# THE INTEGRATION OF CULTURAL, HISTORICAL AND EDUCATIONAL ELEMENTS IN CULTURALIZED GAMES TOWARDS CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT AND PURCHASING BEHAVIOR AMONG VIETNAMESE YOUTH

**Quan Nguyen Van[1] and Minh Do Luong[2]**

[1]Academy of Policy and Development, Ministry of Finance
Hoai Duc, Hanoi, Vietnam

[2]The Olympia Schools,
Nam Tu Liem, Hanoi, Vietnam

**ABSTRACT**

This study investigates how cultural, historical, and educational elements embedded in culturalized games influence consumer purchasing behavior through the mediating role of consumer engagement among Vietnamese youth. Drawing upon Social Identity Theory, Consumer Ethnocentrism Theory and Collectivism Theory, the research proposes that historical authenticity, historical representation quality, cultural symbols, cultural practices, perceived learning value, and interactive learning engagement enhance consumer engagement, which subsequently drives consumer purchasing behavior. Data were collected from 311 Vietnamese young gamers through an online survey using established measurement scales. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 3. The results indicate that the proposed antecedents explain a substantial proportion of variance in consumer engagement (Adjusted $R^2$ = 0.610). Consumer engagement has a significant positive effect on purchasing behavior, explaining 17% of its variance. All indirect effects are statistically significant, confirming the mediating role of consumer engagement in transforming culturally embedded game attributes into behavioral outcomes. The findings demonstrate that culturalized games function not only as entertainment products but also as symbolic carriers of identity and collective memory. By aligning with collectivist values and cultural affiliation needs, culturally authentic and educational game elements strengthen engagement and stimulate purchasing behavior in a globalized digital environment.

**KEYWORDS**: Consumer engagement; cultural identity; culturalized games; purchasing behavior; Vietnamese youth.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development of digital technologies, online entertainment has become one of the most influential domains of cultural consumption among young consumers. In particular, digital games are no longer merely recreational products but have evolved into interactive cultural platforms through which users encounter diverse values, narratives, and identities. As globalization intensifies exposure to multiple cultures through media and consumption practices (Cleveland & Bartsch, 2019), the global circulation of game content enables players to simultaneously engage with global and local cultural symbols. This phenomenon contributes to the emergence of a global consumer culture characterized by interconnected meanings and shared consumption patterns. At the same time, local cultural elements are increasingly embedded in digital products, giving rise to hybrid cultural forms that reflect the process of glocalization, in which global content is localized and local culture is projected onto global platforms (Thompson & Arsel, 2004).

Within this broader transformation, culturalized games which are defined as digital games that intentionally integrate cultural, historical, and educational elements into gameplay, represent a distinctive manifestation of glocalized digital consumption. By incorporating national myths, historical narratives, traditional aesthetics, and educational content into interactive environments, these games allow players not only to entertain themselves but also to experience cultural learning and identity reinforcement. The integration of such elements enhances perceived authenticity, meaningfulness, and symbolic value, which are critical drivers of consumer engagement. Engagement, conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions, plays a central role in shaping consumers' responses to culturally embedded digital content. Cultural identity, understood as individuals' sense of belonging, shared values, and attachment to cultural groups, is therefore likely to influence how young players interpret and interact with culturalized game content. However, prior research on cultural identity has primarily focused on acculturation processes among immigrant populations (Schwartz et al., 2006), with limited attention devoted to its role in digital entertainment consumption, particularly in non Western and emerging markets. Consequently, there remains a theoretical and empirical gap in understanding how the integration of cultural, historical, and educational elements in games interacts with cultural identity to shape consumer engagement and purchasing behavior.

Vietnam provides a particularly relevant context for investigating these relationships. Since the reforms in 1986, Vietnam has undergone rapid economic transformation and increasing integration into global cultural and technological flows (Dinh, 2016). With a young, digitally connected population and a rapidly expanding gaming industry, Vietnamese youth actively participate in global gaming culture while simultaneously demonstrating growing interest in local cultural heritage. Similar to the influence of the Korean Wave Hallyu on Vietnamese consumer lifestyles and preferences (Nam, 2013), culturally embedded game content has the potential to shape not only

entertainment experiences but also purchasing behaviors, including in game transactions and related cultural product consumption. Despite the commercial and cultural significance of this sector, empirical research examining how the integration of cultural, historical, and educational elements in culturalized games influences consumer engagement and purchasing behavior among Vietnamese youth remains limited. Existing studies on game consumption have largely emphasized hedonic motivations, technological features, and gameplay mechanics, while underexploring cultural meaning, historical representation, and educational value as strategic drivers of engagement and monetization. Understanding these relationships is particularly important in emerging markets, where digital games can serve as vehicles for cultural transmission, identity construction, and creative industry development. Therefore, this study aims to examine the effects of integrating cultural, historical, and educational elements in culturalized games on consumer engagement and purchasing behavior among Vietnamese youth. By conceptualizing engagement as a multidimensional construct and investigating its mediating role between cultural integration and purchase intention, this research extends global consumer culture and cultural identity perspectives into the digital gaming context. In doing so, it contributes to the literature on glocalized digital consumption and provides practical implications for game developers seeking to commercialize culturally meaningful content while fostering cultural appreciation and identity affirmation among young consumers. The study is divided in to 5 main parts including introduction, conceptual framework and hypothesis development, methodology, results and discussion, and implications and conclusion.

## 2.0 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT
### 2.1 Consumer purchasing behavior

Consumer purchasing behavior is shaped not only by functional evaluations of products but also by cultural identity and socio-cultural context. Cultural products that embed appealing cultural elements can attract consumers through symbolic and experiential value, which enables individuals to connect their identity with a country or culture through brands (Zhao et al., 2023). Consumers may choose foreign products when they identify with the associated culture while others may reject them due to consumer nationalism and the desire to protect the national economy (Ferreira, et al., 2018). This indicates that cultural identity and consumer ethnocentrism are key determinants of purchasing behavior, particularly in contexts where foreign cultural flows are strong.

Evidences from East Asia show that cultural influence also plays a crucial role in market acceptance. Japanese and Korean cultural products such as anime, music, films and television dramas have penetrated foreign markets and facilitated the entry of related consumer goods by aligning with cultural trends that are highly accepted by local consumers while minimizing negative national associations. This demonstrates that cultural affinity can mediate purchasing decisions and enhance brand acceptance even in the presence of nationalist resistance. As a result, cultural meaning becomes a strategic resource in shaping consumer behavior and market outcomes. In Vietnam, consumption behavior is embedded in a collectivist cultural system influenced by Confucian values, where individuals define themselves through group affiliations such as family, community and nation and prioritize social harmony (Ivtzan et al., 2015). Respect for hierarchy, social order and interpersonal harmony continues to shape values and decision-making processes (Camuñas-García et al., 2023). As a tight culture with strong social norms and self-regulation,

Vietnamese society places constraints on behavior across everyday contexts. At the same time, globalization and new media have introduced individualistic and material values that coexist with traditional beliefs, creating a hybrid cultural identity among Vietnamese youth (Nguyen et al., 2020). Despite long historical interaction with China, Vietnam maintains a distinct cultural identity, further enriched by Buddhist values such as compassion, flexibility and equality. These cultural characteristics shape how young Vietnamese consumers engage with digital products, including games. The influence of East Asian popular culture through new media has become a major driver of cultural consumption, while digital platforms such as YouTube, Google Play and Facebook form a key part of the Vietnamese gaming ecosystem and provide exposure to transnational cultural content (Marder et al., 2019). In this environment, culturalized games that integrate cultural, historical and educational elements function not only as entertainment but also as cultural carriers. Cultural symbols, historical narratives and educational content enable players to experience cultural meaning, reinforce group identity and engage with collective memory.

