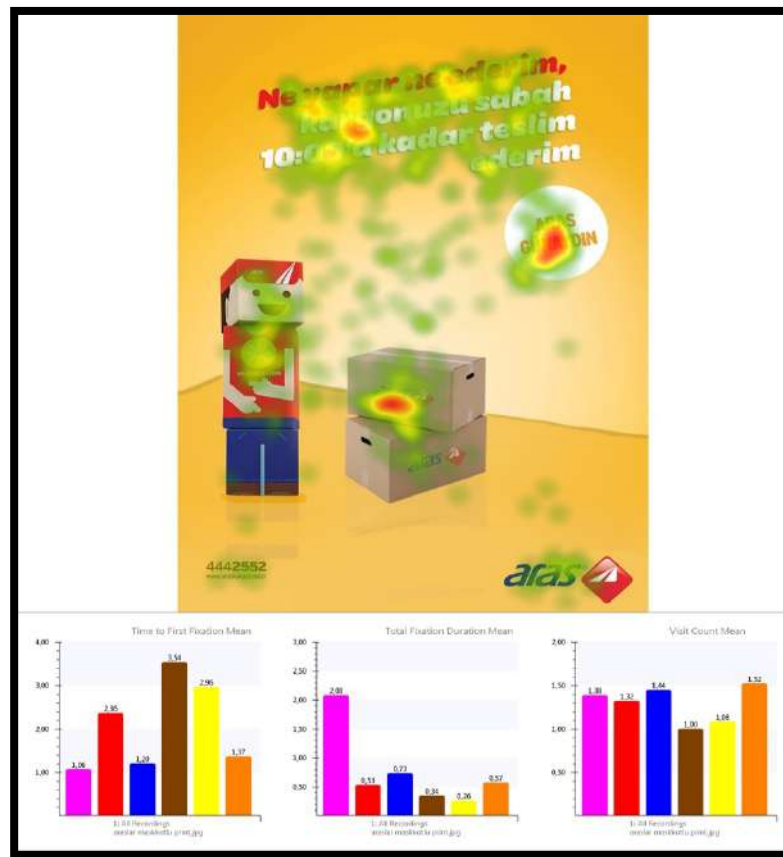
In line with the average of the total focusing times obtained for the advertising visual of the Domino's Pizza brand, it was determined that the subjects focused on the product for the longest time with 1.40 seconds. Other focus averages were the logo with 1.09 seconds, the slogan with 0.92 seconds, the mascot with 0.43 seconds, and the last place was contact information with 0.29 seconds.

Visual 2. Heat map of arçelik advertisement

In the heat map resulting from the eye tracking measurements made for the Arçelik advertising study, it was determined that the subjects focused intensely on the upper and lower product information. It seems that the focus on the logo and mascot is low. In the advertising study of the Arçelik brand, the subjects focused heavily on the upper middle and lower left corners. Considering the initial focus time on the visual elements of the Arçelik brand; it was observed that the subjects first focused on the product information above for 0.70 seconds. Afterwards, the subjects focused on the mascot for 1.21 seconds, the product information below for 1.99 seconds, the logo for 2.81 seconds, and the contact/communication information for 4.16 seconds, respectively.

