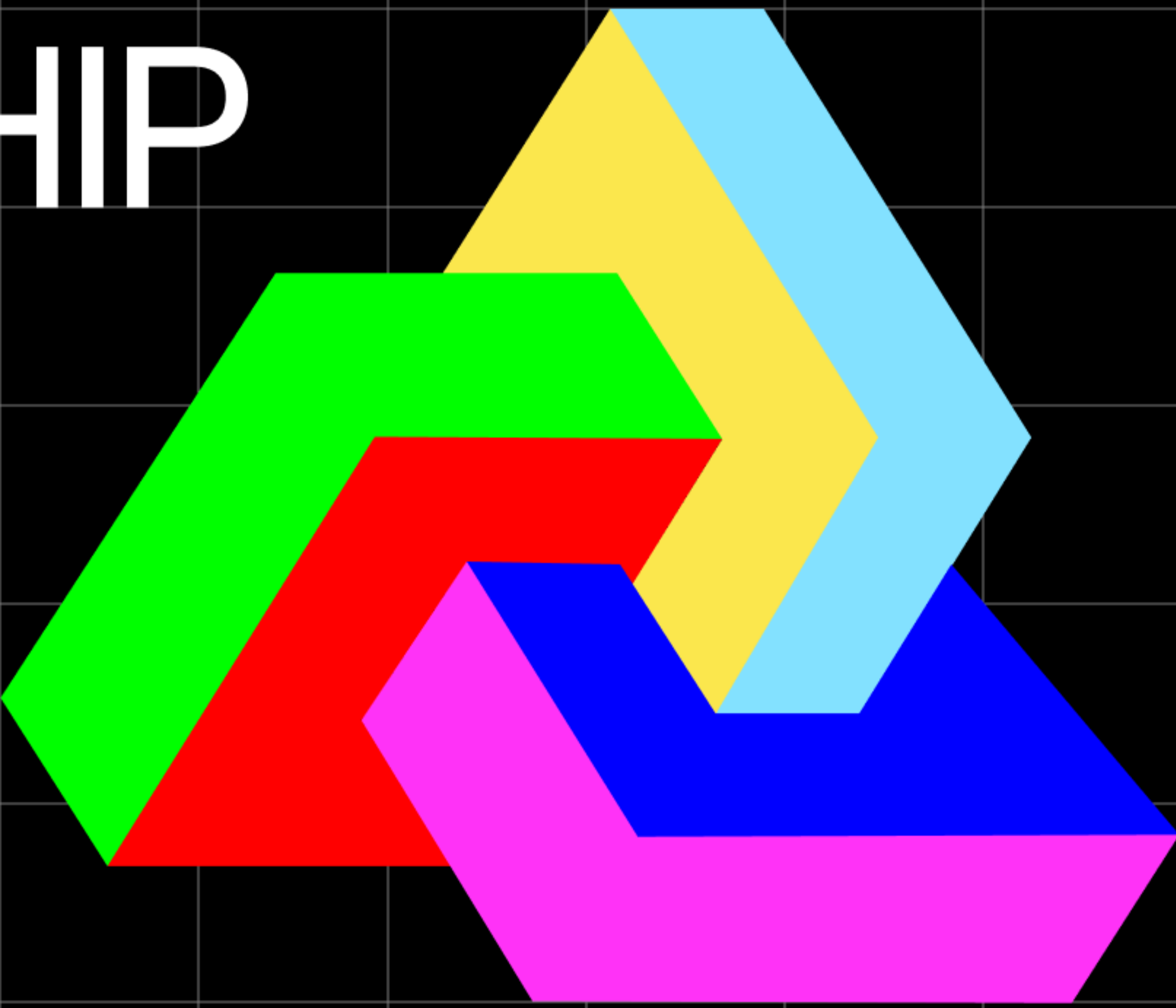


BRAND RELATIONSHIP DESIGN

Why Confidence Building Experiences
Keep Customers Satisfied

 R/GA



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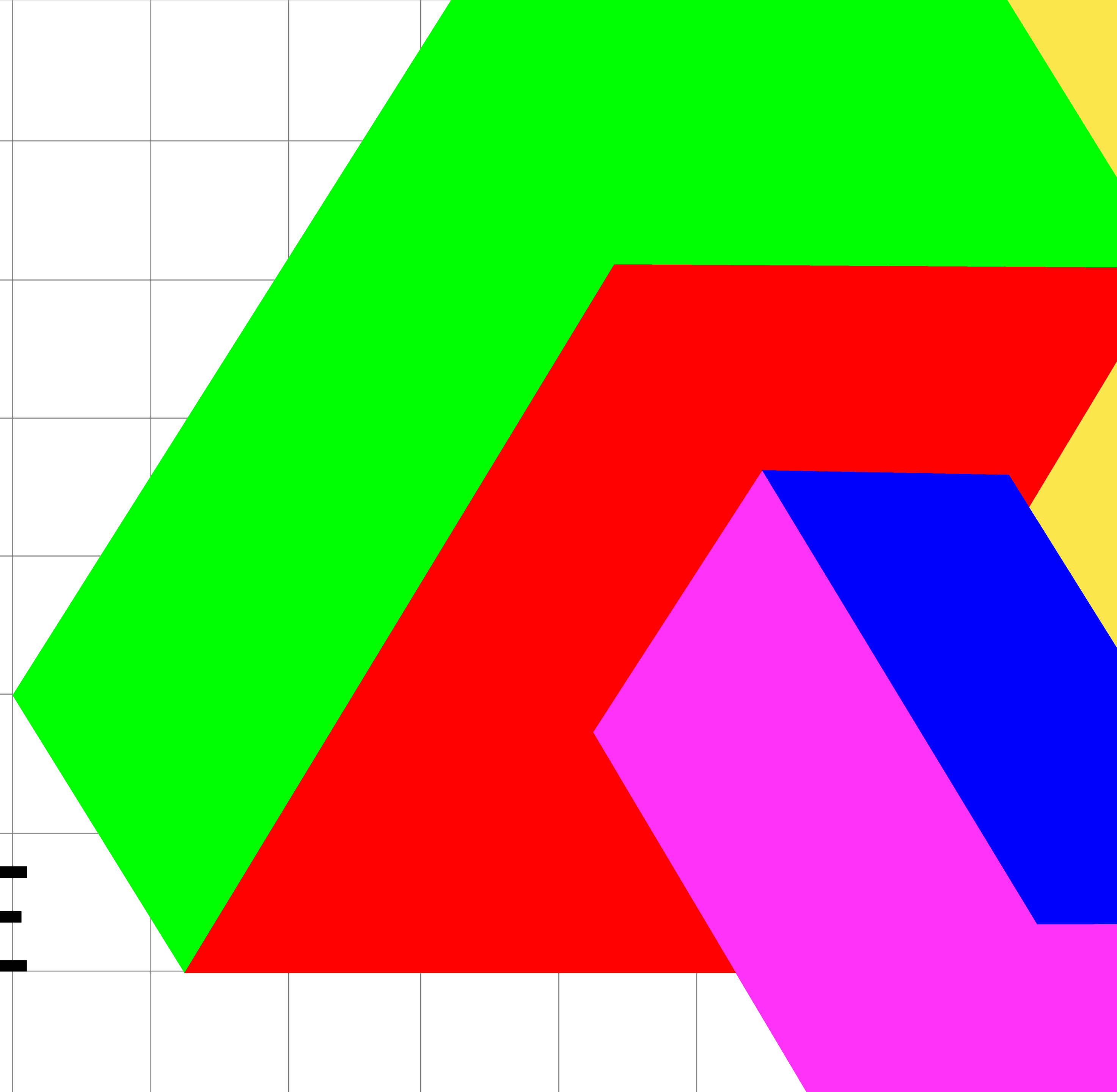
FIRST BEST ACTION

66 By Category

IN SUMMARY

01

WELCOME



□ WELCOME

State of the Industry: Unintended Consequences

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the marketing industry underwent a dramatic shift: rather than expensive customer acquisition, most marketers focused on driving growth by engaging the customers they already had – a focus which has carried through to 2022¹.

Yet despite this sustained focus on customer retention, satisfaction levels sharply declined.

- Since 2019, customer satisfaction levels have plummeted to a 17-year low².
- Less than 35% of customers are completely satisfied with their brand relationships.

Looking Back to Look Forward

In last year's Brand Relationship Design report, we interviewed around 16,000 people in the US, EMEA, LATAM, and APAC, and identified six key attributes for fostering successful brand relationships with customers: first impression, ease of use, communication, personalization, reward and community. In our follow-up study, we've revisited these six attributes to understand which brands are succeeding in these areas. What can we learn from brands that are driving meaningful satisfaction? What is the relative importance of each attribute? And what is the first action brands should take to improve customer satisfaction?

1 eMarketer, Dec 2021: Top Priorities of Customer Experience Professionals Worldwide in 2022
2 Ascsi 2022: U.S. Overall Customer Satisfaction

Our Most Significant Finding

These questions launched this deep exploration into customer experiences of the world's top brands to learn how they're driving meaningful satisfaction and retention with buyers.

Today, brands must make being user-friendly a top priority. In the age of "pull to refresh," with endless options that confuse and overwhelm, the easiest and most straightforward experiences are most satisfying to customers.

- We discovered that the attributes most responsible for driving satisfaction and retention are first impression and ease of use. These attributes have a high correlation and work in concert to deliver positive brand experiences.
- Ease of use scored the highest of any of the six attributes (which also include first impression, communication, personalization, reward, and community) among the surveyed brands (83%).
- From the brands that we researched, those that scored highest on ease of use have a 20% higher satisfaction score compared to brands that scored lowest on satisfaction.

Building customer satisfaction requires more than just conventional user-friendliness, however. When we analyzed the brand attributes that drive satisfactory experiences in greater detail, we discovered over 70% of the attributes that drive satisfaction are linked to customer confidence, leading to two major observations:

- **The obvious:** confidence in quality product/service experience drives satisfaction.
- **The less obvious:** enabling users' ability to achieve their goals drives satisfaction.

□ WELCOME

It's just not about ease for time savings and convenience – it's also about empowering customer confidence. And confidence is about more than building consumer trust behind the product or service: it's about enabling customers' capability to achieve their goals, while removing frustrating and discouraging barriers that might stand in their way. Whether they want to become healthier, pick up a new skill, or learn a new language, there is always an inherent goal behind each purchase — even if they're not aware of it.

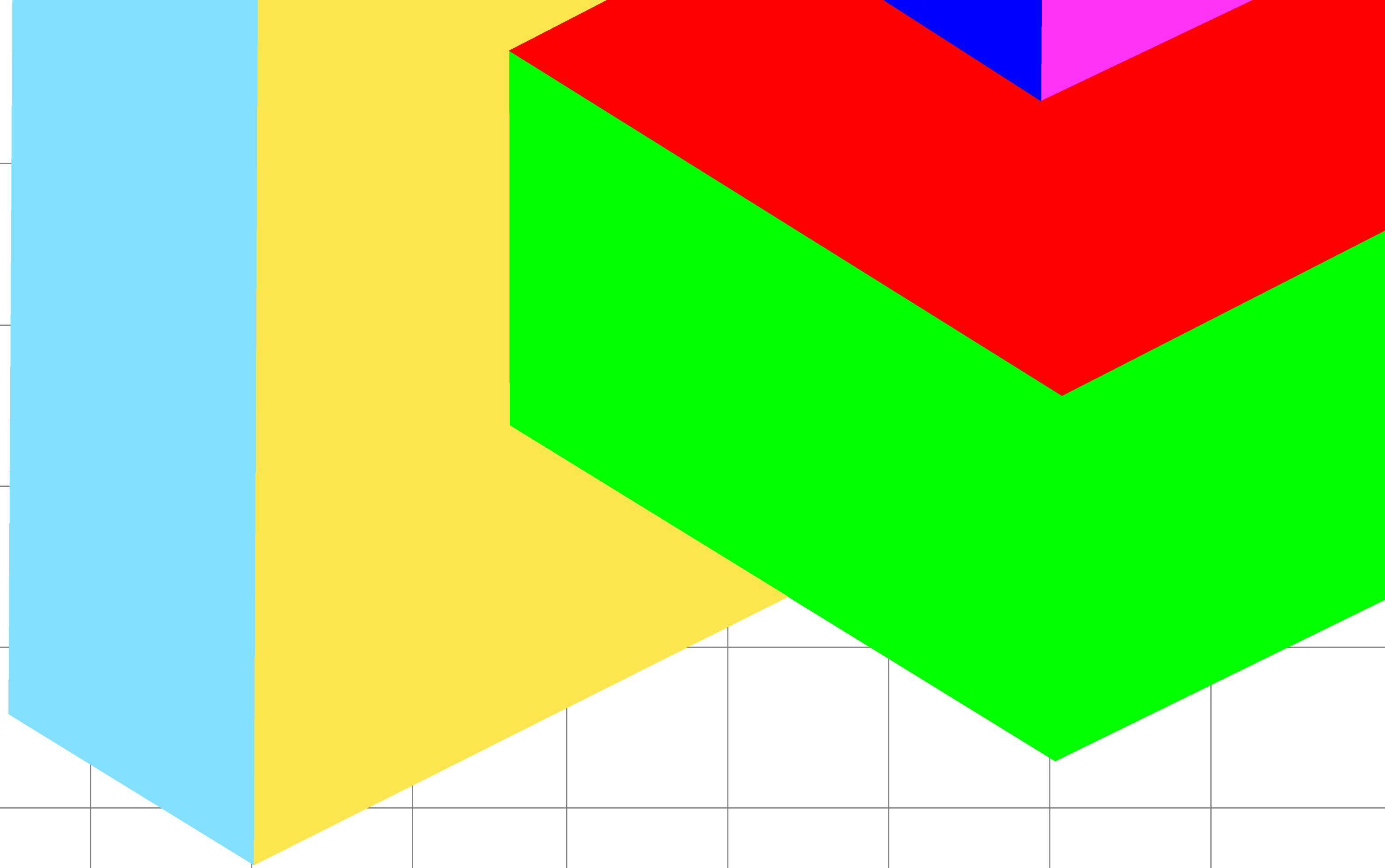
So what should brands do to better help customers achieve their goals, and make them more satisfied overall? The key is to enable user confidence. As brands continue to focus customer experience efforts around retention, those that boost buyers' confidence throughout the entire process of achieving their goals – whether learning to bake a pie or being the best partner they can be – will have happier customers that are more likely to stay with them.

In order to make this report easier to put into action, we've built it as an actionable playbook for brands looking to drive meaningful satisfaction.

We hope you find it helpful!

R/GA

02



METHODOLOGY

Our Research Approach

R/GA surveyed 13,494 consumers in the US, from March 16 to March 23, 2022, focusing on four brand categories: tech, financial services, retail, and hospitality. To qualify for the study, respondents answered a series of screening questions about their purchases and/or accounts within each category. Respondents rated a maximum of two brands of which they were recent or current customers, using scales as well as open-ended questions, to gain a fuller understanding of their experiences.

Our Learning Objectives

To understand and evaluate customer attitudes towards a brand's products and services, and their experience, expectations and desires, related to six brand attributes: *first impression, ease of use, communication, personalization, reward, and community*. As a secondary goal, we set out to understand the relative contribution of these attributes to overall customer satisfaction.

R/GA's global research team leveraged Forsta's Decipher platform for programming and data collection, with sample sourcing from Lucid Marketplace.

Driver Analysis

We ran a series of regression models, statistical analyses of the relationship between causes and effects, to uncover each brand attribute's relative contribution to satisfaction and retention.

The dependent variables were overall experience, satisfaction, retention and advocacy, and the independent variables were the brand attributes. The regressions sought to find the predictive relationship between these, demonstrating which causes (independent variables) are meaningful, and how a change in these causes affects the dependent variable.