From a theoretical perspective, cultural identity theory explains how individuals prefer products that reflect their cultural affiliation and reinforce their sense of belonging (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Consumer ethnocentrism theory explains resistance to foreign cultural products, suggesting that consumers may avoid products perceived as threatening national identity or the domestic economy (Shimp & Sharma, 1987). In addition, collectivism theory suggests that consumption choices are influenced by group norms, shared values and social expectations, meaning that culturally meaningful content can enhance social acceptance and engagement within collectivist societies (Hofstede, 2001). Therefore, when games incorporate culturally authentic and educational elements, they align with the collectivist orientation and identity needs of Vietnamese youth, increasing emotional attachment and willingness to support culturally embedded content. Educational and historical narratives embedded in digital media can also strengthen collective memory and cultural continuity, thereby enhancing symbolic value and consumer engagement (Assmann, 2011). Accordingly, consumer purchasing behavior in culturalized games is shaped by the interaction of cultural identity, consumer ethnocentrism, collectivist values and exposure to transnational digital media. Cultural, historical and educational elements enhance symbolic value and social relevance, thereby strengthening engagement and motivating purchasing behavior among Vietnamese youth within a globalized yet culturally grounded digital environment.

### 2.2 Consumer engagement

Consumer engagement has been conceptualized as a psychological state emerging from interactive experiences between consumers and a focal object such as a brand, as well as a motivational and voluntary investment of cognitive, emotional, behavioral and social resources into interactions within a service system (Hollebeek et al., 2018). Within the context of culturalized games, the focal object is not merely a commercial product but an interactive cultural medium embedding historical, symbolic, and educational meanings. Although definitions differ in emphasis, they share the premise that consumer engagement is grounded in interaction and resource integration, consistent with service-dominant logic, which views interaction as reciprocal influence between actors. From this perspective, culturalized games function as experiential cultural platforms through which players co-create value by interpreting narratives, participating in cultural activities, and expressing identity. Consumer engagement therefore extends relationship marketing by emphasizing players'

active role in forming meaningful relationships with culturally meaningful game environments (Vivek et al., 2012). Consumer engagement is widely recognized as a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive, emotional, behavioral and social dimensions (Schivinski et al., 2016). Cognitive engagement refers to mental attention and meaning processing toward game content; emotional engagement reflects enjoyment, attachment and cultural resonance; behavioral engagement involves participation in gameplay activities; and social engagement captures interaction and sharing within player communities. Cultural orientation shapes these dimensions. Collectivist users tend to process information holistically through contextual relationships, whereas individualist users focus analytically on object attributes (Monga & John, 2007). Such cultural differences influence how players interpret narratives, experience emotions, participate in gameplay and interact socially within digital game environments.

In culturalized gaming environments, consumer engagement is inherently experiential because gameplay requires continuous interaction. Cultural symbols and narratives enhance cognitive engagement by encouraging players to interpret meanings and connect content with prior cultural knowledge. Historically grounded storytelling fosters emotional engagement through immersion in collective memory and identity. Educational mechanics stimulate behavioral engagement by motivating learning-oriented exploration and problem solving. Meanwhile, culturally meaningful content supports social engagement as players share knowledge, collaborate, and collectively experience cultural identity within gaming communities. For Vietnamese youth, whose cultural orientation emphasizes collectivism and group belonging, culturally embedded game content aligns with socially oriented engagement patterns. The integration of cultural, historical and educational elements strengthens reciprocity between players and the game environment, facilitating deeper psychological investment and participatory behavior. In line with service-dominant logic, players integrate their cultural knowledge, emotions and social connections as operant resources, while the culturalized game provides structured cultural content as an operand resource, enabling value co-creation and intensified engagement (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). Accordingly, consumer engagement in culturalized games can be understood as a multidimensional and culturally contingent process in which interaction with culturally meaningful content fosters cognitive immersion, emotional attachment, active participation and social connection. These engagement processes form the foundation for subsequent behavioral outcomes, including continued gameplay, community involvement and purchasing behavior among Vietnamese youth.

### 2.3 Culturalized games in Vietnam and the response of Vietnamese youth

The rapid expansion of digital technologies has transformed gaming from a casual leisure activity into a mainstream cultural practice embedded within everyday life (Shaw, 2010). Rather than existing as a niche subculture, gaming increasingly reflects and reproduces broader social values, identities, and interactions (Steinkuehler, 2006). In Vietnam, this transformation occurs within a unique socio-cultural context shaped by Confucian collectivism, social harmony, and strong community orientation (Gelfand et al., 2011). Consequently, gaming activities are not merely entertainment but function as shared cultural spaces where players communicate, cooperate, and construct social belonging. Online environments therefore operate as "third places" beyond home and school, supporting interaction rather than isolation. Vietnamese youth participate in gaming within a hybrid cultural environment influenced simultaneously by globalization and regional Asian

popular culture (particularly from Korea, Japan and China). While global gaming trends emphasize individual competition and personal achievement, Vietnamese players often value aesthetics, community interaction, teamwork, and social connection (McCauley et al., 2016). This cultural orientation encourages the popularity of cooperative gameplay, guild systems, and social gaming features. As a result, games that embed cultural narratives, historical motifs, folklore, or traditional symbols commonly described as culturalized games can resonate strongly with Vietnamese players because they align with collective identity and national belonging.

The economic context further demonstrates the growing importance of gaming culture. According to the IMARC Group market report, the Vietnamese video game market reached USD 1.2 billion in 2024 and is projected to reach USD 2.5 billion by 2033, growing at a compound annual growth rate of 7.50% during 2025–2033. The growth is driven by immersive technologies, mobile accessibility, esports development, microtransactions, and downloadable content. Mobile gaming is particularly dominant among young users due to convenience and affordability, allowing continuous engagement in daily routines such as commuting or breaks between academic activities (Silk et al., 2016). Streaming platforms and gaming influencers also shape youth attitudes, purchasing behaviour, and cultural preferences toward games. Within this expanding ecosystem, culturalized games are emerging as a strategic direction for developers. They provide not only entertainment but also cultural representation, identity affirmation, and educational value. Vietnamese youth increasingly respond positively to games that incorporate national mythology, traditional costumes, historical settings, or localized storytelling (McCauley et al., 2017). These games offer a sense of familiarity and pride while differentiating themselves from foreign titles. Furthermore, esports and online communities amplify this engagement by enabling collective participation and shared cultural discussion.

However, youth responses are not purely emotional or nationalistic. They remain pragmatic digital consumers who evaluate games based on gameplay quality, graphics, fairness, and social features. Cultural elements enhance attraction but cannot compensate for weak mechanics. Therefore, successful culturalized games in Vietnam require a balance between modern game design standards and authentic cultural integration. In short, the Vietnamese gaming environment illustrates a convergence between cultural identity and digital entertainment. The expanding market size and technological infrastructure create favourable conditions for culturalized games, while the collectivist orientation of Vietnamese youth encourages acceptance and participation. Culturalized games thus function simultaneously as leisure products, social platforms, and cultural communication media, shaping both consumer engagement and behavioural response among young Vietnamese players.

