



OPEN ACCESS

SUBMITTED 04 October 2025

ACCEPTED 28 October 2025

PUBLISHED 21 November 2025

VOLUME Vol.07 Issue 11 2025

CITATION

Stukalov Alexander Alexeevich. (2025). The Role of Customer Experience in Shaping Brand Image in The Massage Industry. The American Journal of Management and Economics Innovations, 7(11), 80–84. <https://doi.org/10.37547/tajmei/Volume07Issue11-11>

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The Role of Customer Experience in Shaping Brand Image in The Massage Industry

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Abstract: This article explores the role of customer experience in establishing and strengthening brand image in the massage industry. It examines the significance of emotional engagement, organizational conditions, and professional expertise in shaping consumer perception. The study's novelty lies in the recommendations derived from a combination of reviewed literature and personal practical experience. The scientific and practical relevance is driven by the high demand for such services and the increasing market competition.

The paper outlines key sources analyzed through the lens of loyalty enhancement strategies. It investigates the challenges of maintaining a consistent service standard and a personalized approach that fosters a positive brand image. Special attention is given to the integration of aesthetic factors, digital feedback channels, and staff training, all of which contribute to long-term audience retention. The study aims to identify the reasons why a combination of factors surrounding massage services fosters strong customer trust. The findings will be valuable for salon managers, marketers, and researchers in related fields.

Keywords: massage brand, customer experience, loyalty, emotional perception, service quality, reputation, satisfaction, personalization, sustainable interaction, trust.

1. Introduction The massage industry is experiencing rapid growth due to the increasing demand for relaxation and wellness services. The market is expanding quickly, with new establishments competing for the attention of potential clients. The objective of this study is to identify and describe the combination of factors shaping a massage brand's image through the lens of customer experience.

To achieve this goal, the following tasks have been set:

- Identify the key internal and external conditions influencing visitors' assessment of service quality.
- Establish mechanisms for strengthening trust and fostering loyalty through emotional engagement.
- Demonstrate the importance of continuous improvement in service delivery based on client feedback.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the integration of emotional, technological, and organizational components, analyzed as a unified system. This approach broadens the understanding of how managerial decisions contribute to a massage salon's competitive advantage.

2. Materials and Methods

This study draws on the works of various researchers whose findings reflect different aspects of the massage and hospitality industries. H. J. Guan, W. W. Wang, Z. Guo, J. H. Chan, and H. Qi [4] analyzed customer experiences in the hotel sector, emphasizing visitor emotions and factors influencing repeat visits. I. A. Afittama and M. Nasir [1] explored trust-building and audience retention through consistent service standards. Y. T. Prasetyo, M. M. L. Kahigas, A. P. Tan, L. E. Kurniawan, S. N. Praviro, and R. Nadlifatin [6] contributed to understanding the Indonesian audience, highlighting the importance of pricing, ambiance, and perceived quality. S. Chumnanwai [3] examined Thai customer impressions, prioritizing aesthetic details and staff skills. P. Tipbaros and A. Sangpikul [9] explored the specifics of spa services and their overall impact on visitors. A. Albattat [2] focused on the continuous improvements in Malaysian salons, linking them to increased brand appeal. S. Sulaiman, D. A. A. M. Asri, A. Azmi, and N. Hamis [8] demonstrated how customer satisfaction rises with consistent service performance. S. Iskandar, Y. T. J. Samodra, and W. Gustian [5] specified the unique requirements of sports massage, where safe techniques must align with high qualification standards. S. Sivapitak and A. Sangpikul [7] substantiated the importance of detailed quality control in predicting consumer responses.

The methodological framework includes a comparative analysis of sources, data systematization, and the identification of common patterns related to customer behavior. The study employed an assessment of

similarities and differences in previous research, along with an analytical approach to ensure a structured interpretation of the obtained data.

3. Results and Discussion

In the hospitality industry, customer emotional response is perceived as a combination of comfort and engagement in the consumption process [4]. A similar mechanism applies to the massage industry, where positive experiences encourage client retention, while a lack of attention to detail hinders loyalty development. It has been noted that a systematic focus on emotional engagement increases the likelihood of word-of-mouth recommendations and positive service evaluations. Staff trained to recognize subtle shifts in client mood contribute to a sense of care and personalization, significantly reinforcing brand reputation.

