

Branded music videos on YouTube and their associations with brand awareness among Vietnamese youth

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Abstract

In the context of accelerating digitalization, social media platforms have reshaped branding and advertising practices, encouraging entertainment-oriented communication strategies. Focusing on Vietnam and its digitally engaged Generation Z audience, this study examines how cue-specific attention to branded music videos (BMVs) on YouTube is associated with brand awareness, operationalized as two memory-based brand-identification outcomes: aided brand recognition and contextual brand retrieval (recall-proxy). A cross-sectional survey was administered to Vietnamese Generation Z respondents who regularly use YouTube and reported familiarity with at least five of ten preselected BMVs ($n = 305$). Using descriptive statistics and multivariate ordinary least squares (OLS) regression with robust standard errors in STATA, the study tests whether self-reported attention to specific BMV elements, particularly lyrics and slogans, is associated with the two brand-identification outcomes. Results suggest an asymmetric pattern across the two dimensions of brand awareness. Attention to slogans shows a positive and statistically significant association with contextual brand retrieval ($p < 0.05$), whereas attention to lyrics shows only marginal evidence of association with aided brand recognition ($p < 0.10$). Other measured visual and narrative elements do not demonstrate statistically significant associations in the models, and overall explanatory power is modest. Taken together, the findings indicate that verbal/auditory cues may be more closely linked to brand-identification outcomes than other elements in music-oriented, multitasked YouTube consumption contexts. By integrating brand

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awareness theory and music video theory, this study contributes empirical evidence from a non-Western market and offers practical implications for designing BMVs aligned with specific branding objectives (retrieval-oriented vs. recognition-oriented awareness).

Keywords

Branded music video, brand awareness, aided brand recognition, contextual brand retrieval (recall-proxy), YouTube, digital advertising.

Introduction

Vietnam's digital transformation has accelerated rapidly in recent years, driven by national strategies aimed at expanding digital infrastructure and promoting digital adoption across sectors (Vo, & Dao, 2025). Within this broader digital ecosystem, online platforms play an increasingly important role in shaping communication, entertainment, and advertising practices. Among these platforms, YouTube has emerged as a dominant medium in Vietnam, with approximately 63 million users in 2023, particularly popular among younger generations such as Generation Y and Generation Z (Digital 2023: Vietnam, 2023). Within this evolving media landscape, branded music videos have gained increasing prominence as an advertising format that integrates brand elements – such as logos, slogans, and products – into music content through lyrics, visuals, and narrative structures, often featuring popular Vietnamese artists. High-profile campaigns such as Lac troi (Biti's & Son Tung M-TP) and Dive nha (Honda & Den Vau) demonstrate the emotional resonance and cultural visibility of this format among young audiences.

Despite their growing popularity, branded music videos (BMVs) remain underexplored in Vietnamese academic research. Existing studies on digital advertising in Vietnam have largely focused on social commerce, influencer marketing, or short-form content on platforms such as Facebook² and TikTok (Nguyen, 2023; Nguyen Thi Phuong et al., 2025). Moreover, much of the broader scholarship on branded entertainment and music-based advertising is grounded in Western contexts, raising questions about its generalizability to Vietnam's distinctive media environment, cultural consumption patterns, and youth audiences. More importantly, beyond the macro-level question of whether BMVs “work,” a key unresolved issue is how different embedded cues within music videos may shape distinct dimensions of brand awareness.

Brand awareness is commonly conceptualized as comprising at least two

² Belongs to Meta company, banned at the territory of the Russian Federation.

memory-based outcomes: brand recall and brand recognition. Recall typically requires retrieving a brand from memory in response to a need state, whereas recognition involves identifying a brand when cues are present (Keller, 2003). In digital music video settings – where viewers often multitask and where brand cues can be delivered verbally (lyrics/slogans) and visually (logos/products) – these two outcomes may not be affected in the same way. Prior research suggests that music-based brand placements can enhance engagement and influence consumer responses (Davtyan et al., 2020). However, empirical evidence remains limited in emerging markets such as Vietnam, and existing work rarely isolates which types of embedded cues (e.g., lyrical references versus slogans or visual placements) are more strongly associated with recall versus recognition. This gap is particularly relevant given that Vietnamese Generation Z audiences rely heavily on YouTube for music consumption and entertainment, making BMVs a strategically important yet insufficiently understood form of digital persuasion.

Against this backdrop, the present study examines how BMVs on YouTube are associated with brand awareness among Vietnamese Generation Z audiences, with a specific focus on brand recall and brand recognition. Rather than treating BMVs as monolithic, the study focuses on audience attention to specific embedded brand cues and tests whether attention to different cue types is associated with recall and recognition in distinct ways. In this study, brand awareness is operationalized using survey-based brand-identification tasks, namely aided brand recognition and contextual brand retrieval (recall-proxy). Accordingly, the study addresses the following research questions. First, to what extent is audience attention to embedded brand cues in YouTube BMVs associated with brand recall among Vietnamese Generation Z audiences (RQ1)? Second, to what extent is audience attention to embedded brand cues in YouTube BMVs associated with brand recognition among Vietnamese Generation Z audiences (RQ2)? Third, do the associations differ between brand recall and brand recognition, indicating cue-specific patterns across the two awareness dimensions (RQ3)?

Drawing on the theoretical frameworks discussed in the following section, this study contributes to branded entertainment and digital advertising research by distinguishing recall from recognition and providing evidence from a non-Western, emerging-market YouTube context.

