

Emotional Branding in Joongla: A Marketing Communication in Indonesian Gastronomic Restaurant

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Abstract

Indonesia has 3,259 culinary specialties and 10,900 medium to large-scale food and beverage businesses, reflecting the high level of competition in the culinary industry. Changes in consumer behavior that increasingly prioritize experiences create opportunities for gastronomic restaurants to strengthen their brand identity. This research focuses on Joongla as a gastronomic restaurant that applies emotional branding in its communication strategy. The emotional branding used in this research refers to Marc Gobe's (2005) theory, which includes connection, sensory experience, imagination, and vision. Through a qualitative case study approach, this research analyzes the application of emotional branding at Joongla using interviews, observation, documentation, and literature study. As a gastronomic restaurant with a unique positioning, Joongla prioritizes emotional bonds over its product attributes. The fun dining session and hospitality humanist approach showed that Joongla builds long-term emotional attachments with its customers, makes the sensory experience the principal value, builds customers' imagination through physical media and storytelling, and consistently conveys its vision. This research provides insights into how emotional branding has increased consumer loyalty and encouraged word of mouth as an organic promotional strategy. Furthermore, this research confirms that strong emotional connections can attract and retain consumers, especially if cultural values are integrated into the branding strategy.

Keywords: Emotional Branding; Marketing Communication; Word Of Mouth; Brand Loyalty; Indonesian Gastronomy; Joongla; Dining Experience; Food Communication

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Emotional Branding pada Joongla: Strategi Komunikasi Pemasaran di Restoran Gastronomi Indonesia

Abstrak

Indonesia memiliki 3.259 kuliner khas dan 10.900 bisnis makanan dan minuman berskala menengah hingga besar, mencerminkan tingginya tingkat persaingan di industri kuliner. Perubahan perilaku konsumen yang semakin mengutamakan pengalaman menciptakan peluang bagi restoran gastronomi untuk memperkuat identitas mereka. Penelitian ini berfokus pada Joongla sebagai restoran gastronomi yang menerapkan emotional branding dalam strategi komunikasinya. Emotional branding yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini mengacu pada teori Marc Gobe (2005), yang mencakup hubungan, pengalaman pancaindra, imajinasi, dan visi. Melalui pendekatan studi

kasus kualitatif, penelitian ini menganalisis penerapan emotional branding di Joongla dengan metode wawancara, observasi, dokumentasi, dan studi pustaka. Sebagai restoran gastronomi dengan positioning unik, Joongla lebih mengedepankan ikatan emosional dibandingkan atribut produk yang dimiliki. Sesi fun dining dan pendekatan hospitality humanis yang dilakukan menunjukkan bahwa Joongla membangun keterikatan emosional jangka panjang dengan konsumennya, menjadikan pengalaman pancaindra sebagai nilai utama, membangun imajinasi konsumen melalui media fisik dan storytelling, serta secara konsisten menyampaikan visinya. Penelitian ini memberikan wawasan mengenai bagaimana emotional branding terbukti tidak hanya meningkatkan loyalitas konsumen, tetapi juga mendorong word of mouth sebagai strategi promosi organik. Selain itu, penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa keterikatan emosional yang kuat dapat menjadi strategi efektif dalam menarik dan mempertahankan konsumen, terutama jika nilai budaya juga diintegrasikan ke dalam strategi branding.

Kata kunci: *Pencitraan Merek Emosional; Komunikasi Pemasaran; Dari Mulut ke Mulut; Loyalitas merek; keahlian memasak Indonesia; Joongla; pengalaman makan; komunikasi makanan*

INTRODUCTION

Emotional branding has become an important topic in various studies, especially in the context of brand communication strategies. Various studies have explored the role of emotional branding in media, communications, and other industries (Permanasari, 2022). Agatha & Swarnawati (2024) examined how Netflix Indonesia fosters emotional connections through its Instagram account, @netflixid, highlighting the role of social media in increasing brand loyalty and user engagement. Similarly, Yusriana et al. (2019) investigated the representation of emotional branding in South Korean tourism gimmicks, focusing on the drama Winter Sonata, which effectively built an emotional connection to support city branding initiatives. Emotional branding has also been recognized as a powerful strategy in advertising. Revias et al. (2020) analyzed Mizzu's Khong Guan Face Palette campaign, while Setiawan et al. (2023) explored the emotional branding strategy behind Teh Botol Sosro's packaging design. Both studies underscore how brands leverage emotional connections

to create lasting impressions based on the core principles of emotional branding. In addition, emotional branding has been widely researched in various industries, including fashion, cosmetics, advertising, city branding, and even dental clinics. Unfortunately, until now, there is still no research that specifically discusses the application of emotional branding in the context of culinary businesses, especially from a gastronomic point of view. Given the importance of emotional experiences in consumer decision-making, previous research suggests that emotional branding has excellent potential for success in other fields of business.

Increasingly fierce competition in the industry encourages businesses to develop strategic marketing strategies. The success of a marketing strategy depends heavily on the brand's strength (Hubert K in Santoso & Ardiyansyah, 2023). Branding is important in building relationships with audience perceptions, emotions, and feelings. The emotional aspect can build a psychological bond between brands and consumers, more than just the product's functional value. Emotions and consumption affections are

central feelings in consumer behavior (Mei et al., 2025). To influence consumer behavior, marketers will generally use one of three communication styles, namely (1) emotional branding, which focuses on building an emotional understanding of the product; (2) functional branding, which highlights what is offered; and (3) rational marketing (Mistry et al., 2024). Emotional branding focuses on creating meaningful connections related to a person's lifestyle and experiences, fostering an emotional bond between the person and the issue (Manohar et al., 2023). The main goal of emotional branding is to trigger feelings such as happiness, anger, or calmness in the audience, creating a deep emotional connection (Delbaere et al in Mistry et al., 2024).