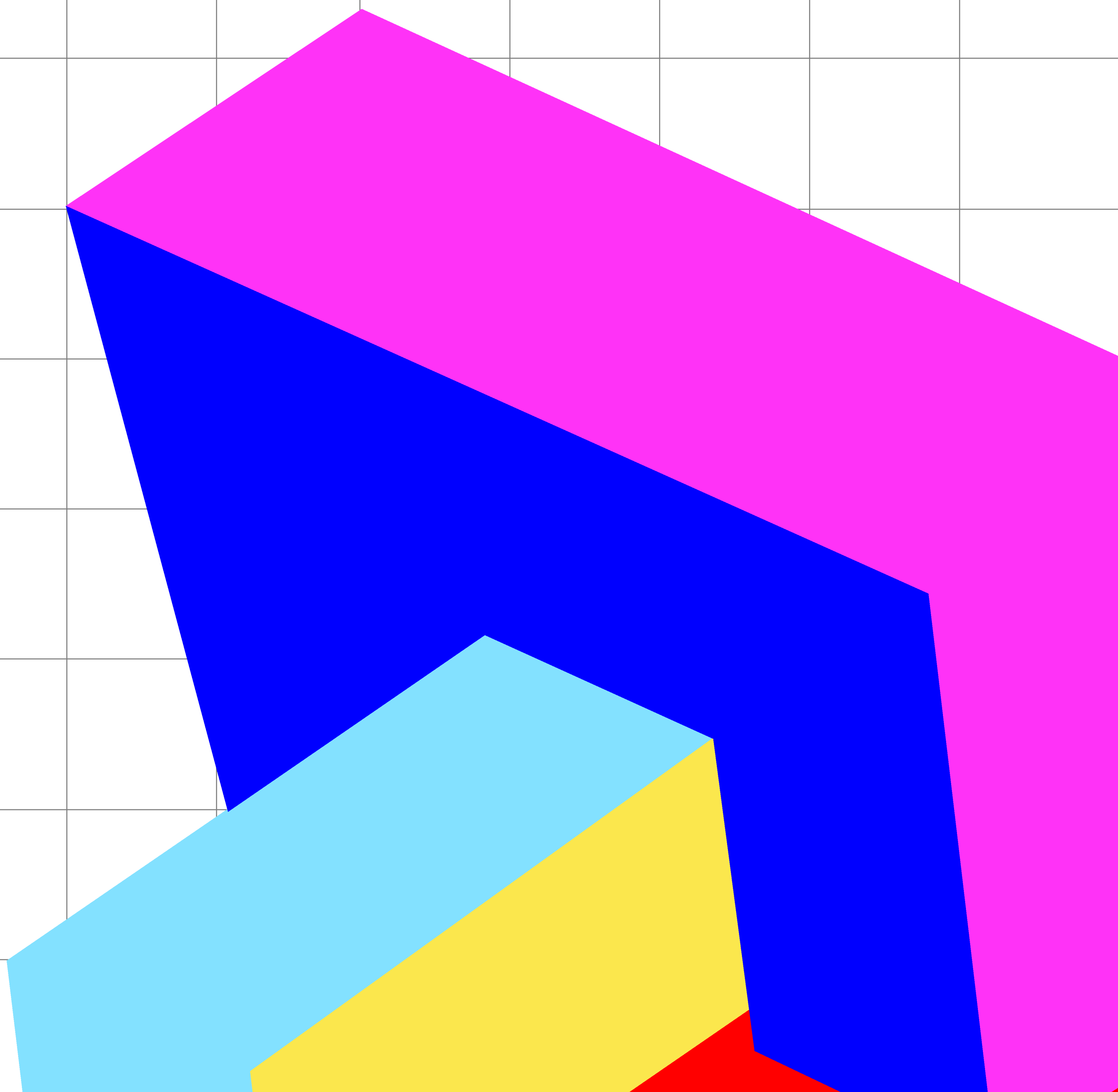
- Drivers analyses are typically conducted to determine which brand attributes should be prioritized when planning how to engage customers, and which aspects of the brand experience are most critical.
- By focusing on the attributes (or “drivers”) that matter most, we can maximize the likelihood of achieving higher levels of customer satisfaction.
- Understanding drivers is important because it enables us to determine which aspects of a category or brand matter most to customers.

Client Disclosures

The following brands featured or mentioned in this report are current or recent R/GA clients: Ally Bank, Amazon, Disney, IKEA, Reddit, Sephora, and Spotify.

03

UNIVERSAL INSIGHT



UNIVERSAL INSIGHT

We're living in a world that feels more complex and uncertain than at any other point in our lives. Political and economic instability, an ongoing global pandemic, existential climate crisis, and international conflicts make it hard for people to feel confident about many of their decisions. At the same time, there has been a noticeable global change in people's lifestyles, mainly how and when they spend their time.

Yet, it's not purely about time-saving convenience. While people have more clutter vying for their time and attention across an increasing number of channels, they find themselves increasingly prioritizing time for their goals and ambitions. Why is that?

Our era of non-stop innovation has yielded a movement of people looking to build or learn new skills to become their next best selves. From the rise of apps and services to help users master a new language or get expert advice on everything from songwriting to makeup routines, to the gamification of progress made, the pursuit of personal growth has become a fundamental aspect of everyday life for many of us. This is not a quest for perfection but a drive for personal growth.

At a time of personal growth, coupled with a prolonged period of uncertainty, it's confidence-building simplicity that resonates the

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most. Brands that make the lives of their customers easier, while building their confidence to achieve their goals, will stand out from competitors at a time when such qualities are at a premium.

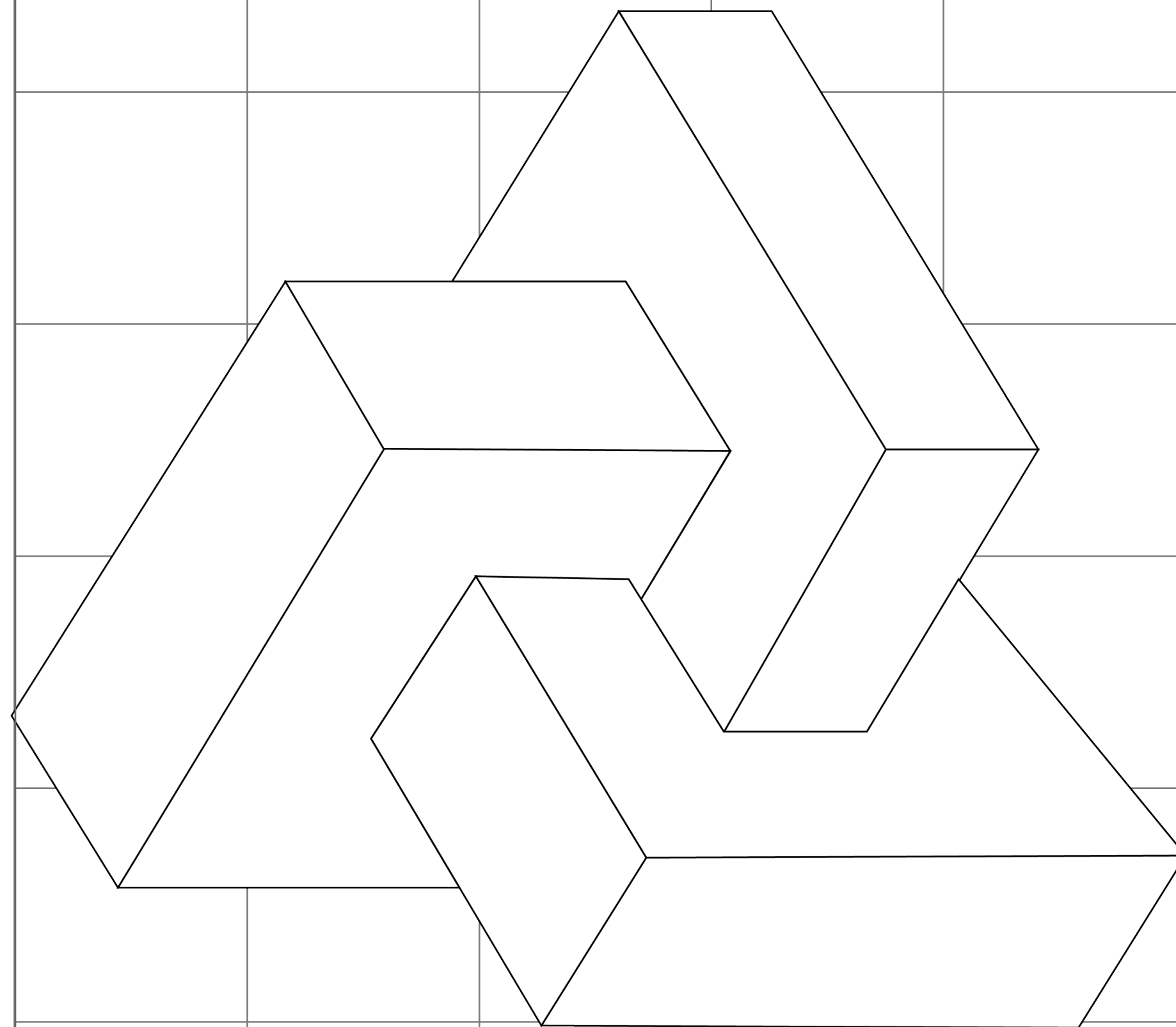
That 70% of brand attributes that drive satisfaction are linked to confidence, then, isn't surprising. We also found that the attributes most responsible for driving satisfaction and retention are first impression and ease of use, which have a high correlation and work in concert to deliver positive brand experiences. Being easy to use at first impression creates positive emotions, and is a crucial first step in building user confidence. This is then reinforced through continued ease of use beyond that moment, which makes customers return certain in their brand interactions.

So, What's a Confidence-Enabling Brand?

Confidence-enabling brands aspire to make our lives easier by striking a balance between freedom of choice and overwhelming options – facilitating choices that are both focused yet flexible, making it easier to save time and prioritize what's important.

It's an exercise in harnessing the power of restraint. And it's not simply about being minimalist, either. Sometimes it requires a little more initial effort, often on the part of both the brand and customer, to create seamless experiences going forward. It's about being decisively bold by being intentionally reductive – distilling brand experiences down to the essence of what gives them value. It's less about what brands should do, and more about being

UNIVERSAL INSIGHT



disciplined in what they should not do. These brands don't overlook what others often take for granted, focusing on delivering what customers come to them for in as direct and straightforward a way as possible, and helping them achieve their goals while making sure it's not easy for them to get lost along the way.

Brands can provide value that keeps customers coming back by instilling and building confidence in customers that they're making it easier for them to achieve a given goal. Confidence-enabling brands have a deep understanding of the goals behind customers' purchases, commonly known as their job to be done – from hobbies, to acquiring new skills, to major life changes. They understand how to create experiences that enable customers to build confidence towards achieving these goals by removing the barriers standing in their way, and creating a pathway to progress.

Rather than gimmicks or rewards that rely on flashiness and novelty, it's the brands that build user confidence, while making their lives easier, that succeed in getting customers to come back time and time again.

Enabling personal agency and simplicity are the foundation from which modern brands must build upon. Up next, we'll show you exactly how to get there.

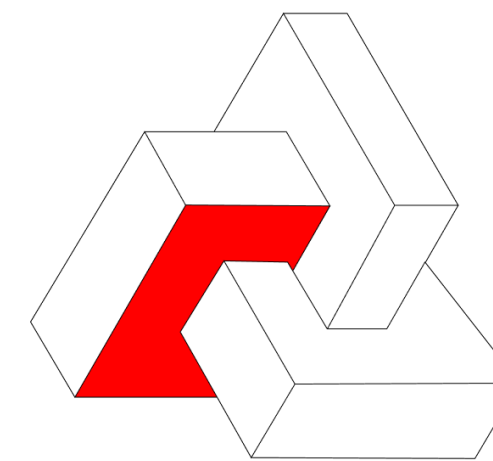
HOW TO DESIGN EXPERIENCES THAT INSTILL CONFIDENCE

through the lens of the six attributes

We've established the value confidence-enabling experiences have in developing sustainable, positive relationships with customers.

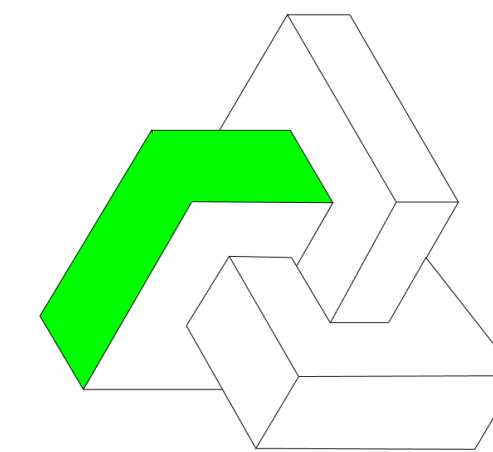
In this section, we'll demystify how brands can make the lives of their customers easier and create confidence along the way, through our six brand attributes. We've listed these attributes in order of importance for driving customer satisfaction, from most to least impactful, according to our research, so that brands understand what elements are ultimately most important for driving consumer satisfaction – and how to leverage them.

Think of this section as your entryway into a world of seamless, confidence-enabling experiences.



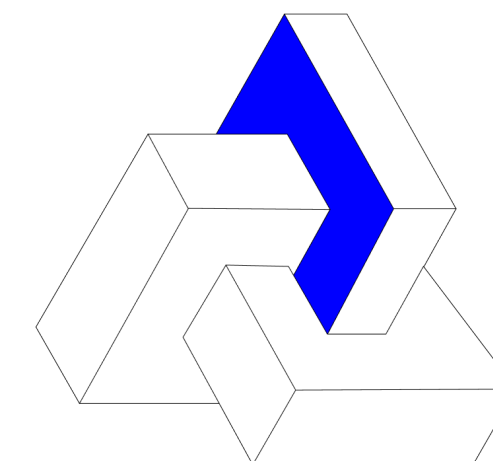
First Impression

Confidence enabling brands build user momentum from the start.



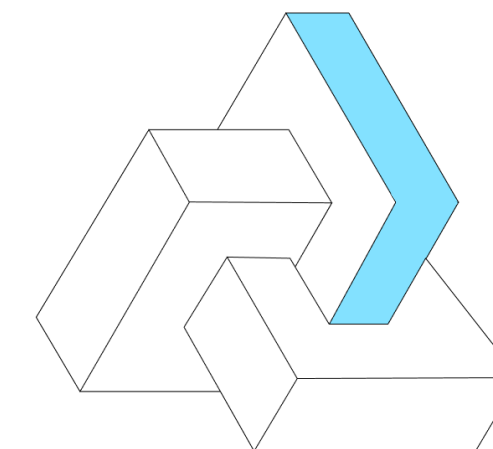
Communications

Confidence enabling brands enable users to solve their own problems.



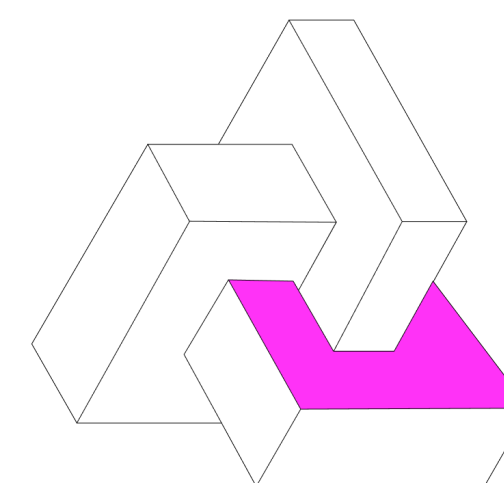
Ease of Use

Confidence enabling brands are delightfully simple.



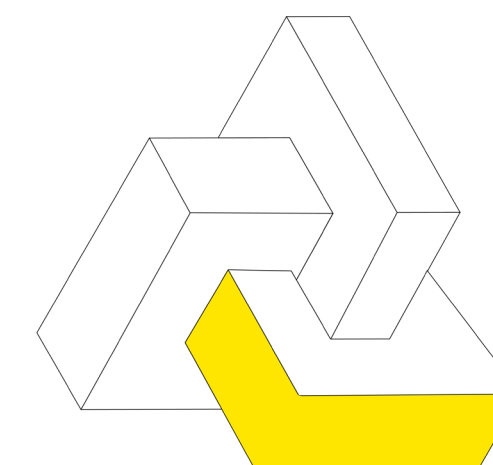
Personalization

Confidence enabling brands personalize with permission.