The number of times the subjects looked at the stimuli was determined based on eye tracking findings for the advertising visual of the Arçelik brand. In this context, the product ranks first with an average of 1.52. Number of times you looked at other images; 1.34 is product information at the top, 1.29 is product information at the bottom, 1.22 is mascot, 1.00 is logo, 1.00 is contact information. When we look at the total focus time obtained for the advertising visual of the Arçelik brand; it was determined that the subjects focused on the product information at the top for the longest time, 1.86 seconds. In the second place was the product information below with 1.17 seconds, in the third place was the mascot with 0.54 seconds, in the fourth place was the product with 0.39, in fifth place was the logo with 0.25 seconds, and in the last place was contact information with 0.19 seconds.
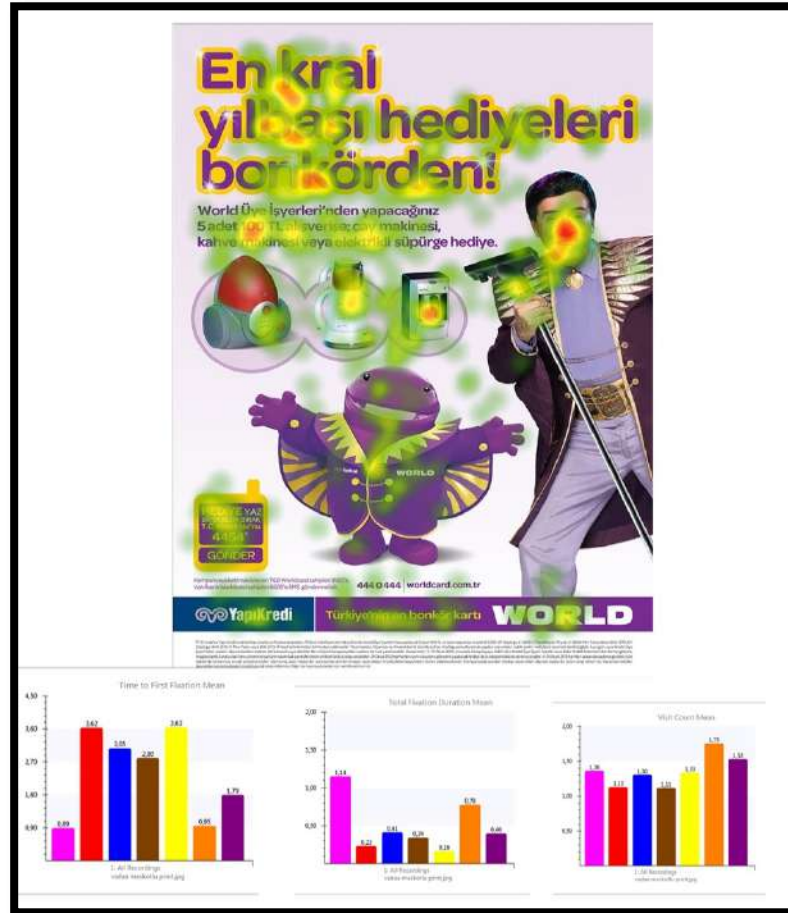
Visual 3. Heat map of aras cargo advertisement

In the heat map resulting from the eye tracking measurements made for the advertising work of Aras cargo brand, it was determined that the subjects intensely focused on sub-campaign information, product and top campaign information. It was observed that the focus on mascot, logo and contact information was low. In addition, the subjects focused highly on the middle, right and upper middle of the image.

When we look at the first focusing time regarding the advertising work of the Aras brand, it was determined that the subjects first focused on the upper campaign information with 1.06 seconds. Afterwards, the subjects focused on the product for 1.20 seconds, the mascot for 1.37 seconds, the campaign information for 2.36 seconds, the logo for 2.96 seconds, and the contact information for 3.54 seconds.

In line with other eye tracking findings regarding the advertising visual of the Aras brand, the number of times participants looked at the stimuli was determined. According to Visual 3, mascot ranks first with an average of 1.52. Number of views for other images; It is listed as 1.44 product,

1.38 campaign information at the top, 1.32 campaign information at the bottom, 1.08 logo, 1.00 contact information. When we look at the total focus times obtained for the advertising visual of the Aras brand; it was determined that the subjects focused on the longest upper campaign information with 2.08 seconds. The product ranked second with 0.73 seconds, the mascot ranked third with 0.57 seconds, the sub-campaign information ranked fourth with 0.53, the logo ranked fifth with 0.34 seconds, and the contact information ranked last with 0.26 seconds.

Visual 4. Heat map of yapı kredi bank advertisement

According to the heat map of the advertising work of Yapı Kredi brand; there was an intense focus on the face of the human photograph used in the advertisement. A high level of participant focus is also observed on the ad title and ad text. There was a lesser focus on mascots, information boxes and logos. It can be said that the focus intensities are especially in the upper and upper middle regions of the image.

