EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the first study to systematically examine how gender and race are represented in brand mascots. Branding is the *sine qua non* of successful products, and top selling brands have a name, symbol, design, motto and other features that make it easy to readily identify them. Mascots, which typically take the form of spokespeople or spokescreatures, are vital to effective branding because they are the image that succinctly conveys the spirit of the brand. Mascot images also convey notions of who matters more in society. Like representation in film, television, and other forms of mass communication, gender and race representations in the familiar images seen in brand advertising send subtle messages about which identities have the authority to confirm value on a product. In this report, we examine how women and people of color are represented in the top selling products in the U.S. to determine whether gender and racial bias exists with mascots.

This executive summary reports the findings of a content analysis of mascots from the 500 top selling products in each of the following thirteen consumer product categories: Bakery; beauty care; dairy; deli; frozen foods; general merchandise; grocery; health care; household care; meat; produce; pet care; and personal care. A team of five researchers systematically reviewed advertising and packaging for the 6,500 products in these product categories and identified products with mascots. The findings in this report are based on 1,096 product mascots.

**Gender**

- Male mascots outnumber female mascots two-to-one (67.1% compared to 31.4%).

![Figure 1: Gender of Mascots](image)
• One-in-four (25.4%) female mascots are presented as gender stereotypes; significantly more than male mascots (15.9%).

• Female mascots are significantly less likely to be shown as commanding (possessing authority) than male mascots (22.9% compared to 14.5%).

• Male mascots are also more likely to be shown as threatening (likely to cause damage or danger) than female mascots (4.1% compared to 1.5%).

• One-in-five female mascots is shown as skinny or very skinny (19.4%), while one-in-ten (11.0%) male mascots is shown with unusually large muscles.

• Nearly one-in-ten (8.0%) female mascots are shown as wearing sexually revealing clothing, while less than 1% of male mascots wear revealing clothing.

• Female mascots are more likely to be shown as partially nude than male mascots (7.5% compared to 0.3%).
• Male mascots are seven times more likely to be shown as funny than female mascots (18.4% compared to 2.6%).

Race
• People of color constitute 38% of the U.S. population, but only 15.2% of mascots.
- Among mascots of color, 18.1% are female while 12.7% are male.

- Mascots of color are significantly more likely to be shown as cooking or preparing food than white mascots (28.1% compared to 10.6%).

- Two-thirds (65.6%) of mascots of color are represented as racial/ethnic stereotypes compared to only 2.8% of white mascots.

- Mascots of color are twice as likely to be portrayed as threatening than white mascots (4.7% compared to 1.7%).

- White mascots are twice as likely to be shown as commanding than mascots of color (27.0% compared to 14.1%).

- White mascots are more likely to be shown eating or drinking than mascots of color (8.4% compared to 0%).