## 2.4 Hypothesis development
### 2.4.1. Historical authenticity
Historical authenticity plays a significant role in enhancing consumer engagement in culturalized video games. By accurately representing historical events, cultural heritage, and real-world locations, games can communicate meaningful national narratives and create immersive experiences that attract players' interest and emotional investment. According to Donald et al. (2023), historically grounded representations in games function as tools of soft power that stimulate

players' curiosity about cultural heritage, landmarks, and traditions, thereby increasing their willingness to explore game worlds both virtually and physically. This authenticity enhances the perceived educational and cultural value of games, making them more appealing and credible to players. In addition, narrative-based historical representation has stronger regulatory and persuasive effects than purely mechanical game systems, meaning that players tend to engage more deeply with content that conveys meaningful historical stories. When historical elements are perceived as accurate and purposeful, players are more likely to develop emotional attachment, spend more time in the game environment, and interact more actively with cultural content (Bogost, 2007). For Vietnamese youth, who are increasingly exposed to culturally oriented digital media, historically authentic culturalized games can foster curiosity about national heritage, strengthen cultural identity, and sustain gameplay involvement. Moreover, authenticity may enhance players' trust in the game developer and reduce perceived artificiality in the gaming experience. Consequently, higher perceived realism can encourage repeated play and long-term engagement behaviors such as community participation and content sharing. Based on above arguments, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

*H1: Historical authenticity positively influences consumer engagement in culturalized games.*

### 2.4.2. Historical representation quality

The growing cultural significance of video games has transformed them into interactive platforms for communicating history and heritage rather than purely entertainment products (Kordyaka et al., 2020). When historical content is presented with high levels of authenticity, coherence, narrative consistency, and contextual depth, it enhances players' sense of immersion and meaning-making, thereby activating cognitive processing, emotional resonance, and participatory behaviors that constitute consumer engagement. High-quality historical representation helps players understand not only what happened but also why it happened, enabling them to interpret events within a broader cultural and social framework. This interpretive clarity encourages players to explore game environments more carefully, interact with narrative elements, and maintain attention over longer gameplay sessions. From a soft power perspective, culturally grounded historical narratives attract users through identification and curiosity, encouraging sustained interaction and deeper involvement. Well-structured storytelling, accurate environmental design, and culturally consistent character behavior strengthen perceived credibility, which increases trust in the game world and motivates players to continue interacting with its content. When historical representation is fragmented or superficial, players may perceive the game as decorative rather than meaningful, reducing emotional attachment and engagement intensity. Empirical findings further indicate that historically rich and credible representations increase immersion and active participation in digital environments (Donald et al., 2023), which suggest that historical quality is a key driver of engagement among players, particularly within culturally oriented game contexts. Higher representation quality also encourages players to share experiences, discuss narratives with peers, and revisit the game to explore additional storylines, reflecting both behavioral and social dimensions of engagement. Therefore, improving the quality of historical representation not only enhances immediate gameplay involvement but also supports longer-term engagement through community interaction and repeated play. Based on above arguments, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

*H2: Historical representation quality positively influences consumer engagement in culturalized games.*

### 2.4.3. Cultural symbols

Cultural symbols function as carriers of shared meanings and values, enabling users to interpret and emotionally connect with cultural content through familiar visual and narrative cues. The use of symbolic metaphors in design enhances memorability, cognitive processing, and affective responses, particularly when symbols embody culturally recognized ideals and identities (Elliot et al., 2015). In interactive environments, culturally embedded symbols facilitate personification, orientation, and meaning-making, thereby strengthening users' experiential involvement and interpretive engagement with the product. Within culturalized games, the integration of traditional motifs, mythological icons, and culturally meaningful visual elements increases perceived authenticity and emotional resonance, which are key drivers of consumer engagement. According to the study of Liu & Zhao (2024), symbols act as semiotic resources that support identity construction and participatory interaction in digital spaces. Moreover, symbolic familiarity reduces cognitive distance between players and digital content, allowing users to quickly understand narratives and gameplay contexts without extensive learning effort. This accessibility encourages longer interaction time and repeated exploration of in-game cultural elements, reinforcing both emotional attachment and behavioral participation. Consequently, culturally meaningful symbols are expected to enhance players' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment in gameplay. Based on above arguments, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

*H3: Cultural symbols positively influence consumer engagement in culturalized games.*

### 2.4.4. Cultural practices

Cultural practices represent socially organized patterns of action through which individuals reproduce, negotiate, and transform shared meanings within a community. They provide structured pathways for young people to construct identity, internalize collective values, and participate in culturally recognized social roles. In societies undergoing rapid socio-cultural transformation, traditional practices may be weakened, hybridized, or partially displaced, thereby intensifying youth's search for symbolic continuity and meaningful cultural belonging (Rubinstein, 1992). This transformation does not necessarily imply cultural loss, but rather reflects a reconfiguration of how traditions are accessed and experienced in contemporary contexts. From a sociocultural perspective, according to prior research by Gutiérrez (2002), cultural practices are mediated through participation, dialogue, and shared activity, where learning and identity construction emerge from engagement in culturally meaningful interactions. In digital environments, such mediation can be reconstructed through interactive systems that simulate ritual forms, traditional activities, and culturally grounded narratives. Culturalized games, therefore, function not merely as entertainment platforms but as alternative cultural spaces where traditional practices are re-enacted, reinterpreted, and collectively experienced. When ritual structures, communal cooperation, traditional aesthetics, or culturally specific modes of participation are embedded into gameplay mechanics, players are offered experiential continuity between virtual and real-world cultural practices. This continuity enhances cognitive immersion, emotional resonance, and social interaction within the gaming

environment, thereby strengthening consumer engagement. Based on above arguments, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

*H4: Cultural practices positively influence consumer engagement in culturalized games.*

### 2.4.5. Perceived learning value

Perceived learning value reflects users' subjective evaluation of knowledge acquisition, skill development, and cognitive benefits gained through an interactive experience. Prior research indicates that self-assessed learning captures motivational involvement, participation, and perceived relevance more effectively than purely objective measures, and is closely associated with intrinsic motivation and active engagement (Eom et al., 2006). When users perceive meaningful learning outcomes, they are more likely to invest cognitive effort, sustain attention, and participate behaviorally in the experience. In educational and experiential environments, perceived learning contributes to overall value perception and strengthens users' interactive involvement. Extending this logic to culturalized games, educational elements that deliver culturally relevant knowledge, historical understanding, and skill-based challenges enhance perceived learning value, which in turn motivates deeper cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement. According to Sanford et al. (2017), perceived learning is positively associated with user participation and experiential involvement in interactive digital contexts, suggesting that learning-oriented value functions as a key driver of engagement. Furthermore, learning experiences that provide interpretive understanding of cultural content can increase users' sense of competence and personal relevance within the game environment. This enhanced sense of meaningful participation encourages repeated interaction and sustained engagement over time. Based on above arguments, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

*H5: Perceived learning value positively influences consumer engagement in culturalized games.*

### 2.4.6. Interactive learning engagement

Interactive learning engagement refers to the extent to which users actively participate in knowledge acquisition through interaction, experimentation, and feedback within a learning environment. Prior research suggests that learning outcomes are enhanced when individuals are cognitively involved, intrinsically motivated, and able to interact with content in meaningful ways. Self-assessed learning and participation capture motivational and behavioral involvement that objective measures may overlook, particularly in interactive contexts where user action and feedback loops are central. The more personally engaged individuals are in an interactive learning process, the higher their level of sustained attention, emotional connection, and participatory behavior (Piercy, 2010). In digital game environments, interactive learning mechanisms such as problem-solving tasks, narrative exploration, and culturally embedded challenges stimulate active user participation and reinforce experiential value. According to the study by Sanford et al. (2017), interactive learning involvement significantly increases users' cognitive and behavioral engagement in digital platforms, as it enhances perceived relevance, motivation, and participation intensity. Continuous interaction with feedback systems allows players to test understanding, adjust strategies, and develop a sense of competence, which further strengthens engagement. As players become co-creators of meaning rather than passive recipients of information, they are more likely to

remain immersed and emotionally invested in the experience. Therefore, when culturalized games provide interactive learning experiences related to cultural, historical, and educational content, they are more likely to foster deeper consumer engagement. Based on above arguments, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

*H6: Interactive learning engagement positively influences consumer engagement in culturalized games.*

