

The effect of marketing via Instagram on generation Z's preference for gyms and the role of brand image as a moderating variable

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CHRONICLE

Article history:

Received: December 26, 2023

Received in revised format: January 29, 2024

Accepted: March 19, 2024

Available online: March 19, 2024

Keywords:

Instagram

Gyms

Generation Z

Jordan

Gyms

Entertainment

Interaction

Trendiness

Customization

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effect of marketing via Instagram on Generation Z's preference for gyms in Jordan, so it would be helpful for marketers of gyms to be aware of using Instagram to attract Generation Z as their potential customers. Moreover, a sample questionnaire was carried out with 138 respondents, which were mostly female respondents (74%) and male respondents (26%). Additionally, 51% of the total number of respondents were 21-24 years old. Therefore, the data was analyzed by applying various statistical techniques such as Cronbach's alpha for testing the reliability of the data, and multiple regression using SPSS version 22 for examining the hypotheses. Likewise, the results showed that Instagram and these variables (entertainment, interaction, trendiness, and customization) have an effect on customers' brand choice, but trendiness did not have a significant effect on the consumer's brand choice, but after testing the effect of the brand image, it became clear that it has significant effect, and therefore it was concluded that brand image has an important effect on customer's brand choice.

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1. Introduction

During this time with the development of technology, users have an open availability to the world through social media. Moreover, there are 1.35 billion Instagram users worldwide, which shows that Instagram is the fourth most popular platform after Facebook, WhatsApp, and Facebook Messenger (Clement, 2023). In addition, many gyms are considered service providers. Additionally, integrating social media content should be carried out in their marketing plan, so fitness centers could succeed (Naomi & Ferdi, 2022). Therefore, this research was conducted to discover the effect of Instagram as a marketing tool on Generation Z's preference for gyms. Therefore, Generation Z was born between 1997 and 2012 (BERESFORD, 2024), so the demand for fitness centers has rapidly expanded, becoming a trend for customers to discover the impact of utilizing Instagram for attracting individuals to the gym. The main objective of this study is to perceive the effect of Instagram with these variables (Entertainment, Interaction, Trendiness, and Customization) on the preferences of Generation Z in Jordan gyms. In addition, to detect the moderating role of the brand image in the influence of Instagram's social media marketing (Entertainment, Interaction, Trendiness, and Customization) on the fitness center preferences of Generation Z in Jordan. This research aims to investigate the effect of Instagram on the preference of Generation Z for gyms and answer this question: What is the effect of Instagram on Generation Z's preference for gyms in Jordan? More specific is to answer the following questions:

Q1: To what extent Instagram's social media marketing elements (Entertainment, Interaction, Trendiness, and Customization) affect Generation Z's choice of gyms?

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ISSN 2561-8156 (Online) - ISSN 2561-8148 (Print)

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doi: 10.5267/j.ijdns.2024.3.016

Q2: Does brand image moderate the effect of Instagram's social media marketing on Generation Z's choice of fitness centers

This study would be beneficial for marketers at fitness centers and gym owners who would like to take more advantage of social media marketing to attract their potential customers. Especially Generation Z because this generation is most likely to have an active lifestyle, so they represent a percentage of 36% who exercise regularly and 50% of them are interested in starting a gym membership (Phillips, 2024). Moreover, using social media marketing and conducting it effectively can help raise brand awareness of fitness centers, to reach more audiences online and build connections with them.

The study illustrates that there is an understanding of the preference of Generation Z for fitness centers, which is influenced by marketing through Instagram, and this proves that it is necessary to attract Generation Z members to gyms by their marketers. However, according to the researchers, there are not a lot of studies done in Jordan about this subject. Also, this study provides some valuable insights that most individuals who are aged 23 years are interested in fitness centers and make their choices according to being exposed to Instagram marketing and addressing that they have an active lifestyle. Therefore, this study adds some information and data that are beneficial for gyms in the parts of social media and consumer behavior.

