

# The impact of brand image and experience on customer satisfaction: A case study of gen Z in Vietnam

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**Abstract:** The study examines satisfaction's impact on brand image and experience. The study uses 225 survey samples and employs various quantitative analysis methods, including Cronbach's Alpha, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), correlation analysis, linear regression, and macro process testing with the Bootstrap method on SPSS26 software. The results revealed that brand image and experience positively impact the customer satisfaction of Gen Z. Additionally, brand image plays a positive moderating role in the relationship between brand experience and customer satisfaction. Based on the findings, several implications are proposed to help enterprises develop effective strategies to enhance customer satisfaction, particularly for Gen Z customers.

**Keywords:** Brand image, brand experience, customer satisfaction, gen Z.

## 1. Introduction

In an increasingly competitive market, customer satisfaction is both a goal and a vital metric for assessing an enterprise's performance. It is a fundamental factor determining a business's success and sustainable growth. A satisfied customer is more likely to continue purchasing and recommend the brand to others, generating a positive ripple effect in the market. Conversely, if the experience falls short of expectations, customers may swiftly abandon the brand and leave negative feedback, significantly impacting its reputation and overall performance. Furthermore, due to the rapid advancement of digital technology, the online commerce market has become highly competitive, with brand-related information spreading at an unprecedented pace. Consequently, customer satisfaction is no longer just a competitive advantage but a prerequisite for businesses to survive and secure their position in the market.

Generation Z has emerged as a key consumer force with significant market influence among current customer groups. According to a McKinsey report (2023), Gen Z represents approximately 25 percent of the global population and is crucial in shaping consumption trends. In Vietnam, this group comprises around 15 million individuals, making it an essential customer segment that businesses cannot overlook. Unlike earlier generations, Gen Z has been raised in a digital environment, enabling them to access and assess information swiftly. They often base their purchasing decisions on personal experiences and brand values rather than solely on price or product quality. Research conducted by Google and Decision Lab (2024) shows that 65 percent of Gen Z consumers in Vietnam are willing to pay more for brands that offer a good experience. Furthermore, over 70 percent of Gen Z consumers believe brands should consistently uphold their image and values. It demonstrates that Gen Z's satisfaction is influenced by the product itself and how a brand shapes its image and delivers an overall experience. Furthermore, a Salesforce report (2023) indicated that 76 percent of Gen Z consumers would distance themselves from a brand after a negative experience, even if the brand has a positive image.

Considering this reality, clarifying the influence of brand image and brand experience on Gen Z's satisfaction is crucial. This study offers theoretical insights and presents managerial implications that assist enterprises in developing effective strategies to improve customer satisfaction.

## **2. Theoretical framework and Research model**

### **2.1. Customer satisfaction**

Satisfaction is a psychological expression that reflects the emotional state of customers after using a product or service. According to Fornell (1992), satisfaction is the attitude developed by customers after utilizing a product, while research by Oliver (1999) and Kotler & Armstrong (2004) highlights that satisfaction occurs when customers compare the perceived performance of a product to their initial expectations. In this context, Hoyer et al. (2001) define satisfaction as a psychological state in which customers recognize that a product or service meets or exceeds their expectations.

Therefore, when a product or service meets or exceeds initial expectations, customers will feel satisfied, excited, and more connected to the brand. Conversely, disappointment and dissatisfaction occur when performance falls short of expectations, undermining trust and overall satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is a positive emotional state that arises from assessing an enterprise through interactions with all relevant stakeholders. Delivering high-quality service fosters customer satisfaction, a key driver of sustainable competitive advantage

in today's dynamic and highly competitive business environment. Whether the experience is positive or negative, customer satisfaction is essential for maintaining customer loyalty and increasing profitability, market share, and return on investment. Murad (2021) argues that customer satisfaction comprises three key components: perception, emotion, or awareness; directed response; and evaluation duration. However, in academic literature, there are two primary perspectives on satisfaction: as a process and as an outcome (Gustafsson et al., 2015). Therefore, satisfaction can be viewed as a prioritized evaluation of a specific purchasing decision.

Generation Z, often called Gen Z or Zoomers, comprises individuals born between 1997 and 2012, constituting nearly 25 percent of the global population. This generation has purchasing power exceeding 7 trillion USD and is projected to make up approximately 27 percent of the global workforce by 2025. Research on generational perspectives in higher education has identified several unique characteristics of Gen Z, which are profoundly influenced by societal and educational systems that utilize advanced technological platforms (Szymkowiak et al., 2021).

