THE ROLE OF A MASCOT AS A PROMOTIONAL MEDIA FOR IFREE GROUP

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ABSTRACT

iFree Group Travelution Indonesia already has a company logo and social media that acts as an identity and a promotional medium for a brand. But, considering the intense market competition, a mascot is needed to strengthen the brand's identity and media promotion. It is the right choice because it remains flexible to the brand's needs and is acceptable to all ages. 5 Steps of Design from Robin Landa is used in the process of designing a mascot. Steps from information gathering through literature review, interviews, and questionnaires, to doing sketches and finalizing mascot design are done systematically to produce a suitable mascot for iFree Group. The result is shown in the mascot's shape, posture, pose, and expression which convey a comfortable, trustworthy, and high-tech impression. Furthermore, the mascot is also designed in other mediums such as Instagram feeds and stories, luggage tags, holiday greeting cards for email newsletters, digital stickers, mascots prototype as virtual assistants on WhatsApp, and thank you cards for package delivery.

Keywords: Brand identity, mascot, promotion medium

1. PREFACE

Building positive and effective communication with consumers is very important for brands. There are many ways to achieve this, one of which is through the use of a mascot. With a mascot, consumers can connect more emotionally, and feel comfortable and safe with the brand. As well as being beneficial to consumers, mascots are also an inexpensive, relevant, and the best way to market products for brands that own them. If it is designed properly and produces a unique mascot, the brand can be recognized faster and remembered longer through the mascot it has, and make it one step ahead of the brand's competitors. In addition to these myriad benefits, having a mascot for a brand is also beneficial in the long term because all aspects of the mascot can be adapted to the needs of the brand, thereby minimizing unwanted out-of-control events.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative methods are used in designing the iFree Group mascot, it refers to the five steps designed by Robin Landa, as follows:

Orientation

In this stage, primary and secondary data collection was carried out by interviewing company information, needs, and limitations in using the mascot as a medium for company promotion with the Senior Marketing Executive of iFree Group Indonesia, Ms. Tia Guswita. In addition, the questionnaire was also conducted with 50 respondents. The average age of the respondents is between 20-29 years, with their domicile in JABODETABEK and other main city in Indonesia. Meanwhile, a literature study was conducted to collect secondary data.

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Analysis and Strategy
With the existing data, an in-depth analysis needs to be carried out so that strategies for guidelines or briefs that are suitable for the purpose can be implemented in designing the mascot.

Design Concept
The design concept is formed through 4 stages, namely: discovery of the basic idea (insight); incubation and illumination as well as concept testing.

Design Development
After the concept is mature, the mascot design is continued by doing sketches and sketch development, so that a complete mascot design can be created.

Implementation
The results of the mascot design are implemented into other media such as Instagram feeds & stories, holiday greeting cards, and others.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Target Audiences
iFree Group mascot are designed for all gender consumers, with an age range of 20-29 years, with their domicile in JABODETABEK and another main city in Indonesia. They have a big spending budget and frequently travel overseas, either for work or holiday.

Key Facts
Based The key facts obtained based on the results of the analysis are as follows: (a) The traits/attitudes that suit the iFree Group are: Trustworthy, high-tech, and comfortable; (b) Respondents' favorite types of illustrations for mascots are simple cartoon types, 3D types, and detailed cartoon types; (c) To reduce production costs, the chosen design is a mascot with a simple cartoon type; (d) Respondents' favorite types of mascot shapes are Humanoid (but not directly representing products, only company types), abstract (but not directly representing products, only company types), and products (directly representing products being sold); (e) Because the designed mascot will also be used as a costume, the use of a humanoid mascot is considered more appropriate; (f) In line with the comfortable nature of the travel accessories that the mascot wants to highlight, designs with cute characteristics can generally be accepted by all age groups. This can be realized through friendly expressions (smiles), the proportion of faces that are close together and large in size (eyes), as well as the overall shape of the mascot which tends to be round, curved or contorted; (g) Trustworthiness in mascot design is synonymous with a straight posture, and other elements that match this trait can be added; (h) High-tech properties are identical to the iFree MOGO S international sim card product, and other elements that match these properties can be added.

The Concept and Creative Strategy
Creative Strategy
The creative strategy that will be used is The Whole Brain Strategy. Rationally, the mascot should be able to highlight international sim card products and travel accessories from the iFree Group. Apart from that, through the designed mascot, consumers need to feel the trustworthiness, comfort, and high-tech of the iFree Group. Creatively, the mascot design must be attractive, easily recognizable, in accordance with the company's design guidelines, and easily distinguished from other mascots.

Creative Concept
The creative concept that will be carried out uses a humanoid shape so that it can be used as a costume. In addition, the mascot also needs to display three main traits: trustworthiness, comfortable, and high-tech.

In conveying these characteristics, there are several mascot design elements that can be created, namely:
(a) Mascot texture and shape
The overall texture of the robot can be made entirely soft like bird feathers and pillows, or a combination of smooth textures like metal surfaces with some soft parts to strike a balance between high-tech and comfort. Alternatively, the texture of the mascot can also be made soft like cloth, but waterproof, so that it becomes a combination of comfortable and sophisticated properties, considering the iFree Group's Ebbly duffel travel bag which is also made of cloth but waterproof.

The shape of the mascot can be dominated by curved sides to highlight the comfortable and sophisticated nature, but it doesn't always have to be round because having straight sides on several sides will actually increase the trustworthiness (steadfastness) of the mascot.

