# The role of emotional branding in the creation of an engaging brand: a case study of Dr. Thanh Thuy's private clinic

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Degree Programme in BM
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This thesis project examines the role of brands and branding on a business's functions. The purpose was to develop an emotionally engaging brand for a small, private clinic. The thesis was commissioned by Dr. Thanh Thuy's private Gynecology and Obstetrics clinic.

The paper is divided into three parts. The theoretical section discusses the concept of brand, the factors that make an effective brand and emotional branding. A brand is not just a name, a design or logo, but rather a subconscious connection between the business and customers, in the sense that consumers categorize the experience they have of a product/service by the brand elements. Their feelings about their experiences with the brand largely determine their willingness to choose that brand again in the future and these experiences can be deliberately influenced by the branding contents that the business presents.

Primary data for the empirical research was collected using a mixed methods approach. A quantitative approach was employed in a survey of the patients of the clinic and a qualitative approach was used through an interview between the researcher and Dr. Thanh Thuy (the case company's owner/doctor in charge).

The data were analyzed using perspectives afforded by the knowledge base. Based on the analysis recommendations were developed to build an emotionally connecting brand for the clinic.

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1    Introduction

To comment on our today's consuming behavior, some argue that instead paying our money for the products, but we are actually buying the brands that these merchandises or services come under. Brand has had its share in the existence and success of businesses long since the beginning of trading, when farmers used hot iron on cattle as mark of ownership to separate their offerings to others. Nowadays, due to the extension of markets and the standardization of quality, brands have become the key element for businesses to differentiate themselves from competitors and in customers' mind. At the same time, both financial and social values of a brand to a business has grown exponentially. Furthermore, influence of brands now goes beyond conscious, rational thinking of consumers. Leading, powerful brands today create boding with its targets on a subtle, subconscious level through emotions, thus they trigger greater customers' response and loyalty. Correspondingly, the question stated in the title of this paper is rather rhetorical, whether the answer is either, there ought to be emotional factors that involved.

1.1    Purpose of the thesis

The goal of this Thesis is to discuss the recommendations suggest to build an emotionally connecting brand for a small healthcare business. The literature review section of the paper is used as the knowledge background for practical implementation as establishing a brand for the case company, Dr. Thanh Thuy's private Gynecology and Obstetrics clinic. By utilizing emotional branding approach, given branding recommendations is expected to deliver positive, distinct effects on current and potential patients' perception about the clinic.

1.2    Case company: Dr. Thanh Thuy's private Gynecology and Obstetrics clinic

The case company in question is Dr. Thanh Thuy's private Gynecology and Obstetrics clinic, specialized in gynecological and infertile consulting, found on 30th of April 2015. Situated in district 5, Ho Chi Minh City, the clinic is a sole trader business, run by the doctor in charge and also the owner of the place, Doctor Thanh Thuy with the help of a full-time assistant. Doctor Thanh Thuy is currently an IVF (In Vitro Fertilization) specialist of Hanh Phuc International hospital in Binh Duong Province, Vietnam. Since the foundation of the clinic, the business's marketing aspect has been predominantly relied on 'word-of-mouth' advertising between patients. The situation the clinic finds itself in is very common within clinics that also share the same business structure and generally in big cities of Vietnam.

1.3    Research questions and methods

The key research question of the thesis is **how to cultivate an emotionally engaging brand for a small, private gynecology and obstetrics clinic?** As the focus of the paper is to acknowledge the existence of the clinic's brand and further develop it through the scope of emotional branding, primary data is collected through mentioned below methods.
Noted in Malhotra (2010, 106), 'the major objective of descriptive research is to describe something – usually market characteristics or functions'. Due to the describing objective of descriptive research, this type of research is chosen to examine the clinic's patients' demographic information and their perception of the clinic as customers using quantitative method (survey questionnaire). Results is inspected and interpreted as hints for brand development suggestions.

Moreover, to ensure the consistency of brand communication throughout the business, qualitative research method (interview) is carried out on Doctor Thanh Thuy to gather insights about how the brand should be developed. Since the only doctor in charge is also the key personnel whose interactions with customers will have the most impact on their perception of the business, congruent vision between the brand and Doctor Thanh Thuy will help reinforcing the continuity of the brand's message.

1.4    Theoretical approach

The theoretical background of this paper covers the concept of brand, factors that make some brands great and further inspection of the emotional branding concept.
Examining the theory of brand provides the author an inclusive look over the brand aspect of a business. Thus, this helps identifying which aspects of the case study's current brand needed to be considered, refined and developed.

Studying reasons that makes World's leading brands has its intangible value that outweighed tangible assets helps the author have a preliminary grasp of today's commerce most important element, customers' perception of the business.

Understanding the factor that essentially determines a business exceptionally success lies beyond customers' conscious, rational evaluation of the product/service quality, or the price-benefit ratio. It's the personal association, emotional connection and self-relatability formed between customers and the business that lay the foundation for customer loyalty hence growth of sales. Therefore, study of emotional branding is crucial for the author to be able to come up with recommendations that deliver distinct effects on the clinic's brand.

Furthermore, additional information about branding for small businesses is also investigated and used as the knowledge base, simultaneously with analyzed data from quantitative and qualitative researches for suggestions made by the author.

## 1.5 Framework of the thesis

This paper is constructed by four main categories: the knowledge base, research approaches, empirical study and branding recommendations.

| Introduction | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Purpose of the thesis | Case company: Dr. Thanh Thuy's private Gynecology and Obstetrics clinic | Research questions and methods | Theoretical approach |

| Knowledge-base | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| What is a brand? | What makes a brand great? | Brand development for small businesses | Emotional branding |

| Research approach | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Research approaches | Research methodology | The credibility of research findings | Research's ethical issues |

| Empirical study | |
|---|---|
| Questionnaires | Interview |

| Practical implementation | | |
|---|---|---|
| Case company: Dr. Thanh Thuy's private Gynecology and Obstetrics clinic | Market condition | SWOT analysis |

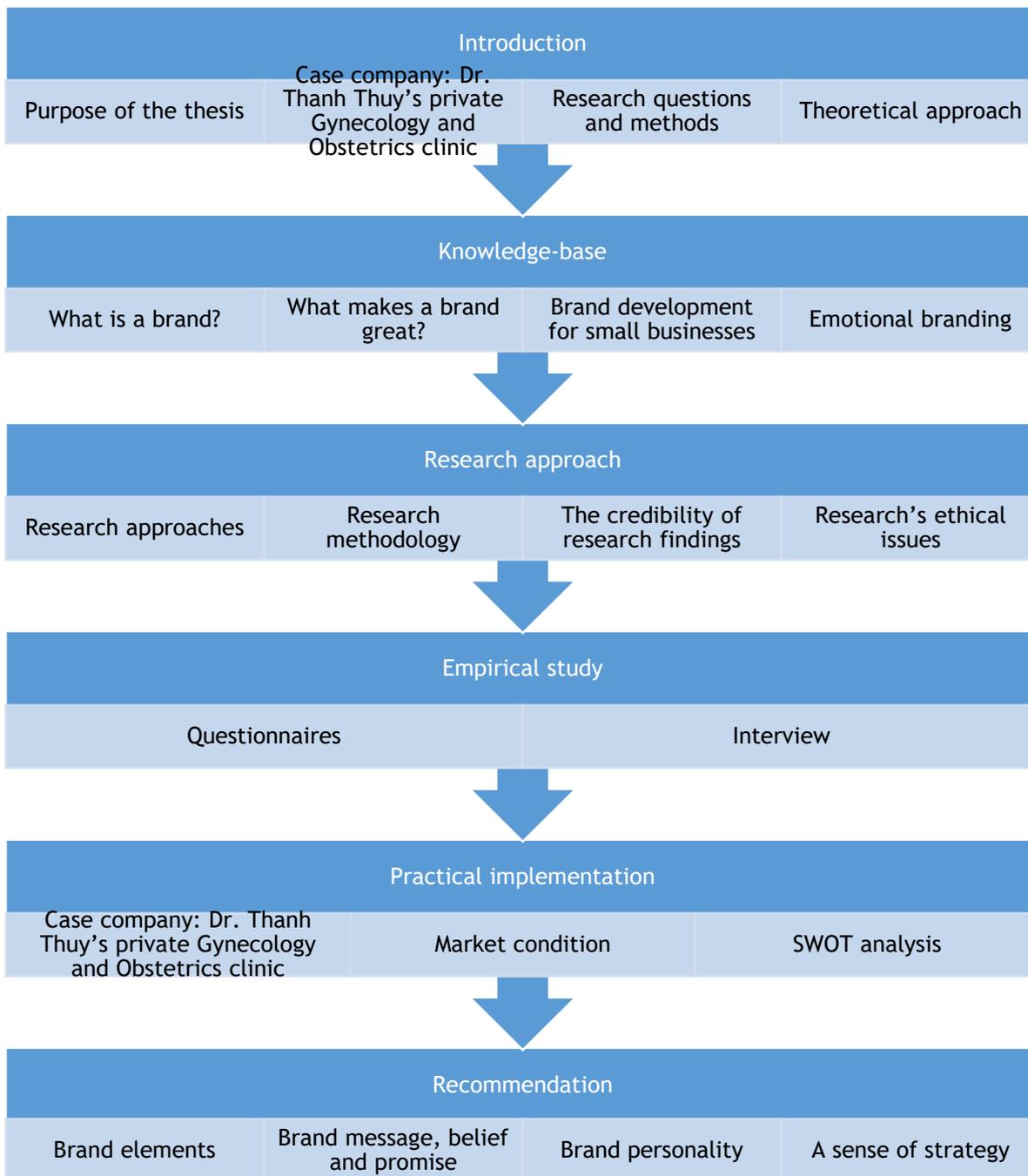| Recommendation | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Brand elements | Brand message, belief and promise | Brand personality | A sense of strategy |

Figure 1 Framework of the Thesis

2    Knowledge base

This part of the paper will answer 3 main questions:

- What is a brand? – Major aspects that structures a brand and their influences on the business and customers
- What are the steps to build a brand for small businesses? – Branding for small businesses
- What is emotional branding? – Forming a stronger relationship by engaging the brand with customers' emotion

2.1    What is a brand?

2.1.1    History and definition

According to Clifton (2010, 13), historically, the word 'brand' originated from 'brandr', an Old Norse word meaning to burn. Creating burned marks is the method that early man used to stamp his cattle, help trade buyers to distinguish livestock that come from different farmers. A farmer with reputation of better quality cattle would be a more preferable business partner than ones with lesser good reputation. Therefore, utility of brands as a buying guide was recognized.

The concept of a brand exists in today's business world not only as one of the most important components determining a company's success but also represents an idea that is subconsciously influencing and arguably, easing our everyday lives in this World of abundancy. Commercial application is nowadays primary use of the word 'brand'. Definition made by The American Marketing Associate describes a brand as a name, symbol, design or any unique features that differentiate a provider's services/products to those originate from other sellers. On legal basis, a brand is considered trademark. If it is used for the company as a whole, the preferred term is trade name (Cohen 2011).

Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman and Hansen (2009, 425) states that 'a brand is the embodiment of customer goodwill accumulated during the lifetime of a service or product'. Encouraging potential customers to look a certain brand in the light in which it portrays itself is the main effort of a company to develop competitive competence. Brands is also "valuable pieces of legal property that can influence consumer behavior, be bought and sold, and provide the security of sustained future revenues." (Kotler et al. 2009, 446) Similarly, as mentioned in the book Principles of Marketing, a brand embodies everything that the product or the service means to customers (Kotler and Armstrong 2012, 267).

From customers' perspective, a brand is more than just a name, or a familiar logo, but the perceived combination of a firm's messages, promises, proven credibility attached to its products/services and public appearance. A brand can be profound enough to arouse the feelings of belonging and affection. Additionally, brands are shorthand-marketing messages that lay the foundation for special bonds between a company and its customers, shaped by emotional fulfilment and trust (Cohen 2011). In today's consumer culture, purchasing decisions made are no longer merely for functional satisfaction but becoming meaning based and brand choices are important element to construct and maintain identity under the form of symbolic assets (Kotler et al. 2009, 426).

Likewise, a brand is the set of expectations and memories that combined, subconsciously affecting consumer's decision to choose one product or service over another (Cohen, 2011). Furthermore, ironically, in today's social, customer-oriented market, marketers can spend enormous amount of money to build, develop and popularize their brands but they do not own it. A brand is what customers say and believe it is.

In brief, the word 'brand' to customers reminds them of their complete experiences with particular products or services provided by a company (Zyman and Brott 2003, 91).

### 2.1.2   Roles of a brand

According to Kotler et al. (2009, 428), there are two separate perspectives when discussing about the role of brands: from a customer perspective and a channel members' perspective. To consumers:

- Brands can be seen as indicator for expected level of quality and satisfaction; e.g. Luis Vuitton, Patek Philippe, Roll-Royce
- Brands are decision-making shortcuts for customers to save to time and effort considering among widely available options.
- Because brands are often believed to correctly reflect quality, peers' satisfaction, their ability to reduce perceived risk in purchasing situation and simplify decision-making is highly appreciated.

To companies:

- Registered trademarks can offer legal protection over unique features or aspects of the product/service.
- Brands are major factor that contribute to customer loyalty, which provide insights of predictability and security for demand.

