

Perceived brand image in customers' perceptions - A netnography study

Le Thi Thanh Xuan, Le Hoai Kieu Giang*



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

Correspondence

Le Hoai Kieu Giang, Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology – VNU-HCM, 268 Ly Thuong Kiet Street, Ward 14, District 10, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
Email: lhkgiang@hcmut.edu.vn

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ABSTRACT

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

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

1. INTRODUCTION

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

image in the literature. Hence, it is worth that more research on brand image should be conducted. Nowadays, consumers find it easier to share their brand experience and look for information about any goods or services from others in a few seconds⁴. That is because of the rocket development of the internet and social media. Globally, the number of internet users and social media users is increasing. Moreover, social online platforms, including Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram, have become popular for users to share and communicate. The rapid growth of using social online platforms has increased the research topic of social media all over the world, but this topic still needs to be completed in Vietnam⁵. In online communities, a large number of different topics are discussed publicly such as fashion, skincare, travelling, and lifestyle. Among them, an ongoing rising trend in the Vietnamese online social environment and attracting a lot of users' interest is the sharing of food reviews⁵. The information shared in various online communities has a crucial impact on the brand image of the food service providers. In the context of

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44 high competition and high demand in Vietnam's F&B
 45 sector, brand image is of utmost importance and a
 46 top priority for businesses since it significantly in-
 47 fluences customer purchase behaviors and loyalty⁶.
 48 While there is a growing academic interest in building
 49 a strong brand image, research is still being conducted
 50 with a customer-oriented approach that focuses on
 51 their experience of service⁷. Therefore, it is neces-
 52 sary to conduct a study that explores the brand image
 53 in the F&B segment in Vietnam from the customer's
 54 perspective.

55 To collect pure opinions from customers (via shares,
 56 reviews, conversations, discussions, and debates) and
 57 to not influence the reviews reflected by customers,
 58 the online communication on social platforms is suit-
 59 able since it does reflect customers' real-time experi-
 60 ences of brands. It is called social online listening⁸.
 61 Recently, conducting online research has been taken
 62 into consideration, because online environment has
 63 become popular in consumers' lives. Netnography,
 64 developed by Kozinets⁹⁻¹¹, can intentionally serve as
 65 an appropriate methodology for conducting market-
 66 ing research in the online environment.

67 The study conducted by Villegas¹² provides a re-
 68 view of studies employing netnography in many re-
 69 search contexts, especially in the marketing disci-
 70 pline. Villegas highlighted that the studies on so-
 71 cial media communities are still need to be expanded.
 72 Later, the review paper on brand image literature con-
 73 ducted by Plumeyer et al.² found some significant is-
 74 sues. Firstly, brand-related user-generated content is
 75 rapidly growing in social media platforms. Secondly,
 76 only a few studies on brand image use secondary data;
 77 hence new data sources should be employed. Thirdly,
 78 more studies should be conducted on many brand
 79 types to confirm the use of user-generated content use
 80 in brand image research. In short, the review of brand
 81 image literature shows some critical gaps in brand im-
 82 age literature. The gaps include that (i) there is a ne-
 83 cessity to employ a qualitative approach to research
 84 brand image in the digital world; and (ii) new data
 85 sources are needed for studying brand image.

86 To respond to gaps found in the literature, the present
 87 study employs netnography to explore the brand im-
 88 age of an F&B brand which is shared on online com-
 89 munities by customers. Specifically, the study's objec-
 90 tives are to (i) explore aspects of the brand image of
 91 Dookki Vietnam in customers' perceptions, and (ii)
 92 propose suggestions for Dookki Vietnam and other
 93 F&B brands to improve their brand images.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW 94

2.1. Social exchange theory and informa- 95 tion sharing in online communities 96

97 Communication in online communities is facilitated
 98 by social media and can be explained by social ex-
 99 change theory (SET). Communication in online com-
 100 munities can be understood as the ways in which
 101 members exchange publicly in posts for the entire
 102 group to read and to benefit from the exchange¹³.
 103 SET is to understand behaviors between individuals
 104 and within groups, and why people share as well as
 105 exchange information. In the present study, SET can
 106 play the role of the foundation for sharing informa-
 107 tion between members about the brand and support
 108 others to have information about the brand. This is
 109 one example of eWOM to improve the efficiency of
 110 individual consumption¹⁴. All shares of consumers
 111 about brands can be considered as a value and lead to
 112 a sustainable competitive advantage (as cited in¹⁴).

