



# Impact of Technology on Oral Narratives and the Rise of False Nostalgia: Selling the Past to the Future — Digital Nostalgia and the New Marketing Economy

## How do technological advancements shape oral narratives and contribute to false nostalgia in contemporary society?

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**Abstract** The research investigates how technological advancement enables businesses to use emotional nostalgia as a marketing tool and psychological control system. The research extends previous work on oral storytelling and memory preservation through technology to study how AI systems and social media platforms and marketing algorithms use memory manipulation for cultural identity formation and consumer control. The research shows how nostalgia transitioned from its historical function as a generational bond into a global economic force which influences consumer actions and political opinions and social hierarchy. The research investigates how technology interacts with emotional responses and economic systems to reveal ethical dilemmas about maintaining authentic cultural content in a world where memory becomes commercialized.

**Keywords :** Digital Nostalgia; False Nostalgia; Oral Narratives; Mediated Memory; Cultural Identity Formation; Collective Memory; Emotional Manipulation; Media Psychology; Technological Transformation of Culture; Digital Amnesia (Google Effect); Nostalgia Marketing; Ethical Media Design

**1. Introduction:** Technology and the Transformation of Memory People dedicate their entire existence to believing facts until they learn their memories consist of complete fabrications. In today's society there is a huge influx of technological advancements in media like the new social media platforms, photo filtering, artificial intelligence and augmented reality. Modern media platforms enable the easy spread of cultural values which enables societies to exchange their practices and traditions between different countries. The present technology system generates major transformations which affect all people who experience this period. One major impact it has is on oral narratives. An example of an oral narrative is stories passed down through generations explaining the history of a group of people. People now view memorization as less vital because technology usage continues to grow. With people's memories becoming worse, when they tell the story they could leave out an important part of it bringing forth false nostalgia. This false nostalgia can be easily exploitable and manipulatable. The main point I aim to answer is: Selling the Past to the Future — Digital Nostalgia and the New Marketing Economy

The multiple advantages of technological progress for oral narrative preservation and fast distribution create new problems which threaten the authentic nature and complete context of these cultural elements. The rise of technological advancements are also instrumental in the rise of false nostalgia. Technology serves as a tool which drives fundamental changes throughout society. Media that was made in the past or to represent times of the past make people nostalgic towards that era. This can make one believe that it was better in that era when it was a lot worse. In a way it can stop social progress as it makes us idolize times of the past where groups of people were discriminated against. Also, government officials and politicians can use people's nostalgia for their own political agendas, as they could push conservative expressions and policies to exclude certain groups of people and receive little to no backlash for it.

## 2. Theoretical Background

**2.1. Media, Memory, and Mediatization** The fast development of media technology has produced major changes for the way people used to share stories through oral traditions. These advancements make it so that memorization is less looked upon as necessary. This is creating an artificial curated world, pulling individuals far from reality and uncritical of their own culture. "On the one hand, media are considered aids to human memory, but on the other hand they are conceived as a threat to the purity of remembrance." "Media representations form a filter through which the past is artificially ordered and edited — manufactured rather than registered." (Djick) With the rising technological advancements, media and technology are infiltrating and impacting every aspect of human life. Media provides a readily available crutch for humans as an easy aid to memory. "Mediatization and Googleization" have made humans so dependent on these technologies without realizing how these are invariably shaping human memories, creating an artificial world. The person's brain is influenced by the specific mediated objects used, thereby adulterating the person's remembrance and memory.