## 2.4.7. The role of consumer engagement

Consumer engagement represents a multidimensional psychological state in which players cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally invest in interactive experiences. According to the study by Hollebeek (2018), engagement strengthens the relational bond between users and the focal platform by increasing involvement, attachment, and participation in value co-creation activities. Within culturalized games that integrate cultural, historical, and educational elements, such engagement emerges when players perceive meaningful relevance between the game content and their identity, knowledge acquisition, and cultural understanding. According to the study by Zhao et al. (2023), identity-related attachment significantly influences consumer purchasing behavior because individuals tend to support products that symbolically represent their values and cultural orientation. For Vietnamese youth, culturally embedded narratives, historical authenticity, and educational meaning enhance personal relevance and emotional connection, thereby transforming gameplay participation into consumption intention. Furthermore, according to the study by Van Anh et al. (2024), emotional involvement and cultural affinity strongly predict purchasing behavior among Vietnamese young consumers in media-related contexts. When players perceive culturalized games as meaningful cultural experiences rather than mere entertainment, purchasing virtual items becomes an expression of belonging and continued participation. Therefore, consumer engagement generated through integrated cultural, historical, and educational elements is expected to directly encourage purchasing behavior among Vietnamese youth. Based on above arguments, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

*H7: Consumer engagement positively influences consumer purchasing behavior of culturalized games.*

The integration of cultural, historical, and educational elements in culturalized games is expected to influence consumer purchasing behavior not only directly but also indirectly through consumer engagement. Consumer engagement functions as a central psychological mechanism that transforms content-based stimuli into behavioral outcomes. When players perceive historical authenticity, high-quality historical representation, meaningful cultural symbols, and culturally grounded practices within gameplay, they experience stronger cognitive absorption, emotional attachment, and participatory involvement. Similarly, when educational components enhance perceived learning value and stimulate interactive learning engagement, players become more cognitively invested and behaviorally active. These experiential and identity-related responses intensify engagement, which in turn strengthens relational bonds with the game. According to the study by Hollebeek (2018), engagement represents a multidimensional psychological state that connects consumers to focal platforms and increases behavioral support. Furthermore, according to

the study by Zhao et al. (2023), identity congruence and perceived cultural relevance significantly predict purchasing behavior through psychological attachment mechanisms. Empirical evidence among Vietnamese youth also indicates that emotional involvement and cultural affinity translate into purchasing intention in media-related contexts (Van Anh et al., 2024). Therefore, consumer engagement is expected to operate as a mediating mechanism through which integrated cultural, historical, and educational elements influence purchasing behavior in culturalized games among Vietnamese youth. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

*H8a: Consumer engagement mediates the relationship between historical authenticity and consumer purchasing behavior of culturalized games.*

*H8b: Consumer engagement mediates the relationship between historical representation quality and consumer purchasing behavior of culturalized games.*

*H8c: Consumer engagement mediates the relationship between cultural symbols and consumer purchasing behavior of culturalized games.*

*H8d: Consumer engagement mediates the relationship between cultural practices and consumer purchasing behavior of culturalized games.*

*H8e: Consumer engagement mediates the relationship between perceived learning value and consumer purchasing behavior of culturalized games.*

*H8f: Consumer engagement mediates the relationship between interactive learning engagement and consumer purchasing behavior of culturalized games.*

Based on the above hypotheses, the authors proposes the following research model:
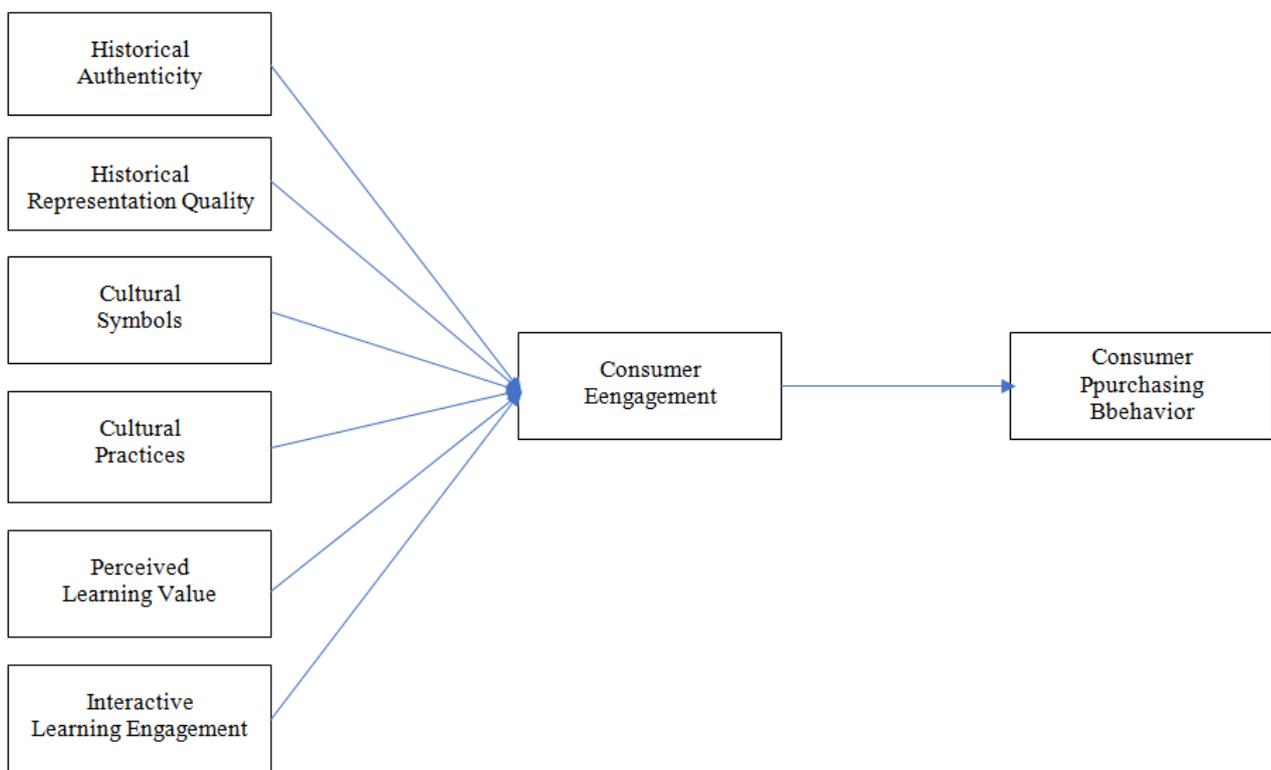


**Figure 1:** Research model

*Source: Authors' analysis*

## 3.0 METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Measurement instrument and questionnaire design

The measurement instrument was developed to examine the relationships between cultural, historical, and educational elements, consumer engagement, and purchasing behavior in culturalized games among Vietnamese youth. All constructs were measured using items adapted from established and validated scales in prior studies and evaluated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

Historical Authenticity (HA) was measured using three items adapted from Park et al. (2019). Historical Representation Quality (HRQ) included four items from Donald et al. (2023). Cultural Symbols (CS) were measured using four items adapted from Liu & Zhao (2024), while Cultural Practices (CP) used three items based on Gutiérrez (2002). Perceived Learning Value (PLV) and Interactive Learning Engagement (ILE) were measured using four and five items respectively from Sanford et al. (2017). Consumer Engagement (CE) was assessed using four items adapted from Hollebeek (2018). Consumer Purchasing Behavior (CPB) was measured using five items adapted from Zhao et al. (2023) and Van Anh et al. (2024). The questionnaire was originally developed in English and translated into Vietnamese using back-translation to ensure semantic equivalence.

### 3.2 Sample population and data collection

The target population of this study consisted of Vietnamese youth who have experience playing culturalized games that integrate cultural, historical and educational elements. A structured questionnaire was distributed online through social media platforms, gaming communities, and university networks to reach young respondents across different regions in Vietnam. Convenience sampling combined with snowball sampling techniques was employed to increase response coverage within the target group.

A total of 311 valid responses were collected and used for data analysis. Regarding age distribution, the majority of respondents were between 18 and 25 years old, followed by those aged 25 to 35, while a small proportion were under 18. In terms of career, students represented the largest group, followed by full time employees, part time employees, freelancers or self employed individuals, and a small number of respondents in other occupations. With respect to educational background, most participants held a university degree or were currently enrolled in university programs, followed by college, high school, and postgraduate levels. In terms of monthly income, the largest proportion of respondents reported earning below 10 million VND, followed by those earning between 10 and 15 million VND, 15 to 30 million VND, and above 30 million VND. Regarding gaming behavior, the majority of respondents reported playing games frequently, with many engaging in gaming activities three to five times per week or daily. This indicates that the sample is appropriate for examining consumer engagement and purchasing behavior in the context of culturalized games. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 3 to assess the reliability and validity of the measurement model and to test the proposed hypotheses.