2.2. Brand community and Online brand 113 community 114

115 A brand community is considered as a group of con-
 116 sumers to share their enthusiasm for the brand¹⁵. The
 117 shares consist of consciousness, ritual and traditions,
 118 and a sense of moral responsibility¹⁶. It is to reflect
 119 the relationships between customers, the product, the
 120 brand, the company and the other customers¹⁵. In
 121 short, a brand community can be defined as "... a spe-
 122 cialised, non-geographically bound community ..."
 123 for a branded product or service¹⁶.

124 Even though brand communities have existed in the
 125 market, geographical distance was an obstacle for cus-
 126 tomers to communicate¹⁷. In their study, Muniz and
 127 O'Guinn¹⁶ highlighted that World Wide Web pages
 128 include text, pictures and sound; hence, computer-
 129 mediated communication is an undeniable part of
 130 customers in online brand communities. By using
 131 online brand communities, customers can share their
 132 experiences, offerings from the brand, and receive
 133 benefits in solving their brand-related issues. Simi-
 134 larly, by tracing online brand communities, firms can
 135 improve their products and service quality¹⁸. Import-
 136 antly, debates, advice, and reviews of customers be-
 137 come sources for firms to improve, to develop prod-
 138 ucts/services¹⁹.

2.3. Brand image 139

140 In a review paper about brand image, Parris &
 141 Guzmán²⁰ stated that there are two well-known and
 142 most-cited definitions of brand image among many

143 studies. In such definitions, whereby Keller explained
 144 what firms intend to show about their brands may be
 145 different compared to what is in customers' minds,
 146 and that is the brand image. Brand image is what is
 147 perceived by customers, reasonably or emotionally.
 148 Aaker also used the term "linked in memory to a
 149 brand" to explain brand image²¹. Similarly, Wijaya²²
 150 presented the hierarchy of branding in which brand
 151 image is explained as something about the brand in
 152 the customers' minds. He also stated that the brand
 153 image, consisting of physical factors and psycholog-
 154 ical factors, links to customers' attitudes and beliefs
 155 leading to the choice of a brand. Even though there
 156 are many definitions of brand image, the similarity
 157 in these definitions is that brand image is perceived
 158 and reflected by stakeholders, individually. Parris and
 159 Guzmán²⁰ also stated that researchers are now chal-
 160 lenging the traditional approach, which leads to the
 161 discussion of brand image in ongoing development.

162 In another review paper by Wijaya²², brand image el-
 163 ements in previous studies are analysed. These ele-
 164 ments consist of functional and emotional satisfaction
 165 and communication forms by the brand; objective
 166 or intrinsic attributes; brand association and brand
 167 personality; product-related attributes, non-product-
 168 related attributes, brand benefits, and brand attitude.
 169 The elements of brand image (in customers' minds)
 170 from previous studies have some notable characteris-
 171 tics, including (natural) elements from the product,
 172 these of information about a product, utilities of the
 173 product and information perceived by customers²².

174 Scholars continue to discuss approaches and scales of
 175 brand image to measure brand image. Scholars have
 176 different measures to study brand image. Some of
 177 them designed their own scales. Meanwhile, some
 178 combine multiple scales to measure brand image²⁰.
 179 However, it is shown that there is no unified scale
 180 which could accurately study brand image. In order to
 181 accurately measure brand image, Burns et al. (as cited
 182 in²⁰) proposed the process of 02 steps, including con-
 183 ducting qualitative study to let stakeholders describe
 184 a brand and then conducting a quantitative study to
 185 test these associations²⁰. The present study is con-
 186 ducting the first step to identify the association of an
 187 F&B brand.

188 Parris and Guzmán²⁰ also mentioned a qualitative ap-
 189 proach which is proposed to respond to the step mov-
 190 ing forward in brand image research. They also sug-
 191 gested the exploration of many stakeholders' percep-
 192 tions of brand image in the digital world is crucial.
 193 This suggestion does echo with that by Plumeyer et

194 al.². In their study, Plumeyer et al.² stated that to-
 195 day, a large number of customers are using social me-
 196 dia platforms, such as Facebook, YouTube, and Insta-
 197 gram, etc. to communicate with others. Hence, fu-
 198 ture research should use new data sources (e.g. user-
 199 generated content, which is available in online com-
 200 munities). However, they also suggested investigating
 201 whether user-generated content is appropriate for all
 202 types of brands².