Reward

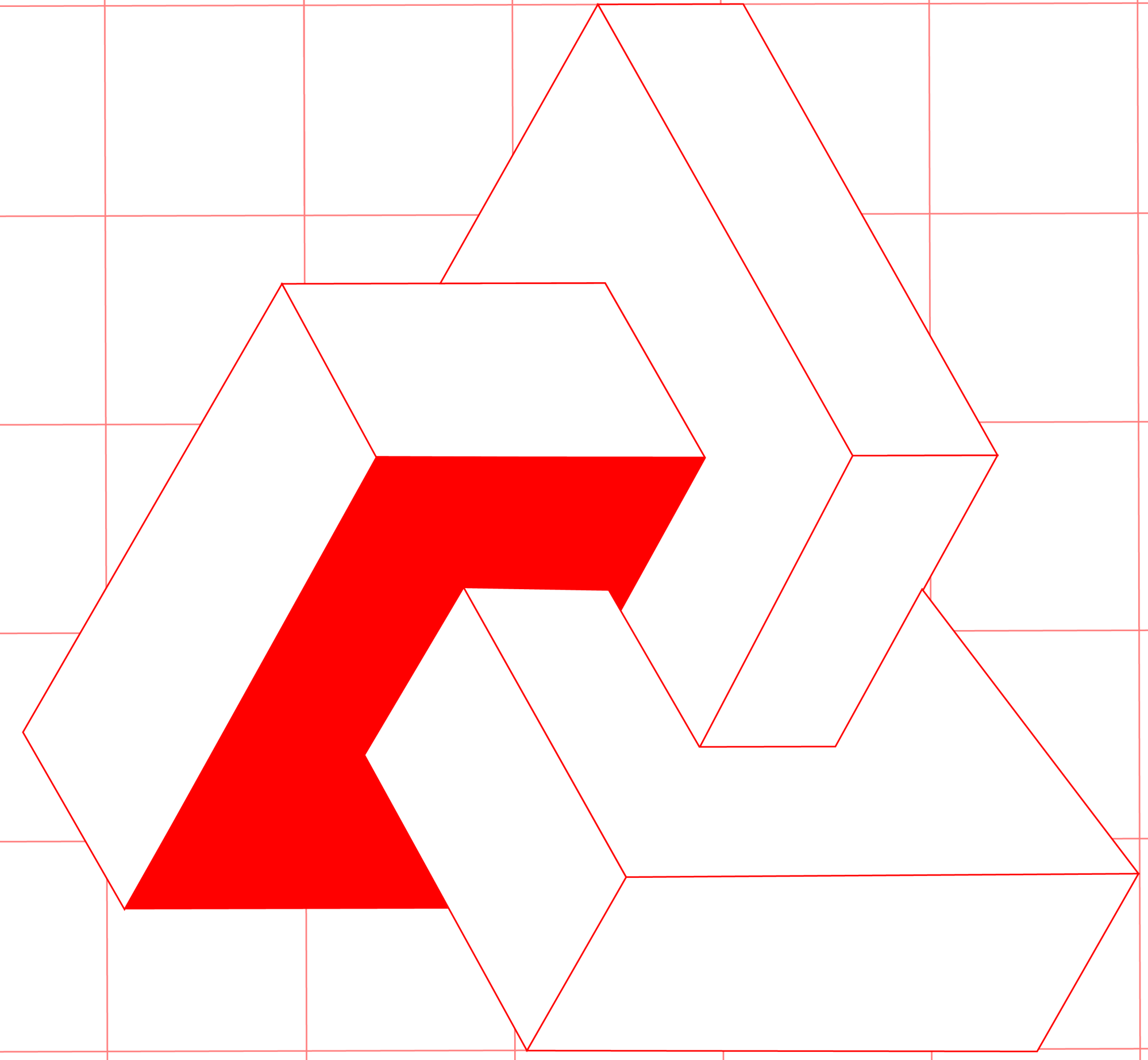
Confidence enabling brands recognize user accomplishment and progress.



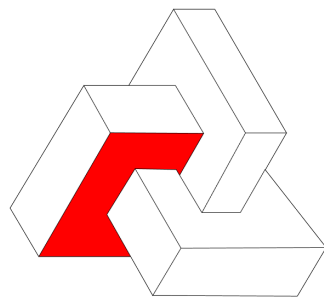
Community

Confidence enabling brands build communities alongside members.

1



FIRST IMPRESSION



01 First Impression

Confidence enabling brands build user momentum from the start.

Your customers are never more open to a relationship than when they've just bought something from you. The first moment after purchase is a vital moment to welcome them in and set expectations. It sets the foundation for creating long-term, high-value customer relationships. From the top ranked brands, we found that:



80% of consumers have positive thoughts and feelings towards the brand.



80% believe others will have a positive impression of the brand.



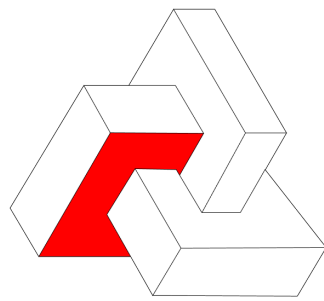
83% of consumers reported having a positive initial experience with the brand.

In addition, we found:

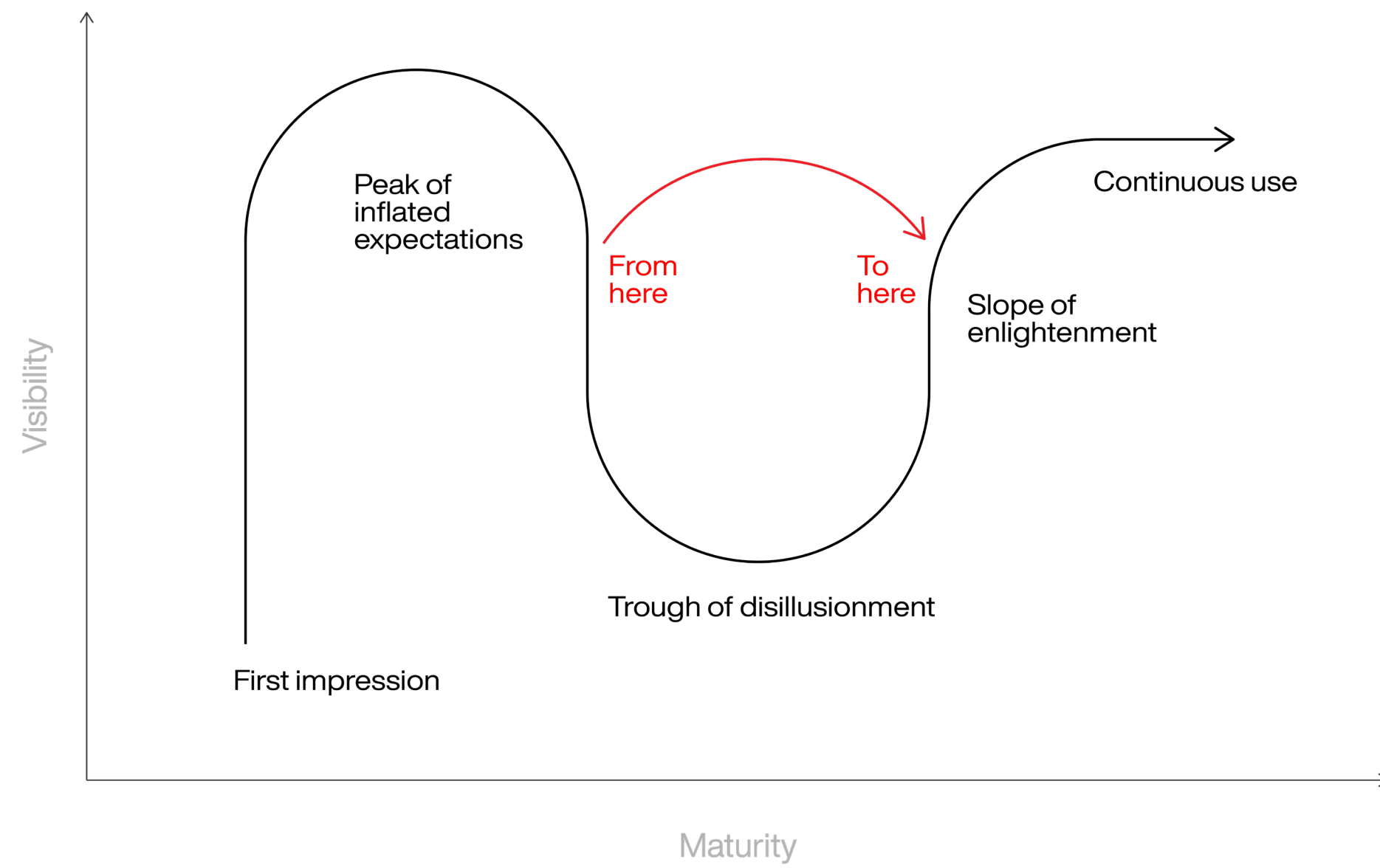
1. The first impression is the most influential of the six attributes in driving satisfaction and retention.
2. There was a high correlation between a positive first impression and positive thoughts and feelings consumers had towards a brand.

Clearly, the value of making a positive first impression has a lasting effect on repeat purchase, and because first impressions are made

UNIVERSAL INSIGHT



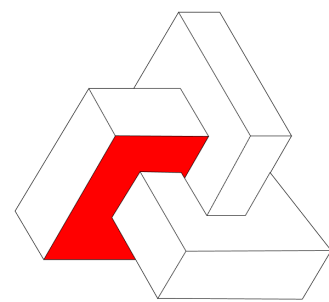
□ Good Onboarding Can Take Users:



at a subconscious level, they're very persistent.

What creates a positive first impression? Conventional wisdom points to “surprise and delight,” but how often do you stick around with a company because it surpassed expectations? Delighting buyers may make “feel good” moments, but superficial interactions quickly fade into memory, and have a small effect on loyalty. Instead, customer loyalty depends on how easy you make it for them to engage with your brand.

When people purchase a product or service, they hope it will address their needs — build momentum, get them to value quickly using simple and intuitive onboarding experiences that combat inertia, and avoid “trough of disillusionment.” First impressions are a moment to celebrate embarking on a new journey. Use positive language to celebrate their first step, communicate how your brand plays a valuable role in helping them reach their goals, and reinforce the possibilities based on the reason for their purchase – ranging from looking to relax with soothing music to becoming a meditation guru. When possible, give customers a reward just for joining to spark a sense of achievement from the get-go. Whereas surprising and delighting your customers may create a feel-good moment, consumers have become increasingly jaded to shallow, attention-grabbing moments that don't connect to meaningful offerings over time. Make it delightfully easy to interact with your brand from the outset, recognize and celebrate the moment after purchase as a first step towards achieving their goals.



□ **Make it delightfully easy to interact with your brand from the outset, recognize and celebrate the moment after purchase as a first step towards achieving their goals.**

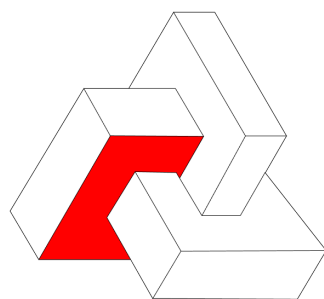
For Tech Products and Services:

Pare down your onboarding to shorten customers' time to value during the initial adoption hump: make the starting point/initial steps obvious, guide their first use with simple nudges to educate and activate faster. Make early suggestions based on what's popular and what's new with the product. Set expectations pre-purchase where possible, such as language in the app store before download. Make connecting a person with support a one-click journey.

For Physical Products and Services:

Make unboxing a celebratory moment, include a corresponding piece of educational content designed to inspire its use, give thoughtful contextual recommendations through email or in-app, and make customer service easily accessible. When possible, onboard in-store with a customer service team member who is ready to help.

Making customers feel welcome allows you to establish a solid foundation to build your brand relationship.



Where to start

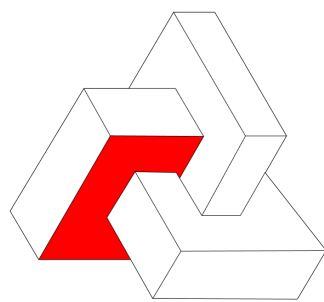
For tech products and services:

- Did you set clear expectations pre-purchase?
- Is your onboarding as simple as possible? Ask yourself what is the key thing your new customers need to know to get started.
- Ask yourself how much customer information you really need at this stage. Do you *really* need their cell phone number and credit card right now?
- Do you use visual cues with intuitive nudges to help guide their first use?
- Do you use repeated design elements for predictability?
- Do you use simple, easy to understand language?
- Is access to FAQs or customer service one click away?
- Do you guide them on accomplishing a task, the “aha!” moment?
- Do you celebrate their first step?
- Do you reinforce the possibilities based on the reason behind their purchase?
- Is the learning experience interactive, simple, and a tad playful?
- Do you ask them what success means to them, or what goal they’re trying to achieve?
- Do you apply accessibility best practices to make it available to all users?

For physical products and services:

- Is your educational content easily accessible physically via the packaging, or is an instructional site clearly signposted?
- Can your receipt be used as a first step for a shopper’s onboarding experience?
- For more complicated products, can your customers onboard in-store with a guide?
- Is access to customer service clearly signposted and easy to use?
- Do you provide thoughtful recommendations related to the customer’s purchase?

UNIVERSAL INSIGHT



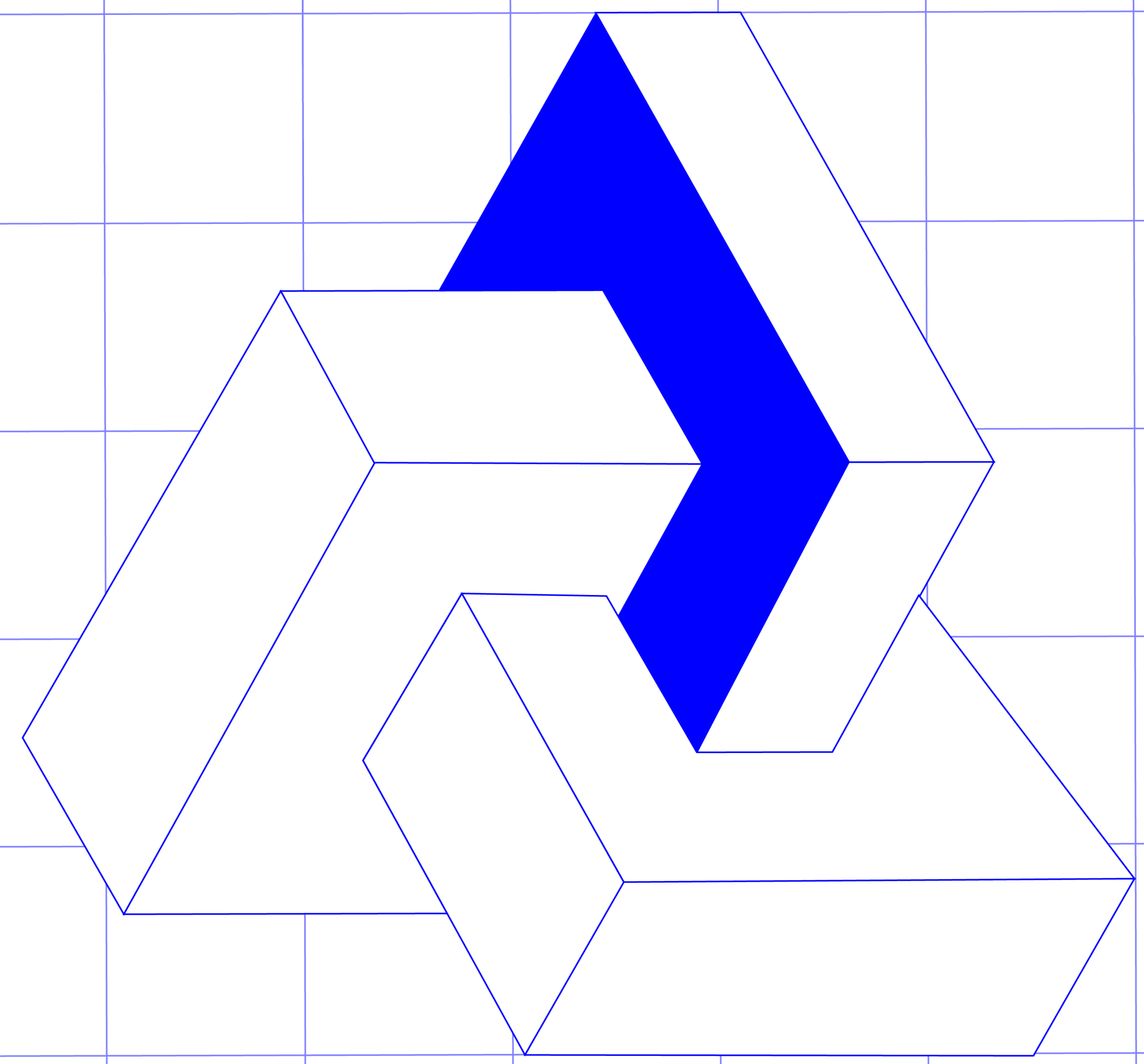
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R/GA**For Example:**

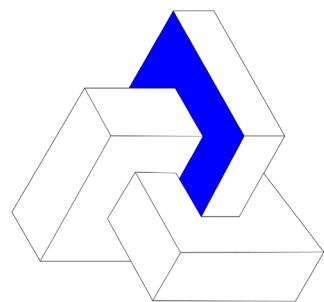
Duolingo's user onboarding begins with a warm welcome from their friendly, guilt-tripping owl, which inquires about their goals and motivations. Users are then guided through a quick translation exercise, showing them how to use the intuitive platform, with quick motivational messages from the get-go to build momentum. Only after these steps are completed does Duolingo ask the user to commit to them – and to their goal – by registering.

Airbnb makes their onboarding easy. Pre-purchase, they don't require people to register before doing a search so they can get started right away. Airbnb also makes clear paths for different personas' "homeowner journey" vs "guest journey"; they don't ask for a credit card right away; they use cognitive helpers like icons to silently hint at what shoppers are supposed to type in; and they have consistent and playful design elements throughout the user experience.

