

Music Video as a Form of Branded Entertainment
An Investigation into Vietnamese Audiences' Perception

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QUALITATIVE RESEARCH INTO AUDIENCE PERCEPTION ON BRANDED MUSIC VIDEOS IN TERMS OF BRAND IMAGE CREATION AND CULTURAL RELEVANCE

ABSTRACT

This research focuses on examining how Vietnamese audiences perceive branded music videos (BMVs) in terms of brand image creation and cultural relevance. With Vietnam's growing status as a favored market for multinational companies and its projected position as the fastest-growing digital economy in Southeast Asia, brands are leveraging BMVs as a strategic tool to attract Vietnamese consumers. Through the medium of music videos, brands tell stories that are closely tied to Vietnamese culture and society, aiming to capture public interest. Collaborations between brands and artists featured in the videos further enhance audience engagement. Employing a qualitative research methodology, this study utilized in-depth interviews to delve into the perceptions of Vietnamese audiences regarding BMVs. By employing both inductive and deductive approaches, this research generated new insights while also confirming or refining existing knowledge. Thematic analysis served as the primary analytical technique, allowing for the identification of patterns and themes within the interview data. The findings of this study offered valuable insights into the perceptions of Vietnamese audiences regarding BMVs in terms of brand image creation and cultural relevance. Audience perceptions were classified into three main categories: positive, negative, and neutral. Positive perceptions highlighted audience recognition of various dimensions of brand image, effective decoding of brand messages and establishment of cultural relevance. Negative perceptions shed light on issues such as ineffective brand image creation and unrealistic portrayal of cultural relevance. Neutral perceptions indicated a lack of audience demand and limited product information within BMVs. The findings also highlighted the crucial role of artists in shaping brand image and cultural relevance within BMVs. The alignment between artists and brands, audience affinity towards artists, their presence as main or supporting roles in BMVs, and resonance with portrayed characters significantly formed audience perceptions. From a practical standpoint, marketers can benefit from the insights gained in this research by developing BMVs with an authentic narrative as an effective strategy to engage audiences. Scientifically, the study contributes to the field by utilizing qualitative, in-depth interviews to provide rich insights into audience perceptions of BMVs. It explores brand image across multiple dimensions and goes beyond brand-related aspects to examine the cultural

relevance of BMVs. Additionally, it sheds light on the significant role of artists in shaping audience perceptions. While this research offers valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations regarding the qualitative nature of the study. Future research could employ quantitative methods to validate these findings, analyze a broader range of BMVs, include participants from diverse cultural contexts, and further explore the dynamics of artist-brand collaborations.

KEYWORDS: *Branded entertainment, music videos, advertising, brand image, cultural relevance.*

PREFACE

This thesis marks a significant milestone in my one-year journey of pursuing my master's degree in the Netherlands. As I approach the culmination of this path, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation:

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1. Introduction

In the current era of information abundance, audiences are increasingly inclined to avoid advertising (Derda, 2023a). This poses a significant challenge for marketers to capture attention and secure top-of-mind awareness (Serazio, 2013). Consequently, there is a growing need for marketers to create engaging and entertaining content that can retain consumer interest. Branded entertainment, which combines entertainment and advertising, provides a medium for brands to reach relevant audience groups (Derda, 2023a; Hudson & Hudson, 2006). By blurring the lines between conventional advertising and entertainment, branded entertainment makes advertisements more appealing and difficult to evade (Serazio, 2013). Branded entertainment can take various forms such as magazines, movies, music videos, TV shows, and video games, depending on specific marketing objectives (Hudson & Hudson, 2006). Among these forms, music videos have emerged as a novel space where art and commerce converge (Serazio, 2013).

In Vietnam, music videos as a form of branded entertainment have become a popular marketing tool as both foreign and domestic brands compete to attract Vietnamese consumers (Ly, 2022). According to General Statistics Office of Vietnam (GSO), Vietnam has gained prominence as a favored destination for multinational companies due to minimal production disruptions during the pandemic. It is projected to become the fastest-growing digital economy in Southeast Asia and one of the fastest-growing economies in Asia in 2023, with an expected GDP growth rate of approximately 6.2%. Vietnam is a key growth market in the Asia-Pacific region for brands and retailers in 2023 (GSO, 2023). With 40% of its population belonging to the consumer class, Vietnam possesses substantial consumer potential (Delteil et al., 2021). Over the next decade, Vietnam's consumer class is projected to grow by an additional 36 million people, defined as those with a minimum daily consumption of \$11 measured in purchasing power parity. This marks a significant shift, as in 2000, less than 10% of Vietnam's population fell into the consumer class, but now that figure has risen to 40%, and by 2030, it could reach nearly 75% (Delteil et al., 2021). To attract Vietnamese consumers, brands are engaged in a competitive race to promote their products, with music videos as a form of branded entertainment serving as a strategy being leveraged (Ly, 2022). Brands build their brand image through storytelling in music videos that are closely tied to Vietnamese culture and society, thereby capturing public interest. Another noteworthy factor is that brands garner

attention from audiences through the collaboration between the brand and artists featured in music videos (Ly, 2022).

Given the potential of the Vietnamese consumer market and the trend of using music videos to promote brands, this research aims to investigate the following compelling research question: **"How do Vietnamese audiences perceive branded music videos in terms of brand image creation and cultural relevance?"**.

Within the context of this research, for brevity and convenience, the term *music videos as a form of branded entertainment* will be referred to as *branded music videos* (BMVs).

1.1. Societal and Scientific Relevance

The societal relevance of this research refers to its potential to effectively implement BMVs in various markets by understanding the crucial role of audience perceptions in shaping strategy outcomes. It offers valuable insights for marketers to construct highly authentic narratives that integrate cultural and social dimensions, resonating with target audiences while promoting brands appropriately. This approach helps marketers achieve their branding objectives by providing audiences with an enhanced viewing experience through BMVs, while effectively conveying cultural and social significance. Furthermore, this research provides insights for marketers to consider artist selection in BMV collaborations, ensuring the creation of a strong brand image and fostering positive audience reception influenced by the chosen artists.

The scientific relevance of this research extends to the advancement of the intersection between entertainment media and advertising. While previous studies have explored various aspects of BMVs, such as the brand-consumer relationship, the role of artists, and the focus on developed regions and countries, there are gaps that need to be addressed. These gaps include the limited use of qualitative approaches, specifically the in-depth interview method, and the lack of comprehensive exploration of the cultural relevance and creation of brand image within music videos. Additionally, the research scope has not encompassed Vietnam, despite its potential as a market in the Southeast Asia region. To bridge these gaps, this research focuses on BMVs, aiming to investigate their contribution to shaping brand image and cultural relevance among Vietnamese audiences.

1.2. Roadmap of the Research

As branded entertainment is a potential marketing tool for connecting with audiences (Hudson & Hudson, 2006), and BMVs are widely used by brands to promote their products and reach Vietnamese consumers (Ly, 2022), this research aims to explore how Vietnamese audiences perceive BMVs in terms of brand image creation and cultural relevance through in-depth interviews. The thesis employs deductive and inductive qualitative research to confirm/refine existing knowledge and generate new insights beyond initial expectations.

The theoretical framework section examines previous research on branded entertainment, brand image, and cultural relevance, as well as providing an overview of the music industry and advertising in Vietnam. The following method section outlines the research design, sampling, operationalization, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, research credibility, and reflexivity. The thesis then presents the findings from the data collection in the subsequent section. The final section discusses the main findings in relation to the research question and addresses societal and theoretical implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

2. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, relevant concepts and previous studies are reviewed and introduced as discussion topics for in-depth interviews to understand how Vietnamese audiences perceive BMVs in terms of brand image creation and cultural relevance. The first section of this chapter starts by providing a definition of branded entertainment and exploring its evolution and the factors that have contributed to its growth. It discusses music videos as a specific form of branded entertainment and draws a comparison between branded entertainment and product placement. Additionally, the execution and the transformative experience associated with branded entertainment are examined. The following section provides an overview of brand image, including its evolution, definition, and five dimensions. The next section explores cultural relevance, including brands as carriers of culture, culture as a means of branding, and the collaboration with artist as a mechanism to establish connection between brand and culture. Finally, the chapter introduces Vietnam's music industry and advertising landscape.

2.1. Branded Entertainment

2.1.1. The Evolution and Factors Driving the Rise of Branded Entertainment

The concept of branded entertainment traces its roots to the practice of integrating products and advertisements into soap operas during the 1930s and 1950s in the United States (van Loggerenberg et al., 2019). This approach was later revived in the mid-1980s, when advertisers began exploring the potential of associating their brands with popular entertainment platforms (Russell, 2007, as cited in van Loggerenberg et al., 2019). Since then, branded entertainment has gained significant traction, with the year 2012 marking a key milestone in its evolution when it was formally introduced as a distinct category at the Cannes Festival of Creativity (van Loggerenberg et al., 2019). This development signaled the growing recognition of branded entertainment as a unique and valuable marketing tool, reflecting the increasing relevance of this approach in contemporary commercial contexts.

The rise of branded entertainment can be attributed to key factors (Musson et al., 2015). First, media fragmentation has inundated individuals with advertising messages (Musson et al., 2015), leading to negative attitudes towards traditional advertising and independent brand engagement (Um & Kim, 2014). Declining time spent on ad-supported media (Mandese, 2021) emphasizes the need for alternative approaches, with branded entertainment emerging as a promising solution. Second, the competitive landscape,

reduced product differentiation, and customer demand for experiential marketing have further driven its adoption (Musson et al., 2015). Third, authenticity is vital, as coherence between brand and content enhances audience enjoyment and validation (Musson et al., 2015). Fourth, budget constraints and the search for effective marketing within limited resources also have fueled the appeal of branded entertainment (Hudson & Hudson, 2006). Last, technology's influence, with viewers having greater control and engaging in ad avoidance behaviors (Musson et al., 2015; Insider Intelligence, 2022), has prompted marketers to explore alternative channels, such as branded entertainment, to capture audience attention through emotional connections, engaging content, and digital media's capabilities (van Loggerenberg et al., 2019).

2.1.2. Definition of Branded Entertainment

Multiple definitions of branded entertainment exist in the literature. Stolley et al. (2021) described branded entertainment as a collaborative process between brands and creative producers. This marketing technique combines brands, entertainment, and media to create opportunities for co-branding. By forming partnerships, companies aim to leverage each other's strengths, thereby enhancing the overall customer and brand experience. However, the article primarily focused on comparing branded entertainment with product placement and highlighted the potential challenges associated with this advertising strategy in the TV and film industry. Although the article acknowledges the role of promoting a brand as the foundation of creative storytelling in branded entertainment, it lacks a comprehensive definition of the concept. Furthermore, it is important to note that the article's examination of branded entertainment is limited to the film and television industries.

In contrast, Hudson and Hudson (2006) defined branded entertainment as the integration of advertising into entertainment content by incorporating brands into the storylines of various entertainment media, including film and television. They also recognized the collaborative nature of branded entertainment involving entertainment, media, and brands. However, their definition lacks extensive detail regarding the nature of branded entertainment and the specific benefits that brands can gain through this practice. Although they identified intriguing research areas, such as consumer attitudes towards branded entertainment across different product categories and cultures, they didn't provide in-depth exploration of these topics or offer additional supporting information or

references.

In this study, the definition of branded entertainment provided by van Loggerenberg et al. (2019) is adopted to address the limitations of previous definitions. According to the authors, branded entertainment is “a communication effort that employs a compelling authentic narrative to achieve brand resonance” (p. 334). They emphasize the significance of authenticity in driving branded entertainment and elaborate on the characteristics of an authentic narrative. These characteristics include being brand-generated, aligned with the brand's identity, original, emotionally meaningful, sincere, believable, and well-crafted.

In branded entertainment, an authentic narrative should be initiated and driven by the brand itself, reflecting its unique identity that sets it apart from competitors. The narrative should offer novelty, presenting a fresh and original perspective, while also creating a strong emotional connection with the audience. It should be sincere, genuinely aiming to entertain and provide value, and at the same time, believable, ensuring that the audience finds it plausible and relatable. The brand's commitment to the creative process and its pride in producing high-quality work is evident in the well-crafted narrative, which is meticulously developed with careful consideration and attention to detail to create a compelling final output.

The authors also proposed four dimensions of brand resonance that can be achieved through an authentic narrative. These dimensions include attachment, engagement, community, and loyalty. Attachment refers to the emotional bond formed between viewers and the brand, while engagement involves active participation with the brand's content. Community represents the sense of belonging and identity viewers develop with the brand, and loyalty relates to their likelihood of continued support and advocacy for the brand. These dimensions align with the transformative concept proposed by Russel (1998), suggesting that branded entertainment can offer transformative experiences to audiences.

By focusing on the authenticity of the narrative and the dimensions of brand resonance, the concept of van Loggerenberg et al. (2019) provides a valuable framework for analyzing audience perceptions of BMVs as tools for brand building and construction of cultural relevance.

2.1.3. Music Video as a Forms of Branded Entertainment

Branded entertainment has taken various forms over the years and has been represented in different promotional formats, including short videos, product placements within original programming, magazines, radio broadcasts, movies, music and gaming industry tie-ins, advertising-funded programming, and more (Derda, 2023a). In this research, music videos are chosen as the focus of investigation, as they are a prevalent and popular form of branded entertainment (Burkhalter & Thornton, 2012).

Research on music video as a form of branded entertainment (BMVs) encompasses a diverse range of studies primarily examining the brand-consumer relationship. Specifically, these studies measure audience reception and the influence of product placements on various aspects related to the brand, such as brand attitude, brand memory, behavioral intentions, and persuasion knowledge. For instance, Davtyan et al. (2020) explored the effects of brand placement repetition in music videos on consumers' memory, brand attitudes, and behavioral intentions. Matthes and Naderer (2015) investigated the impact of product placement disclosures on brand memory and persuasion knowledge, with a specific focus on the moderating role of product placement frequency. Roozen and Claeys (2009) analyzed the effectiveness of product placements used in music videos on the attitude of audiences toward the music video, the artist, and the brand.

Additionally, some studies further analyze the role and influence of artists in music videos with brand placements. For instance, Hudders et al. (2012) investigated the impact of brand prominence and artist connectedness on brand placement effectiveness. Sánchez-Olmos and Castelló-Martínez (2020) analyzed the presence of artists, brands, and products in music videos featuring the best-selling songs in the Billboard Hot 100 from 2003 to 2016.

Furthermore, research on branded entertainment in general, and specifically on music videos as a form of entertainment, predominantly focuses on developed regions and countries such as the European Union (EU), United States (US), Korea, and Singapore. For instance, Piazzolla et al. (2021) conducted a cross-cultural case study in the United Kingdom, Spain, and Italy to investigate the effectiveness of brand placements in music videos. Dagnino (2019) highlighted the marketization of Italian film in his study on branded entertainment and cinema in Italy. Lee et al. (2011) conducted a comparative study on young adults' responses to product placement in the US and South Korea, shedding light on how product placement influences consumer behavior in developed markets. Nikolaidou and Mylona (2020) explored branded entertainment in Greece and highlighted the

industry's shift to digital platforms. Chee et al. (2012) focused on emotional connectivity in branded entertainment and the gender divide within the developed market of Singapore. These studies collectively indicate that branded entertainment research predominantly concentrates on developed countries and regions, as they possess more established markets and media industries that employ branded entertainment techniques.

Given the diversity of the aforementioned studies, there are still some gaps that need to be addressed. First, there is a lack of research employing the in-depth interview method as a qualitative approach. Second, no study has adequately covered the aspect of cultural relevance in music videos as a form of branded entertainment. Third, there is a dearth of research addressing how brand image is created through these music videos. Last, the scope of Vietnam has not been covered, despite it being considered a potential market in the Southeast Asia region (Delteil et al., 2021).

To address these gaps, this research focuses on BMVs, aiming to explore the effectiveness of this promotional tool in shaping brand image and cultural relevance among Vietnamese audiences.

2.1.4. *Branded Entertainment and Product Placement*

2.1.4.1. Differences Between Branded Entertainment and Product Placement. Branded entertainment is a growing form of product placement, as defined by Hudson and Hudson (2006). The definition of product placement has evolved significantly over time, expanding beyond its initial focus on movies exhibited in theaters. Definition of Clark (1991) emphasized the inclusion of consumer products or services in films with the aim of obtaining compensation or reciprocal promotion for the films in marketers' advertising campaigns (Hudson & Hudson, 2006). However, this definition is now considered too narrow as product placement has extended to various media forms beyond movies. Scholars have proposed updated definitions that acknowledge the diverse range of media platforms involved (Hudson & Hudson, 2006). As a result, the definition of product placement has changed to include the commercial integration of brand components in entertainment media programs (Karrh, 1998, as cited in Um & Kim, 2014). To distinguish between pure product placement and branded entertainment, a continuum is used to assess the level of brand integration within a storyline or plot. Passive product placement happens when a product or brand is just featured or mentioned in a film or television program with minimum brand integration (Hudson & Hudson, 2006). Such placements are

generally perceived as less effective compared to other forms of placement (Gupta & Lord, 1998, as cited in Um & Kim, 2014). On the other hand, branded entertainment, viewed as an advanced form of product placement along the continuum, represents a high level of brand integration, where the product is seamlessly woven into the narrative, becoming an integral part of the storyline (Hudson & Hudson, 2006).

