



MEMORIAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND DIGITAL REPRESENTATIONS IN GEN Z'S UNIVERSITY CHOICES

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ABSTRACT

University choice among Generation Z is often explained through rational factors such as program quality, tuition fees, reputation, and career prospects. However, in digital environments, students do not merely receive information from university advertisements; they interpret, remember, compare, and relate it to their own social and economic conditions. This study explores how verbal and visual representations in university advertisements contribute to the formation of memorial consciousness in a Gen Z student's university choice. Using a phenomenological approach, this study examines an in-depth interview with one Gen Z student who chose a private university in West Java, Indonesia. The interview narrative was analyzed using Atlas.ti to trace how the participant experienced, interpreted, and internalized verbal and visual representations in university advertisements. The findings show that memorial consciousness was formed through four connected layers: noetic activation, noematic construction, modal filtering, and decision formation. Repeated acts of searching, noticing, thinking, and focusing activated the participant's attention toward advertisement content. Informational cues such as admission schedules, guidelines, procedures, and important dates became basic memory objects. These cues were then filtered through social, economic, cultural, and symbolic considerations, including family, tuition fees, distance, facilities, accreditation, and institutional recognition. The decision emerged through expressions of interest, encouragement, confidence, and readiness to register. This study suggests that university advertisements become meaningful when digital representations are connected with memory, feasibility, social validation, and future imagination.

Keywords: Memorial Consciousness; Gen Z; University decision-making; Digital Advertising; Social Influence

INTRODUCTION

The selection of a university by Generation Z (Gen Z) is deeply shaped by the way universities present themselves through digital media. For this visually oriented and digitally connected generation, university choice develops through continuous encounters with social media posts, websites, videos, online advertisements, campus images, slogans, and student testimonials. These verbal and visual representations do more than provide information; they shape impressions, activate memories, and influence how prospective students imagine their future academic life. In this sense, university advertisements become a meaningful digital experience that helps Gen Z construct

perceptions of an institution and relate those perceptions to their personal aspirations (Zhang & Zhang, 2025).

University selection has often been discussed through rational factors such as tuition fees, academic programs, graduate employability, campus facilities, and institutional reputation. These factors remain important, yet they only explain part of the decision-making process. In digital environments, students also respond to visual atmosphere, emotional tone, familiar locations, peer influence, narrative style, and the symbolic image of the university. Research on digital advertising shows that visually rich and emotionally engaging content can strengthen audience perception, memory retention, and consumer engagement (De Silva & Fernando, 2025). This means that university choice needs to be understood not only as a rational evaluation of institutional quality, but also as an affective and memory-based process shaped by repeated digital exposure.

This study focuses on memorial consciousness as a way to understand how Gen Z students connect digital representations with remembered experience, social impressions, and future expectations. Memorial consciousness refers to the way memory, previous experience, social interaction, and media exposure work together in shaping present perception and future decisions. In the context of university selection, a student may remember a campus image seen on Instagram, a conversation with a friend, a family expectation, a family city, or a promotional video that evokes a sense of belonging. These memories may gradually form an emotional attachment to a university and influence the direction of choice. Although universities increasingly rely on digital platforms and multimodal advertising, research that specifically examines how verbal and visual representations contribute to memorial consciousness among Gen Z students remains underdeveloped (Rahman et al., 2026).

The main objective of this research is to examine how a Gen Z student interprets and internalizes verbal and visual representations in university advertisements during the university selection process. More specifically, this study explores how multimodal advertisements activate layers of memory related to geographical familiarity, social influence, emotional attachment, economic consideration, and future aspiration. These layers are important because prospective students rarely make decisions from information alone. They also respond to what feels familiar, credible, emotionally relevant, socially supported, and aligned with their imagined future. Studies on digital persuasion indicate that structured visual narratives and persuasive media representations can shape audience interpretation and emotional engagement (Xu et al., 2026). Therefore, this research positions university advertisements as memory triggers that connect institutional messages with personal experience.

As university selection becomes increasingly embedded in digital culture, the study of student decision-making needs to move toward a more holistic framework. Prospective students evaluate academic programs and institutional reputation, while also responding to images, stories, emotions, and memories produced through digital encounters. A campus photograph may evoke comfort, a student testimonial may create trust, and a short promotional video may help a student imagine belonging to a particular academic community. Research on personalized digital communication shows that adaptive and emotionally responsive media environments can influence audience behavior and long-term engagement (Xu et al., 2026). This suggests that university communication should be designed not merely to deliver facts, but to create meaningful, memorable, and emotionally resonant experiences for prospective students.