Literature review

Digital advertising and branded content

The transition from traditional mass media to digital environments has

reshaped contemporary advertising and communication practices, supported by advances in connectivity, data analytics, and multimedia technologies. Digital advertising is commonly discussed in relation to the technologies and business models underpinning online advertising, including data-enabled ad delivery and measurement in digital ecosystems (Dens, & Poels, 2023; Shanahan, & Kurra, 2011). In emerging markets such as Vietnam – where Internet penetration and smartphone adoption have increased rapidly – digital platforms have become central infrastructures for brand-mediated communication and audience engagement (Le, & Ratten, 2021).

Within this evolving media environment, branded content has emerged as a prominent form of brand communication that integrates brand meanings into informational or entertainment-oriented media. The evidence from core scholarly definitions supports this characterization. Branded content has been defined as content that is fully or partly funded by a brand and designed to make audiences choose to engage based on entertainment, informational, or educational value. It has also been characterized as a fusion of advertising and entertainment that is integrated into an organization's broader brand strategy and distributed as entertainment content with a highly branded quality (Dens, & Poels, 2023; Horrigan, 2009).

Empirical work further suggests that branded content can shape consumer experiences and downstream brand outcomes in digital settings, although effectiveness may vary depending on execution and context. For instance, studies on branded content experience in social media emphasize how consumer experience and engagement mechanisms help explain branded content's effects beyond mere exposure (Waqas et al., 2022). Cross-cultural evidence also indicates that branded content appeals (e.g., entertainment appeal) and users' motivations for social media use can jointly predict brand-related outcomes, underscoring the importance of audience-centered mechanisms in branded content effectiveness (Buzeta et al., 2024).

Recent scholarship additionally highlights that branded content, and related formats (e.g., native advertising) have become embedded in contemporary media business models, as media organizations develop dedicated branded content teams and studios to produce these formats – raising practical and ethical considerations about the integration of commercial content into editorial environments (Carvajal, & Barinagarrementeria, 2021). Within this broader shift, branded entertainment formats that combine cultural production and commercial communication have gained increasing relevance.

Among branded entertainment formats, BMVs represent a distinctive

manifestation of branded content, integrating music, visual aesthetics, and narrative storytelling with embedded brand cues delivered through both auditory (e.g., lyrics, slogans) and visual (e.g., logos, products) channels. Despite their growing presence on digital platforms – particularly YouTube – academic research on music-based branded communication remains limited, especially in emerging digital markets where media practices, cultural consumption patterns, and audience–brand relationships may differ from those observed in Western contexts. This motivates closer investigation of how such embedded cues function in context-specific ways within Vietnam’s contemporary digital advertising landscape. Recent studies also highlight the growing influence of digital platforms in shaping contemporary media consumption patterns and audience engagement, particularly among younger audiences who increasingly rely on online media environments for information and entertainment (Vu, 2025; Ahmed, 2024).

YouTube as a distribution platform for BMVs

YouTube has established itself as the world’s largest video-sharing platform and a central hub for platform-based audiovisual media consumption. As a user-generated content platform supported by large-scale recommendation and ranking systems, YouTube facilitates the discovery and circulation of video content and can sustain visibility through algorithmically shaped exposure pathways. These characteristics make it a key infrastructure for contemporary digital advertising and brand-mediated communication in platform environments (Covington et al., 2016). At the same time, algorithmic visibility does not guarantee attention or persuasion, as user choice and context of viewing shape what is processed and remembered. Its participatory features – such as liking, commenting, and sharing – enable continuous interaction between content, audiences, and brands, which can extend audience engagement and increase the diffusion potential of brand-related messages beyond initial viewing (Dehghani et al., 2016; Khan, 2017).

From a strategic perspective, YouTube has become an important distribution environment for branded content because content can gain reach not only through paid promotion but also through algorithmic visibility and audience-driven circulation. However, the effectiveness of branded communication on YouTube is contingent rather than guaranteed: users retain high control over viewing choices, attention can be fragmented, and overt persuasion may trigger avoidance. Accordingly, the outcomes of branded communication are likely to depend on how brand cues are integrated into the viewing experience and how audiences interpret persuasive intent in a high-choice, ad-saturated

environment (Dehghani et al., 2016; Khan, 2017).

Within the broader YouTube media ecosystem, music-related content occupies a particularly prominent position. YouTube functions not only as a video-sharing platform but also as a major channel for music discovery and everyday music consumption, especially among younger audiences. This dual role allows music videos to operate simultaneously as cultural media artefacts and strategic communication vehicles, creating opportunities for brands to be embedded within audiovisual storytelling through both visual cues (e.g., logos, products) and auditory/verbal cues (e.g., lyrics, slogans).

Research on brand placement in music videos suggests that product placement practices in highly viewed music videos on YouTube show evolving patterns in how brands are inserted and contextualized within audiovisual content (Marques Cuadra, & Sedeño Valdellós, 2017). Related work also indicates that audience perceptions of authenticity and their relationships with artists can shape how viewers interpret and respond to brand appearances in music videos, thereby influencing cognitive responses to embedded brand cues (Thornton, & Burkhalter, 2015). Despite YouTube's centrality for distributing music-based content, much academic research has concentrated on influencer-generated videos, vlogs, or skippable pre-roll advertising formats. Consequently, BMVs remain underexamined as a distinct form of platform-based advertising communication. This limitation is especially salient beyond Western contexts, where cultural values and platform usage patterns may shape video consumption and audience responses in ways that are not fully captured by Western-centric evidence (Park et al., 2017). Taken together, these gaps motivate closer investigation of BMVs on YouTube in emerging markets such as Vietnam, including how embedded cues within such content may relate to brand awareness outcomes.