According to Chicca and Shellenbarger (2018), Gen Z shows a stronger instinct and need for personal identity expression than previous generations. This generation seeks independence in thought and action, possesses multitasking abilities, and generates creative ideas and aspirations due to their extensive exposure to diverse information via social media (Seemiller & Grace, 2017; Ozkan & Solmaz, 2015). Gen Z consumers differ significantly from previous generations in evaluating and deriving satisfaction from products, goods, or services. Growing up in the digital age, they have access to vast amounts of information, which allows them to compare offerings from various sources easily. Additionally, Gen Z often shares their opinions on social media, making their satisfaction not just a personal feeling but also an influence on the broader community.

## ***2.2. Relationship between brand image, brand experience, and customer satisfaction***

### **2.2.1. Brand experience**

Brand experience occurs when customers seek, purchase, and consume products, goods, or services (Arnould et al., 2002; Brakus et al., 2008; Holbrook, 2000). It can be divided into three distinct aspects: product experience, shopping and service experience, and consumption experience. In which:

- i) Product experience occurs when consumers engage with a product (Hoch, 2002). This experience can be direct, involving physical contact with the product (such as

touching, holding, or using it) (Hoch & Ha, 1986), or indirect, as when the product is displayed or viewed in an advertisement (Hoch & Ha, 1986; Kempf & Smith, 1998).

- ii) Shopping and service experiences happen when customers engage with the physical environment, staff, store policies, and in-store operations (Hui & Bateson, 1991; Kerin et al., 2002).
- iii) Consumption experience occurs when customers use or enjoy a product or service. It is a multidimensional experience encompassing emotions, imagination, and pleasure (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982).

According to Berry and Carbone (2007), brand experience is derived not only from the functional value of a product but also from the technical and human factors the business provides. Brand experience encompasses customers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses during their interactions with a brand, which include products, goods, services, marketing communications, shopping environments, and brand identity elements (Brakus et al., 2009). Sahin et al. (2011) also emphasize that brand experience is influenced by stimuli related to design, packaging, advertising, and the brand environment. It is a crucial foundation for customer satisfaction (Pham, 2023). A positive brand experience enables businesses to build strong customer relationships and gain a competitive advantage in the market.

Research by Nam et al. (2011), Ana and João (2013), and Klaus and Maklan (2013) demonstrates a positive relationship between brand experience and customer satisfaction. In today's consumer landscape, experiences are crucial in shopping and consumption. Most customers value the overall brand experience as well as its specific elements. Notably, the more engaging, impressive, and emotionally distinctive the brand experience is, the higher the level of customer satisfaction (Keng et al., 2013; Trinh, 2024).

For Gen Z customers, satisfaction stems from product functionality and how the brand communicates, responds, and embodies its core values. Gen Z seeks a seamless experience across both online and offline channels, quick customer service, and personalized engagement. A consistent and positive brand experience boosts satisfaction, loyalty, and word-of-mouth referrals, while a negative experience can swiftly undermine Gen Z's satisfaction with a product. Based on the argument outlined above, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H1: Brand experience has a positive impact on Gen Z customer satisfaction.**

### 2.2.2. Brand image

According to Munson and Spivey (1981), brand image is connected to how individuals perceive their social status. Owning a well-known branded product is often regarded as a symbol of success and elevated social standing. Brand image refers to customers' perceptions and evaluations of a brand, influenced by their actual experiences and the marketing communications they recall from their interactions with the brand (Keller, 1993). It includes tangible elements such as logos, colors, and product designs, as well as intangible values like reputation, style, and the emotions a brand evokes. Nandan (2005) defines brand image as how a brand is perceived in customers' minds, emphasizing that it holds particular significance for younger generations as it is inherently subjective and stems from their viewpoints (Keller, 2015). Brand image is influenced and shaped by marketing activities, social context, and the individual characteristics of target consumers (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). Kotler and Armstrong (2012) highlight that brand image is an essential part of branding and is built through consumers' positive or negative associations when recalling a brand. The essence of brand image is a series of mental evaluations that customers form about a brand they are familiar with, creating a lasting impression through their interactions (Omoriegbe et al., 2019). Thus, brand image is a functional tool for identifying and differentiating products, goods, or services among competing brands based on customer perception.