## 4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Demographics of respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. A total of 311 valid responses were collected. Regarding age, the majority of participants were between 18 and 25 years old (187 respondents, 60.1%), followed by those aged 25 to 35 (112 respondents, 36.0%), while only a small proportion were under 18 years old (12 respondents, 3.9%). This indicates that the sample appropriately represents young individuals, which aligns with the target population of the study.

In terms of career, students constituted the largest group (146 respondents, 47.0%), followed by full time employees (96 respondents, 30.9%). Part time employees accounted for 34 respondents (10.9%), freelancers or self employed individuals represented 25 respondents (8.0%), and other occupations accounted for 10 respondents (3.2%). This distribution suggests that most participants were either studying or at an early stage of their professional careers. With respect to education level, respondents were predominantly university students or graduates (158 respondents, 50.8%), followed by college level (62 respondents, 19.9%), high school (58 respondents, 18.6%), and postgraduate education (33 respondents, 10.6%). This reflects a relatively well educated sample capable of evaluating cultural and educational elements in games. Regarding monthly income, the majority of respondents reported earning below 10 million VND (142 respondents, 45.7%). This was followed by those earning between 10 and 15 million VND (88 respondents, 28.3%), 15 to 30 million VND (63 respondents, 20.3%), and above 30 million VND (18 respondents, 5.8%). The income structure is consistent with the financial profile of young consumers in Vietnam.

Finally, concerning gaming frequency, most respondents reported regular gaming habits. Specifically, 103 respondents (33.1%) played daily and 102 respondents (32.8%) played three to five times per week, while 79 respondents (25.4%) played one to two times per week and only 27 respondents (8.7%) played rarely. This indicates a high level of engagement with games, making the sample appropriate for examining consumer engagement and purchasing behavior in culturalized games.

**Table 1:** Demographics of respondents (n = 311)

| Demographics | | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age | < 18 | 12 | 3.9 |
| | 18 - 25 | 187 | 60.1 |
| | 25 - 35 | 112 | 36.0 |
| Career | Student | 146 | 47.0 |
| | Full time employee | 96 | 30.9 |
| | Part time employee | 34 | 10.9 |
| | Freelance/self employed | 25 | 8.0 |
| | Others | 10 | 3.2 |
| Education | High school | 58 | 18.6 |

|  | College | 62 | 19.9 |
|---|---|---|---|
|  | University | 158 | 50.8 |
|  | Postgraduate | 33 | 10.6 |
| Monthly Income | Below 10 million VND | 142 | 45.7 |
|  | 10 - 15 million VND | 88 | 28.3 |
|  | 15 - 30 million VND | 63 | 20.3 |
|  | Above 30 million VND | 18 | 5.8 |
| Gaming Frequency | Rarely | 27 | 8.7 |
|  | 1–2 times/week | 79 | 25.4 |
|  | 3–5 times/week | 102 | 32.8 |
|  | Daily | 103 | 33.1 |
| **Total** |  | **311** | **100** |

*Source: Authors' analysis*

## 4.2 Scale reliability and validity assessment

Table 2 presents the reliability and convergent validity results for the study constructs, including historical authenticity (HA), historical representation quality (HRQ), cultural symbols (CS), cultural practices (CP), perceived learning value (PLV), interactive learning engagement (ILE), consumer engagement (CE), and consumer purchasing behavior (CPB) in the context of culturalized games among Vietnamese youth. The results indicate strong internal consistency reliability across all constructs, as all Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70. In particular, consumer purchasing behavior demonstrates the highest reliability ($\alpha$ = 0.940; CR = 0.954), followed by perceived learning value ($\alpha$ = 0.937; CR = 0.955) and historical authenticity ($\alpha$ = 0.919; CR = 0.949). Other constructs also show satisfactory reliability, including interactive learning engagement ($\alpha$ = 0.910; CR = 0.933), cultural symbols ($\alpha$ = 0.895; CR = 0.927), consumer engagement ($\alpha$ = 0.881; CR = 0.918), cultural practices ($\alpha$ = 0.811; CR = 0.885), and historical representation quality ($\alpha$ = 0.785; CR = 0.850). These results confirm that the measurement items consistently capture their respective theoretical constructs. Convergent validity is also well established, as all Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceed the minimum criterion of 0.50. Historical authenticity shows the highest AVE (0.861), followed by perceived learning value (0.841) and consumer purchasing behavior (0.806). Cultural symbols (0.762), consumer engagement (0.738), interactive learning engagement (0.735), and cultural practices (0.720) also demonstrate strong explanatory power, while historical representation quality presents an acceptable AVE of 0.587. These findings indicate that the measurement model adequately captures the cultural, historical and educational elements of culturalized games, as well as consumer engagement and purchasing behavior among Vietnamese youth, supporting the reliability and convergent validity of the constructs used in this study.

**Table 2:** Construct reliability and convergent validity

|  | *Cronbach's Alpha* | *rho_A* | *Composite Reliability* | *Average Variance Extracted (AVE)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CE | 0.881 | 0.884 | 0.918 | 0.738 |
| CP | 0.811 | 0.860 | 0.885 | 0.720 |
| CPB | 0.940 | 0.941 | 0.954 | 0.806 |
| CS | 0.895 | 0.902 | 0.927 | 0.762 |
| HA | 0.919 | 0.923 | 0.949 | 0.861 |
| HRQ | 0.785 | 0.868 | 0.850 | 0.587 |
| ILE | 0.910 | 0.911 | 0.933 | 0.735 |
| PLV | 0.937 | 0.938 | 0.955 | 0.841 |

*Source: Data analysis by SmartPLS3*

Table 3 reports the discriminant validity assessment using the Fornell–Larcker criterion. The square roots of the AVE values for CE (0.859), CP (0.849), CPB (0.898), CS (0.873), HA (0.928), HRQ (0.766), ILE (0.857), and PLV (0.917) are all higher than their corresponding inter-construct correlations. This indicates satisfactory discriminant validity among the constructs. Therefore, the cultural, historical and educational elements, as well as consumer engagement and purchasing behavior, represent empirically distinct constructs in the context of culturalized games among Vietnamese youth, supporting the adequacy of the measurement model for further structural model analysis.

**Table 3:** Fornell-Larcker Criterion

|  | *CE* | *CP* | *CPB* | *CS* | *HA* | *HRQ* | *ILE* | *PLV* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CE | 0.859 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| CP | 0.319 | 0.849 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| CPB | 0.416 | 0.678 | 0.898 |  |  |  |  |  |
| CS | 0.629 | 0.214 | 0.180 | 0.873 |  |  |  |  |
| HA | 0.578 | 0.203 | 0.500 | 0.638 | 0.928 |  |  |  |
| HRQ | 0.520 | 0.180 | 0.276 | 0.391 | 0.401 | 0.766 |  |  |
| ILE | 0.645 | 0.363 | 0.435 | 0.541 | 0.428 | 0.398 | 0.857 |  |
| PLV | 0.624 | 0.136 | 0.279 | 0.644 | 0.621 | 0.449 | 0.493 | 0.917 |

*Source: Data analysis by SmartPLS3*

Table 4 presents the discriminant validity assessment using the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT). The results show that all HTMT values are below the conservative threshold of 0.85, indicating satisfactory discriminant validity among the constructs. The highest HTMT value is observed between CP and CPB (0.771), followed by ILE and CE (0.718), and CS with HA and PLV (both 0.701). Despite being relatively higher than other pairs, these values remain well within acceptable limits. The remaining construct pairs exhibit substantially lower HTMT ratios, such as CP and PLV (0.144), CP and HRQ (0.193), and CS and CPB (0.193). The HTMT results further confirm that the cultural, historical, and educational elements, along with consumer engagement

and purchasing behavior, are empirically distinct constructs. This supports the robustness of the measurement model and its suitability for subsequent structural model analysis.

