Perceived brand image in customers' perceptions - A netnography study

Le Thi Thanh Xuan, Le Hoai Kieu Giang[*]

ABSTRACT

The existing body of literature on brand image highlights a pressing demand for further investigation into this area, leveraging new and diverse data sources, particularly within the dynamic landscape of the online environment. To respond to the call from previous studies, the present study employs netnography as the research method, and netnographic data to explore brand image aspects of Dookki - an F&B brand, from customers' perceptions. To be more specific, the method employed in this study utilizes netnographic data to delve deeply into various facets of the brand image associated with Dookki as perceived by its customers. Netnography was chosen as it can help to capture insights from online interactions and discussions and offers a comprehensive lens through which to explore various aspects of brand image in the social media landscape. Specifically, symbolic Netnography with archival netnographic data was apply to conduct the research in 06 online communities with 1,203 comments in 64 posts. The selected online communities are based on 05 criteria of netnographic methodology, consisting of having a research question relevant segment, topic or group; high ``traffic'' of postings; large numbers of discrete message posters; detailed or descriptively rich data, and many between-member interactions of the type required by the research question. The research findings show that, in customers' perceptions, there are 05 aspects of Dookki's brand image with 15 items, including Food quality, Service quality, Price fairness, Marketing activities, and Hygiene. Among 15 items identified in this study, Responsiveness, Taste, Assurance, and Empathy are mentioned in comments and reviews with the highest frequencies. The findings of this study yield valuable contributions to both theoretical frameworks and empirical understanding in the field.

Key words: brand image, netnography, online communities, F&B

Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology – VNU-HCM, 268 Ly Thuong Kiet Street, Ward 14, District 10, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Correspondence

Le Hoai Kieu Giang, Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology – VNU-HCM, 268 Ly Thuong Kiet Street, Ward 14, District 10, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Email: lhkgiang@hcmut.edu.vn

Check for updates

VNUHCM PRESS

1. INTRODUCTION

In brand management, understanding customers' brand perspectives is essential, whether positive or negative. Customers' feelings and reviews of brands are the key elements to describe the relationship between brands and customers. The research findings of previous studies show that brand image plays a vital role in in marketing, and positively impacts on brand trust, brand equity, customer satisfaction, etc.[1-3]. Investigating and studying customers' perspectives are pivotal for successful brand management. Plumeyer et al.[2] quoted Aaker's brand image definition as anything linked to the memory of a brand (such as product attributes, customer benefits, or relative price); meanwhile, Keller's definition explained brand image as consumers' perceptions of what reflects the brand in their memory in the form of a network. The common issue in these two works is that brand image is based on customers' eyes. Moreover, in the systematic review paper, Plumeyer et al.[2] stated that there is no comprehensive review of how to measure brand image in the literature. Hence, it is worth that more research on brand image should be conducted..

Nowadays, consumers find it easier to share their brand experience and look for information about any goods or services from others in a few seconds[4]. That is because of the rocket development of the internet and social media. Globally, the number of internet users and social media users is increasing. Moreover, social online platforms, including Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram, have become popular for users to share and communicate. The rapid growth of using social online platforms has increased the research topic of social media all over the world, but this topic still needs to be completed in Vietnam[5]. In online communities, a large number of different topics are discussed publicly such as fashion, skincare, travelling, and lifestyle. Among them, an ongoing rising trend in the Vietnamese online social environment and attracting a lot of users' interest is the sharing of food reviews[5]. The information shared in various online communities has a crucial impact on the brand image of the food service providers. In the context of

high competition and high demand in Vietnam's F&B sector, brand image is of utmost importance and a top priority for businesses since it significantly influences customer purchase behaviors and loyalty[6]. While there is a growing academic interest in building a strong brand image, research is still being conducted with a customer-oriented approach that focuses on their experience of service[7]. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a study that explores the brand image in the F&B segment in Vietnam from the customer's perspective.

To collect pure opinions from customers (via shares, reviews, conversations, discussions, and debates) and to not influence the reviews reflected by customers, the online communication on social platforms is suitable since it does reflect customers' real-time experiences of brands. It is called social online listening[8]. Recently, conducting online research has been taken into consideration, because online environment has become popular in consumers' lives. Netnography, developed by Kozinets[9–11], can intentionally serve as an appropriate methodology for conducting marketing research in the online environment.

The study conducted by Villegas[12] provides a review of studies employing netnography in many research contexts, especially in the marketing discipline. Villegas highlighted that the studies on social media communities are still need to be expanded. Later, the review paper on brand image literature conducted by Plumeyer et al.[2] found some significant issues. Firstly, brand-related user-generated content is rapidly growing in social media platforms. Secondly, only a few studies on brand image use secondary data; hence new data sources should be employed. Thirdly, more studies should be conducted on many brand types to confirm the use of user-generated content use in brand image research. In short, the review of brand image literature shows some critical gaps in brand image literature. The gaps include that (i) there is a necessity to employ a qualitative approach to research brand image in the digital world; and (ii) new data sources are needed for studying brand image.

To respond to gaps found in the literature, the present study employs netnography to explore the brand image of an F&B brand which is shared on online communities by customers. Specifically, the study's objectives are to (i) explore aspects of the brand image of Dookki Vietnam in customers' perceptions, and (ii) propose suggestions for Dookki Vietnam and other F&B brands to improve their brand images.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Social exchange theory and information sharing in online communities

Communication in online communities is facilitated by social media and can be explained by social exchange theory (SET). Communication in online communities can be understood as the ways in which members exchange publicly in posts for the entire group to read and to benefit from the exchange[13]. SET is to understand behaviors between individuals and within groups, and why people share as well as exchange information. In the present study, SET can play the role of the foundation for sharing information between members about the brand and support others to have information about the brand. This is one example of eWOM to improve the efficiency of individual consumption[14]. All shares of consumers about brands can be considered as a value and lead to a sustainable competitive advantage (as cited in [14]).