Apart from being comfortable and trustworthy, the mascot must also show its high-tech nature with various appropriate shapes and elements, for example by adding a signal antenna.

(a) Expression
The mascot's main expression must always be friendly, this can be manifested by smiling expressions, as well as by placing large facial features (big eyes) close together (eyes, nose, mouth) to give a cute impression, which can reinforce a friendly impression. However, other expressions such as excitement, surprise, sadness, and anger can be designed to complement the mascot if required in certain circumstances.

(b) Postures and poses
The main posture of the mascot can be designed to be straight so that trustworthiness is evident in the mascot. In addition, the main pose of the mascot needs to show a friendly and trustworthy nature.

Creative Decision
Verbal Decision
The name of the mascot is i-Min, where the letter "I" is taken from "I" in the "iFree Group", and the word Min comes from the term admin.

Visual Decision
(a) Mascot illustration
The mascot is humanoid in shape for promotional costumes and can accentuate comfort, trustworthiness, and sophistication. The shape of the mascot is designed to tend to be round or curved with a combination of upright shapes so that there is a combination of comfort and trustworthiness. The mascot design can also include iFree Group products in it.

(b) Various mascot expressions
The mascot expression has several variations, namely: happy, excited, sad, surprised, and angry.

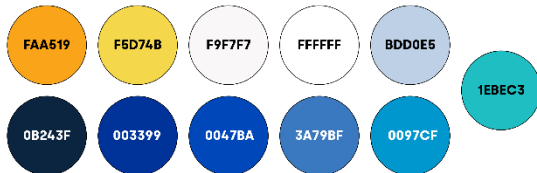(c)   Variation of the mascot on certain occasions
The mascot will also have variations for various holidays celebrated in Indonesia, such as Ramadhan, Chinese New Year, Nyepi, Vesak, Christmas, and New Year.

(d)Mascot color scheme
The color scheme uses the iFree Group color palette as follows:

Figure 1
iFree Group Color Palette

The type of font used is Silka, which are the company official font type. It is used in design for mascot implementation in other medium.

Figure 2
Silka font

Media Decision
Media decision for iFree Group mascot consist of digital mascot, and mascot in other medium such as Instagram feeds and stories, luggage tags, holiday greeting cards for email newsletters, digital stickers, mascots prototype as virtual assistants on WhatsApp, and thank you cards for package delivery.

Figure 3
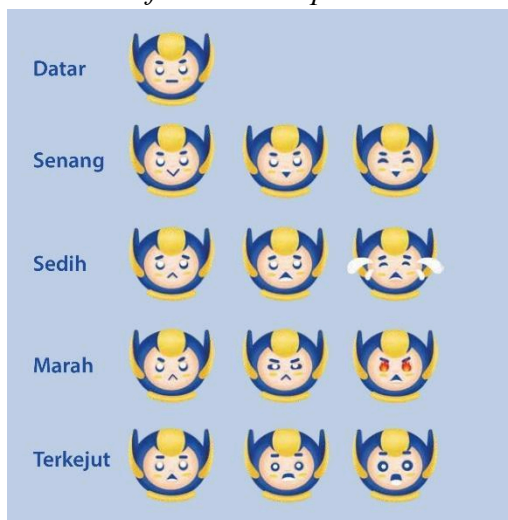*Mascot full body design, with it's signature pose*

Design Media
Main Media

Figure 4
Front, side, and back view of mascot

Figure 5
Variation of mascot's expression

Secondary Media
Figure 6
Instagram Feed design with iFree Group mascot

Figure 7
Instagram Story design with iFree Group mascot

Figure 8
Mascot illustration for holiday greetings

Figure 9
Holiday greetings mockup in newsletter version

Figure 10
Thank you card for sending packages

Figure 11
Mascot as digital stickers, seen on light and dark chat background

Figure 12
Mascot as profile picture for WhatsApp virtual assistant purpose

Figure 13
Prototype of mascot as WhatsApp virtual assistant

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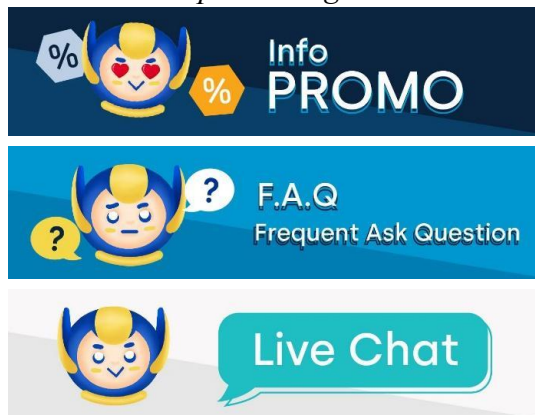
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Figure 14

Menu banner option design used in virtual assistant prototype

Figure 15

Customer satisfaction banner option design for virtual assistant prototype

Figure 16

Luggage tag design with mascot and countries landmark as the cover

Figure 17
Short intro video for iFree's sim card, combined with augmented reality technology (by scanning the physical sim card cover, triggering the short video)

4.   CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In designing the mascot and implementing the media, it is necessary to have a good understanding of character design, both in terms of body posture and character expressions. In addition, an understanding of color and basic design elements such as lines, shapes, and others can also add detailed meaning to the mascot to be designed.

The media for implementing the mascot must also be considered carefully, such as when designing a mascot character. The media chosen must be in accordance with the mascot created and the company it represents. However, the implementation media that has been made in this project is in accordance with the needs and type of company.

Acknowledgement

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