2. Literature Review

Businesses can apply their marketing goals on social media through social media marketing by promoting different products or services on social media that lead to results. Moreover, Instagram has been a powerful marketing tool and many businesses are utilizing Instagram as a marketing strategy due to its global usage (Berthon et al., 2009). In addition, Instagram contains around 33 million users who were born between 1997 and 2012, which shows that Instagram is the most used platform among Generation Z (Dixon, 2023). However, most businesses are carrying out their marketing strategy on Instagram because of its popularity among users. In addition, Instagram is applied by 81% of social media for search products or services (Ambrose et al., 2020). According to Les Mills' report, which is a global fitness company that provides classes, generation Z is the most active generation in gyms. Moreover, while Generation Z is always active on social media, there is a chance to catch their attention by sharing online content (Phillips, 2024). However, the researchers indicated that no exact study has been done about the effect of Instagram on Generation Z's preference for gyms.

2.1 Instagram Platform

Instagram is a mobile application where users share photos and videos with people who follow them, and it is one of the biggest social media platforms with 2 billion active users in 2022. In addition, Instagram allows users to edit photos and videos within the app as well as share stories, which stay for 24 hours and disappear (Eldridge, 2024). In addition, Instagram allows users to post short videos, which are called reels up to 90 seconds, and use effects while editing (Meta Center, 2022). Moreover, businesses are using Instagram to promote their products and services (Tekulve & Kelly, 2013).

2.2 Instagram and Generation Z

Generation Z spends most of their time on Instagram. Furthermore, this generation has grown through the digital era by being exposed to the world through the internet, which made it an important part of their lives. As a result, this development made Generation Z attached to social media platforms like Instagram (Mantooth, 2023). Consequently, Instagram has witnessed high growth among young users over the recent years (Vogels et al., 2022) with more than half of Generation Z adults utilizing Instagram daily (Vogels et al., 2022). Additionally, Generation Z is becoming responsible decision-makers in a short time and they are developing changes in their environment (Liu, 2024). Furthermore, companies target Generation Z due to their buying power, which is higher than the previous generations (Djafarova & Fouts, 2022). On top of that, marketers consider Generation Z an outstanding opportunity. As a result, this research is conducted to explore the impact of Instagram on Generation Z's choice of fitness centers.

2.3 Fitness Centers and Generation Z

Fitness centers provide several services like group classes and weight training areas, which makes it a service-based business (Freitas & Lacerda, 2019). Furthermore, the fitness industry is considered a service provider, so scholars indicated that Generation Z goes to gyms and utilizes these services.

2.4 Instagram and Consumer Purchase Behavior

Purchase behavior is defined as the process of making a decision in which a customer determines to buy and consume the product or service instead of choosing something else there are 5 stages of purchasing behavior: needs assessment, searching about the product, comparing it to other products, deciding what they want to purchase and how they rate the product after purchasing it (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Social media made this process easier by providing important instruments. As a result, a huge investment must be made in marketing efforts on social media to allow companies to share their messages with a large number of their targeted customers. Moreover, online shops and service providers are using Instagram as a social media for promotion because it is a great platform for marketing efforts due to its organization and the content that can be easily managed, so to examine the practicality of products as well as services before launching them officially. In addition, companies receive feedback automatically from their customers, so they can work further on developing them. In addition, the availability of social media has affected both consumer behavior and marketing strategies, as consumers like to use social media for many objectives, and one of them is the purchase of products. Plus, this research has shown the positive impact of the information posted on social media on the consumer purchasing procedure, and social media is used as a suitable platform for product and

brand searching because it is used by most of the respondents as a way to know more about specific products and brands. Additionally, Instagram has been progressing rapidly for several years in the section of buying online, which has led to the growth of the e-commerce market.

2.5 Social Media Marketing and Brand Choice (Brand Image)

Social media includes a few components such as entertainment, trendiness, interaction, and customization (Rimadias et al., 2021). As a result, the following factors were developed and discussed below:

Entertainment is known as the Instagram platform is an entertainment platform, as it provides entertaining and diverse content to all customers, and marketers aim to provide entertaining content to attract these customers (Agichtein et al., 2008). The relationship with customers can be strengthened by providing a video-sharing feature that allows them to share their occasion with others (Dessart et al., 2015). This makes entertainment an important element of social media marketing.

