

The Role of Nostalgia Marketing in Evoking Emotional Engagement with History-related Content on Social Media: A research among Gen Z in Vietnam

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Abstract

The research aims to evaluate the impact of Nostalgia Marketing on nostalgic emotional engagements among Generation Z in Vietnam, within the context of historical content disseminated on social media platforms. Adopting an approach that conceptualizes nostalgia as a retrospective emotional state that can be triggered not only by personal experiences but also through mediated stimuli, the research analyzes Nostalgia Marketing across common digital content formats, including images, videos, infographics, and text. Data were collected through a survey of Generation Z respondents in Vietnam and analyzed using statistical techniques to assess the extent to which each content format influences nostalgic emotional engagements. The findings indicate that Nostalgia Marketing formats generate non-uniform effects on nostalgic emotional engagements. Specifically, images, videos, and infographics exhibit positive and statistically significant effects, with images demonstrating the strongest impact, followed by videos and infographics. In contrast, text-only content does not show a statistically significant effect on nostalgic emotional engagements. Furthermore, the results reveal the existence of statistically significant differences in nostalgic emotional engagements across gender groups. These findings contribute to a clearer understanding of the role of Nostalgia Marketing in evoking emotional engagements among Generation Z through historical content in the digital media environment.

Keywords: Nostalgia Marketing, nostalgic emotional engagement, history-related content, social media, Gen Z

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1. Introduction

In the context of intensifying globalization and digitalization, Gen Z is becoming the largest demographic in society and the primary force receiving information through digital environments (Nguyen 2025). However, this explosion has fundamentally altered how Gen Z perceives and interacts with the world, as information is consumed rapidly, visually, and closely tied to entertainment elements. In this context, national historical values, with their depth and accumulated significance over time are facing a demand to "transform" themselves into formats more suitable for how young people consume and experience content in digital spaces. This indicates that methods of conveying history and traditional cultural values need to be adjusted and restructured to adapt to the changes in the modern media landscape (Tran & Hoang 2022).

From this need for adaptation, the transmission and maintenance of historical values do not stop at providing information but require creating emotional connections with young people. Many psychological and behavioral studies indicate that emotional engagement is the foundation for attitude formation, capable of predicting intentions and directing long-term memory and attachment to abstract values. Within this framework, nostalgia is viewed as an emotional mechanism capable of narrowing the gap between the present and the past, allowing people to approach historical values not just through reason but through memories, symbols, and stories with collective meaning (Hungenberg et al. 2020), contributing to the consolidation of social identity and increasing positive attachment to shared cultural values (Wildschut et al. 2006). Therefore, for Gen Z, those without direct experience of historical events, nostalgic emotional engagements can absolutely be triggered through cultural symbols, historical images, sounds, stories, and elements reminiscent of the past. Furthermore, these nostalgic emotional engagements evoked within Gen Z can become a behavioral driver, shaping how this generation engages and interacts with history. Consequently, historical stories about previous generations and patriotism are increasingly trending and being spread by the youth themselves; this is an indirect way of nurturing the appreciation and affection of young people for the nation's historical values. Through nostalgic emotional

engagements, historical values are thus not only recalled but continue to be nurtured, disseminated, and maintained with long-term vitality in contemporary social life.

Leveraging this advantage, Nostalgia Marketing is often approached as a strategy to evoke positive emotion, thereby creating a distinct impact on human behavior (Cheung et al. 2016). In fact, numerous studies have applied Nostalgia Marketing across various fields, such as branding (Le 2025; Zhuang 2023), leisure tourism (Earl & Hall 2023; Leong et al. 2015), and experiential service industries (Cui 2015; Sierra & McQuity 2007; Pascal et al. 2002). However, these studies primarily examine Nostalgia Marketing in physical spaces, where nostalgic emotion are triggered through existing sensory stimuli such as images, sounds, scents, tastes, or touch. In such cases, the mechanism for evoking nostalgia is tied to the recipient's direct experience and physical interaction (Chen et al. 2020). This opens a new research gap regarding the adaptability and operation of Nostalgia Marketing in the increasingly evolving digital context.

On the other hand, the reality in Vietnam shows that many digital media products creatively exploiting historical and traditional cultural elements have attracted significant attention and gone viral among the youth. Media campaigns about heritage, music, and cinematic products inspired by history, or digital content recreating national cultural memories with modern visuals, stories, and language, not only create positive media effects but also contribute to awakening national pride and youth interest in national memory heritage. It is evident that when history is approached through emotional experiences, particularly nostalgic emotional engagements, noble historical values are no longer perceived as knowledge detached from life but become the foundation of national identity, community consciousness, and national pride.