2.2. Brand community and Online brand community

A brand community is considered as a group of consumers to share their enthusiasm for the brand[15]. The shares consist of consciousness, ritual and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility[16]. It is to reflect the relationships between customers, the product, the brand, the company and the other customers[15]. In short, a brand community can be defined as "… a specialised, non-geographically bound community …" for a branded product or service[16].

Even though brand communities have existed in the market, geographical distance was an obstacle for customers to communicate[17]. In their study, Muniz and O'Guinn[16] highlighted that World Wide Web pages include text, pictures and sound; hence, computer-mediated communication is an undeniable part of customers in online brand communities. By using online brand communities, customers can share their experiences, offerings from the brand, and receive benefits in solving their brand-related issues. Similarly, by tracing online brand communities, firms can improve their products and service quality[18]. Importantly, debates, advice, and reviews of customers become sources for firms to improve, to develop products/services[19].

2.3. Brand image

In a review paper about brand image, Parris & Guzmán[20] stated that there are two well-known and mostly-cited definitions of brand image among many

studies. In such definitions, whereby Keller explained what firms intend to show about their brands may be different compared to what is in customers' minds, and that is the brand image. Brand image is what is perceived by customers, reasonably or emotionally. Aaker also used the term "linked in memory to a brand" to explain brand image[21]. Similarly, Wijaya[22] presented the hierarchy of branding in which brand image is explained as something about the brand in the customers' minds. He also stated that the brand image, consisting of physical factors and psychological factors, links to customers' attitudes and beliefs leading to the choice of a brand. Even though there are many definitions of brand image, the similarity in these definitions is that brand image is preceived and reflected by stakeholders, individually. Parris and Guzmán[20] also stated that researchers are now challenging the traditional approach, which leads to the discussion of brand image in ongoing development.

In another review paper by Wijaya[22], brand image elements in previous studies are analysed. These elements consist of functional and emotional satisfaction and communication forms by the brand; objective or intrinsic attributes; brand association and brand personality; product-related attributes, non-product-related attirbutes, brand benefits, and brand attitude. The elements of brand image (in customers' minds) from previous studies have some notable characteristics, including (natural) elements from the product, these of information about a product, utilities of the product and information perceived by customers[22].

Scholars continue to discuss approaches and scales of brand image to measure brand image. Scholars have different measures to study brand image. Some of them designed their own scales. Meanwhile, some combine multiple scales to measure brand image[20]. However, it is shown that there is no unified scale which could accurately study brand image. In order to accurately measure brand image, Burns et al. (as cited in[20]) proposed the process of 02 steps, including conducting qualitative study to let stakeholders describe a brand and then conducting a quantitative study to test these associations[20]. The present study is conducting the first step to identify the association of an F&B brand.

Parris and Guzmán[20] also mentioned a qualitative approach which is proposed to respond to the step moving forward in brand image research. They also suggested the exploration of many stakeholders' perceptions of brand image in the digital world is crucial. This suggestion does echo with that by Plumeyer et

al.[2]. In their study, Plumeyer et al.[2] stated that today, a large number of customers are using social media platforms, such as Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram, etc. to communicate with others. Hence, future research should use new data sources (e.g. user-generated content, which is available in online communities). However, they also suggested investigating whether user-generated content is appropriate for all types of brands[2].

In short, there are two research gaps identified in brand image literature. Firstly, studying on brand image with new approach in the digital world is needed. In the present study, netnography, a qualitative approach, is proposed to explore customers' perceptions of online communities. Secondly, studying on brand image with new data sources is crucial. In the present study, user-generated content of an F&B brand is collected from online communities.

2.4. Netnography as a reasearch method

Netnography was proposed by Kozinets[9] to investigate customer behaviors in communities present on the Internet. In his paper, Kozinets stated that, netnography can be used as a methodology, a methodological tool and an exploratory tool to conduct a study in online communities. Later, Kozinets[10] continued to develop netnography as an online marketing research technique, based on the fact that consumers are using many online communication formats to share ideas and contact other consumers to find more objective information about products/services. Kozinets also revised and proposed new definitions of netnography in 2010, 2012, and 2020[23], and netnography can be employed in different areas, such as sociology, psychology, business, political science, medicine or nutrition and health management[24,25].

There are four types of netnographies[26]. Firstly, auto-netnography is about writing, vulnerability, art and sacrifice from a particularly "local" site: one's own identity and story. Secondly, symbolic Netnography is conducted on sites to study online social experiences and interaction of particular people's groups, cultures, nations, and languages in text-sharings. Thirdly, digital Netnography helps to understand cultures based on data analytic techniques from social media. Lastly, humanist Netnography focuses on the changing nature of human social existence and is guided by social issues of great importance.

There are three forms of netnographic data: archival, co-created, and fieldnote data[26]. Archival data has already existed and the researcher is not involved in

creating data. Co-created data is the one created in the interactions between the researchers and related members. Fieldnote data is made by the researcher while participating in online communities. The present study will employ symbolic netnography with archival data to explore what customers share (experience and interaction) about Dookki, the selected brand.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Dookki was founded in 2014 in Korea, and has more than 300 stores around the globe. The first store of Dookki Vietnam was opened in 2008, and now the number of stores in Vietnam has reached 60. It is a chain of restaurants to serve topokki buffet. Dookki's brand image is selected as the research object to provide more empirical evidence of user-generated content in brand image research, which is suggested by Plumeyer et al.[2].