Interaction is the degree to which social media platforms allow for two-way communication and sharing of opinions and information is an important aspect to consider (Dessart et al., 2015; Kim & Ko, 2012). This feature enables consumers to connect with others who have similar interests and discuss specific products or brands on these platforms (Muntinga et al., 2011). For instance, Instagram provides a comment section for users to express their opinions with an option to share content through stories or reels. On the other hand, this level of interaction surpasses the effectiveness of traditional media channels like print, TV, and radio (Bowen, 2015). Indeed, the ability to engage with others and contribute to user-generated content plays a role in strengthening consumer attitudes toward brands and their intention to make purchases (Fischer & Reuber, 2011). Therefore, when brands post information that aligns with the preferences of their targeted audience on social media, it fosters discussions and improves relationships between consumers and brands (Manthiou et al., 2013).

Trendiness is how to obtain updated news and information on various products or services through social media platforms. Consumers are likely to exhibit a propensity to actively pursue up-to-date and popular information related to diverse brand offerings on social media channels, leading to an impetus to remain current concerning brand evolution through the pursuit of pertinent trends (Rimadias et al., 2021). Furthermore, updated information can be a significant factor in assisting customers to attract attention evoke positive customer emotions, and drive loyalty intentions toward products or services (Liu et al., 2021). Moreover, the effect of trendiness on Instagram is contingent upon the age of customers. Indeed, previous research has demonstrated that younger customers are more inclined towards following trends and are impacted by emerging fashion (Al-Haddad et al., 2023).

Customization is a messaging and marketing service designed to enhance customer satisfaction through the provision of customizable products or services and effortless access to information. Ultimately, this approach adds value to the customer's experience (Cheung et al., 2021). Regarding the development of the concept of customization over time, in the beginning; the dominant mode of manufacturing was mass production to reduce costs at the expense of customization. In the late twentieth century, the concept of customization took greater attention (WOLNIAK, 2023). As the concept of customization developed over time, it began to play an important role in customers' choice of brands (Althuwaini, 2022).

Brand choice is defined as having a preference from a group of other brands after considering brand awareness, which is when the customer knows a specific brand and acknowledges it in different situations, so they can remember it. As a result, customers research their brand choice by default or by being exposed to marketing ads, so some ads motivate them to believe that a specific brand is a perfect fit for them (Alam & Rubel, 2014). Therefore, it is considered the dependent variable and it is based on the hypothesis and the model and it represents the brand choice of products or services, so this study is focused on gyms, which contain some services like group classes, weight training areas, and more for the consumers (Wang & Chiu, 2023).

Brand image is how a customer views a brand, which is the moderating variable of this study and it is communicated from the group of impressions, which was taken from a diversity of origins with an image that has a specific idea and can be interpreted by the receiver (Kapferer, 2012). Companies transmit their brand by utilizing some marketing strategies, so they can present their idea, so people can view it in the way they want (Nandan, 2005). However, brand image is the moderating variable in this study, and it refers to the brand image expressed by gyms.

3. Research Hypotheses

Based on the discussion above and to answer the study questions, the following hypotheses have been developed:

H₀₁: There is no statistically significant effect of Instagram's social media marketing elements (Entertainment, Interaction, Trendiness, and Customization) on Generation Z's choice of fitness centers, at $\alpha \leq 0.05$.

H₀₂: Brand image does not moderate the effect of Instagram's social media marketing on Generation Z's choice of fitness centers, at $\alpha \leq 0.05$.

4. The Research Model

The model of this research was adopted and developed by researchers based on previous research. (Fernandes & Moreira, 2019).