BMVs and their associations with brand awareness

BMVs operate at the intersection of music, visual aesthetics, and brand communication, functioning as a form of branded entertainment in which commercial cues are embedded within culturally resonant audiovisual content. Rather than relying on interruptive advertising formats, BMVs typically integrate brands into the music video's audiovisual discourse, enabling brands to be encountered in contexts that audiences may approach primarily as entertainment. Evidence from music-video placement research suggests that brand appearances can vary from subtle integration to more imposed insertions while remaining recognizable to viewers, highlighting the strategic importance

of how brands are embedded within the narrative and aesthetics of the video (Sánchez-Olmos et al., 2019).

Brand awareness is widely conceptualized as a multidimensional construct comprising at least two key components: brand recall and brand recognition. Brand recall refers to an individual's ability to retrieve a brand from memory when prompted by a product category or consumption situation, whereas brand recognition concerns correctly identifying a brand when exposed to relevant cues. These dimensions reflect different memory processes and are commonly used to evaluate the effectiveness of marketing communications and branded content (Keller, 2003).

Prior empirical research indicates that brand integrations in music-video contexts can affect consumer outcomes, though effects depend on execution characteristics. For instance, experimental work shows that the repetition of brand placements in music videos can improve brand memory and can also influence downstream outcomes such as attitudes and behavioral intentions, with effects varying by exposure levels (Davtyan et al., 2020). Related findings also show that placement outcomes can depend on how the brand is linked to on-screen characters and the perceived prestige of the brand, which can shape consumer interest within a music-video context (Thornton, & Burkhalter, 2015). In addition, qualitative research highlights that viewers' relationships with recording artists and perceptions of authenticity can shape how audiences interpret brand appearances in music videos, suggesting that meaning-making processes may mediate whether brand cues translate into positive brand knowledge (Burkhalter et al., 2017).

At the same time, existing scholarship on music-based brand integration has tended to emphasize visual prominence (e.g., logos/products on screen) and exposure characteristics (e.g., repetition), whereas comparatively less attention has been paid to verbal brand cues, such as brand name placements in lyrics or slogans integrated into musical narratives. Recent content-analytic work examining both lyrics and music videos in global streaming charts highlights that lyric-based brand placement is not rare, yet its cognitive effects remain less consistently tested than visual prominence in the music-video placement literature. This is notable because experimental evidence in adjacent music-based contexts shows that brand name placements in song lyrics – especially when accompanied by disclosure – can affect brand awareness outcomes, underscoring the need to consider verbal modalities alongside visual cues when theorizing brand awareness effects in BMVs (Van Vaerenbergh, 2017).

Theoretical framework

This study is grounded in two complementary theoretical frameworks: Brand Awareness/Brand Equity theory (Aaker, 1991) and customer-based brand equity (Keller, 1993), alongside Andrew Goodwin's music video framework (Goodwin, 1993). Together, these perspectives provide a conceptual lens for examining how brand cues embedded in music-video aesthetics and narratives may relate to consumer perception and memory-based brand awareness outcomes, including brand recall.

Brand awareness theory

Brand awareness refers to a consumer's ability to identify a brand under different memory conditions, commonly discussed through two related components: brand recognition and brand recall (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). Brand recognition is the ability to confirm prior exposure to a brand when relevant cues are present (e.g., seeing the brand name or logo), whereas brand recall refers to retrieving the brand from memory when prompted by a product category or a consumption situation (e.g., needing to buy/use a product) (ibid). This distinction and its strategic implications have been further elaborated in advertising and branding research, which differentiates recognition-based versus recall-based awareness objectives (Percy, & Rossiter, 1992; Rossiter, 2014; Rossiter, & Percy, 1997). Because recall is generally more retrieval-intensive while recognition is more cue-dependent, these components may play different roles in consumer decision-making, where awareness can function as a salient heuristic influencing choice (Hoyer, & Brown, 1990; Macdonald, & Sharp, 2000).

In this study, brand awareness is examined in the context of YouTube BMVs, where brand cues can be delivered through multiple modalities (verbal/auditory cues such as lyrics or slogans, and visual cues such as logos or products). Accordingly, we operationalize brand awareness using two brand-identification outcomes aligned with the survey design: (1) a contextual brand retrieval (recall-proxy) measure based on a need-state prompt, and (2) an aided brand recognition measure based on identifying brands associated with the stimulus BMVs. Because both measures rely on list-based responses, they should be interpreted as cued/aided memory performance rather than pure unaided recall.

Keller (1993) also highlights the depth and breadth of brand awareness, referring to the ease with which a brand comes to mind and the range of situations in which it is retrieved. In digital media environments, these memory outcomes

may be shaped by repeated and multimodal exposure; however, the extent to which exposure translates into recall versus recognition can vary depending on execution, platform context, and fragmented attention patterns typical of YouTube use. In BMVs specifically, brand awareness may thus depend not only on visual exposure to logos or products but also on how brand cues are integrated into musical composition, lyrics, slogans, and audiovisual storytelling.

Goodwin's music video theory

In *Dancing in the Distraction Factory* (1992), Andrew Goodwin proposed a framework for analyzing music videos based on seven key features:

1. Genre characteristics: Music videos reflect stylistic traits of the music genre.
2. Lyrics–visual relationship: Visuals may illustrate, amplify, or contradict the song's lyrics.
3. Music–visual relationship: Editing often aligns with musical tempo and rhythm.
4. Artist focus: Frequent close-ups emphasize the artist's persona and identity.
5. Visual motifs: Artists often develop recurring visual symbols across videos.
6. Voyeurism: The camera may adopt a voyeuristic gaze, often sexualising bodies for visual appeal.
7. Intertextuality: References to cinema, television, or pop culture are common.