For Gen Z, a strong and positive brand image enhances trust and increases satisfaction during the purchasing journey. This generation highly values transparency, corporate social responsibility, and personal engagement from brands. If a brand successfully aligns with its values and meets its expectations, its satisfaction increases, leading to positive word-of-mouth recommendations within its communities (Putri & Yasa, 2022). Conversely, if a brand image is inconsistent or lacks authenticity, Gen Z may quickly disengage, sharing negative experiences that can damage the brand's reputation. Furthermore, research has demonstrated the positive impact of brand image on customer satisfaction (Tu & Chih, 2013; Teng et al., 2022). Based on the argument outlined above, we propose the following hypothesis:

#### **H2: Brand image has a positive impact on Gen Z customer satisfaction.**

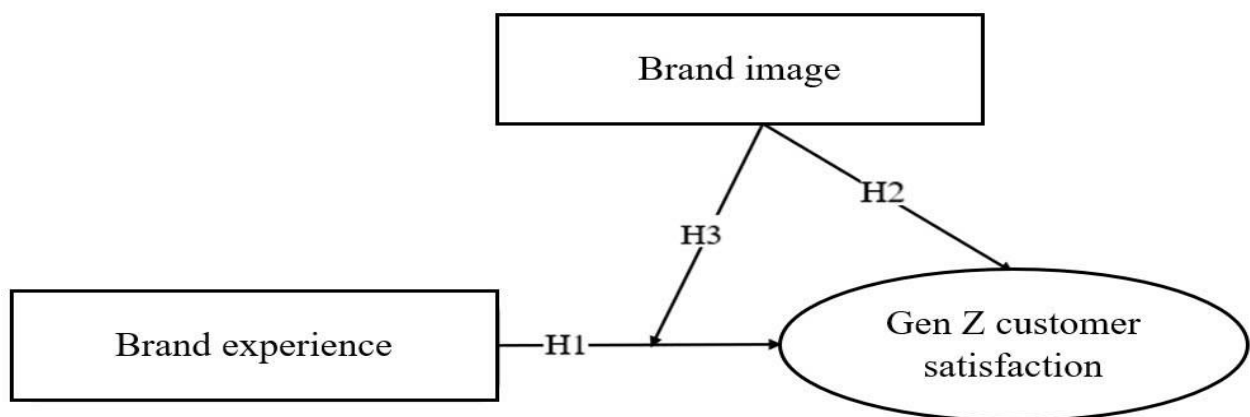
Additionally, this study examines the moderating effect of brand image on the relationship between brand experience and Gen Z's satisfaction. When a brand has a strong, trustworthy, and value-aligned image, Gen Z is likelier to overlook minor negative experiences because they trust its overall value (Davies et al., 2018). However, if a brand has a weak image, even a good experience may not be enough to ensure sustained satisfaction. According to Pham (2023), when comparing similar brand experiences, Gen Z favors and supports brands that leave a more substantial positive impression, meaning that brand image reinforces and

strengthens the relationship between brand experience and customer satisfaction. Based on the argument outlined above, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H3: Brand image positively moderates the relationship between brand experience and Gen Z customer satisfaction.**

### 2.3. Proposed Research Model

Based on the hypotheses outlined above, the author proposes the research model illustrated in Figure 1 as follows:



**Figure 1. Research model**

*Source: Proposed by the authors*

The research model is expressed by the following equation:

$$CS = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * BE + \beta_2 * BI + \beta_3 * BE.BI + \varepsilon$$

In which:

CS (dependent variable): Gen Z customer satisfaction

BI (moderating variable): Brand image

Independent variables ( $X_i$ ): Brand experience (BE), Brand image (BI).

Interaction variable: Brand experience and brand image (BE.BI).

$\beta_k$ : Regression coefficients ( $k = 0, 1, 2, 3$ ).

$\varepsilon$ : Random error term.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Quantitative research

To assess Gen Z's customer satisfaction with brand image and brand experience, the author employs various analytical methods in SPSS 26, including:

- Cronbach's Alpha

- Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)
- Correlation analysis
- Multiple linear regression analysis

These analyses help determine which factors in the research model directly impact Gen Z's customer satisfaction and measure the extent of their influence. Additionally, to examine the moderating role of brand image in the relationship between brand experience and Gen Z customer satisfaction, the study applies the Bootstrapping technique in the Macro Process within SPSS.