The present study employ symbolic netnography, a qualitative approach[26], to explore customers' perspectives on the brand image of Dookki Vietnam. The netnographic data were collected from six online communities (Table 1). These communities were selected based on five criteria, consisting of (i) having a research question relevant segment, topic or group; (ii) having high "traffic" of postings, (iii) having large numbers of discrete message posters; (iv) having detailed or descriptively rich data; (v) having many between-member interactions of the type required by the research question[10].

Specifically, the present study chose six popular food review communities, where many posts and comments about restaurants including Dookki Vietnam could be found daily. These communities have a large number of members around 78 thousand to 2 million members from different Vietnamese regions and provinces. Moreover, the posts about Dookki Vietnam in these communities have many discussions by their members. In this study, the netnographic data were archival and produced data that were found, gathered and captured by researchers[26].

The collected data were analyzed in two steps. In the first step, posts and comments about Dookki from each community are collected and analysed using the thematic analysis method. This is the process of detecting patterns in qualitative data, which identify, categorize, and describe in detail each theme and subtheme covered in the netnographic data[27]. These themes and sub-themes represented Dookki Vietnam's brand image aspects from customer perspectives. In the second step, as instructed by Kozinets[10], themes and sub-themes identified in the first community are compared with the second one (See Figure 1). These comparisons are continued till the 6th community, and between communities.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The netnographic data were collected from 64 posts on selected communities that contained 1,203 comments about Dookki Vietnam. The research identified 5 themes and 15 subthemes representing Dookki brand image aspects (Table 2). The frequency indicated the number of times that customers gave comments about a specific aspect. The higher the frequency, the more customers are concerned about that aspect. As a result, that aspect plays a vital role in shaping the brand image of Dookki Vietnam in the customer's mind.

4.1. Food quality

Food quality is considered one of the most significant factors in the dining experience[28–30]. This study found that Dookki's customers often mentioned *taste*, *diversity of choice*, *food temperature*, *food presentation*, *serving size*, *healthy options*, and *freshness* when they discussed food quality aspects. Of which, *taste, diversity of choice,* and *food temperature* are the top three receiving the most comments, at 271, 55, and 52 respectively.

Taste got masses of comments from customers, and there was much controversy. A number of customers agreed that Dookki dishes taste too sweet, as reflected in a comment, *"In the first time I ate it, I left too much because it was too sweet to eat"* (Netno C1, 2023). Additionally, "taste like flour" was also mentioned keyword frequently in the comments, such as *"The food taste like flour, so after eating a few, I feel bored and can not eat all"* (Netno C3, 2023). Another customer complained that the seafood was quite fishy (Netno C2, 2023). On the contrary, a few customers also commented positively on Dookki that *"the taste of hot pot is okay"* (Netno C1, 2023) or *"Dookki now has a sweet chicken sauce which is delicious"* (Netno C5, 2023). Most of the reviews about the taste of the dishes at Dookki are negative, which makes lots of customers not want to come back.

Diversity of choice means the number of dishes served by Dookki. Many customers said that the food at Dookki is quite varied, and they felt satisfied when there were many choices to enjoy (Netno C5, 2023). Moreover, side dishes at Dookki are also various (Netno C1, 2023). Only a few customers thought that the number of food served at Dookki was relatively modest (Netno C4, 2023). It can be seen that the

Table 1: The selected online communities

| No.	Community name	Code	No. of members	Proximately duration (year)	No. of selected post about Dookki Vietnam	No. of comments in posts about Dookki Vietnam
1	Thanh Riviu	C1	2.078.803	5	23	592
2	Am thuc Sai Gon	C2	560.316	3	5	129
3	Sai Gon Phot	C3	324.895	2	3	57
4	Dao Do An	C4	442.112	4	2	58
5	Hoi Review do an co tam!!!	C5	820.013	5	16	276
6	Dookki Vietnam	C6	78.043	1	15	91
Total					64	1.203

Source: The researcher's data analysis
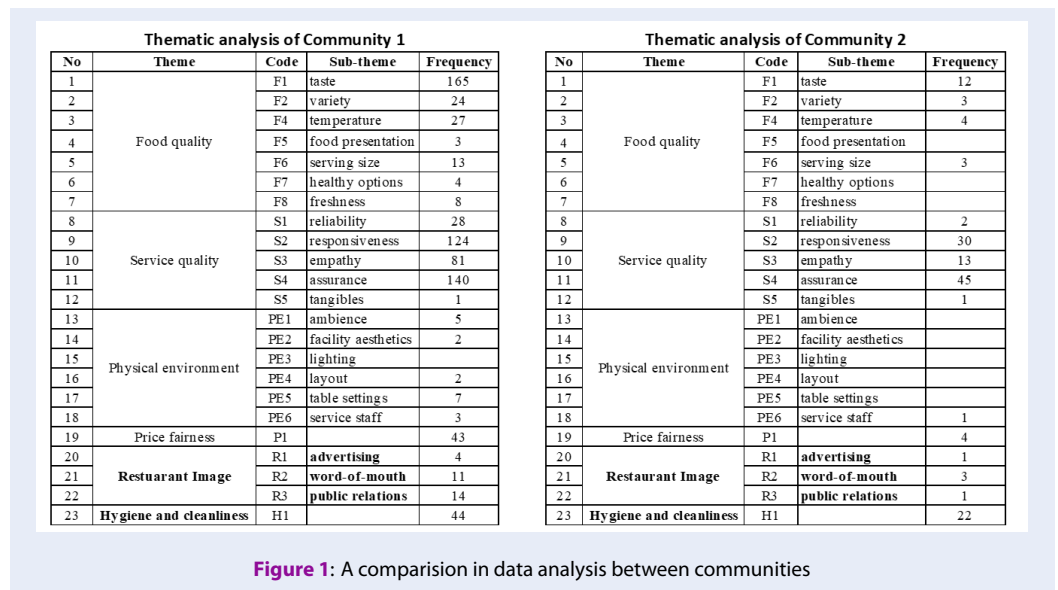
Figure 1: A comparision in data analysis between communities

majority of customers are satisfied with the variety of dishes at Dookki, which gives them a positive experience with this dining brand.

