

The Power of Positive Interaction in Brand Loyalty:

A Qualitative Exploration of the Nail Salon Industry in Ireland

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National College of Ireland

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The power of positive interaction in brand loyalty: A qualitative exploration of the nail salon industry in Ireland

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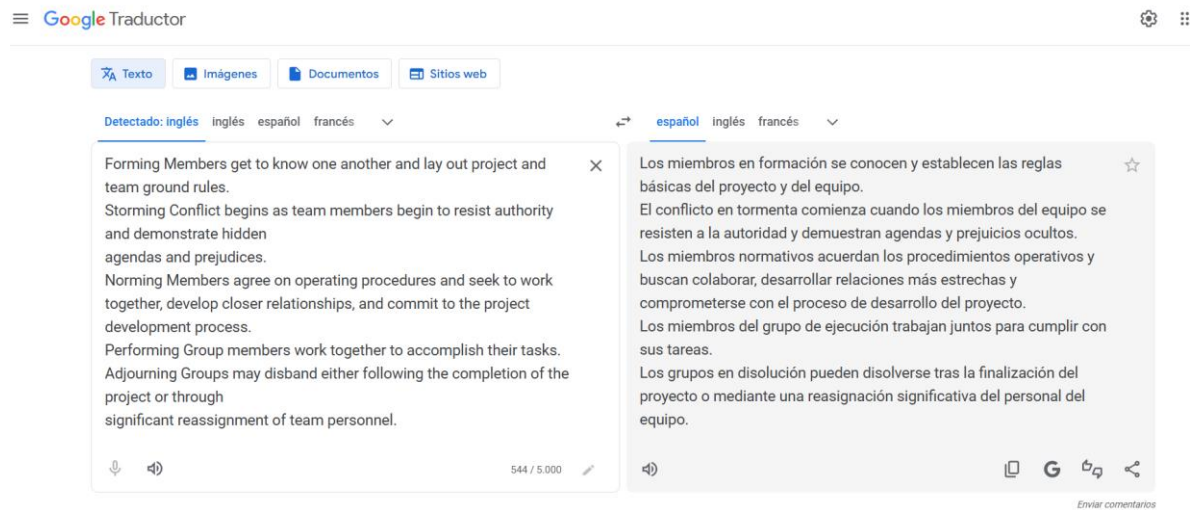
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Thank you so much to John Rownan; without you, Ireland would have been nothing more than a memory in my mind.

And last but not least, my mother, my unconditional love.

Abstract

The nail salons industry has a lack of information about their own as field, and at the moment does not exist any information about loyalty brand in nail salons, for that reason, this research has as objective to explore about positive interaction and how it affect to the loyalty brand of nail salons of Ireland , the relevancy of this is could recognise it for apply it as possible strategy.

This qualitative study was realised by collecting information through a semi-structured interview, which was applied to twelve regular clients of nail salons of Ireland and the analysis was with the Customer Journey Mapping model.

The finding mentions the main touchpoints considered for clients as; added value extras, the treatment that the staff give to the clients and the client satisfaction and loyalty, inter alia.

The results of this research showed how through the emotional connection between nail technician the client develop emotional engagement with the nail salon and strengthen the customer loyalty, producing like this a strong strategy which can be applied in any nail salon of Ireland.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Background to the study

According to *Statista (2025)*, the Irish nail market will reach US\$18.85 million in 2025 and is expected to grow by 2.88% annually over the next five years. The nail market has a big

future growth expectation. It is undoubtedly one of the most popular markets for entrepreneurs because it is profitable, and the possibility of having a quick investment return is significant for an entrepreneur. According to the *British Beauty Council (2020)*, a report published in 2020, there were 9.286 hair & beauty salons in 2019, and *Smartsrapers (2025)* mentioned 856 nail salons located in Ireland as of May 2025, with an average age of 4 years and 4 months. Many of the nail salons that already are working in Ireland have social media profiles, the most relevant way to interact with their clients, and it helps to keep at the forefront, an essential strategy for businesses which want to continue active in the new era.

Customer service is a relevant factor nowadays, because clients can recognise their own needs and know how the customer service is perceived in the company's market position, according to Cichoń, S. (2024). They recognise their power through customer service, which is the key to the general nail salon and beauty industry, because they know where they should start improving their service to make a difference in the market. One of the most important factors for reaching that difference and, simultaneously, the success as a business, is the positive interaction. According to *Cayla, J. and Auriacombe, B. (2025)*, there is much literature which talks about the emotions and how the positive interactions that staff offer and the customer service area can give to the clients affect positively and, at the same time, allow for the creation of brand loyalty. Unfortunately, a study still does not exist which can reach the nail salon market, in particular. For that reason, this research was developed to explore and try to answer how positive interaction can affect nail salons located in Ireland.

1.2 Gaps in the literature

It is important to recognise how crucial emotional connection is in the beauty business, but there is still a gap in relation to the nail salon industry in Ireland. According to Salman, S. (2018), satisfaction is related to service quality and loyalty in the nail industry, but the context of this study is going. On the other hand, we have the customer journey mapping, as the model that will be used, which has been used for developing new marketing strategies, and related to the beauty business as well, but this never to take advantage of this to go deep and explore in the way where this research is going, with positive interactions and nail salons in Ireland. And less in a qualitative approach, because most of the customer service studies are focused on a quantitative methodology, with studies related to statistics and numerical evaluations.

1.3 Academic Justification

The literature supports theories about the relation between emotions, psychological factors and brand loyalty. According to *Mei-Hui Fu, Yi-Feng Yang and Thuy Dung Nguyen (2025)*, the loyalty brand is also related to emotional attachment and positive recommendations. The reason why this research is seeking to apply all this information in an area which has not been developed so far, and which is highly relevant to the economy and market, already exists in Ireland, because it is a country which is constantly open to new entrepreneurship and new markets, with the intention to growth and helps to the development of the economy.

Through the search for scientific support for this research, the concept of “emotional branding” appears, which, according to *Oktariani, T.O. and Aulia, A. (2024)*, brands are looking to increase purchases through the emotional connection with customers and clients. This concept is not new, and it has been used for a long time in the industry. Still, so far, there exists a lack of information about how the “emotional branding” can affect nail salons, which are located in Ireland, because the existing studies never involve this area of the industry. It is essential in Ireland because, after COVID, the nail salon industry has increased, and the competition is vast.

About the customer journey mapping as the analysis model considered in this research as a measurement, according to *Hawkins, J., Linscheid, N. and Somongkol Teng (2023)*, this model allows for identifying what the client expects from the brand, where the brand is failing and how it is possible to modify it. Which is perfect for the objective of this research, because the main idea is to discover whether positive communication is working as a tool for brand loyalty, but through this model (Customer Journey Mapping), it will be possible to recognise it and discover the factors that are working in favour of the brand, and which are not. And in the future this information can help to entrepreneurs that are trying to boost the business idea and highlight in the industry.

1.4 Research Aim

The research aim is to explore how the positive interaction in nail salons, which are located in Ireland, can contribute to developing the brand loyalty of the brand, analysing the emotional connection and the quality of the service as help for the nail salon.

1.5 Research Questions

The main question of this research is:

“How do positive interactions with clients, throughout the customer journey, influence brand loyalty in the Irish nail salon industry?”

The sub-questions are:

1. What is a touchpoint that makes a difference in the customer perception of a nail salon?
2. How do clients perceive the attitude of the staff?
3. Which are the key factors that allow for repeat visits or recommendations?
4. How is brand loyalty developed through emotional connection and service-based in the nail salon industry?

1.6 Methods and scope

This research will be developed through the qualitative methodology, because this method allows to analyse information as emotions and opinion, without quantification, in some cases, the information as emotions or feeling has a number to associate to them, but in the case of this research, the measurement will be to apply a semi-structured interview, and it will be the way to get information from clients of nail salons of Ireland, in specific of Dublin.

According to Rouse, E. *et al.* (2025), qualitative investigation goes from ethnography to narrative analysis, which is why it allows us to analyse and obtain feelings and emotions and use them as a measurement. The purpose of this research is to obtain the opinions of the clients, obtain answers to the questions and sub-questions proposed in this research and, at the same time, reach the objective of the study.

The model selected for this research is the Customer Journey Mapping, which has been used as a marketing strategy development, and this model will be applied to recognise the five stages: the objective, the customer persona, the chart touchpoint, walk in the customer's shoes and identify pain points and resolution. It is important for the development of this

research, because it will allow us to recognise where should be focused the strategy of nail salon in Ireland should be focused to reach the loyalty of the clients and their preferences. At the same time, it could help us recognise relevant information about positive communication and its importance for clients. Also, through customer journey mapping, it will be possible to discover pertinent information about the preferences of clients and, why not, since here the new entrepreneurs can develop a new strategy for their own salons.

The semi-structured interview will be applied to clients of nail salons in Ireland who are between 25 and 45 years old and who used to go to get their nails done or have been getting them done in the last six months.

1.7 Dissertation Structure

The structure of this research is:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Chapter 4: Finding & Analysis

Chapter 5: Discussion

Chapter 6: Conclusion & Recommendation

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Explaining Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is not something new; it is changing and evolving according to the new technologies and trends. Before, the loyalty was related to the benefits that customers received, but now the customers consider the experience as the most important; this information, according to *C. N., N., Mathew, M.M. and Thomas, B.A. (2025)*.