According to the first focus findings; participants first focused on the campaign information for 0.89 seconds. It was noted that the focus was on human face from bee 0.95 sec, 1.79 sec mascot, 2.80 sec logo World, 3.05 sec slogan, 3.62 sec logo Yapı Kredi 3.63 sec contact information. According to the participants' total focus time; the longest time was focused on campaign information, with an average of 1.74 seconds. Then, the average focusing time is 0.78 for the live character, 0.54 for the slogan, 0.40 for the mascot, 0.34 for the logo World, 0.24 for the logo Yapı Kredi and contact information at 0.16 seconds. According to the number of times the participants looked at the elements in the advertising study, the highest looking average was the human face with 1.75, followed by; 1.52 mascot, 1.36 campaign information, 1.33 contact information, 1.30 slogan, 1.13 logo Yapı Kredi and 1.11 logo World were recorded.

5. DISCUSSION

The role of advertising in attracting consumers' attention is commercial one as well as a scientific topic (Pileliene & Grigaliunaite, 2016). For this reason, the visual stimulus effectiveness of advertisements is the subject of academic research not only for brands in the practical field, but also in a theoretical context. The visual appeal of mascots used as brand ambassadors in advertisements is of great importance. In this study, the visual salience of different types of brand mascots prepared for Instagram advertisements was determined numerically using the eye tracking method. Within the scope of the study, heat map, first focusing time, total focusing time and looking numbers were recorded with the eye tracking method to determine visual salience.

In the light of the findings obtained from the experimental research, it has been determined that there are differences in the visual attention-grabbing levels of mascots. It has been determined that the visual appeal of the animal mascot of the Dominos brand is low. However, the product image in the Dominos advertisement is more attractive. It can be said that the large size of the product image in the advertisement of the Dominos brand is effective in its attractiveness, and the fact that it is in the front position compared to other visual elements. According to the results obtained in the review of the visual attention and perception literature in the context of the dimensions and viewing angles of the objects, large-sized objects and objects perceived as close attract attention more quickly (Kızıl, 2000, Zimbardo & Gerrig, 2016). The visual appeal of the Arçelik brand's robot mascot is low compared to other visuals. It was determined that the visual element with the highest visual appeal in Arçelik's Instagram advertisement was the parent product information. It

has been determined that the visual appeal of Aras Cargo's object type mascot is low. In Aras' advertisement, the visual appeal of the top campaign information is higher than the mascot. It has been observed that the visual appeal of the fantastic hero type mascot of Yapı Kredi brand is low.

6. CONCLUSIONS

It has been observed that the visual attention appeal of campaign information in Yapı Kredi Instagram advertisement is higher than other visual elements.

It was determined that in most of the advertisements included in the research, the most striking visual element was positioned in the middle and upper part of the design. Supporting this result, in the eye tracking study prepared by Girişken for photographs, it was concluded that the participants focused on the middle regions first (Girişken, 2015). On the other hand, in the context of the last research question of the study, the attention-grabbing levels of different types of mascots were compared by looking at their metric averages. Accordingly, it has been concluded that object and animal type mascots are more attractive than robot and fantasy hero type mascots.

It has been observed that there are not enough experimental studies in the literature regarding the visual appeal of brand mascots. For this reason, conducting different experimental studies on brand mascots will contribute to the marketing and advertising literature. In future studies, conducting different studies by minimizing the effect of brand awareness and limitations related to design features on visual attention will support the literature in the field.

This study, which proves the theoretical effects of brand mascots on consumers' attention, also provides important clues for the practical use of brand mascots. In this context, the effects of brand mascots that attract consumers' attention vary depending on the medium used, such as color, size, element arrangement, logo, and text usage. Therefore, the data obtained from this research offers practical suggestions for the usage of brand mascots.

In this research, conducted with biometric measurement methods, consumers' cognitive attention levels were determined. The findings obtained will form the basis for future studies on brand mascots in advertising and social media literature as a result of the analysis.

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