2



EASE
OF USE



02 Ease of Use

Confidence enabling brands are delightfully simple.

Products and services that pare down complicated experiences to the core basics save valuable time and build user confidence. Failure to deliver this can leave customers feeling misled or discouraged.

Our research indicates that most buyers (83.1%) of the top-ranked brands have easy-to-use products and services. Other findings:



73% said the brand is constantly working to make it easier to engage with it

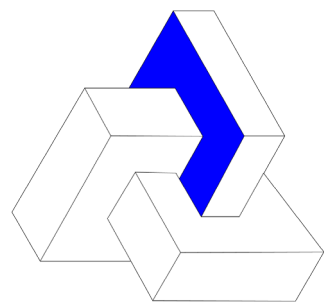


70% agreed that the brand has better products and services than other brands in their category



83% said they understand how to use the brand's products and services.

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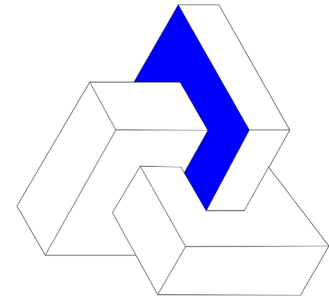


□ We also found that the brand attributes most responsible for driving satisfaction and retention are first impression and ease of use. And these attributes have a high correlation—basically, you can't have one without the other. It's hard to arrive at ease of use without a positive first impression; and being easy to use is crucial to making a positive first impression.

Making experiences intuitive and easy to understand lowers the barrier for engagement. This makes brands more inviting for continuous usage, which in turn lends a sense of confidence for users to find new ways to incorporate them into daily life. The more they come back to and feel at ease with the product or service, the more they understand how it can help them achieve their goals.

So, where should you start?

First, pare down your product or service to be as intuitive as possible, removing anything that is not necessary. Use visual metaphors and simple language, and make information easy to find, with responsive design that clearly shows success or failure of action. Eliminate ambiguity so people can see, understand, and use the product/service without a second thought, to build their comprehension and in turn their confidence. But never sacrifice confidence or understanding for the sake of simplicity. Don't remove language, features, or security that will make the experience easier, which will risk eroding consumer confidence in your product and brand.

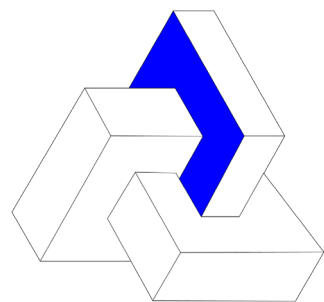


Feedback is the mechanism that privileges the person over the designer.

Second, design for accessibility. Create inclusive products and services that are understandable for all, no matter their barrier. Maximize ease for people of all walks of life using color contrast, caption copy for video and audio, and easily identifiable interactive elements. Make your product or service adaptable to accommodate and fit their individual needs.

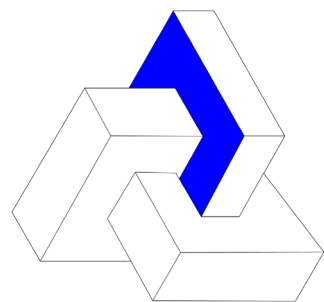
Lastly, design areas for feedback, the cornerstone of the user-friendly world. It's feedback that defines how a product behaves in response to what you want. While the goal of most feedback is to reassure us that the design has gone as planned, feedback is also how the best brands learn to anticipate what buyers want. Nothing says "designed for me," or makes an experience easier/more seamless than your smartphone asking you if you want to go on silent before a movie starts. Feedback also tells brands what buyers don't want, enabling you to be proactive about improving the usability of your products and services before customers complain, while also allowing you to be reductive — culling the features you don't need.

Building something simple is actually quite difficult. Eliminate ambiguity and complexity wherever possible, so people understand and use your product or service with confidence. This is harder than it sounds, but well worth the investment.



Where to start

- Are your service and product experiences intuitive?
 - Do you use simple language, consistent visual language, and give nudges to guide users?
 - Is information easy to find?
- Do you look for user-error areas? They're brimming with insights to help make experiences easier.
- Is your product compatible with related products or services?
- Are your interfaces consistent?
- Do you eliminate ambiguity or unnecessary steps?
- Do you maximize ease of use with features that include users of all abilities? Incorporate accessibility from the beginning of your design process and have an inclusive team at the helm. [W3.org](https://www.w3.org/) has a host of suggestions.
- Do you have areas for feedback throughout the journey?
 - Do you use in-person surveys, email, website, and/or in-app areas for customer feedback?
 - Do you use simple one-click surveys to track the experience over time?
 - Do you include emotive cues like emoji faces?
- Are you proactive about improving the usability of your products and services? Do you do it before customers complain?



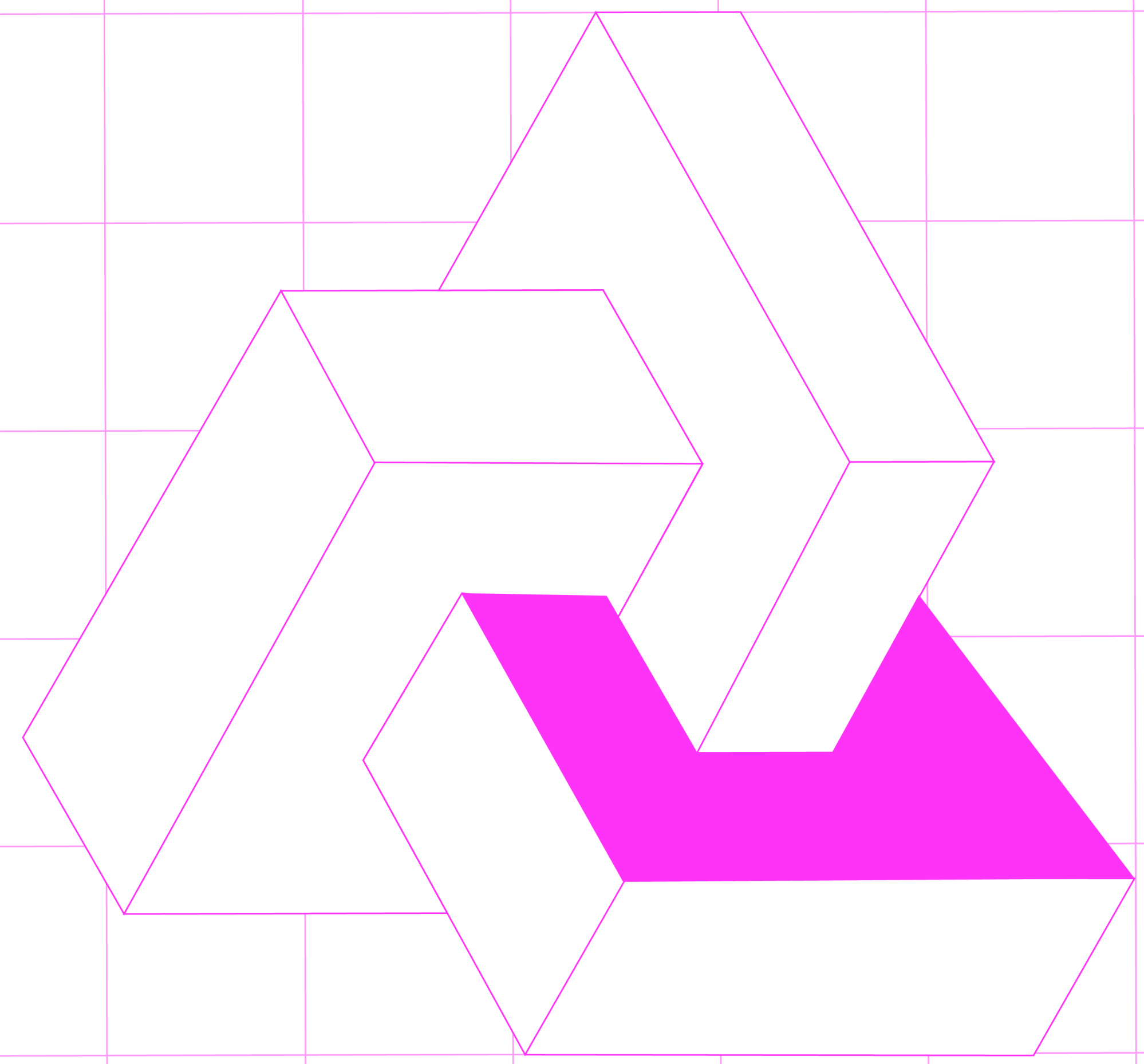
For Example

Disney understands its customers holistically because it's constantly capturing feedback. The Disney survey team is in the theme parks getting feedback from guests as they enter and exit the facility. Guests can also give in-app feedback or email in customer service suggestions. Disney uses 'listening posts' scattered throughout their theme parks to review the customer experience and understand from visitors what needs improving. For example, Disney created 'Special Assistance' passes for its disabled visitors, having learned about some of the access challenges they had in the parks.

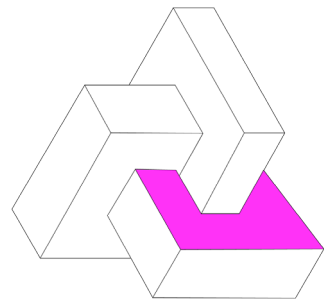
Ally Bank prioritizes clear communication through simple and easy-to-use language in every touchpoint. It even went so far as to create the Dejargonator tool to help people easily understand complicated finance terms, building the confidence and comfort of the customer as they navigate their financial decisions. "We want customers to understand, in a very straightforward manner, what they're signing up for. And so the Dejargonator tool was born out of that notion," Ally Bank chief marketing and public relations officer Andrea Brimmer told R/GA. "When you roll over a term on our storefront that you don't understand, you can hit the Dejargonator and it will explain it in plain English for you, so that you're clear on it and you can make [informed] choices."



3



REWARD



03 Reward

Confidence enabling brands recognize user accomplishment and progress.

At this point, the customer-brand relationship has been established and you're identifying ways to encourage them to keep coming back to you. In our research, we found that when it comes to being rewarded, the areas that most contributed to customer satisfaction and retention are:

- Helping customers achieve their goals
- Valuing them as a customer
- Helping buyers get the most out of being a customer

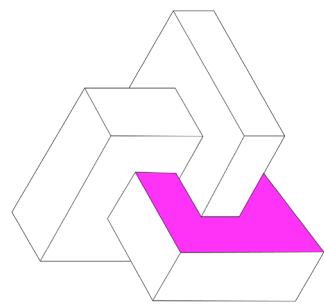
We found that while 70% of shoppers feel valued as a customer by the brands they rated, only financial services and tech categories show rewards as a positive driver of satisfaction and retention.

What's causing this disconnect?

While discounts and gamified dopamine hits make buyers feel valued, they don't connect to the goal behind their product or service purchase. Customers receive a little feel-good bump when they feel they've won a discount code for referring a friend, or unlocked a new level based on their overall spend, but these are all in the name of short-term boosts.

So it comes as no surprise that despite membership in reward programs rapidly growing, active participation is falling⁴. The reason is simple: most programs don't connect rewards to the goal

⁴ eMarketer, Loyalty memberships Climb, but participation Wanes



□

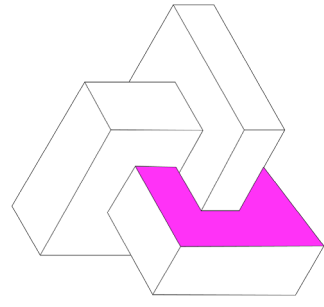
We wanted to really make membership to be inclusive, but also move from a traditional transactional loyalty proposition to where membership is here to help you live better. So we want to give members access to the things that they need to bring their ideas to life. ”

Aaron Mitchell
IKEA Global Vice President, Customer Engagement and Loyalty

behind purchase, gamify for gamification's sake, and largely involve discounts. In fact, only 32% of respondents in our study strongly agree that they are rewarded with things that matter to them. The real winners are brands that engage customers on an emotional level by tapping into the motivation behind their purchase. Behind most product and service purchases, there is an inherent goal someone is trying to achieve, commonly known as the jobs to be done theory⁵. Downloaded a language app? They've set out to learn a new language. Bought a beginners camera? They're on the path to master photography. Bought a trending dress on Instagram? They're keen to tap into fashion.

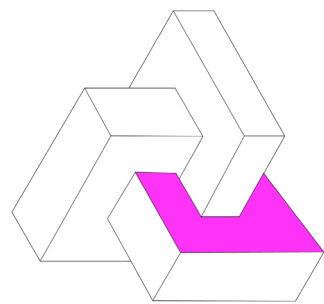
Offer your customers monetary, access, and experiential rewards that nudge them towards the next step towards achievement, such as invitation to an event or discount towards their next class. Use positive reinforcement through playful and satisfying interfaces, like progress bars, points and badges, and celebratory language to affirm the progress they're making. During key moments of their journey, share a recap of their accomplishments, and, when possible, give customers a reward just for joining to spark a sense of achievement from the get-go. Rewards programs can also foster brand partnerships, both an important strategy for your brand and a way to holistically help customers achieve the goals that they're pursuing through your products and services.

5 Harvard Business Review, 2016: Know Your Customers' "Jobs to Be Done"



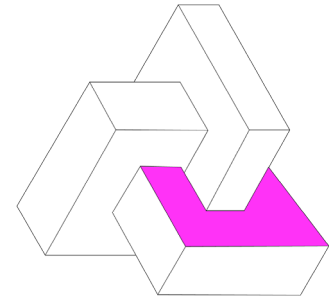
There's untapped loyalty potential rooted in customer motivations.

There's untapped loyalty potential rooted in customer motivations. Use rewards in service of a customer's goal, so rewards are less like a carrot, but rather confetti to recognize their achievement.



Where to start

- Do you link purchase of product or service to a customer's job to be done, the goal behind their purchase?
 - Does your customer rep, onboarding or digital interface ask the customer what their goals are directly?
 - Do you use that goal to personalize offers and rewards to them?
- Do you turn customers' goals into a game, where level ups can result in rewards like badges, unlocks, and shout outs?
 - Do you gamify the process of earning rewards through points and badges?
 - Do you have a playful, visually satisfying interface?
 - Do you use positive reinforcement to indicate someone is on the right path through celebratory language, points, progress meter, and/or badges?
 - Do you hint at upcoming rewards or share a freebie following a purchase for instant gratification?
 - Do you have a progress bar or leveling system that indicates their progress towards a goal?
- Do you have a flexible rewards system that allows customers to earn points/currency that can be used both inside the brand and in the real world?
 - Do you make it easy for people to use the rewards they've accumulated?
- Do you reward users with personalized, shareable content/insights/information—such as their usage/consumption?
- Do you elevate super users to a high-ranking status, for example, by highlighting their community contributions like reviews or trouble shooting, and inviting them to brand events?