2.1.1 Definition of brand loyalty

Brand loyalty is a concept created and developed between 1920 and 1930 in the USA, it was when the companies started to analyse how customers had a preference for specific products and there were constantly repeating the purchase, but the customer analysis just started in 1980, Jacoby and Chestnut wrote the first book that mentioned something about customer loyalty, for example, they mentioned how repeat a product is not just loyalty, because they considered something intentional and positive for the brand, this according to *Jugenheimer, D.W. (1979)*, they mentioned as well how emotional process are part of the brand loyalty process. Another author is Aker, who mentioned another point of view. He mentioned how customer preference is not for the brand, it is for the price, characteristics, or even the place where the brand is located, according to *C. N., N. Mathew, M. M., and Thomas B.A. (2025)*. Through this is possible to mention how the loyalty brand is a process that can be influenced by emotions that a brand of product can produce to the customers, and it can influence them to make purchases over time, and factors as price, characteristics, etc, can affect the customer's decision.

If the definition of the concept is analysed in a general context, according to *Cambridge (2025)*, it always means buying the same product by the same brand. this can give us an idea about the concept and how it can be considered, how it is to be faithful to a company at the moment, and how to acquire a product. In the case of *Oxford (2025)* in "A Dictionary of Marketing", customer satisfaction is something that successful brands keep when customers repeat their purchases for a long time. In the case of these 2 versions of the concept is possible to say that it is related to time and preference from the customer to the brand; they did not mention anything about other factors, which means it is a direct relation between customer and brand, and the preference that they develop over the time.

Another important aspect of the relationship between customer and brand is considering customer behaviour. Most importantly, this is how customers evaluate the name, logo,

slogan, and other details that are not always considered, according to Bawazir, F.C., Harianto, E., and Azizurrohman, M. (2024). The experience that customers have during the purchase is extremely relevant; it can make the difference in whether they decide to come back again or not.

2.1.2 How is it possible to measure?

The brand loyalty has been studied over the last decades, and it is related to customer loyalty, brand equity, and purchase intention. But it is essential to highlight the theory of Sirgy of self-congruity, and it talks about how customers prefer brands with a self-concept, and if it can be like their personality and/or image, more so because the customers feel an identity or an ideal image from the brand. It can produce emotional benefits to the customers, and at the same time, the brand receives preference, according to Yi Qian Lu et al. (2025). They also mentioned how brands nowadays are trying to develop their own identity because it is related to something particular and special that they want to demonstrate and give to customers. It is considered very valuable, for example, Aaker developed a theory about the brand personality and how it relates to sincerity, excitement, competency, sophistication and ruggedness, but it depends on the cultural context in many cases.

The different personality dimension brands affect the loyalty of the customers, and according to Yi Qian Lu et al. (2025), scholars are trying to encourage people to do more research about customer loyalty and whether this situation is similar in Western countries and whether the same variables affect or if changes occur. At least in Ireland, no research has been developed with that specific information, and related to nail salons has been even harder to develop; for that reason, the relevance of this research and analysis can be discovered by examining variables as the image, the personality of the brand, or even discover if the positive interaction is important for customers at the moment when they decide buy a product, and if it create a strong preference on them.

Good learning habits are crucial for behaviour in commerce, for that reason, the new platforms allow customers to talk about their prior experience and give a category to the brands, which is why it is possible to say that the knowledge and evaluation of the customers is highly relevant. It can also be considered a measure for other people. At the moment, the gamification, the strategy of clients to give an online evaluation to the brands, is the most popular and important way to measure how the brands are developing in the market and if the customers are considering them, according to L. Wanf, G. Kunter and S. Ramesh (2020).

In this case, word of mouth is the most important strategy for business as nail salons, because it is a plus and comments and experiences affect the behaviour of future customers as well, even when no existing research that can analyse the specific case of nail salons, this field is more particular, mostly if we consider how popular are nail salons nowadays.

2.2 Customer-Brand Interaction in the Digital Era

The digital era has been modifying for the last 30 years the way customers interact with brands, because now there exist new ways of accessing them, for example, buying products from another country or even continent, but online it is possible to access them and receive them at your house. AI is another variable that influences customer reaction. AI is another digital tool that is affecting digital marketing and the interaction between brand and customer, and helps to build a deeper relationship with customers, according to *Kanojia, P., Malhotra, R.K. and Tiwari, A. (2024)*.

2.2.1 Relevance of customer-brand interaction in the digital era

The digital era means not just a problem for the traditional brands associated with the adaptation and renovation of their marketing business model. It has some benefits as well, some of which are related to habits and behaviour from customers that help the brands in terms of use and profitability. Jose Ramon Saura (2021) mentioned it and said how digital marketing was the strategy to modify the old habits that customers had when digitality was still not here. It became a technique that allows for the persuasion of customers to purchase products or services, but this process was something integral that was developed in the last 30 years, and fortunately, this strategy was directed in the correct way to reach an increase in sales.

The digital era has revolutionised the beauty industry in general, because since the 2000s, digital platforms have become a very relevant tool for society, for example, the development of social media and the creation of Apps. A study by Zhou talks about how the new word of mouth nowadays is digital (eWOM), according to *Singh, R., Telukdarie, A. and Mongwe, R. (2024)*, it is through the influencers on social media, this information becomes relevant, thanks to individuals who are considered icons when testing products and services from different brands, reason why the brands are considering new strategies collaborating with the influencers for do visible their brand and products. This strategy can be the face of the brand or even send them the products, and then they can give their own opinion about it.

Their opinion is so important for their virtual community, so they decide to buy the products after a good review.

The new digital marketing strategies are constantly changing and depend on customer needs; it is a priority. According to *Du, Z. (2025)*, he mentioned in a study related to the digital marketing of Chinese brands, and how they are applying strategies as differentiation, added value and resonance with the objectives of achieving profitability and strengthening brand competitiveness, and other benefits like customer satisfaction. The result was highly positive and valuable for Chinese brands. The purchasing behaviour is another variable that was modified by the digital era, because in the past, the big brands had the power in the industry; nowadays, even small brands can grow at the same level, with less investment or visibility in the traditional channels. *Du, Z. (2025)* mentioned how the online channels are the priority now, and the brands are boosting their social media through reels and live streaming, but at the same time, they are looking to mix the best of online and offline and adapt it to the market trends.

2.2.2 Social media and the new beauty trends

Singh, R., et al. (2024) mentioned how, for the digital marketing of beauty brands, the interaction with the followers is relevant, and how 93% of the marketing professionals consider important and effective the use of instant messages with their virtual community, which makes a change in the information consumption on digital platforms. Like this, the behaviour of customers changes when the brand builds a better interaction with customers.

It is important to mention how relevant the activities of people on social media are, for example, the live chats and comments, because they are waiting for a real possibility of interaction with their favourite brands, famous influencers and even other people with specific knowledge. These people are free to give their opinion about brands, products and services, or just give their like or dislike. Other actions that are causing the change of digital marketing in social media are the reviews, people, and influencers who can leave their opinions on websites or apps, where the brands can gain an advantage and use it for promoting their products or services in this digital world, according to *Ao, L., et al. (2023)*. The users follow influencers and consider their opinion, knowledge and recommendations, even when it can be an ad for different brands. In some cases, brands use it to their advantage to increase the reach of followers and increase the purchases of their products or services.

People follow popular influencers on social media because they have a kind of authority on beauty and style. After all, they have many followers, and the brands are supporting them, but in many cases, they do not have experience or knowledge about it; they are just testing products and working with the brands, without intention, they force the decision of the followers, just being the face or represent a brand, according to *N., S. and Suganthi, G.M. (2024)* the influencers boost the value of products and services. It has a cultural value, it has an important aspirational social level because the followers are looking for the type of life that influencers show through social media, and in many cases the ads that influencers recommend are part of the business and not always are agree or use the product or serviced, sometimes is part of the alliance with the brand.

2.3 Emotional Experience and Customer Loyalty

According to *Annisa, F.F. et al. (2023)*, a study by Ali (2016) talked about how relevant it is for customers to interact with the staff when they pay for a service. In the example, a coffee shop was mentioned where teenagers used to go, and for them, the most important factor is not just the products; they also consider the place, how the staff are with them and how they are treated. This study showed how satisfaction and customer loyalty are influenced by the treatment customers receive and other factors, such as knowledge about the products, professionalism, inter alia.

2.3.1 Positive emotions & customer perception

It does not many studies related to the emotions and the perception of clients related to nail salons, but there are some which talk about how the “Atmosphere” affects the perception that clients have about a store. For example, the distribution that a store has is highly important because the clients can perceive how comfortable the staff feel at the moment of giving the service, according to *T. Huong et al. (2021)*. In the case of another type of service, like hotels, *Fitriyah, N.L. et al. (2023)* mentioned how the only way the clients can express how they feel during the time that they were in the hotel is through eWOM (electronic word of mouth), and in this case, the perception of the service and the positive emotion is directly related with the staff and how they give and offer the service to the clients. Like this, the staff can produce experiences, and it will be stored in the memory of the clients and cause emotions, which can be positive or negative, but it will be embodied in the evaluation of the clients on the internet and seen by thousands of people.

