

A Qualitative Study on the Four Pillars of Emotional Branding in Dental Clinic

Ardes Muhammad Naufal Khairi¹, Arlette Suzy Setiawan^{2*}, Alvanov Z. Mansoor¹

1. Master of Design, Faculty of Art and Design, Institut Teknologi Bandung, Indonesia.

2. Department of Pediatric Dentistry, Faculty of Dentistry, Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, Indonesia.

Abstract

Emotional branding is a way for a brand to build emotional connections and provide experience to consumers. For a dental clinic, emotional branding can be beneficial because emotions and patient experiences are influential in determining patient behaviour in the dental clinic environment. The emotional branding strategy is based on four basic concepts called the four pillars of emotional branding: relationships, sensory experiences, imagination and vision.

This research is descriptive qualitative research that aims to examine the emotional branding of dental clinics seen from applying the four pillars of emotional branding. The data were obtained through direct observation of one of the dental clinics in Bandung, Bandung Dental Center, and interviews with those responsible for clinical branding.

The results of observations and interviews regarding branding activities and strategies carried out by the Bandung Dental Center were then analyzed to determine the application of the four pillars of emotional branding, according to Marc Gobe. From the findings obtained at the Bandung Dental Center clinic, the application of the basic concepts of the four pillars of emotional branding has been found. However, some aspects of the application can still be developed further.

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Introduction

Patients act as consumers of a dental practice business. Patient experience has a role in determining patient behaviour in the dental environment. The negative experience of dental examination is one of the causes of a patient's anxiety about the dentist. The patient's perception of a dental environment can determine a person's fear and avoidance of the dentist.¹⁻³ In addition, the sensory experience obtained by the patient is an experience that patients do not commonly experience. Dentist practice can be confusing for a patient because there are sights, sounds, and smells that are different and unusual for a person to experience.⁴

Branding for a dentistry business can be profitable. The brand aims to distinguish and identify a service or product from other products.⁵

Brand can be a link for a patient to conclude a series of benefits and expectations about a dental practice.⁴ Branding, for a dental practice business, aims to build a presence or differentiator in the market that can attract and create loyalty for a patient.⁶

In addition to differentiation, a clinic must also be able to provide a good experience and emotional bond to patients. Dental clinics can take advantage of emotional branding in the clinic's branding strategy. Morrison and Crane (2007) define emotional branding as a way to create a strong emotional bond and emotional association with a brand to allow a brand to subliminally build emotional relationships with consumers.⁷ The emotional branding strategy is based on four basic concept pillars called the four pillars of emotional branding, which include relationship, sensory experience, imagination, and vision.⁸ If a brand can apply the four aspects of these basic concepts, successful emotional branding can be achieved.

Now people can find dental clinics that carry out branding activities, one of which is the Bandung Dental Center clinic in Bandung. The Bandung Dental Center Clinic, established in 2013, is a dental clinic with a one-stop dental

*Corresponding author:

Arlette Suzy Setiawan
Department of Pediatric Dentistry, Faculty of Dentistry,
Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, Indonesia.
E-mail: alvanov.mansoor@itb.ac.id;
arlette.puspa@unpad.ac.id

service concept, which means that it can serve various dental health care needs with the needs of different specialist dentists. This study aimed to determine whether the Bandung Dental Center clinic's branding activities encountered the application of emotional branding seen from how the basic concepts of the four pillars of emotional branding were applied.

Materials and methods

This research was conducted through a qualitative and descriptive approach. Data was collected through direct observation of branding activities carried out by the Bandung Dental Center clinic and interviews with the party responsible for clinical branding activities, Dr Brinets Sudjana as operational manager of the Bandung Dental Center clinic. The data obtained were then mapped and analyzed in the theory of the four pillars of emotional branding in Marc Gobé's emotional branding strategy.⁸

Study Object

The dental clinic used as the study's object of study is the Bandung Dental Center clinic, also known as the abbreviated name BDC (Figure 1). Bandung Dental Center Clinic is a dental clinic located in Bandung City, at Jalan Karapitan No. 88c, Bandung City, West Java, and has been established since 2013. Bandung Dental Center provides dental care services that can be divided into three types, namely: curative (healing), preventive services (prevention), and promotive services (health maintenance).



Figure 1. Bandung Dental Center Clinic.

Operational Definition

This study examines the four pillars of emotional branding; relationship, sensory experience, imagination, and vision.⁸

Relationship, how the object of study builds relationships with customers. This relationship can be seen in the facilities that make it easier for patients to schedule their treatment.