Many culinary businesses struggle to establish a strong brand image, which hinders their competitiveness (Utami, 2021). Consumer behavior and needs in the culinary industry have shifted from fulfilling basic needs to seeking experiences, insights, or fulfilling job demands (Ariyanti, 2023). This shift is reflected in consumers' increasing knowledge, which affects how they choose dishes and food needs. In the culinary industry, there is something called gastronomy, which emphasizes creating an immersive experience when enjoying a meal. Many people seek gastronomic experiences because of their uniqueness,

not because of the luxury of the restaurant or the variety of menu options available (Nugraha & Sumardi, 2019). Gastronomy encompasses cultural, historical, and environmental descriptions of where, when, why, and how food is served and consumed (Nugroho & HD, 2020).

Bandung is famous as a Culinary City that continues to present various culinary innovations and increasingly prioritizes the consumer experience. Bandung has a large proportion of the creative economy, especially in the culinary sub-sector (Iskandar in Wahyono et al., 2023). Through improving creative innovation, capital structure, supply chain management, strengthening brand image, and creating value chains, the culinary sector in Bandung can achieve competitive advantage and support regional economic growth (Wahyono et al., 2023). The concept of restaurants in Bandung continues to experience rapid development, no longer relying solely on serving a la carte or set menus as before. One of the more popular concepts is omakase, initially introduced by Chef Tatemukai of Kinokawa in the early 2000s (Soemantri, 2023). Unlike casual dining restaurants, the omakase concept offers a more formal and intimate atmosphere, emphasizing the customer experience, as practiced by Joongla.

Table 1. List of 8 best fine dining restaurants in Bandung

Name	Description	Location	Followers Instagram
Joongla	Indonesian gastronomy with a modern twist, creating a unique experience for fusion cuisine lovers	Sukajadi Street No.148-150, Bandung	25.382

Jung Chan Dining	The first Korean fine dining restaurant in Indonesia specializing in fermented ingredients	Bukit Pakar Timur Street No. 76E, Bandung	21.254
MMBS (Mari Merangkai Bunga Seroja)	The restaurant serves Sundanese fine dining with a modern concept and has a special menu of Betawi dishes	Pelesiran Street No. 28, Bandung	18.253
Altero Bistronomi	With a classic European atmosphere, this restaurant can create a romantic fine dining experience	Cipaganti Street No. 38, Bandung	9.387
The 18th Restaurant & Lounge	The restaurant offers stunning views from its rooftop location, along with steak and grill specialties	Gatot Subroto Street No. 289, Bandung	8.262
Plataran Bandung	Focuses on serving carefully curated international heritage cuisine with an elegant ambiance	Diponegoro Street No. 27, Bandung	7.672
Monomono	Nikkei concept restaurant that combines Japanese-Peruvian delights plus Argentinian Grill flavors	Dr. Setiabudi Street No. 430, Bandung	7.023
Cerita Meja Makan	The restaurant emphasizes exceptional omakase desserts while presenting a unique main course menu	Talaga Bodas Street No. 64, Bandung	557

Source :Data processed by researchers ,based on What's New Indonesia ,December10 th2024

Among the eight best fine dining restaurants in Bandung, Joongla has the most Instagram followers, although their concept is a fun dining experience, which is more akin to omakase. Joongla focuses on the limited access to local culinary archives, the low awareness of middle-class urbanites about the impact of consumption patterns, and the lack of space for discussion about Indonesian gastronomy. Joongla offers a sensorial experience through Indonesia's gastronomic diversity to address this. As Indonesia's first fun dining restaurant with a storytelling approach, Joongla emphasizes in-depth research and quality presentation of every dish. Besides operating in Bandung, Joongla actively

collaborates in major cities to introduce Indonesian gastronomy. Joongla also got recognition from foreign media, where Joongla was featured in Malaysian Airlines and SEA News Today. Joongla believes that collaboration between the government, private sector, academics, and communities can help the younger generation recognize Indonesian gastronomy as one of the nation's strengths.

Consumer loyalty is now determined by product quality and the brand's ability to build emotional connections. Gastronomy focuses on taste and texture and explores the history, traditions, and cultural values associated with food consumption (Sutrisno, 2024). Gastronomy focuses on food culture,

which allows consumers to explore various traditions through gastronomic culinary experiences (Sormaz, Akmes, Gunes, and Aras in Sutrisno, 2024). This experience creates a deep impression, as realized by Joongla through its restaurant concept. Despite Joongla's exclusive appeal in gastronomy and storytelling concepts, efforts to execute practical branding innovations remain their priority.

When viewing the phenomenon of consumers who increasingly prioritize experiences in enjoying culinary, researchers present the theory of emotional branding from the thoughts of Marc Gobe (2005) as a basis for understanding Joongla's branding activities. Emotional branding creates emotional connections that connect products with individual consumer experiences (Balaji in Permanasari, 2022). Emotional branding is seen as a brand promise to consumers, which allows them to enjoy the world created by the brand. The researcher reviewed emotional branding on Joongla through four main pillars: 1) Relationship, 2) Sensorial experience, 3) Imagination, and 4) Vision.

Changes in consumer behavior have made emotional branding a key element in marketing communication strategies. In a gastronomic restaurant like Joongla, emotional branding can strengthen emotional connections with consumers. Emotional branding encourages consumer loyalty and is an effective medium to promote Indonesia's rich local cuisine. The emergence of experiences and emotions when consuming a brand reflects the development of marketing today, where transactions are not only limited to products (Pravitaswari in Rachmah &

Madiawati, 2022). This research focuses on how emotional branding is carried out by Joongla as an effort to build brand loyalty. In addition, this research also aims to analyze the marketing communication strategies that Joongla applies to strengthen emotional branding. As a business in the gastronomy sector closely related to experience and culture, Joongla is an ideal example to analyze the role of emotional branding as a marketing communication strategy. Gastronomy serves as a fulfillment of consumption needs and a means of cultural expression and local identity with emotional value for consumers. Gastronomy and culture strongly support the tourism sector, acting as key industry elements (Yubianto, 2023). Since the emotional branding approach is rarely applied in the gastronomy sector, this opportunity can be utilized to build competitiveness and increase appreciation for Indonesia's local culinary culture in domestic and international markets. In the context of creative industries and culture-based tourism, emotional branding can create a more immersive and meaningful consumer consumption experience. This approach enhances the innovation of marketing communication strategies and supports the positioning of Indonesian gastronomy as a significant attraction in culture-based tourism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gastronomy

As the largest archipelago in Southeast Asia, Indonesia has an abundance of culinary riches passed down from generation to generation. In the period up to 2024, Indonesia's original cuisine has

attracted the attention of many tourists, both domestic and foreign. At least 3,259 authentic culinary types are found in Indonesia (Gardjito et al., 2017). On the other hand, the number of medium and large-scale food and beverage businesses in Indonesia has reached 10,900 (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023). Unfortunately, of the many culinary businesses, only a few highlight the richness of Indonesian gastronomy.