2.1.4.2. Execution of Branded Entertainment. As an advanced form of product placement, branded entertainment shares similarities characteristics with product placement. First, it is executed in subtly and prominently (Sharma & Bumb, 2020). Subtle product placement, often referred to as a "soft-sell approach", involves discreetly incorporating branded elements into the content without interrupting the viewer's experience (Sharma & Bumb, 2020). Typically, these placements are of modest dimensions, occupying the background or appearing subtly in the foreground. They enjoy limited screen time and infrequent occurrences, employing audio or visual cues while maintaining indirect associations with the dialogue (Sharma & Bumb, 2020). While this approach avoids disrupting the content, its disadvantage lies in potentially going unnoticed by viewers.

Conversely, prominent product placement, also referred to as a "hard-sell approach", emphasizes a more direct integration of branded elements (Sharma & Bumb, 2020). However, it is crucial to maintain the naturalness of the content even with prominent placements (Sharma & Bumb, 2020). In the case of branded elements employing a prominent strategy, they are generally characterized by their larger size, clear visibility in both the background and foreground, extended exposure time, higher frequency, utilization of combined audio and visual elements, and direct linkage to the dialogue. (Sharma & Bumb, 2020). While this approach may attract attention and be easily noticeable, it can disrupt the storyline, resulting in reduced brand resonance and negative brand perception (Sharma & Bumb, 2020; van Loggerenberg et al., 2019).

Product placement is commonly classified into two main types as subtle and prominent. However, there are various approaches to incorporating branded elements into entertainment content. The first type involves visual placement, which focuses on the visibility of the branded elements on screen (van der Westhuizen & Mulder, 2019). This includes considerations such as the position of the item in the foreground or background, its size, the presence of the logo, and how the product's functionality is visually depicted (Sharma & Bumb, 2020; van der Westhuizen & Mulder, 2019). The degree of prominence

or subtlety in the plot determines whether the visual product placement is subtle or prominent.

Alternatively, branded elements can also be incorporated verbally. Verbal placement entails mentioning the brand name, discussing the function of the branded elements, and integrating product placement into the script (Sharma & Bumb, 2020; van der Westhuizen & Mulder, 2019). To amplify their impact, visual and verbal product placements are frequently combined (van der Westhuizen & Mulder, 2019).

In this research, a selection of three BMVs was chosen as samples, encompassing various forms of product placement, including subtle, prominent, visual, and verbal placements. The aim is to anticipate diverse findings during the interviews, seeking to understand how audiences evaluate the presence of product placement in relation to their perceptions of brand image and cultural relevance.

2.1.4.3. A Transformational Experience. Branded entertainment, similar to product placement, offers a transformational experience. Russell (1998) introduced the concept of "transformational" integration in product placement, suggesting its ability to transform consumer experiences by aligning them with the depicted scenarios in movies or TV shows. The transformational proposition comprises four key aspects: personal relevance, experiential/empathy, informational, and executional dimensions.

Personal relevance plays a crucial role, as viewers tend to connect themselves metaphorically with the characters portrayed in novels, plays, and movies (Hirschman, 1986, as cited in Russell, 1998). When branded products are associated with celebrities, either explicitly through endorsements or implicitly through usage, they can serve as powerful endorsements, as the celebrity's persona intertwines with the product, sending a strong approval message (Hackley & Hackley, 2006). The values associated with the celebrities' "brand" within the entertainment context become unconsciously linked with the product brand, enabling self-concept reinforcement (Hackley & Hackley, 2006).

The experiential/empathy aspect involves viewers' emotional identification with entertainment forms such as TV programs or films. By placing real branded products within these narratives, the authenticity and salience of the brands are heightened, thus enhancing viewer empathy (Russell, 1998). Viewers engage in new worlds through popular culture, and the presence of brands in these aspirational realms allows for a lasting connection to the consumer's daily life beyond the viewing experience (Hackley & Hackley,

2006).

Regarding the informational aspect, Russell (1998) proposed that product placement differs from traditional advertising by offering indirect information about branded products. While functional products can convey extensive information by showcasing their usage, symbolic products rely more on personal relevance and emotional components. TV shows and movies serve as vehicles for conveying ideological or symbolic meanings associated with the brands (Russell, 1998)

The executional aspect emphasizes the importance of well-executed product integration. Unlike traditional advertising, product placement involves incorporating brands within existing plots, requiring a good fit (Russell, 1998). The executional dimension is comparable to the match-up hypothesis in celebrity endorsements, where the product characteristics should align with the image conveyed by the celebrities (Kamins, 1990, as cited in Russell, 1998). Successful product placements often result from finding this alignment.

2.2. Brand Image

2.2.1. *The Evolution of Brand Image*

Brand image plays a pivotal role in guiding strategic marketing decisions, enabling businesses to effectively target specific market segments and position their products. Over time, the concept of brand image has undergone significant transformations. Initially, in the 1950s to 1970s, it was perceived as the amalgamation of customers' cognitive and emotional perceptions, combined with the tangible attributes of the product (Lee et al., 2014). During the 1980s, a symbolic framework emerged, redefining the concept of brand image. Researchers began focusing on the messages (Swartz, 1983, as cited in Lee et al., 2014), meanings (Durgee & Stuart, 1987; Reynolds & Gutman, 1984, as cited in Lee et al., 2014), and associations that depicted abstract perceptions within customers' minds. The 1990s marked a distinct shift as brand image was recognized as a distinct construct separate from product image (Lee et al., 2014). In addition, researchers have employed various terms interchangeably to describe this concept, such as brand identity, perceived image, and brand personality (Malik et al., 2012). Due to the evolution of brand image, it has been defined and utilized in diverse ways by different researchers (Lee et al., 2014). Scholars have categorized brand image into five main groups: generic, symbolic, meaning/message, personality-based, and cognitive/psychological (Malik et al., 2012). This

categorization allows for a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of brand image.

2.2.2. Definition and Dimensions of Brand Image

This paper adopts the concept of brand image as proposed by Wijaya (2013). Brand image refers to the impression or description that remains in the minds of consumers, influencing their behavior towards the brand (Wijaya, 2011). This behavior can range from loyalty and trust to trial and error, or avoidance based on negative perceptions or lack of relevance to their needs (Wijaya, 2011). Brand image emerges from a multitude of attributes that develop through interactions involving products, brands, and consumers. These attributes encompass knowledge, emotions, and attitudes towards the brand, ultimately synthesized within personal memory (Wijaya, 2013). Walters (1974) emphasizes the significance of personal and environmental factors in shaping brand image as they strongly influence individuals' perceptions. The environmental aspect relates to the controllable technical attributes of a product, overseen by the brand owner. On the other hand, the personal element is linked to the intentionally crafted experiences by the brand owner to engage the audience (Walters, 1974).

According to Wijaya (2013), these factors are reflected in the five key dimensions that shape and represent brand image: brand identity, brand personality, brand association, brand attitude and behavior, and brand benefit and competence (Wijaya, 2013). Brand identity encompasses the physical and tangible attributes of a brand, such as logos, colors, packaging, and slogans. The second dimension, brand personality, refers to the distinct character that sets a brand apart from others in the same category. This personality can be expressed through traits like friendliness, creativity, and independence. Brand association, the third dimension, involves the specific elements consistently linked to a brand, including unique product offerings, consistent activities, and symbols with strong meanings attached to the brand. The fourth dimension, brand attitude and behavior, pertains to the attitudes, behaviors, and attributes associated with a brand during communication and interaction with consumers. Lastly, the fifth dimension, brand benefit and competence, encompasses the values, advantages, and distinctive capabilities a brand offers in addressing consumer problems. These benefits can take functional, emotional, symbolic, or social forms, influencing the brand image of a product, individual, or company. Understanding these different dimensions of brand image enables researchers and

decision-makers to assess the strength and effectiveness of a brand image for a specific product, individual, or institution/company. Measuring and evaluating these dimensions provides valuable insights into how consumers perceive a brand. The stronger and more positive these dimensions are in the minds of the consumer audience, the stronger and more positive the overall brand image will be (Wijaya, 2013).

The concept of brand image, as outlined by Wijaya (2013) with its five dimensions, is applicable to this research. It is based on the idea that brand image is closely connected to how consumers, who are the target audience of communication, interpret and understand brand messages. These messages then shape their lives and contribute to the construction of their self-perception and understanding of reality (Wijaya, 2013). This viewpoint aligns with the objective of this study, which aims to explore the perspectives of Vietnamese audiences, through the medium of BMVs, on how they perceive and understand brands, as well as how they feel their personal identity and the society they live in are reflected in the music videos in which brand message is embedded.

2.3. Cultural Relevance

The study doesn't treat the notion of cultural relevance as an already established concept, instead adopting the perspective that brands construct their own cultural meanings and leverage those meanings to promote themselves through branded entertainment as a strategic tool (MacInnis et al., 2019). Therefore, this research defines cultural relevance through two approaches. One sees brands as carriers of culture. The other considers culture as a tool for branding, where the brand message is integrated into the BMVs. Both approaches recognize the interdependence of brand and culture, and they suggest that collaboration with artists in music videos acts as a means to establish this connection.

2.3.1. Brands as Carriers of Culture

Brands are acknowledged as carriers of culture when they embody the abstract characteristics and values associated with specific cultures (Holt, 2004; MacInnis et al., 2019). Viewing brands as cultural forms recognizes that branding is a distinctive form of communication involving storytelling within the context of products and services to address consumer desires and needs (Cayla & Arnould, 2008). Many brands now take a stance on social issues and align themselves with specific cultural values, positioning themselves as part of the collective (Biraghi et al., 2020). This shift positions brands not

only as commercial entities but also as representations of individuals and social groups (Fournier & Alvarez, 2019). It has resulted in enhanced trust and intimacy with consumers, as brands that have a voice in societal matters and demonstrate humanity are more likely to establish a connection where consumers feel comfortable sharing intimate aspects of their lives (Biraghi et al., 2020).

As outlined by MacInnis et al. (2019), the cultural values embodied by brands are closely tied to their alignment and significance for consumers as participants in culture. Consumers perceive brands that align with their cultural values and categories as relatable, reflecting their own identity. Brands that exhibit cultural congruity hold significant meaning for consumers as they embody cultural values, address important life tasks and concerns, and engage in interactions with individuals within their culture and subcultures (MacInnis et al., 2019).

As a result, both personal and social identity impact the process of brands obtaining cultural significance (Swaminathan et al., 2007; Fournier & Alvarez, 2019). Social identity refers to the elements of an individual's self-image associated with the groups they belong to (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, as cited in Fournier & Alvarez, 2019). According to Fournier and Alvarez (2019), people tend to prefer brands associated with the social groups they belong to or aspire to belong to, while avoiding brands associated with groups they do not identify with. Belonging to a social group involves shared experiences that shape skills, knowledge, inclinations, and preferences, creating a shared "habitus" within the group. Consumption further strengthens this preference by establishing associative connections between the brand, the social group, and the individual in consumers' minds (Fournier & Alvarez, 2019).

Additionally, personal identity plays a role in the process of brands acquiring cultural meaning. Personal identity encompasses the unique aspects of an individual's self-concept (Kleine et al., 1995; Swaminathan et al., 2007, as cited in Fournier & Alvarez, 2019). Consumers express and construct their personal identities by utilizing brands as culturally available mechanisms (Belk, 1988; Fournier, 1998; McCracken, 1986, as cited in Fournier & Alvarez, 2019). Through their relationships with brands, consumers attribute meanings that help them navigate and shape their lives (Fournier, 1998). In the realm of branded entertainment, personal relevance plays a significant role, measuring the extent to which viewers connect themselves with television programs, movies, or music videos (Hackley &

Hackley, 2006). According to Hirschman (1986), audiences metaphorically view themselves as characters in narratives, interpreting their brand and product experiences accordingly.

MacInnis et al. (2019) emphasize the significance of celebrity endorsers in shaping the cultural meaning of brands. These endorsers, seen as reference groups, have an impact on consumer behavior through both informative and normative pathways. In terms of informational influence, influencers, including celebrities, impact consumer evaluations of products, purchase decisions, and consumption behaviors. On the other hand, normative influence stems from culturally significant influencers shaped by socialization within the family and other social agents. These influencers shape diverse consumer behaviors, including adherence to fashion norms (more prominent in Asian cultures than in Western cultures), gift-giving practices, patterns of food consumption, family recreational activities, as well as expressions of emotions, evaluations, and complaints associated with consumption activities (MacInnis et al., 2019). The persuasion power of influencers is shaped by several attributes associated with persuasive sources, including trustworthiness, expertise, similarity, attractiveness, and likability (McGuire, 1969; Mills, 1969, as cited in Friedman & Friedman, 1979). Celebrities are often perceived as attractive and likable. They generate persuasion through the process of identification, wherein individuals adopt the attitudes and behaviors advocated by the influencer because they derive satisfaction from believing that they share similarities with that person (Friedman & Friedman, 1979).

This study explores the role of hip-hop artists as celebrity endorsers in shaping the cultural meaning of brands. Hip-hop, considered a distinct culture, encompasses music as a prominent element (Burkhalter & Thornton, 2012). It serves as a creative and rebellious outlet for individuals, particularly the youth, fostering a sense of energy and expression (Jankov, 2016). The hip-hop industry, a thriving multibillion-dollar sector, exerts substantial influence across various domains, including fashion, car design, television programming, sports, and marketing (Taylor & Taylor, 2004, as cited in Burkhalter & Thornton, 2012). Collaborating with hip-hop artists to release BMVs provides a way for brands to convey cultural meaning. Through BMVs, hip-hop artists exert influence through verbal expressions, clothing, music preferences, and basic social values, leading to an identification process (Englis et al., 1993; Friedman & Friedman, 1979; Wilson & MacGillivray, 1998, as cited in Burkhalter & Thornton, 2012). The impact of this influence is particularly evident among young people who utilize music videos as a source of self-

discovery, shaping their musical preferences, fashion styles, and even engagement with social issues such as empowerment, responsibility, voting, and sexuality (Sun & Lull, 1986; Tiggemann & Slater, 2004, as cited in Burkhalter & Thornton, 2012).

In summary, the influential power of hip-hop artists as celebrities allows brands to reinforce themselves as carriers of culture, attaining iconic status and embodying significant symbolic representations for individuals (Burkhalter & Thornton, 2012). The perception of brands as symbolic entities enhances their favorability among consumers, aligning with their cultural representations (Derda, 2023b). In addition to the aforementioned influences, hip-hop artists are specifically chosen in this research as celebrity endorsers in the context of Vietnam, where hip-hop music has gained popularity in recent years and there is a trend of creating BMVs through collaborations with hip-hop artists. This aspect is further elaborated in the section of Music industry and advertising in Vietnam.

2.3.2. Culture as a Means of Branding

This research highlights the significance of leveraging culture to establish an authentic brand voice in communication with target audiences (Biraghi et al., 2020; Derda, 2023b). By integrating brands into culture, they undergo a transformation from commercial identities to social identities, allowing for the creation of more genuine narratives that resonate with the target audience (Biraghi et al., 2020). This, in turn, strengthens the self-brand connection, which measures the extent to which individuals incorporate brands into their self-concept (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). Brands that align with the image of the group to which the audience belongs (ingroup) tend to have stronger self-brand connections compared to brands that are inconsistent with the ingroup image (Escalas & Bettman, 2005).

Zimmerman (2011) asserts that brands can enhance their image by engaging with celebrity artists who have credibility among audiences, as these celebrities can influence audience standards, beliefs, motivations, and behaviors. Consequently, celebrities can endorse products/brands and generate consumer awareness. The endorsement process is reciprocal, as the celebrity and the endorsed product/brand influence each other (Till & Shimp, 1998, as cited in Zimmerman, 2011). Endorsing a product with a well-liked celebrity creates a positive conditioning effect, and vice versa (Zimmerman, 2011). The credibility of the celebrity endorser plays a crucial role in being perceived as a credible source of product

information and a convincing representation of the brand, thereby positively impacting the brand image (Zimmerman, 2011). For example, a placement of a product with a popular singer can positively influence consumer attitudes (Petty et al., 1991, as cited in Zimmerman, 2011). Celebrity product endorsement also contributes to consumers' perceptions of legitimacy, status, coolness, and other cultural associations associated with the brand (MacInnis et al., 2019).