Sensory experience is a sensory experience obtained from stimuli in the form of visual, aroma, sound, touch and taste.

Imagination is the use of an imaginative approach in designing a brand which is reflected in the design of brand identity, products, packaging, retail stores, and advertisements.

Vision, briefly, can be interpreted as a way of looking ahead for a brand and how a brand can answer the problems that occur during the brand's journey. The vision of a brand can be reflected and felt through the quality of the product or the results of the services provided.

Result

The results of direct observation at the research location collected data, as shown in Table 1.

Pillar	Study Result
Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patient scheduling can be done using the Whatsapp application according to operating hours • A large selection of partner insurance
Sensory Experience	
Sight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application of the visual identity of the Bandung Dental Center brand in the clinic environment (Figure 2A). • Application of the clinic logo on some properties (Figure 2B) • Tidiness dental treatment room as one of the visual stimuli (Figure 2C).
Sound	Do not have a sound stimulus in the form of music that can be heard in the clinical environment. However, the clinic also plays music in some clinic rooms depending on the doctor's work preferences because some doctors cannot work with music.
Smell	The scent of air freshener in the clinic has not been selected according to its suitability with the clinic brand,
Taste	The taste that comes from the drugs is needed when carrying out treatment actions.
Touch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patients can feel tactile stimulation from various sources at the Bandung Dental Center clinic, such as from the waiting room bench and dental chair. • Patients can also feel tactile stimulation from the actions performed by dentist and dental nurses
Imagination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The naming of the clinic (Bandung Dental Center) indicates that a dental treatment center is available in a city. • Clinic logo shape showing a family (Figure 3 A and C) • Color of the brand (Figure 3B) • Use of social media
Vision	Adaptation of the Bandung Dental Center clinic in a pandemic condition with changes to several services following the Covid-19 health protocol.

Table 1. The results of the study of the object of study are categorized into four pillars.



Figure 2. A. Brand colours can be consistently applied in the Bandung Dental Center clinic environment. B. Application of the clinic logo on some properties. C. Dental treatment room as one of the visual stimuli.



Figure 3. A. Bandung Dental Center clinic logo. B. Bandung Dental Center clinic brand colour. C. Bandung Dental Center logo philosophy.

According to the results of interviews with the clinical operations manager, the concept of the Bandung Dental Center clinic is a one-stop dental service, which means that the Bandung Dental Center clinic can serve all the needs of patients related to dental and oral problems. Therefore, the Bandung Dental Center clinic has many general and specialist dentists, including pediatric dentistry specialists, oral surgeon specialists, orthodontic specialists, dental conservation specialists, periodontists and oral disease specialists.

The target segmentation of patients from the Bandung Dental Center clinic are groups of people who need dental-aesthetics services and special attention in terms of dental growth and development at the age of children and adolescents. The Bandung Dental Center Clinic has the vision to improve the image of dentists by providing full service by providing comprehensive and quality health services, developing the knowledge and skills of medical personnel through training that supports clinical programs and conducting community service. According to an interview with the clinic's operational manager, the value the clinic wants to convey is 'family', and the Bandung Dental Center wants to be seen as a friendly clinic.

Discussion

According to Gobé (2009), the basic concept of emotional branding is based on four pillars that form the basis of a successful emotional branding strategy.⁸ The four pillars are relationship, sensory experience, imagination and vision. Therefore, branding activities and media carried out by Bandung Dental Center will be mapped and grouped into these four pillars.

Relationship

For matters related to accessibility, the Bandung Dental Center clinic provides convenience and flexibility for patients to schedule visits and customer service that can be done via WhatsApp. Furthermore, for patients who use insurance services, the Bandung Dental Center clinic also partners with many insurance service providers. Patients who use certain insurance services can take advantage of these insurance services at the Bandung Dental Center clinic.

For a company to be able to build relationships with consumers, companies must understand and understand the wants and needs of its target audience or consumers so that it can design an appropriate approach.⁸ As a dental clinic, the Bandung Dental Center clinic consumers are our patients. Convenience is one of the things that a dental clinic patient wants and needs.⁹ Each patient has different treatment needs for their dental health problems. Bandung Dental Center Clinic is a clinic with a one-stop dentistry concept with many dentists with different specialities. This allows Bandung Dental Center to provide convenience for patients

needing dental treatment from different specialists.

In addition to the ease of obtaining dental care, convenience can also refer to matters related to clinic accessibility, such as opening hours, location, patient reception, and booking appointments. In addition to matters relating to the ease of service, the attitude shown by doctors and staff can affect patient satisfaction.⁹ Generally, dental patients expect to receive services from a dental clinic in an honest, friendly, and caring manner.¹⁰ Based on interviews with clinical, operational managers, staff and doctors at Bandung Dental Center, they are trying and required to serve patients in a friendly manner with a disposition that emphasizes clinical values.