Gastronomy is the art and science of good eating (Nugroho & HD, 2020). The term “gastronomy” comes from ancient Greek, combining the words “gastro” meaning stomach, and “nomos” meaning law or rule. This field of study explores food’s culture, history, and environmental context, including when, where, why, and how it is served (Nugroho & HD, 2020). Gastronomic products can provide an immersive experience by engaging the human senses and emotions. The involvement in question refers to the relationship between individuals and objects based on needs, norms, and interests (Leong in Hidayatullah et al., 2023)

Emotional Branding Theory

Building a brand involves more than ensuring its existence, visibility, and functionality. Brands must also be able to form emotional bonds with consumers daily. Emotional branding is a new marketing communication concept focusing on consumers’ emotions, feelings, needs, desires, beliefs, and aspirations (Pogorzelski in Andriani et al., 2024). Emotional branding was first introduced by Marc Gobe in 2005, a leading expert in studying emotional aspects (feelings). Emotional branding can give credibility

and personality to a brand to create a deeper relationship with consumers. Thus, emotional branding can create a “personal dialog” between a brand and consumers. In this era, consumers expect the brands they choose to deeply understand their needs and cultural orientation.

Marc Gobe formulated four pillars of emotional branding that form the foundation of branding, namely 1) relationship, the core value of the brand so that consumers can assess whether these values match them so that a long-term emotional relationship can be established; 2) sensorial experience, sensory stimulation designed to create an intuitive connection with consumers; 3) imagination, the imagination that a brand promises through design and brand identity; 4) vision, guidelines for creating stories and experiences that reflect brand values.

Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is a crucial factor that companies must take into account. Brand loyalty refers to consumer loyalty, which means buying a brand with consistency, positive attitudes, and unique feelings for the brand (Zuhroh, 2024). Brand loyalty is formed from consumer satisfaction, which creates trust and increases awareness of the product in the minds of consumers (Santoso & Prasastyo in Agnesia et al., 2022). Brand loyalty reflects consumer closeness to a brand (Simamora in Pandiangan et al., 2021). Brand loyalty is a factor in consumer vulnerability to competitors and affects the company’s future performance prospects. Brand loyalty is more effective than finding new consumers (Muntazah et al., 2020). With brand loyalty, the brand will remain superior and not easily replaced.

Word of Mouth Marketing

In a highly competitive market, companies must create a promotional mix to communicate product existence to the public effectively. There are eight main communication models known as the marketing communication mix. These models include advertising, sales promotion, events and experiences, public relations and publicity, direct marketing, interactive marketing, word-of-mouth marketing, and personal selling (Kotler & Keller in Fikri et al., 2020). Word-of-mouth marketing is a form of promotion that arises from customer experiences after using a product or service. Perceived advantages drive the recommendations, comments, and reviews consumers share, thus building trust in their minds (Itasari et al., 2020). Word-of-mouth marketing is arguably the most influential means of persuasion and is one of the main predictors of a company's growth (Reichheld in Lisjak et al., 2021). In contemporary times, businesses have actively sought to create and spread word-of-mouth communication to effectively promote their products and services (Ramajudeen in Etim & James, 2023).

METHODS OF RESEARCH

This study uses a qualitative case study approach to describe Joongla's emotional branding in building brand loyalty and analyze the marketing communication strategies used to strengthen emotional branding. Researchers use qualitative research methods to find new findings that can develop insights into emotional branding from a marketing communication perspective. With an explorative case study, this research aims to explore the structure

of the phenomenon to develop hypotheses and theoretical models.

For data collection, semi-structured in-depth interviews were used as primary data, previously determined by purposive sampling, where researchers selected informants who could provide information relevant to the research problem. This research interviewed Joongla's internal parties, three consumers who had visited Joongla more than once, academics, and branding practitioners. The average interview duration of the data collection was about 42.8 minutes for each informant, of which there were six informants in total. The recorded interviews were processed into transcription tables for each informant, facilitating the coding process using NVivo 12 software. Secondary data was collected through observation, documentation, and literature studies related to Joongla's emotional branding.

Data in qualitative research generally consists of the words and actions of individuals. Hence, methods that can effectively capture this language and behavior are required (Erickson & Wilson in Wahyuni, 2023:53). Qualitative data analysis is inductive, where the researcher identifies categories, patterns, and relationships through discovery (Haryono, 2020:47). In the data analysis stage, researchers used the Miles & Huberman Interactive Analysis Model, which consists of 1) Data Reduction, 2) Data Display, and 3) Conclusions Drawing and Verification. In this study, researchers used data source triangulation to ensure the validity and reliability of the research results (Sugiyono in Faustyna, 2023:124). Triangulation involves comparing the viewpoints of informants from Joongla,

restaurant, Joongla upholds the vision of “Spreading the story of Indonesian gastronomy to the world, driven by love and courage.” The dining concept revolves around seasonal storytelling, where each season highlights the distinctive cuisine of different Indonesian islands.