The congruence between the product/brand and the celebrity in an advertising strategy is a crucial factor (Kamins & Gupta, 1994). Celebrity-product congruence refers to the compatibility between the attributes of a celebrity endorser and the characteristics of the endorsed product (Zimmerman, 2011). According to Kamins and Gupta (1994), this congruence affects the process of identification, wherein a celebrity's attractiveness is higher when he or she can knowledgeably discuss product attributes that are important and salient to the target audience's product evaluation process. Therefore, the presence of congruence between the product/brand and the celebrity supports the prediction of celebrity effectiveness in the social influence identification process. High congruence between the product and celebrity image enhances celebrity believability, attractiveness, and leads to a more favorable attitude and purchase intention toward the product (Kamins & Gupta, 1994).

In this research, culture is viewed as a means of branding when it is integrated into BMVs. This integration allows brands to associate their products with credible celebrities, which can shape audience attitudes towards consumption and increase believability and receptivity towards the associated brands, even indirectly (Burkhalter & Thornton, 2012). Consequently, audiences are more motivated to engage in practices aligned with the brand message (Biraghi et al., 2020). The study focuses on hip-hop artists as celebrity endorsers in BMVs, given the growing recognition of their value in celebrity endorsement and their use as product endorsers (Burkhalter & Thornton, 2012). Hip-hop is viewed as an artistic practice with subcultural content that thrives within a neoliberal environment (Derda, 2023b), yet it is also a popular form of marketing communication (Setiawan & Maliki, 2020). Hip-hop culture is utilized as a selling strategy (Setiawan & Maliki, 2020), having potential in developing an authentic brand voice, fostering community bonding, and conveying impressions of authenticity, "coolness," and social propagation of the brand (Derda, 2023b).

In this study, the collaborations between brands and hip-hop artists in BMVs are examined to understand how they act as a mechanism for delivering culture as a tool of branding to audiences in Vietnam, where the music industry has been witnessing a rise in hip-hop prominence in recent years.

2.4. Music Industry and Advertising in Vietnam

Vietnam's music industry is aligning with the global trend of digitization and consistently releasing digital products (Anh, 2021). Within a span of two or three days, prominent local musicians in Vietnam garner 25 to 30 million views on digital platforms, while it may take a week for international artists to achieve the same level of viewership (Kim, 2022). The indie and hip-hop genres are gaining increasing popularity, reflected in their presence on the Spotify Vietnam Charts and their integration into television shows and daily life (Ng, 2021). As for music streaming, YouTube and Facebook emerge as the leading platforms, with 75% of Vietnamese individuals incorporating music into their daily routine as their primary mode of entertainment (Ng, 2021).

Within this flourishing music industry, there is a rising trend of brand and artist collaborations in the form of BMVs (Nhat, 2019). The inception of this trend can be attributed to the release of the music video titled "Đi để trở về" [Journeys will lead you home] by the local footwear brand Biti's during the Lunar New Year in 2017. The video featured the performance of the then-emerging star, Soobin Hoang Son (Nhat, 2019). According to Brands Vietnam. (n.d.), this BMV promoted sports shoes by exploring a familiar theme during the Lunar New Year in Vietnam, especially among the younger generation, which is the story of traveling or returning home to family during the festive season. This BMV achieved significant success: it ranked second on the YouTube Vietnam Trending chart for 21 consecutive days, received 1.7 million social media interactions, and won the Gold award for Best Use of Broadcast/Video and the Silver award for Brand Development Campaign of the Year (Product) at the 2017 PR Awards Asia in Hong Kong. The success of this music video also marked the comeback of the long-established brand Biti's, particularly its subsidiary brand Biti's Hunter. It also helped Biti's gain attention as the first domestic brand to be highlighted in a holiday advertising campaign, a period that was traditionally dominated by foreign and large-scale brands. Following the success of "Đi để trở về," other brands started producing BMVs to advertise their products by tapping into various aspects of life and culture. Brands often release BMVs during festivals,

anniversaries, and especially during the Lunar New Year (Brands Vietnam, n.d.).

In the past three years, advertising through music videos, particularly with the rise of hip-hop music in Vietnam, has gained even more momentum (Thuong, 2021). Hip-hop music began to gain widespread popularity in August 2020 when the reality TV show called "Rap Viet" became a phenomenon, introducing hip-hop to the general public in Vietnam for the first time in over 20 years (Cam, 2020). The appeal of Rap Viet created a significant impact on the community, providing the audience with a new perspective on civilized and creative hip-hop music, breaking stereotypes such as associating hip-hop with vulgarity or considering it only as a supplementary element in a song (Cam, 2020).

From being an "underground" music genre, rap gained attention in the mainstream and became a prominent trend in advertising, known as "rapvertising" (Ly, 2021). Many brands have launched various advertising campaigns that prominently feature rap music. Just during the Lunar New Year in 2021, there were over 20 BMVs with rap music (Ly, 2021). Following the success of "rapvertising," in 2022, many brands also released music marketing products with rap elements, such as KitKat Nghỉ Đón Tết?! [KitKat Taking a break to celebrate Tet holiday]; Lay's Tết Là Đây Chứ Đâu [Lay - Tet holiday is right here]; Beck's Ice Tet Real Khum? [Beck's Ice Tet is Real]. These BMVs garnered public attention due to their catchy melodies, memorable lyrics, and the involvement of famous performers (Ly, 2021).

Despite being a dominant advertising tool in the current Vietnamese market, BMVs also face certain challenges (Ly, 2022). According to Linh Kieu Nguyen, the founder of the production house FMN Media, there are several challenges associated with BMVs as a choice for advertising (Ly, 2022). Firstly, apart from competing with each other, BMVs also have to compete with pure music products. This implies that brands must accurately identify their target audience from the initial production phase in order to create unique and appealing musical content that attracts audiences. Secondly, BMVs can become ineffective if they are excessively commercialized, leading to negative reactions from the audience, or if the brand message is not clearly conveyed, making it difficult to connect with the audience. This requires the production and creative team to integrate the brand's story naturally and prioritize selecting artists with similar values to ensure that BMVs fully convey information about the brand while helping the artists shine. Thirdly, BMV producers need to pay attention to building visual imagery that effectively represents the brand and

helps it stand out in a competitive market (Ly, 2022).

Considering the current trend of BMVs and the aforementioned challenges, this research promises to provide insights from Vietnamese audiences, aiming to assist marketers in developing and strengthening advertising strategies that incorporate BMVs.

3. Method

This chapter provides an overview of the methodological aspects considered in the study, covering sections such as research design, sampling, operationalization, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, research credibility, and reflexivity. The chapter offers a comprehensive and transparent explanation of the methods employed in this thesis. Appendix A, B, C, D, E, F, and G provide further details on the methods used.

3.1. Research Design

In this study, a qualitative research design has been chosen as the primary method due to its suitability in comprehending the contextualized beliefs, perceptions, and motivations expressed by the sampled individuals (Boeije, 2010). Through the process of qualitative analysis, the collected information is systematically deconstructed into smaller components and then reconstructed into categories and themes that demonstrate relevant patterns closely aligned with the research question at hand (Boeije, 2010). This research approach is particularly advantageous in exploring how Vietnamese audiences perceive BMVs in terms of brand image creation and cultural relevance, as it allows for nuanced and context-specific sampled audiences' perspectives shaped through a meaning-making process (Boeije, 2010).

Specifically, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted as they enable a deep analysis of concepts, particularly when discussing personal experiences, insights, ideas, or motivations that cannot be fully captured through surveys or focus groups (Johnson, 2001). In-depth interviews provide a focused environment, free from distractions and peer-pressure dynamics often present in focus groups. The semi-structured nature of the interviews, guided by an interview guide, ensured a natural flow of conversation while directing participants towards specific areas of inquiry (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Participants had the freedom to answer open-ended questions in their preferred manner, allowing the researcher to flexibly guide the rest of the interview (McIntosh & Morse, 2015).

3.2. Sampling

In the research focused on Vietnamese audiences, the participants were selected based on specific criteria to ensure diversity. They were individuals who were born in Vietnam, held Vietnamese nationality, and resided both in Vietnam and abroad at the time of the study (Appendix A). Furthermore, the participants needed to be active on either

Facebook or YouTube, the top social media and entertainment platforms in Vietnam, according to a report on Vietnamese digital consumption with participants ranging in age from 16 to 62 (Decision Lab, 2023). The purposive sampling method was employed, aiming to capture a wide range of perspectives and experiences (Shaheen et al., 2019) by deliberately selecting participants with different ages, genders, backgrounds, professions, residing locations. In addition, a snowball sampling method was employed. Initial participants were chosen from the researcher's network, and through recommendations from these participants, additional individuals voluntarily chose to participate due to their personal interest in the subject matter (Shaheen et al., 2019). The target was to conduct 13 interviews, excluding one participant involved in a trial interview. However, one interview had to be discontinued due to scheduling conflicts, resulting in a total of 12 successfully conducted interviews. All interviews were conducted conveniently and recorded online using Google Meet to maintain consistency. Consent forms were provided to ensure that respondents understood and agreed to the use of their shared information solely for research purposes. The consent form included comprehensive details on research ethics, participant rights, and the interview process (Appendix B).

3.3. Operationalization

Drawing from existing theories and prior research, the key themes of branded entertainment, brand image, and cultural relevance were determined as the focus for the in-depth interviews. To translate these theoretical concepts into research areas, an operationalization table was developed (Appendix C). Building upon this table, a list of interview questions was generated (Appendix D), which guided the specific procedure employed during the in-depth interviews to ensure meaningful responses and maintain a consistent structure.

Three BMVs were carefully selected as interview samples (Appendix E) based on specific criteria aimed at eliciting diverse opinions from the participants. These criteria encompassed variations in narrative themes, sponsoring brands, featured product categories, video view counts, performing artists (including at least one hip-hop artist), and the presence of product placement in prominent, subtle, visual, and verbal forms (Sharma & Bumb, 2020). To provide comprehensive insights, all three music videos, each exceeding a duration of three minutes, were shared with the respondents via email one day prior to the interviews. They were downloaded the videos from YouTube, where they had been

officially uploaded, then uploaded them to Google Drive for the participants' viewing. This approach ensured an objective viewing experience, mitigating the potential influence of YouTube's associated information or comments on the videos.

3.4. Data Collection and Analysis

A total of 12 interviews were conducted as part of this research, with each interview lasting approximately one hour. The interviews were conducted in the Vietnamese and were recorded using Google Meet, with participants providing their consent for the recordings. Conducting the interviews in Vietnamese was preferred as it allowed the participants to express themselves more accurately and avoid language-related misunderstandings that may arise when using English as their second language. The interviews took place from last week of April to the first week of May 2023, with the first interview serving as a trial to assess the flow and make any necessary technical adjustments. The core interviews followed a structured format, starting with an explanation of the research's purpose and an introduction of the participant. To establish rapport, a brief icebreaker session was conducted, which included questions about whether the participants had watched the three music videos sent to them via email. Following the icebreaker, a discussion session ensued, covering the relevant concepts outlined in the previous chapter of the study.

The interview recordings were transcribed and translated into English by hand in Microsoft Word. Thematic analysis was chosen as the method for coding the transcripts, allowing for the identification of repeated patterns of meaning across interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The thematic analysis encompassed six stages, which consisted of becoming acquainted with the data, creating preliminary codes, identifying themes, reviewing and refining themes, defining and naming themes, and preparing the final report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the first phase, the interview data was carefully read, and initial ideas were extracted. The next phase involved generating initial codes by selecting and naming relevant text segments using the "Comment" function in Word. These codes were then sorted in Microsoft Excel into different levels of sub-themes and selectively merged to create overarching themes. The themes were reviewed and refined to ensure coherence within the data and clear distinctions between themes. Concise and descriptive names were given to the themes in the fifth phase. The findings were presented in the next chapter based on a code tree (Appendix F) and a codebook (Appendix G).

Both inductive and deductive approaches were used during the coding process. The deductive approach drew from existing theories and research on product placement (Bryman, 2012), while the inductive approach allowed for the discovery of new findings and the generation of new theories (Bryman, 2012). By combining these approaches, a comprehensive and current understanding of how the Vietnamese audience perceives BMVs in terms of brand image creation and cultural relevance was sought.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

In qualitative research, it is important to follow ethical principles aligning with this methodology (Bryman, 2012). To ensure ethical compliance, informed consent forms were sent to participants via email and obtained prior to the interviews. These forms sought participants' permission to record the interviews and utilize their contributions, including comments, opinions, expressions, and interactions, for research purposes. Participants were guaranteed anonymity, fostering trust and creating an environment where they could freely and comfortably express themselves during the interviews. Additionally, participants were provided with information on the procedures for withdrawing from the research, including contact details for further assistance.

3.6. Research Credibility

Ensuring research credibility is paramount to uphold the quality and ethical considerations of the study. This involves carefully addressing validity and reliability to yield more dependable and robust results. Reliability refers to the extent to which the findings of a study are not influenced by chance factors (Kirk & Miller, 1986, as cited in Silverman, 2011). To establish reliability, a pilot interview was conducted to test the research instruments. Moreover, the data collected from the interviews underwent constant comparison and careful evaluation, incorporating the detailed concerns raised by the interviewees. The same meticulous approach was applied during the analysis stage, comparing each data segment with existing literature and other responses from the interviewees. The subsequent sections transparently describe the entire research process, ensuring clarity and accountability.

On the contrary, validity relates to the degree of accuracy in which an account accurately represents the social phenomena it references (Hammersley, 1990, as cited in Silverman, 2011). Although this study had a small sample size of 12 participants and only tested three BMVs, it is important to note that qualitative research with a limited sample

size doesn't seek generalizability. Instead, the findings should be understood within the specific context of the research (Silverman, 2011). Validity was established by maintaining transparency throughout the analysis process and examining the alignment between the research question, the chosen methodology of in-depth interviews, and the thematic analysis.

3.7. Reflexivity

Reflexivity in research involves a researcher's conscious and deliberate effort to be aware of their own reactions to the respondents and the construction of the research account (Berger, 2015). This practice enhances the quality of research by enabling researchers to reflect on how their own identities shape the interpretation of data, effectively handle and present findings, and grasp the intricate implications of social phenomena and knowledge production (Berger, 2015). In this study, the researcher adopted the position of a Vietnamese audience, benefiting from insights into Vietnamese culture and a nuanced understanding of implicit content. Furthermore, the researcher brought a marketing background with almost three years of experience, enabling the exploration of diverse perspectives among participants regarding brands. However, it is important to acknowledge the potential risks associated with this position, such as blurring boundaries, imposing personal values and beliefs, and projecting biases (Drake, 2010, as cited in Berger, 2015). Therefore, the researcher maintained a clear separation between herself and the interviewees. The researcher also ensured that participants had the freedom to share their stories without any external influence. She actively listened to what participants said, remaining attentive to both familiar and novel aspects, rather than disregarding any information that may seem unusual or seemingly obvious. By adopting this approach, the researcher upheld the integrity of the study and ensures that participants' perspectives and experiences were faithfully represented.

4. Results

This study focuses on understanding how Vietnamese audiences perceive BMVs in terms of brand image creation and cultural relevance. To answer this research question, data was collected through in-depth interviews with 12 participants, and the findings are presented in this section using thematic analysis. The results reveal three main themes representing diverse perspectives towards BMVs: (1) positive, (2) negative, and (3) neutral or ambiguous perceptions.

4.1. Positive Perception of BMVs

The first theme in the study revolves around the positive perceptions of BMVs among the audience and involving: BMVs as a medium for brand promotion, BMV as authentic representations of cultural significance, and BMV as a means of both brand promotion and cultural reflection, particularly when artists were actively involved.

4.1.1. *BMVs as a Medium for Brand Promotion*

The first sub-theme of the study emphasized the positive perception of audiences towards BMV as a means of promoting a brand. Specifically, BMV served as a medium for building brand image, and helped convey the brand message. In terms of brand image creation, these videos contributed to shaping brand personality and brand attitude, forming brand associations through personal experiences, and communicating the brand's benefits and competency.

Supporting Constructing Brand Personality and Brand Attitude. A majority of participants perceived brands as if they were human beings with unique personalities and attitudes, which aligned with their pre-existing perceptions of the brands. Honda was widely acknowledged by all participants for its well-defined brand personality. One respondent described Honda as "a familiar and straightforward person" due to its reputation as the "national vehicle" (Respondent 3). Brand personality was also identified by some participants in the case of the brand Panasonic. Respondent 6, for instance, shared that she saw Panasonic as a brand that embodied comfort and convenience, reflecting her impression of the brand.