Aiming to fill this market gap, this study approaches Nostalgia Marketing as a communication strategy to evoke nostalgic emotional engagements in Gen Z when consuming historical content on social media. Specifically, the study focuses on examining the role of Nostalgia Marketing in activating nostalgic emotional engagements through various content formats in the digital media environment. On this basis, the study aims to clarify the level of influence of Nostalgia Marketing on nostalgic emotional engagements while providing useful implications for the practical application of Nostalgia Marketing in communication.

2. Literature review

2.1. Theoretical background

Nostalgic Emotional Engagement

The term "nostalgia" originated in the 17th century, initially defined by Hofer as a psychological diagnosis for the distress of being away from one's homeland (Anspach 1934), or as a form of separation anxiety from the familiar (Freud 1900). However, by the late 20th century, the concept underwent a fundamental shift, being redefined as an "emotional engagement state" (Pearsall 1998) or a "sentimental longing for one's own past" (Routledge et al. 2008).

Extensive research has affirmed that nostalgia is not merely a transient psychological state but is considered an intrinsic, subjective, and profound psychological need (Chen & He 2014; Wang 2023). Recognized as a complex emotion embedded with memory components (Holak & Havlena 1998), nostalgia arises not only from personal experience but is also strongly triggered by tangible and intangible stimuli. These triggers depend on external factors, environments, and contexts, particularly sensory elements such as visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile (Yeh et al. 2012; Hungenberg et al. 2020). This suggests that the formation of this emotion engagement does not necessarily require direct lived experience of a historical period. Instead, through exposure to media products and cultural symbols, individuals can construct a connection with the past, transforming nostalgia into a universal emotional experience that transcends the boundaries of personal memory.

Nostalgia Marketing

Srivastava et al. (2025) define Nostalgia Marketing as a strategic approach used by brands and advertisers to tap into these emotions by incorporating familiar elements from the past into their campaigns. Providing a more comprehensive definition, (Cui 2015) describes it as a marketing technique inherently linked to the nostalgic emotions of consumers, where organizations employ marketing activities to evoke nostalgic elements and awaken deep-seated memories. This process, in turn, stimulates nostalgic feelings and drives consumer purchasing behavior. Furthermore, this concept is also referred to as "marketing communications activities that represent and engage with images and values from the past by offering products and services that emphasize a real or fictional connection to a bygone era" (Hartmann & Brunk 2019). The positive outcomes documented across various industries (Friedman 2016) demonstrate that nostalgia is a powerful tool for forging emotional

connections. This further reinforces the role of nostalgia marketing as a vital approach in contemporary marketing research and practice.

2.2. Hypothesis development and conceptual framework

The relationship between nostalgia marketing and nostalgic emotions

(Spence et al. 2014) emphasized that human senses play a critical role in enabling consumers to "re-live" moments from the past, thereby evoking feelings of nostalgia. In this context, the five primary sensory domains include: sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste. This perspective is further reinforced by Hungenberg et al. (2020), who indicated that sensory modalities such as visual (Chen & He 2014), olfactory, tactile, auditory, and gustatory stimuli all possess the capacity to trigger nostalgic memories. While digital platforms present certain limitations in creating multi-sensory experiences, as users cannot physically touch, smell, or have direct tactile engagement with the content; nostalgia marketing stimuli have still proven capable of creating more engaging and authentic experiences by targeting the visual and auditory senses (Rappaport et al. 2018; Velasco et al. 2018). Based on these foundations, it is evident that a commonality among nostalgia marketing models is their ability to elicit cognitive responses regarding the past, which subsequently leads to the formation of profound emotional states.

In this study, Nostalgia Marketing is examined through the lens of historical content and values expressed via various forms of multimedia stimuli in the digital environment. These formats serve as a means of "nostalgia encoding," integrating historical values, cultural symbols, or evocative emotions into digital content within the social media. In the Vietnamese context, common formats such as images, videos, text, and infographics (Sunarso et al. 2023; Thi & Minh) possess distinct reminiscent characteristics. These differences in their mechanisms of impact provide the foundation for the research team to propose hypotheses regarding the varying degrees of influence each content format exerts on users' nostalgic emotional engagement.

Specifically, images have the advantage of triggering immediate memories through nostalgic color palettes, familiar visual symbols, or cultural contexts linked to the past. Meanwhile, infographics balance conciseness with aesthetics; by utilizing symbolic systems and visual schematics, this format both evokes historical recollections and optimizes information processing. Regarding video, the synergy of motion, sound, and dialogue creates a multi-sensory experience, vividly recreating the past and enhancing consumer immersion. Conversely, text operates through a narrative mechanism based on the reader's own memories, leveraging descriptive language, characteristic writing styles, and typography to shape the emotional experience.