As conceptualized by Marc Gobe, emotional branding focuses on building strong emotional connections between brands and consumers through experience-driven engagement. This approach is particularly relevant for brands centered on immersive experiences and deep emotional bonds. Joongla, as a fun dining restaurant with a unique branding concept and strong cultural roots, aligns with the four pillars of emotional branding (relationship, sensorial experience, imagination, and vision). Through this strategy, emotional branding enhances brand communication and fosters lasting consumer relationships. Beyond its role in branding, this research examines whether emotional branding effectively nurtures brand loyalty. In today’s market, consumer loyalty is increasingly fragile, as individuals frequently switch brands based on emotions rather than rational decision-making (Joshi & Nema, 2015). Brands that establish strong emotional ties with consumers are now perceived as more valuable than those that merely emphasize functional product value (Aparicio, 2021). Thus, emotional branding fosters long-term loyalty by creating meaningful, memorable brand experiences. Not only focusing on emotional branding, but researchers also want to examine whether emotional branding can encourage the creation of brand loyalty. Researchers also want to know a marketing communication

strategy to strengthen emotional branding, considering how emotional branding can make a brand more alive in the eyes of consumers.

Relationship and Long-Term Emotional Connections



Figure 3. Diagram map “relationship”

Source :Data processed by researchers2024 ,

Emotional branding emphasizes building a strong emotional connection between brands and consumers, significantly influencing consumer behavior. Every individual begins to realize the hidden value that can be obtained from every behavior, including consumption. Effective relationships can be built by treating consumers as genuine, living, breathing, and complex individuals (Gobe, 2005:2). Joongla does this by adopting a humanistic hospitality approach. When consumers are considered equal partners in creating product and service value through their emotions and experiences, the relationship can involve both rational and emotional aspects (Prahalad & Venkat in Rai & Nayak, 2019). Joongla views itself and its consumers as equal partners who

both play a role in preserving Indonesia's gastronomic heritage.

So far, the culinary sector is a personalized service provider offering unique experiences (Rai & Nayak, 2019). Joongla has built relationships with consumers through its various touchpoints, including direct interaction. By understanding its audience's needs and engaging with emotional aspects, Joongla believes that direct interaction is key to creating effective relationships. Joongla strives to create interpersonal communication that strengthens its relationship with consumers through talking and getting to know each other.

At the end of the fun dining session, Joongla invites consumers to write a journal about the experience. In the journal provided, many customers shared their stories and positive impressions, using this journal to express their impressions with Joongla. This thing helps Joongla create a deep and memorable emotional connection. Joongla also provides merchandise tailored to the seasonal theme of its set menus to strengthen the emotional bonds that have been established. Through merchandise, consumers can recall their experience at Joongla and strengthen long-lasting emotional connections.

Joongla not only encourages the relationship between brand and consumer but also encourages interaction between consumers. These opportunities arise in various moments, such as while waiting at the pick-up point before entering the dining room, during the initial introduction session, and through an interactive game. In the game, eight consumers will be divided into two teams, encouraging them to interact

and get to know each other. Interactions in restaurant services include not only the relationship between consumers and restaurants, but also fellow consumers in the environment (Butcher in Erkmen & Hancer, 2019). Individual similarities can create a positive attitude toward the restaurant and influence consumers' emotional experiences (Erkmen & Hancer, 2019). As such, Joongla creates interactions that support ongoing relationships between consumers, providing a more meaningful experience.

Joongla utilizes storytelling at every stage of fun dining to foster emotional connection. Storytelling takes place at the same time as the fun dining session, with a maximum duration of 90 minutes. Joongla tells each dish's story based on research from various regions in Indonesia. The story told is about the origin of the local ingredients used, based on research from various regions in Indonesia. Cultural values and traditional stories are also raised through the story behind the food. Consumers can feel a sense of attachment through cultural values or individual moments that indirectly connect with Joongla. The emotional bond, which initially starts with an appreciation of local flavors, can develop into a strong association with the Joongla brand. In other words, relationships can be created by using strong emotions, values, and brand identity (Bunga et al., 2024).

Joongla does not build relationships with consumers during fun dining sessions alone but through Instagram touchpoints. With a humanistic approach, the content focuses on Indonesian gastronomic values, reflecting Joongla's position as a communicator who translates their research into a fun dining experience. On

Instagram content, Joongla emphasizes three main aspects: 1) Products, the display of their set menu dishes; 2) Service, the fun dining services that consumers can enjoy; and 3) Education about the uniqueness of Indonesian gastronomy. These three aspects are part of Joongla's promise to diners, which will be fulfilled during the fun dining session. Some guides explain how consumers will feel the experience in their Instagram highlight stories so that the promise is indeed written but with a humanist and unique approach. Potential customers who are interested in visiting Joongla can make a reservation through the website or WhatsApp with Joongla's greeters (Juru Sapa). This approach allows Joongla to gradually build an emotional connection, thus strengthening the long-term bond already established.

Joongla's Project Manager mentioned that their team engages with their audience using a humanistic approach rather than treating them as mere followers on social media. She explains, *"Joongla's content is crafted with a personal and emotional touch. The content is more about the interaction and the packaging of the content, which is quite different. Joongla focuses more on education because the material and context of gastronomics are quite heavy. So, it cannot just be delivered right away. It has to be introduced gradually and retranslated to make it easier to understand"* (A. Shakilla, Personal Interview, December 11th, 2024).

If analyzed further, the relationship is also influenced by other factors, especially the value and uniqueness of Joongla. The value is also in line with the promise offered by Joongla to its consumers. Consumers will feel a strong emotional bond with a brand when the relationship is sustainable.

Joongla has a concept of changing menus served as seasonal set menus to illustrate the gastronomic richness of a particular island or region. The relationship created can encourage consumers to return to visit at an appropriate time. Joongla is perceived as an occasional culinary destination, so repeat visits usually consider the moment, time, and new concepts Joongla presents.

Joongla's success in creating emotional connections is reflected in consumers voluntarily sharing their experiences through word of mouth, making it an organic marketing communication strategy. Joongla will repost user-generated content (UGC) posted by consumers on Instagram. This strategy is done to strengthen relationships and promote the brand. Emotional branding is proven to influence word of mouth significantly (Sianturi et al., 2022). In word of mouth, consumers play an important role in supporting the marketing communication strategy. Therefore, it is important to identify the factors that drive word of mouth so that restaurants can pay attention to brand characteristics and aspects of consumer psychology and behavior (Zhang et al., 2021).