Effective trust management is closely linked to fostering positive emotions during interactions with a brand. Trust is strengthened when clients perceive consistent service standards and a willingness from staff to address any shortcomings [1]. This approach serves as a driving force in shaping brand identity, which over time evolves into a strong association with high-quality service. The study emphasizes the practice of collecting customer feedback as a method for continuous improvement. Regular analysis of complaints provides insights into evolving customer expectations, while a flexible managerial response demonstrates a long-term commitment to customer-oriented service.

Research [6] highlights how Indonesian clients associate the image of a massage salon not only with staff professionalism but also with architectural design, music, and the overall ambiance. Pricing strategies and alignment with stated service levels act as additional motivators for repeat visits. Enthusiasts of massage treatments are particularly sensitive to the balanced combination of a relaxing atmosphere and physical well-being improvements, leading to increased customer commitment and the integration of self-care rituals into regular practices. Services that demonstrate meticulous attention to detail are perceived as enhancing emotional well-being and reinforcing a sense of prestige.

Findings in [3] focus on the experience of Thai clients, whose expectations of a massage brand are shaped by a harmonious combination of visual identity, unique style, and staff expertise. Customers rely on personal impressions communicated through various channels, including social media, which strengthens the symbolic

value of the brand. Researchers indicate that individuals become more receptive to specialized services when their emotional needs are prioritized. As a result, brand resilience in the spa industry is linked to the overall service outcome, which enhances general well-being [9]. A high level of relaxation leads to deep satisfaction among clients, influencing long-term loyalty.

Considering the practices of spa salons in Malaysia, brand appeal increases when visitors observe ongoing improvements in technological infrastructure, receive timely explanations about the range of services, and interact with engaged staff [2]. Long-term customer commitment is reinforced by service consistency, with the implementation of high service standards regarded as a strategic priority that enhances competitiveness. The same principle is evident: satisfaction grows when clients recognize a stable approach to service delivery and notice that management pays attention to details that could otherwise compromise the overall experience [9].

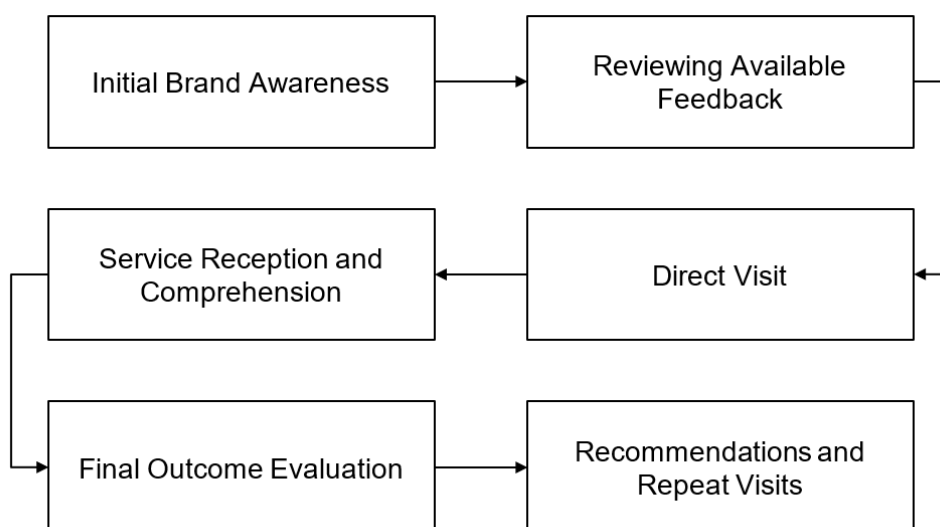
The specific value of sports massage techniques is also noted, where the focus extends beyond wellness to include a sense of security [5]. High execution standards are combined with personalized consultations for injury prevention, encouraging clients to return for repeated sessions. Customers do not just seek relaxation but also confidence in the expertise of the practitioners. A thorough examination of service quality allows for better anticipation of customer responses and the proactive shaping of a favorable brand image [7]. Close attention to client interaction fosters a sense of exclusivity, elevating the brand's reputation.

The rising popularity of massage services is driven by a widespread need for physical and emotional relief, making investments in ambiance and service style a long-term strategy for brand development. A personalized approach that takes into account individual customer preferences fosters a deep emotional connection, positioning a salon as an almost exclusive retreat for restoration. In practice, investments in staff training and digital feedback channels prove effective by giving customers a voice and reinforcing the feeling that their opinions matter. When reputation is built on actual staff achievements and positive customer experiences, brand loyalty strengthens, and conflicts become less significant. Systematic monitoring of customer impressions, combined with a well-developed service strategy, transforms a massage salon from merely a service provider into a symbol of inner harmony.