- With a well-defined brand, a product/service is difficult to copy. It is hard to change lasting impression formed in individual's mind about a business marketing activities and especially personal experiences with the brand over a period. This directly reduces the success chance of the copying attempt made by competitors. E.g. there are very limited differences between the products offered by many brands of bottled water. However, there are companies, which successfully creates brand images that entitle them to charge premium price for their offers (such as San Pelliginos or Evian).
- Through brand extensions, licensing and franchising, brands offer good growth to businesses.
- Strong, powerful brands are usually desired working destinations of high-quality employees.
(Kotler et al. 2009, 428-429)

### 2.1.3 Five stages of a brand experience

- Brand awareness: is the probability of a brand's existence and availability to be aware by potential customers. It determines not only customers' ability to identify a brand image but also the association between it and a particular company's products or services (Investopedia 2006). Brand awareness can be used as one of indicator to measure the effectiveness of advertising. Efficiently increasing brand awareness can be archived through both inbound and outbound marketing efforts.
- Brand recognition: is when customers are able to classify a product/service by its attributed values and design elements. Expanding brand recognition is likewise one of the primary goals of advertising. Taking an example in the soft drink industry, Coca-Cola is one of a few drinks with worldwide recognition not by its unique taste but the corporation's brand visual signifiers (Rouse 2013).
- Brand trial: customers are given the opportunity to experience the product or service that the brand stands for. Examples: trial food courts, free samples of Knorr's snack pot, etc.
- Brand preference: is when customers prefer one brand to others under assumptions of equality in price and availability (Brand reference 2015). Additionally, brand preference is the reflection of customer loyalty, successful marketing tactics, and brand strengths.
- Brand loyalty: is the customers' tendency to continuously purchase one brand's product over another regardless of convenience or price, as the result of a fostered trusting relationship by the brand and affected personal preferences. It helps shielding the company to be less vulnerable to competitive marketing activity or market turbulence. According to Bloemer & Kasper (1995), there are differences between repeat purchasing behavior and brand loyalty. In the writers' view, repeat buying behavior is

the actual rebuying of a brand, regardless of the consumer's degree of commitment to the brand. As the decision to buy a certain brand again might bring the comfort of not being forced to make a new choice, save time and reduce perceived risk. Comparing to brand loyalty where the relationship built based on commitment, meaning that because of this commitment one will insist on buying the same brand the next time he or she needs to buy the product again, even when being fully aware of other brands' better deal, coupons or better purchase visibility. The necessary condition for true brand loyalty to occur is brand commitment. For example, people who usually listed Apple as their top choices for high tech gadgets might have formed a certain level of loyalty toward the brand. Repeatedly experiencing positive feelings about products/services that come from a brand, this similarly triggers a bonding relationship on an emotional level between the customers and the brand. Another instance related to Apple that demonstrates how far customers will do to express their personal commitments to a brand is the seemingly endless debate about the question: 'Samsung's Galaxy or Apple's IPhone, which one is better?' frequently happens on mobile tech focused forums.

## 2.1.4   Brand elements

Before becoming available to customers and generating business value, a brand is usually built consisting several as core elements in the below list (Brand 2016):

- Brand name: word or words used for identification purposes, referring to a company, product/service or concept, sometimes advocative to the idea of the business; e.g. Adidas, Red Cross, Apple, Pepsi
- Logo/symbol: trademarks that visually identify a brand; e.g. Tissot -  
- Key color: main colors used in the theme of product/service; e.g. blue - Facebook
- Graphic & Shapes: distinctive shape of products; e.g. the Beetle - Volkswagen
- Tagline: short, powerful phrases associate with the firm's name; e.g. "I'm lovin' it" – McDonald
- Sound: unique tunes or rhythms designate a brand; e.g. Wall's ice cream rhythm
- Taste: exceptional taste, distinguishing the product; e.g. soft drink Dr Pepper's taste
- Scent: the unique rose-jasmine-musk scent by Chanel No. 5

Depending on the market that a company is operating in, different markets means different type of products/services being offered thus vital brand elements to each business will be deliberately selected based on certain criteria.

According to Mathur (2014) and Sengupta (2013), there are six indicators that should be considered before decisions being made on brand elements:

+Offensive strategy (To build brand equity)

- Memorability: How easy a brand element is recognized and remembered during purchasing process and consumption by customers; this supports reinforcing brand awareness and building brand equity; e.g. short names like Apple, Tide or catchy rhythms theme song in commercials
- Meaningfulness: Brand elements with inherent meaning might be descriptive or persuasive, communicate general or specific information about a product/service; e.g. Lean Cuisine by Stouffers, suggesting delicious, healthy and nutritious pre-made meals
- Likability: How aesthetically pleasing a brand element can be to customers, either visually or emotionally; e.g. baby care products using mild colors for its brand elements evoke smoothness & gentleness

+Defensive role (To leverage and maintain brand equity)

- Transferability: The brand element is created to be utilized for different market segments or products/services from the same or other categories; e.g. Amazon – one of the largest rivers in the World, symbolic for the wide variety of products available on Amazon
- Adaptability: How a brand element adapts to unstable market conditions, changes of customers' tastes over time; e.g. changes of Pepsi logo to follow current trends and fashions
- Protection: a brand element should be legally registered, protected and defended from external competitive violations in order to maintain its uniqueness; e.g.

Taking prudent regard of these six criteria while choosing the business's key brand elements will help differentiating the brand among other competitors and creating a stronger impact in customers' mind, which ultimately results in advantageous brand equity and brand loyalty.

## 2.1.5    Brand identity and brand image

Kotler et al. (2009, 426) noted that the way a company aims to identify or position itself or its product/service is brand identity. Additionally, brand identity can also be defined as how a company expects to be perceived by its customers through the reflection of not only its visual brand components but also the values associated with the business (Investopedia 2010).
In the same way, brand identity is the story that resonate and serve as the brand's criteria, on which a set of rules will be based on to determine what should and shouldn't be in the

brand (MacLeod 2015). Additionally, brand identity should be included in every active carried out by the company in a sense that it will influence how the staffs behave, how visual elements of such as brochures, catalogues business cards, company's stationary, be designed. Furthermore, brand identity is created based on several intangible elements that are called brand pillars. They are:

- Brand mission: summarizes and demonstrate a business's goals and underlying philosophy found in its commerce activities. For example, Coca-Cola chooses its mission in the World is "to inspire moments of optimism and happiness", hence the firm's expression of the brand (advertising, promotion campaigns, personnel, etc.) consistently emphasize this.
- Brand values: are the guiding principles that help forming a company's culture.
- Brand vision: As noted by Collins & Porras (1996), brand vision's framework consists of two parts: core ideology and envisioned future. It demonstrates the company's current missions and purposes as well as where they are progressing toward.
- Brand purpose: is the reason of existence of the business. Stated by Adamson (2009), the importance of a brand's purpose is not just the promise to customers but more importantly, to clarify the role held by the business's employees and associates. Moreover, a sense of purpose will help signifying intrinsic values that personnel have to the company.
- Positioning: how the company's offering contributes to the identified core purposes of the business that the firm hold.
- Voice + tone + look + feel: is the reflections from the chosen values of the business. For instance, commercials/advertisements from law firm often provoke a sense of seriousness and professional through both chosen visual and audio elements. In addition, how the law offices are organized and its personnel's appearance is also aligned with the expected image that clients have for lawyers.

 "Brand image is the visual or verbal expressions of a brand which lead to the psychological or emotional associations that the brand aspires to maintain in the minds of the consumer." Kotler (2009, 426) In brief, brand image is how the brand is perceived by customers. In order to attain the desire brand image, the marketer needs to convey the chosen brand identity through every available marketing mix variable.

## 2.1.6    Brand personality

David Ogilvy first introduces the concept of a brand personality in 1955 (Ogilvy 1955). Using human personality traits or characteristics to describe a specific brand outlines a brand's personality. Also, it has been noted that brand personality is described as human characteristics

that consumers associate with the brand (Aaker 1997, 347). For instance, Apple's brand reminds customers of novelty, uniqueness, and inspirations through distinctive products and the company's revolutionary developing history. Hence, people usually refer Apple as an innovative and daring brand which symbolizes for individuality, rebellious thinking and imagination. The act of personification on a brand aims to increase the brand's relatability to its intended audiences, in this case, current and potential customers. As insightfully states by Aaker (2010), any direct or indirect experiences that customers have with the brand can change their perceptions about that brand's personality. Consequently, a brand's characteristics signify a brand's behaviors through individuals (the company's employees) along with its brand elements

Brand personality could be considered as a self-expressive function to customers. Moreover, a brand distinguishes itself by unique sets of characteristic, similarly to the desire to express individuality of people who choose to link their self-images with a particular brand. For example, Roll-Royce has long been a symbol of simply excellence in every aspect that could ever be required in an automobile. Besides, the name Roll-Royce too evokes the idea of luxury, power and high-ranking social status. Thus it is no surprise when only a certain group of customers choose Roll Royce not merely as one reliable mean of transportation but also as a tool to polish their personal brand by utilizing inevitable association of positive and admirable perceptions that people have for Roll-Royce. In brief, a customer communicates his or her own identity through posing 'personalities' of the brand that one chooses.

Dividing into 5 main core dimensions and their facets, mainly based on a psychological theory namely Big Five Personality Traits, also known as the Five Factor Model (FFM), the Five Dimensions of Brand Personality framework by Jennifer Aaker defines the profile of a brand by using comparison with a human being (Santos 2014):
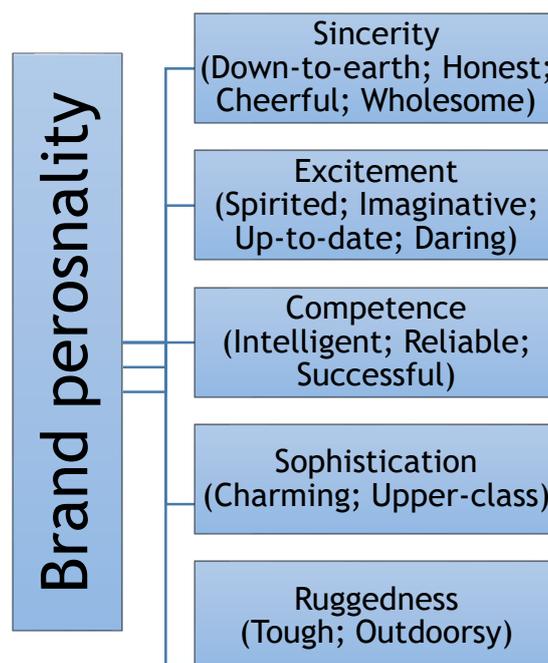
Figure 2 the Five Dimensions of Brand Personality by Jennifer Aaker

(Aaker 1997, 352)

Moreover, Monger (2012a) mentioned that the personality profile of a brand can be archived by involving between created advertising and certain types of users (people who shows to have inter-correlation with it) or the kinds of people used to endorse this personality profile in advertisements. For example, David Beckham is key image representative of H&M (H&M's men department), an international fashion brand which promises to bring high end fashion design and quality into everyday life at a reasonable price. The notable fact about Beckham is that he is considered as the World's trendsetter, with well-refined taste for fashion. Yet the extensive imagery usage of Beckham in H&M clothes, both endorses the brand (men department)'s personalities (of being fashionable, cool and masculine) and creates a big perception twist at the end with such lower prices than expected.

According to Monger (2012a), there are other sources of such associations which are more crucial than advertising, including culturally oriented-stereotypes, word-of-mouth, direct observations of typical users, and publicity. Certainly, consideration of these avenues should be prioritized together with advertising as ways of developing or enhancing brand personalities. Additionally, important life values could be associated between a brand and its provoking personalities. A "value" in this case possibly means an "enduring belief which guides actions and judgments across specific situations."

For examples, through the subtle message delivered by some of Nike's commercials, the effort of the company trying to convey and connect their brand with resilience, athleticism, respectable conation and especially courage, is noticeable or at least intriguing. Once Nike's successfully acquired such distinctive values, consequently, it becomes more attractive to people who attentively pursuit and appreciate athleticism or courage.

Brand personality exists in a subjective emotional realm. According to Dr. Brian Monger, a brand personality comes from many cues around the brand experience. A recognizable and distinct brand personality plays the vital part of a successful brand's appeal. According to Monger (2012b) there are 3 key steps needed to implement a brand personality strategy:

- Studying similar existing symbolic associations with competitive brands and product category
- Choosing key personality features for the brand that has greatest value to target customer segments
- Fulfilling chosen brand personalities (creating, signifying, reinforcing and modifying accordingly)

Step 1: Researching brand personality

There are different ways to learn about perceived personalities linked to different brands within a product category by customers.

One direct, quantitative technique that easy to be applied is having customers rate a brand, and or users of that brand, on various personality adjectives. For example, participants can rate how 'rebellious', 'aggressive' along with several other traits the brand Harley-Davidson on a scale from 1 to five. Gathered results from different brands in a product category can be used to compare on these personalities adjective scales. However, there are two notable drawbacks of this technique, firstly, the given list of adjectives might be incomplete and irrelevant to some particular brands. Secondly, it is quite difficult for customers to truly and correctly recall their feelings/opinions about a brand's personalities in such shortage of time (while they are answering the survey/questionnaire).

One stimulating method used to gain qualitative insights about the type of users associated with certain brand's personality is 'photo sorts'. Photographs of individuals are given to customers, requested to pick which ones they think would use particular brands, and then asked to describe these individuals. Such as customers would be more likely to choose matching a picture of a male Rapper (based his appearance) with the photo of a sport car (a grey Lamborghini) over a wealthy looking middle-age man in his 60s wearing navy suits (assuming there's also another photo of a classy black Mercedes-Maybach S600). In this case, customers

perceive Lamborghini's brand personality as dynamic, edgy and ambitious, which matches the projecting image of the male Rapper rather than a strong sense of power, luxurious sophistication that comes from Mercedes Benz.

Another qualitative approach is 'free associations': a provocation word (a brand name or advertising slogan) is shown to the subject then thoughts that come to the subject's mind is recorded. Since there is the potential of a wide range of associations from the result, research's participants will be asked how well each key association fits the brand (on scale of 'extremely well-fitted' to 'irrelevant'). For instance, research target is a women's private infertility clinic. Gathered results from participants are lists of traits such as trustworthy, professional, wholehearted, expensive, hopeful, etc. Then these traits will be assessed to see whether or not this infertility clinic will choose and emphasize on its key brand's personality as wholehearted and hopeful (since the clinic's customers are women, emotions and feelings might create stronger impact on their experiences as a patient) or professional.

A different method using variance of word association is sentence completion. Respondents use first thoughts that come to their mind to complete a partial sentence: 'product B is…' or 'People choose and enjoy service A because…'. A rich description of product generated from implementation of these techniques will suggest which brand associations should be focused or avoided.

Step 2: Choosing the right 'personality' for a brand

Records from marketing research about personality scale ratings or associations can be compared to target customers' ratings of their own personalities. Conclusions can help clarify which aspects of the brand's personality needed modification, which can be done by advertising efforts.

The selected main 'personality' for a brand should be corresponding to the 'ideal' personality for a brand in that category. In addition, it also has to be consistent with the functional or psychological competences that the brand promises.

Step 3: Implementing chosen brand personality

When target 'personality' of a brand is acknowledged, it is now depending on how a firm manage its marketing efforts to create, refine and reinforce that 'personality', internally within the company's personnel & culture and externally to existing & potential consumers. Marketing mix and communications have major contributions to a brand's personality, especially packaging, pricing, sales promotions and distribution.

From customers' perspective, there are several key elements of advertising that help directly emphasizing the brand's personality:

- The use of a real person's image: association of a real personal and a brand creates the incremental effect on the brand's personality when, with enough repetition, some of this person' personalities are implied on the brand as a desire outcome. E.g. using the name and image of Steve Job, Apple's brand associates itself with its visionary ex-leader, consequently, imposes vision, individuality, achievement on the brand's personality.