These features not only shape the aesthetic experience but also shape how audiences interpret and decode the content. When applied to BMVs, this framework helps explain how brand elements may be woven into music and visuals, potentially guiding attention and supporting memory-based outcomes. In this study, Goodwin's framework motivates examining music-video relationships such as lyrics–visual relations, music–visual editing, artist focus, and narrative/storytelling as contexts within which brand cues (verbal and visual) are embedded.

Integrating the two frameworks

Combining these two frameworks allows for a multidimensional analysis of BMVs, addressing both cognitive (brand awareness) and aesthetic-symbolic (music video) dimensions. While Aaker and Keller provide insights into the mechanisms behind brand memory formation, Goodwin offers tools for dissecting the audiovisual and lyrical integration of brand messages.

This integrated model is applied to analyze how music, visuals, artists, and branding coalesce in BMVs distributed on YouTube, and how these components may relate to brand awareness among young Vietnamese consumers – particularly those belonging to Generation Z. Specifically, the framework motivates examining attention to verbal cues (e.g., lyrics, slogans, brand-name mentions) and visual cues (e.g., logos, products), alongside music-video elements (e.g., music type, artist focus, and story) that may condition how such cues are processed. This integration aligns with the research questions by linking cue-specific attention in BMVs to the two dimensions of brand awareness (recall vs. recognition).

Research methodology

Research design

This study adopts a quantitative research approach to examine the associations between BMVs and brand awareness among Generation Z consumers in Vietnam. The research focuses on analyzing the relationship between independent variables – operationalized as respondents’ self-reported attention to musical, visual, and branding cues in BMVs – and the dependent variables, namely brand recognition and brand recall, the two key components of brand awareness as defined by Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993).

A structured survey questionnaire was developed to collect data, with items specifically designed to measure consumers’ responses to selected BMVs on the YouTube platform. The survey was administered as a cross-sectional questionnaire. The study employs a deductive research strategy, beginning with established theoretical frameworks and examining the research questions through statistical analysis.

Sampling and data collection

The study population included Vietnamese individuals aged 15–30 who regularly use YouTube. To ensure participants were familiar with BMVs content, they were required to confirm having watched at least five out of ten preselected BMVs (self-reported, details are provided in *Table 1* below). Participants were recruited using non-probability (convenience/purposive) sampling via an online survey link distributed through social media and university student networks.

Table 1

List of branded music videos

Name of branded music video	Music artists	Likes	Channel posting	Company	Product type
Lac troi (2016)	Son Tung MTP	1,800,000	@Sontungmtp	Biti's	Sneakers
Di de tro ve (2017)	Soobin Hoang Son	386,000	@1989sEntertainment	Biti's	Sneakers
Chuyen cu bo qua (2018)	Bich Phuong	524,000	@BICHPHUONGOFFICIAL	Suntory PepsiCo	Soft drink
Sang mat chua (2019)	Truc Nhan	878,000	@trucnhanchannel	Tiki	E-commerce platform
Di ve nha (2020)	Den Vau & JustaTee	1,400,000	@DenVau1305	Honda	Motorcycle
Em be (2020)	Amee & Karik	391,000	@St319Entertainment	Beamin	Food delivery mobile app
Em la chau bau (2020)	Tlinh & MCK	372,000	@POPSMUSIC	PNJ	Jewelry
Tet no lo (2022)	Bich Phuong	64,000	@BICHPHUONGOFFICIAL	Suntory PepsiCo	Soft drink
Tet xa hoi, lam gi canggg (2023)	Truc Nhan & Phao	47,000	@trucnhanchannel	Nestlé	Food
Tet on roi (2023)	Dong Nhi, Hien Thuc, Bui Cong Nam & Jun Pham	33,000	@SingerDongNhiOfficial	Unilever	Personal care

Source: Author (2024)

Stimuli selection and sampling strategy

The selection of the ten BMVs was based on three criteria:

- Popularity: Each video had accumulated over 30,000 likes on YouTube as of January 2024.
- Brand diversity: The selected music videos represented eight different product categories, including sneakers, soft drinks, e-commerce platforms, motorcycles, delivery services, jewelry, chocolate, and personal care products.
- Cultural and temporal relevance: All featured artists were young Vietnamese musicians, aged between 26 and 44, who are active in the contemporary Vietnamese music scene.

A non-probability purposive sampling method was employed in combination with snowball sampling, using popular social networking platforms such as Facebook³ and Zalo for distribution.

Over a period of three weeks, the study collected a total of 345 survey responses, of which 305 were deemed valid and retained for analysis. Invalid responses were excluded based on the following criteria: respondents under 15 or over 30 years of age, non-users of YouTube, or those who reported watching fewer than five of the selected BMVs⁴.

Ethical considerations

This study followed standard ethical principles for social science research involving human participants. Before starting the survey, all respondents received an information sheet explaining the study's purpose, what participation involved, the voluntary nature of participation, and how the data would be used. Consent was obtained electronically before any survey questions were displayed. Participants were informed that they could discontinue the survey at any point without any negative consequences, and that only anonymized responses would be analyzed.

Because some respondents were under the age of 18, additional safeguards were applied. The survey began with an age-screening question (age-gating)

³ Belongs to Meta company, banned at the territory of the Russian Federation.