### **3.2. Sample size**

The preliminary scale was developed by synthesizing and selecting elements from previous studies, including Brakus et al. (2009), Nysveen and Pedersen (2014), and Makanyeza and Chikazhe (2017), which identified a total of 20 observed variables. To ensure the scale's relevance to the research context and target respondents, the research team held group discussions with several Gen Z customers and five experts in economics. The results showed a high level of agreement regarding the suitability of the preliminary scale. The study utilizes a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

According to Hair et al. (2010), a minimum sample size ratio of 5:1 and an optimal ratio of 10:1 were applied for EFA analysis. Given the 20 observed variables, the minimum sample size was calculated as  $20 * 10 = 200$  questionnaires. However, to account for potentially invalid questionnaires during data cleaning, 250 questionnaires were distributed. The study employed non-probability convenience sampling by distributing an online survey via Google Forms to Gen Z consumers in shopping communities on social media platforms and e-commerce sites from October 2024 to January 2025. A total of 225 valid questionnaires were collected.

## **4. Findings and discussion**

### **4.1. Descriptive statistics**

- Gender: 46.76 percent female, 53.24 percent male.
- Education level: 60.00 percent have a college/university degree or higher, 29.73 percent completed high school, and 9.73 percent have a postgraduate degree.
- Income: 49.73 percent earn less than 5 million VND per month, 40.00 percent earn between 5 - 10 million VND per month, and 9.73 percent earn more than 10 million VND per month.

- Occupation: 54.59 percent are students, 24.86 percent are office workers, 14.59 percent are freelancers or business owners, and 4.86 percent belong to other categories.

The average response scores were all above 4.05, indicating that most respondents agreed with the survey statements. This suggests that the collected data is suitable for further analysis.

**Table 1. Reliability test results**

Scale	Sign	Cronbach's Alpha	Corrected Total Correlation	Item- Source
Brand experience	BE1	0.815	0.587	Brakus et al. (2009), Nysveen and Pedersen (2014), and the authors.
	BE2		0.562	
	BE3		0.549	
	BE4		0.531	
	BE5		0.524	
	BE6		0.510	
	BE7		0.508	
	BE8		0.486	
	BE9		0.479	
	BE10		0.452	
Brand image	BI1	0.809	0.612	Makanyeza and Chikazhe (2017) and the authors.
	BI2		0.607	
	BI3		0.588	
	BI4		0.565	
	BI5		0.542	
	BI6			
Gen Z's customer satisfaction	CS1	0.824	0.635	Nysveen and Pedersen (2014) and the authors
	CS2		0.628	
	CS3		0.614	
	CS4		0.60	

*Source: Data analysis results from SPSS26*

The reliability test results for the measurement scales indicate that Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for scales exceed the threshold of 0.7, ensuring internal consistency. Additionally, the corrected item-total correlation coefficients for each observed variable within each factor are all above 0.3, while the Cronbach's Alpha if items deleted are lower than the overall Cronbach's Alpha. It confirms that no observed variables were eliminated, and the measurement scale meets reliability and discriminant validity requirements. Therefore, it



qualifies for further exploratory factor analysis (EFA) according to the standards of Hair et al. (2010).

**Table 2. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) results**

Observed variable	Factor	
	1	2
BI3	0.797	
BI5	0.775	
BI2	0.764	
BI6	0.761	
BI4	0.751	
BI1	0.739	
BE1		0.820
BE4		0.813
BE7		0.802
BE3		0.791
BE5		0.784
BE6		0.775
BE2		0.742
BE9		0.731
BE8		0.725
BE10		0.719
Eigenvalue	2.895	1.926
Total Variance Explained	71.032	79.598
KMO Coefficient = 0.807		
Bartlett's Test	Approximate Chi-Square Value	5084.213
	df	250
	Sig.	0.000
CS1	0.812	
CS2	0.804	
CS3	0.796	
CS4	0.788	
Eigenvalue	1.857	
Total Variance Explained	78.603	
KMO Coefficient = 0.814		
Bartlett's Test	Approximate Chi-Square Value	284.213
	df	4

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Sig.	0.000
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*Source: Data analysis results from SPSS26*

The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for the brand image and experience scales produced a KMO coefficient of 0.807, which satisfies the requirement (greater than 0.5 and less than 1). The Sig. value of Bartlett’s test is 0.000 (satisfying the condition of less than 0.05). Additionally, the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) method combined with Varimax rotation was used to assess the degree of explanation of observed variables for factors. The results indicate that the research data were extracted into two groups (with an Eigenvalue > 1), with a total variance of 79.598 percent. Furthermore, the factor loadings of observed variables were more significant than 0.5 and converged into groups of variables with similar characteristics, as initially predicted.