203 In short, there are two research gaps identified in
 204 brand image literature. Firstly, studying on brand im-
 205 age with new approach in the digital world is needed.
 206 In the present study, netnography, a qualitative ap-
 207 proach, is proposed to explore customers' perceptions
 208 of online communities. Secondly, studying on brand
 209 image with new data sources is crucial. In the present
 210 study, user-generated content of an F&B brand is col-
 211 lected from online communities.

2.4. Netnography as a research method

212 Netnography was proposed by Kozinets⁹ to inves-
 213 tigate customer behaviors in communities present
 214 on the Internet. In his paper, Kozinets stated
 215 that, netnography can be used as a methodology,
 216 a methodological tool and an exploratory tool to
 217 conduct a study in online communities. Later,
 218 Kozinets¹⁰ continued to develop netnography as an
 219 online marketing research technique, based on the
 220 fact that consumers are using many online commu-
 221 nication formats to share ideas and contact other
 222 consumers to find more objective information about
 223 products/services. Kozinets also revised and pro-
 224 posed new definitions of netnography in 2010, 2012,
 225 and 2020²³, and netnography can be employed in dif-
 226 ferent areas, such as sociology, psychology, business,
 227 political science, medicine or nutrition and health
 228 management^{24,25}.

229 There are four types of netnographies²⁶. Firstly, auto-
 230 netnography is about writing, vulnerability, art and
 231 sacrifice from a particularly "local" site: one's own
 232 identity and story. Secondly, symbolic Netnography
 233 is conducted on sites to study online social experi-
 234 ences and interaction of particular people's groups,
 235 cultures, nations, and languages in text-sharings.
 236 Thirdly, digital Netnography helps to understand cul-
 237 tures based on data analytic techniques from social
 238 media. Lastly, humanist Netnography focuses on
 239 the changing nature of human social existence and is
 240 guided by social issues of great importance.

241 There are three forms of netnographic data: archival,
 242 co-created, and fieldnote data²⁶. Archival data has
 243 already existed and the researcher is not involved in
 244

245 creating data. Co-created data is the one created
 246 in the interactions between the researchers and re-
 247 lated members. Fieldnote data is made by the re-
 248 searcher while participating in online communities.
 249 The present study will employ symbolic netnography
 250 with archival data to explore what customers share
 251 (experience and interaction) about Dookki, the se-
 252 lected brand.

253 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

254 Dookki was founded in 2014 in Korea, and has more
 255 than 300 stores around the globe. The first store of
 256 Dookki Vietnam was opened in 2008, and now the
 257 number of stores in Vietnam has reached 60. It is a
 258 chain of restaurants to serve topokki buffet. Dookki's
 259 brand image is selected as the research object to pro-
 260 vide more empirical evidence of user-generated con-
 261 tent in brand image research, which is suggested by
 262 Plumeyer et al.².

263 The present study employ symbolic netnography, a
 264 qualitative approach²⁶, to explore customers' per-
 265 spectives on the brand image of Dookki Vietnam.
 266 The netnographic data were collected from six on-
 267 line communities (Table 1). These communities were
 268 selected based on five criteria, consisting of (i) hav-
 269 ing a research question relevant segment, topic or
 270 group; (ii) having high "traffic" of postings, (iii) hav-
 271 ing large numbers of discrete message posters; (iv)
 272 having detailed or descriptively rich data; (v) having
 273 many between-member interactions of the type re-
 274 quired by the research question¹⁰.

275 Specifically, the present study chose six popular food
 276 review communities, where many posts and com-
 277 ments about restaurants including Dookki Vietnam
 278 could be found daily. These communities have a large
 279 number of members around 78 thousand to 2 mil-
 280 lion members from different Vietnamese regions and
 281 provinces. Moreover, the posts about Dookki Viet-
 282 nam in these communities have many discussions by
 283 their members. In this study, the netnographic data
 284 were archival and produced data that were found,
 285 gathered and captured by researchers²⁶.