Regarding Food temperature at Dookki, "cold" and "frozen" are keywords that customers most mentioned by customers. One customer trusted that the food was still as iced when provided to customers, he said that "Teokbokki is still frozen" (Netno C5, 2023). Another comment is, "the dishes on the counter are so cold that makes me bored to eat" (Netno C1, 2023). Just a few people, with 5 out of 52, commented that the food was served quickly and hot enough.

4.2. Service quality

In the current study, the netnographic data about ***ervice quality*** were categorized into five aspects based on the conceptual framework by Parasuraman et al.[31], including *reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance* and *tangibles*. Among these aspects, *responsiveness, assurance,* and *empathy* got the most customer comments, at 280, 268, and 175, respectively.

Responsiveness refers to the willingness of Dookki's staff to help customers and provide prompt service. Customers most mentioned this aspect when they discussed Dookki's service in the online communities. Plenty of complaints were made to express disappointment about Dookki's responsiveness. For in-

Table 2: Aspects of Dookki brand image from netnographic data

No.	Theme (Aspect)	Sub-theme (Detailed aspect)	Code	Frequency
1	Food quality	Taste	F1	271
		Diversity of choice	F2	55
		Food temperature	F3	52
		Food presentation	F4	3
		Serving size	F5	39
		Healthy options	F6	4
		Freshness	F7	19
2	Service quality	Reliability	S8	79
		Responsiveness	S9	280
		Empathy	S10	175
		Assurance	S11	268
		Tangibles	S12	42
3	Price fairness	-	P13	67
4	Marketing activities	-	M14	28
5	Hygiene	-	H15	138

Source: The researcher's data analysis

stance, a customer said, *"In 90 minutes, I can ensure that they just refill the food twice, it is too slow"* (Netno C3, 2023), or *"Meat on the counters is refilled too slowly"* (Netno C6, 2023). Another disappointed customer wrote feedback, *"The day I went, I asked to cook noodles but no one did, so I lost interest and didn't want to eat"* (Netno C1, 2023). Only a very small number of customers have positive comments on this aspect such as *"When passing by, the staff member actively asked me if I needed any help to mix the noodles"* (Netno C1, 2023).

Regarding *Assurance*, it is related to Dookki's employees' courtesy and ability to convey trust and confidence to customers. Based on the collected data, some customers showed that they are quite satisfied with Dookki because the staff is amiable when serving customers, which was revealed in the comment, *"staff are so friendly"* (Netno C1, 2023). Notwithstanding, most customers agreed that the staff at this restaurant are very impolite, rude, and have terrible manners with customers. There were some complaints such as *"The staf f glanced at the customers and showed an unpleasant and impolite attitude when they saw customers taking a lot of food from the counter"* (Netno C3, 2023). Furthermore, the staff is also accused of customers that they are very disrespectful to customers, and they lose faith in Dookki when they have an unprofessional attitude when serving customers. A comment about this issue is that *"Before eating, I had already informed a staff that I would use a free voucher in my loyalty card, but when I charged, they said I couldn't, then they*

showed their annoying towards me" (Netno C1, 2023). Some people even said that they would not return to Dookki due to distrust and the unsociable staff at the restaurant, *"I will not return to Dookki again because the service is not friendly"* (Netno C1, 2023).

Terms of *Empathy*, refer to how Dookki staff provide caring and individualized attention to their customers. Similar to *Responsiveness* and *Assurance*, this item mainly received mostly negative feedback. A lot of customers reported that they were not cared by the staff when they ate at Dookki. For example, one comment showed that *"I went around asking the staff where the dishes and chopsticks were, but they didn't even answer"* (Netno C1, 2023). Another customer agreed with a comment, *"The staff is too indifferent to customers"* (Netno C2, 2023). On the other hand, there is little feedback on the dedication of Dookki's staff to their customers. A comment is that *"I will return to this branch because of the enthusiastic staff"* (Netno C1, 2023).

Besides, *Reliability* and *Tangibles* are the other parts of service quality. While *Reliability* is the ability of Dookki to perform the promised service dependably and accurately, *Tangibles* cover the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, and personnel. Many customers said that Dookki did not really deliver a service as promised. The food stalls are mainly vegetables and shrimp/fish balls instead of fresh meat to cut costs and increase profits. One comment showing dissatisfaction from a customer was *"The thing that disappoints me the most is mixing pork into a plate of*

beef" (Netno C1, 2023). About *T angibles*, this is another massive minus of Dookki. Some customers complained about the small tables at Dookki. They said that the tables at Dookki are too small and quite cramped for a group (Netno C1, 2023). A lot of equipment in Dookki is damaged and can pose a danger to customers. Some comments about this issue are *"While my group are eating and a ceiling fan drops on the table"*, or *"There are five soft drink filling machines in the beverage area but two of them are broken"* (Netno C1, 2023).