- Associated user imagery: the image of users portrayed in the advertisement is vital to personality reference. Oftentimes, potential consumers can easily catch the hint of their 'ideal' ego, the desire self-image presented in the commercial. For example, GoPro HERO 3 commercial video on YouTube is a series of short videos of people filming their small 'adventures' varied from hiking, mountain skiing, white-water kayaking or inside surfing wave tubes using the product itself, played on an uplifting background music. These images provoke the feeling of adventurous, thrill-seeking, excitement, which accurately portray its users' image, at the same time encouraging target customers to buy the product (people who see themselves and enjoy the ideas of them being the people that appear in the commercial)

- Executional elements: additional elements such as color tone, advertisement's pace, background music, nature of editing, overall feeling of the advertisement, also help providing hints of the brand's personality to consumers

- Consistency: consistency of messages or ideas embodied in commercials or marketing efforts is a crucial key step of reinforcing the brand personality in customers' perception.

To conclude, the influence of brand personality is not a visible influence to customers similarly to the way packaging or other brand elements do, but it positively affects customers' perception of the brand through shared values they see in themselves and in the brand.

## 2.1.7    Brand equity

The definition of brand equity offered by the American Marketing Association mentions that the value of a brand is brand equity. From customers' perspective, it is based on their attitudes about positive brand qualities and favorable consequences of brand use.
Another attempt to define brand equity made in 1991 by David Aaker, a branding expert states that "A set of assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that adds to or subtracts from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers."

The measure of a brand's ability to capture customers' preference and loyalty is brand equity. A brand has positive brand equity when consumers favor it more over a generic or unbranded version of the same product. Conversely, negative brand equity illustrates a less favorable reaction from consumers to a specific product's brand compared to an unbranded version (Kotler and Armstrong 2012, 243).

From a marketing research perspective, brand equity is "the framework for understanding the power of the intellectual and emotional association that consumers have with a particular named product or services" (Brand Equity Models and Measurement 2016).

Four consumer perception dimensions used to measure brand strength according to ad agency Young & Rubicam's Brand Asset Valuator are:

- Differentiation (what elements makes the brand stand out)
- Relevance (how customers' needs are satisfied)
- Knowledge (customer's knowledge and understanding about the brand)
- Esteem (how highly the brand is respected and regarded by consumers)

Brands that rate high in all these four dimensions have strong brand equity.
In simple terms, brand equity is a construct that reflects the public's valuation of a brand, the commerce values it holds for the products or services that the firm accompanies based on an emotional involvement developed between customers and the brand.
Three main dynamics outlines a brand's equity:

- Tangible and intangible value: tangible values such as revenues, price premium (Apple) and intangible values like awareness, goodwill (worldwide recognition of Coca-Cola brand)
- Positive and negative effects: the company that owns the brand, products/services provided under the brand's name will benefit or be affected negatively by brand equity
- Consumer catalysts: similar to building a brand, determining one's value through brand equity is primarily decided by customers not the organization

Positive brand equity can help making a product/service's premium price strategy becomes acceptable easier by customers. For example, Apple's pricing for its products is expected by the audiences instead of accepted due to the perception of its brand as being innovative, futuristic and simplified luxurious.

Measuring brand equity provides marketers the insight of the company's brand equity sources, and their effects on the business performance (Kotler et al. 2009, 450). To study brand equity, there are several models can be used such as the Customer-Based Brand Equity or the Brand Asset Valuator (BAV) model.

Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model is developed by Professor Kevin Lane Keller, published in "Strategic Brand Management", it is also known as Keller's Brand Equity Model. This model demonstrates the view of a brand from customers' perspective and highlights four key levels: brand identity; brand meaning; brand response; brand relationships.



Figure 3 Customer-Based Brand Equity (Keller's Brand Equity Model)

- Brand identity: with carried out market research that provides customers' insight and how the brand is perceived by customers, will help brand managers know in which way the brand identity should be formed to make it stand out in the market. The goal at this level is to correctly align customers' perception to core, unique values of the brand.
- Brand meaning: this step is to define and communicate what the brand means.
  - Brand performance: how well customers' needs are satisfied with the chosen brand. The result of brand's performance comes directly from customers' experience of that brand. E.g. BMW cars deliver quality, reliable functions; drivers and passengers' safety and comfortable driving experience, hence the brand performance scores highly in the eye of its customers.
  - Brand imagery: how the brands meet customers' social and psychological needs. E.g. BMW is classified as one of the World's top luxury brands in the

car industry. Choosing the brand satisfy its customers' social need in a sense that the choice of automobile to own efficiently reflects one's wealth and status.

- Brand response: illustrates customers' response to the brand
    - Consumer judgements: forming relationships and loyalty between customers and a brand is mainly based on their judgements. According to Keller, these judgements fall into 4 categories: quality (brand's actual and expected quality); credibility (expertise/innovation, trustworthiness and likability); consideration (relevance of the product/service to customers' needs); superiority (market dominance of the brand over competitors)
    - Consumer feelings: evoked feelings of customers when using the brand and about the brand and about the customers themselves. In the model, there are six positive feelings listed: security, fun, self-reflect, warmth, social approval, and excitement.
- Brand resonance: this level is the most desirable and difficult to reach. It is when customers share/appreciate the same values with the brand, and there is emotional engagement between customers, results strong boding relationship with the brand.

It has been noted in Kotler et al. (2009, 451), the Brand Asset Valuator (BAV) is based on a quantitative research of 500,000 customers in 44 countries and provides comparative brand equity measures across thousands of brands among hundreds of product categories. It consists of 5 pillars of brand equity:

- Differentiation: measure the degree to which a brand is seen as different to others
- Energy: measures the brand's sense of momentum
- Relevance: measures the breadth of a brand's appeal
- Esteem: measures respect and regard for the brand
- Knowledge: measures familiarity and intimacy consumers have for the brand

*Energized Brand Strength* is determined by the combination of Differentiation, Energy and Relevance. This demonstrates the brand's future value. While Esteem and Knowledge together form *Brand Stature,* illustrates brands' past performance in the market. (Kotler et al. 2009, 451)
*Brand Stature* and *Energized Brand Strength* combines to make BAV PowerGrid, showing the stages in the cycle of brand development.
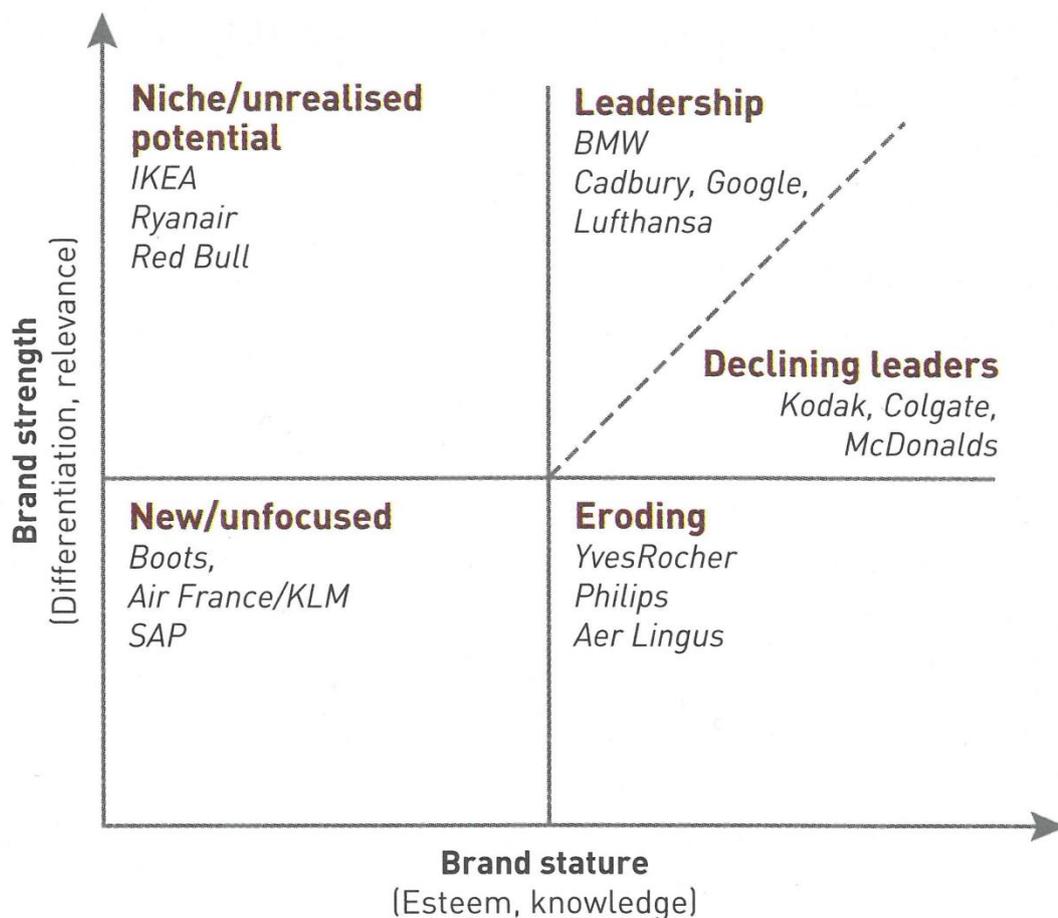
**Brand strength** (Differentiation, relevance)

**Niche/unrealised potential**
IKEA
Ryanair
Red Bull

**Leadership**
BMW
Cadbury, Google,
Lufthansa

**Declining leaders**
Kodak, Colgate,
McDonalds

**New/unfocused**
Boots,
Air France/KLM
SAP

**Eroding**
YvesRocher
Philips
Aer Lingus

**Brand stature**
(Esteem, knowledge)

Figure 4 BAV PowerGrid

(Kotler et al. 2009, 450)

## 2.2 What makes a brand great?

"Successful global brands are strong brands that transcend their origins and create enduring relationships with consumers across countries and cultures." (Hollis 2008, 25)
McDonald's, Facebook, Coca-Cola, Apple, Microsoft, these are the names in the World's top 10 most valuable brands, listed by Forbes. In 2015, Apple's brand value is worth of approximately 145 billion dollars, the World's highest valued brand, leaving behind its direct competitor Microsoft with its brand's value only accounts for half of what Apple's brand does, roughly 70 billion dollars. Facing a 'near death spiral' during early 1990s, Apple, under the leadership of Steve Jobs since 1996, have now reached a new exceptional height in not only the technology market but also the global economy (Badenhausen 2015). Marc Gobe, the author of 'Emotional Branding' argues that Apple's astonishing success is fundamentally the success of its branding strategy.

Clifton (2010, 62) states that distinctiveness and relevance is the two main elements that help positioning great brands in the mind of customers. What can be discovered when we look closely to the similarities that these brands share, that make them exceptionally successful?

### 2.2.1 A compelling idea

Great businesses represent, spread and maintain great, convincing ideas that grasps customers' attention and earn their loyalty by fulfilling unmet or unsatisfied need. For examples, Amazon earned its success, of course, due to the stability, convenience and security the website promises to its users but the idea of a safe, reliable, easy-to-use, diverse online market place behind the site, contributes a large portion to its accomplishment today. Clifton (2010, 62)

### 2.2.2 Consistency in delivering a brand's promises

Respectable people keep their promises even under difficult circumstances and so do respectable, compelling brands. The way a brand presents itself publicly and how it operates; reflect the firm's promises to its customers. This requires the consistency and clarity within the organization to remain constant, even when business strategy and tactics can often change due to astatic operating environment. The whole customers' experiences in the process of evaluation, trail, purchase and adoption is a verification of original promise. Clifton (2010, 63) For instance, Coca Cola's brand promise is 'To inspire moments of optimism and uplift'. It is easy to notice the under lying message in their advertisements, in their product campaigns, resonates with the promise they state. Coca Cola made a brilliant choice of promise to deliver to its consumers, as the experience of a sugar-sweetened beverage itself is physically uplifting due to inclination release of dopamine effect in user's brain after 45 minutes of intake (Naik circa 2015). In addition, joyful decorates are usually seen on Coca Cola's product packaging.

Furthermore, the idea of optimism is also psychologically appealing. Consequently, this proves the intended consistency in brand communication of Coca-Cola.
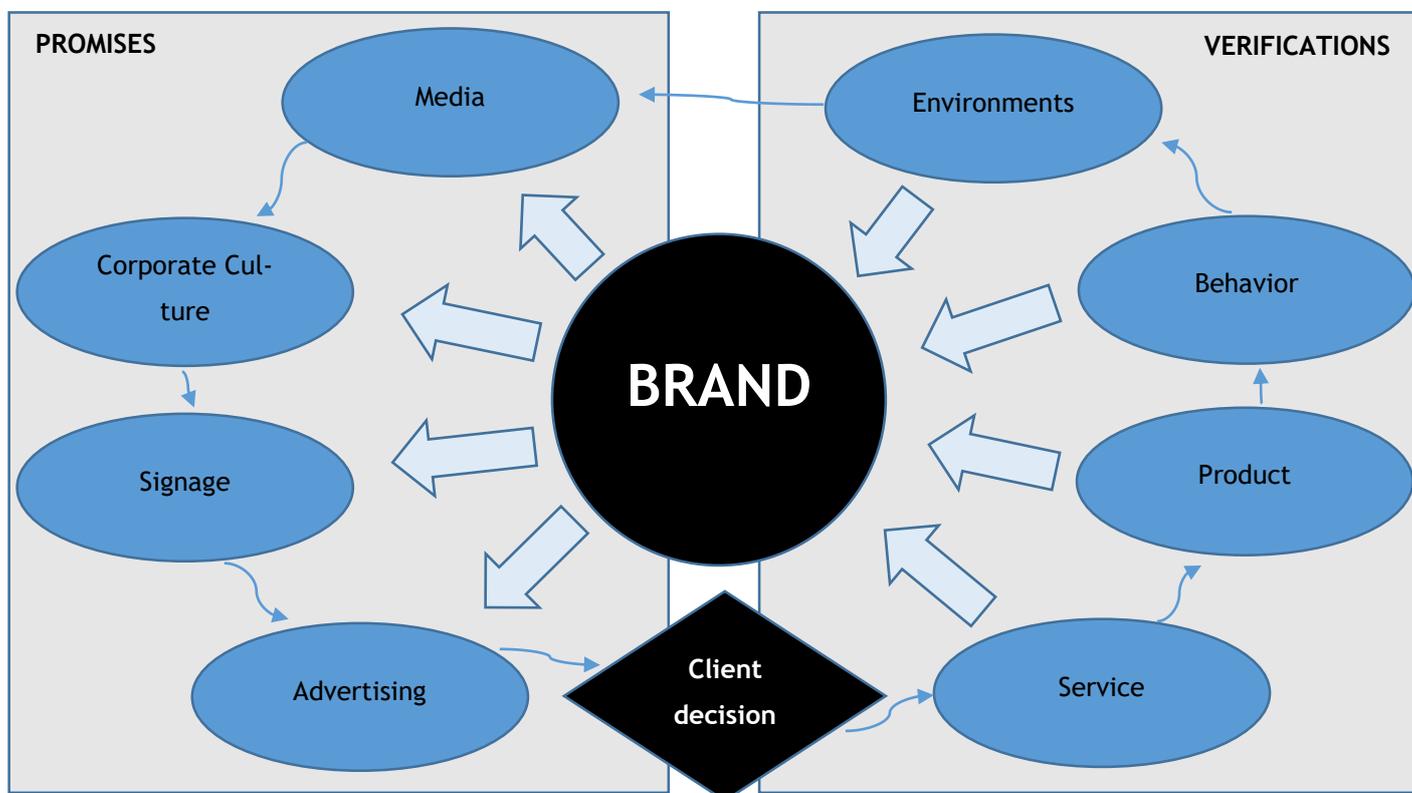


