

THE MEANING OF BRAND IMAGE IN SHAPING CONSUMER DECISIONS TO USE NAIL ART SERVICES: A CASE STUDY OF JEHA NAILS SURABAYA

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Abstract

This study aims to understand the meaning of brand image in consumer decision-making when using nail art services at Jeha Nails Surabaya. The background of this research is based on the growing importance of brand image in shaping consumer perceptions and loyalty, particularly in the creative service industry. A qualitative method was employed, using in-depth interviews with three key informants who are loyal customers of Jeha Nails. The findings reveal that visual elements such as the four-leaf clover logo and the color palette of emerald green and gray evoke a sense of professionalism, elegance, and emotional connection. Additionally, the studio's positioning as an "introvert nail studio" contributes to a comfortable and emotionally engaging customer experience, enhancing its appeal to its target market. The implementation of a full appointment system further strengthens the brand image by emphasizing service personalization and attention to detail. These results support theoretical perspectives which suggest that brand image is not only formed through visual identity but also through affective and sensory experiences. Jeha Nails successfully combines symbolic meaning, personalized service, and visual aesthetics to construct a brand image that resonates with consumers on an emotional level. In conclusion, a brand image that touches the emotional aspects of consumers can significantly influence purchase decisions and foster long-term customer loyalty. This study highlights the importance of building meaningful brand narratives in niche service industries such as nail art, where consumer connection is driven by more than just product quality, but it is shaped by how the brand makes them feel.

Keywords: brand image, consumer behavior, nail art, service personalization

Introduction

In the current digital era and the advancement of technology, consumers are increasingly aware in choosing the products and services they use. This awareness is not only related to product quality, but also to the values, image, and experiences offered by a brand. Brand awareness and brand image are two important elements that are interrelated in shaping consumer perceptions. In an increasingly competitive business environment, a brand must be able to instill a strong identity to remain relevant and attract consumer attention. This is particularly crucial for small and medium-sized enterprises, which must compete not only in terms of price or technical quality but also in how they "present" themselves to the market. Brand image becomes a strategic aspect that reflects professionalism, seriousness in service delivery, and can create a first impression that determines whether consumers will proceed to make a purchase.

One service sector that has experienced significant growth in recent years is the beauty industry, particularly nail art. According to Krisnawati (2022), nail art is the act of beautifying nails by adding drawings, paintings, or ornaments, either directly on natural nails or using artificial nails. This includes techniques and decorations such as coloring, painting, stickers, and three-dimensional applications.

Nail art has evolved from what was once considered a simple form of nail care into a form of self-expression, a symbol of lifestyle, and even a means to boost confidence in social life. Amid the growing demand for aesthetics, many individuals have chosen to pursue nail art as a profession or business. This trend is supported by the increasing accessibility of self-taught nail art education, without the need to go through lengthy formal education. As a result, more and more nail art studios are emerging, each offering different characters and unique traits to the market.

Alongside the influence of social media trends that encourage people to look their best in daily life especially among the younger generation such as Gen-Z, nail art is no longer merely an option, but has become an important secondary need. Many customers choose nail art studios not only for their technical quality but also for the comfort, studio aesthetics, service, and brand image displayed on social media. Therefore, it is

essential for business owners in this field to build a strong, distinctive brand image that aligns with the needs and characteristics of their target market.

According to Christodoulides & de Chernatony (2015), brand image is the perception or mental picture formed in consumers' minds toward a brand, which is built through a series of experiences, marketing communications, and direct interactions with the brand. A strong brand image not only reflects functional product excellence but also touches emotional aspects, which can create psychological attachment with consumers. When a brand is able to build a positive emotional bond, it increases the potential for enhancing customer loyalty.

Muyassirah (2021) explains that consumer behavior after a purchase can serve as an indicator of the brand's success in meeting customer expectations. If consumers are satisfied with the service, they tend to make repeat purchases and recommend the brand to others.

Beyond the process stages, purchasing decisions are also influenced by various factors. These include personal aspects (such as lifestyle preferences and individual values), social factors (such as peer or community influence), and situational aspects (including price, promotions, or the physical condition of the service). Previous consumer experiences with the brand or similar services also significantly influence their decisions (Yusuf et al., 2020).

A study by Utami and Nursiah (2020) shows that brand image has a significant impact on consumer purchasing decisions. Brands that can create a positive image are more likely to gain consumer trust and loyalty, making them more inclined to repurchase and recommend the brand to others. This aligns with Tjiptono (2015), who states that consumers tend to choose brands with a good reputation, as they are perceived to provide added emotional and functional value. In the context of nail art services, such as at Jaha Nails, brand image is not only determined by the final result of the nail art itself, but also by the overall service experience, studio ambiance, comfort, and the personal interaction between customers and service providers.