The factor analysis results for the dependent variable scale show that the KMO coefficient reached a value of 0.814 (greater than 0.5 and less than 1). The Chi-square statistic of Bartlett’s test reached 284.213 with a Sig value of 0.000 (less than 0.05). The factor loadings were all above 0.5, and at an Eigenvalue of 1.857 (greater than 1), one factor was extracted with a total variance explained of 78.603 percent (greater than 50 percent). It confirms that the collected data meets the required standards (Hair et al., 2010).

**Table 3. Pearson correlation analysis results**

		CS	BE	BI
CS	Correlation Coefficient	1	0.705**	0.781**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	225	225	225
BE	Correlation Coefficient	0.705**	1	0.316**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	225	225	225
BI	Correlation Coefficient	0.781**	0.316**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	225	225	225

Note: \*\* corresponds to  $p < 0.01$

*Source: Data analysis results from SPSS26*

Before performing regression analysis, the Pearson correlation results demonstrate a strong correlation between independent factors and the dependent factor ( $r > 0.4$ ) with a significance level of  $\text{Sig} < 0.05$ . Furthermore, there is no evidence of multicollinearity among the independent factors (Hair et al., 2010). Thus, all factors fulfill the conditions needed for regression analysis.

In linear regression analysis using the Enter method, all factors are introduced simultaneously to evaluate the theoretical model.

**Table 4. Model Summary**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted-R <sup>2</sup>	Standard Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	0.753 <sup>a</sup>	0.721	0.708	0.297	1.895

*Source: Data analysis results from SPSS26*

The analysis results indicate that the coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) reaches 0.721, demonstrating that the model explains 72.1 percent of the variance in the dependent variable through independent factors. It suggests a high model fit. The adjusted R<sup>2</sup> is also 0.708, showing minimal deviation from R<sup>2</sup>, confirming that the model does not suffer from redundant variables and is appropriate for the overall dataset. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.895 indicates no autocorrelation in the model, ensuring the independence of residuals.

**Table 5. ANOVA result**

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	124.651	2	62.254	32.459	0.000
Residual	67.667	223	0.367		
Total	192.318	224			

*Source: Data analysis results from SPSS26*

The ANOVA analysis and F-test results also indicate that the statistical value has a Sig value of 0.000, confirming that the regression model is statistically significant.

**Table 6. Multiple regression analysis result**

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.	Collinearity	
	Coefficients					Beta	Statistics
	B	Standard Deviation	Tolerance				VIF
1 (Constant)	1.037	0.034		2.158	0.015	0.611	1.819
BE	0.238	0.026	0.251	5.342	0.000	0.652	1.533
BI	0.172	0.020	0.195	4.175	0.001	0.594	1.647

Dependent variable: CS

Source: Data analysis results from SPSS26

The hypothesis testing results indicate that factors have a significance level (Sig.) less than 0.05. As presented in the table, the independent variables' variance inflation factor (VIF) is below 2, confirming that multicollinearity does not exist among the independent variables. Additionally, the assumption test for the normal distribution of residuals shows a standard deviation (Std. Dev.) of 0.969 and a mean value of -1.13E-16, indicating that the assumption of normal residual distribution in the regression model is not violated. The scatter plot demonstrates the random dispersion of residual values within a range crossing the zero intercept, and the observed points do not deviate excessively from the expected straight line.

Therefore, the assumption of a linear relationship is not violated. As a result, all proposed research hypotheses are accepted, namely:

- The standardized regression coefficient of brand experience (BE) is  $0.251 > 0$ , meaning that brand experience positively impacts Gen Z's customer satisfaction.
- The standardized regression coefficient of brand image (BI) is  $0.195 > 0$ , indicating that brand image positively influences Gen Z's customer satisfaction.