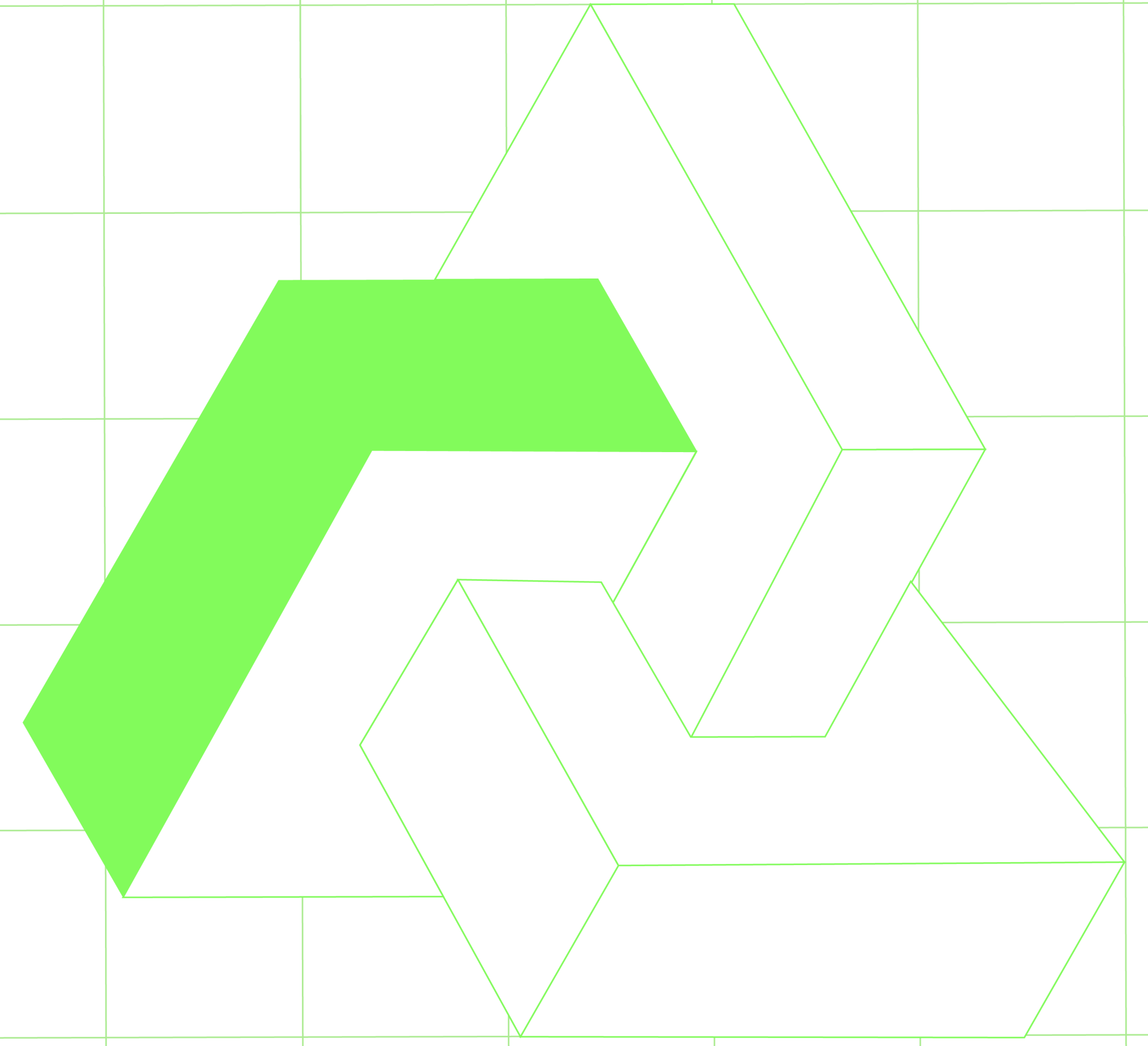


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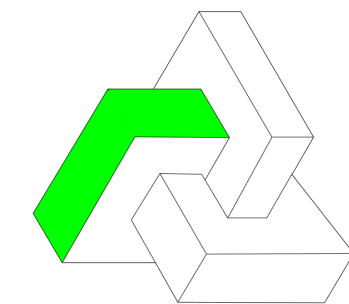
With 25 million members, **Sephora's** rewards program is massively successful, which they credit to emotional rewards. Offering in-store beauty classes, personal makeovers, and product launch parties, Sephora's loyalty program members enjoy a range of fun experiences relevant to their goals, such as mastering skincare and beauty routines.



4



COMMUNICATIONS



04 Communications

Confidence enabling brands enable users to solve their own problems.

When a customer encounters a problem with no clear solution, it can create lasting frustration — the enemy of monetization. Brands must be ready with easily accessible and helpful answers, inspiration, and guidance.

In our research, we found that even among the best brands, less than half of people can get the answers they need as questions arise. Of the respondents:



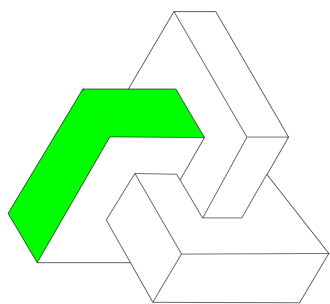
41% can confidently answer that they can get questions answered when they have them.



40% confidently agree that they can get problems resolved when they have them.



39% strongly agree that they can engage with customer services in flexible ways that meet their needs.

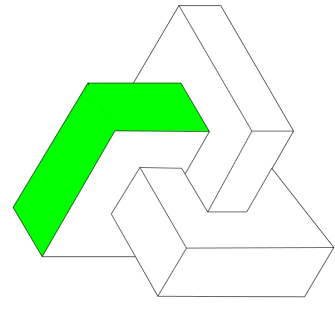


Why is there so much frustration in customer service? In the digital age, chatbots, FAQs, and email support have become the norm. Yet, they are often time-consuming, don't always understand or solve problems correctly, and require the customer to engage multiple times, compounding frustration. Often when users call customer service, they're faced with automated voice menus, put on hold, or told that the agent cannot solve their problem. How often have you typed your account number to be connected to a person, only to be asked again moments later by the rep, or had to repeatedly navigate automated interfaces to be connected to a rep at all? All of this interferes with customer satisfaction and increases employee frustration. And with 88% of buyers saying that they now have higher customer service standards than previous years, this attribute will likely become more critical over time⁶.

So what should brands do to up their communications game?

It starts with self-service portals that elevate personal agency for customers, empowering them to solve their problems on their own, quickly and conveniently. Using behavior data and feedback, you can weed out errors and anticipate future questions to proactively eliminate customer effort. Make this portal easily accessible in-app or on the website, and use simple language throughout. Any communications, whether in-app or email, make it as succinct as possible. People are in work, email, and life overload. Simplifying each point of communication not only saves time, but builds their confidence that they understand even the most complicated of matters.

6 Hubspot, March 2022: The State of Customer Service in 2022



Customer service isn't just about finding a quick solution: it's a way to build a long-term relationship.

Want to go a step further? Make your service representatives just one click away for complicated problems – and empower them to resolve any issue. Studies show that 92% of customers will spend more time with companies that offer preferred, convenient communication options. And customers are 2.4 times more likely to stick with a brand when their problems are solved quickly⁷. Flexible, easy-to-access communication builds confidence in you, and makes them stick around⁸.

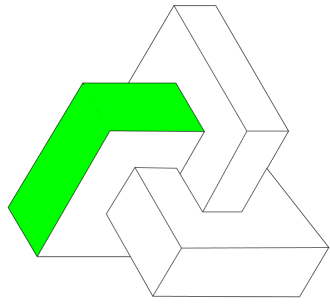
Customer service isn't just about finding a quick solution: it's a way to build a long-term relationship. Each customer interaction is a chance for you to weed out and proactively eliminate future problems, while also instilling confidence that they have agency to solve any problem they encounter.

“ We've tried to make all communications as simple and concise as possible – and in normal language. And that's been a big part of the brand promise since the get go, and it's something that has persisted for us today: Usefulness in communication, not bombarding people in communication.

Andrea Brimmer
Ally Chief Marketing and Public Relations Officer

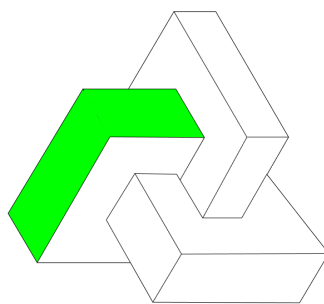
7 Forrester blog, Jan 2021: What's The ROI Of CX Transformation?

8 Forrester blog, Jan 2021: What's The ROI Of CX Transformation?



Where to start

- Do you provide flexible service options through a customer self-service portal?
- Do you use data from customer service to proactively eliminate customer effort?
- Are your customers able to resolve their issues without switching channels?
- Do your reps use simple, easy-to-understand language online? Do your FAQ and self-portals do as well?
- Do your customers have access to real-time assistance when they need it?
 - Is access to a rep one-click away?
 - Are your reps empowered to resolve any issue?
 - Do they anticipate customer needs and treat their time and attention as sacred?
 - Do they ask for what customers' goals or needs are to better understand what they can do for them?



For Example

Amazon doesn't just want to reduce customer effort, it wants to "eliminate" it. Amazon creates an effortless customer service experience for its customers. They try to empower customers to proactively solve their issues themselves through a self-service portal, and the more customers are able to solve those problems themselves (or have them automatically solved for them), the less time they'll need to spend on the phone.

American Express provides one-tap solutions to customers who want to find their own answer to service problems like losing their credit card. When customers do choose or need to call, they've developed "relationship care," a service ethos based on the idea that reps should treat interactions as relationship-deepening moments.

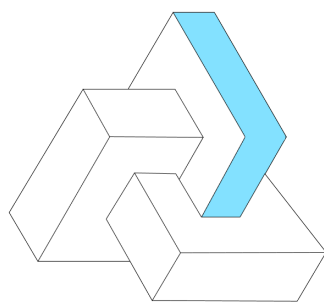
Discover's help card center has answers to common questions, so customers can skip picking up the phone for most of their problems. They also categorize questions and answers neatly to help customers easily find what they need. Plus, they have a smart search function to make perusing even easier, suggesting common topics so customers put in minimal effort to get answers.



5



PERSONALIZATION



05 Personalization

Confidence enabling brands personalize with permission.

By this point in the customer relationship, you've guided your customer through their first experience. They have their product and they know how to use it. Your biggest priority now should be to help bring every customer closer to their goals through personalized and relevant offerings – while making sure they feel secure in how you've acquired and used their data.

In our research, we found that top brands regularly give personalized attention to their customers. Of our respondents:



62% agree that communication from the brand is personalized to their needs.

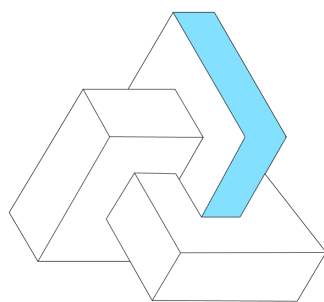


62% feel as if they're able to get personalized attention from the brand.



64% are able to get personalized product/service from the brand.

UNIVERSAL INSIGHT

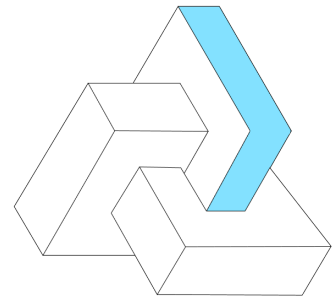


Although people are receiving personalized comms, products, and/or attention from a brand, through regression models we found that personalization isn't a contributor to their overall satisfaction, or retention. Why?

First of all, personalization is no longer a novelty; it's just something customers expect to a degree. Brands don't set themselves apart simply by offering personalized experiences – that's now table stakes. They set themselves apart by how they do this, and what real value their personalized communications and offerings give the customer. Does it give them valuable information, advice, or recommendations that go beyond “you might also like,” suggesting nearby stores, or using a customer's first name in an email? Does it just suggest things customers might want to buy based on previous preferences, or does it ultimately help them achieve the goals they have when using your product or services?

Want to up your personalization game? Recommend cross-platform, even cross-brand, products and services, like a music streaming platform recommending upcoming nearby concerts of your favorite artists. This helps the user fulfill their main goal – enjoying the music they love – beyond the brand's service, increasing the value of continuing to be a customer of that brand (while also providing income opportunities from brand partnerships).

And second, while for years, brands have increasingly personalized, there's been a major shift in the overall public perception around



Perhaps it is time we reframe the “more personalization” approach to a permission-based practice.

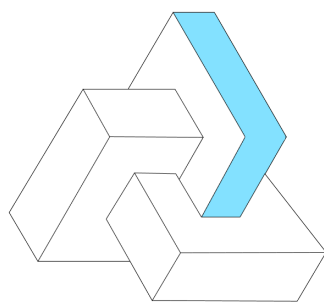
data privacy. Privacy breaches and data scandals have made people very conscious, and wary of how companies use their data. Studies show that people may react negatively to personalization messaging when they receive ads based too closely on purchase history⁹, or if they discover the data used to target them was collected from another site¹⁰. Instead of being impressed by tailored recommendations, customers might be left feeling a bit creeped out, thinking, “Woah, how did they know that I like this product?”

So, consumers say they want and value personalization, at the same time, they are more aware of, and concerned about, privacy issues. Perhaps it is time we reframe the “more personalization” approach to a permission-based practice where a person knowingly opts into personalized recommendations post-purchase, with clear information on how their data will be used and protected. Think of this as “relationship-appropriate personalization,” where buyers have greater confidence in the control and security of their data, and brands can use their opt-in information to make personalized recommendations that are meaningful – to them, without fueling any data privacy-fueled anxiety.

The brands that recognize personalization needs to be earned are the ones that effectively use it to increase customer satisfaction.

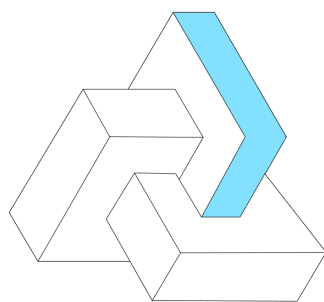
9 SpringerLink: Customization of online advertising: The role of intrusiveness

10 Harvard Business Review: Why Am I Seeing This Ad? The Effect of Ad Transparency on Ad Effectiveness



Where to start

- Do you have your shoppers opt into personalized recommendations with clear information on how their data will be used through a reward program preference center, or during their onboarding experience?
- Do you make your intentions clear and explain the value?
- Do you showcase the new experiences, incentives, and services users can expect from this exchange?
- Is the value proposition reflected in personalized communications?
- Do you share who else will be able to use and see their data?
- Do you give a timeframe on how long the information will be stored?
- Do you use straightforward language when explaining data and privacy options?

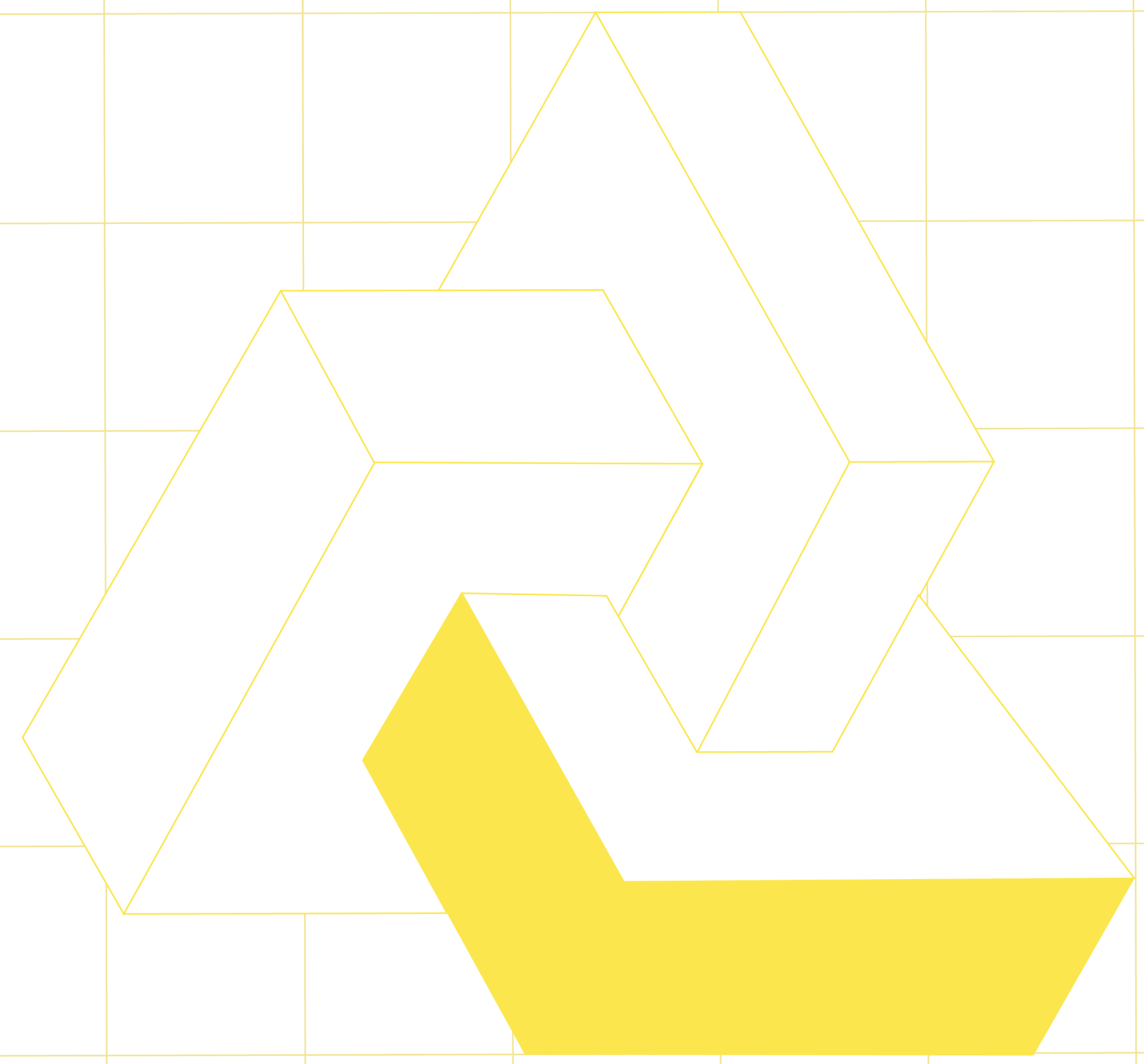


For Example

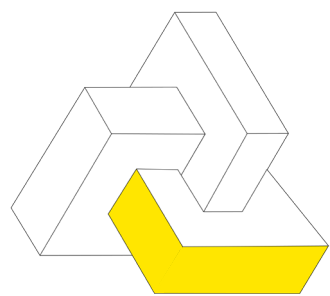
Ulta Beauty invites customers to tell them what they prefer through a robust online preference center. Before they get started, the benefit is clearly articulated, and people then note their skin tone, favorite products, and if they have any specific needs, like gluten-free shampoo. Ulta Beauty ensures the right offers are delivered at the right time and in the proper channels: in-app, email, and even on their website, avoiding irrelevant offers and overcommunication that can be off-putting or annoying to customers.