If we analyse the perception of the clients, according to *Islam, S. et al. (2024)*, the value of the service is co-created, because it is something that is developed by the business and the client, and it is individualised depending on the experience of the client. This value is developed through working together; the client can give their personal touch to the service, and they highly value this aspect of the service. About the emotions that the service can offer to the clients, *Islam, S. et al. (2024)* mentioned how the clients are expecting that the business can manage the bad experiences provided, for example, if the service was not good enough or if something was bad, the business can have another option to repair and compensate it, any discount, a change. So, in the opposite situation, if the service was trouble-free, and they received a good performance during the service, the result will be a comeback again and receive the loyalty of the client. This situation is very common in nail salons, because if the client likes the service received, it is very possible that they can come back for another service in a few weeks, or even recommend the place to any family or friend, more if they consider that the performance of the professional was good, showing their experience and giving a good treat to the client.

2.3.2 Creating brand loyalty through emotional attachment

The emotional attachment has a relevant role in brand loyalty. *Chebab, Z.N. and Boukerch, Y. (2025)* mentioned how, through an emotional bond, the clients develop a connection linking cognitive and emotional dimensions. This connection is related to which clients can consider as identity, because they feel a strong bond when the brand represents something familiar to them. It can be the treatment that the brand gives to the clients, or even a service that the client is looking for to receive or wants to show. According to *Chebab, Z.N. and Boukerch, Y. (2025)*, the psychological theory by John Bowlby, we develop a bond with people who are taking care of us, and it makes us feel comfortable, and we accept the treatment that the brand is giving us, and it is through a positive experience and responsible service. The reason why, if we consider that the brand is giving us a good service and treatment, it is a signal of care for clients, and at the same time, a strong reason to come back again, without consider another brand or even places than can offer similar products or services with lower price or more options, the most important always will be the experienced that clients perceive.

According to *Brakus, J.J. et al. (2022)*, emotional attachment can be perceived in two relevant moments during the consumption, the first is at the beginning of the episode when they are receiving the service, and the second is directly related to their satisfaction with

their life. It is analysing just women, because women are focused on relationships and emotions, after that, they can empathise and delay the gratification with the service. It is a mix of both stimuli. *Brakus, J.J. et al. (2022)* mentioned how some clients develop a preference for the places, if it is close to their jobs or home, it influences as well, because the brand experience is multidimensional, and it means that the most important aspects are not just the emotions and encompassing sensory.

2.4 Customer Journey Mapping: understanding service quality

The Customer Journey Mapping model is a visual representation of the client journey. It tells the story of the experience of clients, and it is considered a good strategy to take all the clients into the radar. The most important thing is not to forget that every client is important and consider every platform and recognise their preferences when the brand wants to incentive their purchasing, according to *Salesforce (2025)*.

Customer Journey Mapping (CJM) is one of the most important marketing tools. The digitality modifies many ways of analysis that companies use for understanding their customers and clients; for that reason, the organisations had the challenge to adapt their marketing. According to *Singh, C.P. and Yousuf, R. (2024)*, this model uses specific information from the database use it for create a new marketing strategy considering the natural language that clients use, and it can forecast customer behaviour. Like this, the brand can use it as a machine learning technique and develop a customer journey map. The (CJM) anticipate the customer needs and helps to increase customer happiness and all in real-time.

2.4.1 Why analyse nail salons in Ireland through the customer journey mapping model

Singh, C. P., and Yousuf, R. (2024) mentioned how the CJM allows companies to discover clients' preferences, opinions, and reasons for buying. At the same time, behavioural data helps to understand the client experience, so that the brands can recognise their preferences and needs and develop more purchase and even more stock if it is necessary. In some cases, the brand can develop new products with the ingredients or even adapt the services to the clients, if necessary. Also, *Popli, S. et al. (2023)* mentioned in their study how, through this model, it is possible to recognise if the clients have a positive or negative perception of the brand, and this is the main reason why this model was considered for the

development of this thesis. The capacity for data collection that allows us, the CJM, is perfect for the focus where is directed this study.

According to Sneed, C. *et al.* (2025), the journey of this mapping has 5 stages; the first stage is to define the objectives for the brand. Those objectives can be understood as customer behaviour, purchase, or building customer loyalty; they can change depending on the situation of the brand at that moment. The second stage is about creating a customer persona; build a customer description in all aspects, including even the purchase of the products or services, needs and habits. The third stage is the chart touchpoint; this step is essential for reaching the goal because, through this, it is possible to recognise the possibilities of interaction with the customers and clients. Number four is to walk in the customer's shoes; this is about recognising how the customers and clients think and feel about the products and services that the brand has. And the fifth and last is to identify pain points and resolutions; this stage is to discover which is the spots where the brand is being weak as a brand, and how it leads to the frustration and disappointment of the customers and clients.

2.4.2 Stages and touchpoints in the nail salon customer journey

- The objective: This stage allows us to identify if the positive interaction helped to create and maintain the brand loyalty. According to *Mondal, P. and Mehra, P. (2022)*, the positive interaction is the result of a bilateral personal relationship that is promoted with the clients, and the consequence is highly beneficial for the nail salon.
- Design of customer persona: In this case, it has a clear identity. Sneed, C. *et al.* (2025) mentioned how the idea is considered based on previous information about how the clients are. The reason why this customer persona has an Irish name, Aoife, is that she is 35 years old, an average age of a client who can access this kind of service frequently. She lives in Dublin, the capital of Ireland. The most relevant aspect of this stage is focused on the characteristics that represent the type of persona that the nail salon is looking for, defined as the perfect client.
- The chart touchpoint: Liu, Z. *et al.* (2025) mentioned the relevance of recognising the tripartite analysis, which includes the perspective of the enterprise, service personnel

and users. Considering those three perspectives is possible to optimise the service configuration and try to modify the failure-prone areas, for example, the reception, the service that they receive, the booking, the awareness, post-service and the favourite of the clients, the loyalty return.

- Walk in the customer's shoes: This stage is highly relevant for the analysis of nail salons, because it allows for the discovery of specific aspects that affect brand loyalty. According to Liu, Z. *et al.* (2025), the TOPSI method was important for the development of their study, which covers title, observation, thoughts/interpretation, feelings/emotional response and action plan/suggested intervention. In this case, the walk in the customer's shoes of this study includes thoughts/interpretation, feelings/emotional response and action plan/suggestion.
- Identify pain points and resolutions: According to Holz, H.F. *et al.* (2024), the pain points are the negative experiences perceived by the client when receiving the service. The challenge of this study will be to recognise the possible pain points that can appear since the moment when the clients are looking for information about the nail salons, until the moment when the salon is looking for the loyalty of the client, and anticipate it will be the key of the success for the nail salon, like this they can avoid those negative experiences.

2.5 Emotions journey and relationship-building

The journey that the clients experience has different types of interactions. Nowadays, the online and offline interaction continues to be a relevant factor as cognitive, emotional and behavioural, essential to achieve satisfaction and customer loyalty, according to *Hardcastle, K., Vorster, L. and Brown, D.M. (2025)*. As the author mentioned, to deepen emotional bonds is still one of the most important keys to successful customer service; it makes the difference and is a special value during the customer journey. Kumar, A. *et al.* (2025) mentioned that people use to communicate through their emotions and intrapersonal communication; for that reason, they are waiting for an understanding from the services, in case of inconveniences and receive potential solutions. This factor is essential for clients, because they are looking to be considered by the brand that is giving the service, after the consideration that the brand could have (nail salon in the case of this study), the clients can

consider if they want to come back with them again or not, the treatment which the clients receive is the key success.

The feeling that the clients have and the excitement works as a great anticipation and loyalty brand, maintaining and constantly creating these emotions and the best customer experience, mentioned by *Märting, C., Bissinger, B.C. and Asta, P. (2023)*. A good experience is a competitive advantage, more for nail salons, even when they are chosen at other places to receive this type of service, where the customer experiences face-to-face, they will always remember the positive first experience, or even it can be the way to receive a good recommendation.

2.5.1 Mechanisms of Loyalty Development in Salon Services

The commitment that a client can develop with a salon is related to the perception and the recognition of the brand, which are price and image associated with the perception, for example, if a client consider the price as a fair factor of the service, and the image not just of the result, the place and the cleaning are related as well, and recognition is associated with the pertinence that clients feel with the salon, this according to *Sak, T. et al. (2024)*. For other authors as *Van Nam Mai and Quoc Nghi Nguyen (2021)*, the mechanisms of brand loyalty in nail salons are related to whether the client considered has committed to the nail salon, if it is related to what the brand means for people, also it is a place where represent the client, they can recommend, even ignoring the negative opinion that other people have about the salon.

2.5.2 Loyalty as a relationship, not a transaction

According to *Van Nam Mai and Quoc Nghi Nguyen (2021)*, the loyalty brand is related to the image that clients have about the salon, even more than the price. Nowadays, the market is very competitive, which is not just about finding a salon that can offer a good price for the service. But also, it is important what image it is showing to the clients and how the clients perceive the image of the salon; if the reviews are good, clients are happy after receiving the service, the social media of the salon, and even if the place looks like the clients want to feel, luxury, clean, peaceful, etc.