These distinct evocative mechanisms lead to the expectation that each content format will produce disproportionate levels of impact on the viewer's emotional engagement. This serves as the scientific premise for the research team to develop hypotheses concerning the specific influence of each content format on nostalgic emotions in the social media environment, as follows:

- H1: Nostalgia marketing stimuli delivered through images influence nostalgic emotional engagement
- H2: Nostalgia marketing stimuli delivered through videos influence nostalgic emotional engagement
- H3: Nostalgia marketing stimuli delivered through infographics influence nostalgic emotional engagement
- H4: Nostalgia marketing stimuli delivered through text influence nostalgic emotional engagement

The authors observe that gender-based disparities in emotional responses may stem from differences in emotion regulation mechanisms between males and females. Some studies suggest that females tend to exhibit stronger emotion regulation in response to negative stimuli, which can cause emotions to accumulate and intensify over time (Gardener et al. 2013). This indicates that under the influence of emotional stimuli, females often experience emotional engagement more deeply and intensely.

Conversely, other research indicates that gender differences in emotional reactions are not always consistent and depend on the approach and measurement of the emotion. According to Deng et al. (2016), emotional experience, also called the physiological and internal emotional response, may be more intense in males in certain cases, whereas females tend toward higher emotional expressivity, exhibiting clearer and more profound outward displays, particularly regarding negative emotions. This suggests that gender differences are contingent upon the specific type of emotion and the particular emotional dimension being examined.

Previous studies have also highlighted gender variations in the selection and evaluation of objects associated with past memories. Specifically, females often link nostalgic emotions to personal or gifted items, while males tend to experience nostalgia through functional objects or consumer products (Wallendorf & Arnould 1988).

Furthermore, each gender may not only perceive different stimuli as nostalgic but also experience and express these feelings with varying degrees of intensity. Based on these premises, it can be inferred that the nostalgic emotions elicited when users engage with historical content are not uniform but vary according to an individual's gender. Consequently, the authors propose the following hypothesis to test the variance in nostalgic emotions across gender groups:

H5: There is a significant difference in perceived nostalgic emotional engagement between genders