Figure 5 The promises and verifications of a brand
(Clifton 2010, 63)

### 2.2.3 Expressions of the brand through every experience

Every interaction we have with a brand defines and shapes our experiences of that brand. Brand leaders understand the distinct of their offerings, then consistently communicate it to desired customers and allow them to be aware and experience the differences at various touch points. Clifton (2010, 64) Taking an example of the Apple store, where the interior design of the place as well as The Genius Bar simultaneously emphasizes Apple's brand customer-centric approach (Genius Bar offers genuine human interactions, technical related problems of Apple products being handle by well-trained personnel, instead of long phone sessions or requirement to shipping the products to repair locations) and maintain consistency of the brand's promises, to deliver unique customer experiences (With open design, the store allows customers to comfortably flow inside or with noticeable similarities between interior designs and Apple's products, such as typographic styles and off giving feelings from visual perceptions).

As stated by Kotler et al. (2009), any information-bearing experience that customers have with a brand is brand contact, either they are positive or negative. This includes not only the human interactions between staff- customer, surrounding display at purchasing location but also customers own physiological sensations that can be 'swayed' by intended interferences, designed based on the understanding of human 5 sensual dimensions (sight, sound, smell, touch and taste).

Davis and Dunn (2002) introduces the Brand touchpoint wheel, which is a model built based on the life span of brand interaction with customers, provides an overall view of where con- sumers will be in contact with the brand. This model distinguishes three phases of a brand- customer interaction: Pre-purchase (awareness, interest, consideration), purchase (trial, pur- chase, repeat), and post-purchase (loyalty, advocacy). This can be used as a structure for the brand manager's checklist to know where and when, customers' experience of the brand can be influenced.
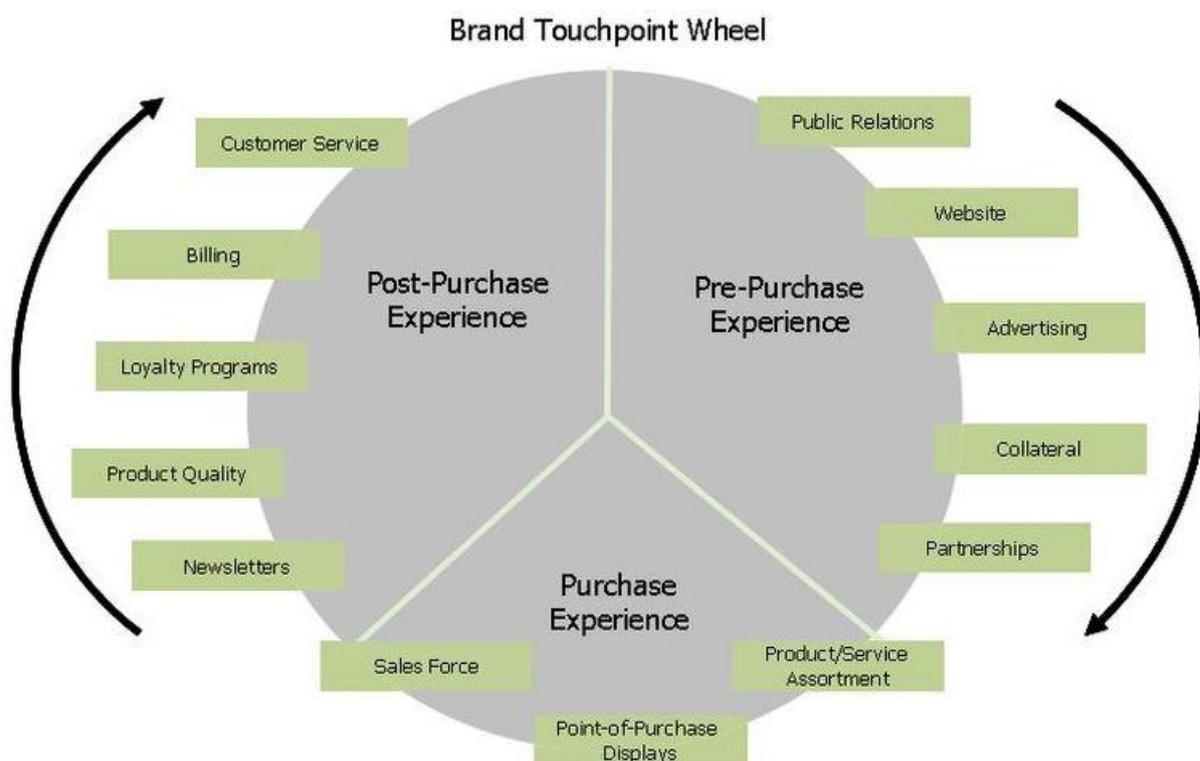
## Brand Touchpoint Wheel

| Public Relations |
| Website |
| Advertising |
| Collateral |
| Partnerships |

**Post-Purchase Experience**

**Pre-Purchase Experience**

**Purchase Experience**

| Customer Service |
| Billing |
| Loyalty Programs |
| Product Quality |
| Newsletters |

| Sales Force |
| Point-of-Purchase Displays |
| Product/Service Assortment |

Figure 6 Brand touchpoint wheel

(Davis and Dunn 2002)

### 2.2.4 Alignment of internal and external commitment to the brand

"Those who live the brand will deliver the brand", Clifton (2010, 64). Leading brands are aware of the influence on their brand strategies to deliver consistent, relevant and differentiated experience by the internal culture within the organization. Alignment of internal values with brand values helps refining the company's culture at the same time embed the core purposes. For example, Harley-Davidson maintain the consistency between its internal beliefs and external delivers by ensuring the firm's employees share the attitudes of freedom, individualism, self-expression with its customers. Brand loyalty is strengthening by the combination of internal employee experience and external customer experience. As John Russell, Harley-Davidson Europe vice-president and managing director says:

"We actively engage with our customer; we encourage our people to spend time with our customers, riding with our customers, being with our customers whenever the opportunity arises. If you move from being a commodity product to an emotional product, through the real attachment and engagement that comes from creating an experience, the degree of differences might appear to be quite small but the results are going to be much greater" Clifton (2010, 65)

### 2.2.5 Relevance

Leading brands spend money to sustain their images visible and credible in customers' perception. By doing so, they maintain the brands' relevance to targeted customers, and the differences to other brands that create competitive advantages. Once a brand loses touch with its customers or ignores potential audience, it lost its relevance. As by choosing a certain brand, customers gain the company that owns that brand the right to provide them what they need.

### 2.2.6 Highly competitive operating environment

Substitutions can easily be found for products or services that Samsung, Coca-Cola, BMW or any other World's most recognizable brands offer. Since brand is about choices that consumers make, leading brands are competing in markets where their customers have many other choices other than their products/services. Therefore, brand owners have to continually and effectively figure out what and how to keeps their brands distinct from competitors. The benefits of offer products/services need to be apparent and consistently delivered with the intention of remaining the brand's relevance, differentiation and credibility.

### 2.2.7 Brand as an asset and brand value as guiding force

The influence of brand extends beyond marketing department in organizations that owns great brands. Brands are embedding to the firms as intangible assets, recognized as central organization principles so that every untaken activity by the business will reinforce the brand.

Great brands are defined by both hard numbers and imagination. Well measured brand value offers a powerful framework for defining brand opportunity, with valuation metrics helps rooting the brand in the precision of commercial reality. Moreover, valuation plays an important role in assessing the value achieved through brand strategy and recognizing opportunities through which that value should be maintained or further developed. (Clifton 2010)

### 2.3 Brand developing for small businesses

As mentioned in chapter 2.1, a brand to customers is not just a name or logo, but rather a billboard that have the promise, message, 'personality' or vision of a company written on it. And these factors would be crucial to forming customers' interpretation of the business. Thus establishing a brand out of small or medium businesses is also needed. In addition, as stated in 'GREEN Communications' Guide to Creating a Brand', every business has a brand whether or not it is aware of as one. A brand communicates the message that the business is trying to tell the customers more effectively, so the desire associations between the business's offers and their needs can be form faster. At the same time, successfully communicating difference between the company's offerings and others will provide competitive advantage when customers are confronted with a wide range of choices (GREEN Communications 2006, 2).
To get started, there are five keys area that small firms need to consider when it comes to assessing the business they are operating in:

- Recognize the business, product or service's core competencies. Importance is not what the business does but what the customers obtain from it.
- Assess the business current and potential customers. For example, who they are or which social class they are in
- Investigate how customers and internal personnel feels about the business. Emotional responses can then be classified as brand value and form the basis of the brand message
- Define how favorably the business is perceived by its customers and potential customers. This demonstrates the perceived quality of the business.
- Study the development potential of the business with its current and potential customers without alternating the business' core competencies.

Once the business's core competencies and current brand positioning is assessed, the brand identity can start being initially defined. However, it is crucial to keep the brand identity from conflicting with the brand's current reputation.

Discussion about the business with customers (through questionnaire) and employees should be performed to ensure the defined core competencies and brand values' credibility. For example, if the employee perceived the company's business as 'professional' but associations between customers and the firm's brand is 'cheerful and cheap', that brand is damaged (GREEN Communications 2006, 2).

To guarantee the consistency of communication, the company's literature needs to reflect the chosen brand values, in a way that current can potential customers can easily notice without any confliction of contents. Particularly, visual associations to brand values can be delivered by deliberate design of logo or the company's stationary. Additionally, understanding and belief of the firm's staffs in the brand values will affect their attitude and behaviors toward customers which ultimately influence the success of the brand more than any promotional activities (GREEN Communications 2006, 3).

It takes time for a brand to develop its strength through consistent communications and brand promises delivered to customer. Thus, brand management is a constant work that requires the commitment from employees to convey the brand at all times. Both positive and negative brand responses from customers need to be monitored, analyzed and consequently, strategic brand related changes to be made (GREEN Communications 2006, 4).

To conclude, Kotler et al. (2009, 429) also introduces four processes of strategic brand management:

- "Ensure identification of the brand with customers and an association of the brand in customers' minds with a specific product or service class or customer need.
- Firmly establish the brand meaning in the minds of customers (by strategically linking a host of tangible and intangible brand associations).
- Elicit the proper customer response to this brand identity and brand meaning.
- Convert brand response to create an intense, active loyalty relationship between the customer and the brand."

2.4    Emotional branding

As noted by Gobé (2009, xxix), Emotional Branding is when people connect subliminally with companies and their products in an emotionally profound way. Also, emotional branding can

be seen as 'a means of creating a personal dialogue with consumers' (Gobé 2009, xxvi) meaning that the business's understanding about customers' needs or cultural orientations reflects through its brand in an intimate and individual way. By striking the audiences' imagination, leading brands are positioning their names in solid places of our mind. From GoPro's thrills to Vogue's iconic glamour, these brands 'exploit' our ego-centric tendency that drive us to make associations with ideas that we deeply desire, including the idea of our better, more interesting, likeable, sociable self through the eyes of others. Furthermore, as perceptively noted by Gobé (2009, xxx - xxxiii), there are ten 'Commandments' that differentiate Emotional branding and traditional branding, which reveal the concept in more details:

- From consumers to people: *'Consumers buy, people live'*. Traditional branding approach sees customers as 'enemy', with strategies to overcome their 'defense' instead of win-win partnership relies on mutual respect.

- From product to experience: *'Products fulfill needs, experiences fulfill desires'*. A major shift from spending money for needs and convenience to shopping experience will stay in customers' mind longer and this expands the spectrum of the context (an experience can be made to be positive, thus becomes beneficial for the brand's image). E.g. displaying products is apparently not the primary goal of Apple Stores. How these places are designed have one main goal is to make the visiting time of customers a small trip, an experience of futuristic atmosphere which synchronizes with the organization's core value, technologically innovative.

- From honesty to trust: *'Honesty is expected. Trust is engaging and intimate'*.

- From quality to preference: *'Quality for the right price is a given today. Preference creates the sale'*. Alternatively, preference is the result of real connections between customers and the brand while quality for a suitable price is merely a norm and obvious expectation.

- From notoriety to aspiration: *'Being known does not mean that you are also loved'*.

- From identity to personality: *'Identity is recognition. Personality is about character and charisma!'* Emotional responds are the first step of emotional connections, thus a brand that shows its personalities is not only more relatable to its target audiences but also provide customers the opportunity to associate themselves and be drawn to the charisma that these traits radiate.

- From function to feel: *'The functionality of a product is about practical or superficial qualities only. Sensorial design is about experiences.'*

- From ubiquity to presence: *'Ubiquity is seen. Emotional presence is felt'*. A quality brand message presents to the audiences is more efficient than clusters of physical space filled with brand's name or logo. For instance, a smart interactive banner on

the side walk can attracts more attention than a big logo billboard on top of a building.

- From communication to dialogue: '*Communication is telling. Dialogue is sharing.*' From the company's perspective, communication is mainly about information, and information is a one-way proposition. Dialogue however, involves customers in the 'conversation' by messages that are individually designed and giving out a more personal feeling for receivers.

- From service to relationship: '*Service is selling. Relationship is acknowledgment.*' Genuine understanding and appreciation for customers as who they are, above all, as people with problems that a business's offerings can solve, instead of perceiving them as merely a part of a commercial exchange.