4.3. Price fairness

Price fairness is consumers' subjective perceptions of sellers' prices[29]. The keywords mentioned most about Dookki's price are "cheapest" and "reasonable". For example, a customer commented that *"I think it is a reasonable price"* (Netno C1, 2023). Another customer think eating at Dookki is very affordable for them with low prices, *"Eating Dookki is the cheapest option"* (Netno C1, 2023). However, *price fairness* is also the evaluation of good value for money spent on the meal[32]. Compared to the service that customers are offered at Dookki, some customers agreed that service at this restaurant is not worth its price, which is mentioned in a comment *"The price is not good because nothing is delicious"* (Netno C1, 2023). Other customers even said that *"Dookki's price is not competitive with other places"* and *"I do not think it is very cheap if including tax"* (Netno C1, 2023).

4.4. Marketing activities

With respect to *Marketing*, comments show that Dookki invests heavily in advertising and especially using influencer marketing. One customer said that this restaurant was advertised strongly, and another exclaimed that the advertisement for Dookki looked so cool (Netno C5, 2023). In addition, inviting celebrities to public relations campaigns is considered adequate for young target customer (Netno C1, 2023). However, compared to actual experiences, Dookki's advertisements are said to be exaggerating the truth. Even many posts discussing Dookki are said to be using seeding marketing, not really sharing from customers. For example, one customer said *"This review feels more like a seeding"* or *"These review posts are completely sobbing praise (not the truth)"* (Netno C1, 2023). Another comment pointed out that *"In fact, the staff in Dookki are bad, but they always look so nice and dedicated in the advertisement"* (Netno C1, 2023). It can be seen that Dookki is more concentrated on attracting customers' attention by inviting celebrities and hiring people as fake customers/ influencers to write reviews for Dookki than advancing the customer's real experience at the restaurant. This has made the inconsistency between advertising and services that Dookki provides in reality, causing customers to underestimate this brand.

4.5. Hygiene

Hygiene is an essential factor that need a lot of attention for a dining service business like Dookki. Therefore, a great number of comments were made about the cleanliness of Dookki. From the netnographic data, customers mentioned this aspect 138 times. Common problems include insects in dishes, decaying food, and dirty floors. One customer commented, *"The squid pieces are so black and tend to decompose, but they are still left on the counter for customers to eat"* (Netno C2, 2023). Another customer shared a bad experience with friends at Dookki, *"The day I ate at Dookki in the Nowzone branch, my friend just poured out the water, and a fly drifted out"* (Netno C1, 2023). Many other customers mentioned flies, worms, hair, and nylon in their hotpot (Netno C2 & C3, 2023). Additionally, plenty of comments mentioned dirty vegetables and uncooked meat, such as *"the chicken is uncooked and still red inside"*, *"water spinach is waterlogged and not washed carefully"*, and *"teokbokki and noodles are moldy"* (Netno C3, 2023). Several customers also complained about dirty floors, *"Dookki in Van Hanh Mall is very dirty. There are many footprints on the floor, but no one has ever seen the staff wipe"* (Netno C2, 2023), or "There was a cockroach crawling on the counter". Consequently, these issues bring an awful dining experience to customers at Dookki.

5. DISCUSSION

The present study found five aspects consisting of 15 detailed items about customers' reflections when they recall this brand were found. The research findings show that *ervice quality* (e.g. *reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance,* and *tangibles*) was the most mentioned by customers in this study, with 844 times. The next aspect that had a considerable many discussions (443 times) was *Food quality* (e.g. *taste, diversity of choices, food temperature, etc*). The following place belongs to the *Hygiene* with 183 comments. Finally, *rice fairness* and *Marketing activities* were also mentioned with a modest amount of comments, at 67 and 28 respectively. The applicability of SET can be understood as why members in online communities shared their experiences at Dookki, and others can benefit from their consumption. Employing SET, Dookki can

have a very good source of information to improve its competitive advantage. From the results, there are some insightful findings worth to be highlighted.

Although Dookki is a dining service, the significant aspect that customers remember and discuss the most is *ervice quality,* and *Food quality* just comes second. Similar to the findings of Erkmen and Hancer[33], *ervice quality* plays a significant role in building the brand image in the minds of restaurant guests. Furthermore, they also emphasized that *ervice quality* is the key to achieving a distinct image. Hence, employees become a critical source of uniqueness and competitive advantage for the restaurant through their attitudes and behaviors during the service provided. Gagic et al.[32] also agreed that employees' performance is a crucial part of this process. Among several dimensions of *ervice quality*, Dookki's *responsiveness*, *assurance* and *empathy* were most discussed by customers.

Nevertheless, there are numerous complaints from customers about the unprofessional manners and attitudes of Dookki's employees, as well as the slowness of the service provided by this restaurant. These issues formed a negative image of this brand in customers' minds. Besides, problems related to facilities such as small tables, damaged machinery, and equipment at different branches also received much negative feedback from customers. Thus, in order to improve the dining experience and brand image, Dookki should pay more attention to these aspects.

Food quality is a critical element that needs to be paid much attention to in any catering service is *Food quality*. Food plays a vital role in the restaurant experience and its taste, presentation, temperature, freshness, nutritional value, etc. are identified by customers as essential quality attributes[32]. In this study, *Food quality* is the second aspect having lots of discussion among Dookki's customers with different facets such as taste, diversity of choice, food temperature, serving size, etc. Especially, *Taste* has an overwhelming number of comments compared to other elements. A study by Liu and Jang[34] figured out that food taste is a crucial attribute of restaurant success. Despite being said to have a wide variety of food options, the *Taste* and *Food temperature* at Dookki are constantly criticized by customers. These things have left customers with a wrong impression of Dookki's brand image in the eyes of customers.