Spotify exemplifies using personalization in a way that doesn't make listeners question how their data was used: it's clear they got the data to guide these recommendations based on that it helped them find something special for you; it's clearly based on your users' listening preferences while using their services, those of your friends on the app, and listeners with similar tastes. The brand earns user confidence through using this data to create valuable experiences. So much so, in fact, that Spotify users annually flood social channels to share their Year in Review.

6



COMMUNITY



06 Community

Confidence enabling brands build communities alongside members.

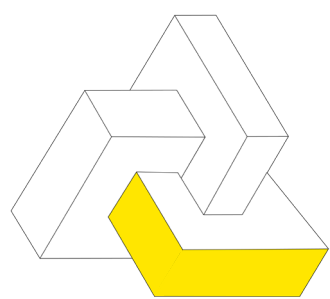


Customers who are a member of the company's brand community initiative.

As with personalization, brands have rolled out an onslaught of community-building initiatives in recent years, making the practice ubiquitous.

But are customers actually excited to participate? Imagine every brand you interact with asking you to join their community. A high number of community members doesn't automatically mean it's a success – successful community initiatives get customers to actively engage with them, and drive brand satisfaction and retention. Our research found that community actually has a relatively small impact on retention, and doesn't contribute to brand satisfaction, suggesting that not many brands are accomplishing that.

Despite brand communities becoming more popular, many brands still don't fully understand what communities are or how to design them around collaboration, shared interests, and connections. They're rushing to create communities before they understand how to effectively do that. Compounding confusion, most customers don't understand how communities are set up, and how to get the best value from them. In fact, when we asked customers whether they considered themselves a member or part of the brand community, we found that only 21% of total respondents said they were members of a brand's community initiative.

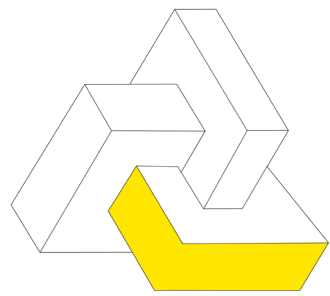


In the simplest terms, a brand community is a place where people connect with your brand and other members – not a rabid cult following pushing your brand on social media. It is crucial to make this distinction if you're looking to leverage community to bolster your customer retention.

Brands should look before they leap, and understand the purpose their community serves, before rushing to build one. To successfully use community to drive loyalty, you must:

1. **Define the intention of the community.** When you create a new community, you need to have a clear intention in mind, since the topics, the people you invite, and the space you select will create a collective sense of place.
2. **Meet people where they are**, with the aim of making it easy to connect with them and others.
 - Digital: Either identify a platform where your audience already is, e.g. Discord, Slack, or Roblox, or create a community portal in your app or website.
 - Physical: Either identify places they are likely to meet, or, create a central place for them, like bicycle racing sportswear brand Rapha did with their shops for cyclists.
3. **Invite your first best members.** Select members with similar interests and values, who also are your super-fans. Start small to curate a space that feels approachable, real, and relevant, and will organically grow along with your members.

All of these elements are necessary to make your customers feel safe in your brand's community and understand the value that



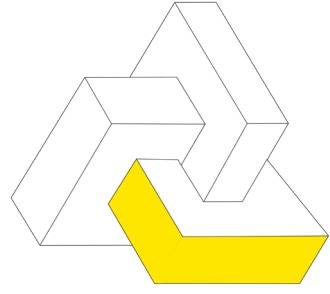
□ UNIVERSAL INSIGHT

the community provides. This in turn enables them to safely and proactively engage with other members. Through advice and discussion, members can share tips and ask questions related to their goals, helping to instill confidence on a member's path to achievement. In the process, such customers become important, and trusted, representatives of your brand.

Where reward is positive affirmation towards a path of mastery, community is for bringing people together through a shared sense of belonging and collaboration.

One thing that was very clear from customer feedback is that they say people create communities, not brands. And that for us is a really important learning ... if they see a brand trying to create a community, it's basically seen by customers as an undercover selling or marketing tactic. ”

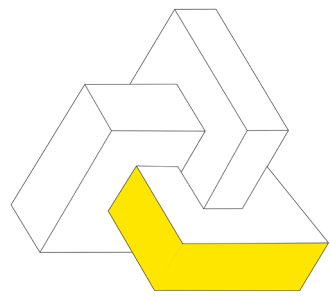
Aaron Mitchell
IKEA Global Vice President, Customer Engagement and Loyalty



Where to start

- Do you have a clear intention of the community? Does it align with your brand values and your customer interests?
- Do community users share/have similar interests and values? Are they superusers of your brand?
- What role does your brand have in the community you've created? It must hit at least two of the following: access, connection, or collaboration.
- Do your members know why you're creating a community and what's in it for them?
- Do you meet your members where they are? Do you make it easy to connect with other members?
- Do you set up moments for new members to make them feel welcomed into the space?





For Example

Glossier's community co-creates with superfans by crowdsourcing their input on aspects from product creation to content marketing. They've created new products based on those unmet needs they've discovered within the community. They also facilitate conversations where people can get the full value out of the products they've purchased from seeing how other customers are using them.

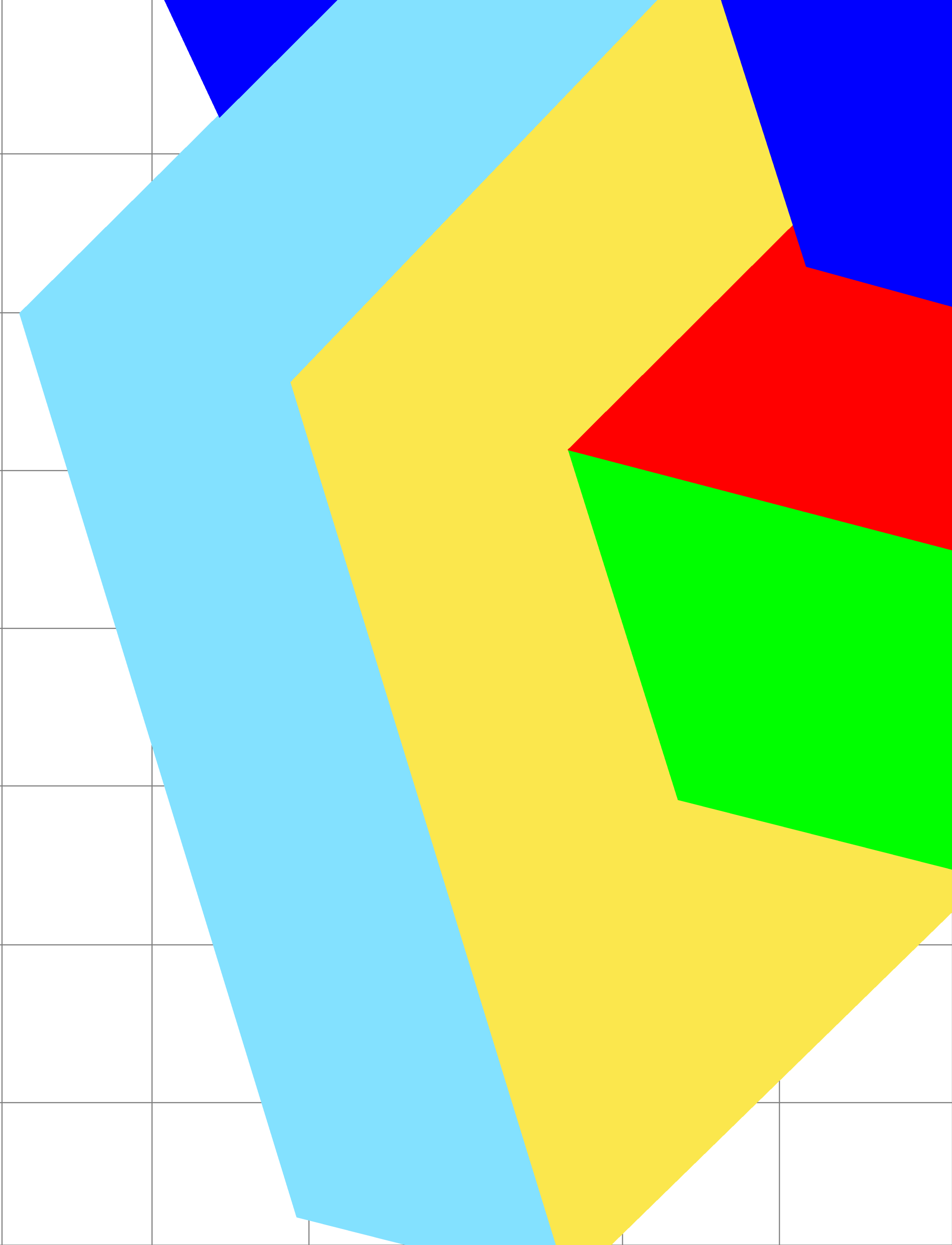
Motorcycle manufacturer **Harley-Davidson's** Harley Owners Group (with the appropriate acronym, H.O.G.) is the world's largest motorcycle membership club, connecting customers with their ride-loving peers. Exclusive to owners only, their webpage learns the Harley owner's interests, motivation and alliances, and provides them with networking opportunities, and offers specialized services and products such as official Harley Davidson insurance, financial services, and touring guides. The community bridges virtual and real-life experiences with in-person meet-ups, rallies, and the 50 Rides, One Nation challenge of scenic and exciting routes around the US.

The Bigger Picture

While each brand attribute shows how to better connect with your customers by making the world a bit easier for them, remember that confidence-enabling experiences maintain consistency throughout the entire journey, not just at a single moment. Distilling experiences down to their most straightforward, most direct form iteratively and across the customer journey builds a strong, lasting relationship over time. From an easy onboarding experience to anticipating new needs, designers and marketers must make their customers' lives easier while helping them reach their goals.

04

CATEGORY LESSONS



Rising expectations met with a proliferation of technology.

Consumers have higher expectations of brands in the wake of the rapidly-expanding proliferation of technology since the outbreak of COVID-19, as well as lower barriers to switching brands¹¹. From the rise of digital convenience options in financial services to decision fatigue in retail, consumers are challenging brands in each category to keep up with a different set of expectations and needs. Clearly, there's a lot for brands to solve if they're keen to create long-term relationships with their customers.

This section will help you understand the gaps between what brands deliver, and what customers really want in each category explored in this report.

Finances often overwhelm and intimidate, seemingly by design.

Financial Services

Finances impact just about every area of our lives, whether you desire more immediate pleasures like buying new clothing or taking a vacation, or long-term life goals and concerns, such as buying a house, having a baby, or caring for family members. People crave a sense of security and confidence for their future. Yet, dealing with financial services can be intimidating and overwhelming, often seemingly by design, and most people feel anything but confident in navigating financial complexities. From banking to investing, people must navigate confusing and complex terminology, a variety of programs and advice – all with real risk to their financial wellness.

Understandably, it's hard to keep up with, and people generally aren't given the tools they need to succeed: all signs point to financial literacy on the decline¹². Few people are adequately prepared to make financial decisions, which are growing even more complex with the influx (and volatility) of crypto-currency. Technology has also dramatically reshaped how people interact with banking, particularly given the increased rate of branch closures since the outbreak of the pandemic¹³. Customers now rely on easy, digital access to banking accounts and tools, with mobile apps preferred by 70% over in-person visits and phone calls¹⁴. Convenience has now become a baseline expectation for all financial brands.

12 Investopedia, April 2022: Why Financial Literacy Is So Important

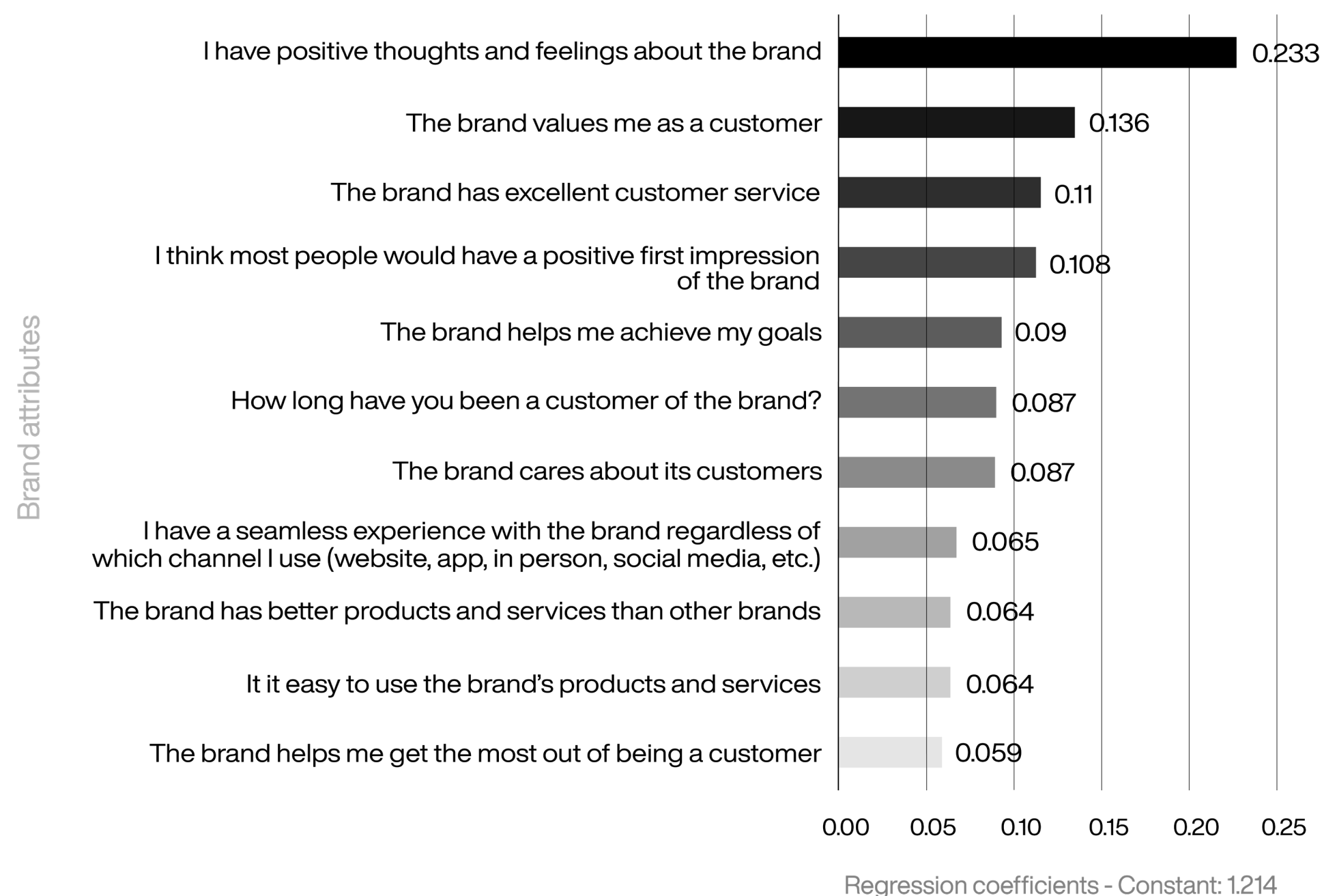
13 NCRC Feb 2022, The Great Consolidation Of Banks And Acceleration Of Branch Closures Across America: 9% of bank branches in the US closed between 2017 and 2021, with the monthly rate of bank branch closures in the US doubled during the pandemic

14 R/GA, 2020: Future of Banking

CATEGORY LESSONS

Financial Services - Regression Model - Satisfaction

Adjusted r2: 0.458



In a world where seamless access to financial data is table stakes, and both consumer trust and financial literacy on the decline, how can financial services brands drive satisfaction and build consumers' confidence in the decisions they're making with their money?

Our research found that first impression, "when I think about the brand, I have positive thoughts and feelings about," reward, "the brand helps me achieve my goals," "the brand values me as a customer," and ease of use, "seamless experience with the brand" most prominently drive satisfaction across all brands in this category.

What does this mean in practice?

Customers are demanding easy-to-use financial products and services that save them time as well as money, from easily setting up an account online to digestible communications that simplify complex financial terms. Simple language and straightforward services not only save time – they enable personal agency, making people feel confident in their financial moves and helping combat fears that cloud decision making in this space. How many of us fully understand compounding interest? Keeping it simple goes a long way in building financial understanding among consumers, which in turn instills confidence.