2.5.3 The role of positive communication during the service

In general, communication is an advantage with clients; it helps to be closer to them, and it produces more confidence, also helping to increase transparency. If the clients are looking

for feedback, it can be easy through good communication and resolving the questions, according to Venkatesan, K. *et al.* (2025). Another relevant tool for communication is social media. This particular but no less important tool helps to access clients differently, because it allows nail salons to show their services, testimonies, environment and even the satisfaction and opinion of other clients, and it can even transform the behaviour of the clients.

Many articles talk about positive communication in different organisations; unfortunately, they do not consider nail salons, but some of them prefer to talk about different types of organisations, being more general, about those that offer services and products to clients, without mentioning a specific market. In those cases, *Mirivel, J.C. and Fuller, R.P. (2024)* mentioned how the businesses are trying to generate positive communication practices seeking to produce a positive answer from the clients, which is highly rewarded for clients. Without doubt, it is positive feedback for the organisation, because the perception of clients can become a good one, and consequently, it can be in the future a loyal client, a new recommendation word of mouth or online, or even a story or reel on social media that can be used as a review, and like this receive more clients in the future.

Another relevant information to highlight is how positive communication affects the employees. At the same time, according to *Mirivel, J.C. and Fuller, R.P. (2024)*, it positively affects the professional development, causing a positive effect on their motivation when the communication with clients flows positively.

2.6 Consistency and emotional safety as loyalty anchors

Some studies mentioned AI as one of the most important anchors for enhancing brand image and loyalty. It is related to social media and the influence that it has on the preferences of customers at the moment to decide on a brand or product, according to *Yu-Peng Zhu et al. (2025)*. Social media is essential nowadays for raising awareness of a brand, product or service; in some cases, the clients make a final decision after living the experience. Social media is the first view and the door to access to a product or service, but the most important and what makes the difference is when people live the experience. According to *Bai, S., Cao, L. and Zhou, J. (2025)*, the emotional connection is the factor which executes the impact and generates more purchases, and is the main anchor, even other types of factors like humour elements, depend on the people who received the stimulation.

Bai, S., Cao, L. and Zhou, J. (2025) mentioned how the value is perceived widely, and six dimensions are considered by the clients and customers at the moment to value a brand, product or service, and it is related to prestige, self-satisfaction, utilitarian value, quality, hedonic and aesthetic. These six dimensions are highly relevant, but in some cases, they can change or even consider some of them more important than others, depending on the type of product or service, and it can also depend on the preference and opinion of customers and clients. But it is important to remember how these dimensions can be considered as loyalty anchors.

2.7 Summary Chapter

The study by *Yu-Peng Zhu et al. (2025)* mentioned how the consistency of the emotions which a brand, product or service can produce through social media is considered as an anchor, and it generates a vinculum with clients and customers that can increase the purchase intention. The challenge of this study is to explore if it applies to nail salons as well, because if the nail salons can use social media as a positive tool to reach new possible clients, it is not a study developed so far which can declare if it works for this type of business. Already exist some studies which mention the relevance of the relationship and positive emotions are relevant for business and the increase of their sales, but nail salons are a type of business with a huge market, and it does not many differences between each other. For this reason, this study is looking for a deeper exploration in this particular market and recognises the main factor which makes a difference for clients. Like this helps the entrepreneurs or Ireland who are trying to start their business or even develop a new and better marketing strategy for this market.

Chapter 3: Research and Methodology

3.1 Introduction to Research Methodology

According to *Siouti, I. and Ruokonen-Engler, M.K. (2025)*, in historical development, more since 1960, emotions are active during research and the results. This is why the relevance of this research focuses on a methodology which can help to analyse and explore the emotions in all stages, so it will be possible to recognise the emotions and the positive reactions that the clients have to their perception of their experience in nail salons in Ireland.

Defining and applying the methodology of research allows us to do a rigorous practice, and the relevance of this practice is to reach credibility through the crisis of the lack of information about a topic, according to *Rivkin, W. (2025)*. And the objective of this way is to get information that will be usable in the future with high standards.

3.2 Research Aims and Objectives

The most relevant aspect of this item, according to *Bahadoran, Z. et al. (2025)*, is to recognise the information needed for this study and formulate the question that will be explored and analysed. In this case, the question of this study is focused on whether positive interaction and brand loyalty are related in the nail salon industry of Ireland, and it will be analysed through the perspective of the customer journey mapping model. According to *Galbreath, B., Merrill, A. and Johnson, C.M. (2024)*, academic research is an important discovery tool for customer satisfaction, and it has been relevant for analysing how deeply an academic study can delve. In the particular case of this research, the purpose is to explore the reasons and perceptions of clients of nail salons in Ireland; for that reason, the question of this study is **“How do positive interactions with clients, throughout the customer journey, influence brand loyalty in the Irish nail salon industry?”**

3.2.1 Aim

This research aims to explore how the positive interaction in nail salons in Ireland can contribute to developing brand loyalty, focusing on the emotional connection with clients and the service quality. Although it is widely recognised that positive interaction causes a difference in the reception of a service in clients and customers, it is not proven that it can produce a particular effect in nail salons, because this part of the beauty market and service industry has not been considered in studies before. The idea is to obtain this information to offer entrepreneurs a new strategy to develop in their nail salons in Ireland, to reach success or at least stand out in the industry.

Through this, it is possible to recognise the objectives, which will help to unpack every question and discover the most important information to resolve and clarify whether the positive interaction can be beneficial or not to the nail salon industry of Ireland.

3.2.2 Objectives

- To identify the touchpoints that are most significant to influence the perception of the nail salon for clients.
- To examine how the client perceives the attitude and behaviour of the staff.
- To determine the key factor for repeat visits and customer recommendations.
- To analyse how the emotional connection and service delivery influence the brand loyalty in the nail salon industry.
- To apply the customer journey mapping model to evaluate the client experience in nail salons located in Ireland.

3.3 Proposed Research Methodology

This research will be developed through a qualitative method, according to *Koussaifi, H., Hart, D.J. and Lillystone, S. (2020)*, a qualitative study is recognised to have information and images, but not numbers as quantitative. In an entrepreneurial environment, numbers matter; they are the most important factor for the life of a business, but the key to permanency in the market and to being competitive are the clients and customers. They are the main factor of this research, exploring through their comments, opinions and experiences, the positive interaction can do or do not the difference between one nail salon and other in the preference of clients, and through a quantitative analysis, which is just possible to discover and analyse numbers, is not likely to explore in the way that this study is focused.

The non-selected quantitative methodology involves graphical presentations and calculation of distribution; it has a hypothesis and a random variable distribution, according to *Dźwigoł, H. and Dźwigoł-Barosz, M. (2025)*. But this research proposed a deeper analysis, related to emotions and discovering how the feeling can affect on a commercial level. The emotions are not measurement, it is not possible to associate a number or quantity to a emotion, maybe in other aspects is likely to relate a value to emotions, but in this case, the objective is explored how emotions can involve or even produce a loyalty from a person to a brand, which is not a specific person.

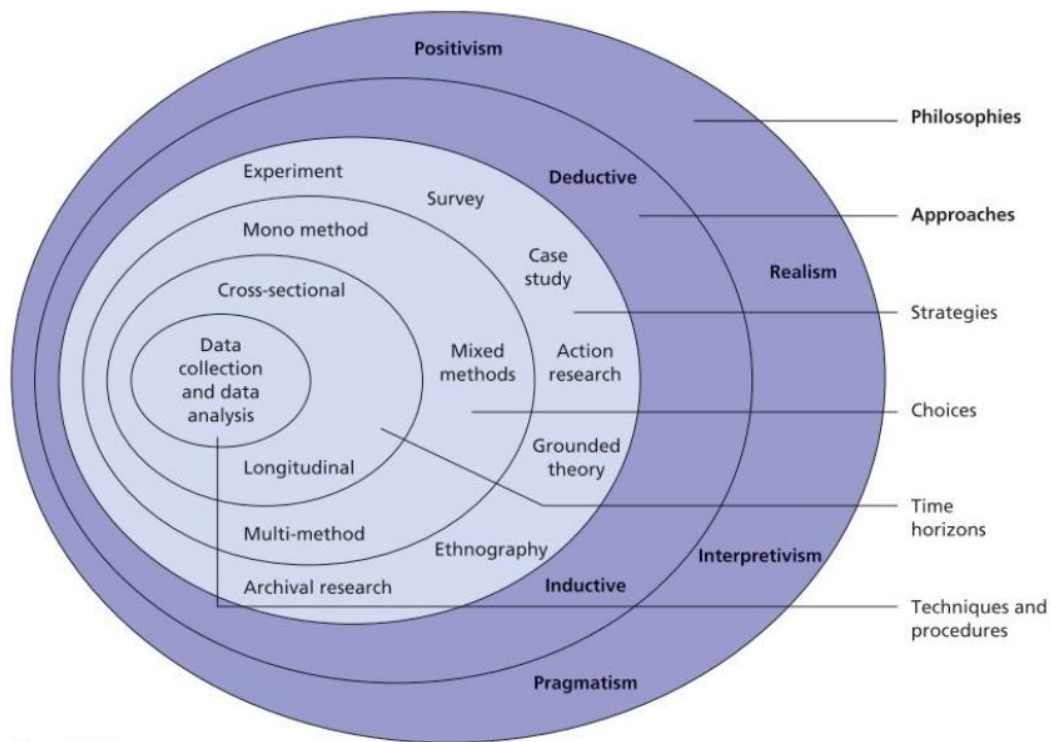


Figure 1. Saunders Research Onion. Source: (Saunders, et al. 2009)