Hygiene refers to the cleanliness of the dining space and the food served to customers at Dookki. Cleanliness is one of the important attributes of a restaurant's brand image that marketers must pay attention to[35]. Much feedback showed the low level of hygiene at Dookki with some issues such as insects in the food and dining area, careless food preparation, rancid food, and dirty floors. It can be seen that Dookki has experienced many criticisms regarding the hygiene of food and the dining area. Food directly affects consumers' health; hence, hygiene has become a critical subdimension of corporate social responsibility[36]. As a result, protecting customers' health is a top priority for restaurants. For this reason, hygiene becomes a noteworthy aspect for Dookki to improve its brand image.

Regarding *rice fairness*, the price offered by Dookki is considered low by most customers, but it is still considered not worth what they receive based on the quality of service and food. Nowadays, people have a higher standard of living, so spending a decent amount of money on a meal is shared. They are willing to pay more for service but the dining experience they receive must be worth it. Therefore, Dookki should consider improving customers' experience through service and food quality instead of positioning its brand image with low prices but lousy quality. Regarding *Marketing activities,* Dookki's use of celebrities for advertising received positive feedback. It can be seen that Dookki targets young customers like students, so the approach by influencers or idols will be practical. However, customers think that the advertising content about the products and services of Dookki is different from reality. Thus, this once again emphasizes that customers today are sage, and Dookki needs to provide them with real value, thereby enhancing the brand image.

6. THEORETIAL AND MANAGERIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The present study is conducted to respond to the gaps found in the literature. By employing Netnography as the research method to collect data in online brand communities, the research findings show that there are 5 aspects with 17 items to describe customers' reflection of Dookki. These aspects are reviewed and discussed repeatedly in posts, negatively and positively. They consist of *Service quality, Food quality, Hygiene, Price fairness* and *Marketing activities.* Among these aspects, *Service quality* is the most-mentioned which is followed by *Food quality*. The research findings have some theoretical and empirical contributions.

Theoretically, with Netnography as the research method to collect user-generated content as the

sources of data, and Dookki-an F&B brand as the research context, the present study has four contributions as follows:

(1) New research approach (netnography) with new data source collected from online brand communities (netnographic data) is employed to conduct a study on brand image measurement. This issue is to contribute to the brand image literature as Parris and Guzmán called [20].

(2) F&B brands are suitable for user-generated content-based analyses. These contributions are to respond to the future research directions suggested by Villegas [12] and Plumeyer et al. [2]

(3) SET is employed to explain why information is shared in online communities. This has not been employed much in previous netnography studies.

(4) Elements of an F&B brand found in the present study (a qualitative study) can be employed to proceed to the second step in the process proposed by Burns et al. (as cited in [20]).

Empirically, some significant managerial implications can be proposed from the analysis of netnographic data. Among 17 items (of 5 aspects) in the brand image of Dookki, *Responsiveness*, *Taste*, *Assurance,* and *Empathy* have the highest frequencies of comments at 280, 271, 268 and 175, respectively.

In F&B, customers enjoy not only the product (e.g. food) but also the service delivered by staff. Prompt service and staff dedication are really pivotal as they have strong impressions on customers' emotions. In the case of Dookki, customers felt dissatisfied with how they were served. In addition to Responsiveness, Assurance - attitudes and behaviors of staff when serving - is also important to customers. Similarly, Empathy is also a part of service quality served by staff and perceived by customers. Apparently, Dookki staff shows unprofessional attitudes and behaviors to customers. This is unacceptable in a service industry like F&B. Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy are to reflect the attitudes and behaviors of staff in delivering their service. The board of management at Dookki needs to check the whole process of service in order to improve the quality of service at Dookki stores. Employee training can be a consideration as well.

In the F&B industry, Food is the core. It is reasonable to understand why Taste is one item with is mentioned repeatedly in online brand communities. The fact shows that the taste of Dookki is reviewed negatively, since ingredients might be not be fresh, or the way to preserve food might need to not better. In addition, Food temperature may be one factor related to the Taste of food. Even though there are only 52 comments, we all know that temperature is an important

issue which the decides the taste and quality of food. Dookki's management board should check and control the cooking process; especially the steps before serving to customers. The whole process, from purchasing ingredients, processing, and cooking to preserving foods should be strictly controlled to maintain required and needed quality. Last but not least, Dookki's management board should pay more attention to collecting customers' feedback in online communities based on SET.

7. CONCLUSION

The research has accomplished all proposed objectives. The research findings have contributed to the theory of brand image theory by employing a qualitative approach and leveraging data from customers' perspectives on online platforms. Besides the theoretical and practical contributions mentioned previously, the research still has some limitations, thereby facilitating further research directions.

First, due to the time limitation, netnographic data is collected from only six large online communities, which are available and popular in the South of Vietnam. Hence, perceptions of customers from the North have yet to be collected yet. Future studies should be extended to more online communities from the North of Vietnam.

The second limitation is that the managerial implications are proposed based on netnographic analysis during a limited study duration. Not all customers who are having their meals at Dookki are available online to share their opinions. Hence, more data collection methods should be combined in future studies to have more comprehensive data and findings.

The third limitation is that the type of data collected in the present study is archival data. Archival data has one drawback: unclear opinions since not all comments are straightforward and easy to understand. Hence, future studies should combine more types of data, such as co-created data, to make members' reviews/comments of members clearer and more meaningful.

The last limitation is that only Facebook online communities are studied in the present study. Meanwhile, online brand communities in social media are also available on other platforms, such as TikTok, Zalo, and Instagram. Hence, to collect netnographic data, future studies should extend to different online communities on other types of social media.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

9. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

10. AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Ms. Le Thi Thanh Xuan took responsibility for completing the introduction to the study and other important sections such as the literature review, research methodology, theoretical and managerial contributions, and conclusion.

Ms. Le Hoai Kieu Giang took responsibility for presenting research findings, discussing the results and completing the manuscript's format following journal guidelines.