### 2.4.1 Female shoppers as customers

Insightfully noted by Gobé (2009, 48), "market research has proven time and again that the primary thing that women want, as people and as consumers, is relationship...Women are also largely holistic in their approach to relationships, meaning that they are less likely than men to compartmentalize a brand or company solely according to what it has to offer them in a specific situation, They want to understand a bigger picture: what the brand stands for on the whole, if the brand's image philosophy, and/or ethics are in sync with their own."

Thus emotional branding is, not a new but innovative approach toward female customers, the main consumers (or consuming-decision-makers) of the market compared to male counterparts.

It also has been noted by Gobé (2009, 48-49) that there are five factors needed to be taken into account when it comes to emotional branding for female audiences:

- Respect: Women are well-informed and mostly are self-learning. Their tendency to proactively research the situation links back to our instincts as a specie. Holding the major responsibility to reproduce, women have to be more careful in their decision-making and more analytical. Hence, by acknowledging that female customers are informed, the brand gains advantage.

- Individuality: Which species that live on Earth loves individuality more than human? And between us, who loves individuality more? It is women's desire to be different that holds the unbreakable foundation of the fashion industry together, forever. Thus, the brand should not arrow down its target audience through stereotyping especially to female customers.

- Stress relief: Many stress-related studies have revealed that women see stress as one of their top concerns. By offering solutions or expressing empathy for the tension that audiences daily face would help the brand more remarkable to customers.

- Connection: As noted by carried out studies, women don't like reading lists of numbers or stats. Instead, they want to be aware how the product affects them.
- Relationship: Women expect a dialogue, not just a commercial transaction. Once found the brands that hold their trust, female customers tend to be more loyal. Brands that successfully demonstrated its core values, what they sincerely stand for, will 'win' more female customers.

## 2.4.2   Sensory branding

As mentioned in section 2.3.3 'Expressions of the brand through every experience', every brand touch-points can be seen as a communication bridge between the brand and customers. Not only the product/service, media contents and personnel but also customers' own sensation felt with their five senses, affect the customers' overall experience about the brand. According to Gobé (2009, 73-103), the five sensual dimensions can be manipulated in ways that benefit they brand using emotional responds:

- Sight: According to Gobé (2009, 79), "Colors trigger very specific responses in the central nervous system and the cerebral cortex. Once they affect the cerebral cortex, colors can active thoughts, memories, and particular modes of perception. This arousal prompts an increase in consumers' ability to process information". By deliberately choosing colors for media contents or the brand's logo, will encourage more understanding for what the brand stands for. Generally speaking, any displaying nonverbal visual elements at the brand touch-point can help shaping the brand identity. For example, wall space filled with clocks turned at multiple travel destinations created for Johnnie Walker in-store clothing shop is to convey the brand's image to sophisticated traveler (Gobé 2009, 84).
- Hearing: "studies have illustrated that 'sound has an immediate and, to a large extent, cognitively unmediated effect on recall and emotions" (Gobé 2009, 73). Audio contents can be used to first inflict the customers' emotions then deliver the brand's message in a harmony manner, hence creating a stronger impact and expectantly memorable. For instance, Discovery Channel promotion's video for…Earth usually have the background music that ignites a sense of connected diversity and greatness, in the audience mind. Being consistent with the video's visual contents, they succeeded wining extra audience's attention proving by making one of the songs became a YouTube viral (I love the whole world – Discovery Channel)
- Taste: It has been noted that proffering food makes us feel at ease, provide pleasures and even indicates kinship (Gobé 2009, 87). Especially at shopping mall or where the customers are expected to stay longer, since the amount of time spent in the place influences the amount of money consumers will spend, complementary gestures from

the brand such as a small coffee or candies adds the positive responds to the shopping experience as a whole and to the brand.

- Smell: One gentle whip of a special, freshly baked brownie' aroma could bring back the good memories made very long time ago. As arguably noted by Gobé (2009, 99), olfactory is the direct links to customers' memories and emotions that can be influenced by planned stimulations. Moreover, nice scents help giving a relaxed, pleasant atmosphere which improves the customers' experience. A uniquely enough scent could help the brand that associated with it lingers on the mind of consumers and potentially more memorable.

- Shape: tactile sense is more concerned by businesses that has their offering as physical products. Nevertheless, a soft, comfortable touch can slightly smooth customers' stresses for a brief moment, which improve their experience at the physical brand touch-point.

## 2.5   Knowledge base summary

To briefly sum up, there are several key points needed to be considered when conducting the empirical part of the paper:

- By definition, a brand can be a name, logo or any unique features that separates the products/services from different companies. However, to a business, the brand holds core values that reflected throughout the business and works as an operation guideline. Furthermore, to consumers, a brand is the assurance of expected quality and values from the chosen product/service and the shortcut of their consuming decisions.

- The 'relationship' between customers and a chosen brand forms throughout 5 stages respectively: brand awareness, brand recognition, brand trial, brand preference and brand loyalty. Whereas in every stage of the brand experience, 3 aspects of a brand: **elements, identity** and **personality**, simultaneously work together with the utilization of deliberated branding contents, to influence the customers' outlook about the **brand image** in a way that benefits and strengthen the connection between them and the business. Furthermore, **brand equity** demonstrates the value of the brand and represent the result of all branding activities from the business interacts with customers' perception.

- "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." – Isaac Newton 1676.

  The brief review over the section discusses 'what makes a brand great?' by Clifton (2010) helps rightly guiding the author's mind when brainstorming about the brand

recommendations that will serve the case company as a solid, cumulative and sustainable foundation for a strong brand. Moreover, this part of the paper provides insights about key requirements for a developing, connecting and lasting brand. In combination, they are **nice ideas being sophisticatedly and repeatedly told in vivid manner, which originated from true beliefs that make sense and stood out among others.**

- The discovering and study of emotional branding helps introducing the author to a different approach when designing the brand contents, correspondingly widening up the range of 'targets' on the customers to influence. For instance, besides brand expression when customers are in using the product/service itself, but also other communication means like human sensory or elements that help evokes desired emotions in the customers which are beneficial for the perception about brand.

## 3    Research approach

This chapter of the paper will illustrate types of research approach and methodologies chosen by the author to gather **primary data** and the results of data collection. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009, 598), primary data is data that is specifically collected for the research being undertaken by the conductor of the research. Hence, collected records have higher relevance to the research objectives and questions.

## 3.1    Research approaches

As noted in Saunders et al. (2009, 124), there are two categorized research approaches:

- Deductive approach: investigate a known theory or phenomenon and tests if that theory is valid in certain circumstance. In other words, deductive approach involves deducting conclusions from premises or propositions (Research Methodology 2016). This approach consists of 4 stages illustrated by the figure below:



Figure 7 Deductive research approach

- Inductive approach: is the process of gathering data, then results are analyzed to formulate a theory. In brief, inductive research moves from 'specific observations to broader generalizations and theories' (Trochim 2006).



Figure 8 Inductive research approach

Considering the extent and context of this paper, **inductive approach** is chosen for the research process. More specifically, this research does not create any new theory but aims to develop practical recommendations for the case company.

Referring to Malhotra (2010, 103), research design can be classified into 2 types. Exploratory research design that includes exploratory research while conclusive research design consists of descriptive research and casual research.

Exploratory research's objective is providing insights and understanding by investigate a problem or situation. Exploratory research can be implemented to satisfy following purposes (Malhotra 2010, 104):

- Formulate and define and problem
- Identify alternative approach
- Hypotheses development
- Acquire insights for developing an approach to the problem

Understanding the objective of exploratory research, this approach is chosen to provide insider insights and visions about how the branding of Dr. Thanh Thuy's clinic should be executed. The method used for this part of the research is qualitative method - interview (this is further explained in section '3.3 Research methodology').

Also noted in Malhotra (2010, 106), descriptive research is the type of research that has its objective to describe something (usually market characteristics or functions). Descriptive research is carried out for following purposes:

- To describe the characteristics of relevant groups
- To estimate the percentage of a specified population that exhibiting a certain behavior
- To determine the perceptions of product characteristics
- To determine the degree to which marketing variables are associated
- To make specific predictions

In order to have more understanding about customers of Dr. Thanh Thuy's clinic, descriptive research is carried out on the patients at the clinic by quantitative method – survey questionnaire (this is further explained in section '3.3 Research methods')

Lastly, as stated in Malhotra (2010, 113) casual research has its main aim to obtain evidence of cause-and-effect (causal) relationships, to help marketing manager make decisions based

on these evidence. However, due to limited relevance between the purposes of this paper's research and the nature of this research type, causal research is not chosen.

## 3.2    Research methodology

### 3.2.1    Qualitative method – Interview

According to Saunders et al. (2009, 320-321), interviews can be categorized into three types:

- Structured interview: uses questionnaire based on fixed or identical set of questions. Interviews are executed by having the questions asked by the interviewer and the interviewee's responses recorded on standardized schedule, often with pre-coded answers. Thus, structured interviews collect quantifiable data, which can be referred to as 'quantitative research interviews'.
- Semi-structured interview: the interviewee will be answering a list of themes or questions and these may vary from interview to interview. Additionally, the order of questions asked also depends on the natural flow of the conversation between the interviewer and the participant.
- Unstructured interview: are informal and applied to further investigate a general area of interest. This type of interview has no predetermined list of questions, giving the interviewee the freedom to talk about anything in relation to the topic area.

As mentioned earlier in sector 3.2, the goal of conducting an interview with Dr. Thanh Thuy is to help the author having a more specific view on how the clinic's brand is expected to be developed. Moreover, gathered information about patients at the clinic from Dr. Thanh Thuy's answers also helps constructing a more profound questionnaire for the quantitative research. Therefore, **semi-structured interview** is chosen to fulfill this purpose.

The interview with Dr. Thanh Thuy occurred on 28th of June, consists of 5 questions relating to:

- The patients' flow of the clinic
- Future branding orientation expected by Dr. Thuy
- The core values that the doctor believes in and they will be reflecting throughout the whole business

3.2.2    Quantitative method – Survey questionnaire

As Saunders et al. (2009, 360) claims that questionnaire is the term used for all techniques of data collection in which participants answer the same set of questions in a fixed order. There are two types of questionnaire and they differ according to the amount of contact the re-searcher has with respondents (Saunders et al. 2009, 362-363).

- Self-administered questionnaire: are usually filled by the respondents via electronical means (Internet – 'Internet-mediated questionnaires', or intranet – 'intranet-medi-ated questionnaires'), postal service (postal/mail questionnaires) and direct delivery (delivery and collection questionnaires).
- Interviewer-administered questionnaire: is when the responses are recorded by the interviewer on the basic of each participant's answers.

To encourage patients' responses and increase the number of participants, **delivery and collection questionnaires** are directly handed out in the clinic's waiting room by Dr. Thanh Thuy's assistant, also the clinic's reception.

As mentioned in sector 1.3 of the Introduction, the survey's core aims are to help understanding who are the clinic's customers; providing essential insights for this paper's author to brainstorm and design an appropriate brand strategy through two main communication channels, virtually (social media and discount coupon sites) and physically (patients' experience at the clinic).

The survey was carried out using paper-based survey method. It can be divided into 3 main parts:

- Questions 1 to 7: patients' demographic data and their habitual use of virtual communication tools
- Questions 8 & 9: patients' opinion about future service improvement at the clinic
- Questions 10 & 12: patients' perception of the clinic's branding (brand personality) and service satisfaction
- Additional question 11: patients' insights about reasons why some decide to stop their treatment

3.2.3    Data analysis

As noted by Saunders et al. (2009, 416), the researcher should consider a number of factors before starting the data's interpretation:

- Data types (scale of measurement)

- Data's format when inputting in analysis software
- Effect of data coding on subsequent analyses
- Weighting cases
- Methods using to check for errors

Relating the context of this paper, since most of the questions in the survey are simple except for questions that require respondents to reflect and rate the importance of their choices (Q10 and Q11), results from the quantitative research is analyzed using basic Microsoft Excel formulas in combination with built-in charts from Microsoft Word to be demonstrated to the readers.

## 3.3    The credibility of research findings

According to Saunders et al. (2009, 156), to determine the credibility of a research, there are three factors that needed to be emphasized: reliability, validity and generalizability. However, reliability and validity is particularly more important in evaluating the results of the research.

Reliability refers to the extent to which the data collection techniques or analysis procedures will yield consistent outcomes (Smith 2008, 109). Noted in Saunders et al. (2009, 156-157) four major threats that can affect the reliability of a research are:

- Subject or participant error: given answers from individual are insistent and varying due to subjective reasons (timing pressure when completing the survey/interview, lack of focus or understanding of the questions)
- Subject or participant bias: respondents' answers are not truly what they believe but rather being influenced by other motives (given answers are thought to be expected by authority or bosses)
- Observer error: research that involves more observers with different ways of conducting the measurements can be complicated and misleading
- Observer bias: the researcher's interpretation of gathered results can be biased by his/her own understanding and opinions

Validity of a research demonstrates whether the findings are really what they appear to be about (Saunders et al. 2009, 157). Lastly, generalizability is to which extent the research results are generalizable. In other words, how gathered data can be equally applicable to other research setting (Saunders et al. 2009, 158).

The survey questionnaire conducted on patients at Dr. Thanh Thuy's clinic faces one popular threat usually found when examining the reliability of a research. Some respondents' answers are not solid and inconsistent due to relatively long list of questions, which including 3 'hard' questions (Q4, Q10, Q11) which requires the participants to think thus bearing the risk of random answers when they are out of patience. However, the given time for each respondent is the waiting time for each patient's turn to have the check up with Dr. Thanh Thuy, which is more than enough for them to thoughtfully read through the survey, unless they find it too long or the answering is interrupted. Hence, this limits the number of responds that are lack of consistency to incidental cases, thus largely reduces the threat on the search reliability. However, another factor to consider is that the patience's own understanding of the question and the context they put them through, also might influence their responds beyond the control of the researcher.

## 3.4    Research's ethical issues

It has been noted in Saunders et al. (2009, 185), during the implementation of a research, there arise several key ethical issues across the stages and duration of the project that researcher need to keep in mind:

- The privacy of possible and actual participants
- Willingness to cooperate of the research's participants
- Participants' approval and possibility of deception
- Confidentiality of the findings and maintaining the anonymity of participants
- Reactions of participants while data is being collected (including discomfort, embarrassment or shame)

## 4    Empirical study

This part of the paper will demonstrate how the chosen research methods are implemented and gathered data to be analyze.