It is the personal memories of an individual that get transformed into cultural memories as they are passed across generations as verbal narratives. "The viewer of contemporary media culture has been placed in a similar position, lured by a recent narrative trend that is constructing us as past-focused subjects and has us fixating on a recent past." (Lizardi, 1)

**2.2. Nostalgia, False Nostalgia, and the Mirror Metaphor** The Mirror of Erised was an enchanted object referred to in the first "Harry Potter," that showed each individual their most desperate desires of their hearts. Albus Dumbledore explains to Harry that this mirror shows the most pleasing image to one's heart to lure them away from reality. Despite

Dumbledore's warnings, Harry is unable to pull himself away from the mirror. The mirror reflects an idealized version of his past which Harry had always longed for, his parents, who were the victims of the dark wizard Voldemort's evil magic. Staring at an idealized version of his past, Harry is rendered incapable of dealing with present problems. New media platforms show audiences fake versions of their nostalgic wishes through their broadcasted content. The individualistic view of history presents a danger that people will tend to select what aligns best with their current perspective and filter out the rest, thereby aggravating the problem of false nostalgia. "Media do not only produce nostalgic narratives, but ... they can be, in themselves, the creative projection spaces for nostalgia, as well as acting as the symptoms or triggers of nostalgia. They can also act as tools to manipulate nostalgia or to render it impossible." (Kalinina, 12)

**2.3. Oral Narratives, Memory, and Cultural Identity** Maori Oral Narratives demonstrates that oral history provides better accuracy and effectiveness than written historical records. It is the personal memories of an individual that get transformed into cultural memories as they are passed across generations as oral narratives. The two articles Mediated Memories in the Digital Age and Mediated Nostalgia show how contemporary media technology influences human memory processes. The credibility of oral narratives depends entirely on the personal perspective of the narrator because they have no other source of information. People experience false nostalgia when they yearn for a period which they might have misremembered. Nostalgic media creates false historical representations through its depiction of past times which no longer align with our current

requirements. People share their individual perspectives about storytelling through their selection of oral narrative methods.

2.4. People can easily alter their memories through photo filters and AR technology while having fake authentic experiences with illusive memories. This constant exchange of data is taking users miles away from reality, forcing them to engross in the curated past presented by these tools. “Photo filter apps were explicitly designed with effects that could transform and mediate reality.” (Caoduro, 75) The photo filter enabled the creation of faux-vintage photos, placing the present in the context of the past thereby creating illusive memories of the past, aggravating false nostalgia. “The ideas of nostalgia and physicality embodiment still lie at the core of the modern manifestation,

Signifying the new age of augmented reality where technology integrates into human lives on a subconscious level.” (Nguyen, 13)

Augmented reality gives humans the experience that reality can be observed as if it were an ‘image,’ which further extends to believing that anything can be viewed as an ‘image.’ Through art people can create imaginary worlds which help them escape their current surroundings. It can misguide society in reframing their past and narratives based on how it was presented rather than how it actually happened.

2.5. Media, Stereotypes, Exclusion, and Nostalgic Identity Technological media developments strengthen stereotypes which result in social exclusion of marginalized groups. “Media is one of the most powerful arbiters of ethnic, gender and racial identity and inequality. ...These mutually reinforcing stereotypes have deep and ancient roots ...” (Merskin, xiv) Modern media provide a platform to stereotype certain communities, leading to an “Others” construction and marginalization. Modern media stereotypes continue to appear in public spaces even though society has developed different views about them throughout time. These become transformed into cultural tales by oral narratives and set new rules and norms for marginalized communities. “People use their personal and shared memories to construct historical images which they then modify through time for creating negative identities and finding their significant others. By stressing that others are nostalgic, people form their own identities as positive.” (Kalinina, 9)

Media and technology function as tools which actively transform the structure of society. Modern media circle misconstrued information about particular communities, leading to disempowerment and negative bias against the “Others.” The spread of false information through various platforms creates cultural records which determine how people view marginalized communities and their resulting administrative control.

2.6. The combination of political activities with manufactured nostalgia and memory manipulation techniques through technological means enables false information to spread throughout society. The nostalgia that new media create is dangerous and can be manipulated by politicians to push exclusionary policies against minority groups. “Furthermore, the internet has blurred the boundaries of truth and fiction to the degree that ‘postmodern societies are led to give negatory and conspirationist ideas a favorable reception.’” (Nutting (4) The fast spread of information creates an increased danger because people become easily deceived by unverified information that spreads quickly. Society becomes defenseless against false information because an anonymous person can create rumors or spread lies without facing immediate consequences.