⁴ This sample size is appropriate for Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and purposive sampling, following the guidelines by Hair et al. (2014), who recommend a minimum of 50 observations, ideally more than 100, with a subject-to-variable ratio ranging from 5:1 to 10:1 – some scholars suggest up to 20:1. Applying the 20:1 rule to this study would require at least 180 observations. With 305 valid responses, the sample size exceeds the recommended threshold, yielding a ratio of approximately 34:1. This ensures both reliability and generalizability for the quantitative analysis.

before participants could access the main questionnaire. Respondents who reported being under 18 were shown an additional assent/consent screen requesting (a) the participant's assent and (b) confirmation that permission had been obtained from a parent or legal guardian to take part. Only those who provided both confirmations were allowed to proceed to the questionnaire; otherwise, respondents were screened out and could not proceed. Survey data were stored securely and accessed only by the research team for analysis. No personally identifiable information (e.g., names, emails, phone numbers, IP addresses) was collected, and responses were recorded anonymously to protect confidentiality. The study did not involve deception and posed minimal foreseeable risk. Data were used solely for academic purposes and reported only in aggregate form.

Variables and measurement scales

The study employed a structured survey instrument consisting of 14 observed variables. Independent variables captured respondents' self-reported attention to key elements of BMVs and embedded brand cues, measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very inattentive) to 5 (very attentive). Music-video factors included attention to music type, lyrics, visuals, artist presence, and storyline. Brand-related factors included attention to product placement, logo visibility, brand-name mentions, and slogan integration.

Brand awareness was operationalized using two memory-based brand-identification outcomes aligned with the survey format: brand recognition and brand recall. Brand recognition was measured as an aided recognition task in which respondents identified which brands they recognized as appearing in the selected BMVs. Brand recall was measured as a contextual brand retrieval task (hereafter, recall-proxy) using a consumption-related prompt (need-state framing) in which respondents indicated which advertised brands/products they remembered in connection with the stimulus BMVs (multiple-response format). Responses were coded at the brand level (correct = 1; otherwise = 0) and aggregated across the ten stimulus brands (see *Table 2*). Because both outcomes rely on list-based responses and no decoy brands were included, they are interpreted as cued/aided brand-identification performance rather than pure unaided recall.

Demographic variables, including age and gender, were included as control variables in the regression models. Behavioral indicators related to YouTube use intensity were collected to describe the sample and contextualize exposure patterns, but were not retained in the main specification to preserve

model parsimony given the study's primary focus on cue-specific attention variables.

Data analysis

After data collection, responses were screened for validity. Only participants who met the eligibility criteria (Vietnamese YouTube users aged 15–30) and who reported having watched at least five out of the ten selected BMVs ($\geq 50\%$ familiarity) were retained for analysis, resulting in 305 valid cases. Therefore, findings should be interpreted as associations observed among respondents with minimum familiarity rather than confirmed exposure to all ten stimuli.

Data analysis proceeded in two steps. First, descriptive statistics were computed to summarize respondent characteristics (age, gender) and key study variables. Second, to examine the associations between cue-specific attention and brand awareness outcomes, we estimated multivariate regression models using ordinary least squares (OLS) in STATA with robust standard errors. The analysis focused on two memory-based brand-identification outcomes aligned with the survey design: (1) contextual brand retrieval (recall-proxy) and (2) aided brand recognition.

Both outcomes were coded at the brand level and then aggregated across the ten stimulus brands. For each stimulus brand j ($j = 1 \dots 10$), a correct selection was coded as 1 and an incorrect/non-selection as 0. The recall-proxy score was computed as the sum of correct contextual retrieval responses across the ten stimulus brands (0–10). The aided brand recognition score was computed as the sum of correctly recognized brands across the ten stimulus brands (0–10). Because the brand-identification items used list-based responses and did not include decoy brands, these outcomes are interpreted as cued/aided memory performance rather than pure unaided recall.

For ease of interpretation and comparability across models, the summed scores (0–10) were additionally expressed as proportions by dividing by 10 (0–1) in the regression analyses.

Independent variables included self-reported attention to music-video elements and embedded brand cues measured on 5-point Likert scales (1 = very inattentive; 5 = very attentive), alongside control variables (age and gender). Statistical significance was evaluated using conventional thresholds ($p < 0.10$, $p < 0.05$, $p < 0.01$). The details of each variable and coding procedures are reported in Table 2.

Model specification:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{1i} + \beta_2 X_{2i} + \beta_3 X_{3i} + \epsilon_i$$

where Y_i either contextual brand retrieval (recall-proxy) or aided brand recognition; X_1 includes respondent characteristics (age, gender); X_2 includes music-video attention variables (music type, lyrics, visuals, artist, story); and X_3 includes brand-cue attention variables (product, logo, slogan, brand name); and ϵ_i is the error term.

The detail of each variable is shown in *Table 2* below.

Finally, we acknowledge that an ideal measurement design would implement a sequential two-step procedure (unaided recall followed by aided recognition with distractors) to strengthen construct validity. This is discussed as a key direction for future research.

Table 2

Description of variables

Variable group	Variable name	Survey item	Scale	Coding / construction
Brand awareness (Dependent variables)	Contextual brand retrieval (Recall-proxy)	When you need to buy/use a product or service, which advertised brand/product from the BMVs do you remember? (Multiple answers)	Multiple choice (check-all-that-apply)	For each stimulus brand j ($j = 1 \dots 10$), correct selection = 1; otherwise = 0. Raw recall-proxy score = $\sum \text{recall}_j$ (0–10). For regression analyses, the raw score was divided by 10 to obtain a proportion (0–1). No decoy brands included.
	Aided brand recognition	Which brands do you recognize as appearing in the BMVs? (Multiple answers)	Multiple choice (check-all-that-apply)	For each stimulus brand j ($j = 1 \dots 10$), correct recognition = 1; otherwise = 0. Raw recognition score = $\sum \text{recognition}_j$ (0–10). For regression analyses, the raw score was divided by 10 to obtain a proportion (0–1). No decoy brands included.