**Table 4:** Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

|  | *CE* | *CP* | *CPB* | *CS* | *HA* | *HRQ* | *ILE* | *PLV* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CE |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| CP | 0.359 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| CPB | 0.452 | 0.771 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| CS | 0.706 | 0.238 | 0.193 |  |  |  |  |  |
| HA | 0.638 | 0.220 | 0.538 | 0.701 |  |  |  |  |
| HRQ | 0.549 | 0.193 | 0.289 | 0.442 | 0.430 |  |  |  |
| ILE | 0.718 | 0.408 | 0.470 | 0.596 | 0.465 | 0.419 |  |  |
| PLV | 0.685 | 0.144 | 0.297 | 0.701 | 0.668 | 0.481 | 0.531 |  |

*Source: Data analysis by SmartPLS3*

### 4.3 Model assessment and discussion

Table 5 presents the results of the structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis conducted using SmartPLS 3. The findings indicate that all hypothesized relationships are statistically significant and consistent with the proposed research framework. Firstly, the results demonstrate that historical authenticity positively influences consumer engagement ($\beta = 0.132$, $t = 2.396$, $p = 0.017$), supporting H1. This finding suggests that when players perceive historical content as accurate and credible, they experience stronger cognitive immersion and emotional attachment, which enhances their involvement in the gameplay experience. From a theoretical perspective, authenticity strengthens perceived realism and trust in the game environment, reducing the sense of artificiality often associated with entertainment media. For Vietnamese youth, historically grounded narratives may also stimulate cultural curiosity and identity affirmation, reinforcing sustained interaction and deeper psychological investment.

Secondly, historical representation quality has a positive and significant effect on consumer engagement ($\beta = 0.179$, $t = 3.206$, $p = 0.001$), supporting H2. High-quality storytelling, contextual coherence, and historically grounded design improve interpretive clarity and narrative immersion, thereby strengthening engagement. This indicates that players respond not only to the presence of historical elements but to how meaningfully and coherently those elements are constructed. Well-developed historical narratives facilitate meaning-making processes, allowing players to connect events, characters, and cultural contexts in a structured way. As a result, representation quality becomes a critical driver of cognitive absorption and emotional resonance.

Thirdly, cultural symbols significantly enhance consumer engagement ($\beta = 0.171$, $t = 2.222$, $p = 0.027$), supporting H3. The integration of culturally meaningful motifs and symbolic elements increases perceived authenticity and identity relevance, encouraging deeper participatory involvement. Symbolic familiarity reduces psychological distance between players and digital content, enabling quicker interpretation and emotional recognition. In the context of Vietnamese youth, culturally embedded symbols may function as markers of belonging and shared heritage,

thereby intensifying affective attachment. This suggests that symbolic design contributes to engagement by strengthening identity congruence within gameplay.

**Table 5:** Structural equation modelling results estimates

| Paths | Original Sample (O) | Sample Mean (M) | Standard Deviation (STDEV) | T Statistics (|O/STDEV|) | P Values |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CE -> CPB | 0.416 | 0.417 | 0.046 | 9.068 | 0.000 |
| CP -> CE | 0.089 | 0.091 | 0.033 | 2.700 | 0.007 |
| CS -> CE | 0.171 | 0.169 | 0.077 | 2.222 | 0.027 |
| HA -> CE | 0.132 | 0.132 | 0.055 | 2.396 | 0.017 |
| HRQ -> CE | 0.179 | 0.178 | 0.056 | 3.206 | 0.001 |
| ILE -> CE | 0.298 | 0.294 | 0.064 | 4.679 | 0.000 |
| PLV -> CE | 0.193 | 0.202 | 0.070 | 2.761 | 0.006 |
| CP -> CE -> CPB | 0.037 | 0.038 | 0.015 | 2.458 | 0.014 |
| CS -> CE -> CPB | 0.071 | 0.070 | 0.032 | 2.220 | 0.027 |
| HA -> CE -> CPB | 0.055 | 0.055 | 0.024 | 2.305 | 0.022 |
| HRQ -> CE -> CPB | 0.074 | 0.074 | 0.024 | 3.127 | 0.002 |
| ILE -> CE -> CPB | 0.124 | 0.124 | 0.034 | 3.662 | 0.000 |
| PLV -> CE -> CPB | 0.080 | 0.084 | 0.030 | 2.692 | 0.007 |
| Adjusted $R^2$: CE = 0.610; CPB = 0.170 | | | | | |

*Source: Data analysis by SmartPLS3*

Fourthly, cultural practices positively influence consumer engagement (β = 0.089, t = 2.700, p = 0.007), supporting H4. The incorporation of ritual structures, cooperative traditions, and culturally embedded activities within gameplay fosters experiential continuity and strengthens emotional resonance. By simulating culturally recognizable forms of participation, games create alternative cultural spaces where traditions are interactively re-enacted. Such experiential continuity bridges virtual and real-world cultural experiences, enhancing immersion and participatory motivation. Consequently, cultural practices embedded in game mechanics stimulate both social and behavioral dimensions of engagement.

Fifthly, the findings indicate that perceived learning value positively affects consumer engagement (β = 0.193, t = 2.761, p = 0.006), supporting H5. When players perceive meaningful knowledge acquisition and cognitive benefits, they are more likely to sustain attention and invest effort in gameplay. Learning-oriented value increases intrinsic motivation, transforming gameplay into a personally rewarding experience beyond entertainment. This suggests that educational components embedded in culturalized games contribute to engagement by enhancing perceived usefulness and competence. In turn, knowledge-based value strengthens long-term involvement and repeated interaction.

Sixthly, interactive learning engagement exerts the strongest positive influence on consumer engagement among all antecedents (β = 0.298, t = 4.679, p < 0.001), supporting H6. Active

participation through exploration, problem-solving, and feedback systems intensifies cognitive absorption and behavioral involvement. Unlike passive information exposure, interactive learning allows players to co-create meaning and test their understanding within dynamic systems. This participatory structure strengthens autonomy and experiential immersion. The relatively strong coefficient suggests that interactive mechanisms are particularly influential in engaging Vietnamese youth within culturally integrated game environments.

Seventhly, the results confirm that consumer engagement positively influences consumer purchasing behavior ($\beta = 0.416$, $t = 9.068$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H7. This finding highlights engagement as a crucial determinant of financial support behaviors in culturalized games. When players are cognitively absorbed, emotionally attached, and behaviorally involved, purchasing becomes an extension of continued participation rather than a purely transactional act. Engagement thus transforms consumption into a form of relational and identity-based expression. This underscores the economic significance of cultivating deep experiential involvement in culturally oriented digital products.