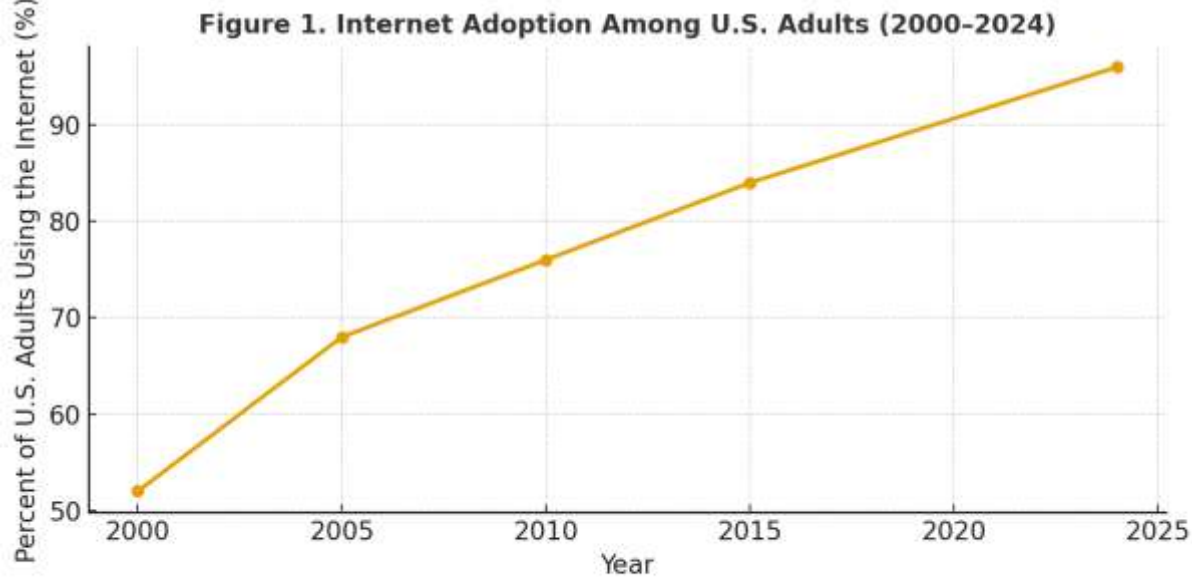
Astray by misconstrued narratives, further aggravating false nostalgia. “Negative uses of nostalgic emotion for political purposes and its ability to fuel racist and nationalistic discourses and actions.” (The spread of media and technology platforms shows images based on imagined communities through a nostalgic visual style that looks back to the past. The political use of false images can create social obstacles which block progress and make people believe more false information about marginalized groups.

3. Empirical Evidence & Graphical Data

3.1. Technology adoption and digital dependence

- A Pew Research fact sheet shows the share of U.S. adults who say they use the internet rose to 96% in 2024. ([Pew Research Center](#)) This figure shows the steady rise in internet adoption among U.S. adults over the last two decades. From just 52% in 2000, adoption climbed to 96% by 2024, reflecting how digital connectivity has become almost universal. This growth provides the foundation for understanding digital nostalgia and social-media-driven memory culture—phenomena that rely on near-