286 The collected data were analyzed in two steps. In the
 287 first step, posts and comments about Dookki from
 288 each community are collected and analysed using the
 289 thematic analysis method. This is the process of de-
 290 tecting patterns in qualitative data, which identify,
 291 categorize, and describe in detail each theme and sub-
 292 theme covered in the netnographic data²⁷. These
 293 themes and sub-themes represented Dookki Viet-
 294 nam's brand image aspects from customer perspec-
 295 tives. In the second step, as instructed by Kozinets¹⁰,

296 themes and sub-themes identified in the first commu-
 297 nity are compared with the second one (See Figure 1).
 298 These comparisons are continued till the 6th commu-
 299 nity, and between communities.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

300 The netnographic data were collected from 64 posts
 301 on selected communities that contained 1,203 com-
 302 ments about Dookki Vietnam. The research identi-
 303 fied 5 themes and 15 subthemes representing Dookki
 304 brand image aspects (Table 2). The frequency indi-
 305 cated the number of times that customers gave com-
 306 ments about a specific aspect. The higher the fre-
 307 quency, the more customers are concerned about that
 308 aspect. As a result, that aspect plays a vital role in
 309 shaping the brand image of Dookki Vietnam in the
 310 customer's mind.
 311

4.1. Food quality

312 *Food quality* is considered one of the most signifi-
 313 cant factors in the dining experience²⁸⁻³⁰. This study
 314 found that Dookki's customers often mentioned *taste*,
 315 *diversity of choice*, *food temperature*, *food presentation*,
 316 *servicing size*, *healthy options*, and *freshness* when they
 317 discussed food quality aspects. Of which, *taste*, *diver-*
 318 *sity of choice*, and *food temperature* are the top three
 319 receiving the most comments, at 271, 55, and 52 re-
 320 spectively.
 321

322 *Taste* got masses of comments from customers, and
 323 there was much controversy. A number of customers
 324 agreed that Dookki dishes taste too sweet, as reflected
 325 in a comment, "In the first time I ate it, I left too much
 326 because it was too sweet to eat" (Netno C1, 2023). Ad-
 327 ditionally, "taste like flour" was also mentioned key-
 328 word frequently in the comments, such as "The food
 329 taste like flour, so after eating a few, I feel bored and
 330 can not eat all" (Netno C3, 2023). Another customer
 331 complained that the seafood was quite fishy (Netno
 332 C2, 2023). On the contrary, a few customers also
 333 commented positively on Dookki that "the taste of hot
 334 pot is okay" (Netno C1, 2023) or "Dookki now has a
 335 sweet chicken sauce which is delicious" (Netno C5,
 336 2023). Most of the reviews about the taste of the dishes
 337 at Dookki are negative, which makes lots of customers
 338 not want to come back.