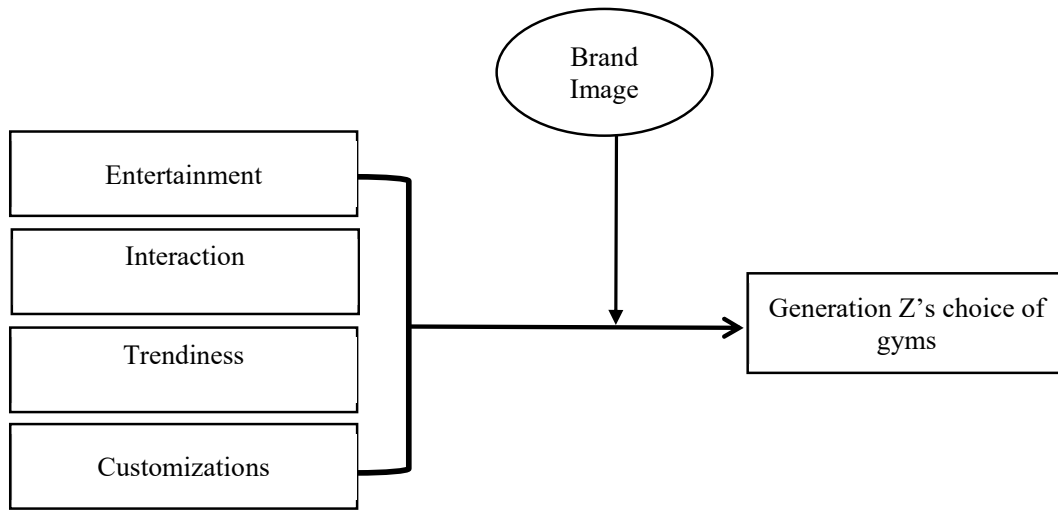


Fig. 1. Research model

5. Methodology

5.1 Research Design

In this study, the researchers utilized a quantitative approach, and primary data was collected through an online survey using a questionnaire. Next, this study considers fitness center brand choice (3 items) as the independent variable (Y), and entertainment (3 items), interaction (3 items), trendiness (3 items), and customization (3 items) as dependent variables (X). In contrast, brand image (4 items) is considered as a moderating variable. Thus, each variable is evaluated with five-point Likert scale questions, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Meanwhile, SPSS software version 22 is utilized to carry out the analysis of the data.

Population and Sample: The research population consists of Instagram users belonging to Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012. Likewise, regarding the sample, the researchers targeted Generation Z who are in Amman, and the sampling technique mixes a convenience sampling method with a non-probability sampling method, so one of the questions in the questionnaire is: "Do you use Instagram?" If the answer is yes, the participants are requested to complete the following questions and if they do not use Instagram, their answer will be excluded, the study utilized a 138-person sample size.

5.2 Data Analysis

The data was analyzed by employing SPSS version 22 to conduct the following tests: demographic analysis, validity and reliability tests, descriptive analysis, and regression analysis.

5.3 Demographic Profile

As shown in Table 1, the sample profile had mostly female respondents (73.9%) and male respondents (26.1%). Additionally, 50.7% of the total number of respondents were 21-24 years old.

Table 1
Demographic Analysis

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	102	73.9
	Male	36	26.1
	Total	138	100.0
Age	13-16	8	5.8
	17-20	42	30.4
	21-24	70	50.7
	25-28	18	13.0
	Total	138	100.0

5.4 Validity and Reliability Tests

To ensure the validity of each variable, the researchers used factor analysis with KMO (Glen, 2016; Kaiser et al., 1974) and conducted a reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha. Some authors stated that factor loading of more than 50% is accepted and most statisticians agreed that if the alpha value is 0.60 or higher it is acceptable (Hair et al., 2010), it turned out that all variables were higher than 0.60 for factor loading, so this means that all variables are valid and reliable as shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Validity and Reliability Tests

	F1	KMO	Chi ²	Variance	Sig.	Alpha
ENT1	.801					
ENT2	.780	.672	43.939	65.538	0.000	.732
ENT3	.847					
INT1	.834					
INT2	.861	.618	42.315	63.022	0.000	.704
INT3	.673					
TR1	.806					
TR2	.846	.691	63.324	71.186	0.000	.787
TR3	.878					
CT1	.849					
CT2	.725	.646	40.887	63.734	0.000	.706
CT3	.815					
CCG1	.850					
CCG2	.782	.680	48.005	66.918	0.000	.745
CCG3	.821					
BI1	.782					
BI2	.811	.716	100.924	65.666	0.000	.817
BI3	.837					
BI4	.810					

5.5 Descriptive Analysis

A descriptive analysis was conducted for each variable in Table 3. As presented in Table 3, all variables were at the medium level, customer choice of gym came in the first rank with a mean value of 3.536 customizations was in second rank with a mean of value 3.531 and tenderness third with 3.493, and interaction was in fourth rank with a mean value of 3.488 and brand image was in the before last rank with a mean value of 3.478 and entertainment was in the last rank with a mean value of 3.464.