In terms of brand attitude, Honda once again emerged as the brand widely recognized by almost all participants for having a clear attitude. Respondent 4 pointed out Honda's attitude, stating: "When thinking of Honda, I associate it with adventure and exploration because Honda motorcycles are known for their durability and ability to be

used on various terrains, from concrete roads to winding mountain paths”. Similarly, Respondent 7 highlighted Honda's supportive attitude, stating:

Well, you know, Honda is the most popular motorcycle brand in Vietnam. So, I think of Honda as a friend with a supportive attitude, always being kind and helpful to everyone on their journey, no matter where they're headed. It's like having a reliable friend by your side as you navigate through life's twists and turns (Respondent 7).

These findings demonstrated that audiences could describe the personality traits and attitudes of brands when watching BMVs in a positive direction. Furthermore, the participants' perceptions of brand personality and attitude aligned with what they already know about the brands. In this case, the participants had knowledge and experience with Honda as a brand that provides high-quality products and is well-received by many customers. The audiences' remarks were all positive in nature. This aligned with the research conducted by Wijaya (2013), which states that if a brand exhibits positive traits like kindness, honesty, consistency between what they promise and deliver, good service, and care for the environment and the community, it has the potential to generate favorable perceptions of the brand's attitudes and behavior.

Supporting Constructing Brand Association. This finding highlighted the positive contribution of BMVs in shaping the brand image by creating brand associations within the viewers' perceptions through evoking their personal experiences related to these brands. For instance, Respondent 2 shared his impression of the brand PNJ, which was triggered upon seeing the brand featured in the music video. He remarked:

It reminds me of what I know about PNJ. In recent years, I've seen PNJ rejuvenating and targeting younger customers. Whenever I went into their stores, I noticed their collection was youthful in terms of design, and their store decoration looked modern (Respondent 2).

Similarly, Respondent 9 associated the brand Panasonic through her family's experiences of using Panasonic's products while watching the music video "Breathing". She mentioned: "The video reminds me of scenes from my family's daily life, particularly during the summer when we used a Panasonic fan and air purifier". Likewise, Respondent 6 recalled her childhood memories connected to her personal and family experiences with Honda motorbike portrayed in the music video "Going home." She shared:

It also reminds me of memories of my time riding a Honda motorbike when I was still in Vietnam. This motorbike that I rode had been in my family since my grandfather's time, then my father's, and then mine. Watching "Going home" makes me remember my parents picking me up from school on that our Honda motorbike. I also had experiences of traveling with my parents to our grandparents in the countryside, carrying a lot of things on that motorbike (Respondent 6).

These participants' sharing of impressions, experiences, and memories about the brands were triggered when they watched BMVs. It demonstrated that BMVs' contribution to the construction of brand associations aligned with the research conducted by Wijaya (2013). According to Wijaya (2013), brand associations are specific elements consistently connected or linked to a brand and can be influenced by various factors such as unique product offerings, recurring activities like sponsorships or social responsibility initiatives, strong connections to relevant issues or individuals, as well as specific symbols and meanings strongly associated with the brand.

Supporting Constructing Brand Benefit. Vietnamese audiences recognized the functional, emotional, and symbolic benefits of the brand's products through BMVs. In terms of functional benefits, Respondent 3 mentioned Honda motorbike, stating: "I can perceive the practicality and versatility of Honda motorbike in riding on various terrains. It is very robust and safe". Regarding symbolic value, Respondent 9 identified the value of jewelry portrayed in the music video, saying: "It [jewelry] helps the consumers become more unique and confident, representing a value of self-expression". Respondent 12 recognized several benefits from the products featured in the music videos "Going home" and "You are a treasure": "You are a treasure" proposed various emotional values, such as feeling beautiful and confident while wearing jewelry. For "Going home", it brought a feeling connected to loved ones and childhood memories, while riding a motorbike".

Audiences who recognized the benefits of the products perceived a specific role for them within the narrative. For instance, the Honda motorbike represented a means for the character to return home and celebrate Tet with family, while jewelry symbolized self-confidence. This demonstrated brand identity alignment, where the narrative strategically reflects the brand's essence throughout (van Loggerenberg et al., 2019). Such narratives helped audiences to identify brand benefits, addressing their functional, emotional, and symbolic needs (Wijaya, 2013).

Conveying Brand Message. BMVs played a positive role in conveying the brand message. Many participants understood the brand message, which was in line with the campaign message embedded in the BMV. Respondent 6 praised Panasonic's message, stating: "I think this brand message is very creative, leading viewers to associate the air purifier product with a peaceful, comfortable, and healthy lifestyle". This statement from Respondent 6 demonstrated her understanding of Panasonic's message conveyed in the final seconds of the BMV "Breathing" (Figure 1):

“Thứ ta cần là nơi ta được thở. Đời cuồng quay, bình yên mãi là nhà” [What we need is a place to breathe. When life spins in chaos, finding peace under the roof of our own home is the greatest blessing].

Respondent 7 shared her perspective on the coherence of Honda's brand message stating: "I realize that Honda's message is talking about the role of the motorcycle as a companion on every road, including the way home. It makes sense, especially in the context of Tet holiday when everyone returns home to celebrate Tet with their families". Similarly, Respondent 1 expressed his agreement with the brand message, saying: "I also feel connected with this message of Honda as I am using a motorbike, and I agree that a motorbike could be considered our partner on the way to everywhere". These insights that shared by participants 7 and 1 aligned with Honda's campaign message in "Going Home" (Figure 2):

“Chở hạnh phúc trên mỗi bước con qua. Để dẫu nơi xa, luôn có "Nhà" bên cạnh [Carrying happiness with every step we take. So that even in distant places, there will always be a "Home" by our side].

The finding revealed that the messages regarding the core value of the products, namely air purifier and motorbike, were seamlessly and creatively integrated and developed throughout the BMVs. This integration allowed audiences to decode the brand message as intended by the brand. It, hence, exemplified the alignment of brand identity, which is a crucial aspect of an authentic narrative and understood as the development of a strategically sound branded entertainment narrative that originates from the core essence of the brand and aims to vividly portray and amplify that essence throughout the narrative (van Loggerenberg et al., 2019).

4.1.2. BMVs as Culturally Relevant

In the second sub-theme, BMVs were perceived as culturally relevant due to its

authentic narrative, well situated in the cultural context and depiction of personal relevance in these music videos.

Culturally Relevant Authentic Narrative. BMVs garnered positive reception for cultural relevance, as they portrayed authentic narratives that were closely aligned with the cultural context. Respondents consistently mentioned the attribute of "believability" when evaluating BMVs in terms of their portrayal of cultural and societal issues. According to van Loggerenberg et al. (2019), "believability" is recognized as one of the characteristics of an authentic narrative in branded entertainment. It says that stories that come across as genuine would create a sense of plausibility, making the narrative appear credible and trustworthy. The level of believability of BMV was reflected in the findings, for example, Respondent 9 shared her perspective on "Going Home":

I think "Going home" is highly credible because it portrays small but valuable everyday details, such as the main character opening a handwritten letter from his mother with instructions for taking care of himself. Additionally, the performances of the supporting actors who play the parents and young villagers are authentic, and their costumes and setting are realistic (Respondent 9).

The detail of the mother's handwritten letter in the music video (Figure 3) evoked empathy from Respondent 9 as it portrayed the mother's care for the main character by instructing him through the letter instead of directly expressing it. This reflected Vietnamese cultural norms, where familial affection is often not verbally expressed directly but rather through actions like written messages.

Similarly, Respondent 11 added: "Going home" resembles real life as it portrays the typical activities of a family during the Tet holiday, such as going to the market to shop for Tet, visiting the flower market (Figure 4), and wrapping banh chung (traditional sticky rice cake)". Respondent 4 shared her perspective on how BMV reflected certain aspects of life: "As for "Breathing", I find the story credible because it reflects societal issues such as gender inequality, communication of violence, and stress at work and in life." This perspective was shared after she mentioned that she perceived inequality through the image of the female character always being shown cooking (Figure 5), instance of communication of violence depicted by the main couple having loud arguments (Figure 6), and scenes portraying the male protagonist appearing exhausted after arguing with his wife (Figure 7).

This finding suggested that brands served as cultural reflections of Vietnamese people, showcasing traditions such as celebrating Tet with family and parents expressing love for their children. Additionally, brands also reflected contemporary social issues in Vietnam, including work-related pressures, lack of personal and family time, communication violence, and gender inequality. Therefore, the finding reinforced existing research that views brands as platforms for cultural and social expression. Brands evolved beyond being solely commercial entities, serving as representatives that reflect culture and address significant social issues, positioning themselves as part of the people and society (MacInnis et al., 2019; Biraghi et al., 2020). By incorporating cultural and societal issues, brands had the potential to create authentic narratives that were believable (van Loggerenberg et al., 2019).

Depiction of Personal Relevance. BMVs were positively perceived as realistic portrayals of cultural relevance, reflecting participants' personal relevance encompassing their lifestyles, experiences, beliefs, and values. Respondent 3 expressed empathy with the character in "Breathing" because he shared similar experiences and challenges in life:

This is a story that has many similarities to mine because I am currently working 16 hours a day, with no time to call my parents or my girlfriend, and sometimes I don't even know why I'm working that much. I can relate to the character in the music video, feeling being stuck and unable to escape from this busy and rushed life (Respondent 3).

Similarly, Respondent 1 found his own situation reflected in the music video, saying: "I see the narrative of "Going home" as relevant to me, because I am also someone who works far from home and only goes back to my home to gather with my family during the Lunar New Year". This sharing indicated that Respondent 1 shared a commonality with the character, both having a rural hometown and pursuing their careers in the city, eagerly anticipating Tet holiday to reunite with their family. Respondent 5 shared his belief about the importance of togetherness (Figure 8) and the value of love, which were reflected in the music video "Going home":

I somewhat see myself in the character in "Going home" as I am a person who likes to gather and be close to those who understand and love me sincerely. Especially on important occasions like Tet, I always want to be with my loved ones (Respondent 5).

This finding provided support for the idea that brands serve as carriers of culturally meaningful values to consumers who act as cultural participants (MacInnis et al., 2019). The process of brands acquiring cultural significance was demonstrated when audiences felt connected to the characters in the narrative (Hackley & Hackley, 2006), seeing themselves reflected in the group of people they belong to, such as those facing work pressures or those who migrate from rural areas to urban centers and return to the countryside during Tet after a year of hard work in cities. Even if interviewees didn't share the same background as the people in the narrative, they still shared values and beliefs related to the importance of spending time with loved ones. Thus, audiences perceived brands that aligned with their cultural values and categories as "like me" (MacInnis et al., 2019). Brands became culturally available mechanisms through which social identity and personal identity were constructed (Fournier & Alvarez, 2019). This also demonstrated the concept of "community" as a dimension of brand resonance through the creation of authentic narratives (van Loggerenberg et al., 2019).

4.1.3. Positive Impacting on Brand Promotion and Cultural Reflection through Artist Involvement

Audiences had a positive perception of BMVs as a means of brand promotion and cultural reflection through artist involvement. The artist involvement referred to the participation of artists as singers and/or characters in BMVs. The artist involvement was perceived in fourfold: (1) the artist's appearance in the branded music video and their real-life personality were in line with the brand, (2) the artist's appearance, along with their resemblance to the portrayed character, elevated the delivery of the music video's message, (3) the audience's personal fondness for the artist contributed to their enjoyment of the branded music video, (4) the artist, who served as the main character in the video, played a significant role in shaping the narrative.

Artist's Appearance and Their Real-Life Persona as a Match with Brand. Artists made a positive contribution to brand promotion, specifically in supporting brand image through their acting and real-life similarities with brand featured in the BMV. Almost all the respondents agreed that Den Vau, the singer in "Going home," was a suitable choice for Honda, as he well portrayed a character using a Honda motorcycle, aligning with the brand's attributes known by the respondents. Moreover, the interviewees also relied on their knowledge of Den Vau in real life to assess his compatibility with the brand.

Respondent 3 commented on his embodiment of the character: "I see Den Vau portraying an ordinary and simple person effectively. In the music video, he wears casual clothes and displays humility, which I think suits the nature of the product and brand". Den Vau's suitability for the Honda brand was also acknowledged by Respondent 4, who stated: "The collaboration between Den Vau and Honda is good because both Den Vau and Honda's products are relatable to the working class and associated with daily life". Apart from Den Vau, other artists like Tlinh also received comments about their personal resonance with the brand. Based on their knowledge of Tlinh's background, Respondent 2 said: "As for Tlinh, I know a bit about her background. I think she's very individualistic, confident, and modern, which suits the image that PNJ wants to convey in the music video". Respondent 8 evaluated Chau Bui in the music video, considering both her acting skills and his knowledge of her, emphasizing her suitability for PNJ by saying: "Amongst all the artists in this music video, Chau Bui is the most suitable for the brand because she is a fashion model, acts well, has a beautiful face, and exudes a luxurious and glamorous vibe."

The finding highlighted participants' perception of a match between artists and the product/brand, contributing to the formation of brand image. This aligned with prior research emphasizing the impact of celebrity product endorsement on consumers' perceptions, including credibility, status, attractiveness, and cultural associations (MacInnis et al., 2019). Furthermore, when product/brand and celebrity image exhibit high congruence, it enhances the credibility and appeal of the celebrity, resulting in a positive attitude and increased likelihood of product purchase (Kamins & Gupta, 1994). In this finding, congruence between the product/brand and the artist heightened the believability and appeal of the artist, fostering a favorable attitude towards the product, though not necessarily translating into purchase intent.

Artist's Appearance, along with their Resemblance to the Portrayed Character, Elevated the Delivery of the BMV's Message. Artists contributed to the culturally relevant narrative through their performance and personal resonance with the characters they played in the BMVs. Respondent 2 shared their feelings about the artist's involvement, stating, "Chau Bui also represents the character in the story because she has style, beauty, and is a role model for young women". Respondent 10, who had personal knowledge of Den Vau, recognized a match between Den Vau and the character he played:

I think Den Vau's appearance contributes to reflect the character's story. Den is also

someone who comes from the countryside and make a living in the city, which aligns with the character's background in the story. Therefore, his portrayal of a character becomes more reasonable (Respondent 10).

Similarly, based on the artist's performance and their knowledge of that artist, Respondent 12 noticed a match between the Dalab band and the message conveyed in the BMV "Breathing":

Dalab acted well, portraying the group of people reflected in the story. As far as I know, Dalab represents the story because they started out as a small indie hip-hop band in Hanoi and later pursued their career in Saigon, facing numerous challenges and making sacrifices along the way. So, if they sing about someone working hard, struggling to the point where they have no time for anything else, I think it's reasonable (Respondent 12).

The findings revealed that the artists served as culturally relevant normative influencers. Consistent with previous research (MacInnis et al., 2019), such influencers can influence various consumer behaviors, including fashion choices, gift-giving practices, food consumption habits, family leisure activities, and the expression of emotions, evaluations, and complaints related to consumer experiences. In this study, the artists, as culturally relevant normative influencers, portrayed characters that conveyed messages related to women's self-expression, family reunions during Tet, and the challenges of balancing work and family in modern lifestyles. This aligns with the notion that celebrities transfer their character's personality to the product, creating a strong endorsement message (Hackley & Hackley, 2006).

Audience's Personal Affinity for Artist as an Enhancement of the Enjoyment of BMVs. The audiences' personal connection with the artist played a significant role in their enjoyment of the BMVs. This personal connection could stem from the audience's appreciation for the artist's music or their admiration for the artist. For example, Respondent 1 expressed his interest in certain artists, which influenced his affection for the music videos. He said: "Yes, I like the musical style of Den Vau, Justatee, and Dalab, so I have some affection for these music videos". Similarly, Respondent 6, who had a personal connection with Den Vau, stated: "I like this MV partly because, as I mentioned earlier, I like listening to Den's rap music, so I will proactively listen to all of his music products". Respondent 8 shared that he was a fan of Chau Bui and followed Chau Bui on social media

platforms. His fondness for Chau Bui contributed to his positive impression of the BMV, as he stated: "I am a fan of Chau Bui so I even like "You are a treasure" more".

This finding revealed that the enjoyment of audiences towards BMVs increased thanks to their admiration and fondness for the artist. This aligned with the viewpoint that artists who are liked or admired by audiences have an impact on audience standards, beliefs, motivations, and behaviors (Zimmerman, 2011). However, the finding didn't provide clear evidence that audience's preference for an artist endorsing a product leads to increased liking for that specific product/brand, as suggested in the study of Zimmerman (2011).

Artist as the Main Character having Prominent Role in the Narrative. A new finding emerged regarding the role of the artist in BMVs. Participants seemed to assess the influence of artists based more on their main or supporting roles in the story rather than their status as hip-hop singers. The artist, when portrayed as the main character, was seen to have a significant role in shaping the narrative of the music video. In "Going home", Den Vau played the main character, and all interviewees agreed that he had a prominent role in the narrative, unlike Justatee, another singer who played a supporting character. Respondent 3 shared: "Den Vau is the sole artist who leads the narrative, appearing in the first frames, and viewers seem to follow the footsteps of the character, Den Vau, as he returns to the countryside." Similarly, in "You are a treasure", Chau Bui, despite not being a singer, still garnered attention from the participants because she played the main character. Most interviewees believed she had a significant role in shaping the narrative of the music video. Respondent 11 complimented her, saying: "Chau Bui did an excellent job. She truly stood out as the main character. Her demeanor was fitting, and as a fashion model, she represented a character who values outward appearance and enjoys dressing beautifully".