3.4 Research Philosophy

Three possible philosophies exist that could be applied to this research: Interpretivism, positivism, and pragmatism. Of those 3, the philosophy which applies is interpretivism. According to Mbhiza, H. (2024), interpretivism is a subjective philosophy. How the author mentioned, if it is applied to the analysis of the pedagogical relationship between a student and a teacher, it is possible to cross the limit of the interpretivism and the positivism -in the particular case of this research, positivism is definitely not an option because it- in the specific case of this research, positivism is definitely not an option, because positivism is focused on the quantification analysis and statistics, and this study is looking for the analysis and discovery emotions and feeling - For that reason, this study is trying to be most objective possible. Still, it is relevant as well to remember all the literature which supports all the investigations about the relationship between client and brand, and how the positive interaction has a huge significance in the development of brand loyalty for clients. In this case, and through that, we can recognise if it applies to nail salons in Ireland as well. It is

essential to consider the culture and habits of people and the perception of the new generations in this study because the preferences and perceptions that clients have nowadays of the services can change.

3.5 Research Approach

The options for research are inductive or deductive, but the approach of this study is inductive. According to *Corley, K., Bansal, P. (Tima) and Yu, H. (2021)*, the inductive approach is looking to explain a unique phenomenon's particularity. This phrase explains perfectly the objective of this research, because it has already been discovered and analysed how positive interaction affects and even incentivises the loyalty of the brand from the client. However, it is still unknown if it affects nail salons, in particular those in Ireland, considering how many of them are not administered by Irish; many of them are foreigners starting a business in a different society. For this reason, this research has as an objective to apply interviews to clients of nail salons in Ireland and, through that, explore the information acquired and not check if a hypothesis is true or not.

The other option, the deductive approach, works on the hypothesis of another research, and it incorporates numbers and percentages. In this case, this study does not work on other information; the idea is based on information that already exists, looking for particular information that does not exist. It explores whether the positive interaction helps to develop brand loyalty in nail salons in Ireland.

3.6 Research Strategy

According to *Pregoner, J.D. (2024)*, depending on the research and the topic, the approach can be quantitative or qualitative. If the approach is already defined, it allows us to develop, understand, and contribute to education research. In this case study, the approach selected was qualitative, because it is based on information and analysis of the comments gathered by an interview, and how the participants mentioned they feel and their perception during the service that they received in nail salons in Ireland, and the only way to do a summary of this type of information, feelings and emotions, is through empiric interpretation.

Pregoner, J.D. (2024) mentioned that the quantitative approach allows quantifying through numbers and statistics, requiring statistical tools to analyse the results. Unfortunately, interpreting the participants' answers with numbers is not a good idea because the objective is to identify relevant aspects of their perception.

3.7 Measurement Method

The measurement method employed in this research will be a semi-structured interview because the idea is that the question of whether it is necessary to reach answers allows answering the research question. Another possible option could be considered, for example, structured interviews or even a focus group, but according to Hazir, O., and Karlidag, T.A. (2024), the semi-structured interview is flexible, and it is a mix of prepared questions and the possibility of asking deeply if necessary.

3.8 Analysis of Qualitative Data

The semi-structured interview will allow us to collect information and then will use the thematic analysis, which has six phases, according to *Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2021)*, the six phases are familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching the themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report. Like this will be possible to reach details information and experiences of the participants. Also, the analysis will be with the objective to collect adequate information which can helps to use with the Customer Journey Mapping, like this, following the five stages of the model to explore the answers and find the information that helps to answer the question and sub-questions proposed in this research.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

This research will use a semi-structured interview as a measurement. Previous to the application of the interview, the participants should fill out a consent form, where they may authorise that the information given can be used for a study. The consent form mentioned the thesis name and who required the information, and they should sign the document and add the date when the interview was conducted. According to *Pai, S.N. et al. (2023)*, the consent form in some cases lacks several key aspects; for this reason, it is relevant to have a pre-designed consent form.

The participants will be fully informed about the purpose of this research and the reason why an interview will be applied, the information gathered by the participants in the interview is confidential and voluntary; the answers did not need their names or even other personal information, and the consent form is a document which will be kept by the author, in case it is needed in the future. The information given by the participant will not be used for any other purpose or in other circumstances; in case this were to happen, the author should ask the participant for authorisation. And something important to mention about the interview is that

every participant never mentioned the nail salon where they got their nails done; they just mentioned, because it was a requirement for the interview, that they had been getting their nails done at least once in the last six months in a nail salon in Ireland.

Following the requirements of National College of Ireland, the information collected for this research will be stored during five years and then the information will be deleted for safe and guard the privacy of the participants, according to *National College of Irlanda (2024)*.

3.10 Population/Sample

It is expected to be applied to between 8 and 12 participants. This information will be used to explore and recognise relevant information for this study. According to *Ma, Y., Zhao, X. and Zhao, R. (2025)*, a semi-structured interview allows to receive more information to be received from the interview and personalises the questions if it is necessary, which improves the participation of the clients. Considering the disadvantages of this measurement method, it can be the subjectivity of the answers; it is possible that the emotionality of the bond between the client and salon can affect the objectivity of the answers about their perception. Some people can develop a strong bond with people who regularly do their nails. As an advantage, without a doubt, is the possibility that the interviewer can access deep information during the interview, receiving precise information and helpful for this research.

The interview participants were selected from people who used to get their nails done in the last six months, people who are getting their nails done in salons in Ireland, not particular places, just official nail salons, and the criteria were that people between 25 and 45 years old were selected. For the research, a minimum of 8 and a maximum of 12 participants were required, so the conditions of a qualitative approach could be valid. The number of people was considered according to *Gandy, K. (2024)*, who mentioned interviews for focus groups, but, in this case, it is for a semi-structured interview; for that reason was considered a similar number was considered, because the ideas was to maintain the credibility which the number of participants can give to the research.

About the analysis of the information and information gathering, the interviews will be conducted face-to-face and written. After that, when all the interviews are finished, the information will be written in a Google Form, which allows exporting the information in Microsoft Excel, making it easier to read and then analyse. Subsequently, the Customer Journey Mapping will be applied to the information gathered and, in this way, obtain a

rigorous examination of the information and recognise the information related to the objectives.

3.11 Limitations to Research

The limitations are clear in this research, for example, the first is the sampling that was determined, between 8 and 12 people, it was possible to applied the interview to more people, with the intention to get information from different views, even when the sample was a mix between Irish people and foreigners that are living in Ireland, and people who are in the country temporarily and people who is living permanently. Even if more participants were involved, the possibility of analysing Ireland's nail salon industry could be increased.

The second limitation discovered was the location of the participants. All of them are located in Dublin. This limitation was applied without intention, but in this way, the sample could analyse the capital city of the county, with more nail salons and more industry competency.

The third limitation was the limitation of this semi-structured interview. Although it was considered semi-structured, in cases where the participant did not want to give more information or just forgot relevant information about reactions and perception, this could affect the development of the interview.

Another factor to mention is about the interpretation, how it is qualitative research the data interpretation could be subjective, and it can reduce bias and objective perspectives of the information. And the last one, is the limitation of time for obtain the data, it even can be related with the second limitation mentioned before.

3.12 Model: Customer Journey Mapping

A key component of this research is the Customer Journey mapping model (CJM), which is relevant for achieving the proposed objectives of the research. According to *Sneed, C. et al. (2025)*, the CJM is a pertinent tool for marketing, and this model helps to measure the decision, loyalty, recognition and recommendation from the clients. The first and most important stage is to define the objective, *which is to identify the type of interaction clients experience in nail salons in Ireland, and to analyse the perceived importance of having a positive interaction.* The next stage is to create the customer persona, and it is important to recognise the type of clients who will be interviewed. It is a person between 25 and 45 years old, who lives in Dublin city in Ireland, and got their nails done at least once in the last 6 months in a nail salon in the city.

Ao, L., et al. (2023) mentioned the relevance of social media to make a business visible, and how still is underexplored in nail salon in Ireland. In this stage, the third one and where we should identify the touchpoints, is important to recognise 6 ways how the clients can discover a nail salon, those are through *Awareness*, where the recommendations of family and friends are essential. Then we will call *Consideration*, that is the evaluation that a client can give to a nail salon in an app or website. Another is the *booking*, because it is very important for clients, as they see that a place is always busy, and they have many clients who are constantly trying to get an appointment in the salon. Next one is the *Experience*, because a place can be busy, but if you are not happy with the steps, or the products, or even the treatment, it is not a good service. Then the *Post-Service*, because if a nail salon just wants to make a purchase, but they are not available for feedback or even answer emails from their clients, it can be a place where the clients will not want to come back. And the last one is the *Loyalty*, because according to Mirivel, J.C. and Fuller, R.P. (2024), the clients are rewarded with loyalty for the good attitudes that the business offers to them; for that reason, it is important to consider this item to analyse if it affects nail salons in Ireland in particular.