Finally, mediation analysis reveals that consumer engagement significantly mediates all proposed indirect relationships, supporting H8a to H8f. Specifically, engagement mediates the effects of historical authenticity ($\beta = 0.055$, $p = 0.022$), historical representation quality ($\beta = 0.074$, $p = 0.002$), cultural symbols ($\beta = 0.071$, $p = 0.027$), cultural practices ($\beta = 0.037$, $p = 0.014$), perceived learning value ($\beta = 0.080$, $p = 0.007$), and interactive learning engagement ($\beta = 0.124$, $p < 0.001$) on purchasing behavior. These findings indicate that cultural, historical, and educational elements do not directly translate into purchasing outcomes; rather, they operate through the psychological mechanism of engagement. In other words, meaningful cultural integration enhances purchasing behavior only when it successfully generates cognitive immersion, emotional attachment, and participatory involvement. This reinforces the conceptualization of consumer engagement as the central explanatory pathway linking culturally embedded game design to economic sustainability among Vietnamese youth.
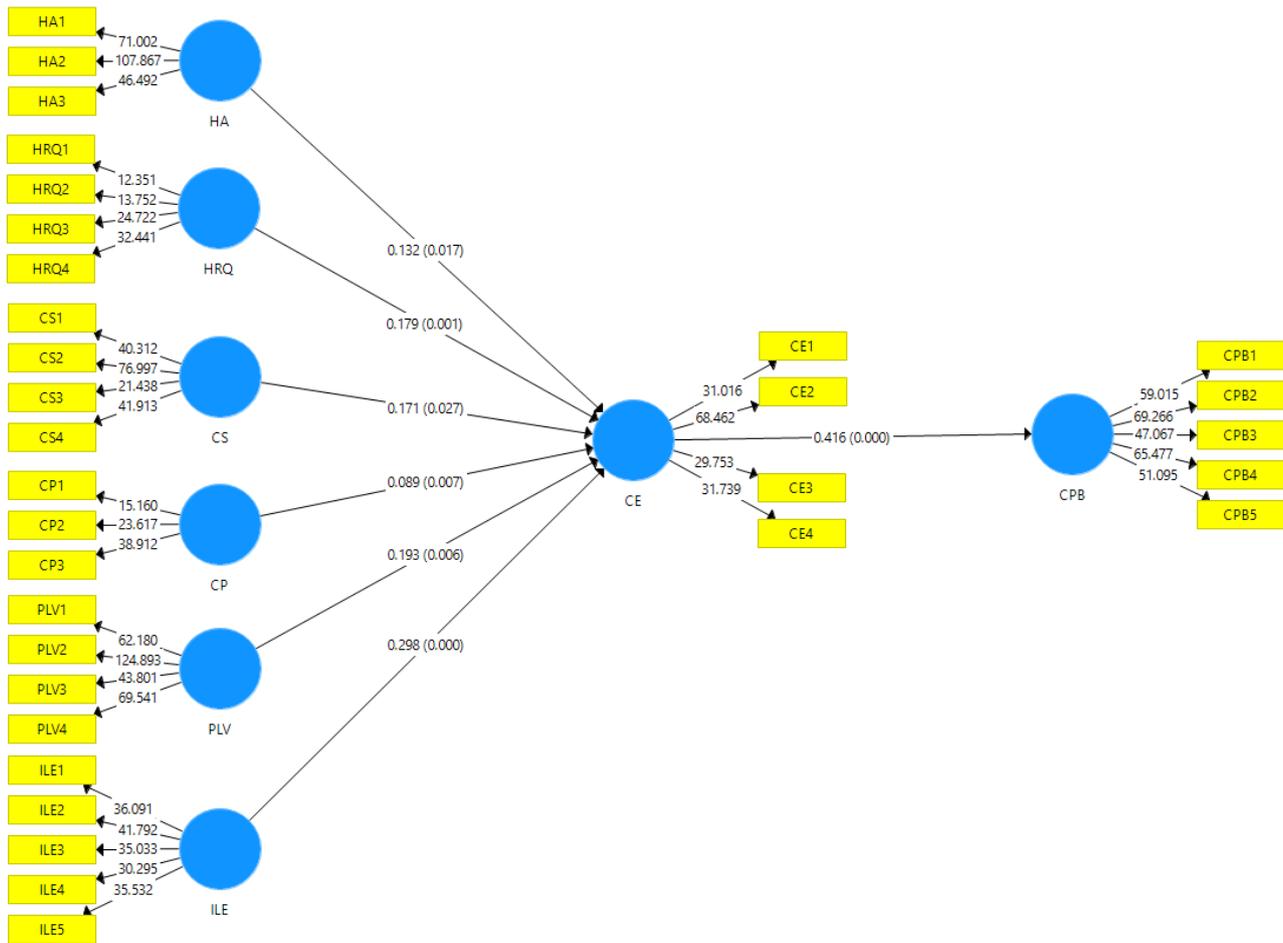
**Figure 2:** PLS bootstrapping model
*Source: Data analysis by SmartPLS3*

The structural model results indicate strong explanatory power and statistically significant relationships among the constructs. The adjusted R² value for CE is 0.610, suggesting that CP, CS, HA, HRQ, ILE, and PLV jointly explain 61.0% of the variance in CE, which can be considered substantial explanatory power in behavioral research. Among these predictors, ILE ($\beta$ = 0.298, p < 0.001) shows the strongest positive effect on CE, followed by PLV ($\beta$ = 0.193, p = 0.006), HRQ ($\beta$ = 0.179, p = 0.001), CS ($\beta$ = 0.171, p = 0.027), HA ($\beta$ = 0.132, p = 0.017), and CP ($\beta$ = 0.089, p = 0.007). All paths are positive and statistically significant, indicating that these cultural and experiential factors significantly enhance CE. Furthermore, CE has a strong and significant positive effect on CPB ($\beta$ = 0.416, p < 0.001). The adjusted R² for CPB is 0.170, meaning that CE explains 17.0% of the variance in consumer purchasing behavior, which represents a moderate level of explanatory power given that CPB is predicted by a single mediator. The indirect effects (CP → CE → CPB, CS → CE → CPB, HA → CE → CPB, HRQ → CE → CPB, ILE → CE → CPB, and PLV → CE → CPB) are all positive and significant (p < 0.05), confirming the mediating role of CE in transmitting the effects of cultural and experiential factors on purchasing behavior. Overall, the findings support the proposed mediation model and demonstrate that CE plays a central role in linking culturalized game attributes to consumer purchasing behavior.

## 5.0 IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the literature by theoretically and empirically integrating cultural identity, consumer ethnocentrism, collectivism, and cultural memory into a unified framework explaining purchasing behavior in culturalized digital games. Grounded in Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), the findings demonstrate that culturally embedded game elements activate identity affirmation processes. The significant and strong effect of CE on CPB confirms that when digital products reinforce a sense of cultural belonging, they translate symbolic identification into concrete purchasing behavior. This extends social identity theory beyond traditional intergroup and brand community contexts into interactive digital consumption environments. The results also deepen the application of Consumer Ethnocentrism Theory (Shimp & Sharma, 1987). Rather than conceptualizing ethnocentrism solely as resistance to foreign products, the findings indicate that culturally authentic and locally meaningful content strengthens cultural engagement, which subsequently drives purchasing behavior. This suggests that ethnocentrism may operate not only as a defensive reaction but also as a positive identity-based motivation that supports culturally aligned products. Consistent with Collectivism Theory (Hofstede, 2001), the high explanatory power of CE (Adjusted $R^2$ = 0.610) indicates that cultural engagement in Vietnam is strongly shaped by shared values, social norms, and collective meaning systems. Cultural symbols, historical authenticity, and educational value significantly contribute to CE, confirming that consumption in collectivist contexts is socially embedded and normatively influenced rather than purely individualistic. The findings therefore provide empirical validation of collectivism theory within a contemporary digital marketplace. Furthermore, this study highlights how digital games function as carriers of collective memory and historical consciousness. The significant indirect effects through CE demonstrate that historical representation quality and learning value enhance symbolic meaning, which is then transformed into behavioral outcomes. This bridges cultural memory scholarship with consumer behavior research and advances understanding of how mediated cultural narratives generate market value.