Variable group	Variable name	Survey item	Scale	Coding / construction
Personal characteristics (X1)	Age	Year of birth	Numerical	Age calculated from year of birth
	Male	Gender	Nominal	Male = 1; Female = 0
YouTube use / exposure (Control & screening)	YouTube_use_freq	Average daily YouTube use	Ordinal (categorical)	Code based on questionnaire categories (e.g., 1 = <1 hour/day; 2 = 1–2 hours; 3 = 2–3 hours; 4 = >3 hours)
	bmv_familiarity_count	How many of the 10 selected BMVs have you watched?	Numerical (0–10)	Self-reported count of watched BMVs; used for screening (retain if ≥5/10) and may be used for robustness checks
Music video attention variables (X2)	music_type	Attention to music type in the MV	5-point Likert	1 = very inattentive; 5 = very attentive
	lyric	Attention to lyrics in the MV	5-point Likert	1 = very inattentive; 5 = very attentive
	visual	Attention to visuals in the MV	5-point Likert	1 = very inattentive; 5 = very attentive
	artist	Attention to artist in the MV	5-point Likert	1 = very inattentive; 5 = very attentive
	story	Attention to storyline in the MV	5-point Likert	1 = very inattentive; 5 = very attentive
Brand-cue attention variables (X3)	product	Attention to product in the MV	5-point Likert	1 = very inattentive; 5 = very attentive
	logo	Attention to logo in the MV	5-point Likert	1 = very inattentive; 5 = very attentive
	slogan	Attention to slogan in the MV	5-point Likert	1 = very inattentive; 5 = very attentive
	brand_name	Attention to brand name in the MV	5-point Likert	1 = very inattentive; 5 = very attentive

Source: Author (2024)

Findings

Sample characteristics and YouTube usage patterns

The final dataset consisted of 305 valid responses from Vietnamese Generation Z participants. Following Pew Research Center’s classification, Generation Z refers to individuals born between 1997 and 2012 (Dimock, 2019). The sample exhibited a relatively balanced gender distribution (46.6% male; 53.4% female) (see Table 3).

Table 3

Statistics describing the demographics of the study sample

Character	Frequency	Proportion	
Gender	Male	142	46.6%
	Female	163	53.4%
Year of birth (age)	2009 (15)	26	8.52%
	2008 (16)	25	8.20%
	2006 (18)	26	8.52%
	2005 (19)	26	8.52%
	2004 (20)	23	7.54%
	2003 (21)	24	7.87%
	2002 (22)	32	10.49%
	2001 (23)	26	8.52%
	2000 (24)	23	7.54%
	1999 (25)	25	8.20%
	1998 (26)	24	7.87%
1997 (27)	25	8.20%	

Source: Author (2024)

Respondents ranged in age from 15 to 27 (born 1997–2009), representing multiple cohorts within Generation Z. Generation Z is often described as “digital natives” due to growing up with pervasive digital technologies (Prensky, 2001), although the empirical basis and implications of “digital nativity” have been widely debated in the scholarly literature (Bennett et al., 2008; Kirschner, & De Bruyckere, 2017). Prior research also suggests strong Generation Z engagement with smartphone-mediated digital media use (Mason et al., 2022). In addition, digital video platforms such as YouTube are increasingly used for music consumption, where users may “listen” to music videos rather than continuously

watch them (Beuscart et al., 2022). In Vietnam, recent empirical work likewise documents distinctive technology habits among Generation Z (Quỳnh, & Hương, 2022) and broader management research indicates Generation Z’s preference for flexible/hybrid work arrangements (Osorio, & Madero, 2025).

Respondents reported high levels of YouTube use: 34.4% used YouTube for less than one hour per day, 32.5% for 1–2 hours, 27.9% for 2–3 hours, and 5.2% for more than three hours (see Table 4). In addition, 55.7% reported that at least half of their YouTube time was spent watching music videos. These patterns are consistent with YouTube’s role as a major music consumption platform among Generation Z audiences in Vietnam (Chusna, 2018).

Table 4

Descriptive statistics of YouTube usage habits of the research sample

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Proportion
Time to use YouTube for 1 day	Less than 1 hour	105	34.4%
	From 1 to 2 hours	99	32.5%
	From 2 to 3 hours	85	27.9%
	Over 3 hours	16	5.2%
Percentage of time spent watching MVs	Less than 25 %	65	21.3%
	From 25% to 50%	70	23%
	From 50% to 75%	94	30.8%
	Over 75%	76	24.9%

Source: Author (2024)

Associations between BMV elements and aided brand recognition

Table 5 reports the OLS regression results examining associations between cue-specific attention to BMV elements and aided brand recognition. The dependent variable is measured as a proportion (0–1), derived from the number of correctly identified stimulus brands divided by 10. Among the music-video variables, attention to lyrics shows a positive association with aided brand recognition ($\beta = 0.0131$, $p = 0.089$), indicating that higher self-reported attention to lyrics is associated with slightly higher brand-identification performance when prompted.