This finding offered a new perspective to analyze the impact of artists in BMVs, extending beyond the theoretical framework of their role in brand image creation and cultural relevance. It highlighted that regardless of whether the artists were hip-hop artists or not, their impact became evident when they portrayed main characters.

4.2. Negative Perception of BMVs

The second theme, focused on the negative perceptions of BMVs, can be divided into three sub-themes. Firstly, audiences had a negative perception of BMVs as a means of

brand promotion. Secondly, they viewed these videos as unrealistic depictions of cultural relevance due to their unauthentic narratives. Thirdly, audiences held negative views of BMVs as a medium for brand promotion and cultural reflection, particularly concerning the involvement of artists.

4.2.1. *BMV as Ineffective for Brand Promotion*

Negative perceptions of BMVs revolved around various aspects of brand promotion. Firstly, audiences viewed these videos unfavorably as a means of integrating the brand's product within the narrative, as the product's role was deemed insignificant. Moreover, the discomfort caused by advertising within BMVs led to negative perceptions among audiences regarding the videos' ability to build brand loyalty. Furthermore, participants had negative opinions regarding the videos' ability to construct brand personality and brand attitudes. Additionally, BMVs failed to convey the brand message. Lastly, these videos were perceived as annoying forms of advertising.

Negatively Integrating Brand. BMVs were perceived negatively in terms of integrating the brand, primarily due to the lack of seamless incorporation of the products into the narrative, resulting in the insignificance of brand presence and their products within the storyline. This perception was raised when the majority of respondents noticed the products visually, and they were subtly or prominently placed in the BMVs. Additionally, this observation was most frequently mentioned when discussing Panasonic's products. For example, Respondent 2 noticed a fan with the Panasonic logo as a prominent product placement, placed in the middle of a close-up scene in the BMV (Figure 9). He felt that the product was simply placed within the story without any significant dramatization or personalization, stating: "I feel like I'm being forced to look at the product, as the fan is awkwardly inserted into the middle of the video without a clear purpose. I don't see what role the fan plays in the story". Respondent 5 noticed the presence of the fan when reviewing a scene of "Breathing", mentioning the unclear role of that fan in the narrative, saying: "The fan doesn't seem related to the story. The song is flowing smoothly and then the fan suddenly appears and interrupts the song. I think the fan is just a household product and doesn't play a role in the story". The presence of the PNJ's product went unnoticed by Respondent 1 until he watched again a scene of the BMV shown by the researcher during the interview. He expressed his perspective, stating that he saw the jewelry as an integrated product in the music video without a specific role.

The finding reflected research on the execution of branded entertainment, demonstrating that when products are subtly placed in BMVs, they potentially go unnoticed by audiences (Sharma & Bumb, 2020). Conversely, when products are prominently placed in BMVs, they are more easily noticeable but disrupt the storyline (Sharma & Bumb, 2020; van Loggerenberg et al., 2019). In addition, the presence of vague and unremarkable product elements in the narrative failed to reflect the brand's identity as a characteristic of an authentic storytelling process, where the essence of the brand is strategically portrayed and dramatized (van Loggerenberg et al., 2019). The finding also didn't support research of Russell (1998) about the executional aspect of the transformational experience that branded entertainment offers, stating that product placement involves incorporating brands within existing plots, requiring a good fit (Russell, 1998).

Negatively Constructing Brand Loyalty. Most of the participants had no intention of sharing information about the brand or product featured in the BMVs since they recognized the presence of advertising when it was prominently and visually displayed, which made them feel uncomfortable. Only a small number of respondents noticed verbal advertising, indicating that participants didn't pay much attention to whether the song lyrics contained advertising elements or not. Respondent 4 expressed her discomfort with the advertising elements in the BMV "You are a treasure," leading her to have no desire to support or advocate for the brand, stating: "Even though I am a customer of PNJ, I don't want and have no intention to share any information about their products or brand through this music video as through the music video, the excessive and frequent display of advertisements makes me feel really uncomfortable". Similarly, Respondent 2 expressed discomfort with product placement and would not share positive thoughts about the brand, mentioning: "However, with PNJ, I might have a slightly negative opinion when talking to a friend, and I would share that "this MV has too much advertising, and they keep showing close-ups of the product"".

This finding reflected two types of product placement executions, namely prominence and visual placement, where prominent placement can reduce brand resonance by disrupting the storyline (Sharma & Bumb, 2020; van Loggerenberg et al., 2019). In this case, brand resonance was understood in terms of loyalty, which is defined by van Loggerenberg et al. (2019) as the likelihood of viewers to continue supporting and

advocating for a brand. With this finding, brand loyalty was diminished as audiences feel uncomfortable with the advertisements appearing in BMVs.

Unsuccessful Depiction of Brand Personality and Brand Attitude. BMVs received negative perceptions regarding the shaping of brand image, specifically brand personality and brand attitude, due to the limited presence of the brand in the narrative. Among the three brands examined, Panasonic garnered the most comments indicating a lack of distinct brand personality and attitude, mainly because its role in the narrative was ambiguous. When discussing this brand personality, Respondent 4 stated: “As for Panasonic, I don't feel that it has any personality because the brand appears too pale and faint”. Respondent 2 acknowledged the presence of Panasonic's personality but felt it was weakly portrayed, saying: “Panasonic has a sense of familiarity, warmth, and is a family member. But this personality is not strong because the brand appears too faintly in the story”. In terms of brand attitude, Respondent 8 commented: “As for Honda and Panasonic, I don't see any attitude or behavior being portrayed in the music videos as the brands' products aren't placed in a way that is connected to the narrative”. Similarly, Respondent 10 expressed: “Panasonic doesn't seem to encourage or motivate viewers in any particular way as I even didn't notice the appearance of the brand”.

In this finding, it is worth noting that the participants recognized the product placement as subtle, and they only noticed the advertising elements in "Breathing" when shown the music video again during the interview. This indicated that the weak presence of the brand within the narrative could be attributed to the subtle placement of the product in the music video, which caused the audience to overlook its appearance (Sharma & Bumb, 2020). Consequently, the audience didn't construct brand image in terms of brand personalities and brand attitude, as suggested by the research conducted by Wijaya (2013).

Failing to Convey Brand Message. BMVs were perceived negatively as a medium for conveying brand messages. It is interesting that participants, who didn't perceive the personality and attitude of a brand due to subtle placement leading to an unclear role of brand, also failed to grasp the brand's message. Once again, Panasonic received the most comments regarding unclear brand message due to an ambiguous role of this brand in the narrative. For example, Respondent 2 shared: “The brand message in "Breathing" doesn't make me feel anything because I don't understand the relevance of the brand's product that can help me have a peaceful and relaxing life”.

In cases where the brand message was understood, there was a misalignment between this message and the audience's personal identity. For example, Respondent 7 acknowledged a misalignment between the brand message and her beliefs, stating: "PNJ's message is about how jewelry creates personality and self-confidence. I don't like this approach because I don't express myself through material things, my statement of personality is not in jewelry". Similarly, Respondent 4 shared a discrepancy between the brand message and her experience, saying:

Honda's message emphasizes that the Honda's motorbike plays a role in connecting people and their loved ones, accompanying them on their way home and on every road, which is not true for me because I don't ride motorbike and I don't have the experience of riding one home for reunion in Tet (Respondent 4).

This finding highlighted that the unclear role of the brand, as the product was subtly placed in the BMV, resulted in audiences lacking a strong impression of the brand to decode its message. It aligned with Sharma and Bumb's (2020) research on the consequences of subtle product placement, which can result in the product or brand being easily overlooked by viewers. In the cases where participants understood the brand message but found it incongruent with their values, beliefs, and experiences, it indicated that the participants didn't incorporate brands into their self-concept (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). Consequently, brands failed to create an authentic culturally resonant narrative that could effectively leverage culture as a branding tool (Derda, 2023b; Biraghi et al., 2020; Escalas & Bettman, 2005).

Annoying Brand Advertisements. Interviewees expressed their perception of BMVs as irritating brand advertisements. They believed that product placement acted as a distraction from the narrative, and the frequent and prominent appearances of products in the videos annoyed them. The audience's comments regarding product placement as a distraction from the narrative were primarily directed towards Panasonic's products in "Breathing". Respondent 12 conveyed his thoughts on the product placement in "Breathing":

When I watch the final seconds, I realize that it is an advertisement for Panasonic's household products. But looking back, when I also notice the fan appearing in the middle of the music video in a close-up shot. [...] I think the appearance of the fan is an awkward integration and not related to the plot. The connection between the

fan and the story's meaning is too far-fetched (Respondent 12).

Furthermore, the audience felt uncomfortable when they saw products appearing too prominently and frequently in the BMVs. For example, regarding the product placement in "Going Home," Respondent 8 shared: "There's also another part where they show a road back home, then suddenly a group of people on motorcycles appear for some time, and I find that part unnatural, uncomfortable, and clearly advertising". Respondent 3 expressed discomfort with the product placement in "You are a Treasure": "As the frequency of jewelry appearances increased throughout the music video, I began to feel uncomfortable because they were too blatant and appeared in close-up shots" (Figure 10).

The finding revealed that the product was visibly placed in the foreground of "Breathing", appeared in foreground for a certain of time in "Going home", and had frequent and extended foreground placement in "You are a treasure". This aligned with research of Sharma and Bumb (2020) on prominent product placement, which involves a direct integration of branded elements. Such an approach can disrupt the storyline and create a negative impression on the audiences (Sharma & Bumb, 2020).

4.2.2. Unrealistic Portrayal of Cultural Relevance

BMVs were perceived as presenting an unrealistic depiction of cultural relevance due to their unauthentic narratives. Within this sub-theme, the lack of believability/credibility in the narrative of BMVs was highlighted. Respondent 7 commented on the credibility of the narrative in "You are a Treasure", saying: "It is the least credible story because it stages many scenes that are not close to everyday life, the child character has too much makeup, not like reality. The actions of the characters are also exaggerated" (Figure 11).

Respondent 8 analyzed certain aspects of "Going Home" that made him feel the story lacked depth:

The story of returning to the countryside for Tet with family doesn't feel meaningful enough to me because the scenes in the music video are abrupt and lack smooth transitions. The character goes home to visit family and relatives, but suddenly says goodbye to their parents and goes back to the city. I feel that the script doesn't reflect the emotions and real-life situations accurately. Additionally, towards the end of the music video, when the character reads their mother's letter, I find that part forced and insincere (Respondent 8).

Similarly, Respondent 9 shared her thoughts on the narrative of "Breathing", saying: It seems to touch on a common issue faced by individuals under a lot of pressure in life, but the execution is not authentic, with abrupt scene transitions that interrupt the flow of the story. For example, the scene where the two main characters are arguing suddenly ends, making way for a scene where they reconcile without a clear reason (Respondent 9).

These comments from the participants highlighted the importance of authenticity in the narrative when determining the realistic portrayal of cultural relevance in BMVs. Their evaluation primarily focused on the degree of believability in the narrative (van Loggerenberg et al., 2019). This finding indicated that narrative having a low level of believability/credibility diminished the authenticity of the cultural and social issues depicted in the narrative. As a result, it didn't support prior research suggesting that brands act as carriers of culture, conveying cultural values and addressing important social issues, positioning themselves as part of the community (Biraghi et al., 2020).

4.2.3. *Negatively Impacting on Brand Promotion through Artist Involvement*

BMVs were perceived negatively as a medium for brand promotion and cultural reflection due to the involvement of artists. The participants expressed negative opinions because they believed there was a mismatch between the artist and the brand, and their personal dislike for the artist intensified their dislike for the BMVs. When evaluating the mismatched artist-brand partnership, participants relied on their real-life knowledge of the artist. For example, Respondent 4 explained why she felt the brand and the artist didn't harmonize in the BMV, saying:

Tlinh and PNJ represent two parallel worlds. PNJ is associated with the image of an old lady, while Tlinh represents the youthful and dynamic generation [...] Chau Bui is also not related to PNJ because Chau Bui is a fashion model who often uses high-end foreign brands, while PNJ is a domestic brand in Vietnam, so the combination between the artist and brand is unbalanced (Respondent 4).

Likewise, Respondent 8 commented on the male hip-hop artist in "You are a treasure": "MCK is not suitable for the PNJ brand in "You are a treasure" because the PNJ product looks luxurious while MCK has a street style" (Figure 12).

Similarly, Respondent 9 evaluated the artist-brand partnership based on her prior knowledge of the artist:

Panasonic's household appliances are also mass-produced, common products that are close to families, but the two singers are not married according to my knowledge, so I don't see their appearance contributing to the better promotion of the story or the brand's message (Respondent 9).

Furthermore, the participants' personal dislike for the artists intensified their dislike for the BMVs. For example, Respondent 3 said: "I don't like Chau Bui, so when I noticed the pun between her name and "treasure," I disliked this music video and jewelry of PNJ even more". Respondent 4 also shared: "Besides, I don't like Chau Bui. To be exact, I used to like her, but now I don't. So, I didn't like the music video even more because of that". Respondent 9 stated: "However, I don't like this song, not only because of the content, but also because I don't like Tlinh anymore".

On the one hand, the finding indicated a mismatch between the artist and the brand, coupled with the audience's dislike for the artists, resulting in a failure to enhance the artists' credibility and attractiveness. Consequently, no favorable attitudes or purchase intentions were expressed towards the product/brand. This finding wasn't in line with the research conducted by Kamins and Gupta (1994) on the importance of congruence between the product/brand and the celebrity in advertising strategies to increase the celebrity's influence and positively impacts the attitudes and purchase intentions of audiences towards the product. On the other hand, the finding that participants' personal aversion towards the artist amplified their negative perception of the BMVs aligned with research of Zimmerman (2011), which highlights the role of preexisting attitudes and opinions towards the celebrity in determining the influence and effectiveness of celebrity endorsements. Specifically, when a product is endorsed by a celebrity who is admired and liked by the audience, it creates a positive conditioning effect. Conversely, when the celebrity endorsing the product is disliked by the audience, it can have a detrimental effect, leading to negative associations with the endorsed brand (Zimmerman, 2011).

4.3. Neutral Perception of BMVs

The final theme discussed the audience's neutral perception of BMVs, meaning that BMVs were perceived as irrelevant and acceptable advertisements.

4.3.1. BMVs as Irrelevant

BMVs were considered irrelevant for multiple reasons. Firstly, they didn't contribute to promote the brand. Secondly, they were seen as inadequate in reflecting the social and

personal identities because the narratives lacked personal relevance to the viewers. Lastly, the participation of artists in the videos was considered insignificant, and their involvement did not contribute to brand promotion or cultural reflection.

A Non-Contributor to Brand Promotion. BMVs were seen as not contributing to brand promotion in terms of brand association, brand benefit, and brand loyalty. First, BMVs were perceived as not contributing to brand association because the participants did not use the brand's products. For example, Respondent 1 shared: "The other two music videos don't remind me of anything as I don't wear jewelry of PNJ and don't use household products of Panasonic". Similarly, Respondent 12 shared:

No, because I don't wear jewelry or give it as gifts, I don't ride motorbikes, and I rarely use a fan, I prefer air-conditioner. I don't have any personal experiences related to the PNJ brand or the Honda brand that were sparked by watching the videos (Respondent 12).

Second, BMVs were perceived as a non-contributor to construction of brand benefit and competency due to insufficient product information and no demand from the interviewees. The participants did not perceive any benefits or values from the brands portrayed in the music videos because they lacked information about the products and did not see any functional or emotional value being demonstrated. For example, Respondent 1 mentioned that he could not consider buying a Honda motorcycle just from watching the music videos as there was no demonstration of how the motorbike works or its benefits. Similarly, Respondent 2 expressed his lack of realization of brand benefits from all the products of the three brands because the appearance of the products was not strong enough and there was insufficient information provided to understand their benefits. Furthermore, the participants' lack of demand for the products was another reason why they perceived the BMVs as not contributing to the construction of brand benefit and competency. Respondent 4 mentioned that she didn't ride a motorbike, so the music video "Going home" didn't bring any benefit or value from the product. Similarly, Respondent 11 shared that she had no demand of all products appeared in three BMVs: "Because I don't need to buy a motorcycle, I don't like PNJ-style jewelry, and I don't have a need to buy household items".