Before assessing the moderating effect of brand image on the relationship between brand experience and Gen Z's customer satisfaction, the authors calculated representative factors by averaging independent, dependent, and moderating variables. They then applied the bootstrap method in the Macro Process.

**Table 7. Moderating effect results**

Model	Coeff	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	1.2307	0.6482	1.3765	0.0164	2.4322	0.3432
BE	0.2156	0.1875	1.4811	0.0322	0.1359	0.5761
BI	0.1338	0.1934	2.0989	0.0176	0.0215	0.4901
Int_1	0.1526	0.0812	3.4573	0.0001	0.0806	0.2875

Product terms key:  
Int\_1: BE\*BI

*Source: Data analysis results from SPSS26*

The analysis results indicate that the p-value of the interaction term (Int\_1) is less than 0.05, confirming that brand image has a moderating effect on the relationship between brand experience and Gen Z's customer satisfaction. Additionally, the regression coefficient of the interaction term (Int\_1) is positive, and the regression coefficient of brand experience on Gen Z's customer satisfaction is also positive. It suggests that the relationship between brand experience and Gen Z's customer satisfaction strengthens as the moderating brand image increases. Therefore, hypothesis H3 is accepted.

The research findings show that brand image and experience positively influence Gen Z's customer satisfaction. Furthermore, brand image is a moderating factor in the relationship between brand experience and customer satisfaction. Based on the analysis results, the research model is represented in the following standardized beta coefficient equation:

$$CS = 0.251BE + 0.195BI + 0.152*BE.BI + \varepsilon$$

This finding highlights a distinct difference in how Gen Z perceives satisfaction compared to previous generations. Unlike Gen X and Gen Y, who prioritize product quality and long-established brand reputation, Gen Z emphasizes personalized experiences and interactions and the value that brands provide. They look for high-quality products and a seamless, convenient, multi-channel shopping experience that fosters emotional connections to the brand. Furthermore, Gen Z shows less brand loyalty than earlier generations, as they are more easily drawn to brands that consistently refresh their image to remain relevant and engaging. These insights offer businesses a valuable basis for creating more effective strategic approaches.

## 5. Implications

The research findings indicate that brand image and experience positively affect Gen Z customer satisfaction. Additionally, brand image serves as a moderating factor in this

relationship. Therefore, enterprises must implement effective management strategies to improve customer experience and establish a strong brand image.

Firstly, enterprises should strengthen a consistent and personalized brand experience by crafting a seamless customer journey across online and offline channels, ensuring that every brand touchpoint provides a positive experience. Utilizing AI and Big Data can aid in personalizing experiences and delivering tailored content and promotions for each Gen Z customer. Moreover, boosting engagement on social media through creative content, trying out new trends, and maintaining direct communication with customers will further enhance brand relationships.

Secondly, enterprises should establish a strong and consistent brand image by shaping a unique identity that aligns with key values such as sustainability, social responsibility, and innovation trends that appeal to today's young consumers. Maintaining a consistent brand image across all communication channels, including content, visuals, and customer interaction style, is crucial. Collaborating with KOLs (Key Opinion Leaders) and Influencers who have a strong presence in the Gen Z community can boost brand recognition and foster stronger connections with customers.

Furthermore, enterprises must improve service quality and responsiveness. Training employees in communication and problem-solving skills will help create a positive customer experience. Implementing AI-powered chatbots and 24/7 customer service will ensure instant support and efficient responses. Collecting customer feedback through surveys and online reviews enables businesses to adjust their services promptly, improving satisfaction levels.

Additionally, enterprises should also leverage community engagement and customer loyalty by creating online customer communities and encouraging Gen Z to share their experiences and engage with the brand. Developing flexible loyalty programs offering financial incentives and exclusive experiences will improve customer retention. Regularly hosting events, workshops, and interactive campaigns can strengthen the emotional connections between customers and the brand.

Lastly, enterprises should adjust their pricing strategies and policies to cater to Gen Z. Implementing flexible pricing models, such as service bundles, subscription plans, or installment payments, will better align with Gen Z's spending habits. Innovative promotional strategies, including behavior-based discounts, gamification, and exclusive offers for young consumers, can boost engagement. Clear return and warranty policies will also help build trust and instill confidence in customers when choosing a brand.

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