Brand perception in the massage industry is closely tied to how visitors evaluate their experiences throughout the service journey, from booking to post-service interactions. The analyzed materials confirm that attention to detail, reliance on relaxation rituals, and staff professionalism significantly shape brand identity [4]. The feedback of loyal customers, their assessment of comfort, and perceived service quality have a direct impact on reputation.

Figure 1 visually illustrates the logical sequence of stages a customer goes through before and after engaging with a massage service. Each step—from initial exposure to advertising materials to the consolidation of personal experience—forms the foundation for either sustained interest in the brand or its decline.

Figure 1



Based on this logic, it becomes evident that the complex set of factors influencing customer perception requires coordinated efforts from service management specialists. For example, in Thai massage centers, achieving harmony between interior design, professional skills, and a welcoming atmosphere is a key element in retaining visitors [3]. The structured development of this experience reinforces a sense of

exclusivity, particularly for clients seeking to enhance their psycho-emotional well-being [6].

Table 1 presents the main internal and external factors that shape the brand image of a massage service. These factors can be adjusted when designing staff training programs, planning marketing campaigns, and implementing elements that improve client well-being.

Table 1 - Factors affecting the overall impression of a massage (compiled by the author based on his own research)

Factor group	Example details
Internal characteristics	Therapist qualifications, friendliness of service staff, architectural environment, technological solutions (e.g., online booking).
External influences	Competition levels in the region, information environment (social media, ratings on specialized platforms), economic conditions.

Further analysis, drawing on [9], shows a consistent correlation: the more harmoniously convenience, transparent pricing policies, and therapist hospitality align, the higher overall customer satisfaction, which influences the choice of a specific salon [9]. At the same time, the findings indicate that maintaining consistent service quality builds trust among clients, who, in turn, act as opinion leaders [8].

Repeat visits to massage services are not only associated with tangible health benefits but also with the emotional connection clients establish with staff. Customers who receive expert guidance on sports massage are more

likely to return, considering the enhanced sense of personal safety and comfort. Trust reinforcement plays a crucial role in long-term customer retention, supported by both managerial actions (such as prompt responses to feedback) and personalized consultations.

To summarize the findings, Table 2 presents comparative observations illustrating how loyalty drivers are formed in the massage industry. Systematic quality improvements and continuous customer feedback analysis are fundamental conditions for maintaining a competitive position in the market.

Table 2 Comparative overview of results by loyalty factors (compiled by the author based on his own research)

Source	Key findings
Guan, Jingjing et al. [4]	Emotional response enhances the desire to recommend the service.
Afiftama, Ilham & Nasir, Moehammad [1]	Established trust is reinforced through personalized support.
Chumnanvej, Sasachol [3]	Attention to space design details stimulates customer commitment.
Sulaiman 2020 CustomerSA et al. [8]	Consistent satisfaction increases clients' willingness for repeat visits.
Iskandar, Samodra, Y. T. J., Gustian, U. [5]	Well-founded consultations on sports massage boost confidence.

The findings indicate that a reliable massage brand is built through continuous improvements that make guests feel valued. Even minor interior details, calming music, and timely staff communication serve as important quality markers for clients.

Within this framework, feedback management enables businesses to promptly detect shifts in customer preferences. Many salons utilize online tools to collect reviews and develop loyalty programs that encourage repeat visits. Importantly, employee engagement in customer care plays a key role in strengthening the brand image. When administrators and massage therapists demonstrate friendliness, respond sensitively to client concerns, and respect personal boundaries, visitors gain an additional incentive to return to the same salon.

It can be concluded that well-designed customer interaction at every stage of service engagement fosters deeper emotional involvement. The combination of health benefits, sensory relaxation, and genuine support from staff enhances the overall positive perception of the service. Expanding the range of treatments, integrating modern communication technologies, and regularly assessing customer satisfaction contribute to strengthening a brand's position in the massage industry.

The conducted study confirms that the integration of

4. Conclusions

factors related to well-structured procedures, psychological support, and service consistency shapes the perception of a massage brand in the eyes of the public. The research objectives have been met.

The findings indicate that the effective implementation of these conditions creates a foundation for attracting new visitors while motivating existing clients to return. The results may be valuable for massage business owners looking to strengthen their market position through service quality enhancement, as well as for researchers studying consumer behavior and the dynamics of modern wellness technologies.

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