REFERENCES

1. Bilgin Y. The effect of social media marketing activities on brand awareness, brand image and brand loyalty. Business & management studies: an international journal. 2018 Apr 25;6(1):128-48;Available from: https://doi.org/10.15295/bmij.v6i1.229.
2. Plumeyer A, Kottemann P, Böger D, Decker R. Measuring brand image: a systematic review, practical guidance, and future research directions. Rev Manag Sci. 2019 Apr;13(2):227-65;Available from: https://doi.org/10.1007/s11846-017-0251-2.
3. Su HY. The effect of brand image on purchase intention: A study of luxury products. International Journal of Organizational Innovation. 2021;14(2):110-9;.
4. Sijoria C, Mukherjee S, Datta B. Impact of the antecedents of eWOM on CBBE. Marketing Intelligence & Planning. 2018;36(5):528-42;Available from: https://doi.org/10.1108/MIP-10-2017-0221.
5. Ha LTT, Thu VT. Motivations of guests contributing sWOM on social media: a case in Vietnam. Journal of Asian Business and Economic Studies. 2022 May 20;29(2):146-62;Available from: https://doi.org/10.1108/JABES-05-2020-0055.
6. Savitri C, Hurriyati R, Wibowo L, Hendrayati H. The role of social media marketing and brand image on smartphone purchase intention. International Journal of Data and Network Science. 2022;6(1):185-92;Available from: https://doi.org/10.5267/j.ijdns.2021.9.009.
7. Thuy VTN, Thao HDP. Impact of students' experiences on brand image perception: the case of Vietnamese higher education. Int Rev Public Nonprofit Mark. 2017;14(2):217-51;Available from: https://doi.org/10.1007/s12208-016-0171-x.
8. Szabó A, Fekete M, Böcskei B, Nagy Á. Real-time experiences of Hungarian youth in digital education as an example of the impact of pandemia. "I've never had better grades on average: I got straight all the time". International Journal of Educational Development. 2023;99:102782;Available from: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2023.102782.
9. Kozinets RV. On Netnography: Initial reflections on consumer research investigations of cyberculture. Advances in Consumer Research. 1998;25:366-71;.
10. Kozinets RV. The field behind the screen: Using netnography for marketing research in online communities. Journal of Marketing Research. 2002 Feb;39(1):61-72;Available from: https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkr.39.1.61.18935.
11. Kozinets RV. Marketing netnography: Prom/ot(Ulgat)ing a new research method. methodological innovations online. 2012 Apr;7(1):37-45;Available from: https://doi.org/10.4256/mio.2012.004.
12. Villegas D. From the self to the screen: A journey guide for auto-netnography in online communities. Journal of Marketing Management. 2018;34(3-4):243-62;Available from: https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2018.1443970.
13. Blanchard AL. Testing a model of sense of virtual community. Computers in Human Behavior. 2008 Sep;24(5):2107-23;Available from: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2007.10.002.
14. Sloan S, Bodey K, Gyrd-Jones R. Knowledge sharing in online brand communities. Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal. 2015 Jun 8;18(3):320-45;Available from: https://doi.org/10.1108/QMR-11-2013-0078.
15. Stokburger-Sauer N. Brand community: Drivers and outcomes. Psychology & Marketing. 2010 Apr;27(4):347-68;Available from: https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20335.
16. Muniz AM, O'Guinn TC. Brand community. J Consum Res. 2001 Mar;27(4):412-32;Available from: https://doi.org/10.1086/319618.
17. Lee HJ, Lee DH, Taylor CR, Lee JH. Do online brand communities help build and maintain relationships with consumers? A network theory approach. J Brand Manag. 2011 Dec;19(3):213-27;Available from: https://doi.org/10.1057/bm.2011.33.
18. Gupta R, Kumar V, Kaushik AK, Gupta DD, Sindhwani R. Investigating the impact of online brand communities on online customer engagement and brand loyalty. Journal of Global Marketing. 2023 Aug 8;36(4):319-38;Available from: https://doi.org/10.1080/08911762.2023.2180789.
19. Martínez-López FJ, Aguilar-Illescas R, Molinillo S, Anaya-Sánchez R, Coca-Stefaniak JA, Esteban-Millat I. The role of online brand community engagement on the consumer-brand relationship. Sustainability. 2021;13(7):3679;Available from: https://doi.org/10.3390/su13073679.
20. Parris DL, Guzman F. Evolving brand boundaries and expectations: looking back on brand equity, brand loyalty, and brand image research to move forward. Journal of Product & Brand Management. 2023 Jan 31;32(2):191-234;Available from: https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-06-2021-3528.
21. Koubaa Y. Country of origin, brand image perception, and brand image structure. Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics. 2008 Mar 28;20(2):139-55;Available from: https://doi.org/10.1108/13555850810864524.
22. Wijaya BS. Dimensions of brand image: a conceptual review from the perspective of brand communication. European Journal of Business and Management. 2013;5(31):55-6;.
23. Kozinets RV. Immersive netnography: a novel method for service experience research in virtual reality, augmented reality and metaverse contexts. Journal of Service Management. 2022 Mar 28;34(1):100-25;Available from: https://doi.org/10.1108/JOSM-12-2021-0481.
24. Kopaničová J, Klepochová D, Francová Z. Use of netnography in contemporary marketing research. Central European Business Review. 2022 Sep 19;11(4):111-31;Available from: https://doi.org/10.18267/j.cebr.303.
25. Costello L, McDermott ML, Wallace R. Netnography: Range of practices, misperceptions, and missed opportunities. International Journal of Qualitative Methods. 2017 Dec;16(1):160940691770064;Available from: https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917700647.
26. Kozinets RV. Netnography: Redefined. 2nd ed. London: SAGE Publications Ltd; 2015;Available from: https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405165518.wbeos0782.
27. Braun V, Clarke V. Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative research in psychology. 2006;3(2):77-101;Available from: https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.
28. Ha J, Jang S (Shawn). Effects of service quality and food quality: The moderating role of atmospherics in an ethnic restaurant segment. International Journal of Hospitality Management. 2010 Sep;29(3):520-9;Available from: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2009.12.005.
29. Jin N, Lee S, Huffman L. Impact of restaurant experience on brand image and customer loyalty: Moderating role of dining motivation. Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing. 2012 Aug;29(6):532-51;Available from: https://doi.org/10.