The theoretical foundation of this study draws on memorial consciousness, multimodal representation, and digital decision-making. Memorial consciousness emphasizes that decision-making is shaped by remembered experiences, emotional impressions, and socially mediated encounters that remain embedded in individual cognition over time (Donnelly, 2020). Multimodal representation explains how meaning is constructed through the combination of text, image, color, layout, sound, and narrative structure. Digital decision-making highlights how online environments guide attention, interpretation, and preference formation. In university choice, these three perspectives intersect when students encounter advertisements that combine institutional claims, visual identity, student stories, and emotionally charged images. Such encounters can create lasting associations that influence how students perceive and compare universities (Li, 2024).

This research contributes to studies on digital media, memory, and educational decision-making by explaining how multimodal university advertisements shape Gen Z's memorial consciousness. By focusing on the relationship between representation and memory formation, this study offers a deeper understanding of how young people engage with digital content when making important educational decisions. Research in behavioral neuroscience and multimodal interaction shows that coherent visual, emotional, and sensory experiences can influence cognitive processing, memory retention, and decision-making behavior (Anzani & Bruno, 2026). This supports the view that university advertisements function not only as promotional tools but also as cognitive and emotional stimuli that shape how prospective students remember, interpret, and choose an institution.

The findings of this study are expected to offer both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, the study expands the discussion of university selection by bringing memory, emotion, and multimodal representation into the analysis of Gen Z decision-making. Practically, the study provides insight for universities seeking to design more effective digital communication strategies. In a competitive higher education market, universities need to present information in ways that are clear, credible, emotionally engaging, and memorable. Studies in human-computer interaction and multimodal communication also show that emotionally responsive digital environments can strengthen user engagement and long-term cognitive attachment to visual content (Duffy et al., 2026). Therefore, understanding the relationship between multimodal digital representation and memorial consciousness can help universities develop communication strategies that resonate more deeply with the emotional and cognitive characteristics of Gen Z students.

Overall, this study argues that Gen Z's university selection process is shaped by a dynamic interaction between information, memory, emotion, and digital representation. University advertisements do not only introduce institutional identity; they also create visual and verbal experiences that prospective students remember, interpret, and connect with their own aspirations. By examining how multimodal representations activate memorial consciousness, this research provides a more nuanced understanding of how Gen Z students make university choices in digital culture. It also offers a foundation for future studies and marketing practices that seek to engage prospective students through communication that is meaningful, coherent, and memorable.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Memorial Consciousness

Memorial consciousness refers to an awareness formed through life experiences, memories, and emotionally meaningful interactions. This concept helps explain how individuals connect past experiences with present decisions, especially in contexts related to identity, aspiration, and emotional attachment (Donnelly, 2020). Memorial consciousness involves the integration of remembered experiences with current cognitive and emotional states, which then shapes how individuals interpret situations and respond to future possibilities. In the context of university selection, memorial consciousness guides prospective students as they evaluate complex choices through memories, emotional impressions, and personal meanings attached to particular institutions.

In the process of choosing a university, individuals draw on various forms of memory, including autobiographical memory, social memory, and culturally embedded memory. For Gen Z, these memories are increasingly shaped by digital environments and multimodal representations encountered through social media, online videos, university websites, and digital advertisements (Manca et al., 2023). As a generation closely connected to digital communication, Gen Z links past experiences with future aspirations through digital narratives and representations that continually shape their perceptions of universities and educational opportunities.

Research on memory and emotional cognition also emphasizes the role of emotional processing in memory retention and retrieval. Emotional responses triggered by visual and verbal digital representations tend to be encoded deeply in memory and later influence judgments, preferences, and decisions (Horton, 2021). For Gen Z students, emotionally engaging university advertisements can create strong affective associations that remain after the first exposure. Through multimodal communication, including visuals, sound, storytelling, and symbolic imagery, digital advertisements generate memorable emotional experiences that contribute to long-term cognitive impressions and institutional perceptions.

Multimodal Representations

The concept of multimodal representations pertains to the use of multiple forms of media (such as verbal, visual, auditory, and digital elements) to communicate meaning and influence audience perception. In the context of university choice, multimodal representations are central to how prospective students construct perceptions of institutions and emotionally engage with university branding through digital media (Voloshchuk & Glinka, 2023). Advertisements that combine text, images, videos, interactive features, and symbolic visual narratives function not only as informational tools but also as mechanisms that evoke emotional responses and shape how students interpret the identity and values of a university.