## 4.1    Questionnaires

From 25th of June 2016 to 31st of August (68 calendar days, 29 clinic's working evenings – this is further explained in sector 5.1), there are 72 participants who contributed 67 valid answers, including infertility patients and prenatal check-up mothers.

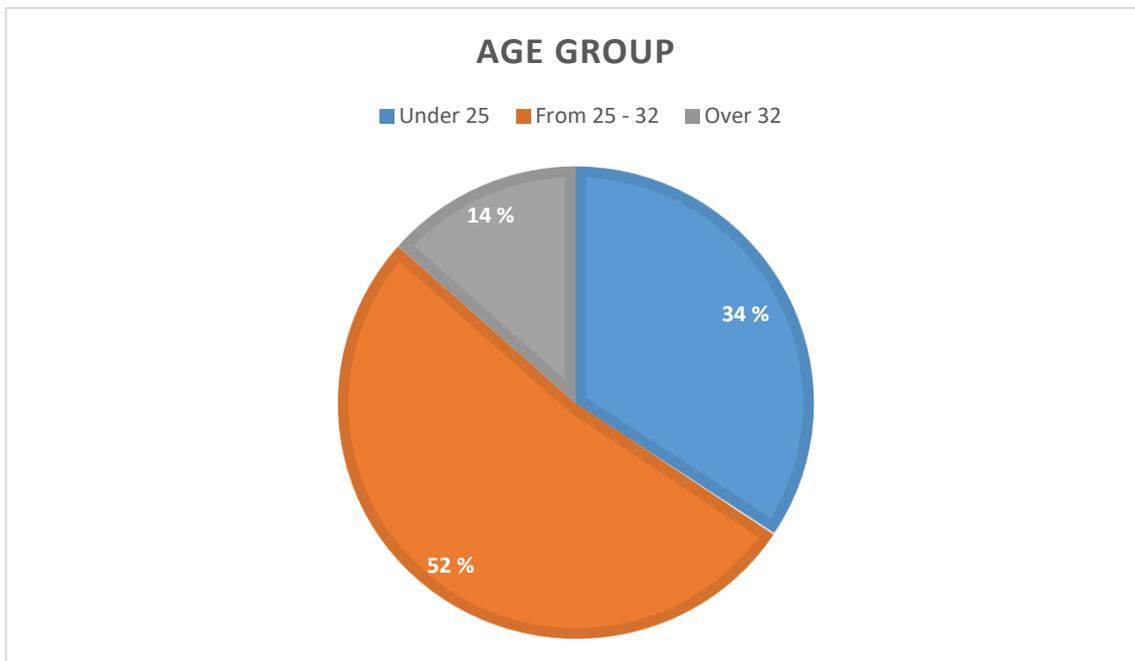### 4.1.1 Data collection and analysis

**Q1.** Age group



Figure 9 Patients' age group

Patients that belong to the fertile age group take account for more than 85% of the partici-pants where over 32 years old patients only takes 14%. This results show that the clinic is hav-ing not only infertility patients but also pregnant women.
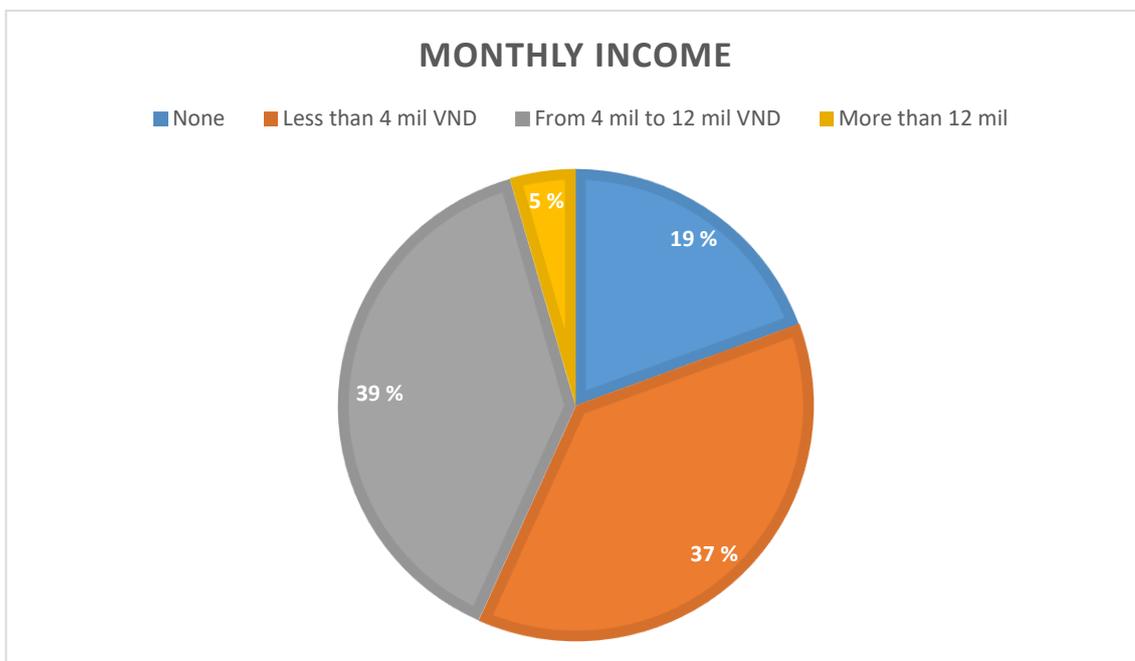
**Q2.** Financial status



Figure 10 Patients' current financial status

The results reflect not only the monetary figures but also, in a sense, reveal the educational level of patients at the clinic, whether they are unskilled labor (people who have only had attained high school diploma) or someone who might have a degree. This will help fine-tuning the brand approach so that patients with money doesn't feel like they are paying for something less than they believe they deserve and the financially struggles won't be overwhelmed by the impression of costly medical treatments.

**Q3**. Awareness of Dr. Thanh Thuy's clinic
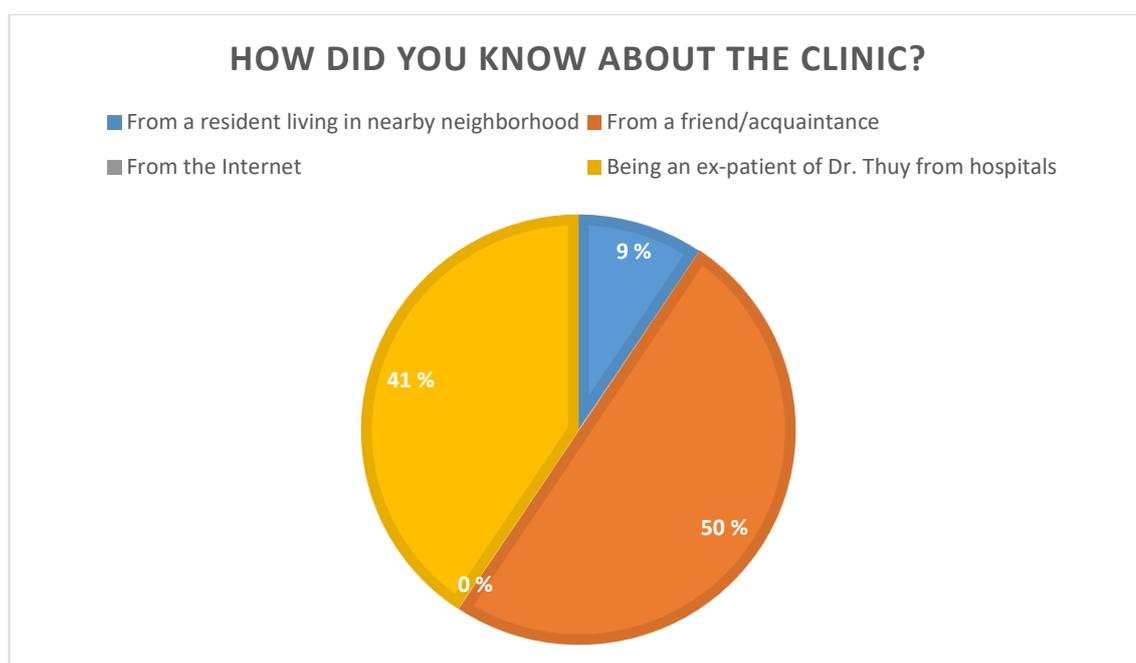


Figure 11 Awareness of the clinic

The results are expected as there is no existence of information about the clinic online yet. However, 'word-of-mouth' advertising is once again proven to be the most effective and commonly used marketing technique in Vietnam since 50% of the participants know about the clinic from someone else. Only 9% out of 67 participants know about the clinic from someone who lives nearby, this tells the potential of physical advertising in the residential area where the clinic located is not fully exploited.

Sub-question 3: Do you know any other infertility private clinic and how do you know about them?
Among the 48 participants answered 'Yes', 12 people (25%) noted that they know other clinic from Internet, approximately 44% out of 48 people know through a friend/acquaintance. This again confirm the possibility to raise the awareness about Dr. Thanh Thuy clinic by using online communication channels.

**Q4.** Opinion about the belief that patients in Vietnam is not being treated as a customer of healthcare service, specifically in gynecological and infertility
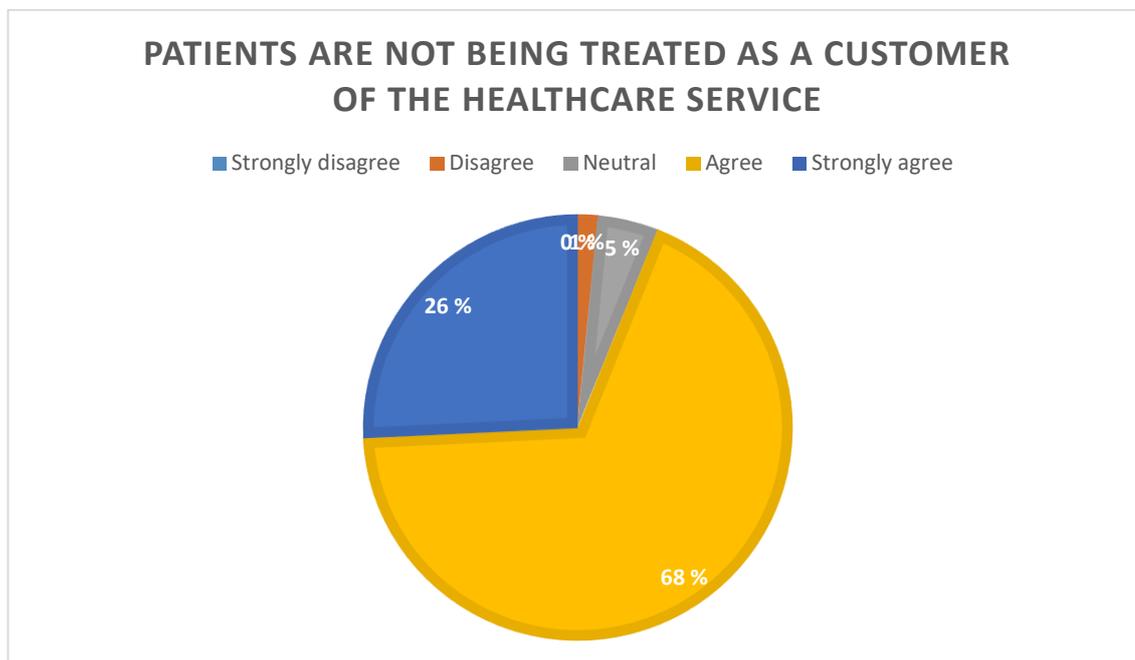


Figure 12 Opinion about how patients are being treated in healthcare service

As show, it is shocking but foremost, disappointing while 94% (62 people out of 67) agree to this suggested opinion. Nevertheless, this is seen as a good branding opportunity as to empha-size on the message that at Dr. Thanh Thuy's clinic, patients are not only patients but also customers.