Table 5

**OLS regression results: associations between BMV cue attention
and brand awareness outcomes**

Variables	Aided brand recognition (β)	Aided brand recognition ($P > t $)	Contextual brand retrieval / Recall-proxy (β)	Contextual brand retrieval / Recall-proxy ($P > t $)
Male	-0.00635	0.742	0.00369	0.858
Age	-0.000114	0.965	-0.00219	0.442
Music_type	0.00485	0.496	-0.000634	0.993
Lyric	0.0131*	0.089	0.0113	0.166
Visual	0.0109	0.138	0.00705	0.350
Artist	-0.000249	0.976	-0.0111	0.214
Story	-0.00309	0.669	-0.00838	0.276
Product	-0.0111	0.198	-0.00893	0.340
Logo	0.00905	0.313	0.0148	0.118
Slogan	0.0127	0.140	0.0195**	0.036
Brand_name	0.00494	0.564	0.00464	0.616
Constant	0.603***	0.000	0.671***	0.000
Observation	305		305	
R-squared	0.029		0.038	

*Robust standard errors were used to compute p-values. *p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01*

Source: Author (2024)

Other music-video elements, including visuals, music type, and brand-related variables such as logo and product, show coefficients that are not statistically significant. Variables such as artist and story exhibit negative coefficients, but these associations do not reach statistical significance. Demographic controls (age and gender) are also not significantly associated with aided brand recognition in this specification. Overall, the findings suggest that verbal cues reflected in attention to lyrics may be more closely associated with aided brand recognition than the other measured visual or narrative elements in this dataset.

Associations between BMV elements and contextual brand retrieval

The regression results for contextual brand retrieval (recall-proxy) show a different pattern of associations. As shown in *Table 5*, attention to slogans is the only variable demonstrating a statistically significant positive association with recall-proxy ($\beta = 0.0195$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that respondents who reported paying greater attention to brand slogans embedded in BMVs tend to report higher contextual brand retrieval scores in the aided brand-identification task.

Other elements related to music-video content and brand presentation, including lyrics, visuals, logo, product, and brand name, do not show statistically significant associations with recall-proxy. Several variables (e.g., age, artist, and story) exhibit negative coefficients, but these associations do not reach statistical significance.

Taken together, the findings suggest asymmetric associations across the two brand-identification outcomes. While attention to lyrics shows modest evidence of association with aided brand recognition, attention to slogans is more strongly associated with contextual brand retrieval (recall-proxy) among Vietnamese Generation Z respondents. These results should be interpreted as associations rather than causal effects.

Discussion

Contextual brand retrieval (recall-proxy) in BMVs

The findings suggest that contextual brand retrieval (recall-proxy) associated with BMVs appears selective and is most consistently associated with attention to slogans. Among the examined variables, attention to slogans is the only element that demonstrates a statistically significant positive association with recall-proxy. This pattern suggests that verbal cues may be more closely associated with contextual retrieval outcomes than the other measured visual or narrative elements in this dataset.

From a cognitive perspective, retrieval-oriented brand awareness involves accessing brand-related information from memory, and retrieval is more likely when cues are linguistically salient and repeatedly encountered in the viewing/listening experience (Keller, 1993). Given that the retrieval outcome in this study was assessed using a list-based aided format, slogans may function as verbal anchors that support contextual brand identification when respondents are asked to indicate brands/products associated with the stimulus set. Prior research has highlighted slogans as an integral element of brand positioning and as a key object of consumer memory, with marketplace evidence examining what drives

slogan recall and how slogans are linked to brand-related evaluations (Briggs, & Janakiraman, 2017; Kohli et al., 2007, 2015). Recent work further suggests that linguistic properties of slogans relate systematically to how memorable slogans are, reinforcing the relevance of verbal design choices for memory outcomes (Hodges et al., 2024).

The prominence of slogans in this study can also be interpreted in light of YouTube music consumption practices, where users often “listen” to music videos rather than continuously watch them, implying that auditory/verbal layers may receive relatively sustained attention in everyday use (Beuscart et al., 2022; Dasovich-Wilson et al., 2022). This attention pattern is consistent with broader evidence that brand placements in music videos can be linked to memory outcomes, although associations may depend on execution factors such as repetition and how cues are encountered (Davtyan et al., 2020). Taken together, these considerations may help explain why other brand-related variables do not show statistically significant associations with recall-proxy in the model.

Importantly, the results caution against assuming that the mere presence of brand elements in music videos is sufficient to support retrieval-oriented brand awareness. Instead, the findings point to the potential relevance of explicit, linguistically salient cues (e.g., slogans) in music-based branded content, while recognizing that the present evidence reflects associations rather than causal effects.

Aided brand recognition in BMVs

In contrast to contextual brand retrieval (recall-proxy), aided brand recognition shows a different pattern. The analysis provides marginal evidence of a positive association between attention to song lyrics and aided brand recognition ($p = 0.089$). While this does not meet the conventional threshold of statistical significance ($p < 0.05$), it suggests that lyrics may serve as a potentially relevant, albeit limited, channel through which brand information is identified when respondents are prompted.

This pattern is consistent with the idea that auditory and linguistic processing can matter for recognition in music-based branded content. Prior work on brand mentions and placements in music-related contexts indicates that verbal brand cues (e.g., lyric-based placements) can be noticed and processed by listeners, with implications for brand memory outcomes under cueing conditions (Delattre, & Colovic, 2009; Van Vaerenbergh, 2017). For Generation Z audiences, who often use YouTube as a music-streaming platform rather than a purely visual medium,

lyrics may function as an accessible layer of the viewing/listening experience through which brand information can be detected and later recognized when prompted (Beuscart et al., 2022). More broadly, this interpretation is consistent with research showing that digital media environments shape younger users' practices through platform-specific forms of access, participation, and content engagement (Chobanyan, 2020; Gjylbegaj, & Radwan, 2024; Wei, & Ong, 2025). From a customer-based brand equity perspective, this aligns with cue-dependent recognition processes, in which accessible cues support brand identification under prompting (Keller, 1993; Yonelinas, 2002).