Indonesian gastronomy is Joongla's core value, successfully reinforced through a humanist hospitality approach, creating an emotional connection. Thus, Joongla is not just a place to enjoy gastronomic dishes but also becomes part of the established identity and relationships. Deep relationships between consumers and brands can provide a significant competitive advantage over competitors (Rai & Nayak, 2019). Emotional branding and word of mouth are important in influencing purchasing decisions and supporting customer retention.

Dining and The Heritage: A Nusantara Gastronomys

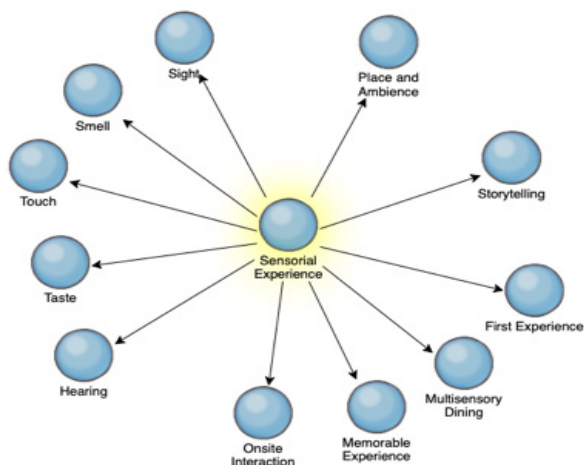


Figure 4. Diagram map “sensorial experience”

Source :Data processed by researchers2024 ,

The sensorial experience serves as a stimulus that can create a deep and lasting impression in the consumer’s emotional memory (Gobe, 2005:74). Therefore, the five senses’ appeal can be considered the main factor differentiating a brand experience from competitors. As a gastronomic restaurant, Joongla focuses on delivering a sensorial experience to leave a lasting impression on consumers. In line with its identity, “Tour of Indonesia through fun dining experience with #ImpactfulFlavors”, Joongla designed a sensory stimulant that tells the story of Indonesia’s gastronomic richness.

The sensorial experience is based on understanding consumer needs, preferences, and their delivery through the senses (Yusriana et al., 2019). The consistency of the sensorial experience at every step can strengthen consumers’ memories and encourage their loyalty (Andronic & Morosanu, 2020). In the context of restaurants, the elements of the

five senses, conscious and unconscious, have an important role in creating consumer experience. The sense of taste is a key aspect of the culinary experience, where Joongla pays special attention to the flavors and order of presentation in fun dining. This approach delivers a unique sensation so consumers can feel surprised when enjoying Joongla’s dishes. Great taste is key in shaping the restaurant experience, as it stimulates the sensory brain and creates a pleasant sensation (Fong et al., 2023).



Figure 5. Visual experience of Joongla

Source :Instagram Joongla(2024 ,

The visual aspect of Joongla restaurant is formed through various visual stimuli. Joongla relies on displays, plating, and restaurant ambiance to create an attractive visual experience for consumers. There is also a play of lights at Joongla to create unique lighting effects, where the lights can attract attention and focus consumers on specific areas. In addition, consumers can witness the process of serving dishes by the chef, adding to the appeal of the culinary experience. Vision is the dominant sense in conveying brand image and value, considering that 83% of information is received through vision (Harizi, 2021). Joongla utilizes visual elements as a value that enhances the gastronomic experience and provides an aesthetic impression that enriches the experience.



Figure 6. Chef table of Joongla

Source :Instagram whatsnewbandung2024 , _

The kitchen, located close to the chef's table at Joongla, provides an aroma stimulus that visitors can enjoy. Joongla uses scents from the room and dishes to create a sense of smell without interrupting the eating experience of its consumers. The proper use of scent can be an effective tool to build positive emotional memories of a brand. Humans can recognize up to 10,000 scent combinations. Although it is difficult to name a particular scent, they can still distinguish it even after a long time (Fong et al., 2023). Therefore, aroma stimulus is an innovative move by Joongla to make it easier for consumers to remember their experiences.



Figure 7. A sonic experience Joongla & Bottlesmoker

Source :Instagram Bottlesmoker2025 ,

Joongla utilizes auditory stimuli by presenting background music that supports the fun dining atmosphere. The auditory stimulus includes ease of hearing, naturalness, clarity, and recognition of various musical backgrounds (Harizi, 2021). Music or sound (auditory) is important in building emotional connections between consumers and brands (Bhardwaj & Jaroliya, 2024). Joongla chose Nusantara-themed music that harmonizes with the regional concept of the set menu presented. The choice of music is carefully curated to create a harmonious atmosphere without disturbing the fun dining experience, avoiding the distraction effect due to excessive stimulus.

Joongla provides sensory stimulation through playful sessions between consumers, where they can touch local ingredients used in fun dining dishes. This activity helps consumers better understand and recognize the gastronomic dishes they enjoy. The sense of touch enables recognition of the world through physical contact, where the tactile stimulus provides information about the object touching the skin (Harizi, 2021). By physically touching the local ingredients shown by Joongla, consumers can feel an attachment in terms of sensorial experience. Groping activities are usually done because they are fun, engaging, or both.

Storytelling plays an important role in enriching the sensorial experience of Joongla consumers. Through storytelling, Joongla introduces local ingredients and Indonesia's gastronomic richness, which is not widely known. Each season, Joongla archives the archipelago's research results, menu concepts, and food through

storybooks. Besides being told directly, consumers can also read the stories through the fairy tale book provided. Restaurants must integrate sensory cues that align with consumer preferences (Haase in Chang & Cheng, 2023). Sensory cues should convey stories implicitly and explicitly to build positive perceptions that support brand success.

A sensorial experience can build a deep emotional attachment for consumers, influencing their subconscious perceptions (Aparicio, 2021). The senses are the most intuitive medium for understanding a product so that a sensorial experience can create a lasting emotional impression. Moreover, personalized sensorial experiences are more effective in attracting consumer attention (Andronic & Morosanu, 2020). In this context, Joongla consistently integrates Indonesian cultural values to create experiences that reinforce positive brand perceptions.