**Q5.** Patients' awareness about infertility and treatments
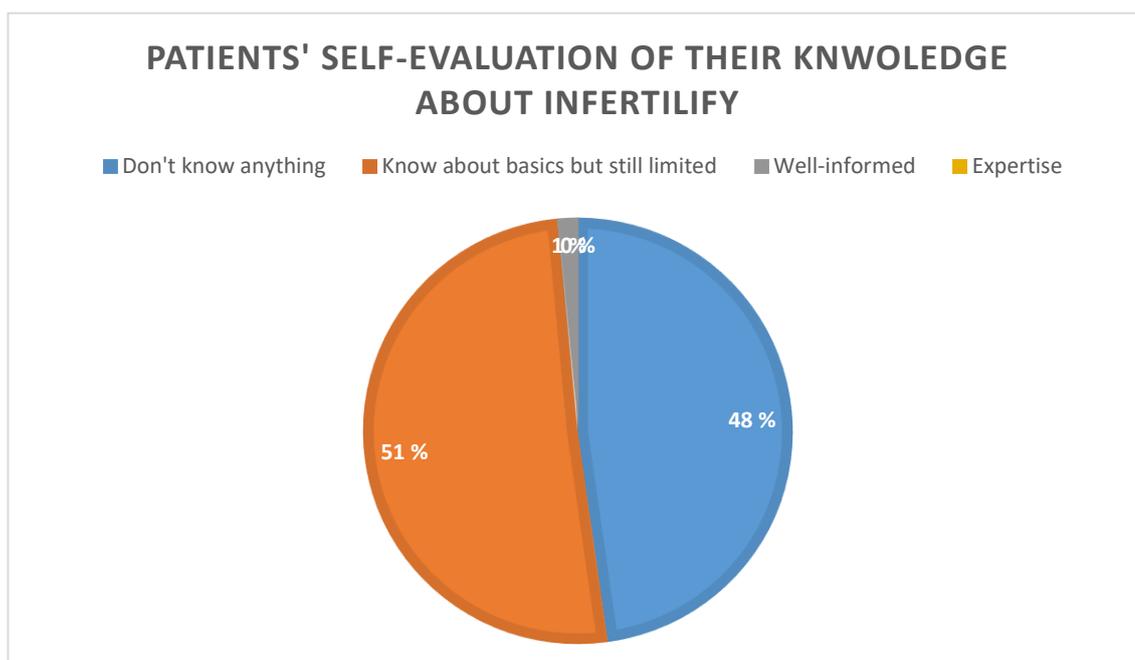


Figure 13 Patients' awareness about infertility and treatments

The result from this question raises the urgency to inform the patients about infertility and encouragement needed for them to learn more about the health issue they are facing. Respectively to **question 8** when asked whether or not patients are keen to the idea of a reliable, filtered and relevant information source about infertility is also the clinic's Facebook page, 49 of 67 participants are interested.
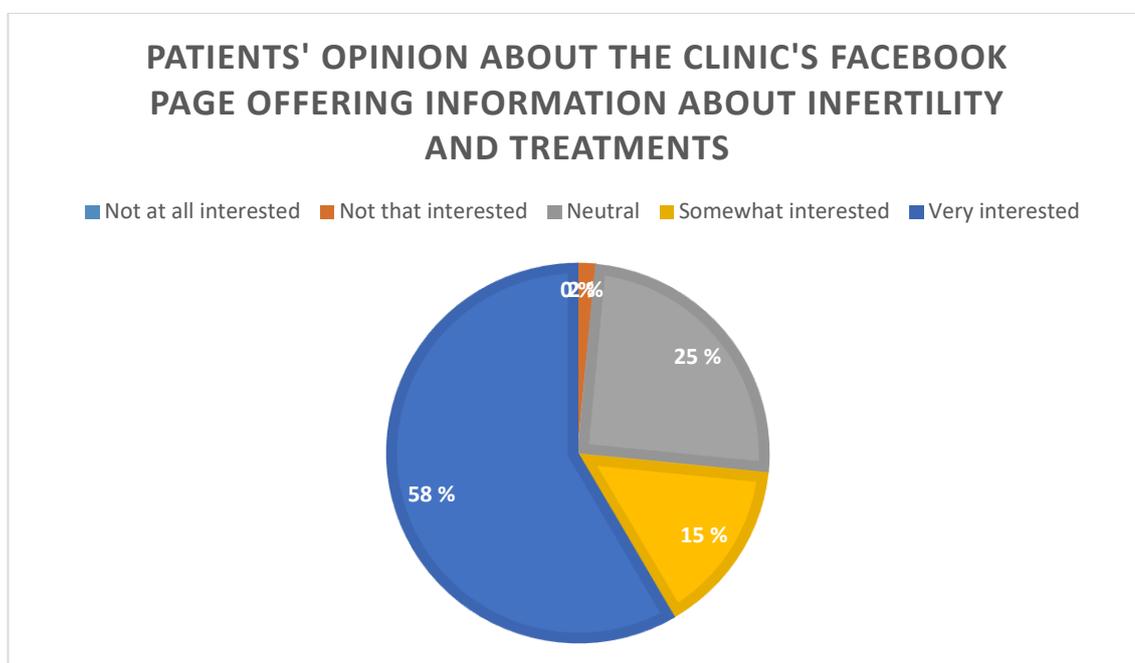


Figure 14 Patients' opinion about the clinic's Facebook page offering information about infertility and treatments

**Q6.** How often do you use Facebook?
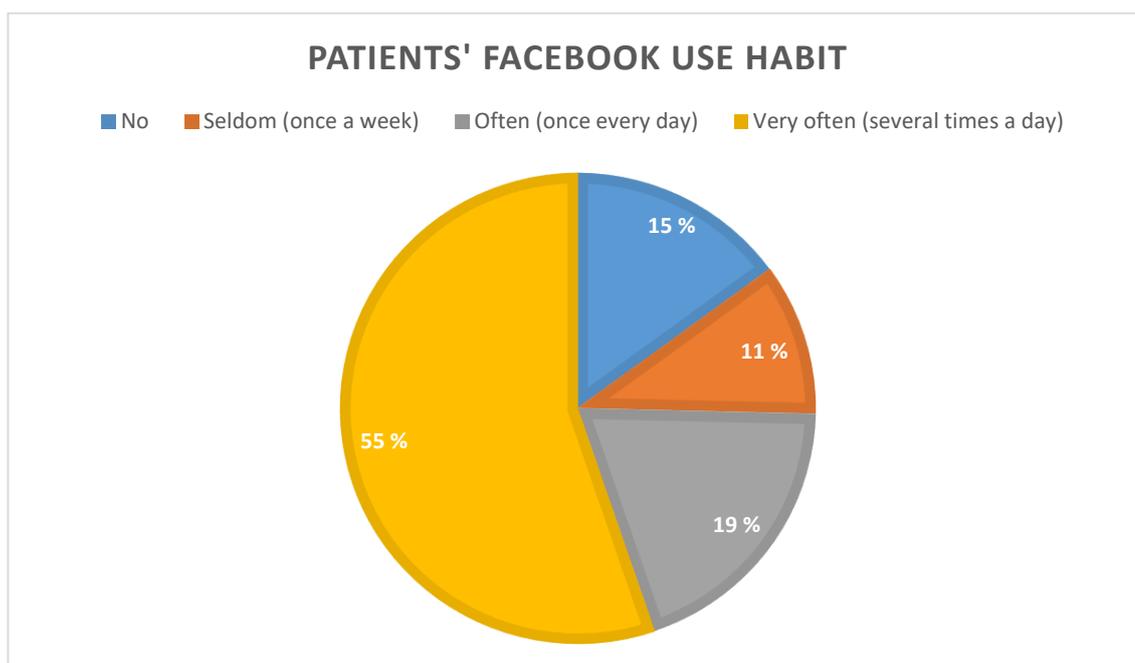


Figure 15 Patients' social media using habit

From this question, it shows that the use of Facebook as another brand communication is an ideal option. Also, Facebook's check-in function can be encouraged to be used by patients that come to the clinic, hence directly expand the business's online visibility through patients' own social media connection.

**Q7**. How often do you use online discount coupons website?



Figure 16 Patients' discount coupon website using habit

As discussed with Dr. Thanh Thuy from the interview, she expects to use discount coupon websites such as muachung.vn or nhommua.com to offer patients service packages, for instance 3 times check-up at the clinic with cheaper fee, as a marketing attempt. However, the result illustrates that the target audience is not familiar with this kind of website where only 15% of survey participants use them.

**Q9**. Patients' opinion for a weekly group counselling among others and doctor

Almost 75% of the participants show their appreciation for the idea about counselling sessions, meaning that if this is placed into practice, it will be the foundation of a small community between patients, where they can share their experiences, doubts, questions to others and having Dr. Thanh Thuy to help them answer. As mentioned in section 2.5 where the theory of emotional branding is discussed, by providing the sense of a community, patients' desire of belonging being fulfilled will help forming a closer relationship between themselves and the clinic. Mental support is as important as any physical treatment especially among those who find themselves in the same difficult, vulnerable position like not being able to have a child.
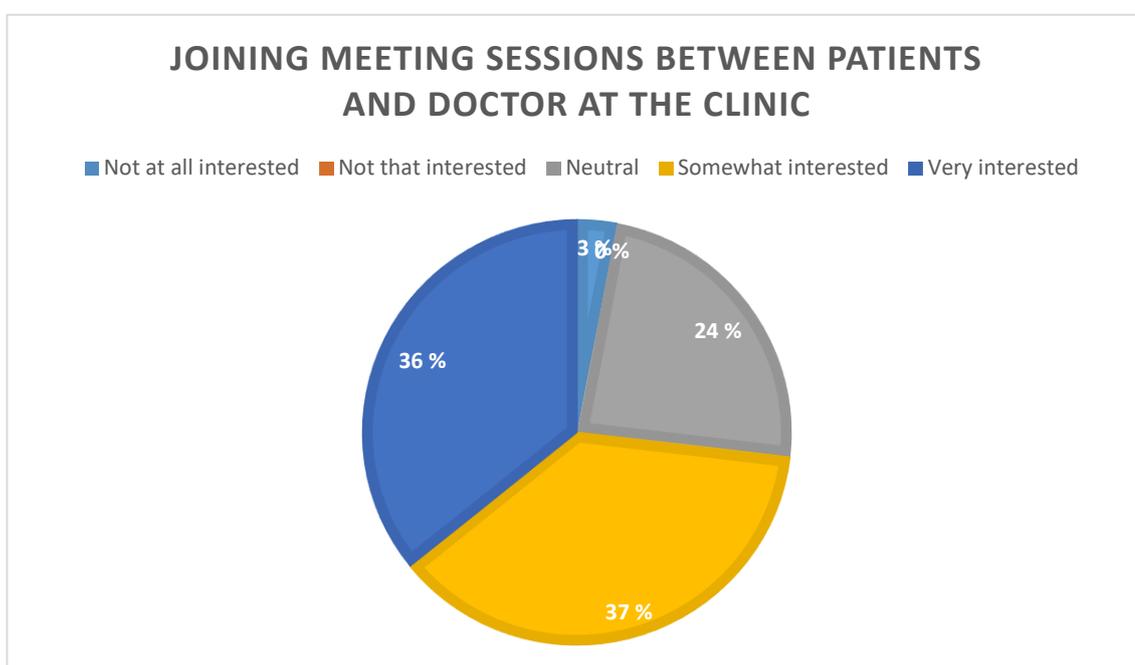


Figure 17 Patients' opinion about counselling sessions between them and doctor

**Q10.** Patients' opinion about the clinic's characteristics and their importance
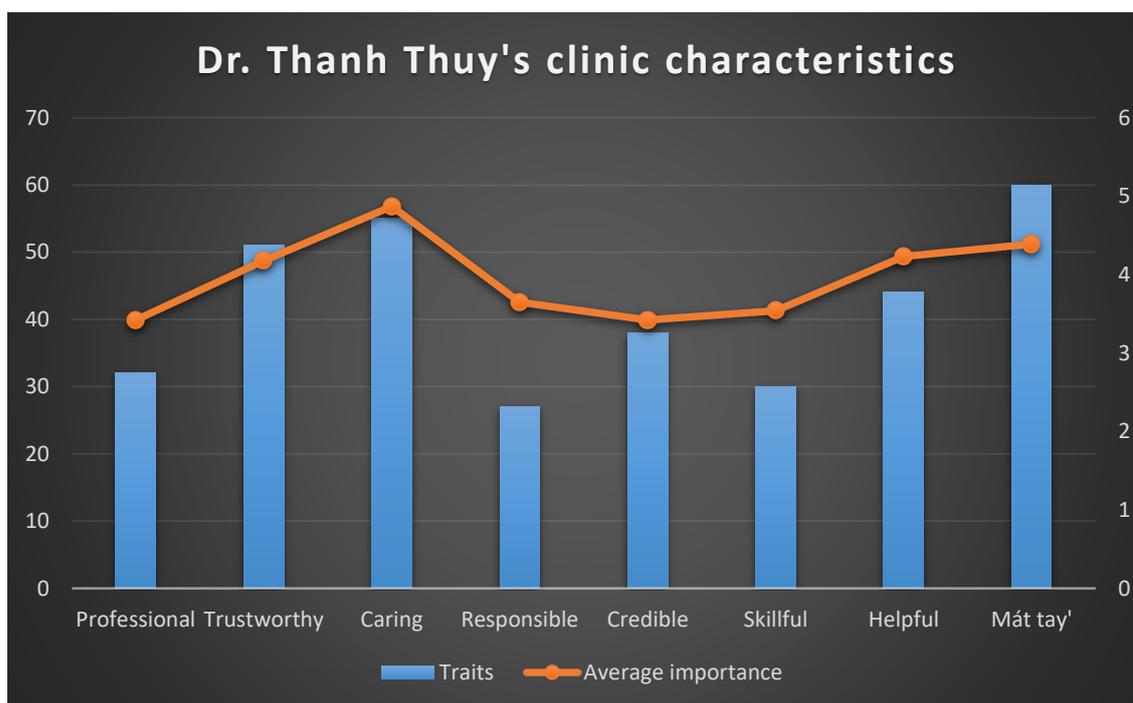


Figure 18 Participants' judgement of the clinic's characteristics and how important they are on scale 1 - 5

As the key question of the survey, this question demonstrates how the clinic is perceived by the participants through a list of 'personalities' and the average rate on how importance these traits to patients.

It is a surprise when 'caring' was chosen by approximately 82% participants (55/67) while 'professional' accounts only 48%. This tells that even though to healthcare services, customers (patients) expect a certain level of professionalism, care still holds an essential position in their minds with the highest rate of 4.87, showing that besides proper medical attention, patients too expect a sense of caring from the doctor, not as someone with expertise to those who needed but the caring nature among human beings. Furthermore, being helpful is highly appreciated by 44 over 67 survey contributors, rated 4.23/5.

Lastly, 'Mát tay' is slang term for having good luck in doing. The word has its meaning varied depending on the context, in this case, it means that there is a higher pregnancy probability among infertile patients treated by the doctor. As an Asian society, we still place our hope for things in rather spiritual beliefs. Even though the chance of an infertile patient gets pregnant largely depends on the treatment and of course the physical state of the person herself, the number of patients being cured by the doctor in the past gives that doctor a good name,

especially in Vietnamese culture. The result from this question is expected and it truly reflects the importance of this trait with second highest average rating of 4.39 coming after 'caring'.

## 4.2    Interview

The interview discusses briefly about the target customers which majority falls into the fertile age group (from under 32 years old) and average middle class. In addition, Dr. Thanh Thuy mentioned her disagreement with the reality that patients are being treated as 'somewhat inferior' party in the healthcare industry and the old mentality where patients 'need' doctors. Also believing that patients should be seen as customers not those who are in need of help from experts, Dr. Thanh Thuy agrees to make some changes in the services offered by the clinic to emphasize on the message.

Moreover, Dr. Thanh Thuy expressed her deep compassion and empathy for women, especially those who are in middle or lower society class that face infertility with limited budget and a lot of hope bearing one's own vulnerability. She believes what she is doing, is not simply curing a disease but rather help someone fulfilling one of her life-long wishes. Looking from this perspective, a brand message that evokes genuine understanding of patients' position can be ideal. Additionally, Dr. Thanh Thuy also talked about the luck factor in treatment when the results often time cannot be predicted and of course, as noted while the result of survey question 10 being discussed, 'spiritual' beliefs sometimes hold strong impact to patients' decision where to go. Thus, embedding 'luck' to the clinic's brand is chosen and furthered explained in section '5.4 Brand recommendations'.

## 5    Practical implementation
## 5.1    Case study: Dr. Thanh Thuy's private Gynecology and Obstetrics clinic

As briefly discussed in section 1.2 of the Introduction, Dr. Thanh Thuy's private Gynecology and Obstetrics clinic is a newly established business, operates under the form of sole proprietorship. The clinic is currently running part-time schedule, three evenings a week on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, from 6 pm to 10pm due to Dr. Thanh Thuy's regular working hours at Hanh Phuc International hospital. However, this operating schedule is also convenient for everybody else as most of the people have their evening free.