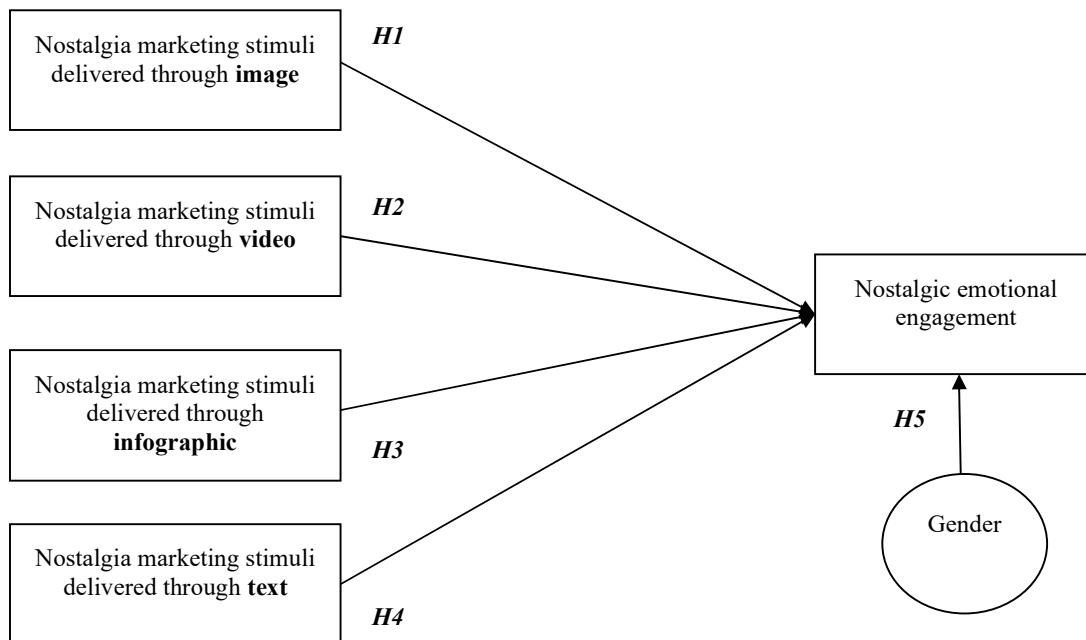


Figure 1. Proposed research model

Source: Summary of the authors' research result

3. Research methodology

3.1. Sample and data collection

This study focuses on Generation Z (Gen Z) in Vietnam to explore and verify the role of Nostalgia Marketing in shaping nostalgic emotional engagement regarding historical topics on social media. The selection of Gen Z as the primary research subjects is based on two fundamental reasons. First, compared to other age groups, Gen Z exhibits the most robust presence and interaction on social media (Slotta 2025). This advantage enables them to receive, disseminate, and shape information trends effectively and rapidly. Second, as a transitional generation, Gen Z is highly expected to become the key force in creating and spreading historical heritage values within a digital future. Consequently, analyzing Gen Z's nostalgic emotional responses to media stimuli has become an urgent requirement to measure the connectivity of historical content with the youth. This serves as a critical foundation for shaping strategies to preserve and transfer cultural values in the digital era.

The research employs a quantitative-leaning approach, beginning with a preliminary online survey to verify the reliability and internal consistency of the observed variables. The pilot scale assessment was conducted on a sample of 150 Gen Z individuals. Analysis results indicated that all factors achieved a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient > 0.8 , demonstrating very high data reliability. Additionally, the corrected item-total correlation coefficients were all > 0.3 , ensuring that the observed variables met the requirements for discriminant validity and that no convergent errors occurred (Hair et al. 1998). Based on these empirical results, the entire scale was maintained in its original form for subsequent analysis in the formal research phase.

During the formal data collection stage, the online survey was widely distributed across social media platforms with the highest interaction density among Vietnamese youth today, including Facebook, Instagram, Threads, and TikTok. The study applied a convenience sampling technique, establishing a mandatory screening criterion:

participants must fall within the defined age range of Generation Z. The detailed characteristics of the research sample are summarized and presented in the descriptive table below:

Table 1: Research sample

Variables	Categories	Frequency (percentage)
Gender	Female	310 (55,3%)
	Male	251 (44,7%)
Living area	Urban area	429 (76,5%)
	Rural area	132 (23,5%)
The most frequently used social media	Facebook	178 (31,7%)
	Tik Tok	264 (47,1%)
	Instagram	61 (10,3%)
	Threads	39 (7%)
	Zalo	19 (3,4%)

Source: Summary of the authors' research result

3.2. Measures

All concepts in the study were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 represents "Strongly Disagree," and 5 represents "Strongly Agree." The measurement indicators for each concept were inherited and adapted from previous validated studies in marketing and consumer behavior to ensure reliability and suitability for the research context. Specifically, the independent variables related to Nostalgia Marketing were developed based on the theoretical foundations of Wildschut et al. (2006), Holak & Havlena (1998), Cui (2015), and prior research such as Wen et al. (2019), Özhan & Talih Akkaya (2021), and Adil Mahmood Alkhafagi (2023). The structure of the observed variables for each content format is distributed in detail as follows: video (6 variables), image (5 variables), infographic (6 variables), and text (5 variables). These items focus on exploring the capacity of each content form to evoke memories, establish associations, and trigger the nostalgic responses of the recipients. Regarding the dependent variable, nostalgic emotional engagement was measured through 4 observed variables, adapted from the theoretical framework viewing nostalgia as an emotional state arising from reminiscent stimuli (Wildschut et al. 2006; Jain et al. 2017; Sedikides & Wildschut 2016). These variables were designed to directly reflect the characteristic psychological manifestations of the youth when exposed to historical materials, including states of being: moved, proud, sentimental, and appreciative. Focusing on these emotional nuances allows the study to accurately assess the depth of the connection between the Gen Z audience and the transmitted cultural and historical values.

4. Result

4.1. The impact of nostalgia marketing on Gen Z's nostalgic emotional engagement in history-related social media content

4.1.1. Measuring the reliability of Cronbach's alpha scale

The reliability of the measurement scales was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficients. According to Hair et al. (1998), a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.6 or higher is considered acceptable, while items with item-total correlations below 0.3 are regarded as poor indicators and should be removed (Nunnally and Burnstein, 1994). Specifically, Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.8 to nearly 1.0 indicate good scale reliability, whereas values between 0.7 and 0.8 suggest that the scale is adequate for use.