After defining the measure items for the touchpoints, it is important to specify which are part of every item.

1. Awareness: Instagram, Google Maps and recommendations
2. Booking: Online booking, calls and WhatsApp
3. Experience: Staff treatment, reception and quality of the service
4. Post-Service: Social media, messages and interviews.
5. Loyalty: Newsletter, discounts and loyalty cards.

Next stage is to define the *Walk in the customer's shoes*, it is necessary to recognise what we want to discover through the CJM and the interviews, in this case, the idea is to explore the emotions that clients could recognise and mention in the interviews, and the perceptions that they have about the nail salons where they used to get their nails done. According to Christiner, M. et al. (2023), language perception is a way to discriminate and remember intelligible language. The clients will have the chance to express how they considered the treatment that they received, and in this research, it is possible to recognise the gaps that the nail salon could not discover and repair during the treatment that they offer. The next and last stage of the CJM is *identifying pain points and resolutions*. When the clients who will develop the interview of this research, it will be possible to recognise the weaknesses of

the nail salons where they used to go, and compare at the same time, if that characteristic is common in nail salons in Ireland, and like this, it will be possible to modify it for a new strategy which can be considered as beneficial to nail salons in Ireland in the future.

3.13 Summary

This chapter mentioned the methodology of the research and all the most relevant aspects related to the development of the study. Also, it was explained how, through an interview, the information was collected for analysis and how the customer journey mapping and its five stages will allow us to explore the information gathered by the participants, and thus, discover if the positive interaction affects the brand loyalty in nail salons of Ireland.

It was developed and mentioned the ethical considerations in developing the semi-structured interview, the selection criteria and the research design. Through all the elements discovered in this chapter, we can continue with the findings and analysis that will be possible to find in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

According to Heni, N., Surono, S. and Ariffin, K. (2025), it is the interpretation of research findings and connecting them with previous studies that adds content and value to the scholarly discourse. This study allows us to explore the nail salon market located in Ireland, in particular Dublin, and through that, discover more about the possibilities of entrepreneurship in this type of business and what to consider before starting.

All the participants mentioned at any moment of the interview how important the connection between the staff and the client is at the moment when they arrive at a nail salon in Ireland. Also, one of them mentioned a bad moment that she had to live through in her last experience in a nail salon, for example, the participant mentioned *“Receptionist - I understand that if someone arrives late you should explain that customer shouldn't be late, but they shouldn't talk as if we were their little kid.”*. The following section presents the analysis of the objectives of this study.

4.2 Participant Profile

Participants	Name	Age	Frequency
1	Participant 1	34	Occasionally
2	Participant 2	26	Every 3 weeks
3	Participant 3	25	Once a month
4	Participant 4	36	Once a month or every month and a half
5	Participant 5	34	Every 3 weeks
6	Participant 6	45	A few times per year
7	Participant 7	39	Once a month
8	Participant 8	30	Once a month
9	Participant 9	26	Once or twice per month
10	Participant 10	37	Every 3 weeks
11	Participant 11	30	Every 4-5 weeks
12	Participant 12	42	Twice a month

This table has information about the interview participants. The first column shows the number of participants. The second column shows the name assigned to each participant, but the real name will not be revealed to protect their privacy. The next column shows the participants' age, and the last one shows the frequency with which they get their nails done. One relevant aspect to mention is that they all are women.

4.3 Research Objective 1

To identify the touchpoints that are most significant in influencing the perception of the nail salon for clients.

The analysis of this objective will recognise the touchpoints relevant to the participants. In some cases, the participants mentioned similar touchpoints related to attitudes, but in others, they mentioned details that were steps typical of the salon.

4.3.1 Greeting & hospitality touchpoint

The clients identified three different touchpoints of the nail salons where they are frequently going; The first is the welcome; this moment is relevant for them, how was mentioned before, one of the participants said when she arrived at the nail salon, and she was a few minutes late, the receptionist was not too friendly with her and her friend. In other cases, the participants mentioned that in the nail salon where they used to go, they always received an offer of a drink (coffee, tea or water) and even the staff received their call by their name, which makes it more personalised.

Participant 8: "I was welcomed by someone who was very kind and talkative, they offered me tea or coffee and gave me a colour chart soon after entering"

4.3.2 Collaborative Progress Touchpoint

The second touchpoint mentioned was the personalised attention that they received. Many of the participants mentioned how the staff—the nail technician or even the receptionist—used to say hello by their name. At every step of the service, the nail technician asks if they are happy with the service, for example, if the shape and length are okay or if they want to modify anything. The main objective of that question is to confirm their satisfaction with the service given.

Participant 10: "... showing the nails throughout each step is great to ensure I'm happy as we go.."

4.3.3 Value Added touchpoint

The third touchpoint identified and mentioned by the participants was the additional details that nail salons offer to the clients. In some places, they provide hot towels and massages in the pedicure chair, and it is essential for clients, maybe not the most relevant item of the nail salon, but they consider it a plus to the salon.

Participant 10: "...Hot towel and hand cream at end is always nice Hot towel and hand cream at end is always nice".

4.4 Research Objective 2

To examine how the client perceives the attitude and behaviour of the staff.

A big part of the sample mentioned how the staff had a good attitude toward them. Still, it is essential to say that just one participant mentioned having a bad experience in a nail salon and feeling rushed by the receptionist. However, the rest of the participants mentioned how happy they were with the service they received.

4.4.1 Positive Perceived staff attitude and behaviour

The participants mentioned the staff's attitude while in the nail salon receiving the service. They mentioned how they were kind, professional, and in a manner that made them feel good. The participants generally said they were happy with the staff's treatment.

Participant 9: "Friendly, respectful, and professional staff make the experience much more enjoyable and build trust over time"

4.4.2 Negative perception of staff attitude and behaviour

Of course, not all the perceptions were the same, not all were perfect and positive; one of the participants was an exception, because the participant mentioned how one member of the staff, the receptionist in particular, said she was late and the treatment that the receptionist had with her was not the most appropriate to the situation, even the participant mentioned she felt as a child.

Participant 6: "Receptionist - I understand that if someone arrives late you should explain that customer shouldn't be late, but they shouldn't talk as if we were their little kid."

4.4.3 Staff Engagement

Some participants mentioned how important it is for them to have the staff's reaction at the moment of the service. There are cases when clients ask for suggestions from the staff, but the final decision is always the client's; for that reason, the participants mentioned how relevant it is for them when the staff listen and are really interested in the client's preferences.

Participant 2: "... they truly cared about what I wanted, and the quality of their work was amazing."

4.5 Research Objective 3

To determine the key factor for repeat visits and customer recommendations.

This is a relevant factor in every nail salon, a reason why we will determine which is the key to nail salons which make the difference and produce repeat visits in clients, a valuable reason.

4.5.1 Consistency service

Clients want to feel comfortable with the nail salon, where they can go every time, trusting the service will be high quality and balanced with the price. Knowing that you will always find precisely what you want in the same place can be one of the keys to brand loyalty.

Participant 2: “Consistent quality, friendly and attentive staff, good prices, and that they remember my preferences.”

4.5.2 Connection with the staff

Participants mentioned how relevant it is for them when the staff know about them, remember their name, and give personalised service. This is not the most relevant factor because it is a mix between the service and the relationship, which is developed with the staff. Still, they highlight how not just the service is important, but the connection is important as well.

Participant 8: “...staff get to know you, you know what the quality is like and what is the best value.”

4.5.3 Fair pricing and quality balance

The participants considered the quality-price relation important and mentioned it as one of the most important factors when they decide to go to a nail salon. Some participants mentioned how the prices of the beauty industry in Ireland are higher than in other countries; for that reason, they are constantly looking to save as much as possible. They consider getting their nails done as a monthly indulgence, which needs to be as cheap as possible, but they always strive to have good service. It is a compliment between both.

Participant 9: “A combination of factors is important to me—price, service quality, the overall atmosphere...”

4.5.4 Hygienic and comfortable atmosphere

Another factor mentioned in the interview was how important cleaning is for clients. The participants said that they consider a good nail salon if it is clean and the atmosphere is pleasant. And a pleasant reference to a quiet and relaxing place.

Participant 10: "The atmosphere is important too, cleanliness, staff politeness etc."

4.5.5 Convenient opening hours and good location

The last relevant factor mentioned in the interview was the possibility of getting a convenient slot that is suitable for their schedules and in a good location. In some cases, a good location can be close to their job or their house or even easy to access, considering the parking or bus stop.

Participant 11: "It used to be price and location."

4.6 Research Objective 4

To analyse how the emotional connection and service delivery influence the brand loyalty in the nail salon industry.

The participants mentioned how, for them, the development of brand loyalty is directly related to the staff and how they are treated. For example, the participant who mentioned having a bad experience with the receptionist decided to come back to the salon even though that moment was uncomfortable for her because the treatment that she received from the person who did her nails was good.