Patients of the clinic are mostly either Dr. Thuy's patients at Hung Vuong hospital, where she used to work before filling the role in Hanh Phuc International hospital or friends/acquaintances of these people, who have known about the clinic through word-of-mouth. This illustrates the limited reach between the clinic and its potential customers that can be advanced by utilizing other communication channels.

Even though, this is a common chosen model for private healthcare industries in Vietnam, specifically Ho Chi Minh City, the gynecology and obstetrics market is not cutthroat due to terrifying rapidly growth of infertile rate among the population.

## 5.2    Market condition

As stated by Suckhoedoisong (2016), a national wide research carried out by the National Hospital of Obstetrics and Gynecology & Hanoi Medical University, involves 14.300 married couples within fertile age group (15-49 years old) across 8 provinces and cities that represent 8 different Eco zones in Vietnam, indicates that the infertile rate reaches approximately 7.7%. Vietnam's population is roughly 91.7 million according to General Statistics office of Vietnam (2016), correspondingly, there are about 700.000 to 1 million married couples facing infertility. In addition, a shocking 50% rate of these unfortunate couples are under 30s.

Furthermore, as recorded from the interview with Dr. Thanh Thuy, her comment on the situation is that infertility is gradually becoming one of major problem in Vietnam's society. Usual overcrowded Obstetrics and Gynecology hospitals in major cities, for instance in Ho Chi Minh City, truly reflect the potential for private clinic industries, at the same time, less busy clinic offers patients less waiting - more questioning time and especially, much lower stresses in the context where stress always exists.

## 5.3    SWOT analysis

According to Taylor (2016), SWOT is an analytical framework that concerns 4 aspects relating to the target business, whereas **S**: Strength, **W**: Weakness, **O**: Opportunity and **T**: Threat. SWOT is commonly applied during strategic planning which evaluates both internal and external factors.

As for the case company Dr. Thanh Thuy's clinic, SWOT analysis will help identify the business's current position in the market and the right degree in which brand communications and messages involve.

| Strength | Weakness |
|---|---|
| • Convenience (location and visiting time)<br>• Lower stress (from external environment)<br>• More intimate doctor-patient relationship (smaller mental/psychological gap)<br>• Reasonable fee<br>• | • Limited professional credibility (Dr. Thuy has only started infertility work for 7 years)<br>• Semi-reliance on Word-of-mouth marketing to reach future customers (patients)<br>• Small-scale human resources (only 1 doctor in charge)<br>• Shorter working hour (only 12 hours weekly) |
| Threat | Opportunity |
| • Competition from other clinics<br>• Overcrowded sessions (indirectly reduce checkup/questioning and increase waiting time) | • Large patients base from hospitals<br>• Patients engagement can be further applied online<br>• Offering a different attitude toward the old, wrongly believe mentality (patients need doctor) |

Table 1 Dr. Thanh Thuy's clinic SWOT analysis

As explained in section 5.2, market condition for the clinic's business is ideal. However, there are still some threats relating to the number of patients each session could negatively affect the service quality.

5.4    Brand recommendation

Taking into consideration from the knowledge base of this paper in chapter 2, the clinic's **brand personality** is chosen to be the key brand developing aspect as it not only reflects the core values of the business, internal beliefs of management (Dr. Thanh Thuy) and how the service to be delivered but also, from customers' perspective, it determines a certain level of trust and hope they have since the nature of the offering service holds a highly sentimental value to patients (to help a woman overcoming illness to be a mother).

Moreover, other branding aspects such as brand message, promises and elements is also considered.

### 5.4.1 Brand elements

It is natural that women are the child-bearer, however, due to infertility, some can't. Instead of seeing them as the unfortunates, even though they are, the idea of female infertile patients are simply mothers who are not yet mothers, until something infinitely larger than anything that is within our understanding of the physical World, intervene. Images of the stork have always reminded viewers about the folktale when babies are carried to hopeful mothers' doorstep from the sky. Thus, the **clinic's logo** is a simplified version of this image with abbreviation of Dr. Thanh Thuy's name. Furthermore, the idea of babies coming from the sky represents 'luck' to those who urges to have one but are not able. This is indirectly and subtly linked to the 'Mát tay' trait that the brand is expecting to have, in the eyes of audience.



Figure 19 the clinic's logo

### 5.4.2 Branding communication tools

It is clear from the survey results and the known current influence of Facebook to the Vietnamese's population, this social media platform is best suited for the brand's audience. The brand's activities on Facebook serve three main purposes:

- Reducing the reliance of the clinic's marketing on uncontrollable factor 'the word-of-mouth'
- Increasing the number of communication tool for the audience to use on other potential customers. To be more specific, Facebook user's activities such as like, comment or share can be seen on other users' Newsfeed, which indirectly create more media attention to the clinic's Facebook page once a patient press 'Like' an article shared on the clinic's Timeline.
- A platform to communicate the brand's personality through media contents besides healthcare related articles (photos, videos, notes)

Furthermore, in combination usage of Ask.fm and Facebook, the clinic's Facebook page can be used as an online Q&A session where the questioner's identity is decided to be public or not by themselves. This also form the sense of a community which is essential to emotional branding efforts.

### 5.4.3 Brand message, belief and personality

From the gathered result of the survey and the interview with Dr. Thanh Thuy, both patients and especially Dr. Thanh Thuy prefer the emphasis on caring factors which will reflect on the clinic's branding contents consistently throughout the brand's message, belief and personality.

- Brand belief: To make an emphasis out of a commonly agreed idea between the patients and Dr. Thanh Thuy, the opinion that patients are also the customers of the healthcare industry, is chosen to be one of the core values of the clinic. From this perspective, using a slogan to present this idea to target audiences is selected. For instance, 'My patients, my customers, my friends'.
- Brand personality: From analyzed result of the survey and the interview with Dr. Thanh Thuy, 'caring' and 'Mát tay' are the two most appealing to both the customers and key personnel. By choosing this to be the two core values for the brand, it helps creating and maintaining the consistency throughout the whole business.
- Brand message: The brand message is the mixture of both the brand's personality and the brand's belief. The branding content should simultaneously tell the audiences that:
  - ➢ 'Caring' is a highly concerned and one of the most important qualities to the brand (more specifically to Dr. Thanh Thuy as there is a direct link between the brand's name and the person that represent the business). For example, through Facebook's activities, the update contents can vary from the major topics (infertility, pregnancy) to mental healthcare to even quick healthy beauty-related salad recipe that are good for pregnant women. In addition, setting up a small database contains successfully cured infertile patients at the clinic' information like contact info, the baby's birthday is another tool for the brand to show its 'caring' side. The basic database can be used for 'after sale' services like a personally written text message by Dr. Thanh Thuy to the mother on her baby's 1st birthday.
  - ➢ And 'Mát tay' is also one of the clinic's unique trait, especially when the audiences are women. This character for instance can be told through a series of

baby photos whose mothers were Dr. Thanh Thuy's patients (with the mothers' consent) and the start & end date of the treatment, either long or short, it always motivates others not to give up.

➢ From gathered data, 'helpful' personality is highly appreciated by patients and can be shown through closed group talking sessions between Dr. Thanh Thuy and patients, where they can express and share their worries/doubts with others and received both expertise and empathetic answers. Besides, as mentioned in section 5.4.2 'Branding communication tools', the clinic's Facebook page is regularly updated with relevant articles and branding contents.

### 5.4.4   A sense of strategy

Mentioned in sector 2.5.2 'Sensory branding', brand expressions can come under the form of sensual stimuli (vision, taste, smell, touch, hear). From this perspective, recommendations that can be immediately applied to the current situation of the clinic are listed below:

- Visionary branding: there are two practical options that can be immediately used to the current situation of the clinic.
  - ➢ First, one big photo of a series of babies that were 'helped' to be born by Dr. Thanh Thuy, places on the waiting room's wall. This demonstrates the 'Mát tay' character of the brand.
  - ➢ Second, to encouraging patients to go to the clinic's Facebook page, small notes made out of fine paper are given to each patients at the end of each session when they are paying. The content of this note is the Facebook address, the clinic's slogan.
- Sound like good marketing: Due to the stressful atmosphere created by limited space of the waiting room, soundproofing ability of the thin aluminum wall and social norm pressure, soft and uplifting background music can be played like in clinic. This helps reducing the anxiety for the patients and offer a difference to their experience of the brand.
- Teasing taste: From the understanding of customers' physiological exhaustion from transporting and the positive psychological effects on the guest, sweets are usually found at hotels' reception and often initially offered. The same trick can be used for the clinic at both when the patients are waiting and when they are paying. The candy offered after the payment is nice tasting candy and varied depending on who is the patient. If she is pregnant, a sour candy is given and if she is an infertility patient, a sweet chocolate will help lighten up the mood and easing the stress after each sessions. Furthermore, according to Influence: The psychology of persuasion by Dr. Rob-

ert Cialdini, the act of reciprocating patients' payment with a candy will help increasing the chance they will do as instructed when the reception hands them the note that contains the clinic's Facebook page (encouraging more online activities on the page).

- Touching shape: Because the brand 'cares' so the experience of the customers should evoke this thought/feeling. The chairs in the waiting room can be replaced with more comfortable model.

- Scene that seduces: a light refreshing scene lemon or herbals would take away the dense atmosphere in small, closed places like the clinic's waiting room or even the check-up room. Thus Dr. Thanh Thuy also suggested using desktop humidifying gadget mixed with herbal concentrates.

More importantly, a memorable scene, a sweet chocolate every clinic visits, an unexpected text message or a catchy rhythm helps the experience of the brand becomes more vivid, which leaves a stronger impact to the audiences. It also shows the potential of the ability to influence customers' experience at many brand touchpoints, thus helps the brand forming a deeper connection with the customers (patients) on a subconscious level.

## 6 Conclusion

Branding is more than just a logo. It is deliberated planning at every touchpoint with customers to show the core values that the business stands for and how these can relate to them. Customers buy the quality that relates to them and the ones that they want to see in themselves.

Emotional branding creates a more substantial impression on its audiences. It is widely invested and used by leading corporations, hence modifying and applying this perspective to smaller size businesses like Dr. Thanh Thuy's clinic can deliver surprising results.

From gathered data of the survey conducted for research purpose of this paper, it shows that patients from the clinic refer 'caring' over 'professionalism' even though healthcare industry requires a higher level of professional and expertise. Moreover, the interview with Dr. Thanh Thuy suggests an opinion on which the branding direction is based, that patients are more of a customer because they are patients. In addition, sensory branding 'tricks' offers a unique way to observe and influence how customers build relationship with a brand both rationally and subconsciously.

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Figures

Tables

Appendixes

Appendix 1: Patients' questionnaire

1) **Which is age group that you belong to?**
o Under 25
o From 25 – 35
o Over 35

2) **What is your current financial status? (Monthly income)**
o None (housewives)
o Less than 4,000,000 VND
o From 4,000,000 VND to 12,000,000 VND
o More than 12,000,000 VND

3) **How did you learn about the clinic?**
o From a resident living in nearby neighborhood
o From a friend/acquaintance
o From the Internet
o Have already been a patient of Dr. Thanh Thuy from hospitals
o Other: _____

➢ Besides Dr. Thanh Thuy clinic, do you know any other infertility private clinic?
  a. Yes
  o How did you know about this/these clinic(s)?
  o From a resident living in nearby neighborhood
  o From a friend/acquaintance
  o From the Internet
  o Have already been a patient of the clinic's doctor in charge from hospitals
  o Other: _____
  b. No

4) **How much do you agree with the opinion that patients in Vietnam is not being treated as a customer of healthcare service, specifically in gynecological and infertile consulting? (1 – Strongly disagree to 5 – Strongly agree)**

| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| o | o | o | o | o |

5) **Based on your own judgement, how would you rate your knowledge about infertility and infertility treatment?**
o I don't know anything
o I know the basics about infertility but knowledge about treatments is limited
o I am well-informed of infertility and treatments
o I am an expert of infertility and treatments

6) **How often do you use Facebook?**
o No
o Seldom (once a week)
o Often (once every 2-3 days)
o Very often (several times a day)

7) **How often do you use online discount coupon sites? (such as muachung.vn; nhommua.com; hotdeal.vn; ...etc.)**
o No
o Seldom (once a week)
o Often (once every 2-3 days)
o Very often (several times a day)

8) **How much would you appreciate that Dr. Thanh Thuy's clinic Facebook page would offer filtered, reliable and relevant information about infertility and treatments?**
o Not at all interested
o Not that interested
o Neutral
o Somewhat interested
o Very interested

9) **Would you be interested in joining meeting sessions between other infertility patients and the doctor at the clinic for support counselling?**
o Not at all interested
o Not that interested
o Neutral
o Somewhat interested
o Very interested

10) **When you think of Dr. Thanh Thuy's clinic, which characteristics come to your mind when describing the clinic? (You can choose more than 1 answer) Please also mark in scale from 1-5 how accurate these characteristics describe the clinic (1 = not strong, 5 = very strong)**

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| o Professional | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| o Trustworthy | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| o Caring | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| o Responsible | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| o Credible | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| o Skillful | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| o Helpful | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| o "Mát tay" | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

11) **Which of the following factors you think will affect your decision to continue with your infertile treatment plan? (You can choose more than 1 answer) Please also mark in scale from 1-5 how impactful these factors are to you? (1= not important at all, 5= very important)**

- Current treatment price level
      1     2     3     4     5

- Physical comfort
      1     2     3     4     5

- Confidence in success
      1     2     3     4     5

- The continuity of care and doctor attitudes
      1     2     3     4     5

- Empathy, listening skill from the staffs
      1     2     3     4     5

- Time for questions
      1     2     3     4     5

**12) How would you rate the overall experience being a patient of the clinic? Please mark on a scale from 1 to 5 how happy you are with the experience (1=not happy at all, 5=very happy)**

- o Not at all happy
- o Not happy
- o Neutral
- o Happy
- o Very happy

Appendix 2 Interview with Dr. Thanh Thuy's questions

1. Can you tell me a little bit more about the target customers? Who are the clinic aiming to serve? (age group, financial/social class, educational level)

2. What are you aims to develop the brand of the clinic? What is clinic's vision for the future?

3. From an insider perspective, if the clinic is a person, how is that person going to be? What characteristics might this person have? I have here a list of a few adjectives that might be helpful (professional, trustworthy, caring, responsible, credible, skillful, helpful, "Mát tay")

4. How do you want patients to be approach by your business? (social media, websites, the media)

5. There is opinion that patients in Vietnam are is not being treated as customers of the healthcare service. What do you think about this, particularly in gynecological and infertile consulting?