Sensory Experience

The experience of the five senses is obtained from the stimulation of the five senses, which can be visual, aroma, sound, touch and taste. Lindstorm (2010)¹¹ divided into two types of sensory stimulation: branded and non-branded stimuli. When viewed from the sensory stimuli that can be found at the Bandung Dental Center clinic, branded stimuli can be found in visual stimuli in the clinic. The rest of the other sensory stimuli are non-branded stimuli. The sensory stimuli that can be found at the Bandung Dental Center clinic are as follows:

Visual stimulus. Some visual stimuli that can be found at the Bandung Dental Center clinic are branded stimuli. Branded visual stimuli that can be found at the Bandung Dental Center clinic are the application of the visual identity of the Bandung Dental Center brand in the clinic environment (Figure 2). For example, blue is the colour of the clinic's brand that is consistently applied to staff uniforms, interiors, graphic elements, and promotional media for medical gowns worn by patients. In addition to applying colour in the clinic environment, the application of the clinic logo is also often found in the Bandung Dental Center clinic environment.

Applying clinical visual identity aims to give the impression of unity and visual consistency. By providing visual stimulation in the form of consistent application of visual identity, associations with the visual identity of the Bandung Dental Center clinic brand will be built. Non-branded visual stimulation is found at the clinic, including the Interior of the Bandung Dental Center clinic. The glass wall's dental treatment room and waiting area are limited so

that the action room can be seen from the waiting room. The use of the glass is intended to make the clinic look open, and the patient can see the cleanliness and treatment processes in the treatment room, but patient privacy is also maintained by the presence of an opaque part in the middle of the glass barrier. The cleanliness of the clinic, especially in the operating room, can be seen in the Bandung Dental Center clinic environment. The Bandung Dental Center Clinic maintains its operating room and waiting room to keep them clean and tidy (Figure 2C).

Sense of smell stimulus. Stimulation of the sense of smell that can be found at the Bandung Dental Center clinic is dominated by the smell of drugs and the tools used to clean the room. In addition to these aromas, the clinic also provides air fresheners that aim to make visitors more comfortable and overcome the smell of medicines and cleansers that some people may not feel comfortable with. However, according to an interview with the clinic manager, the scent of air freshener in the clinic has not been selected according to its suitability with the clinic brand so the olfactory stimuli that can be found at the Bandung Dental Center clinic cannot be called branded stimuli.

The smell is a sense that cannot be ignored by a person, unlike visuals and sounds where a person can close their eyes or ears.¹¹ Stimulation in the form of aroma will always be in every breath. Although only one per cent of brain function is allocated to smell, from the perspective of emotional branding is a powerful sense, especially in evoking memories.¹² Aroma is a potent stimulus to evoke a person's memory.¹¹ Aroma influences a person's emotions, especially a pleasant aroma can positively affect consumer behaviour.⁸

Sense of sound stimulus. For the stimulation of the sense of hearing, the sound commonly encountered at the Bandung Dental Center clinic is the sound of dental procedures, such as the sound produced by dental tools such as dental drills. Bandung Dental Center Clinic does not yet have sound stimulation in the form of music that can be heard in the clinic environment. However, the clinic also plays music in some rooms depending on the doctor's work preferences because some doctors cannot work with music. Of all the five sense perceptions, about six per cent are represented by the sense of hearing.¹³ The sense of hearing is susceptible

to selective perception, as well as the perception of the sense of sight. Content distracting or uninteresting to hearing can be filtered out, meaning the message will never reach the consumer.¹² Gobé (2009) describes ways to use sound for emotional branding. A company can study a consumer's profile and select music that is explicitly played according to the consumer's preferences.⁸

Sense of touch stimulus. As a patient, you can feel tactile stimulation from various sources at the Bandung Dental Center clinic, such as from the waiting room bench and dental chair. Apart from the dental chair and bench, patients can also feel the tactile stimulation from the actions performed by doctors and dental nurses. Tactile stimulation from the actions of a doctor himself cannot be managed by the clinic, and it returns to each clinic dentist's skills in serving his patient's dental care.