The findings of this study provide important managerial implications for game developers, cultural content creators, and policymakers seeking to promote culturally embedded digital products. The strong explanatory power of cultural engagement indicates that investment in culturally meaningful content is not merely symbolic but strategically valuable. Developers of digital games should prioritize the integration of authentic cultural symbols, historically accurate narratives, and high-quality historical representation, as these elements significantly enhance cultural engagement, which in turn drives purchasing behavior. Cultural authenticity should not be treated as decorative background content; rather, it should be embedded into core gameplay mechanics, storytelling, character design, and visual aesthetics to create immersive identity-based experiences. The significant impact of interactive learning experience and perceived learning value suggests that educational components can function as competitive advantages. Game designers should therefore incorporate interactive historical missions, culturally grounded quests, and narrative-driven learning elements that allow players to actively experience cultural heritage rather than passively consume it. Gamified learning features not only increase engagement but also strengthen emotional attachment, which ultimately supports monetization strategies such as in-game purchases, premium content, or cultural-themed expansions. Given the strong mediating role of cultural engagement, marketing strategies should emphasize identity resonance rather than purely functional benefits. Promotional

campaigns can highlight national heritage, collective memory, and cultural pride to appeal to collectivist values and strengthen psychological connection with target audiences. Collaborations with cultural institutions, historians, or educational organizations may further enhance perceived authenticity and legitimacy. For policymakers and cultural agencies, the results suggest that supporting culturally embedded digital content can generate both economic and cultural benefits. Encouraging partnerships between game studios and cultural heritage organizations, providing funding incentives for historically grounded digital projects, or integrating digital games into cultural education initiatives may help strengthen youth engagement with national culture in a globalized media environment. The study demonstrates that culturally meaningful design is not only socially valuable but also commercially viable. By aligning product development, storytelling, and marketing strategies with cultural identity and collectivist values, digital game producers can simultaneously enhance user engagement, reinforce cultural continuity, and stimulate sustainable purchasing behavior.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The study relies on self-reported survey data, which may be subject to common method bias and social desirability effects despite statistical controls. Future research could combine survey measures with experimental designs or behavioral data to enhance methodological robustness. Besides, the model focuses primarily on cultural and educational attributes of games, while other potentially influential factors such as gameplay quality, technological performance, price sensitivity, or peer influence were not included. Incorporating these variables may provide a more comprehensive explanation of purchasing behavior. Expanding the theoretical model in these directions would deepen insight into consumer behavior in culturalized digital environments.

**REFERENCES**

Assmann, J. (2011). Cultural memory and early civilization: Writing, remembrance, and political imagination. Cambridge University Press.

Bogost, I. (2010). Persuasive games: The expressive power of videogames. MIT Press.

Camuñas-García, D., Cáceres-Reche, M. P., & Cambil-Hernández, M. D. L. E. (2023). Mobile game-based learning in cultural heritage education: a bibliometric analysis. Education+ Training, 65(2), 324-339.

Cleveland, M., & Bartsch, F. (2019). Global consumer culture: epistemology and ontology. International marketing review, 36(4), 556-580.

Dinh, M. T. A. (2016). The causes and effects of Korean pop culture on Vietnamese consumer behavior. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Thammasat University, Phra Nakhon.

Donald, I., Webber, N., & Wright, E. (2023). Video games, historical representation and soft power. Journal of Gaming & Virtual Worlds, 15(2), 105-127.

Elliot, E. A., Xiao, Y., & Wilson, E. (2015). A multicultural blend: metaphors, cognitive social capital and multiculturalism. International Marketing Review, 32(2), 200-218.

Eom, S. B., Wen, H. J., & Ashill, N. (2006). The determinants of students' perceived learning outcomes and satisfaction in university online education: An empirical investigation. Decision Sciences Journal of Innovative Education, 4(2), 215-235.

Ferreira, J., & Ferreira, C. (2018). Challenges and opportunities of new retail horizons in emerging markets: The case of a rising coffee culture in China. Business Horizons, 61(5), 783-796.

Gelfand, M. J., Raver, J. L., Nishii, L., Leslie, L. M., Lun, J., Lim, B. C., ... & Yamaguchi, S. (2011). Differences between tight and loose cultures: A 33-nation study. Science, 332(6033), 1100-1104.

Gutiérrez, K. D. (2002). Studying cultural practices in urban learning communities. Human development, 45(4), 312-321.

Hollebeek, L. D. (2018). Individual-level cultural consumer engagement styles: Conceptualization, propositions and implications. International Marketing Review, 35(1), 42-71.

Hofstede, G. (2001). Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.

IMARC Group. (2024). Vietnam video game market report 2025–2033. IMARC Services Private Limited. https://www.imarcgroup.com/report/vi/vietnam-gaming-market

Ivtzan, I., Lomas, T., Hefferon, K., & Worth, P. (2015). Second wave positive psychology: Embracing the dark side of life. Routledge.

Kordyaka, B., Jahn, K., & Niehaves, B. (2020). Towards a unified theory of toxic behavior in video games. Internet Research, 30(4), 1081-1102.

Liu, L., & Zhao, H. (2024). Research on consumers' purchase intention of cultural and creative products—Metaphor design based on traditional cultural symbols. Plos one, 19(5), e0301678.

Marder, B., Gattig, D., Collins, E., Pitt, L., Kietzmann, J., & Erz, A. (2019). The Avatar's new clothes: Understanding why players purchase non-functional items in free-to-play games. Computers in Human Behavior, 91, 72-83.

McCauley, B., Merola, G., & Gumbley, S. (2017). Play on demand: Why do players play the mobile games they do. International Journal of E-Business Research (IJEBR), 13(4), 37-54.

McCauley, B., Nguyen, N., & McDonald, M. (2016). Understanding the motivations of Vietnamese millennial mobile gamers: A pilot study. In International Conference on Emerging Trends in Business, Economics and Management, Dubai, UAE.

Monga, A. B., & John, D. R. (2007). Cultural differences in brand extension evaluation: The influence of analytic versus holistic thinking. Journal of consumer research, 33(4), 529-536.

Nam, S. (2013). The cultural political economy of the Korean wave in East Asia: Implications for cultural globalization theories. Asian Perspective, 37(2), 209-231.

Nguyen, T. N., McDonald, M., Nguyen, T. H. T., & McCauley, B. (2020). Gender relations and social media: A grounded theory inquiry of young Vietnamese women's self-presentations on Facebook. Gender, Technology and Development, 24(2), 174-193.

Piercy, N. (2010). Experiential learning: The case of the production game. Innovations in Education & Teaching International, 50(2), 202-213.

Rubinstein, D. H. (1992). Suicide in Micronesia and Samoa: A critique of explanations. Pacific Studies Journal, 15(1), 5.

Sanford, D., Ross, D., Rosenbloom, A., & Singer, D. (2017). Course convenience, perceived learning, and course satisfaction across course formats. E-journal of Business Education and Scholarship of Teaching, 11(1), 69-84.

Schivinski, B., Christodoulides, G., & Dabrowski, D. (2016). Measuring consumers' engagement with brand-related social-media content: Development and validation of a scale that identifies levels of social-media engagement with brands. Journal of advertising research, 56(1), 64-80.

Schwartz, S. J., Montgomery, M. J., & Briones, E. (2006). The role of identity in acculturation among immigrant people: Theoretical propositions, empirical questions, and applied recommendations. Human development, 49(1), 1-30.

Shaw, A. (2010). What is video game culture? Cultural studies and game studies. Games and culture, 5(4), 403-424.

Shimp, T. A., & Sharma, S. (1987). Consumer ethnocentrism: Construction and validation of the CETSCALE. Journal of Marketing Research, 24(3), 280–289.

Steinkuehler, C. A. (2006). Why game (culture) studies now?. Games and culture, 1(1), 97-102.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In S. Worchel & W. G. Austin (Eds.), Psychology of intergroup relations (pp. 7–24). Nelson-Hall.

Thompson, C. J., & Arsel, Z. (2004). The Starbucks brandscape and consumers'(anticorporate) experiences of glocalization. Journal of consumer research, 31(3), 631-642.

Van Anh, N. T., Thu, L. A., Ngan, T. M., & Khoa, D. D. M. (2024). Factors affecting the purchasing behavior of Vietnamese youth for products linked with K-Pop idols.

Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2016). Institutions and axioms: an extension and update of service-dominant logic. Journal of the Academy of marketing Science, 44(1), 5-23.

Vivek, S. D., Beatty, S. E., & Morgan, R. M. (2012). Customer engagement: Exploring customer relationships beyond purchase. Journal of marketing theory and practice, 20(2), 122-146.

Zhao, S., Tu, Y., & Jiang, Q. (2023). The influence of cultural identity on consumer purchasing behavior. Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Science, 7(4).