4.6.1 Emotional connection and self-care

The people who participated in the interview considered getting their nails done as a self-care action. They are receiving this service from a person whom they can trust, which is why it is essential to trust the person who will give you the service. They said that their intention is to receive a good experience and to feel well.

Participant 11: "I tend to associate going to the salon with making time for myself, something I know I will enjoy as I always feel 'pampered'."

4.6.2 Be valued and appreciated

They mentioned the relevance of feeling appreciated and valuable for the person who is doing the service, in this case, the staff, and it is because they are giving their trust in the person who is doing their nails and paying a high price for a service that they hope to enjoy.

One participant mentioned how getting their nails done is her favourite moment of the month, and how she has been going to the same place for a long time, because the person who used to give the service and she have been developing a very good relationship.

Participant 4: "Make me feel very special when I'm arriving and they call me by my name ..."

4.6.3 Confidence and safety

The participants mentioned that it is essential for them to trust the staff because they will get a service they cannot do for themselves, as they do not know how it is done. For that reason, they have blind faith in the person who is doing their nails.

Participant 10: "I would be too nervous to go to a different salon in case I wasn't happy with the service. I used to choose any staff when booking ..."

4.6.4 Technician-client bond as customer retention

One of the most essential pieces of information gathered in this research was how relevant the technician-client relationship is. At least two participants mentioned that they used to go to a specific nail salon just for the nail technician. The bond that they developed over time is so valuable for them, and they are trying to keep it because they trust in the service and the quality they are giving.

Participant 10: "... I have found the right nail technician for me."

4.7 Research Objective 5

To apply the customer journey mapping model to evaluate the client experience in nail salons located in Ireland.

In this item, the five stages of the model selected in this research will be analysed using all the information gathered through the semi-structured interview. Some of the stages were already mentioned during the development of this study, but others were developed after the analysis of the interview with the objectives.

4.7.1 Objective

To explore how the positive interaction in nail salons in Ireland can contribute to developing brand loyalty, by analysing through the Customer Journey Mapping and recognising the emotional impact and customer experience.

4.7.2 Create Customer Persona

- **Age:** 25 to 45 years old.
- **Location:** Dublin, Ireland.
- **Frequency:** To get your nails done for the last 6 months.
- **Priority:** Good customer service, reasonable price, good location, confidence, good environment, kindness.
- **Motivation for:** Good treatment by the staff, professionalism and personalised service.
- **Frustration for:** Low quality, no communication, and bad treatment from the staff.

4.7.3 Chart Touchpoint

- **Awareness:** The participants mentioned arriving at that place through friends' recommendations, social media, and places that are close to their jobs, so they are strategic places for them.
- **Booking:** Some participants said they used to book online, or even on apps, but one participant prefers booking by calling the nail salon.
- **Experience:** Good reception, communication with the nail technician, drinks offered, extra services like hot towels, and the personal treatment they received from the staff.
- **Post-Service:** The participants mentioned they never received any post-service follow-up; just when they paid for the service, the receptionist used to ask if everything was good.
- **Loyalty:** One of the participants said that the nail salon where she used to go has a loyalty card. Every time you go, you receive a sticker, and after 10 stickers (10 services), you receive one for free. But the other participants considered the only signal of loyalty the treatment they received from the nail technician and the bond.

4.7.4 Walk in the customer's shoes

- **Awareness:** When it was a new experience in the nail salon, the participants mentioned that they felt very curious about the place and the services and had high expectations of the final result. But if the place was the same as always, they knew what to expect of the service.
- **Booking:** They used to feel satisfaction when the booking was quick and straightforward.

- **Experience:** They feel considered by the technician because they ask for their opinion at every step of the service, and they like every extra and the treatment.
- **Post-Service:** They go out of the salon happy because they received what they wanted. Some of them mentioned they would like to receive the worry of the nail salon after service, while some of them are happy without post-service.
- **Loyalty:** Participants mentioned how happy they are to return to the same nail salon, where they know they will receive a similar positive experience.

4.7.5 Customer Journey Mapping: Identify Pain Points and Resolutions

- **Weakness points:**
 1. Less communication in some nail salons, because not all staff members speak English.
 2. Not all the nail salons have post-service, and some participants would like to receive it.
 3. The extras are not too common in nail salons; not all have the differentiating factor.
- **Potential solutions:**
 1. Offer the staff the correct training, which can involve steps of treatment, technical language, and customer service. It should not be certificated; it is enough to give the basic tools for developing the service.
 2. Create a post-service system, so that the clients can recognise the value that the nail salon offers and thus increase their loyalty
 3. Incorporate extras to the services. A little detail makes the difference, especially when the industry is huge and the competency strong.

4.8 Summary

This chapter allows us to discover relevant aspects of the nail salon industry, what clients expect of them, and some information on where entrepreneurs can focus to stand out in the market.

The next chapter will analyse the literature and studies already developed and the comparison with the information obtained through this research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter has as an objective to analyse the information gathered through the interview and compare with the information that was available, before studies which could give us clues about what clients are expecting of the nail salon, it is essential to mention that the nail salon industry was not developed in particular before, always was considered as part of the bigger picture in the industry. Still, the entrepreneurs, who are the reason for this research, never had the specific information to develop a strategy which could launch their business and differentiate their brand.

5.2 Relation between findings and research objectives

5.2.1 Objective 1 – Touchpoints most significant

Through the information obtained with the semi-structured interview, it was possible to discover the relevant touchpoints of nail salons in Ireland that are related to awareness; that is, how the clients find the nail salon and decide to start getting their nails done there. In some cases, the clients decide by the recommendation of a friend or even the location of the nail salon; it depends on the client and their preference.

Another aspect is the booking, because it could be as easy as possible or even maintain the classic channels, such as calls. The next one is the experience, which is considered as one of the most relevant, because clients are looking for a place where they can trust to receive a good service and treatment, since cleaning tools to receive extras during the service – a drink, be called by your name, hot towels – in many cases, it makes the difference at the moment to decide to continue going to the same nail salon or looking for another. The post-service is essential as well, but in the modern world, people are not always looking for constant communication with the service.

And what can be considered as the significant discovery, the loyalty in nail salons is regarded by the confidence and the bond that clients develop with the staff, which can be viewed as the nail technician the most crucial character of the nail salon, is essential to mention how another characters of the nail salon are important as well, as the receptionist and the person who can offer the extra service. Still, the most significant differentiation is developed by the nail technicians, because clients feel comfortable with them and trust in their job, the clients will continue to return with the same technician, and it becomes loyalty for the nail salon.

According to Liu, Z. *et al.* (2025), a good design of a good experience is the high quality and symmetry; if it fails, all the touch points fail and affect the product-service system. This allows us to recognise the similarity between the previous study and this research, but it is essential to mention how, for nail salons in Ireland, one of the differentiations is how important the bond between technician and client is. *Chebab, Z.N. and Boukerch, Y. (2025)* also mentioned how the bond that clients can develop with the brand occurs when clients feel a connection with the image and meaning of the brand. It is similar to the situation of nail salons, but not the same, because in this case, the connection is directly with a specific person.

5.2.2 Objective 2 – Staff attitude and client perception

Mirivel, J.C. and Fuller, R.P. (2024) mentioned how the brands are trying to offer a good attitude to the clients and give them a good perception. But in the case of nail salons in Ireland, they should take it a step further and prepare their staff to work with a service-oriented approach, because this is the key to loyalty in nail salons in Ireland.

If a nail salon is looking to strengthen other aspects, like extra services, invest in better products, or even invest in better-quality tools, it could be a good idea, but the information gathered highlights how relevant it is to invest in boosting the customer service and soft skills of the staff.

5.2.3 Objective 3 – Key factor for repeat visits

This research mentioned how aspects such as cleaning, location, recommendation and the relaxing environment are essential for clients, but the main factor is the staff's treatment. Anyways, it is essential to maintain all the other factors perfectly, but if a nail salon is considering all the aspects but wants to look for a new strategy, the main idea is to focus on customer service. According to *Du, Z. (2025)*, customer satisfaction and differentiation are the main factors brands use to encourage clients to repeat visits, and of course, it is relevant, because if it is not a proper place to offer that type of service, it will not work. For that reason, it is essential to be worried about the basics of a nail salon, because the clients continue to put the focus on them.

5.2.4 Objective 4 – Emotional connection and the influence of brand loyalty

This research analysed the bond between the nail technician and the client, which is one of the most important factors for brand loyalty. *Bai, S., Cao, L., and Zhou, J. (2025)* proposed emotional connection as a key factor in purchasing, and it can be considered a factor in

brand loyalty. In the case of nail salons in Ireland, it is possible to say that the most potent brand loyalty strategy is the bond nail technicians develop with the client.

5.2.5 Objective 5 – Customer Journey Mapping model and Client experience

The customer journey mapping allows us to discover different aspects that can be considered relevant to a business. The main idea is to take every one of the stages and create a new strategy which can be applied to the company. In this case, it is essential to consider how the clients of nail salons in Ireland are getting in contact, and how they find out about the nail salon. Before that, it is essential to create a good impression on clients through the service, because if someone shares a bad experience with more people, it is possible to lose possible future clients.