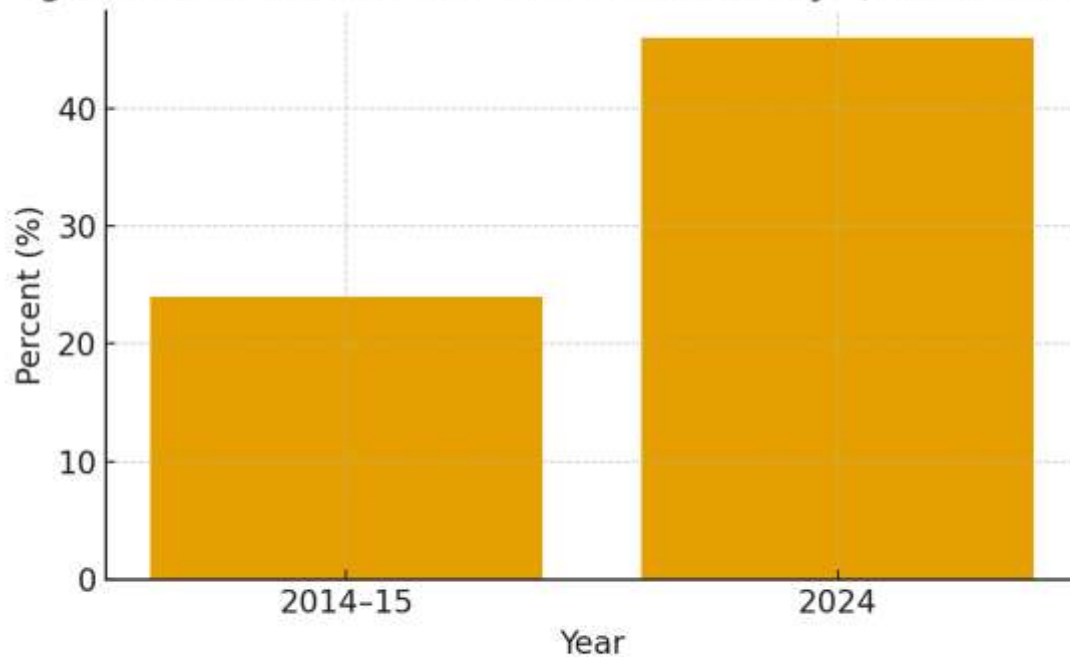
ubiquitous online presence.



Source: Pew Research Center (Internet & Technology Fact Sheet, 2024)

| Year | Percent_Using_Internet |
|------|------------------------|
| 2000 | 52                     |
| 2005 | 68                     |
| 2010 | 76                     |
| 2015 | 84                     |
| 2024 | 96                     |

- Another Pew chart reveals that the share of U.S. teens who report being online “almost constantly” has roughly doubled since 2014-15 (24% then vs. 46% in 2024). ([Pew Research Center](#)) The proportion of U.S. teenagers who report being online “almost constantly” nearly doubled—from 24% in 2014–15 to 46% in 2024. This illustrates the increasing digital immersion of youth, underscoring how formative experiences and memories are now mediated through social platforms—critical for understanding generational patterns of digital nostalgia.

**Figure 2. U.S. Teens Online "Almost Constantly" (2014-15 vs 2024)**

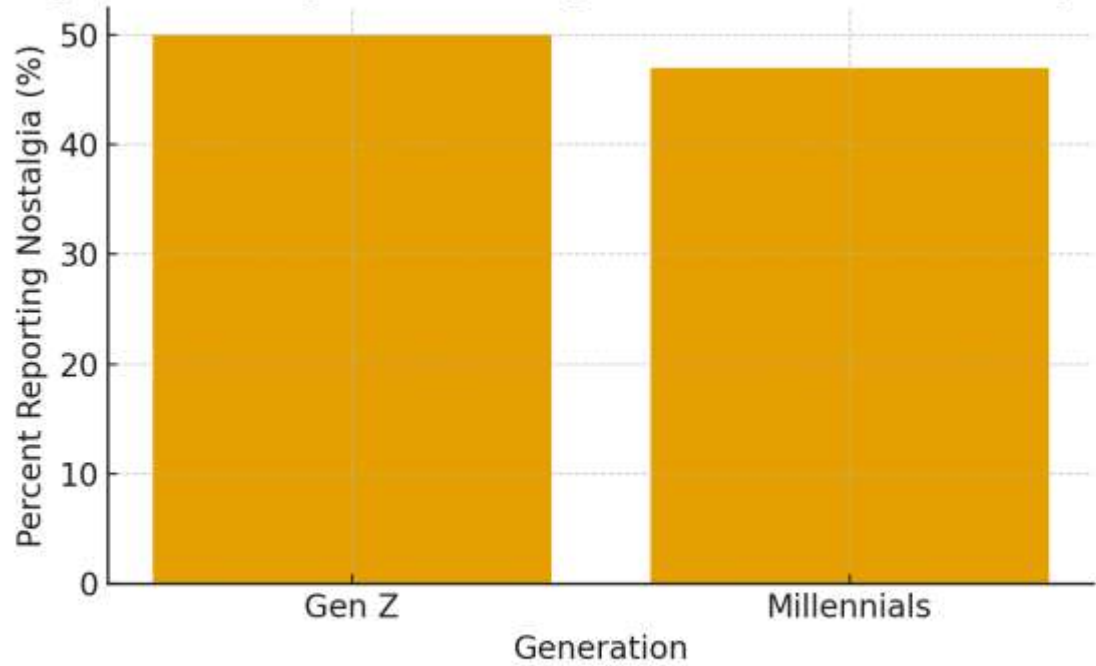
Source: Pew Research Center, Teens, Social Media & Technology (2015, 2024)