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

Table 1: The selected online communities

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

Source: The researcher’s data analysis

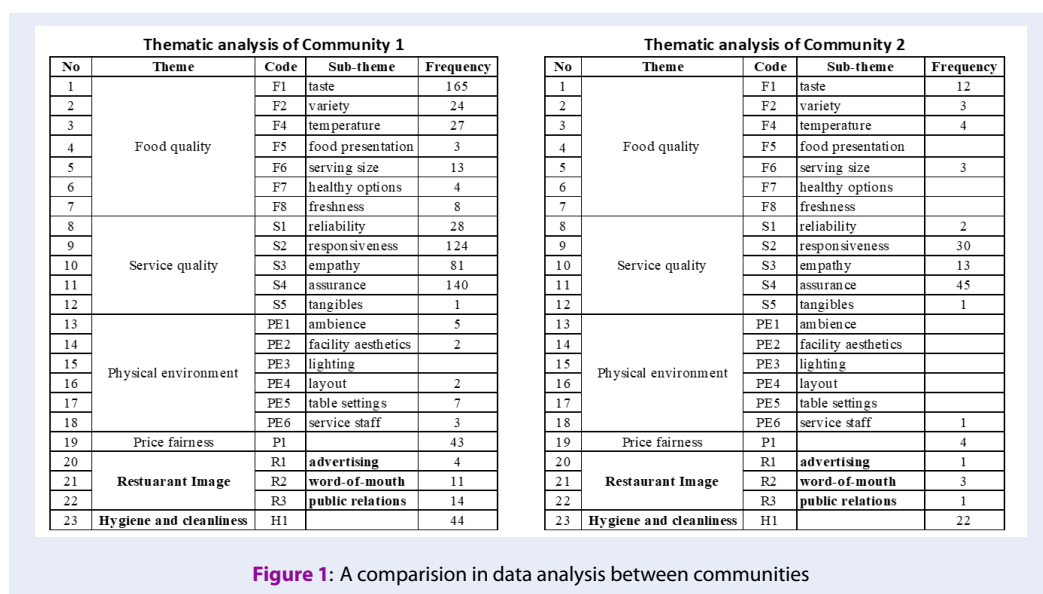


Figure 1: A comparison in data analysis between communities

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

4.2. Service quality

In the current study, the netnographic data about **service quality** were categorized into five aspects based on the conceptual framework by Parasuraman et al.³¹, including *reliability*, *responsiveness*, *empathy*, *assurance* and *tangibles*. Among these aspects, *responsiveness*, *assurance*, and *empathy* got the most customer comments, at 280, 268, and 175, respectively. *Responsiveness* refers to the willingness of Dookki’s staff to help customers and provide prompt service. Customers most mentioned this aspect when they discussed Dookki’s service in the online communities. Plenty of complaints were made to express disappointment about Dookki’s responsiveness. For in-

Table 2: Aspects of Dookki brand image from netnographic data

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

Source: The researcher's data analysis

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

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

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

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

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

435 *beef*” (Netno C1, 2023). About *T angibles*, this is
 436 another massive minus of Dookki. Some customers
 437 complained about the small tables at Dookki. They
 438 said that the tables at Dookki are too small and quite
 439 cramped for a group (Netno C1, 2023). A lot of equip-
 440 ment in Dookki is damaged and can pose a danger
 441 to customers. Some comments about this issue are
 442 “*While my group are eating and a ceiling fan drops*
 443 *on the table*”, or “*There are five soft drink filling ma-*
 444 *chines in the beverage area but two of them are broken*”
 445 (Netno C1, 2023).

446 4.3. Price fairness

447 *Price fairness* is consumers’ subjective perceptions of
 448 sellers’ prices²⁹. The keywords mentioned most about
 449 Dookki’s price are “cheapest” and “reasonable”. For
 450 example, a customer commented that “*I think it is*
 451 *a reasonable price*” (Netno C1, 2023). Another cus-
 452 tomer think eating at Dookki is very affordable for
 453 them with low prices, “*Eating Dookki is the cheapest*
 454 *option*” (Netno C1, 2023). However, *price fairness* is
 455 also the evaluation of good value for money spent on
 456 the meal³². Compared to the service that customers
 457 are offered at Dookki, some customers agreed that
 458 service at this restaurant is not worth its price, which
 459 is mentioned in a comment “*The price is not good be-*
 460 *cause nothing is delicious*” (Netno C1, 2023). Other
 461 customers even said that “*Dookki’s price is not com-*
 462 *petitive with other places*” and “*I do not think it is very*
 463 *cheap if including tax*” (Netno C1, 2023).

464 4.4. Marketing activities

465 With respect to *Marketing*, comments show that
 466 Dookki invests heavily in advertising and especially
 467 using influencer marketing. One customer said that
 468 this restaurant was advertised strongly, and another
 469 exclaimed that the advertisement for Dookki looked
 470 so cool (Netno C5, 2023). In addition, inviting
 471 celebrities to public relations campaigns is considered
 472 adequate for young target customer (Netno C1, 2023).
 473 However, compared to actual experiences, Dookki’s
 474 advertisements are said to be exaggerating the truth.
 475 Even many posts discussing Dookki are said to be us-
 476 ing seeding marketing, not really sharing from cus-
 477 tomers. For example, one customer said “*This review*
 478 *feels more like a seeding*” or “*These review posts are*
 479 *completely sobbing praise (not the truth)*” (Netno C1,
 480 2023). Another comment pointed out that “*In fact,*
 481 *the staff in Dookki are bad, but they always look so*
 482 *nice and dedicated in the advertisement*” (Netno C1,
 483 2023). It can be seen that Dookki is more concen-
 484 trated on attracting customers’ attention by inviting

485 celebrities and hiring people as fake customers/ 485
 influencers to write reviews for Dookki than advancing 486
 the customer’s real experience at the restaurant. This 487
 has made the inconsistency between advertising and 488
 services that Dookki provides in reality, causing cus- 489
 tomers to underestimate this brand. 490