Furthermore, in a qualitative approach, the relationship between brand image and purchasing decisions can be explored through how consumers personally interpret their experiences. Brand image is no longer merely a visual representation or marketing message but has become a reflection of the values, lifestyle, and identity consumers want to embody. Therefore, understanding the meaning constructed from consumer experiences of brand image is essential in comprehending their decision-making process (Creswell, 2018).

Thus, it can be concluded that brand image and purchasing decisions are closely related. A strong brand image can form positive perceptions and increase consumer tendency to choose a particular brand, especially in service-based sectors that emphasize direct experience, such as nail art.

Jaha Nails is a private nail art studio in Surabaya that positions itself with a distinctive image, different from typical nail art studios. Adopting a brand identity as an "introvert nail art studio," Jaha Nails was founded based on the owner's introverted character and a deep understanding of market segments with similar traits. Introverted individuals typically avoid crowded places, long uncomfortable conversations, and socially draining activities. Recognizing these needs, Jaha Nails offers an experience specifically designed so that each nail session becomes a moment for self-time, healing, and energy recharge.

The studio offers personalized experiences ranging from private one-on-one sessions, a choice of interaction atmospheres (quiet manicure, soft light chat, to chatty & fun conversation), as well as options for music and beverages tailored to customer preferences. This personal and niche approach has become the studio's unique selling point that differentiates Jaha Nails from its competitors. The brand image is designed not only to attract attention but also to foster loyalty among customer segments who feel emotionally and psychologically represented.

For Jaha Nails, it is essential to understand how far the crafted brand image has succeeded in shaping positive perceptions in consumers' minds and whether these perceptions influence their decision to use the service. Does the experience truly meet their expectations? Has the developed brand image effectively conveyed the intended values to customers? To answer these questions, a study is required that explores the meaning of brand image more deeply from the consumer's perspective.

With a market that is becoming more selective and demanding more personal approaches, brand image is no longer just a visual element or marketing strategy. It has become a reflection of the values, experiences, and identity internalized by consumers. Therefore, understanding the meaning of brand image from the consumer's point of view is a crucial step in ensuring that the brand identity created by Jaha Nails is truly accepted and interpreted in line with its original goals. This exploration not only helps in evaluating the effectiveness of brand communication strategies but also provides a solid foundation for future brand development strategies that are more relevant, authentic, and emotionally resonant with consumers.

Based on the aforementioned explanation, this research is directed toward examining more deeply how consumers interpret the brand image of Jaha Nails and how this interpretation influences their decision-making process in using nail art services. Furthermore, it is important to identify which elements within the brand image are considered the most influential in the consumers' decision-making considerations. This research not only focuses on evaluating current consumer perceptions but also aims to uncover what kind of

ideal brand image should continue to be developed by Jeha Nails in order to align with the characteristics of its target market and to build a stronger emotional connection.

This study aims to explore the meaning of Jeha Nails' brand image from the perspective of consumers as direct users of its nail art services, and to identify the key elements of the brand image that have a significant influence on their decision-making process. Therefore, the findings of this study are expected to serve as a foundation for evaluating and developing a more targeted and sustainable brand image strategy.

The benefits of this study can be divided into two aspects. First, academically, this research contributes to enriching the literature on brand image within the context of service businesses, particularly in the beauty and nail art industry, through a qualitative approach that emphasizes the consumer's point of view. Second, from a practical standpoint, this study can provide valuable input for Jeha Nails in evaluating the effectiveness of the brand image that has been established, as well as in designing a brand communication strategy that is more authentic and relevant to the needs and expectations of its consumers. By deeply understanding consumer perceptions, Jeha Nails can continue to strengthen its position as a nail art studio that not only offers aesthetic services, but also delivers meaningful and personalized experiences to its customers.

Methods

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of how consumers interpret the brand image of Jeha Nails and how it influences their decision to use its nail art services. This approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to describe a phenomenon naturally and contextually from the participants' point of view. A qualitative method is suitable as it helps explore consumers' subjective perspectives and their experiences in responding to services more deeply (Creswell, 2018).

The data for this study were collected using two main methods: interviews and observations. The interviews were conducted directly with three consumers who had used Jeha Nails' services, selected using purposive sampling. Informants were chosen based on specific criteria namely, consumers who had experienced the service at least once to ensure the data collected is relevant to the research focus. Some of the key questions asked included:

1. What was your first impression of Jeha Nails as a brand?
2. How was your experience getting a nail art service at Jeha Nails?
3. What factors made you choose Jeha Nails over other nail art studios?