Table 3
Descriptive check (One-Sample Statistics)

	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.
Entertainment	3.464	0.845	4.562	0.000
Interaction	3.488	0.874	4.639	0.000
Trendiness	3.493	0.845	4.843	0.000
Customization	3.531	0.722	6.118	0.000
Customer Choice	3.536	0.752	5.920	0.000
Brand Image	3.478	0.793	5.012	0.000

T-Tabulated=0.960

5.6 Relationships among Variables and Sub-Variables

The relationships among independent sub-variables are between 0.384 and 0.943, which means that there is a strong relationship between entertainment with both trendiness and customization, but a medium relationship with interaction. Moreover, customer choice has a strong relationship with entertainment, trendiness, and customization, while it has a medium relationship with interaction. Finally, a brand image also has a strong relationship with entertainment, trendiness, customization, and brand customer choice.

Table 4
Pearson Bivariate Correlation

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Entertainment						
2 Interaction	0.384**					
3 Trendiness	0.943**	0.395**				
4 Customization	0.904**	0.417**	0.874**			
5 Customer Choice	0.935**	0.367**	0.886**	0.963**		
6 Brand Image	0.973**	0.391**	0.973**	0.940**	0.951**	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

5.7 Hypotheses Testing

Regression Analysis

To test the hypotheses, the researchers used SPSS and conducted a multiple regression analysis (See Table 4).

Table 4
Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	Sig.
1	.976 ^a	.953	.952	678.272	0.000
2	.978 ^b	.956	.954	573.086	0.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), CT, INT, TR, ENT, b. Predictors: (Constant), CT, INT, TR, ENT, BI

c. Dependent Variable: CCG

In Table 4, model 1 shows that when we regress the four independent variables together (entertainment, trendiness, interaction, and customization) against customer choice of a gym, the relationship is very strong where $r=0.976$, and they can explain 95.3% of variation on customer choice of a gym where ($R^2=0.953$, $F=678.272$, $Sig.=0.000$). In addition, model 2 shows when researchers are using a brand image as a moderator the relationship is also strong where $r=0.978$ and together can explain 95.6% of variation on customer choice of a gym, where ($R^2=0.956$, $F=573.086$, $Sig.=0.000$).

Table 5
Multiple Regression Analysis

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.146	.078		1.884	.062
	Entertainment	.376	.058	.422	6.502	.000
	Interaction	.037	.018	.043	2.100	.038
	Trendiness	.074	.051	.083	1.451	.149
	Customization	.702	.047	.673	14.982	.000
2	(Constant)	.148	.076		1.963	.052
	Entertainment	.248	.072	.279	3.445	.001
	Interaction	.029	.018	.033	1.627	.106
	Trendiness	.266	.084	.298	3.170	.002
	Customization	.560	.068	.537	8.271	.000
	Brand Image	.454	.160	.478	2.841	.005

a. Dependent Variable: CCG, T-Tabulated=0.960

Furthermore, to test the effect of the four independent variables on customer choice of a gym, model 1 shows customization has the highest significant effect where $\beta=0.673$, $t=14.982$, $Sig.=.000$, followed by entertainment where $\beta=0.422$, $t=6.502$, $Sig.=0.000$, then interaction has a significant effect where $\beta=-0.043$, $t=2.100$, $Sig.=0.038$, finally trendiness does not have a significant effect where $\beta=.083$, $t=1.451$, $Sig.=0.149$. Therefore, for H_{01} the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative has been accepted there is a statistically significant influence of Instagram's social media marketing elements (Entertainment, Interaction, and Customization) affecting Generation Z's choice of fitness centers, at $\alpha \leq 0.05$. While trendiness does not have a significant effect.

For model 2, where brand image is used as a moderator, Table 5 shows that customization has the highest significant effect where $\beta=0.537$, $t=8.271$, $Sig.=.000$, followed by entertainment where $\beta=0.279$, $t=3.445$, $Sig.=0.001$, then trendiness has a significant effect where $\beta=0.298$, $t=3.170$, $Sig.=0.002$, while interaction does not have a significant effect where $\beta=0.033$, $t=1.627$, $Sig.=0.106$, and. Therefore, for H_{02} the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative is accepted, brand image has a moderating action on the effect of Instagram's social media marketing on Generation Z's choice of fitness centers, at $\alpha \leq 0.05$. More specifically, social media marketing elements (Entertainment, Trendiness, and Customization) affect Generation Z's choice of fitness centers, at $\alpha \leq 0.05$, while Interaction does not affect Generation Z's choice of fitness centers, at $\alpha \leq 0.05$.