491 4.5. Hygiene

492 *Hygiene* is an essential factor that need a lot of at- 492
 tention for a dining service business like Dookki. 493
 Therefore, a great number of comments were made 494
 about the cleanliness of Dookki. From the netno- 495
 graphic data, customers mentioned this aspect 138 496
 times. Common problems include insects in dishes, 497
 decaying food, and dirty floors. One customer com- 498
 mented, “*The squid pieces are so black and tend to de-*
 499 *compose, but they are still left on the counter for cus-*
 500 *tomers to eat*” (Netno C2, 2023). Another customer
 501 shared a bad experience with friends at Dookki, “*The*
 502 *day I ate at Dookki in the Nowzone branch, my friend*
 503 *just poured out the water, and a fly drifted out*” (Netno
 504 C1, 2023). Many other customers mentioned flies,
 505 worms, hair, and nylon in their hotpot (Netno C2 &
 506 C3, 2023). Additionally, plenty of comments men-
 507 tioned dirty vegetables and uncooked meat, such as
 508 “*the chicken is uncooked and still red inside*”, “*water*
 509 *spinach is waterlogged and not washed carefully*”, and
 510 “*teokbokki and noodles are moldy*” (Netno C3, 2023).
 511 Several customers also complained about dirty floors,
 512 “*Dookki in Van Hanh Mall is very dirty. There are*
 513 *many footprints on the floor, but no one has ever seen*
 514 *the staff wipe*” (Netno C2, 2023), or “*There was a cock-*
 515 *roach crawling on the counter*”. Consequently, these
 516 issues bring an awful dining experience to customers
 517 at Dookki. 518

519 5. DISCUSSION

520 The present study found five aspects consisting of 15 520
 detailed items about customers’ reflections when they 521
 recall this brand were found. The research findings 522
 show that *ervice quality* (e.g. *reliability, responsive-*
 523 *ness, empathy, assurance, and tangibles*) was the most
 524 mentioned by customers in this study, with 844 times.
 525 The next aspect that had a considerable many discus-
 526 sions (443 times) was *Food quality* (e.g. *taste, diversity*
 527 *of choices, food temperature, etc*). The following place
 528 belongs to the *Hygiene* with 183 comments. Finally,
 529 *rice fairness* and *Marketing activities* were also men-
 530 tioned with a modest amount of comments, at 67 and
 531 28 respectively. The applicability of SET can be under-
 532 stood as why members in online communities shared
 533 their experiences at Dookki, and others can benefit
 534 from their consumption. Employing SET, Dookki can
 535

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

539 Although Dookki is a dining service, the significant
540 aspect that customers remember and discuss the most
541 is *ervice quality*, and *Food quality* just comes sec-
542 ond. Similar to the findings of Erkmén and Hancer³³,
543 *ervice quality* plays a significant role in building the
544 brand image in the minds of restaurant guests. Fur-
545 thermore, they also emphasized that *ervice quality* is
546 the key to achieving a distinct image. Hence, employ-
547 ees become a critical source of uniqueness and com-
548 petitive advantage for the restaurant through their
549 attitudes and behaviors during the service provided.
550 Gagic et al.³² also agreed that employees' perfor-
551 mance is a crucial part of this process. Among several
552 dimensions of *ervice quality*, Dookki's *responsiveness*,
553 *assurance* and *empathy* were most discussed by cus-
554 tomers.

555 Nevertheless, there are numerous complaints from
556 customers about the unprofessional manners and at-
557 titudes of Dookki's employees, as well as the slowness
558 of the service provided by this restaurant. These issues
559 formed a negative image of this brand in customers'
560 minds. Besides, problems related to facilities such as
561 small tables, damaged machinery, and equipment at
562 different branches also received much negative feed-
563 back from customers. Thus, in order to improve the
564 dining experience and brand image, Dookki should
565 pay more attention to these aspects.

566 Food quality is a critical element that needs to be paid
567 much attention to in any catering service is *Food qual-*
568 *ity*. Food plays a vital role in the restaurant experience
569 and its taste, presentation, temperature, freshness,
570 nutritional value, etc. are identified by customers
571 as essential quality attributes³². In this study, *Food*
572 *quality* is the second aspect having lots of discussion
573 among Dookki's customers with different facets such
574 as taste, diversity of choice, food temperature, serv-
575 ing size, etc. Especially, *Taste* has an overwhelming
576 number of comments compared to other elements. A
577 study by Liu and Jang³⁴ figured out that food taste is a
578 crucial attribute of restaurant success. Despite being
579 said to have a wide variety of food options, the *Taste*
580 and *Food temperature* at Dookki are constantly criti-
581 cized by customers. These things have left customers
582 with a wrong impression of Dookki's brand image in
583 the eyes of customers.