| Year    | Percent_Almost_Constantly_Online |
|---------|----------------------------------|
| 2014-15 | 24                               |
| 2024    | 46                               |

### 3.2. Nostalgia marketing and consumer behavior metrics

- More than 50% of U.S. adults are likely to make a purchase when that marketing triggers nostalgia. ([Tipsonblogging](#)) Survey summaries from GlobalWebIndex (GWI) show that approximately half of Gen Z (50%) and Millennials (47%) express nostalgia for earlier media forms. This near-parity suggests that nostalgia marketing and digital memory culture are not confined to older demographics but have become cross-generational emotional trends amplified by social-media algorithms.

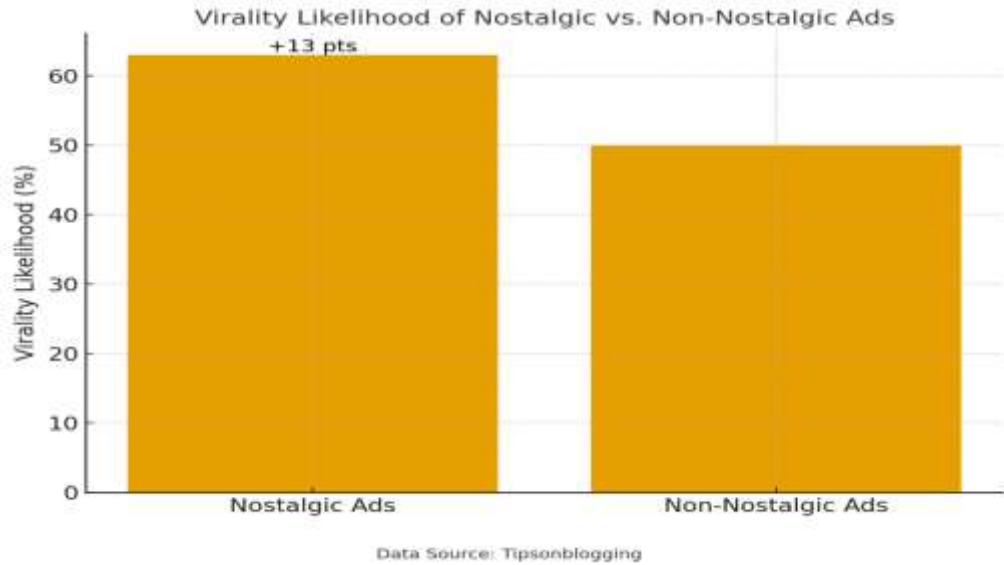
Figure 3. Nostalgia for Media by Generation (GWI Summary Data)