The implementation of sensorial experiences not only strengthens brand identity but also influences future consumer decisions. When Joongla consumers are impressed by the sensory stimulus, they are likelier to return to try the next season's set menu because of the different experiences and flavors. Emotions and sensory stimuli influence each other, and emotions can trigger different response patterns from the brain and body (Kulkarni & Kolli, 2022). The integration of sensory stimuli at Joongla triggers emotional signals in the limbic system, strengthening relationships and building long-term loyalty through consumer memories.

Imagination as Joongla's Narrative in Introducing Indonesian Gastronomy

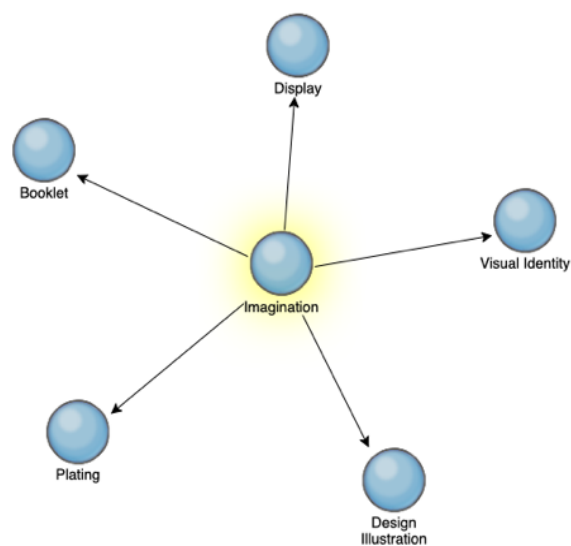


Figure 8. Diagram map “imagination”

Source :Data processed by researchers2024 ,

In emotional branding, imagination allows brands to create unique experiences that evoke consumers' feelings and memories. Imagination also helps brands communicate creatively to attract attention through a different look (Setiawan et al., 2023). Imagination is often reflected in brand design, which makes the emotional branding process more tangible. While creating imagery that surprises and delights consumers is challenging, Joongla successfully directs imagination to enrich the consumer experience. Joongla utilizes storytelling to trigger consumers' imagination, thus creating nostalgia and the feeling of exploring different parts of Indonesia. This approach provides an imaginative, fun dining experience, inviting consumers to explore Indonesian culture through food.



Figure 9. The story of the brem koin

Source :Booklet Joongla2024 ,

One interesting story Joongla told was about brem koin. Brem koin is the ingredient of a dish on the seasonal set menu, “Dari Mata Elang Jawa Turun Ke Hati”, called Brem Sri. Joongla combines brem koin into a new food with innovation, but there is a story about how this traditional Javanese food already existed in Serat Centhini in 1814. Likewise, with other foods, there is always a story as part of the culture and history in every local ingredient that is rarely recognized by the city community. Joongla excels in storytelling, which is crucial for shaping the gastronomic experience of its consumers. This storytelling also enhances their imagination.

Imagination in an individual’s subconscious is emotionally connected to what is seen (Setiawan et al., 2023). Therefore, building imagination through product and campaign design is important to touch consumers’ hearts (Andronic & Morosanu, 2020). Joongla has succeeded in building consumer imagination by

supporting various physical media, such as booklets, displays, plating, and visual identity. Through an imaginative approach, Joongla connected consumers with cultural values, history, and personal memories and aroused curiosity about Indonesian gastronomy.

Imagination can be a tool to promote Joongla through word of mouth, where there is value in eating Indonesian gastronomic dishes while feeling directly invited to travel around Indonesia, even though consumers are just sitting there enjoying Joongla’s stories and dishes. This aspect of imagination is one of Joongla’s advantages over its competitors. Imagination plays a significant role in creating attractiveness and elevating the cultural values of Indonesian gastronomy. Thus, imagination can be an important factor in repeat visits to the restaurant. Even Joongla consumers consider imagination to be a powerful weapon that makes the experience at Joongla more memorable.

Imagination must be at the company’s core to drive the transformation of business areas into creative and innovative workspaces (Gobe in Listiani., 2024). At Joongla, imagination has been reflected in its attachment to Indonesian cultural values, thus introducing consumers to diverse flavors and cultures. Imagination increases awareness of Indonesia’s gastronomic richness and builds positive perceptions of Joongla’s service quality. Thus, imagination is an important factor in shaping Joongla’s brand image.

Vision as Joongla's Added Value and Identity

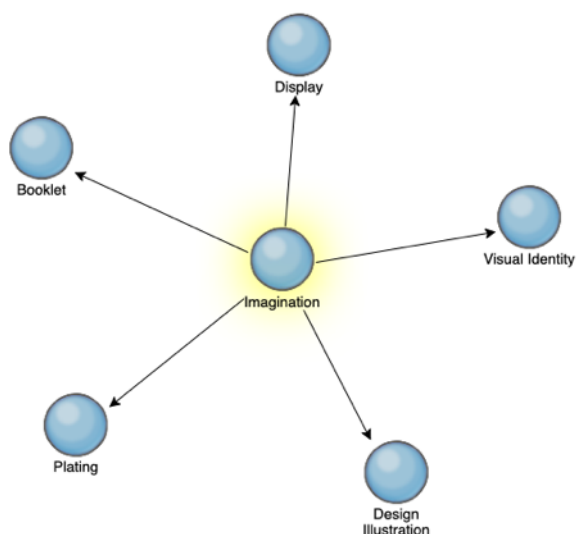


Figure 10. Diagram map "vision"

Source :Data processed by researchers2024 ,

Vision is the strategic foundation that directs the brand's interaction with the audience and is the key to long-term success (Gobe, 2005:xxxvii). It is a guideline for creating stories and experiences that reflect brand values. Joongla has a core vision: "Spreading the story of Indonesian gastronomy to the world, driven by love and courage". The vision is realized through three main missions, namely: 1) Archiving contemporary experiments in Indonesian gastronomy; 2) Promoting these gastronomic archives through storytelling and various activities; and 3) Inviting professionals from diverse fields, as well as individuals or entities, to participate in this storytelling journey. Joongla's vision and mission are conveyed through their social media, and the booklet is provided during the fun dining session so that the audience can recognize Joongla's identity.