584 *Hygiene* refers to the cleanliness of the dining space
585 and the food served to customers at Dookki. Clean-
586 liness is one of the important attributes of a restau-
587 rant's brand image that marketers must pay attention

588 to³⁵. Much feedback showed the low level of hy-
589 giene at Dookki with some issues such as insects in the
590 food and dining area, careless food preparation, ran-
591 cid food, and dirty floors. It can be seen that Dookki
592 has experienced many criticisms regarding the hy-
593 giene of food and the dining area. Food directly af-
594 fects consumers' health; hence, hygiene has become
595 a critical subdimension of corporate social responsi-
596 bility³⁶. As a result, protecting customers' health is a
597 top priority for restaurants. For this reason, hygiene
598 becomes a noteworthy aspect for Dookki to improve
599 its brand image.

600 Regarding *rice fairness*, the price offered by Dookki
601 is considered low by most customers, but it is still
602 considered not worth what they receive based on
603 the quality of service and food. Nowadays, people
604 have a higher standard of living, so spending a de-
605 cent amount of money on a meal is shared. They
606 are willing to pay more for service but the dining ex-
607 perience they receive must be worth it. Therefore,
608 Dookki should consider improving customers' expe-
609 rience through service and food quality instead of po-
610 sitioning its brand image with low prices but lousy
611 quality. Regarding *Marketing activities*, Dookki's use
612 of celebrities for advertising received positive feed-
613 back. It can be seen that Dookki targets young cus-
614 tomers like students, so the approach by influencers
615 or idols will be practical. However, customers think
616 that the advertising content about the products and
617 services of Dookki is different from reality. Thus, this
618 once again emphasizes that customers today are sage,
619 and Dookki needs to provide them with real value,
620 thereby enhancing the brand image.

6. THEORETIAL AND MANAGERIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

621 The present study is conducted to respond to the
622 gaps found in the literature. By employing Netnogra-
623 phy as the research method to collect data in on-
624 line brand communities, the research findings show
625 that there are 5 aspects with 17 items to describe cus-
626 tomers' reflection of Dookki. These aspects are re-
627 viewed and discussed repeatedly in posts, negatively
628 and positively. They consist of *Service quality*, *Food*
629 *quality*, *Hygiene*, *Price fairness* and *Marketing activi-*
630 *ties*. Among these aspects, *Service quality* is the most-
631 mentioned which is followed by *Food quality*. The re-
632 search findings have some theoretical and empirical
633 contributions.

634 Theoretically, with Netnography as the research
635 method to collect user-generated content as the
636
637

638 sources of data, and Dookki-an F&B brand as the re- 691
 639 search context, the present study has four contribu- 692
 640 tions as follows: 693

641 (1) New research approach (netnography) with new 694
 642 data source collected from online brand communities 695
 643 (netnographic data) is employed to conduct a study 696
 644 on brand image measurement. This issue is to con- 697
 645 tribute to the brand image literature as Parris and 698
 646 Guzmán called²⁰. 699

647 (2) F&B brands are suitable for user-generated 700
 648 content-based analyses. These contributions are to re-
 649 spond to the future research directions suggested by
 650 Villegas¹² and Plumeyer et al.²

651 (3) SET is employed to explain why information is 703
 652 shared in online communities. This has not been em- 704
 653 ployed much in previous netnography studies. 705

654 (4) Elements of an F&B brand found in the present 706
 655 study (a qualitative study) can be employed to proceed 707
 656 to the second step in the process proposed by Burns 708
 657 et al. (as cited in²⁰). 709

658 Empirically, some significant managerial implications 710
 659 can be proposed from the analysis of netnographic 711
 660 data. Among 17 items (of 5 aspects) in the brand im- 712
 661 age of Dookki, *Responsiveness*, *Taste*, *Assurance*, and 713
 662 *Empathy* have the highest frequencies of comments at 714
 663 280, 271, 268 and 175, respectively. 715