1080/10548408.2012.701552.

30. Sulek JM, Hensley RL. The relative importance of food, atmosphere, and fairness of wait: The case of a full-service restaurant. Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly. 2004 Aug;45(3):235-47;Available from: https://doi.org/10.1177/0010880404265345.

31. Parasuraman A, Zeithaml V, Berry L. Refinement and reassessment of the SERVQUAL scale. Journal of Retailing. 1991;67(4):420-50;.

32. Gagic S, Tesanovic D, Jovicic A. The vital components of restaurant quality that affect guest satisfaction. Turizam. 2013;17(4):166-76;Available from: https://doi.org/10.5937/Turizam1304166G.

33. Erkmen E, Hancer M. Building brand relationship for restaurants: An examination of other customers, brand image, trust, and restaurant attributes. International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management. 2019 Mar 18;31(3):1469-

87;Available from: https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-08-2017-0516.

34. Liu Y, Jang S (Shawn). Perceptions of Chinese restaurants in the U.S.: What affects customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions? International Journal of Hospitality Management. 2009 Sep;28(3):338-48;Available from: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2008.10.008.

35. Kim WG, Hong-Bumm K. Measuring customer-based restaurant brand equity: Investigating the relationship between brand equity and firms' performance. Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly. 2004;45(2):115-31;Available from: https://doi.org/10.1177/0010880404264507.

36. Shim JM, Lee WS, Moon J, Song M. Coffee shop corporate social responsibility (CSR) and reuse intention using triple bottom line theory. British Food Journal. 2021 Nov 2;123(12):4421-35;Available from: https://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-12-2020-1134.

Bài nghiên cứu

Hình ảnh thương hiệu được cảm nhận từ nhận thức của khách hàng - Một nghiên cứu sử dụng phương pháp netnography

Lê Thị Thanh Xuân, Lê Hoài Kiều Giang[*]

TÓM TẮT

Các tài liệu hiện có về hình ảnh thương hiệu nhấn mạnh nhu cầu cần thiết của việc nghiên cứu thêm về lĩnh vực này bằng cách tận dụng các nguồn dữ liệu mới và đa dạng, đặc biệt là trong bối cảnh môi trường trực tuyến. Để đáp ứng lời kêu gọi từ các nghiên cứu trước đó, nghiên cứu này sử dụng phương pháp netnography để nghiên cứu và thu thập dữ liệu nhằm khám phá các khía cạnh hình ảnh thương hiệu của Dookki - một thương hiệu F&B, từ nhận thức của khách hàng. Cụ thể, phương pháp này sử dụng dữ liệu netnography để đi sâu vào các khía cạnh khác nhau của hình ảnh thương hiệu liên quan đến Dookki theo cảm nhận của khách hàng. Netnography được chọn vì có thể giúp nắm bắt những hiểu biết từ các tương tác và thảo luận trực tuyến, và cung cấp một góc nhìn toàn diện để khám phá các khía cạnh khác nhau của hình ảnh thương hiệu trong môi trường mạng xã hội. Cụ thể hơn, cách tiếp cận Symbolic Netnography và dữ liệu Archival netnography được sử dụng để tiến hành nghiên cứu cho 06 cộng đồng trực tuyến với 1.203 bình luận trong 64 bài đăng. Các cộng đồng trực tuyến chọn dựa trên 05 tiêu chí của phương pháp netnography, bao gồm các câu hỏi nghiên cứu liên quan đến chủ đề, đối tượng nghiên cứu; lượng "traffic (lưu lượng truy cập)" của bài viết cao; có số lượng lớn người đăng tin khác nhau; dữ liệu chi tiết hoặc phong phú, và nhiều tương tác giữa các thành viên thuộc đối tượng của nghiên cứu. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy, trong nhận thức của khách hàng, có 05 khía cạnh chính của hình ảnh thương hiệu Dookki chứa 15 thành tố chi tiết, bao gồm Chất lượng thực phẩm, Chất lượng dịch vụ, Giá cả hợp lý, Hoạt động tiếp thị và Vệ sinh. Trong số 15 thành tố được xác định trong nghiên cứu này, Phản ứng nhanh, Hương vị, Sự đảm bảo và Sự đồng cảm được đề cập trong các bình luận và đánh giá với tần suất cao nhất. Những phát hiện của nghiên cứu này mang lại những đóng góp quý giá về khung lý thuyết và hiểu biết thực tiễn trong lĩnh vực này.

Từ khoá: hình ảnh thương hiệu, netnography, cộng đồng trực tuyến, F&B

Trường ĐH Bách Khoa, ĐH Quốc Gia TP.HCM, 268 Lý Thường Kiệt, P.14, Q.10, Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, Việt Nam

Liên hệ

Lê Hoài Kiều Giang, Trường ĐH Bách Khoa, ĐH Quốc Gia TP.HCM, 268 Lý Thường Kiệt, P.14, Q.10, Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, Việt Nam

Email: lhkgiang@hcmut.edu.vn

Check for updates

VNUHCM PRESS