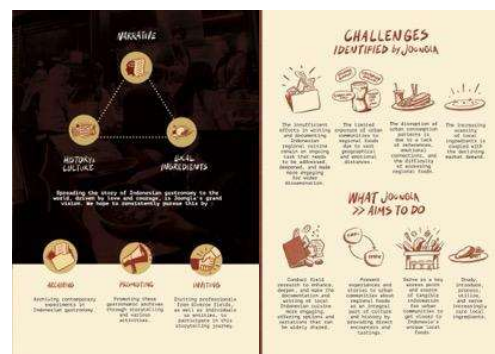


Figure 11. Vision of Joongla

Source :Booklet Joongla2024 ,

Joongla communicates its vision through in-person interactions and social media content. When they meet, they often express their vision as a guide to their goal. In addition, there is also physical media to convey their vision in the form of a narrative. The vision can establish a unique brand identity through various touchpoints and win over competitors. Brand vision can be reflected in the quality of products and services (Khairi et al., 2022). Joongla maintains high standards in hospitality and fun dining experiences, thus supporting the delivery of its vision. A restaurant's service quality is an important factor influencing customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Brands need a strong vision to develop according to their life cycle in the market (Gobe, 2005:xxxvii). To maintain its existence, a brand must maintain its balance and innovate. Joongla's vision inspires and builds a deep emotional connection with consumers. With a focused and integrated vision, consumers can experience new insights into Indonesian gastronomy, especially with the different seasonal set menus that are presented so that different cultural stories are presented.

Since its inception, vision has been part of Joongla's identity. Vision, mission, and

brand personality can be the foundation of storytelling to convey the company's story to consumers (Walter & Gioglio in Sousa, 2021). Joongla's vision guides understanding of the brand identity and offers added value, highlighting the restaurant's uniqueness. Although consumers prioritize experience over vision, Joongla's vision enriches the experience. With a clear vision, Joongla has successfully changed consumers' perceptions of Indonesia's gastronomic richness, thus creating more meaningful value. A strong consumer experience vision can help brands excel, increase loyalty and consumer advocacy, and support sales and profitability (Bansal, 2023). Joongla maintains vision implementation through internal alignment meetings and periodic evaluations to stay relevant amidst changing consumer behavior. This approach ensures that the brand vision is aligned with consumer needs and business goals.

Interaction between Emotional Branding Dimensions in Forming Brand Loyalty and Word-of-Mouth

A brand plays an important personal role and greatly influences consumers (Gobe in Rajai & Modi, 2022). In forming an emotional connection, Rajai & Modi (2022) describe the process of communicating branding as follows.

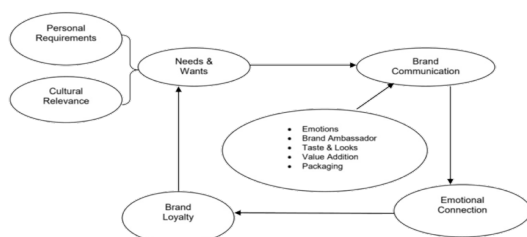


Figure 12. Diagram Humanized Brands Through Emotions

Source :Rajai & Modi2022 ,

The diagram presented (Figure 12) explains the relationship between the various elements associated with brand communication. The flow of relationships starts from understanding the needs and wants of consumers, which are influenced by personal requirements and cultural relevance. These two factors become the basis for designing an approach relevant to formulating brand communication as the primary message delivery medium, with a considerate target audience. This interaction between consumer needs and wants, with brand communication, encourages the formation of emotional connections. A strong emotional connection becomes the foundation for building brand loyalty, where consumers feel personally attached and tend to choose brands consistently. Thus, brand loyalty provides positive feedback to brand communication strategies while reinforcing cultural relevance and consumer needs, creating a continuous cycle to maintain a strong relationship between consumers and brands. The following diagram can be drawn from the field findings in the practical reality of a gastronomic restaurant like Joongla. The brand communication strategy can be the basis for them to form emotional relationships with consumers, which become brand loyalty, according to the diagram shown (Figure 12).

Based on interviews and observations through Joongla's Instagram, the emotional connection formed from the success of emotional branding contributes to consumer satisfaction and perceived value. This result is reflected in the many electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) reviews reposted by Joongla, which show

consumer satisfaction with their fun dining experience. Joongla does not have brand ambassadors or influencers, so they rely on organic word-of-mouth for the promotion strategy. The research involving three consumers as informants revealed that they first learned about Joongla through recommendations from someone close to them. This encouragement led them to share their positive experiences through user-generated content (UGC) whenever they had a unique encounter with Joongla. Word-of-mouth marketing is also a marketing communication strategy tool that Joongla relies on to maintain its humanist hospitality and emotional branding. With this voluntary engagement, the emotional connection not only strengthens customer loyalty but also increases the value they feel towards Joongla, thus organically supporting the restaurant's promotion through their social networks.



Figure 13. Diagram of Joongla Emotional Branding

Source :Data processed by researchers2024 ,

The researcher connects the findings (Figure 13) with the previous diagram (Figure 12) to produce two new indicators: 1) Word-of-mouth marketing, where consumers provide information or recommendations about a brand to others; and 2) Emotional branding, the brand communication process to build emotional connections. Both are due to the concept of Joongla and the success of emotional branding, which successfully

supports the formation of brand loyalty. Consumer satisfaction from the application of emotional branding also successfully encourages word-of-mouth marketing.

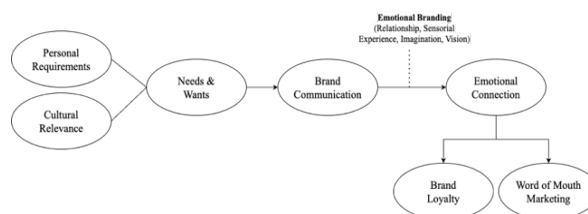


Figure 14. Diagram Emotional Branding

Source :Data processed by researchers2024 ,

The interaction between the four pillars of emotional branding, connection, sensorial experience, imagination, and vision, can create a comprehensive consumer experience. The emotional connection between consumers and brands will be stronger if it is supported by satisfying sensorial experiences, pleasant imaginations, and brand visions aligned with consumer values. These four pillars do not function in isolation. Instead, each pillar functions synergistically, resulting in a comprehensive and immersive experience. Emotional branding can be the key to driving the promotion of a brand, with strong support from its four pillars.