However, the modest statistical evidence necessitates cautious interpretation. Any association between lyric attention and aided recognition likely depends on contextual factors such as the clarity of brand references, narrative congruence, and the degree to which the integration is perceived as natural rather than intrusive. This is consistent with evidence that integrations tend to perform better when they are perceived as authentic and non-disruptive (Hudders et al., 2012). More broadly, brand awareness outcomes can be shaped by cumulative exposure and prior familiarity beyond the focal stimulus, which may dilute the explanatory contribution of any single cue type in cross-sectional survey settings (Campbell, & Keller, 2003).

Other elements, including visuals, logos, products, and brand-name cues, do not demonstrate statistically significant associations with aided brand recognition in this dataset. This suggests that mechanisms often emphasized in visual-salience accounts may operate differently in music-based digital content and under fragmented attention patterns typical of YouTube use (Beuscart et al., 2022). Taken together, the results point to selective, rather than uniform, associations between specific embedded cues and prompted brand identification outcomes.

Asymmetric associations across dimensions of brand awareness

A key insight from the findings is that associations between BMV elements and brand awareness outcomes are asymmetric across contextual brand retrieval (recall-proxy) and aided brand recognition. No single element shows strong, consistent associations with both outcomes. Instead, attention to slogans is more strongly associated with recall-proxy, whereas attention to lyrics shows only tentative evidence of association with aided recognition. This pattern supports the view that recall and recognition are related but distinct memory processes rather than interchangeable indicators of communication effectiveness (Keller, 1993; Yonelinas, 2002).

In this study, contextual retrieval appears more closely linked to explicit verbal cues such as slogans, which can serve as salient anchors supporting retrieval-oriented brand identification (Briggs, & Janakiraman, 2017; Keller, 1993). Aided recognition, by contrast, may be partially supported by lyrics as an auditory–linguistic context that facilitates prompted brand identification, although the evidence here is weaker (Delattre, & Colovic, 2009; Van Vaerenbergh, 2017). The lack of overlapping predictors suggests that BMVs are unlikely to operate as a one-size-fits-all branding tool; effectiveness is likely to depend on the campaign objective (retrieval-oriented versus recognition-oriented awareness) and on how audiences process music-video content under platform conditions (Rossiter, 2014). For Vietnamese Generation Z audiences, this interpretation is consistent with evidence that YouTube music-video use often involves listening rather than continuous viewing, which may make auditory/verbal layers relatively more influential than purely visual cues (Beuscart et al., 2022).

Finally, the relatively low explanatory power of the regression models indicates that the measured BMV elements explain only a small share of variation in the brand-identification outcomes. This is not unexpected in cross-sectional social research, as brand awareness is shaped by multiple unobserved influences such as prior brand familiarity, cumulative cross-platform exposure, and individual differences in engagement (Calder et al., 2009; Campbell, & Keller, 2003). Moreover, the study’s outcomes are derived from list-based brand-identification tasks without decoy brands, which may introduce guessing and measurement noise and thereby attenuate model fit. Importantly, because the study’s aim is explanatory, estimating selective associations, rather than prediction, modest R^2 values do not preclude theoretically meaningful inference in such settings (Abelson, 1985; Shmueli, 2010). These results should therefore be interpreted as evidence of cue-specific associations rather than comprehensive determinants of brand awareness.

Limitations and directions for future research

This study should be interpreted in light of several limitations. The regression models show relatively modest explanatory power, which is not uncommon in quantitative social science research. Outcomes such as brand awareness are typically shaped by multiple interacting influences, including prior brand familiarity, cumulative media exposure, and individual differences in engagement, that are difficult to fully capture within a single cross-sectional model. Consequently, the results should be interpreted as identifying selective associations rather than providing a comprehensive explanation of brand-

identification outcomes (Abelson, 1985; Shmueli, 2010). In addition, the study relies on self-reported measures of attention and a cross-sectional survey design, which limits the ability to infer causal relationships. The measurement of brand awareness is also based on list-based identification tasks without decoy brands, which may introduce some degree of guessing. Finally, this research represents an exploratory quantitative attempt to estimate how embedded brand cues in branded music videos relate to recall and recognition, an area that remains relatively underexplored in existing literature, particularly in emerging digital markets such as Vietnam. Future research could build on these findings by employing experimental or longitudinal designs and incorporating additional explanatory variables to better capture the complex mechanisms underlying brand awareness in music-based digital advertising contexts.

Conclusion

This study shows that although multiple brand elements are commonly integrated into YouTube branded music videos, their associations with brand awareness are not uniform. In particular, attention to slogans is positively associated with contextual brand retrieval (recall-proxy), whereas attention to lyrics shows only tentative evidence of association with aided brand recognition. Overall, the results suggest that verbal/auditory components may be more closely linked to memory-based brand-identification outcomes in this context than the other measured elements, although the strength of evidence differs across outcomes.

While BMVs combine auditory and visual modalities, the present findings do not support the assumption that visual prominence or brand visibility alone reliably predicts brand awareness outcomes in this sample. Instead, linguistically explicit cues such as slogans appear more closely associated with retrieval-oriented identification, and lyrics may provide a limited channel through which audiences identify brand-related information when prompted. These conclusions should be interpreted as associations rather than causal effects, given the cross-sectional survey design and the modest explanatory power of the regression models.

For marketers in Vietnam, BMVs remain a promising approach to reaching digitally engaged younger audiences, but execution should be aligned with the specific branding objective. If the goal is to support retrieval-oriented awareness, ensuring that slogans are clear and salient within the music-video experience may be particularly important. Future research could strengthen construct validity by adopting a sequential two-step measurement procedure (unaided recall followed by recognition with distractor brands), incorporating

decoy brands to reduce guessing, employing experimental designs to assess causal mechanisms, and accounting for additional drivers of brand awareness such as prior brand familiarity and cross-platform campaign exposure.

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