However, focusing solely on reducing friction can risk flattening your brand's experience rather than distinguishing it from your

□ CATEGORY LESSONS

competitors. Consumers in this category are looking for brands that help them achieve their financial wellness goals so that they feel competent and have a sense of security in the face of an uncertain future. Rewards are a key attribute to tap into that customer motivation. Through rewards, brands can help customers prioritize and better understand their financial goals, track the progress they're making to help them stay motivated, and master their financial literacy. The customer can then make decisions regarding budgeting, saving, investing, and retirement planning with confidence.

Take note from Ally Bank, a digital financial services company, which has made clear communication, experiences that are easier for people to use, a cornerstone of its brand. "That's what the brand has been built on," Ally chief marketing and public relations officer Andrea Brimmer told R/GA, "identifying those pain points, finding a different way to do it, and thinking like humans – not thinking like marketers, and bankers, and technologists – thinking about everything that we didn't like in the category as customers of the category and how to solve for that."

Brimmer cited financial literacy as one part of that equation (even well before they're customers), as well as "the sheer fact that the banking category makes it as difficult as possible to understand how to manage your money and get to your money." "Why do I have to pay \$5 to get my money out of an ATM?" she added. "Explain it to me. So we don't charge ATM fees. Those are the kinds of things that we've solved for 24/7 service, and we call it speaking human."

Retail is facing a paradox of choice.

Retail

With more choices than ever, shoppers are increasingly facing a paradox of choice. On one side you have the fast pace of trends and infinite retail options, on the other, technology is bridging physical and digital retail through omnichannel experiences. Logistical and supply chain issues only underscore how ever-shifting this category is, as shoppers never know what a store will have in stock – or when prices will be raised. And while shoppers are making purchases in droves¹⁵, and retailers are scrambling to adapt to advances in technology to keep up, satisfaction with retailers is at its lowest level since 2015¹⁶.

Flooded with an avalanche of new products and information, customers seek curation that not only solves decision paralysis, but also empowers them to figure out what they really want or need.

When we asked survey participants what is most important to them for satisfying retail experiences, we found that “help me get the most out of being a customer,” “excellent service,” and “make it easier for me to engage with it,” were most common answers, concluding that excellent customer service, along with first impression, and ease of use are most important of the six brand attributes for driving satisfaction in this category.

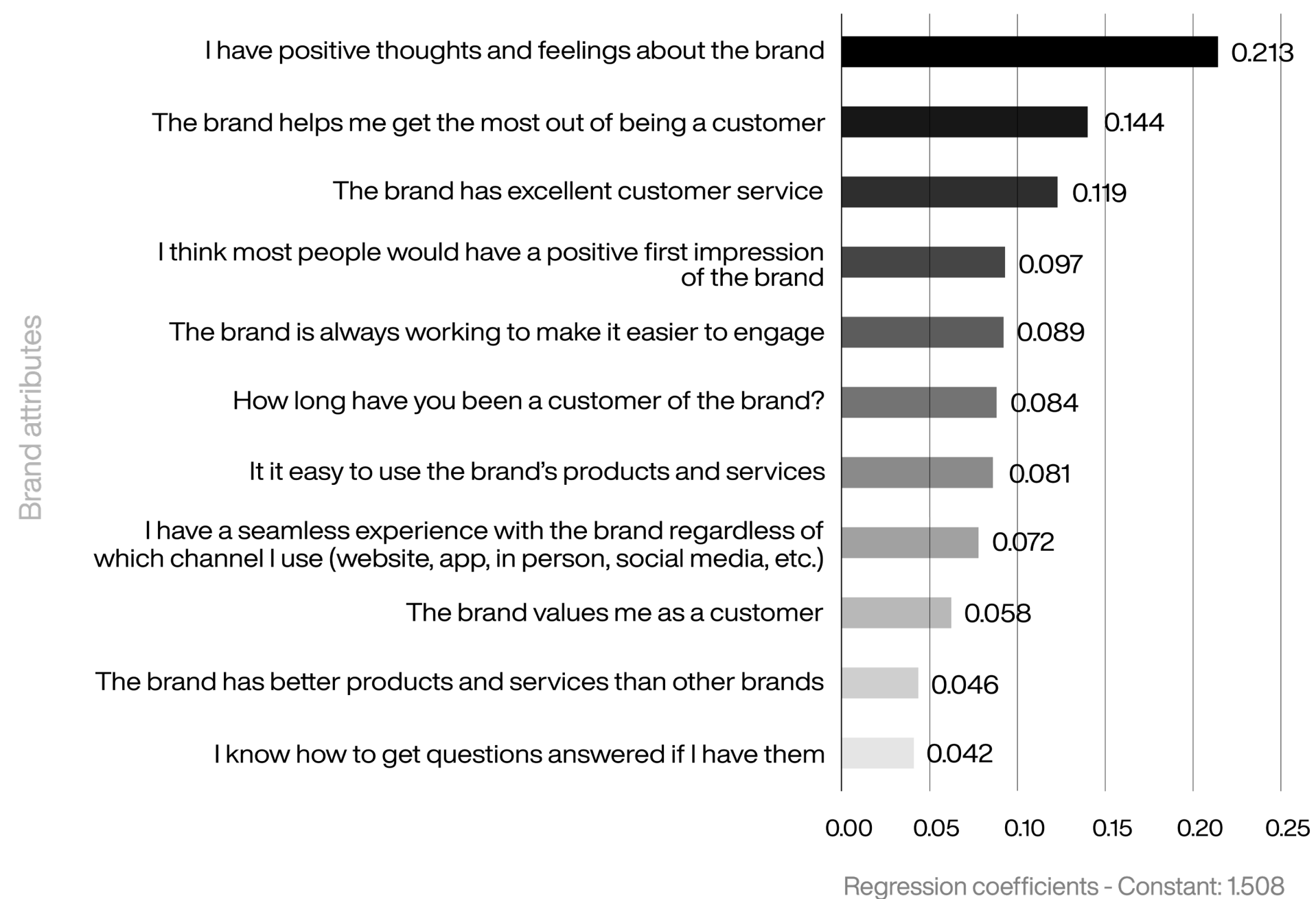
15 National Retail Federation, Jan 2022: What’s ahead for retail in 2022

16 ASCI 2021: Retail and Consumer Shipping Report

CATEGORY LESSONS

Retail - Regression Model - Satisfaction

Adjusted r2: 0.379



What does this mean in practice?

In the face of ever-expanding choice, shoppers want what's on their list at the best value possible, quickly and on the channel of their choice. They are prioritizing convenience, from easily navigating a website to quick in-store self-checkout. So while retailers are facing pressure to add robust ecommerce options, the focus should be on ways to reduce cognitive load — by arranging products in a visually coherent way, laying out stores and websites intuitively, and offering fast-check-outs. The ultimate goal, when people already have so much on their plate, is to lead them to easier purchase decisions.

It's not just about simplification, though. Customers are looking to get the most out of their experience, so it's also about providing guidance and high-touch service, so they feel secure and confident in their decisions, not frustrated or overwhelmed. This means easily accessible customer support, along with clearly displayed information on availability, reviews, price and location, are crucial to boosting shopper confidence.

Streamlining choice for a better shopping experience not only helps shoppers save time, it builds their confidence in the ability to make the right decisions for them, bringing those brands closer to becoming their retailer of choice.

Tech is on a path of endless innovation.

Tech

As technology ushered in lowered barriers for digital disruption¹⁷, brands in this space must relentlessly capture – and keep – customer attention at a fast pace. Brands are constantly reinventing offerings and adding new features to delight and retain customers. However, while this rapid acceleration of choice and options may make our apps and toys more powerful, they also become far more complex (and hard to keep up).

In turn, users need to continuously adapt to new innovations, quickly turning yesterday's innovation into today's standard. It's a vicious cycle that adds more pressure on the brand and user, with no clear winner. Even worse, fatigue starts to set in: with all of our devices constantly updating and changing, and a constant stream of messages and alerts across platforms. So it's no wonder that, as tech innovations speed up, analog-era products such as record players and single-use cameras, have made a comeback. And who's driving this trend? It isn't primarily being driven by millennial nostalgia, but by Gen Z, digital natives steeped in Internet culture who are turning to analog to find a momentary escape from complex technology and digital overload.¹⁸

In the midst of this complexity, our research shows that a positive first impression and ease of use drive customer satisfaction in the category.

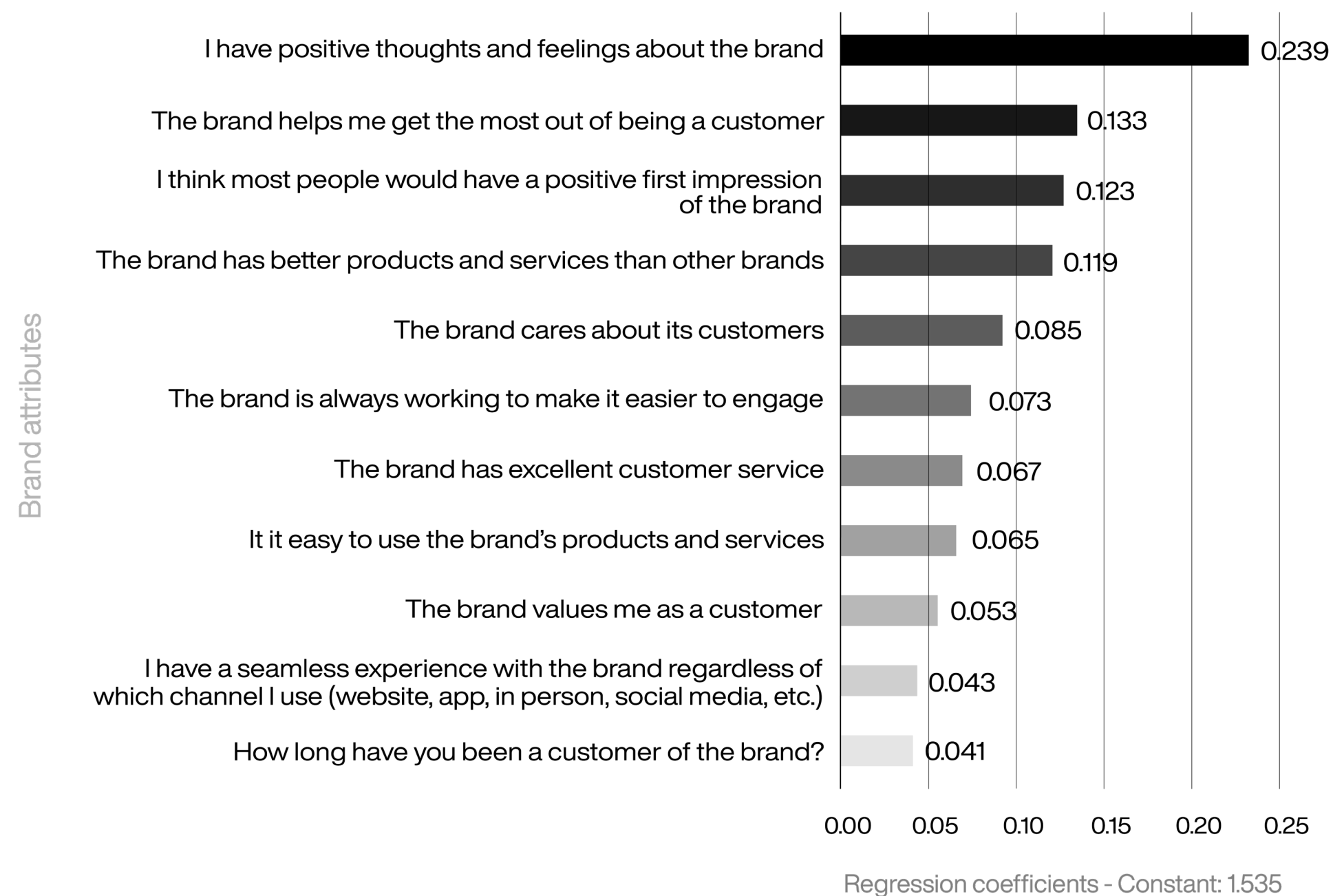
17 McKinsey, 2021: The new digital age

18 Gen Z Finds Stability by Embracing the Past, Forbes, May 2022

CATEGORY LESSONS

Tech - Regression Model - Satisfaction

Adjusted r2: 0.436



What does this mean in practice?

Users want to tackle the learning curve as quickly as possible to get the most out of their experience. When was the last time any of us read a manual? Making their new tech product or service's onboarding as intuitive as possible, offering a product ecosystem that shares data instantly, and providing customer service that is easy and accessible no matter which channel they're on, makes their lives easier. It also makes customers confident that they know how to use it and where to find answers when they need them. While technology advances and its growing capabilities offer value to customers' relationships with brands, it also requires greater simplification.

People want quick mastery and comprehension of tech services, in order to take advantage of the innovation they offer. Brands that recognize the ultimate goal behind their product or service, and tap into that through rewards and other forms of encouragement, drive satisfactory experiences. As customers use your product and service, reward them with points, offers, and discounts, along with congratulatory language to boost their confidence and affirm they're advancing toward their goals.

□ CATEGORY LESSONS

What stands in their way?

The high learning curve, because of the endless pace of innovation. As soon as customers learn how to use features, new ones are added. This also slows the rate of upgrade, as people anxiously await the next best thing instead of taking advantage of sequential upgrades, knowing more are coming soon. Brands should balance updates and features with intuitive guides that encourage users to adopt and take full advantage of what the tech offers, to set themselves apart from other brands and retain users.

Hospitality is blurring the lines between physical and digital.

Hospitality

As travelers enthusiastically plan trips again, after a long period of uncertainty and anxiety, hospitality brands — hotels, resort operators, and cruise lines — increasingly find that technology is central to innovating at this crucial moment. Brands in the space are dealing with the paradox of choice when catering to guests whose priorities have shifted, and who now find their leisure time more precious than ever. As lines between physical and digital experiences blur, most brands are digitizing the front desk experience through access to up-to-date information to make guests have more enjoyable stays. Yet guests feel that hotels are now offering less value than prior to the pandemic. What's causing the disconnect?

We discovered that communication and ease of use are leading drivers of satisfaction in the hospitality industry.

What does this mean in practice?

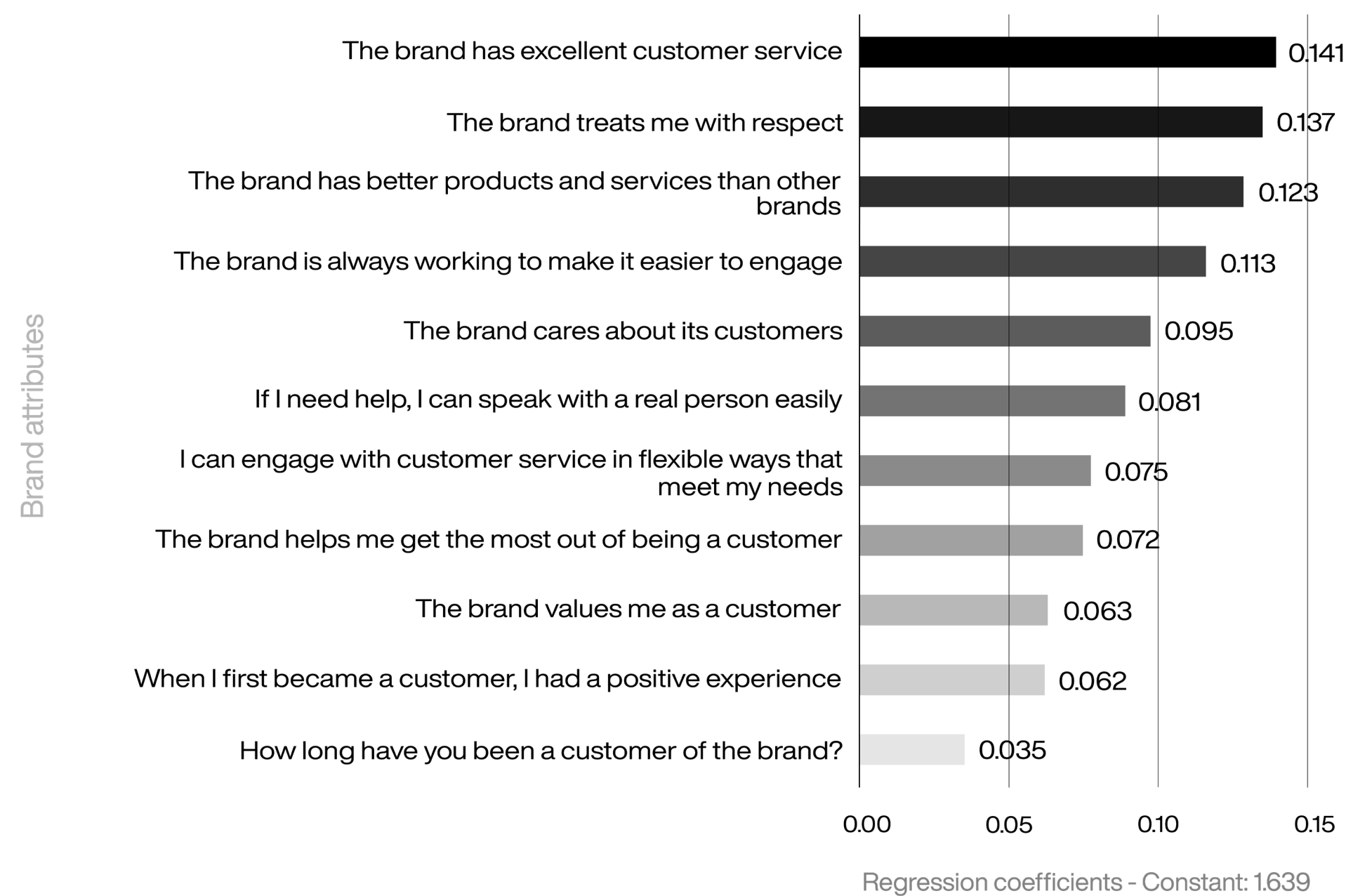
It isn't enough for hospitality brands to meet guests' expectations by making every associate a guest expert. Brands need to scale proactive, flexible, and real-time services that allow guests to be fully prepared for their stay.