Joongla restaurants not only offer dishes with satisfying flavors, but also create an emotional experience through concept, ambience, and quality service. This approach encourages consumers' emotional connection and increases the likelihood of repeat visits, ultimately strengthening brand loyalty. Thus, emotional branding is a key strategy in building long-term consumer relationships, especially amid increasingly competitive business competition.

When each pillar of emotional branding supports each other, consumers will also feel the perceived value that makes them trust the brand. This trust encourages consumers to recommend a brand to others, thus creating positive organic word of mouth. Word of mouth is formed and carried out directly and through social media to become a form of user-generated-content (UGC). Both have significantly increased the restaurant's brand awareness to a broader audience. Word-of-mouth marketing can convince potential customers that the brand promise will be realized, encouraging others to try and experience the emotional branding firsthand.

Thus, emotional branding is closely related to a marketing communication strategy because both support each other in building deep relationships between brands and consumers. Emotional branding is a strategic approach to building relationships with consumers, whereas Joongla, as a restaurant, certainly needs a marketing communication strategy supporting its promotional process. Word of mouth will not be created without strong emotional branding. Vice versa, the application of emotional branding will undoubtedly be strengthened by organic marketing communications carried out by its consumers. Emotional branding is not only a way to build emotional connections, but also an important tool in creating marketing communication strategies to create memorable experiences, loyalty, and customer recommendations.

CONCLUSION

Emotional branding can be an effective marketing strategy considering how

powerful consumers' feelings are. When consumers feel personally fulfilled, and there is even an emotional bond, then they will return to the brand again. Emotional branding is a marketing communication strategy that shapes consumer attitudes towards brands. The emotional benefits of this strategy tend to be unique to each consumer, leading to more positive behavioral responses toward brands (Robert in Dhannur & N, 2014). Unlike the usual traditional approach, emotional branding can be an innovation to understand the needs and feelings of consumers, as Joongla does through its four pillars.

Based on the research results presented earlier, Joongla, a gastronomic restaurant, successfully applies emotional branding through the pillars of relationship, sensorial experience, imagination, and vision. Each pillar of emotional branding is interconnected in building consumer experiences. Joongla has paid attention to strong emotional connections, engaging sensorial experiences, innovative imagination in enjoying food, and brand vision that changes consumer perceptions. A restaurant's pleasant experience can encourage consumers to return, so emotional branding is a key factor that supports consumer loyalty.

Changing consumer preferences that increasingly prioritize experiences in the culinary sector allow Joongla to apply emotional branding and word of mouth as its marketing communication strategy. This strategy is based on in-depth research, which is then processed through creative exploration by utilizing the richness of Indonesian gastronomy. In its efforts to build a brand identity

beyond the name, Joongla presents a unique culinary experience to strengthen emotional attachment with its consumers. This attachment plays an important role in positively impacting the sustainability and competitiveness of the brand in the long run, especially considering how the power of word of mouth is mighty for organic brand promotion and has substantial benefits.

Joongla implements emotional branding through a strategy that prioritizes consumers' emotional experiences by utilizing humanistic hospitality. They create experiences that incorporate storytelling elements, where each dish represents the cultural stories and traditions of a particular region in Indonesia. In addition, interpersonal interactions with consumers, a restaurant atmosphere designed to stimulate emotions, and a creatively packaged menu help build deeper relationships with consumers. Physical media such as food and displays of local ingredients, merchandise, booklets, journals, and other physical media also strengthen their visual identity as part of emotional branding. By creating memorable moments, Joongla can build stronger customer loyalty.

Evidence of Joongla's humanistic hospitality approach can be found in the experience of consumers who interact directly during the fun dining session. They feel the service with a high level of hospitality rarely found in other restaurants. Joongla prioritizes the interaction between the Joongla team and consumers to build personal relationships so that consumers feel treated with care and respect. From the initial introduction session to warm and

friendly interactions throughout the dining experience, Joongla can establish a stronger emotional connection with consumers.

To strengthen emotional branding, Joongla communicates brand values through appropriate marketing strategies. As a restaurant with a fun dining experience concept, Joongla relies on word-of-mouth marketing to increase brand awareness. Consumer satisfaction can encourage recommending behavior to others. The recommendation can be delivered through direct word-of-mouth and electronic word-of-mouth, which is realized in the form of user-generated content (UGC) on social media. This marketing communication strategy strengthens emotional branding, increases trust, builds brand identity, and attracts more consumers.

In the tourism and hospitality industry, the traveler experience is significantly enriched by the various elements that make up the consumption value, which is not only based on functional aspects (Nie et al., 2024). Each culture has a unique way of interpreting hospitality. In the West, marketing emphasizes luxury, comfort, and convenience. Meanwhile, hospitality is more related to warmth, family relationships, and personal closeness in the East. Therefore, marketing strategies must be adapted to the cultural context to be more effective (Yusupovna, 2024). Joongla's emotional branding has strong relevance in the Indonesian context, especially in regions with deep cultural ties to food and gastronomy. In a country that emphasizes warmth and hospitality, the feelings created in the dining experience are an important opportunity to maintain the brand's position in the market. Customers'

emotional attachment to the brand provides a competitive advantage and creates higher loyalty, as customers tend to choose the brand based on feelings, not just rational reasons (Rai & Nayak, 2019).

The results of this research provide valuable contributions for policymakers in designing effective culture-based gastronomy promotion programs. In addition, the findings also open up opportunities for businesses to adopt emotional branding strategies in gastronomy to attract international tourists. The insight can help introduce local culinary treasures while strengthening global awareness of Indonesia's cultural heritage. By implementing this gastronomic field research program, the culinary potential of Indonesian regions will gain wider recognition, making it one of the main tourist attractions on the island. Additionally, this branding of gastronomic restaurants aims to empower local communities and preserve cultural and culinary heritage for future generations.

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