These questions aimed to explore personal experiences, brand image perceptions, and the reasons behind the decision to use the service. In addition to interviews, direct observation was carried out at the service location to observe customer behavior and the overall service environment. The observation helped capture brand image elements offered by Jeha Nails, such as the studio ambiance, interaction styles, and personalized service options and how these were received by clients.

To strengthen understanding and support data analysis, the researcher also conducted a literature review using journals, books, and relevant online articles. All collected data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns and consumer interpretations of Jeha Nails' brand image in their decision-making process to use its nail art services.

Results and Discussions

Interview Findings

Based on interviews with three informants who are active customers of Jeha Nails Surabaya, it was found that their first impressions of the brand were very strong and long-lasting. The informants expressed that when they first discovered Jeha Nails, either through social media or recommendations, they immediately felt that the studio had a distinct character compared to other nail art places. One informant noted that the visual nuances presented—such as the emerald green and grey color palette and the four-leaf clover logo design—created a professional, classy, and calming impression. Although not all of them understood the symbolic meaning behind these visual elements, they agreed that the overall appearance conveyed a sense that the brand was not formed carelessly, but rather through thoughtful consideration and a consistent aesthetic value.

Their experiences during nail art sessions at Jeha Nails were also perceived very positively. One of the most outstanding aspects for the customers was the booking process, which they felt was very personal and unlike any experience they had encountered elsewhere. Consumers were asked to fill out a fairly detailed form, including design preferences, music references, desired communication atmosphere during the treatment, and even the drink they would like to be served. For the informants, this initial step not only made it easier to express their needs but also created the expectation that the service they would receive was truly tailored to them as individuals. One customer even mentioned that she felt "treated as someone special, not just an ordinary client." This shows that even the early interactions before the treatment contributed to building an emotional bond between the customer and the brand.

The reasons the informants chose Jeha Nails over other nail art studios were also rooted in emotional and psychological experiences, rather than merely considerations of price or design trends. The concept of an “introvert nail studio” was highly appreciated, especially by those who tend to feel uncomfortable in crowded or overly open spaces. This studio was perceived as able to provide an intimate, calm atmosphere that was friendly toward the personal needs of customers, without social pressure or expectations to behave in a certain way during the treatment. One informant even said she felt like she was “coming to a place that knows how to make me feel comfortable and not have to talk much.” This indicates that the brand image of Jeha Nails is not only built through visual aspects but also through the ambiance, service approach, and the ability to understand the emotional preferences of its consumers.

Overall, the interviews showed that customers’ decisions to use Jeha Nails’ services were greatly influenced by a combination of visual identity, personal experience, and the emotional values they felt during their interaction with the brand. Jeha Nails is seen as successfully forming a strong and unique brand image through an experience that touches not only on aesthetics but also on the affective and psychological aspects of its clients. This approach makes customers feel appreciated, understood, and ultimately encouraged to return and recommend the studio to others.

Observation Findings

During the observation process, the researcher paid close attention to how a Nailist (Nail Artist) at Jeha Nails carried out her professional role in creating a personalized experience for each client. From the beginning of the session, the Nailist carefully reviewed the preferences that the client had filled out in the booking form, ranging from design references, preferred interaction atmosphere (more conversation, light chatting, or quiet), beverage choices, to favorite songs.

As a Nailist, she appeared to adapt her communication style accordingly. For clients who selected a “quiet” atmosphere, the Nailist kept the conversation to a minimum, speaking only when necessary, using a soft and polite tone. However, when serving clients who chose “light chatting,” she took the time to bring up light topics about daily life, while still maintaining a comfortable tone that did not distract from the main focus of the service. In contrast, for clients who selected “more conversation,” she made a greater effort to open up discussions, even sharing personal experiences that the client might be able to relate to.

The Nailist also showed careful attention to detail in her technique. She gently adjusted the position of the client’s hands several times to ensure the client did not feel stiff and reconfirmed any sudden design changes the client wanted. All of these actions were performed with calmness and patience, reflecting the values of Jeha Nails as a studio that respects both the process and the comfort of the client.

The Nailist’s workspace was also neatly organized and had a calm atmosphere. There were no interruptions from other clients because the one-on-one system was consistently implemented. The studio’s interior, which uses an emerald green and grey palette, conveyed a soothing impression that was not only felt by the clients but also helped the Nailist work more focused and relaxed.

From the Nailist’s perspective, the interaction was not just about technical service but also about creating an emotional connection through attention and empathy. The Nailist seemed fully aware that every small element from the initial greeting, the appreciated silence, to the music and drink prepared, contributes to Jeha Nails’ brand image as a studio that deeply understands and values the client’s personality.