Third, BMVs were perceived as not contributing to the construction of brand loyalty due to insufficient product information. The majority of participants expressed that they

lacked enough information about the brand's product to decide whether they would be inclined to share or discuss it, or even consider buying it. Respondent 11 shared: "I wouldn't discuss anything with friends about the brand or product because I watched the MV for entertainment purposes only. Information about the product and brand doesn't interest me enough to bring it up in a discussion with others". Similarly, Respondent 5 said: "I didn't have enough impression of the brand to think that I would share any information about the product or brand".

The findings indicated that BMVs were perceived as a non-contributor to brand association, brand benefit, and brand loyalty. It was attributed to two reasons: insufficient product information and lack of product demand from the audience. The reason for insufficient product information is that the audience didn't clearly and directly perceive information about the product. This reflected study of Russell (1998) on the informational aspect of product placement's transformational experience, which states that product placement differs from traditional advertising by providing indirect information about the branded product. The reason for the absence of product demand showed that audiences didn't have experience with the product or pay attention to its benefits, resulting in a lack of contribution to the research brand benefit and brand association as two out of five important dimensions of brand image (Wijaya, 2013).

A Non-Reflective Mirror of Social Identity and Personal Identity. BMVs were perceived as not reflecting the audience's social identity and personal identity because they lacked personal relevance with the depicted group of people in the BMVs. Almost all the interviewees recognized the group of people portrayed in the BMVs. However, many of them didn't see themselves in the storyline because they didn't belong to the depicted group or didn't have the shared experiences, lifestyle, beliefs, or values. For instance, Respondent 3 explained his differences with the portrayed group in the music video "Going home": "However, I am not part of the group of people mentioned in the MV because I live in the city, not in the countryside, and I have never had to ride a motorbike to the countryside like that". Similarly, Respondent 9 explained how she didn't belong to the group of people mentioned in the music video: "I haven't had my own family yet, so I don't see the similarity there. Additionally, the music video focuses on exploring the relationship between individuals and their loved ones, while my current concern is the relationship between me and myself". Respondent 8, he had some similarities with the character in the

narrative, but he still had certain different experiences:

I don't see much connection to myself. I also work far from home, but I often go home and don't have to wait until Tet holiday to do so. I also often call home, so I don't have the feeling of missing my family like the character in the video (Respondent 8).

The finding showed that audiences didn't construct their social identity and personal identity through the cultural and social issues that brands addressed in BMVs. In other words, BMVs didn't help them live their lives (Fournier, 1988). This finding didn't contribute to demonstrating the aspect of brands as culture carriers, as outlined in MacInnis et al. (2019), which states that the cultural values embodied by brands are associated with the brand's congruity and meaningfulness to consumers as cultural actors. In this case, brands didn't appear to be a culturally available mechanism, failing to connect with the self and lacking significance for consumers in terms of their enactment of cultural values and current concerns (MacInnis et al., 2019).

A Non-Contributor to Brand Promotion and Cultural Reflection through Insignificant Artist Involvement. The majority of respondents believed that compared to the main artists in BMVs, those in supporting roles either made no contribution or their contribution couldn't be evaluated in terms of storytelling and enhancing brand image because their roles in the narrative were too vague. In the music video "You are a treasure", MCK was perceived by respondents to have the least contribution in portraying the narrative and conveying the brand's message. Specifically, Respondent 3 shared:

MCK's rap section is not really related to the theme of the song, and it feels like his character appears for no reason in the music video [...] He appears too little and seems out of place due to his outdated and street-style outfit. Perhaps the director should have dressed MCK in fancier clothes to match the atmosphere and the product's elegance (Respondent 3).

In the music video "Going home", respondents evaluated Justatee's appearance in a supporting role as less prominent compared to Den Vau, who played the main character, and they didn't see Justatee making significant contributions to the story. Respondent 10 expressed:

Justatee appears infrequently and sings very little in the music video. I'm not exactly sure which character he is portraying, whether he's a friend or relative of the main

character. His role also fails to capture the simplicity and closeness of the story's context like the character portrayed by Den Vau [...] I don't sense any connection between Justatee and Honda (Respondent 10).

In "Breathing", all respondents agreed that Juky San, in a supporting role, didn't contribute to the storytelling or convey the brand's message. Respondent 6 shared her inability to evaluate the performance of this artist, stating: "Juky San appeared little in MV. She played the role of the main character's wife, mainly serving to heighten the climax of the story. However, she failed to portray the emotions of a wife. I also didn't notice any scene where she used Panasonic product".

Overall, the artists with limited appearances in BMVs were perceived by the audience as not contributing to the representation of culture and the brand. This finding is new, aligned with the earlier observation in the first main theme, which highlighted the prominent role of the artist as the main character in the narrative.

4.3.2. *BMVs as Acceptable Advertisements*

Participants viewed BMVs as acceptable forms of advertisement, expressing that the product placement in the narrative was reasonable, and they didn't experience any annoyance or irritation regarding the integration of products.

Reasonable Product Placement in the Narrative. The participants who regarded the product placement in the narrative as reasonable also recognized the BMVs for their high entertainment value, so they didn't perceive or hold any particular impression regarding the brand or product featured in the BMVs. Respondent 11, expressed her acceptance in "You are a treasure", stating:

The appearance of the PNJ logo at the end of the video is acceptable to me because it's not too obvious, it's skillfully incorporated. I don't feel like I am watching an ad [...] I think it is for entertainment. I only pay attention to the story and the song in the video, not the advertisement (Respondent 11).

Similarly, Respondent 12 shared his perception of product placement and his evaluation of the entertainment value in "Going home":

I thought that the motorcycle was a necessary part of the music video, representing the character's transportation to get home. Therefore, I found the appearance of the motorcycle reasonable [...] I even don't see any signs of advertising if you don't show some scenes again. So, I think "Going home" is just an entertainment music

video (Respondent 12).

Likewise, Respondent 10 stated: "It's fine. The integration [in "Going home"] isn't clumsy, but rather skillful. I didn't notice that it is advertisement".

This finding indicated that when the product was skillfully integrated into the branded music video, it becomes more easily accepted by viewers, enhancing the sincerity of the story. This finding aligned with research on the execution aspect of the transformational experience offered by branded entertainment, highlighting the importance of well-executed product integration (Russell, 1998). It also supported the notion of sincerity as a crucial characteristic of an authentic narrative in branded entertainment, as proposed by van Loggerenberg et al. (2019).

Not Annoyed by Product Placement. Participants also found the product placement to be acceptable because they didn't feel annoyed by it. In this finding, participants also recognized the BMVs for their high entertainment value, so they didn't perceive or form any impression regarding the presence of the featured products or brands in the BMVs. For instance, Respondent 3 shared:

I didn't feel bothered by the appearance of advertising products in "Breathing" maybe because they didn't appear frequently and only had one close-up shot of the fan [...] I focus more on listening to music and watching the video, and I didn't pay much attention to the advertising aspect in this music video. I rate it as a regular entertainment product (Respondent 3).

Similarly, when Respondent 5 realized that there was a fan as a product of Panasonic in the story, he found the appearance of the fan quite irrelevant as it entered the frame unexpectedly. However, since this appearance only lasted for a moment, he did not find it annoying. Respondent 8 considered the BMV "You are a treasure" to be purely for entertainment purposes, saying: "Throughout the watching process, I saw this music video as an entertainment product. It was only when I saw the PNJ logo appear in the last few seconds that I realized it was sponsored by PNJ" (Figure 13).

This finding demonstrated that when the product was subtly integrated into the narrative, and its presence didn't disrupt the narrative, leading audiences to accept the advertising element in the BMV. Subtle product placement also contributes to a more sincere narrative, as evidenced by audiences perceiving the BMVs as entertainment products rather than advertisements. Thus, this finding supported Sharma and Bumb's

(2020) research on the nature of subtle product placement and further clarified the concept of sincerity as a characteristic of an authentic narrative (van Loggerenberg et al., 2019).

5. Conclusion

Building upon the discoveries presented in the preceding chapter, this section utilizes those findings to shed light on the research question: **How do Vietnamese audiences perceive music video as a form of branded entertainment in terms of brand image creation and cultural relevance?**

Furthermore, this chapter examines the broader societal and scientific implications of the study. Lastly, limitations are acknowledged, and recommendations for future research are offered.

5.1. Main Findings

The findings of this study provided insights into how Vietnamese audiences perceive BMVs in terms of brand image creation and cultural relevance. The perceptions of audiences can be categorized into three directions: positive, negative, and neutral, each influencing how they constructed the brand image and cultural relevance conveyed in BMVs. Moreover, the role of the artist was evaluated in all three perception directions.

5.1.1. *Positive Perception*

Audiences perceived BMVs as a means of brand promotion. They recognized various aspects of brand image such as brand personality, brand attitude, and brand association, which aligned with their pre-existing perceptions and experiences related to brands. Audiences also perceived brand benefit and competence as additional dimensions of brand image, encompassing functional, emotional, and symbolic aspects. They successfully decoded the intended brand message, thanks to the seamless integration of the product within the narrative, which reflected the alignment of brand identity and contributes to an authentic storytelling experience.

BMVs were also perceived as culturally relevant. They were considered believable as they reflected cultural and social issues. Additionally, BMVs served as depictions of personal relevance by addressing cultural and social content representative of individuals and groups, showcasing lifestyles, experiences, and values.

The congruence between the artists and the brand played a crucial role in shaping the brand image in viewers' perception, enhancing the believability and appeal of both the artist and the brand. The artists acted as culturally relevant normative influencers through their performances and personal resonance with the characters they portrayed in the BMVs, contributing to a strong endorsement message. When artists received admiration

from the audiences, it positively influenced their viewing experience of the BMVs. The artists who played the main characters significantly contributed to the narrative's representation.

5.1.2. *Negative Perception*

Audiences perceived BMVs as ineffective for brand promotion. The integration of the brand within the videos was negatively perceived due to the lack of seamless product placement in the narrative. Specifically, subtle placement often went unnoticed, while prominent placement caused discomfort among audiences. Brand loyalty was not fostered as prominent placement discouraged audiences from sharing their thoughts about the product or brand. Additionally, subtle product placement resulted in an unsuccessful portrayal of brand personality and brand attitude, causing the audience to overlook the product within the narrative. The brand message was not effectively conveyed, resulting in a weak impression and difficulty decoding the intended message. Prominent product placement within BMVs was considered annoying brand advertising as it distracted from the narrative and caused discomfort among audiences.

Furthermore, BMVs were seen as presenting an unrealistic portrayal of cultural relevance due to the lack of believability in the narrative, thereby diminishing the authenticity of the cultural and social issues depicted.

The involvement of artists also contributed to the negative perception of BMVs as a medium for brand promotion. The mismatch between the artist and the brand, coupled with audiences' personal dislike for the artist, intensified their dislike for the BMVs. This resulted in a failure to enhance the artist's credibility and attractiveness, leading to unfavorable attitudes and a lack of purchase intentions towards the product or brand expressed by audiences.

5.1.3. *Neutral Perception*

BMVs were considered irrelevant in promoting the brand. They didn't contribute to brand association, brand benefit, or brand loyalty, mainly due to a lack of audience demand for the products and insufficient product information provided. This reflected the informational aspect of the transformative experience of product placement. Furthermore, audiences perceived BMVs as a non-reflective mirror of social and personal identity. They lacked personal relevance with the depicted group of people in the BMVs, which meant that brands were not seen as carriers of culture. A new finding emerged, indicating that

BMVs were perceived as having minimal contribution to brand promotion and cultural reflection when artists made only a minimal appearance in the videos. BMVs were viewed as acceptable advertisements when the products were skillfully integrated into the videos, enhancing the sincerity of the story. Additionally, audiences did not feel annoyed by subtle product placement, which contributed to a more sincere narrative. However, though the sincerity of the story was enhanced, impressions regarding the embedded brands or products in the BMVs were either not formed or not clearly established.

All the findings highlighted the significant role of an authentic narrative in creating brand image and establishing cultural relevance among audiences. A brand identity that is aligned, sincere, and believable was found to be among the most influential characteristics of an authentic narrative in shaping audience perception. The dimensions of brand image were identified and addressed from various audiences' perspectives, including positive, negative, and neutral. Artists played a crucial role in portraying the brand image and depicting cultural values and social issues in BMVs. This role depended on the similarity between the artist and the brand, as well as the resemblance between the artist and the character portrayed in the BMVs. It also relied on the audience's preference for the artist. The significance of the main and supporting roles played by the artist in the BMVs was emphasized as a new finding. The findings didn't reveal any specific audience perceptions regarding the role of hip-hop music in the viewing experience of BMVs and their understanding of brand image and cultural relevance.

5.2. Societal and Scientific Implication

5.2.1. Societal Implication

Marketers stand to benefit significantly from this research, which offers valuable insights for developing effective strategies in BMVs that resonate with the target audience. First, marketers can enhance brand image by leveraging positive audience perceptions reported in this research. This can be achieved through studying customer experiences with the brand and aligning dimensions of brand image (Wijaya, 2013) with these experiences and apply it in BMVs.

Second, marketers can leverage culture as a branding tool by crafting narratives in BMVs that genuinely reflect cultural values and address social issues. This approach enables marketers to position the brand as a cultural carrier, establishing a connection with

the target audience (Derda, 2023b; Biraghi et al., 2020).

Third, marketers can optimize the effectiveness of BMVs as advertising tools by applying the research findings. It is crucial to skillfully integrate products into the videos, avoiding placements that are overly prominent or subtle, which could lead to negative perceptions. By achieving a balance between product visibility and narrative coherence, marketers can create highly authentic BMVs that have a significant impact on the audience (van Loggerenberg et al., 2019).

Last, the research emphasizes the pivotal role of the artist in portraying brand image and conveying cultural values and social issues in BMVs. Marketers can leverage this understanding to ensure alignment between the artist and the brand, maximizing the artist's resonance and appeal to the audience. This alignment establishes a strong endorsement message and cultivates positive attitudes towards the brand (Kamins & Gupta, 1994).

5.2.2. Scientific Implication

This study has several scientific implications. Firstly, it employed a qualitative, in-depth interview method, providing rich insights into audience perceptions of BMVs compared to previous research that mostly focused on quantitative methods.

Second, the study offered a comprehensive understanding of audience perceptions by examining brand image across five dimensions, surpassing previous research mainly focused on attitudes, memory, and behavioral intentions.

Third, the study explores the cultural relevance of BMVs, going beyond previous research's brand-related aspects. It investigates how audiences perceive cultural authenticity in BMVs, shedding light on the role of BMVs as a medium for cultural reflection.

Last, the study contributed to understanding the role of artists, particularly hip-hop artists, in BMVs. It highlighted the importance of artist-brand congruence and character portrayal in shaping audience perceptions of brand image, emphasizing artists' influence as culturally relevant normative influencers and their impact on endorsement messages.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research

5.3.1. Limitations

The present study is subject to certain limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the qualitative nature of the research, employing in-depth, semi-structured

interviews, may restrict the generalizability of the findings. The small sample size of 12 participants, recruited through a snowball sampling method, further limits the extent to which the results can be applied to a broader population. Aware of the potential limitations, efforts were made to mitigate their impact. The use of a snowball sampling method was chosen due to the specific criteria required for participant selection. While this method facilitated access to individuals who met the desired criteria, it may have introduced bias and limited the diversity of perspectives represented in the sample. Moreover, conducting the interviews in Vietnamese and subsequently reporting the data in English could introduce translation discrepancies and the loss of cultural nuances. While efforts were made to ensure accurate interpretation and representation of participants' responses, it is important to recognize that some subtleties and nuances of the original data may not have been fully captured in the translated version. Additionally, the exploration of Vietnamese audiences' perception was based on the analysis of only three BMVs. Although efforts were made to select BMVs under certain criteria, the limited number of videos may not provide a comprehensive understanding of the range of audience responses.

5.3.2. Recommendations for Future Research

This research suggests several avenues for future research. Firstly, while qualitative, in-depth interviews were utilized in this study, it is recommended to validate the findings through quantitative research methods. Conducting surveys or experiments can provide broader perspectives and statistical evidence to support and generalize the study's findings.

Secondly, future research can employ content analysis techniques to comprehensively examine BMVs and their impact on audience perception. Analyzing a diverse range of BMVs across different brands and genres can reveal patterns and elements that contribute to brand image creation and cultural relevance.

Thirdly, to explore the cross-cultural aspects of audience perception, future research can include participants from non-Vietnamese backgrounds. In-depth interviews or focus groups with individuals from diverse cultural contexts can provide insights into how BMVs are perceived across different cultures and enhance our understanding of the influence of cultural context on audience responses.