664 In F&B, customers enjoy not only the product (e.g. 716
 665 food) but also the service delivered by staff. Prompt 717
 666 service and staff dedication are really pivotal as they 718
 667 have strong impressions on customers' emotions. In 719
 668 the case of Dookki, customers felt dissatisfied with 720
 669 how they were served. In addition to Responsiveness, 721
 670 Assurance - attitudes and behaviors of staff when 722
 671 serving - is also important to customers. Similarly, 723
 672 Empathy is also a part of service quality served by staff 724
 673 and perceived by customers. Apparently, Dookki staff 725
 674 shows unprofessional attitudes and behaviors to cus- 726
 675 tomers. This is unacceptable in a service industry like 727
 676 F&B. Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy are to 728
 677 reflect the attitudes and behaviors of staff in deliver- 729
 678 ing their service. The board of management at Dookki 730
 679 needs to check the whole process of service in order to 731
 680 improve the quality of service at Dookki stores. Em- 732
 681 ployee training can be a consideration as well. 733

682 In the F&B industry, Food is the core. It is reason- 734
 683 able to understand why Taste is one item with is men- 735
 684 tioned repeatedly in online brand communities. The 736
 685 fact shows that the taste of Dookki is reviewed nega- 737
 686 tively, since ingredients might be not be fresh, or the 738
 687 way to preserve food might need to not better. In ad- 739
 688 dition, Food temperature may be one factor related to 740
 689 the Taste of food. Even though there are only 52 com- 741
 690 ments, we all know that temperature is an important

issue which the decides the taste and quality of food. 691
 Dookki's management board should check and con- 692
 trol the cooking process; especially the steps before 693
 serving to customers. The whole process, from pur- 694
 chasing ingredients, processing, and cooking to pre- 695
 serving foods should be strictly controlled to main- 696
 tain required and needed quality. Last but not least, 697
 Dookki's management board should pay more atten- 698
 tion to collecting customers' feedback in online com- 699
 munities based on SET. 700

7. CONCLUSION 701

702 The research has accomplished all proposed objec- 702
 703 tives. The research findings have contributed to the 703
 704 theory of brand image theory by employing a qualita- 704
 705 tive approach and leveraging data from customers' 705
 706 perspectives on online platforms. Besides the theo- 706
 707 retical and practical contributions mentioned previ- 707
 708 ously, the research still has some limitations, thereby 708
 709 facilitating further research directions. 709

710 First, due to the time limitation, netnographic data 710
 711 is collected from only six large online communities, 711
 712 which are available and popular in the South of Viet- 712
 713 nam. Hence, perceptions of customers from the 713
 714 North have yet to be collected yet. Future studies 714
 715 should be extended to more online communities from 715
 716 the North of Vietnam. 716

717 The second limitation is that the managerial impli- 717
 718 cations are proposed based on netnographic analysis 718
 719 during a limited study duration. Not all customers 719
 720 who are having their meals at Dookki are available on- 720
 721 line to share their opinions. Hence, more data collec- 721
 722 tion methods should be combined in future studies to 722
 723 have more comprehensive data and findings. 723

724 The third limitation is that the type of data collected 724
 725 in the present study is archival data. Archival data has 725
 726 one drawback: unclear opinions since not all com- 726
 727 ments are straightforward and easy to understand. 727
 728 Hence, future studies should combine more types of 728
 729 data, such as co-created data, to make members' re- 729
 730 views/comments of members clearer and more mean- 730
 731 ingful. 731

732 The last limitation is that only Facebook online com- 732
 733 munities are studied in the present study. Meanwhile, 733
 734 online brand communities in social media are also 734
 735 available on other platforms, such as TikTok, Zalo, 735
 736 and Instagram. Hence, to collect netnographic data, 736
 737 future studies should extend to different online com- 737
 738 munities on other types of social media. 738

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 741 ing with data collection. 741

742 **9. CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

743 The authors declare that they have no conflicts of inter-
744 terest.

745 **10. AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION**

746 Ms. Le Thi Thanh Xuan took responsibility for com-
747 pleting the introduction to the study and other im-
748 portant sections such as the literature review, research
749 methodology, theoretical and managerial contribu-
750 tions, and conclusion.

751 Ms. Le Hoai Kieu Giang took responsibility for pre-
752 senting research findings, discussing the results and
753 completing the manuscript's format following journal
754 guidelines.

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

Lê Thị Thanh Xuân, Lê Hoài Kiều Giang*



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TÓM TẮT

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

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

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

Liên hệ

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

Email: lhkgiang@hcmut.edu.vn

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