Table 2. Cronbach's alpha analysis result

Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	Corrected Item Total Correlation	Number of scales eliminated
Image (IMG)	0,863	0,650 - 0,710	0/5
Video (VID)	0,900	0,710 - 0,741	0/6
Infographic (INF)	0,902	0,708 - 0,763	0/6
Text (TEX)	0,878	0,689 - 0,733	0/5
Nostalgic emotional engagement (EMO)	0,867	0,672 - 0,772	0/4

Source: Summary of the authors' research results

The overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficient reached $0.882 > 0.6$, and the item total correlation coefficients ranged from 0.650 to 0.763. All observed variables exhibited item total correlations greater than 0.3 and lower than the overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, indicating that each item contributed positively to the reliability of the scales. These results confirm that all measurement scales meet the required reliability criteria and are suitable for subsequent confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Based on this foundation, the study proceeded with CFA to further assess the convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement scales.

4.1.2. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) acknowledges the evaluation of the overall model fit and the examination of convergent and discriminant validity among constructs. This step is a critical validation procedure that enables the researchers to assess the adequacy of both the proposed research model and the measurement scales.

Based on the conceptual model developed to examine the relationship between nostalgia marketing and nostalgic emotion, and grounded in theoretically robust measurement items, the authors first assess the overall model fit with the collected dataset. Subsequently, the study examines whether the observed variables appropriately represent their respective latent constructs by evaluating composite reliability (CR), convergent validity, and discriminant validity within the CFA framework.

Model fit measures

According to Hu and Bentler (1999), commonly used goodness of fit indices for assessing model fit include the Chi-square statistic (CMIN), degrees of freedom (df), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). A structural model is considered acceptable when the following criteria are met: $CMIN/df \leq 5$, $CFI \geq 0.8$, $GFI \geq 0.9$, $RMSEA \leq 0.08$. More stringent criteria indicate a good model fit when $CMIN/df \leq 3$, $CFI \geq 0.9$, $GFI \geq 0.9$, $TLI \geq 0.9$, and $RMSEA \leq 0.06$.

The model fit assessment's result shows that the proposed structural model demonstrates a good level of adequacy, as all fit indices meet the conventional thresholds (Table 2). Specifically, the $CMIN/df$ value of 2.571 (< 3), suggests a very small discrepancy between the theoretical model and the empirical data. The GFI and CFI values are 0.902 and 0.951, respectively, exceeding the recommended cutoff of 0.9, reflecting a satisfactory level of model fit. Furthermore, the RMSEA value of 0.053, which is below the acceptable upper limit of 0.08, confirms that the model exhibits a low approximation error and is good for the research context.

Table 3: Model fit index

	Index	Evaluation
CMIN/DF	2,571	Good (≤ 3)
GFI	0,902	Good (≥ 0.9)
CFI	0,951	Good (≥ 0.9)
TLI	0,945	Good (≥ 0.9)
RMSEA	0,053	Good (≤ 0.06)

Source: Summary of the authors' research results

Master validity

The authors conducted an assessment of composite reliability (CR), convergent validity, and discriminant validity among the constructs to evaluate the adequacy of the proposed measurement scales for the research model. The measurement items were developed through the synthesis and adaptation of multiple prior studies; therefore, certain observed variables may not be fully appropriate in representing their corresponding constructs or may not sufficiently demonstrate discriminant properties. The results of these assessments are presented in Table 3.

Table 4: Model validity measures

Construct	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	VID	IMG	INF	TEXT	EMO
VID	0.900	0.600	0.689	0.900	0.775				
IMG	0.864	0.561	0.698	0.867		0.830***	0.749		
INF	0.902	0.607	0.727	0.904		0.733***	0.703***	0.779	
TEX	0.878	0.590	0.727	0.880		0.811***	0.835***	0.853***	0.768
EMO	0.876	0.639	0.305	0.881		0.552***	0.546***	0.519***	0.535***
									0.800

Source: Summary of the authors' research results

The findings indicate that all latent constructs exhibit high composite reliability, with CR values ranging from 0.864 to 0.902. These values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70 proposed by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), indicating strong internal consistency among the indicators within each construct (Netemeyer et al., 2003). In addition, the evaluation of convergent validity shows that the average variance extracted (AVE) for all constructs exceeds the threshold of 0.50, thereby confirming adequate convergent validity.

To establish discriminant validity, the maximum shared variance (MSV) should be lower than the AVE, and the square root of AVE should exceed the inter-construct correlations. As shown in Table 3, the measurement scales for the four independent constructs VID, IMG, INF, and TEX, exhibiting relatively strong intercorrelations, suggesting that discriminant validity among these constructs is not fully established. Nevertheless, the study proceeds with structural equation modeling (SEM) to further test the hypothesized relationships and to clarify the distinct effects of each independent construct on nostalgic emotional engagement.