Lastly, given the new findings regarding artist involvement in BMVs, future research

can focus on examining the audience's perception of artist-brand collaborations in terms of brand image creation and cultural relevance. Investigating artist-brand congruence, the role of artist endorsement, and the dynamics between artists, brands, and audience perceptions can offer valuable insights for effective strategies in leveraging artist influence in BMVs.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: List of Respondents

Respondent No.	Gender	Age	Location
Respondent 1	Male	31	Vietnam
Respondent 2	Male	26	Vietnam
Respondent 3	Male	25	The Netherlands
Respondent 4	Female	30	France
Respondent 5	Male	24	United Kingdom
Respondent 6	Female	29	United States
Respondent 7	Female	27	Vietnam
Respondent 8	Male	28	Vietnam
Respondent 9	Female	25	Vietnam
Respondent 10	Female	31	Greece
Respondent 11	Female	33	Vietnam
Respondent 12	Male	22	The Netherlands

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

CONSENT REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATING IN RESEARCH

FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, CONTACT:

Vu Phuong Mai, 656496mv@student.eur.nl

DESCRIPTION

You are invited to participate in a research about branded entertainment. The purpose of the study is to understand Vietnamese audiences' perception of branded music videos in terms of brand image creation and cultural relevance.

Your acceptance to participate in this study means that you accept to be interviewed. In general terms, my questions will be related to how you understand the narrative of the given branded music videos, the brands and your culture depicted in these videos.

Unless you prefer that no recordings are made, I will make a video recording of the interview.

I will use the material from the interviews and my observation exclusively for academic work, such as further research, academic meetings and publications.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

As far as I can tell, there are no risks associated with participating in this research. I will not use your name or other identifying information in the study. To participants in the study will only be referred to with pseudonyms, and in terms of general characteristics such as age and gender, etc.

You are always free not to answer any particular question, and/or stop participating at any point.

TIME INVOLVEMENT

Your participation in this study will take approximate 60 minutes. You may interrupt your participation at any time.

PAYMENTS

There will be no monetary compensation for your participation.

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

If you have decided to accept to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. If you prefer, your identity will be made known in all written data resulting from the study. Otherwise, your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS

If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact –anonymously, if you wish— the thesis supervisor, Dr Izabela Derda at izabela.derda@eshcc.eur.nl.

SIGNING THE CONSENT FORM

Unless having an oral consent preference, you can consent to participation in the study by signing/ inserting your digital signature below.

I give consent to be recorded during this study.

Name:

Date:

Signature:

Thank you for your time!

Appendix C: Operationalization

Concept	Sub-concept	Definition	Example of interview question
Branded Entertainment/ Authentic narrative (van Loggerenberg et al., 2019)	Brand-generated	The degree to which a brand engages the audience to invest their time and allows the brand to convey its narrative	If you had free time, will you watch these video(s) just for your entertainment? Why?
	Brand identity aligned	The strategic adherence of the narrative to portray and emphasize the fundamental nature of the brand	What is the role of the brand(s) in this video?
	Original	The 'genesis' of the brand story	What do you think
	Emotional meaning	The reaction elicited from the audience by a thought-provoking narrative	about the narrative of the video(s)?
	Sincere	The genuine and respectful intention of the brand to generate entertainment	What do you think is the purpose of the video(s)?
	Believable	The credibility and trustworthiness of the narrative	How do you evaluate the level of credibility and trustworthiness of the narrative?
	Craft	The brand's dedication as the creator of the original content	Can you tell me how you perceive the video quality?
Branded entertainment/	Attachment	Arising from an emotional bond with the audience	

Brand resonance (van Loggerenberg et al., 2019)	Engagement	Describing the manner in which the target audience actively connects with the brand through an authentic narrative	Overall, what are your feelings about the brand(s)? Do you have any emotional bond with them? above
	Community	The establishment of brand communities through the utilization of authenticity	Do you realize any group of people depicted in the videos? If yes, how do they look like? Do you feel like to be a part of this group?
	Loyalty	Taking shape as an intention or behavior exhibited by the target audience	Would you like to share the information about this brand? Do you think that you would be more willing to use their product/services after watching these videos?
Brand image (Wijaya, 2013)	Brand identity	The tangible attributes of the brand or product that facilitate easy recognition and differentiation by consumers from other brands or products	Do you notice any elements related to the brand(s) in the videos? If yes, what are they? How do you feel about them?

Brand personality	The unique character of a brand that encompasses specific human qualities, allowing consumers to easily distinguish it from other brands within the same category	If you could treat the brand(s) as human being, how do you describe the brands' personality?
Brand association	Elements closely linked to a brand, which can stem from a distinct product offering, recurring and consistent actions, matters strongly associated with a brand or person, or specific symbols and meanings that evoke brand recognition in the audience	How do these music videos remind you of the brand?
Brand attitude and behavior	The attitudes and behaviors exhibited by a brand during communication and interaction with consumers, which shape consumers' perceptions and evaluations of the brand	If you could treat the brand(s) as human being, how do you describe the brands' attitude?
Brand benefit and competence	The values, benefits, and competencies of a brand in addressing consumer concerns, meeting their needs, desires, aspirations, and preoccupations. These competencies can encompass emotional, functional, social, or symbolic dimensions	What are benefits/values that the brand can offer you?

Cultural relevance	Brands as carriers of culture	Brands act as culture carriers when they embody the characteristics and values of a particular culture (Holt, 2004; MacInnis et al., 2019). This phenomenon is influenced by social and personal identities (Fournier & Alvarez, 2019). The cultural values linked to brands enhance their alignment and significance for consumers as cultural participants (MacInnis et al., 2019). Celebrity endorsers, such as artists, who possess attractiveness and likability, play a crucial role in shaping the cultural significance of brands (Friedman & Friedman, 1979).	How would you describe the cultural values message conveyed in this music video(s)? What aspects of the music video do you relate to the most? Are there any messages or images that resonate with your personally? What do you think about the artist(s) in the music video? What are their roles?/How do they contribute to the narrative?
	Culture as a means of branding.	Brands can build an authentic voice in communication with target audiences (Derda, I., 2023b, reinforcing their brand image by utilizing culture through collaborating with artists, who have credibility with audiences (Zimmerman, 2011), with congruence between the brand and the celebrity being crucial (Kamins & Gupta, 1994).	What do you think about brand's message/voice through culture/values depicted in this music video?

What is your opinion of the partnership between the brand and the artist(s) in this music video? Do you think the collaboration was effective in conveying a cohesive message?

Appendix D: Interview Guide

Introduction:

- Introduction from the researcher, including practical details (e.g., consent for recording, confidentiality), and outlining the session's steps.
- Brief introductory provided by participant.

Icebreaker:

- Do you usually watch music videos?
- Which platform do you typically use to watch them?
- Have you watched the three music videos I previously sent you?

Discussion questions:

- If you had free time, will you watch these video(s) just for your entertainment?
Why?
- What do you think about the narrative of the video(s)?
- How would you describe the cultural values message conveyed in this music video(s)?
- What aspects of the music video do you relate to the most? Are there any messages or images that resonate with your personally?
- Do you realize any group of people depicted in the videos? If yes, how do they look like? Do you feel like to be a part of this group?
- Do you notice any elements (in verbal and/or visual form) related to the brand(s) in the MVs? If yes, what are they?
- How do you feel about them (elements)?
- What is the role of the brand(s) here?
- What do you think about the artist(s)/singer(s) in the music video? What are their roles? /How do they contribute to the narrative?
- What is your opinion of the partnership between the brand and the artist(s) in this music video? Do you think the collaboration was effective in conveying a cohesive message?
- Overall, what are your feelings about the brand(s)? Do you have any emotional bond with them?
- What do you think about brand's message/voice through culture/values depicted in

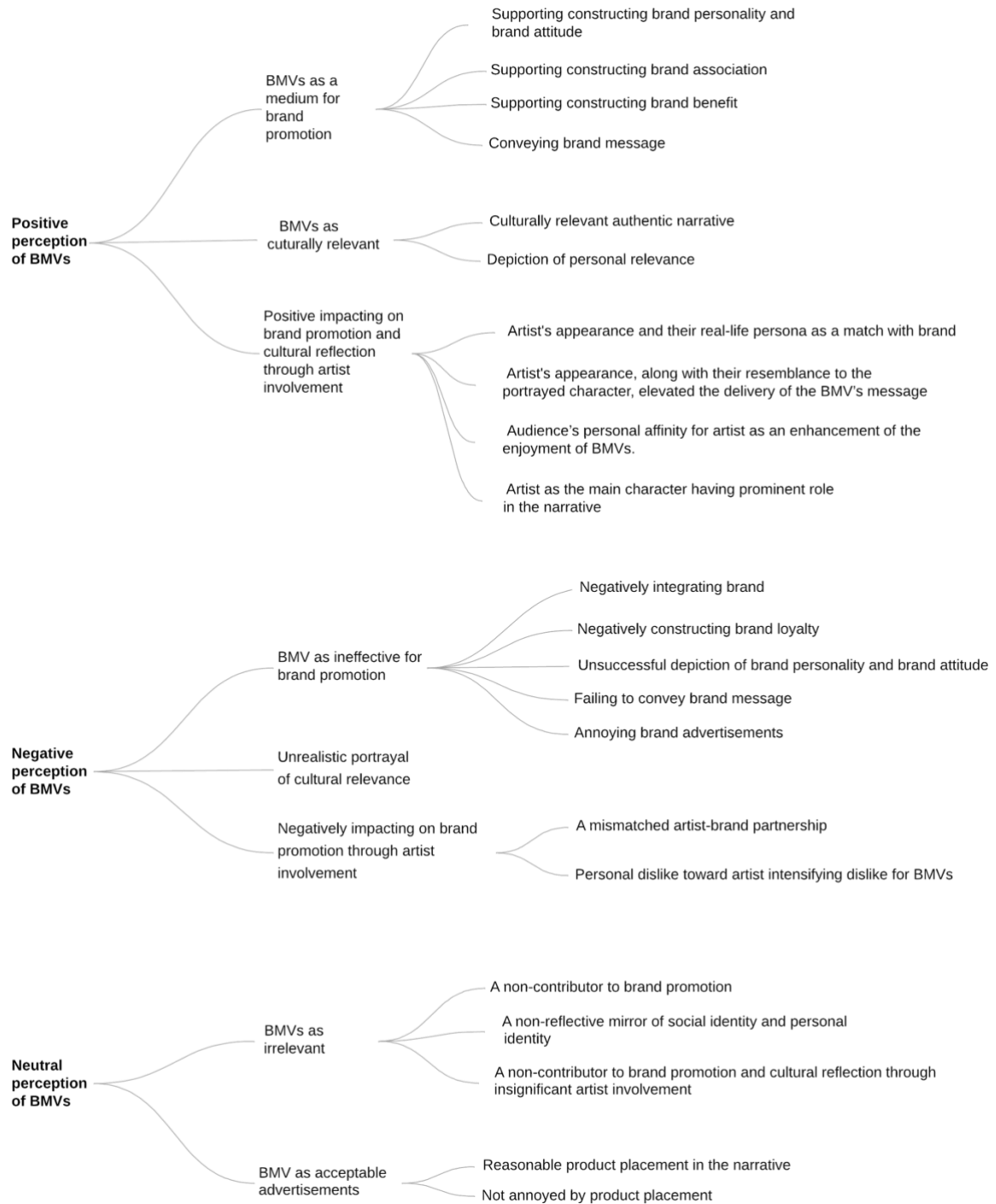
this music video?

- If you could treat the brand(s) as human being, how do you describe the brands' personality?
- If you could treat the brand(s) as human being, how do you describe the brands' attitude?
- What are benefits/values that the brand(s) can offer you through the MVs?
- How do you evaluate the level of credibility and trustworthiness of the narrative?
- Can you tell me how you perceive the video quality?
- How do these music videos remind you of the brand?
- What do you think is the purpose of the video(s)?
- Would you like to share the information about this brand? Do you think that you would be more willing to use their product/services after watching these videos?

Appendix E: Sampled Branded Music Videos

Name	Theme	Brand (product)/Industry	No. of views	Artist
Đi về nhà [Going home]	For Tet holiday: Home is always where you can come back regardless of what you do or what struggles you have faced throughout the year.	Honda (motorbike Winner X)/Manufacturing	145 million	Den Vau – rapper Justatee - rapper
Em là châu báu [You are a treasure]	Feminism: Women are Treasure	PNJ (jewelry)/Jewelry manufacturing	39 million	Chau Bui – fashion model Tlinh - rapper MCK - rapper
Thở [Breathing]	Slowing lifestyle: Be slower, take a deep breath to enjoy life	Panasonic (household appliances)/Consumer electrics	11 million	Dalab – hip-hop band Juky San – pop singer

Appendix F: Code Tree



Appendix G: Code Book

Code	Description	Example
Supporting constructing brand personality and brand attitude	Constructed brand personality and brand attitude aligned with audiences' pre- existing perceptions of the brands	When thinking of Honda, I associate it with adventure and exploration because Honda motorcycles are known for their durability and ability to be used on various terrains, from concrete roads to winding mountain paths.
Supporting constructing brand association	Constructed brand association due to evoked personal experiences related to the brands.	It reminds me of what I know about PNJ. In recent years, I've seen PNJ rejuvenating and targeting younger customers. Whenever I went into their stores, I noticed their collection was youthful in terms of design, and their store decoration looked modern.
Supporting constructing brand benefit	Constructed functional, emotional, and symbolic benefits of the brand's product	I can perceive the practicality and versatility of Honda motorbike in riding on various terrains. It is very robust and safe.
Conveying brand message	Understood brand message being in line with the campaign message embedded in the BMVs	I realize that Honda's message is talking about the role of the motorcycle as a companion on every road, including the way home. It makes sense, especially in the context of Tet holiday when everyone returns home to celebrate Tet with their families.

Culturally relevant authentic narrative	Authentic narratives closely aligning with the cultural context	I think "Going home" is highly credible because it portrays small but valuable everyday details, such as the main character opening a handwritten letter from his mother with instructions for taking care of himself. Additionally, the performances of the supporting actors who play the parents and young villagers are authentic, and their costumes and setting are realistic.
Depiction of personal relevance	Portrayed cultural relevance reflecting audiences' personal relevance	This is a story that has many similarities to mine because I am currently working 16 hours a day, with no time to call my parents or my girlfriend, and sometimes I don't even know why I'm working that much. I can relate to the character in the music video, feeling being stuck and unable to escape from this busy and rushed life.
Artist's appearance and their real-life persona as a match with brand	Artists contributing constructing brand image through their acting and real-life similarities with brand	I see Den Vau portraying an ordinary and simple person effectively. In the music video, he wears casual clothes and displays humility, which I think suits the nature of the product and brand.
Artist's appearance, along with their resemblance to the	Artists contributing to the culturally relevant narrative	Chau Bui also represents the character in the story because she has style, beauty, and is a role model for young

portrayed character, elevated the delivery of the BMV's message	through their performance and personal resonance with the characters they played	women.
Audience's personal affinity for artist as an enhancement of the enjoyment of BMVs	Audiences' personal connection with the artist leading to their enjoyment of BMVs	Yes, I like the musical style of Den Vau, Justatee, and Dalab, so I have some affection for these music videos.
Artist as the main character having prominent role in the narrative	Artists as main characters having significant role in shaping the narrative	Den Vau is the sole artist who leads the narrative, appearing in the first frames, and viewers seem to follow the footsteps of the character, Den Vau, as he returns to the countryside.
Negatively integrating brand	Negatively integrated brand due to the lack of seamless incorporation of the products into the narrative	I feel like I'm being forced to look at the product, as the fan is awkwardly inserted into the middle of the video without a clear purpose. I don't see what role the fan plays in the story.
Negatively constructing brand loyalty	No intention of sharing information about the brand or product due to uncomfortability of	I think Den Vau's appearance was reasonable and reflected the character's story. Den is also someone who comes from the countryside and make a living in the city, so the story

	prominent and visual advertising	about a character who is working in the city now returns to the countryside for Tet holiday becomes more reasonable.
Unsuccessful depiction of brand personality and brand attitude	Unsuccessful depiction of brand personality and brand attitude due to the weak presence of the brand	As for Panasonic, I don't feel that it has any personality because the brand appears too pale and faint.
Failing to convey brand message	Failed conveyance of brand message due to unclear role of the brand	The brand message in "Breathing" doesn't make me feel anything because I don't understand the relevance of the brand's product that can help me have a peaceful and relaxing life.
Annoying brand advertisements	Annoying brand advertisements due to distracted and annoying frequent and prominent product placement	When I watch the final seconds, I realize that it is an advertisement for Panasonic's household products. But looking back, when I also notice the fan appearing in the middle of the music video in a close-up shot. [...] I think the appearance of the fan is an awkward integration and not related to the plot. The connection between the fan and the story's meaning is too far-fetched.
Unrealistic portrayal of cultural relevance	Unrealistic depiction of cultural relevance due to unauthentic	It is the least credible story because it stages many scenes that are not close to everyday life, the child character has

	narratives	too much makeup, not like reality. The actions of the characters are also exaggerated.
A mismatch between the artist and the brand	An artist-brand mismatch based on audiences' real-life knowledge of the artist	Tlinh and PNJ represent two parallel worlds. PNJ is associated with the image of an old lady, while Tlinh represents the youthful and dynamic generation. Chau Bui is also not related to PNJ because Chau Bui is a fashion model who often uses high-end foreign brands, while PNJ is a domestic brand in Vietnam, so the combination between the artist and brand is unbalanced.
Personal dislike toward artists intensified dislike for BMVs		As for Honda and Panasonic, I don't see any attitude or behavior being portrayed in the music videos as the brands' products aren't placed in a way that is connected to the narrative.
A non-contributor to brand promotion	A non-contributor to brand association, brand benefit, and brand loyalty due to insufficient product information and lack of product demand	No, because I don't wear jewelry or give it as gifts, I don't ride motorbikes, and I rarely use a fan, I prefer air-conditioner. I don't have any personal experiences related to the PNJ brand or the Honda brand that were sparked by watching the videos.
A non-reflective mirror of social identity and	A non-reflective mirror of social	However, I am not part of the group of people mentioned in the MV because I