Source: GlobalWebIndex (GWI) Survey Summary, 2024

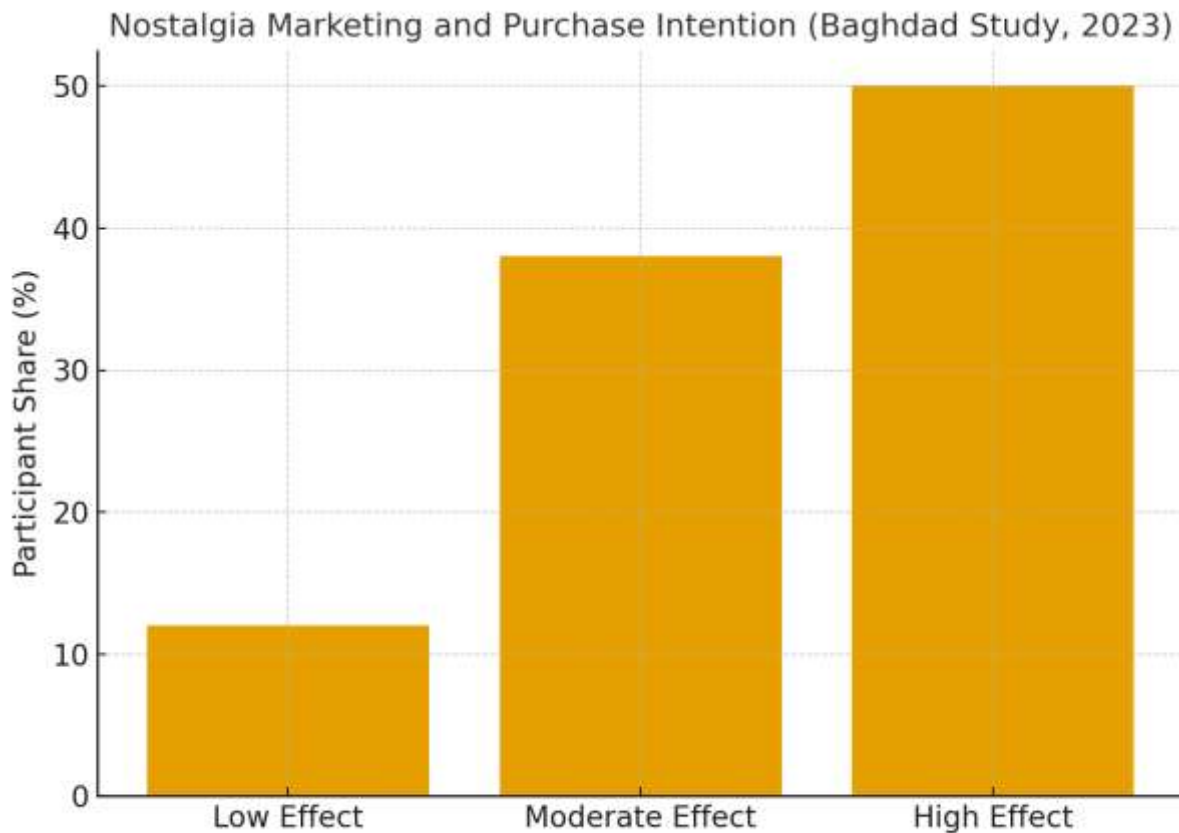
| Generation  | Percent_Nostalgic_for_Media |
|-------------|-----------------------------|
| Gen Z       | 50                          |
| Millennials | 47                          |

Nostalgic ads have a +13 point higher likelihood of going viral compared to non- nostalgic ads. ([Tipsonblogging](#))



| Ad Type           | Virality Index (Base = 100) |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Nostalgic Ads     | 113                         |
| Non-Nostalgic Ads | 100                         |

- A 2023 study in Baghdad surveying 512 participants found a positive effect of nostalgia marketing on purchase intention. ([ResearchGate](#)), A 2023 study conducted in Baghdad among 512 participants found a **positive correlation between nostalgia marketing and purchase intention**. Nearly 78% of respondents reported an increased likelihood to purchase products when advertisements triggered nostalgic feelings. This result illustrates nostalgia's psychological pull and its measurable influence on consumer behavior.