Regarding booking, it is essential to stay at the forefront because the new generations are trying to contact the nail salon, and it should be available to every person. And, of course, continue considering the calls because they continue to be a very relevant contact tool in this country. Same with the experience, offer something that can make the nail salon unique, different from the others, and it will be why the clients will consider your nail salon rather than the nail salon on the next street.

The post-service will not be something too extravagant, it can be a reminder message, or even a “evaluate your service on Google and receive 5% discount on your next service”, using it as a strategy to receive more recommendations and loyalty program at the same time. However, there exists a gap in the literature about it. The nail salon industry is growing daily, and it is essential to discover the possible differentiations and how to apply them in this vast market. Nail salons are not make-up, skin care, or body treatments; even when nails are part of your body, the industry is independent, and the idea is to strengthen this particular industry as much as possible, boost it and become unique.

5.3 Comparison with existing literature

If we compare with the literature previously viewed, it is possible to highlight what *Sak, T. et al. (2024)* said, which mentions that depends on the recognition that the client makes in the nail salon is the preference that they made. It cannot be completely wrong, because the place and the environment could help the client to feel comfortable or not in the nail salon. Still, the main reason why the client stays with one nail salon in particular and does not want to change is the connection and bond that the client develops with the nail

technician. It is a relevant part of the literature that the authors were missing because the main reason for the preference is human origin.

5.5 Theoretical and practical implications

One of the most important theoretical tools of this research was the customer journey mapping. This model allows for developing new strategies and, simultaneously, discovers new relevant elements for the business or the industry, depending on the case.

In the case of this research, the most critical element discovered was how the emotional component is essential for nail salons, in an era when technology is one of the most relevant aspects of our lives, emotions continue to be necessary for the nail salon industry. This same aspect may not too relevant in other regions of the world, because it is important to recognise the size of Ireland and factor which affects to the client, for example, it is a country part of European continent, but the connection is not enough, it continue being an island in the cornel of the continent, and because it is country separate of the rest of the world the society could be conditioned for others factors, because the factors that affect to Ireland cannot be the same than other countries as Chile – for example- a country that is separate of another countries but in their own continent, and maybe the most relevant aspects for customer loyalty cannot be related with the emotions.

The last implication to mention is how the positive communication between nail technician and client is effective a relevant tool for nail salons in Ireland, when the technology is saying how obsolete many occupations can be, the customer service, emotionality and positive communication are giving us a lesson about how relevant continuing to be the emotions and human contact, because new technologies can come, even be part of the new strategies for reach clients, but humans has something that new technologies never will develop, emotions.

5.6 Limitations and Recommendations

Recognising how the sample, geography, and location, inter alia, can limit this research is important. Training the staff for a service focused on the client and their well-being, making them feel as well as possible, at the same time, they should try to discover or find a differentiating factor that can make them unique.

A relevant aspect to consider is how foreigners are a common profile in nail salons; many of them can be in the country for a long time, which is why investing in training of people who

are not planning to stay long-term in Ireland can be an investment which will lose out in the future, but at least the owners can take the training and then teach to the staff the most relevant tools for treat the clients, and like this they can reduce the cost of the training.

The main recommendation of this research is appeal to the emotions and soft skills, and it involves clients and staff. For example, let's consider the experience of one of the participants, who mentioned that the receptionist of the nail salon talked to her as a child. We will see how it is important to maintain a flexible treatment for clients of nail salons, it does not mean that the client cannot respect the rules and politics of the salon, it means that it is important to let them know the rules and politics and maintain constantly the good treatment and looking for options in the case for the hardest clients.

5.7 Summary

This chapter was the opportunity to recognise the discovery of the research and analyse in comparison of previous studies, and like this recognise the difference and new aspects that will contribute to the development of future businesses related to nail salons in Ireland.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This research has explored the nail salon industry and aspects of positive communication. The main question was, “**How do positive interactions with clients, throughout the customer journey, influence brand loyalty in the Irish nail salon industry?**” This chapter will explain the general summary of this research.

6.2 Summary of findings

This research provided relevant information to prove the relevance of positive communication and its importance in developing brand loyalty in Irish nail salons. At the same time, it developed information essential for answering the five main objectives.

6.2.1 Objective 1:

- The way the clients perceived the welcome to the nail salon is essential as a first impression.
- The extras that the nail salon offers to the clients made the difference.
- Making the clients part of the progress of the service is important as well.

6.2.2 Objective 2:

- It is essential that the perception of clients of the staff is that they are always paying attention to their attitude towards clients.
- Professionalism is what clients are constantly looking for because they trust the person who is doing their nails.
- The positive interaction, in this case, the warmth, is the most essential aspect for clients.

6.2.3 Objective 3:

- Clients are looking for a fair price, a mix between price and quality.
- They want a comfortable place where they can rest and feel pampered.
- Cleaning is a fundamental factor now to choose a nail salon.
- The location is always important; they are those who decide if it is better to close to the home of the job.

6.2.4 Objective 4:

- Emotional connection and quality of service are the main factors. Suppose the clients do not develop an emotional connection, but it is a good nail salon. In that case, they probably will come back when they receive a better recommendation or another place with the same good conditions, then they can change their preference. However, if clients develop an emotional connection with one nail technician, they will always come back, even if they receive good recommendations about other places.

6.2.5 Objective 5:

- The customer journey mapping allows us to analyse a new strategy to recognise the main factors affecting and developing brand loyalty in Irish nail salons.

6.3 Overall Conclusion

Positive interaction is the main factor recognised in this research; the relevance that it has to the loyalty brand is essential. Now, it is possible to know that positive interaction is the objective to reach for every nail salon with its clients. If a nail technician can develop this type of interaction with their clients, it is the key to a nail salon.

As mentioned before, even if a nail salon has all the other factors and can develop many strategies for keeping clients, if its nail technicians do not develop a deeper interaction with them, they are not localised. For this reason, the most important thing in a nail salon is to boost the soft skills of its nail technicians, and thus, its service will be strengthened enough for clients.

6.4 Contribution to Knowledge

The most important contribution of this research was the application of the Customer Journey Mapping model in an emotional context to explain the specific area of nail salons in Ireland. Even when the beauty industry included nail salons as a general market, nobody before was focused on positive communication and how it affects brand loyalty. Fortunately, we recognised the high relevance of this research.

6.5 Practical Recommendations

One of the most important aspects to mention is the extras of the nail salon, without a doubt, it is something which will help to recognise the particularity of a nail salon; the chocolate, the

bottle of water with the brand, the flip-flops of the brand, any exclusive detail that can give recognition to the nail salon. Another important aspect to highlight is the training of the staff; it is known that the staff can have a high rotation rate, but it is important at least to recognise where it is important to put the focus if you are the owner or manager, and where you should teach the staff to pay attention and improve it.

Another recommendation is that now that we can recognise customer journey mapping as a good tool, maybe we should apply it every two years and try to improve or change the strategy. If the technology cannot change the emotional connection, many other factors can change, and through this model, it will be possible to recognise it.

6.6 Suggestions

In the future, it may be a good idea to compare Ireland with other European countries, even with countries on another continent. Maybe a mix of methodologies would be useful. Also, recognise the difference between nail salons that can apply this strategy and those that are not changing the strategy and listen to the opinion of the staff.

6.7 Final Statement

This research allows us to recognise the relevance of people in occupations that are highly important, the nail salons are offering a service which affects to the self-esteem of many people day by day, even in other countries this job is recognised as a therapy, where you spend essential part of your day with a person who is becoming in part of your life and with you enjoy to spend time. Hopefully, through this research, the industry can understand and recognise the relevance of this occupation to society.

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Appendix 1

Qualitative Interview Question

Thesis: The power of positive interaction in brand loyalty: A qualitative Exploration of the nail salon industry in Ireland.

Section 1: Background

Q1: How often do you visit nail salons?

Q2: How do you usually choose which nail salon to go to?

Q3: What is most important to you when choosing a salon (ex., Price, service, atmosphere, staff interaction)?

Section 2: Customer journey & interaction

Q4: Can you describe your last experience at the nail salon?

Q5: How were you welcomed or greeted when you arrived?

Q6: Did you feel the staff listened to your needs or preferences? How?

Q7: What kind of interaction did you have with the person who did your nails?

Q8: Was there anything during your visit that made you feel especially comfortable or uncomfortable?

Q9: Did you feel valued or appreciated as a customer during your visit? Why or why not?

Section 3: Emotional Experience

Q10: How did you feel during and after visit to the salon?

Q11: Would you say the experience has a positive emotional impact on you? Please explain.

Q12: What role does staff behaviour play in how you feel about a salon?

Section 4: Brand Loyalty

Q13: Would you return to the same salon? Why or why not?

Q14: Have you recommended this salon to others? What made you do so (or not)?

Q15: What would make you loyal to a nail salon brand over time?

Section 5: Final Reflections

Q16: In your opinion, what makes a nail salon experience truly exceptional?

Q17: If you could change one thing about your last visit, what would it be?

Q18: Do you have anything else you would like to add about your experiences with nail salons in Ireland?