Discussion

In understanding how the brand image of Jeha Nails is formed, it is important to see that the consumer experience at this studio is not only practical but also deeply personal and emotionally meaningful. Jeha Nails does not merely position itself as a provider of nail art services, but instead builds an experiential ecosystem that allows consumers to feel understood, accepted, and cared for. This experience is constructed through a combination of spatial ambiance, interpersonal communication, and carefully selected symbols.

The approach taken by Jeha Nails reflects a shift in modern branding strategies that emphasize emotional closeness and symbolic relevance. Consumers are not just seeking beautiful nails as an end result, but a setting that provides a sense of safety and comfort, as well as services that feel personally tailored to them. This indicates that brand image cannot be shaped solely through visual promotion, but must also be built through direct interactions that leave a profound psychological impression. In this context, the concept of brand image as described by Christodoulides & de Chernatony (2015) becomes relevant, in which brand perception includes symbolic and emotional dimensions that go beyond mere external appearances.

The visual symbols such as the logo and color choices used by Jeha Nails are not merely aesthetic. These elements act as a form of indirect communication that conveys the character of the brand. The choice of the four-leaf clover symbol, for instance, conveys a sense of luck, sincerity, and exclusivity messages that are not always spoken but are felt. This meaning can be explained through a semiotic approach, where symbols function as tools that build associations and meaning in the consumer’s mind. The use of emerald green and

grey also carries certain psychological connotations that enhance the premium yet calming atmosphere, aligning with the preferences of the target audience who tend to avoid noisy or overly flashy environments.

The connection with consumer decision-making theory by Kotler & Keller (2016) is evident in how Jeha Nails supports the customer at each stage, from the emergence of need to post-purchase experience. Consumers who feel understood are more confident in making choices, and the positive experiences they have contribute to the natural formation of loyalty. In the context of services, post-purchase experience has a long-term impact on brand perception, as it touches on both memory and emotion simultaneously.

The formation of Jeha Nails' brand image can also be understood through the lens of consumer experience theory as proposed by Solomon (2018), wherein a consumer's interaction with a brand does not merely create opinions, but also builds a personal relationship that adds emotional value. Here, the experience created is authentic, not the product of marketing fabrication. With personalized services, consumers do not feel like ordinary customers but rather as individuals whose preferences are respected and valued.

By using a qualitative approach, this study captures the subjective side of the consumer experience, which cannot be fully explained through numerical or quantitative data. Interpretation of consumer narratives becomes essential to understanding how brand image is formed socially and culturally.

Overall, it can be seen that the strength of the Jeha Nails brand lies in its consistency in delivering the values it upholds: comfort, personalization, and sincerity. The meaning of brand image is not derived solely from logo design or studio color scheme, but from the way consumers feel treated and appreciated. Jeha Nails successfully combines visual and emotional elements into a unified whole, making the customer experience feel holistic and leaving a lasting impression.

Conclusion and Suggestions

This study aims to understand how consumers interpret the brand image of Jeha Nails and how this meaning influences their decision-making in using nail art services at the studio. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that consumers perceive Jeha Nails' brand image as a combination of comfort, calmness, attention to detail, and a distinctive personal touch. This brand image is shaped not only through visual elements such as the four-leaf clover logo and the studio's color palette, but also through emotional and interpersonal experiences encountered during the service process.

This brand image plays a significant role in influencing consumers' decisions to choose Jeha Nails over other service providers. Consumers do not merely consider the final result of the nail art but also the studio atmosphere, interactions with the nail artist, and personalized services tailored to their preferences. This shows that the brand image of Jeha Nails is not simply a visual perception or one-way communication, but rather a result of meaningful social interaction and emotional experience.

The implications of these findings highlight the importance of maintaining and continuously enhancing the elements that shape a holistic consumer experience. The differentiation strategy based on personalization and comfort has proven to be a major strength in building customer loyalty and a strong brand image.

For Jeha Nails, it is suggested to maintain and continue developing its personalized service approach. Small details such as drink options, music preferences, and recording of client preferences have proven effective in strengthening the brand image. Jeha Nails could also consider documenting customer testimonials both visually and narratively to enhance the brand's identity through storytelling. For future researchers, this study is limited in terms of the number of informants and was conducted in a major city where brand awareness tends to be higher. Future studies may expand the number and diversity of respondents and include smaller cities to see whether the meaning of brand image and its influence on purchasing decisions differ across regions. Lastly, for other players in the beauty industry, this research shows the importance of building a brand image that is not only visual but also emotional and symbolic. Studios or businesses in this sector can take valuable lessons from Jeha Nails' strategy in creating meaningful personal connections with customers, as this plays a significant role in encouraging purchasing decisions and customer loyalty.

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