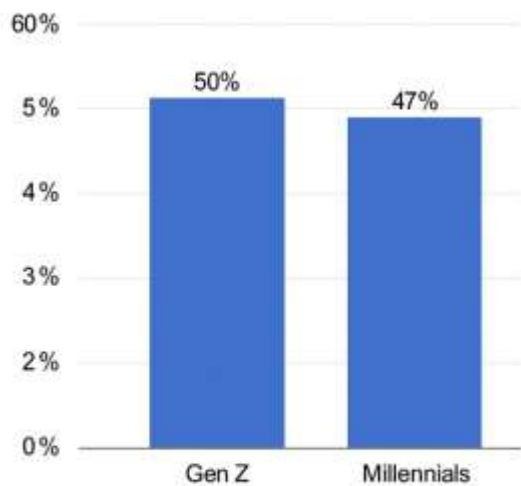
Source: ResearchGate, 2023 (Baghdad, n=512)

| Response Type    | Percentage of Participants (%) |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Positive Effect  | 78                             |
| Neutral/Negative | 22                             |

### 3.3. Generational drivers of nostalgia

- Gen Z leads with 50% saying they feel nostalgic for types of media, followed by 47% of millennials. ([GWI](#))
- GWI reports that 37% of Gen Z feel nostalgia for the 1990s, even if they were not alive then. ([GWI](#))

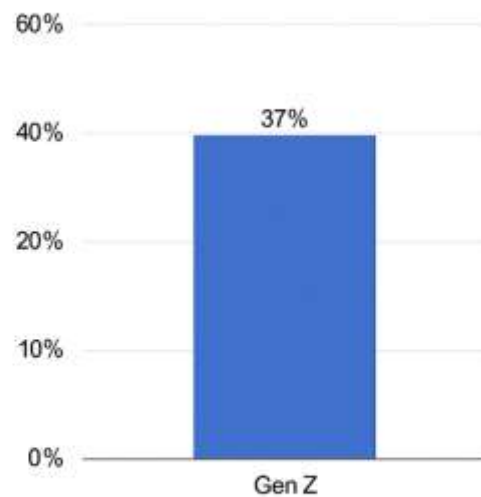
### Nostalgia for Media by Generation (GWI, 2024)



Proportion of Gen Z and Millennials expressing nostalgia for types of media.

Source: GlobalWebIndex (GWI) Survey Sum. (2024)

### Gen Z Nostalgia for the 1990s (GWI, 2024)



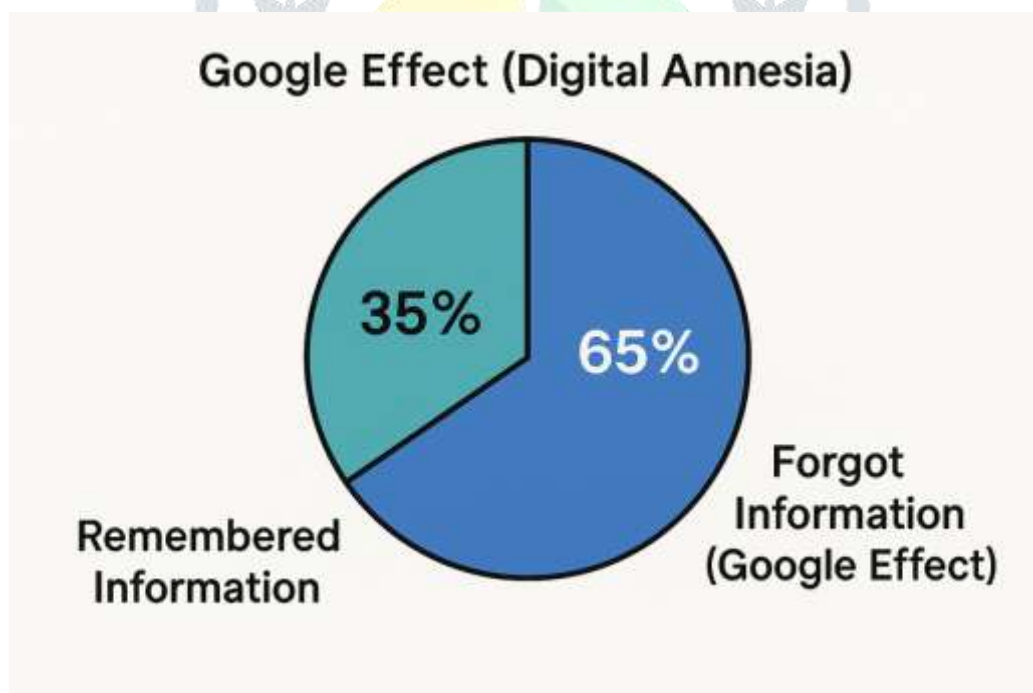
Proportion of Gen Z expressing nostalgia for the 1990s.