Structural Equation Modeling analysis

After establishing the relationships among variables and validating the model's fit with market data, the research team employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to analyze the multidimensional associations between the dependent variable, 'Nostalgia emotional engagement' (EMO), and the four independent variables: VID, IMG, INF, and TEX. The results of the SEM analysis are presented in Figure 2.

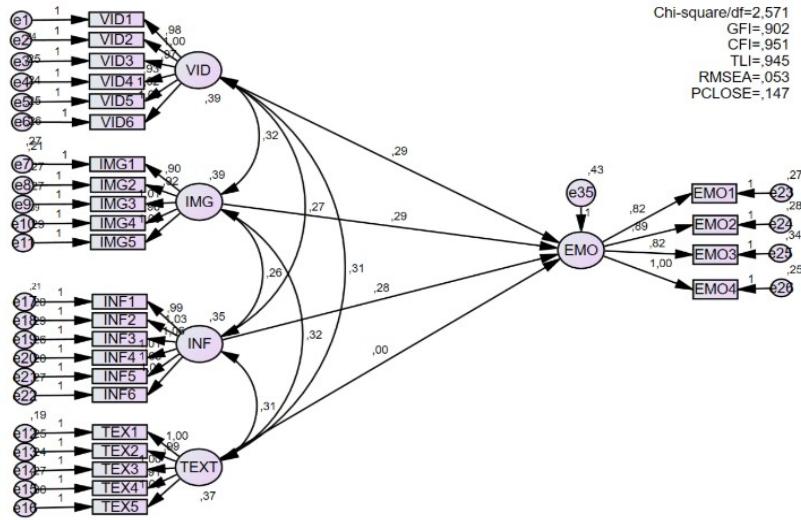


Figure 2: Structural Equation Modeling result

Source: Summary of the authors' research results

The Squared Multiple Correlation (R^2) indicates that the predictive power of social media content forms regarding the dependent variable 'Nostalgic emotional engagement' is moderate. Specifically, the four independent Nostalgia Marketing variables account for 34.7% of the variance in the dependent variable. While this level of explanatory power is not substantial, it is considered adequate within this research context. This is because emotion is an intrinsic attribute, subject to subjective influences and conditioned by various extraneous factors such as viewing duration, publication platform, and engagement metrics.

Regarding hypothesis testing and impact assessment, the SEM results indicate that the relationship $TEX \rightarrow EMO$ yields a p-value of 0.981. This value exceeds the standard threshold of 0.05, demonstrating that one of the four independent variables possesses no significant relationship with the dependent variable EMO . Consequently, hypothesis H4 is rejected; hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 all exhibited p-value lower than 0.05, achieving statistical significance at the 95% confidence level

The unstandardized regression coefficients are predominantly positive, indicating a positive relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

The SEM results support hypothesis H1, H2, and H3, as presented in Table 4

Table 5: Summary of SEM result

Hypothesis (Hs)		Unstandardized Estimate	P-Value (Sig)	Result
H1	$EMO \leftarrow VID$	0,290	0,044	Accept
H2	$EMO \leftarrow IMG$	0,289	0,021	Accept
H3	$EMO \leftarrow INF$	0,281	0,039	Accept
H4	$EMO \leftarrow TEX$	-0,004	0,981	Reject

Source: Summary of the authors' research results

Nostalgia Marketing stimuli exert a positive impact on the nostalgic emotional engagement on social media users during the consumption of historical content. The magnitude of influence among these factors is ranked in the following order IMG , VID , and INF .

4.2. Gender differences in nostalgic emotional engagement

Gender is posited as a potential factor influencing the nostalgic emotional engagement by social media users. The sample composition consists of 251 male respondents (44.7%) and 310 female respondents (55.3%). Consequently, this study examines whether there is a statistically significant difference in the evaluation of nostalgia emotional engagement between male and female participants.

To test this hypothesis (H5), the research team employed the One-Way ANOVA method. This technique is utilized to test for the equality of means across data groups with a significance level of 5%. The test results determine whether there is a statistically significant difference in the dependent variable 'Nostalgic emotional engagement' based on the 'Gender' factor. The results of the One-Way ANOVA analysis are presented as follows:

Table 6: One-Way ANOVA testing result

	Sig. (Levene test)	Sig (ANOVA)	Conclusion
<i>Nostalgic Emotional Engagement</i>	0,085 > 0,05	<0,001	There are differences between the two gender groups

Source: Summary of the authors' research results

Consequently, hypothesis H5 is supported. The result of $\text{Sig} < 0,001$ ($< 0,005$) confirms the existence of a statistically significant difference in the nostalgic emotional engagement between male and female groups. Specifically, descriptive statistics reveal that nostalgia is elicited more intensely in the female group, with a mean score of 4.24, corresponding to the 'Strongly agree' level. This figure is significantly higher than the rating observed in the male group ($M=3.43$), which ranks slightly above the average level.