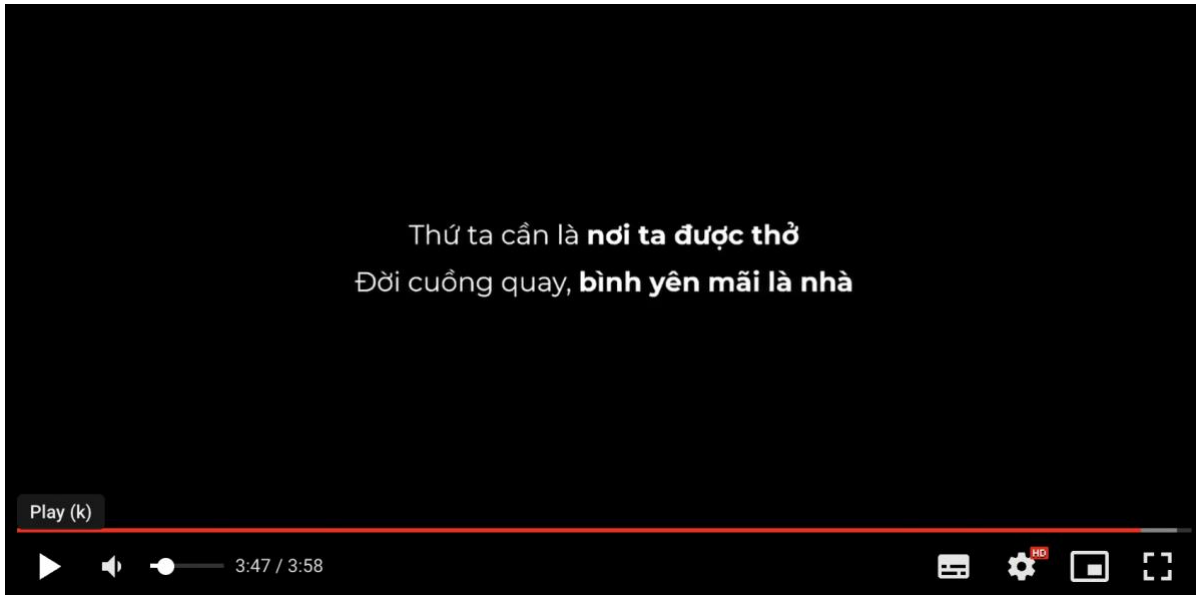
personal identity	identity and personal identity due to lack of personal relevance with the depicted group of people in BMVs	live in the city, not in the countryside, and I have never had to ride a motorbike to the countryside like that
A non-contributor to brand promotion and cultural reflection through insignificant artist involvement	Artist as supporting characters not contributing to the representation of culture and the brand	MCK's rap section is not really related to the theme of the song, and it feels like his character appears for no reason in the music video [...] He appears too little and seems out of place due to his outdated and street-style outfit. Perhaps the director should have dressed MCK in fancier clothes to match the atmosphere and the product's elegance.
Reasonable product placement in the narrative	The product is skillfully integrated into the branded music video	The appearance of the PNJ logo at the end of the video is acceptable to me because it's not too obvious, it's skillfully incorporated. I don't feel like I am watching an ad [...] I think it is for entertainment. I only pay attention to the story and the song in the video, not the advertisement.
Not annoyed by product placement	Subtle product placement was not annoying	I didn't feel bothered by the appearance of advertising products in "Breathing" maybe because they didn't appear frequently and only had one

close-up shot of the fan [...] I focus more on listening to music and watching the video, and I didn't pay much attention to the advertising aspect in this music video. I rate it as a regular entertainment product.

Appendix H: List of Figures

Figure 1

The message of Panasonic



Note. Screenshot from the BMW "Breathing", showing the message of Panasonic at the end of the BMW: "What we need is a place to breathe. When life spins in chaos, finding peace under the roof of our own home is the greatest blessing".

Figure 2

The message of Honda

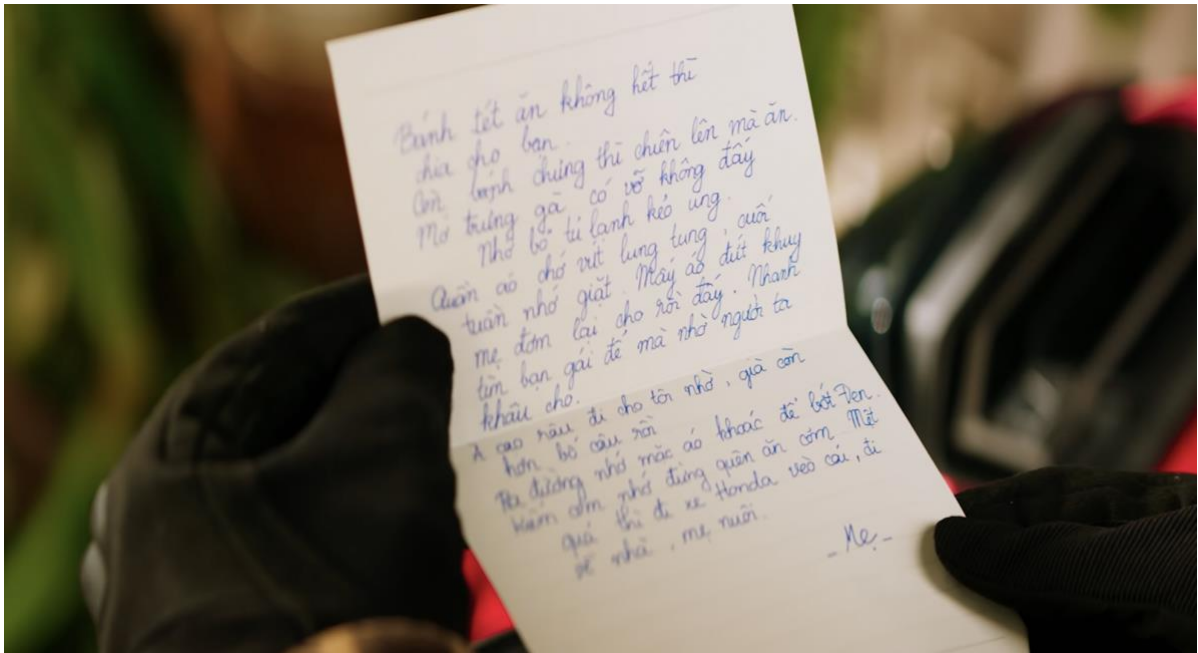


Note. Screenshot from the BMW "Breathing", showing the message of Honda at the end of

the BMW: "Carrying happiness with every step we take. So that even in distant places, there will always be a "Home" by our side".

Figure 3

The handwritten letter from mother



Note. Screenshot from the BMW "Going home", showing the main character opening the handwritten letter from his mother with caring instructions.

Figure 4

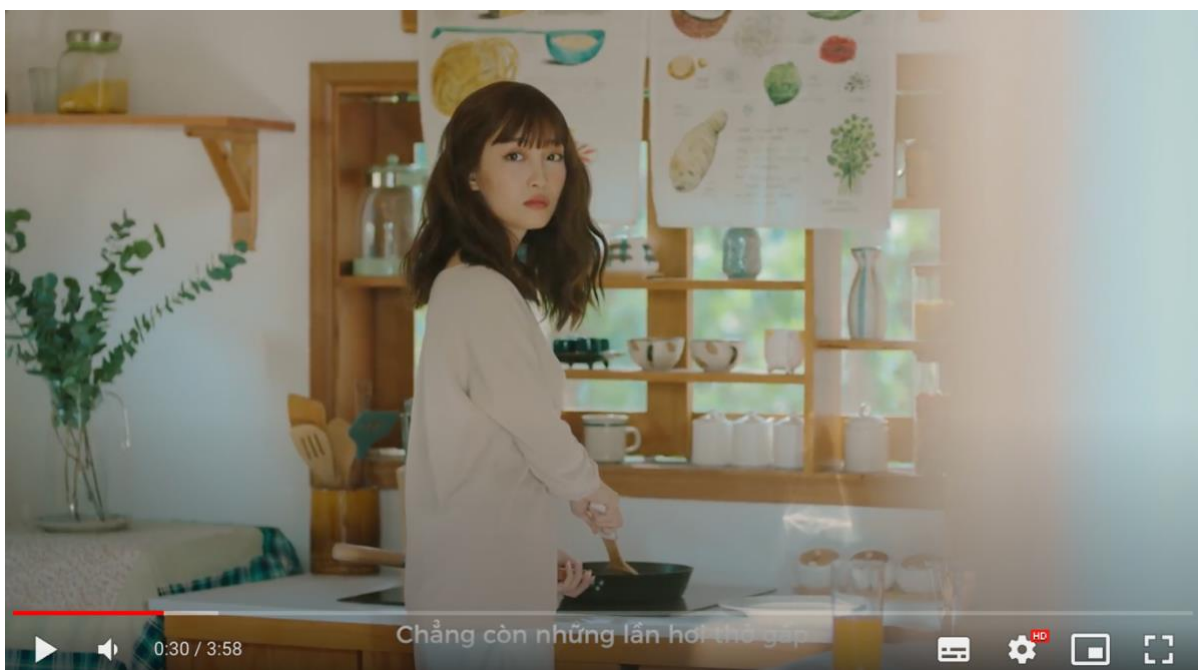
Going shopping and buying flowers as typical activities of a family during Tet holiday



Note. Screenshot from the BMW “Going home”, showing the main character riding a Honda motorbike to take his mother shopping and buying flowers for Tet holiday.

Figure 5

The female character cooking in the kitchen



Note. Screenshot from the BMW “Breathing”, showing the female character who always appears in the kitchen, cooking for the family.

Figure 6

The main couples having loud arguments



Note. Screenshot from the BMV “Breathing”, showing the main couples having loud arguments.

Figure 7

The main male character appearing exhausted after arguing with his wife



Note. Screenshot from the BMV “Breathing”, showing the main male character appearing

exhausted after arguing with his wife.

Figure 8

The moment of family togetherness



Note. Screenshot from the BMV “Going home”, showing the family gathering and playing games together during the Tet holiday.

Figure 9

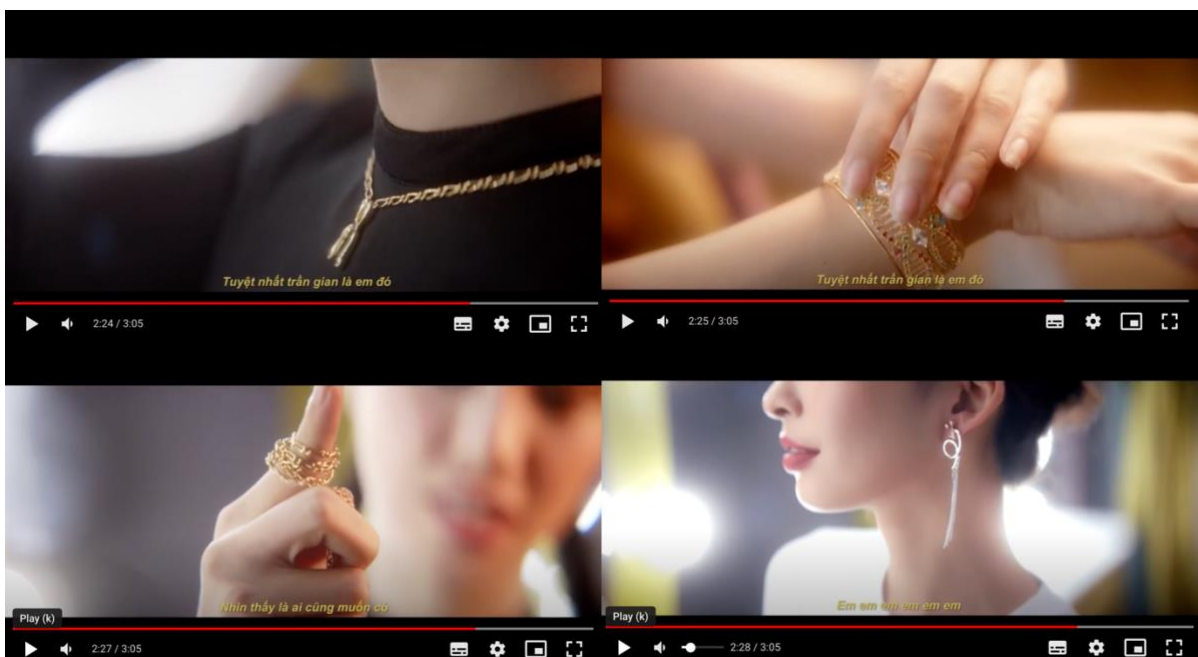
A fan with the Panasonic logo as a prominent product placement, placed in the middle of a close-up scene



Note. Screenshot from the BMW “Breathing”: A fan with the Panasonic logo as a prominent product placement, placed in the middle of a close-up scene.

Figure 10

Product placement appears continuously and prominently

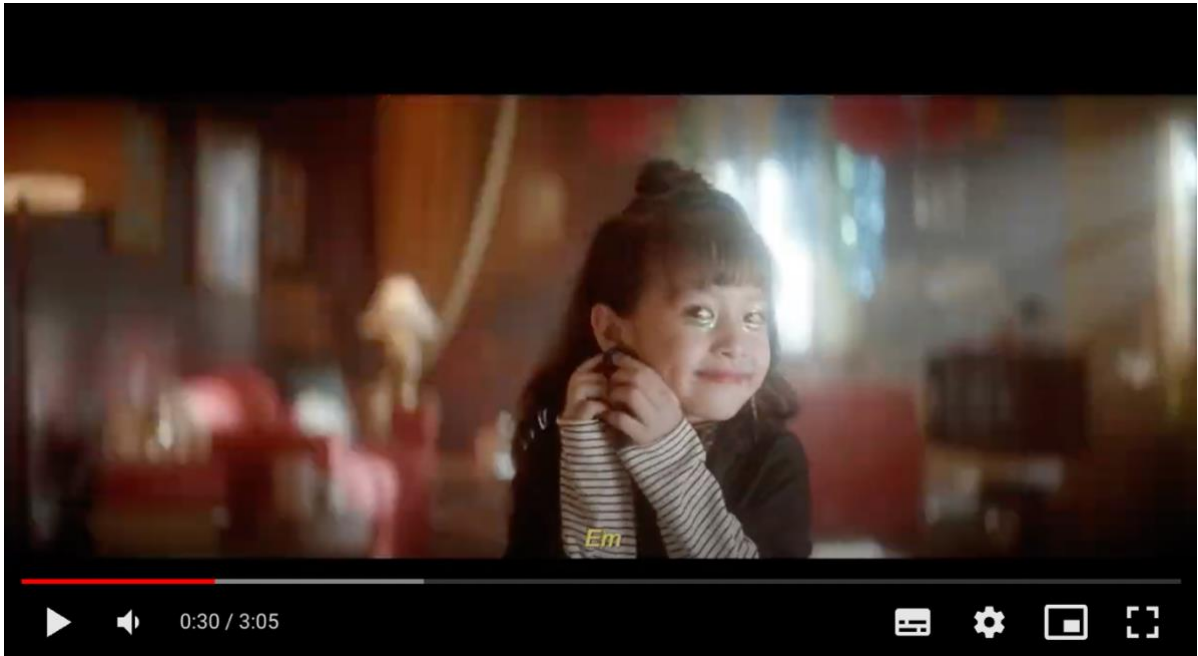


Note. Screenshot from the BMW “You are a treasure”, showing continuous and prominent

product placement.

Figure 11

The child character with heavy makeup



Note. Screenshot from the BMW “You are a treasure”, showing the child character with heavy makeup.

Figure 12

The artist MCK with his street style clothes



Note. Screenshot from the BMW “You are a treasure”, showing the artist MCK with his street style clothes.

Figure 13

PNJ logo appearing in last scene



Note. Screenshot from the BMW “You are a treasure”, showing the logo of PNJ in the last scene.