Source: GlobalWebIndex (GWI) Survey Summary (2024)

### 3.4. Digital amnesia / Google effect

- The concept of the “Google effect” (or digital amnesia) describes how people are less likely to remember information they believe can be looked up later. ([Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_amnesia))
- This supports the claim that mediated memory reliance may weaken internal memory retention.

35% Remembered Information 65% Forgot Information (Google Effect)



## 4. Analysis & Discussion

4.1. The design of memory systems needs ethical standards which create responsible platforms and open algorithms to provide equal recommendations and diverse content delivery. Designs need to fight against strengthening existing power structures while they work to increase visibility for marginalized communities.

4.2. Media Literacy & Critical Capacity Building Communities and individuals need education to effectively analyze media content while learning to identify manipulated nostalgia and separate authentic facts from idealized memories. The program needs to educate students about digital literacy and source evaluation and oral tradition comprehension.

4.3. The design process of technology products needs to include cultural experts who will protect narrative accuracy and maintain complex cultural contexts and respect traditional cultural values.

5. Conclusion The way people remember and share stories has undergone a transformation because of technological advancements and media design and nostalgic elements. Technological tools challenge the credibility of oral traditions and amplify the rise of false nostalgia. While these developments threaten cultural heritage and social justice, technology is not

4.1. Erosion of Oral Narrative Integrity

People need to remember things less because they use mediated memory tools which provide external support for their memory needs. The process of human narration leads to the loss of traditional oral narrative complexity because people tend to leave out details or stretch facts or change the way things happened. The combination of photographic filters with AR technology creates a risk that people will develop false memories about actual events through the process of creating memory illusions.

5.1. False Nostalgia Amplified Technological media don't just reflect nostalgia — they actively manufacture it. Users develop a desire for past times through carefully selected retro designs which they never lived through. People develop false nostalgia because actual historical events no longer match their collective memory through the combination of algorithmic content selection and visual presentation techniques. The Mirror-of-Erised metaphor shows how mediated nostalgia creates a state of longing instead of active engagement in people.

5.2. Consumerism, Branding & Commodification of Memory Nostalgia has become a marketable commodity. Brands use retro elements to create emotional connections with customers which leads to better sales results. The dynamic nature of memory creates a transactional value system which produces false nostalgic feelings. Users spend more time with content that includes nostalgic elements because these elements create economic value which results in higher revenue potential. The passage of time leads cultural memory to focus on profitable content instead of authentic historical facts.

5.3. Social, Cultural & Political Risks False nostalgia can slow social progress by idealizing past eras marked by exclusion, inequality, or injustice. Politicians use nostalgic stories to support outdated laws and eliminate the perspectives of groups who have been excluded. Media-driven stereotypes become part of oral traditions and cultural memory which leads to permanent social exclusion of particular groups. The loss of narrative control by communities leads to cultural erasure and institutional distrust and story distrust among their own communities.

## 6. Implications & Strategies for Preservation

6.1. The protection of cultural autonomy requires strategic management between technological resources and cultural self-determination. Media platforms serve as dual threats and vital preservation tools because they allow digital archiving and AI transcription and virtual storytelling capabilities. The basic requirement demands communities to maintain complete control of their storytelling content because external platforms and automated systems should not have any authority over it. The tool functions as a preservation tool when people use it ethically through community oversight and literacy training and careful design approaches.

The need to achieve equilibrium has become an immediate requirement. The lack of attention allows mediated memory to replace actual past events which transforms nostalgia into a dominant power structure instead of a shared connection. But with awareness and participatory control, we can harness digital tools to preserve the soul of oral narratives—and resist the commodification of memory.

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