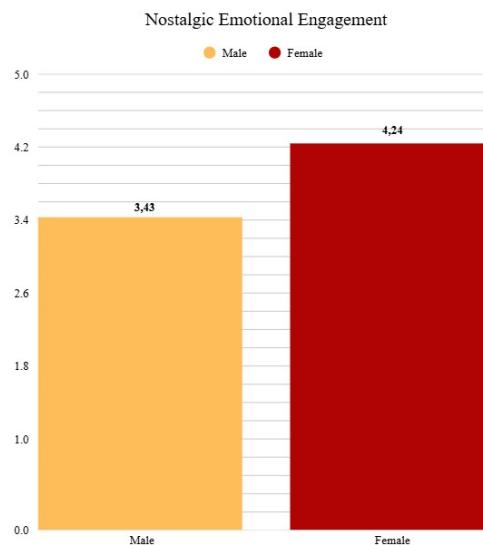


Figure 3: Comparing nostalgic emotional engagement in different gender groups

Source: Summary of the authors' research results

5. Discussion and recommendation

5.1. Discussion

5.1.1. Nostalgia marketing through visual of content format plays an important role in evoking nostalgic emotional engagement

The research results indicate that visual content formats are increasingly dominant in evoking emotional engagement among social media users. This is evidenced by the acceptance of three out of four hypotheses H1, H2, H3, all of which relate to Nostalgia Marketing stimuli containing "visual of content" components. These include static images, images combined with design elements (infographics), and video, the simultaneous integration of moving images and sound. These findings demonstrate that image-based stimuli can elicit significantly stronger nostalgic emotional engagement compared to text-only formats. This outcome reinforces and extends the research by Poretski et al. (2019), suggesting that content consumption involving "visuals" is more exploratory and relies more heavily on contextual factors than pure text.

It can be observed that the three Nostalgia Marketing stimuli: images, videos, and infographics do not exhibit a substantial disparity in their impact on the nostalgic emotional engagement of Gen Z. Among these, images were proven to have the strongest effect at 29%; however, this figure is only 0.2% higher than that of video. In fact, research has previously compared the effectiveness of these two content formats in stimulating emotional responses (Fan et al. 2023). While video stands out for its capacity to convey more information, making the intended message easier to comprehend and interpret compared to static images (Hua et al. 2008; Schultz 2017). This can be attributed to the fact that video is a format capable of activating multiple senses during consumption (Schultz 2017). Furthermore, the level of vividness in video is significantly higher than that of images or text in advertising (Dardis et al. 2016).

However, Fan et al. (2023) also demonstrated that static images are consistently as effective as, and occasionally even more effective than, video in evoking human emotions. Their findings indicate that static frames possess a greater capacity to elicit intense negative emotions (e.g., "sadness," "fear") as well as slightly higher levels of positive emotions. Particularly in the Vietnamese context, regarding historical themes, these negative emotions can serve as a catalyst for nostalgic feelings, as proposed by the authors in the measurement scale, including "pride," "poignancy," "wistfulness," and "appreciation." Images depicting the severity of war, the fear of loss, or the grief over the sacrifices of fallen heroes can awaken a profound understanding of the past in viewers, while simultaneously fostering positive values such as national pride and a sense of appreciation for peace. In this case, negative emotions do not exist in isolation; instead, they are reinterpreted through the lens of nostalgia, transforming into emotional responses that are constructive and carry high social significance.

Although both are static visual formats, infographics possess distinct characteristics that differ from standard images, as they combine visuals with data to present content intuitively, often through maps, diagrams, and various illustrative elements. Marchegiani and Phau (2013) previously suggested that when nostalgic imagery is overused or too overt (e.g., heavy film grain filters, vintage objects, or subsidy-era imagery), viewers may perceive a sense of "staged" production rather than an authentic experience. This perception can diminish authenticity, thereby weakening the nostalgic emotional response. This may explain why nostalgia marketing via infographics exerts a slightly lower impact on nostalgic emotional engagement compared to images, recorded at 28.1%.