Arming your guests with everything they need for their travel begins with asking for their preferences and goals for the trip immediately after booking with you. Then, through carefully

CATEGORY LESSONS

Hospitality - Regression Model - Satisfaction

Adjusted r2: 0.326



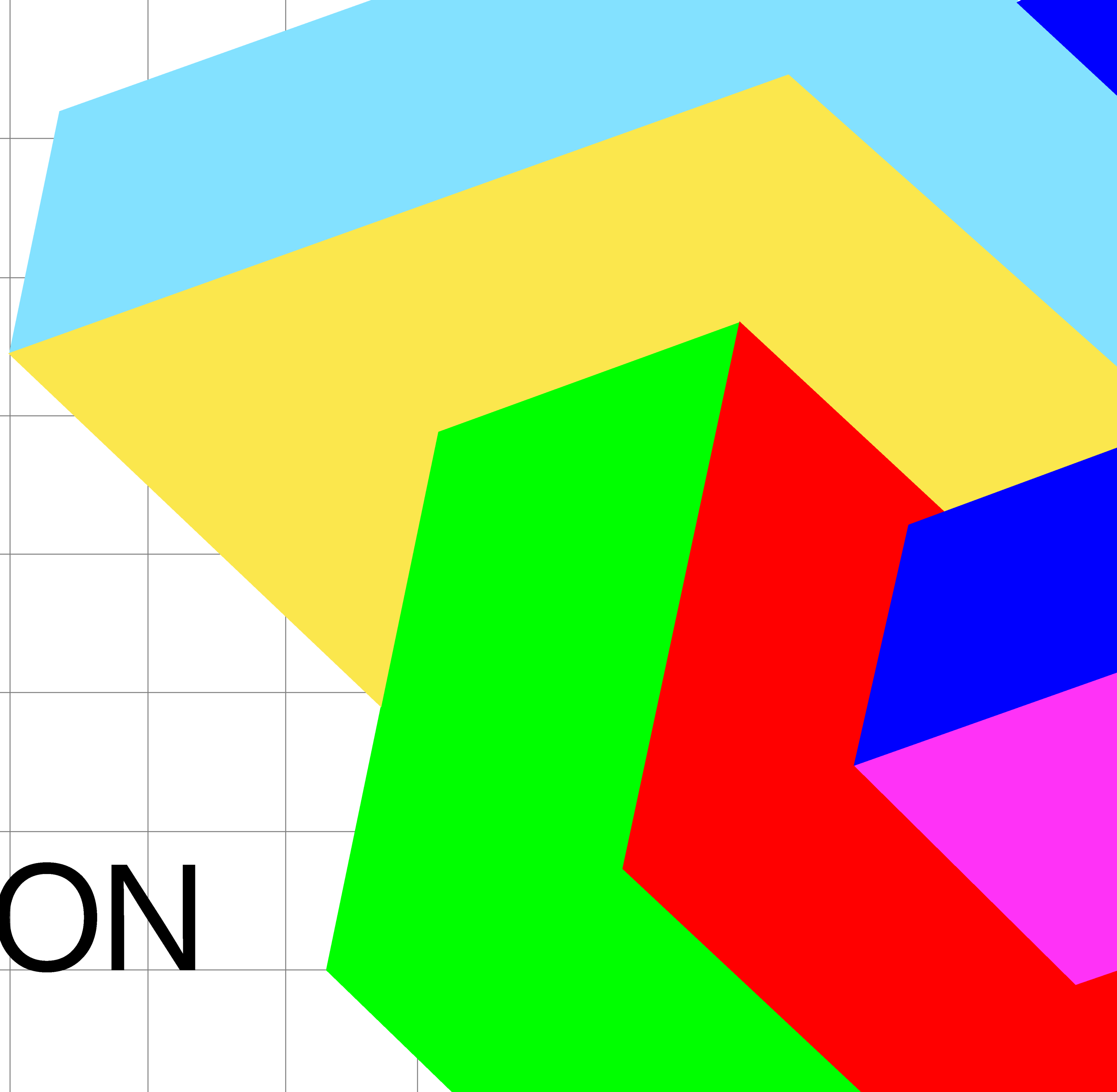
coordinated communications before, during, and after their stay, leverage that information to give them everything from ‘insider tips’ to suggestions for off-the-beaten path locations so they feel like a local. Nothing instills confidence better than knowing your way around town.

Brands who win in this space also understand the value of providing their guests with flexible service and proactively serving their needs. Guests can call services directly with any questions ahead of their stay, send an email, or, in some instances, access a chatbot via their website or app. Once they’ve arrived, guests can walk up to the front desk to speak with the staff directly, who provide warm service, from thoughtful greetings upon entering the lobby, to personally following up on special requests like restaurant recommendations, to reps empowered to resolve any problem.

When guests want to make a request, they expect to do this quickly and easily, on the channel of their choice. Or better yet, through a self-service portal. Treat requests as insights to design future experiences. Excellent service is proactively improving guests’ experiences. Understanding the most frequently made requests and asking for feedback at crucial moments in the journey will improve future stays.

05

FIRST BEST ACTION



First Best Action

We've used the lessons learned from top brands —where 88% of customers were satisfied with their experiences, to codify how brands can improve customer satisfaction and get buyers coming back. There is no one size fits all approach across all industries, and confidence comes in different forms based on customer goals which vary across specific brand categories. Brands can apply our six attributes to drive confidence in a multitude of ways, such as product changes, new service offerings, and streamlining in-store experiences.

But large-scale changes like retail footprint or overhaul of digital presence can take months or even years to implement and require considerable financial resources. A *first best action* is designed for *speed to market* and can be quickly implemented to measure impact and inform more complicated, holistic changes to customer relationships down the line. Despite category differences, there's one place where brands across all strategies can adopt a first best action to start addressing customer satisfaction: *communications*.

Strategies like email, push, and point-of-sale or call center scripting, deliver relevant, useful KPIs like Net Promoter Score (NPS) insights relatively quickly. You can then create a business case with minimal investment and build a foundation of widely-applicable insights that can inform longer term, more holistic investments across

□ FIRST BEST ACTION

product, service, and organizational opportunities. You don't need to do product and service innovation to get started. Email can be a great pilot.

Taking your first best action

Since first impression is a crucial brand attribute for customer satisfaction across categories, communications around the onboarding experience is a logical place to start tackling your pain points and laying the groundwork for sustainable long-term relationships. Using comms channels to create greater awareness of existing self-service experiences beyond the onboarding process can also have a significant impact on driving satisfaction – with a relatively low lift. Keep in mind the importance of ease of use, a critical attribute across the board to enable user confidence, while considering the best ways to reach users.

We'll explore examples of an effective and simple first best action in the four brand categories we focused on, as well as recommend ways to apply key findings from this pilot to scale up.

Financial Services

Build confidence through guidance.

First best action: Embrace email and in-app messaging that makes customers feel more secure in their financial decisions and understand service offerings, with brand editorial educating them on financial literacy, and using next-best-product api's to recommend tools and services most relevant to their goals.

How to scale up: Further the concept of guidance with a playful experience through demos and sandboxes. This gives customers a chance to practice using financial tools in a simulated way, to see how their actions can lead to financial security without any actual risk involved, building the confidence that they know how to navigate the financial system and make decisions for themselves.

Retail

Build confidence through streamlining the choice dilemma of Retail.

First best action: When developing a first best action for retail, embrace the power a strong sales associate has in developing a streamlined and enjoyable shopping experience that helps customers navigate an overwhelming array of options, and scale it across the ecosystem. From product recommendations that integrate reward redemption and promotional calendar, to layering on style tips and seasonal insights, scale this service through tactics like reward-usage onboarding with examples of products to redeem or seasonal trend newsletters.

How to scale up: Further this helpfulness with a customized touch, using personal shopper chat bots that bring the service of in-store associates to users shopping online. Incorporate users' own points and shopping data into email comms that directly address their personal shopping wants and needs.

▪

Technology

Build confidence through encouraging day-to-day usage of technology products and services.

First best action: When it comes to first best actions, steps to solidify product offerings and services exploration are vital. With constant innovations and changes, applying tactics that encourage users to explore, understand, and leverage, the wider offerings helps cement the value of the services with them – better connecting the satisfaction they have with the value that was presented in acquisition, something that often goes unrealized in the category. With deployment in mind, brands should first focus on comms that aid mastery and connections that enable consistent usage. Gamified prompts delivered via onboarding emails to explore unique functionalities, and apply them in users' day-to-day lives through challenges to connect with friends and family, are one example.

How to scale up: These comms easily scale to product and service implementations with in-line tool tips that encourage users to take advantage of features that help them in real time. This builds their confidence and ultimately helps them achieve their goals, like being able to stay connected to the people they love no matter where they are, or what devices they use.

Hospitality

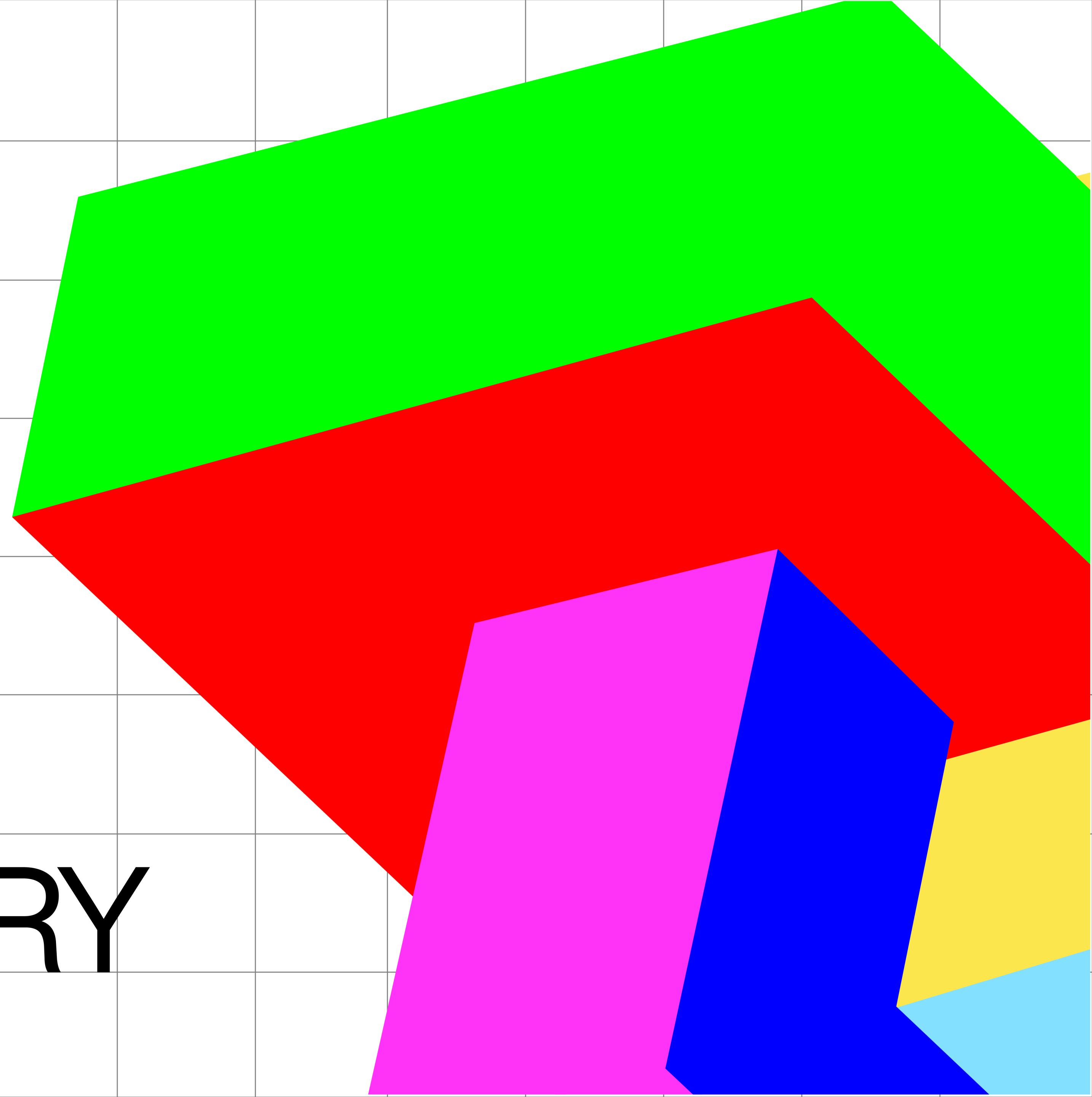
Build confidence by scaling proactive, flexible and real-time concierge services.

First best action: Carefully coordinated communications, before, during, and after visits are crucial to providing concierge service throughout the entire experience of guests, who want to escape everyday life while enjoying creature comforts. Begin by understanding guest preferences and needs, such as extra towels or booking a meeting room, to help them prepare for their stay. Take this opportunity to also inform guests of how they easily request anything they need during their stay however they choose to access your service – mobile, email, even the front desk – and make sure customer service is ready to help them, whatever they ask.

How to scale up: Build a robust customer profile through experiences across channels, and feedback loops at key moments in a guest's visit, so your concierge easily anticipates their needs before and during their stay – and will be prepared for their next visit. By examining experiences across the board, you'll understand where you can improve and cut down on unnecessary steps or delays.

06

IN SUMMARY



A perpetual work in progress

Collectively, each of the six attributes are working parts of a whole that add up to an experience that makes the lives of your customers easier, while creating confidence – both in your brand and on their path to achieving their personal goals.

These larger goals don't reflect a final destination, but a continual work in progress. Similarly, your brand's approach to customer relationships isn't something you can figure out and check off a to-do list one time. How your brand engages with customers needs to be ongoing and evolving, to keep up with changes, while always rooted in your central value.

For instance, IKEA's brand is centered around helping customers elevate the everyday home experience, and there are always new ways to improve our lives at home. "That relationship will never be done," Global Vice President, Customer Engagement and Loyalty Aaron Mitchell explained. "The home is never done. You'll never be finished with improving your home, with wanting to live better. It's a continuous journey."

Design experiences for a more human future

We've provided a list of the brand attributes most important to drive satisfaction and keep your customers coming back, and a first best action to make it easy to figure out where to start – but there are any number of next moves from there.

While this report focuses on four broad brand categories, the fundamental principles it examines apply across all industries. The importance of designing approachable experiences that instill user confidence extends far beyond purchase and post-purchase decisions, including ones with far greater consequences. Our Future of Health Experiences report, for example, examined how better designed experiences in health can help lead to better healthcare outcomes and allow people to live healthier lives.

Companies are not people, but the people behind your business should strive to make your brand feel more human. Connect with your customers in ways that give them the confidence to make continual progress in whatever it is they are striving for, by understanding what they need to make their lives easier and more fulfilling. Designing confidence-enabling experiences is one important element in designing for a more human future. The central element underlying each attribute contributing to confidence-enabling experiences is empathy. This is a trait to consider and return to whenever you feel stuck as to your next move; it should point to the right path forward.

Thank you

Brand Relationship Design at R/GA helps brands establish and nurture lasting relationships with their customers, creating mutual value at every touchpoint. After unlocking unique customer needs and motivations, our team helps brands design relevant value propositions, communications, and experiences that drive truly enduring, two-way value that build customer satisfaction. It's possible, it's effective, and it starts here.

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