Touch is essential in the brand experience; touch is often used to overcome brand ignorance.⁸ Tactile experience is often central to assessing the quality of a product.¹¹ In products, tactile stimulation can also be felt in a brand environment such as a store. A company does not need to highlight all five sensory stimuli. The perception of the five human senses is limited by the division between the foreground and background senses.¹⁴ Companies must think about their brand carefully and choose the most appropriate and relevant sensory stimuli for the brand.⁸

Sense of taste stimulus. Even though it is not a food and beverage industry, the Bandung Dental Center clinic is a dental clinic, so many activities occur in a person's mouth so that stimuli can be found in the form of taste that comes from the drugs needed when carrying out treatment actions. Although the senses are separate, the senses of smell and taste operate simultaneously. Of the two, the smell is the primary sense in the sensory experience because people tend to smell something before tasting it.¹² Other companies outside the food and beverage industry will have difficulty stimulating the taste buds. The most common way to provide a taste experience outside the food and beverage industry is to offer customers either served or self-served drinks. For businesses in the field of dentistry and mouth, taste stimulation can come from the drugs used during the examination.

Imagination

The name clinic has name "Bandung Dental Center". Gobe (2009) emphasizes that the purpose of creating a brand name is to stand out.⁸ Naming of the Bandung Dental Center clinic allows the clinic to be easily searchable for prospective patients looking for a dental clinic in the Bandung City area. There is a logo on the visual identity of Bandung Dental Center (Figure 3A-C). A logo is often considered a guarantee of quality; overall, consumers tend to feel more comfortable interacting with a brand already recognized. The logo is not a communication channel but a symbol of what a company represents.⁸

The shape of the Bandung Dental Center logo consists of four people forming a molar tooth. When separated, the shapes are divided into clinical initials B, D and C. The shape of the person in the logo has a message as a representation of family values which is used as the Bandung Dental Center brand value. In contrast, the shape of the molars represents the clinical business field, namely dentistry. In addition to the logo, there is a blue colour used by Bandung Dental Center as the brand colour. The colour itself can provide associations in the minds of consumers. Colour is a subjective experience because it relates to things that are known and often encountered.^{15,16} The blue colour used by the Bandung Dental Center is an unobtrusive blue colour, so it does not make the viewer uncomfortable. The blue colour is also consistently used by Bandung Dental Center in every application of its brand identity, such as websites, social media, to staff uniforms.

Besides colours and logos, the Bandung Dental Center clinic does not yet have a supergraphic system for its visual brand identity. However, the Bandung Dental Center clinic can be seen as tending to use rounded and indecisive shapes as graphic elements so that the clinic does not look intimidating or scary. Furthermore, they use photos from the Bandung Dental Center clinic; a photo that looks friendly and smiling can give the impression that it follows what the clinic wants to convey: family and friends.

Bandung Dental Center utilises its website (<https://www.bdc.co.id>) and social media, such as Instagram and YouTube, to promote and deliver information about the clinic. In addition, the Bandung Dental Center clinic also uses

social media to educate about dental health or general health. In addition to uploading posts, the clinic also holds an Instagram live webinar that is educational about dental health. Furthermore, Bandung Dental Center also utilises the Youtube channel owned by the clinic to participate in distributing educational videos about dental health. The purpose of the educational content is so that patients and the general public can gain more knowledge about dental health through social media from the Bandung Dental Center clinic, as well as a way to interact with the community and patients from the clinic's through social media.

Vision

A strong brand vision is needed so that the brand can develop and maintain its presence in the market. A brand must exist in a state of balance to renew itself continuously.⁸ Bandung Dental Center is a clinic that has been around for a long time; since its inception in 2013, Bandung Dental Center is still standing and running its practice. This can be achieved because the Bandung Dental Center clinic has a strong vision. Vision can briefly be interpreted as a way of looking ahead for a brand and how a brand can answer the problems that occur during the brand journey. The vision of a brand can be reflected and felt through the quality of the product or the results of the services provided. The service quality of a dental clinic can be a factor that affects patient satisfaction.⁹

According to interviews with clinic managers, to maintain the quality of service outcomes, clinics often hold training and workshops for clinical staff, both doctors and nurses, to develop the quality and knowledge of the clinical staff. In addition, the Bandung Dental Center clinic is also a clinic that is very selective in choosing a dentist. To deal with change, the Bandung Dental Center clinic is an adaptive clinic and continues to innovate along with the times. For example, when the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 came to Indonesia, the Bandung Dental Center implemented a negative pressure room in its clinic to improve safety and comfort at the clinic.

Conclusion

The Bandung Dental Center clinic has implemented several basic concepts of the four pillars of emotional branding. However, some of

these applications can still be developed further, mainly by providing sensory experiences other than visuals which are more inclined towards branded stimuli, so that these stimuli can cause associations in the minds of consumers.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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