6. Discussion

This study was directed to investigate the effect of Instagram's social media marketing constructs (entertainment, trendiness, interaction, and customization) on customer choice of a gym, and the moderating role of brand image on the effect of Instagram's social media marketing constructs (entertainment, trendiness, interaction, and customization) on customer choice of a gym. Results indicated that there is a strong relationship between entertainment with both trendiness and customization, but a medium relationship with interaction. Moreover, customer choice of gym has a strong relationship with entertainment, trendiness, and customization, while it has a medium relationship with interaction. Finally, a brand image also has a strong relationship with entertainment, trendiness, customization, and brand customer choice. Furthermore, findings indicate that there is a statistically significant influence of Instagram's social media marketing on Generation Z's choice of gym. Customization has the highest significant effect, followed by entertainment, where interaction has a significant effect, while trendiness does not have a significant effect. Moreover, when using a brand image as a moderator, results show that brand image has a moderating action on the effect of Instagram's social media marketing on Generation Z's choice of gym, where Customization has the highest significant effect, followed by entertainment, then trendiness, while interaction does not have a significant effect. Such results match with prior studies, Instagram has been a powerful marketing tool and many businesses are utilizing Instagram as a marketing strategy due to its global usage (Berthon et al., 2009). Social media components such as entertainment, trendiness, interaction, and customization affect consumer behavior and purchase decision-making (Rimadias et al., 2021). Instagram provides entertaining content to attract customers (Agichtein et al., 2008). Interaction allows sharing of opinions and information with others (Dessart et al., 2015; Kim & Ko, 2012), so facilitating interaction is better than other social media channels like print, TV, and radio (John Bowen, 2015), and better engagement to develop positive attitudes toward brands and purchasing (Fischer & Reuber, 2011). Though Instagram supports brands with preferable information, it enhances the relationships between consumers and brands (Manthiou et al., 2013). Related to trendiness Instagram provides updates about brand development and new trends (Rimadias et al., 2021). Updated information attracts customer attention and drives loyalty toward brands (Liu et al., 2021). Trendiness on Instagram is affected by the age of customers, younger customers follow more than older customers (Al-Haddad et al., 2023). Customization increases customer satisfaction and adds value to the customer's experience (Cheung et al., 2021). In the late twentieth century, the concept of customization took greater attention (WOLNIAK, 2023). Customization began to play a crucial role in customers' choice of brands (Althuwaini,

2022). Concerning brand choice, customers research their brand choice and are motivated and attracted by marketing ads (Alam & Rubel, 2014). Finally, brand image has a specific idea in the mind of the customer (Kapferer, 2012). Organizations use different marketing strategies to present their idea to be viewed by customers as they want (Nandan, 2005).

7. Conclusion

This study was conducted to provide a better understanding of the impact of marketing via Instagram on Generation Z's Brand choice and test the role of Brand image as a moderating variable. However, the researchers targeted Generation Z who are in Jordan, and a quantitative approach was used to conduct the study. As a result, it was found that the relationships among independent sub-variables are medium to strong, and medium to strong with customer choice, while they have strong relationships with a brand image.

Results show that Instagram social media marketing constructs affect together (entertainment, trendiness, interaction, and customization) customer choice of a gym. Furthermore, they affect customer choice of a gym in the presence of brand image as a moderator. Furthermore, model 1 shows customization has the highest significant effect on customer choice of a gym, followed by entertainment, then interaction, while trendiness does not have a significant effect on Generation Z's choice of gym. Model 2 shows when brand image is used as a moderator, customization has the highest significant effect followed by entertainment, then trendiness while interaction does not have a significant effect on customer choice of a gym.

In the end, the study recommended doing research about the effect of marketing via Instagram on Generation Z's preference for gyms on a larger audience and using a convenience sample method. With more than 300 respondents and studying, which type of Instagram content attracts Generation Z customers to a certain gym, this can be carried out by working closely with marketers at a gym, so they can test and optimize which type of content gets Generation Z customers to become a member at the gym?

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