Finally, nostalgia marketing via text was not found to have a significant impact on "nostalgic emotional engagement." This reveals a shift in the experiences of social media users in Vietnam; rather than focusing on textual content, individuals are increasingly adapting to graphical interfaces and a "touchscreen culture" dominated by symbolic forms (Kendall et al. 2013). In a digital environment saturated with diverse content formats, plain text becomes less effective at triggering emotions compared to formats supported by visual aids, especially for nostalgia, which requires rapid, powerful, and experiential elicitation. Consequently, unlike video, images, or infographics, pure text struggles to forge an emotional connection deep enough to impact Gen Z users.

5.1.2. Nostalgic emotional engagement differs between male and female groups

The results indicate that female respondents experienced a significantly higher level of nostalgic emotional engagement compared to their male counterparts, thereby confirming the existence of gender differences in the reception of and reaction to Nostalgia Marketing stimuli. This finding aligns with previous studies suggesting that nostalgia is not merely an individual emotional response but is also influenced by gender-related social constructs (Stern 1992). This can be explained by the fact that gender is socially constructed; men and women tend to interpret, evaluate, and express nostalgic emotions with varying degrees and intensities depending on the type of stimuli and the context of reception (Stern 1992). Similarly, Holbrook (1993) pointed out that women tend to be more sensitive to elements reminiscent of the past and are more easily triggered by nostalgic emotions than men.

5.2. Recommendation

The research findings demonstrate the varying degrees of emotional impact that different visual content formats, such as video, images, and infographics exert on Gen Z. This provides a solid foundation for the authors to propose strategic orientations for digital content. These insights are not only practically significant for content creators, media agencies, and organizations but also contribute significantly to the preservation and restoration of historical values within a rapidly shifting digital era. Understanding which content formats align with the consumption behaviors and preferences of the younger generation enables media practitioners to select more effective delivery methods, replacing traditional approaches that are gradually losing their appeal.

By providing a scientific basis for designing historical content that is engaging, accessible, and optimized for the digital environment, this study expects to stimulate interest among young people, enhance the viral potential of historical values on online platforms, and thereby support the transformation of history into a vibrant part of modern digital life.

(1) Image

To enhance the transmission of history through images, the authentic recreation of past contexts including space, detail, and the visual environment must be seamlessly integrated with familiar identifiers for Gen Z. This combination aims to forge a connection that allows them to easily visualize, or even immerse themselves in, the atmosphere of that period. Furthermore, the aesthetic and symbolic value of images should be intensified. This can be achieved through techniques such as nostalgic color grading, retro framing, or specific visual markers characteristic of certain historical eras. However, a high degree of fidelity must be maintained to ensure the viewer's ability to associate with the content and sustain an authentic emotional connection.

(2) Video

Video is a format capable of activating both visual and auditory senses simultaneously (Marchegiani and Phau 2012). Therefore, visual elements (color, effects, motion) and auditory elements (music, narration) must be skillfully and concurrently integrated to trigger more powerful nostalgic responses. Additionally, incorporating historical materials through music and narration can be blended with modern trends, such as creating a remix or a modernized version of a historical story. Infusing this "modern breath" makes history feel closer and fresher to the younger generation while preserving its core essence and showing respect for the past. Concurrently, applying storytelling in videos allows messages to touch viewers' emotions more effectively than traditional factual reporting. Given the rise of short-form content, creators should begin videos with open-ended questions or unexpected elements to stimulate comments and foster a personalized experience.

(3) Infographic

Infographic design should focus on cultural cohesion and visual intuition. Specifically, designs should reflect memory-storage formats familiar to younger generations, such as digital photo albums or scrapbooks, combined with vintage or retro palettes and appropriate typography to enhance familiarity and recognition. As infographics are essentially a redesigned version of text with more visual elements, special attention must be paid to layout and color to ensure Gen Z perceives the nostalgic quality. The layout should present timelines, events, and figures clearly and concisely, enabling Gen Z to quickly grasp the context and historical stages. Furthermore, images and charts must directly illustrate specific milestones or the progression of events.

Furthermore, nostalgia marketing strategies should be designed with flexibility and differentiation based on gender to optimize the elicitation of nostalgic emotional engagement. Understanding the nuances in how males and females perceive and express nostalgia will enable content creators to develop more tailored messages, thereby enhancing communication effectiveness, engagement levels, and emotional resonance within each target group. Specifically, for the male group, nostalgic content should prioritize visual or video formats that are powerful, dramatic, and rich in historical conflict, such as war, sacrifice, or heroism, aligning with their tendency to favor "tough-minded" and more intense stimuli (Holbrook 1993). Conversely, for the female group, content should focus on stories rich in humanity, emotion, and collective memory, expressed through highly evocative imagery, nostalgic color palettes, or reminiscent music to effectively tap into their preference for "tenderhearted" and deeply emotional experiences.

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