These multimodal representations are not passive forms of communication; rather, they actively engage viewers through sensory and emotional stimulation (Anwar et al., 2026). Research in multimodal discourse and digital advertising demonstrates that the interaction between visual and verbal modes significantly affects audience interpretation, emotional attachment, and memory formation (Muam et al., 2025). Through the integration of images, language, sound, and digital interaction, advertisements create immersive experiences that encourage students not only to consume information but also to internalize it cognitively and emotionally.

Furthermore, visual-emotional strategies embedded in digital advertisements have been shown to strengthen audience engagement by triggering affective responses and



symbolic associations that remain memorable over time (Song & Bakar, 2025). In the context of university marketing, these emotional and sensory experiences contribute to how Gen Z students remember, evaluate, and emotionally connect with institutions during the university selection process. Therefore, multimodal representations play a crucial role in shaping both perception and memorial consciousness within digital decision-making environments.

Multimodal representations in university advertisements often utilize visual elements (such as images of campus life, student testimonials, interactive media, and iconic institutional landmarks) to evoke feelings of belonging, aspiration, and emotional attachment among prospective students. These visual elements, when combined with persuasive verbal messages, shape how students perceive and emotionally connect with a university (Ariefin et al., 2025), making the institution more memorable and cognitively engaging (Voloshchuk & Glinka, 2023). For example, promotional videos portraying vibrant campus activities and student interactions may trigger excitement, social identification, and future-oriented aspirations, while accompanying textual narratives reinforce perceptions of academic prestige and career success. Together, these multimodal elements create cohesive narratives that influence how students remember and interpret the university experience.

Additionally, multimodal representations in digital advertisements enable universities to create immersive sensory and emotional experiences for viewers. Research on multimodal digital interaction demonstrates that integrating visual, auditory, textual, and interactive communication modes significantly enhances user engagement and emotional immersion (Kourtesis, 2024). For Gen Z, who have grown up in highly digitized and media-saturated environments, these immersive multimodal experiences strongly shape how university advertisements are processed, remembered, and emotionally evaluated. The emotional resonance created through multimodal communication extends decision-making beyond rational evaluation to include sensory and affective responses that influence long-term perception and preference formation.

The role of multimodal representations in memory and decision-making is further reinforced by theories of embodied cognition, which suggest that cognition emerges not only through abstract mental processing but also through bodily, sensory, and emotional experiences. Recent studies on immersive digital environments demonstrate that multisensory engagement significantly enhances emotional connection, cognitive immersion, and memory retention by integrating visual, auditory, and interactive stimuli into a unified experience (Kourtesis, 2024). These findings indicate that sensory-rich environments strengthen the relationship between emotional experience and long-term cognitive processing.

By stimulating multiple senses simultaneously, multimodal advertisements allow prospective students to engage with university content on a deeper and more personal level. Research on interactive immersive advertisements shows that emotionally engaging digital experiences increase attention, emotional arousal, and cognitive engagement, which subsequently improves memorability and audience attachment (Kadar, 2022). This embodied and emotionally charged interaction often differentiates one institution from another because students are more likely to remember universities that evoke positive emotional responses through integrated visual and verbal communication.

Furthermore, studies grounded in embodied cognition theory reveal that augmented and multimodal digital presentations enhance associative memory formation and recall by connecting sensory perception with emotional interpretation (Zhou et al., 2024). In the context of university advertising, visual narratives, symbolic imagery, and emotionally resonant storytelling contribute to stronger memory encoding and influence how prospective students perceive institutional identity and future aspirations. Therefore, multimodal representations function not merely as informational tools but also as emotionally immersive experiences that shape long-term decision-making processes among Gen Z students.

Digital Communication in Education

Digital communication has fundamentally transformed how information is delivered, accessed, and consumed in the field of education. In university marketing, digital platforms such as websites, social media, streaming services, and online advertisements have become essential tools for engaging prospective students through immediate, interactive, and personalized communication environments (Sari & Tania, 2025). For Generation Z, who are highly immersed in digital ecosystems, these platforms shape how educational information is interpreted, experienced, and remembered. The integration of digital technologies into university marketing strategies allows institutions to provide targeted and adaptive content that aligns with students' interests, behaviors, and aspirations.

The use of digital communication in university marketing has created new opportunities for personalized engagement, enabling universities to tailor advertisements and online content to the preferences and identities of prospective students. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube facilitate the creation of visually dynamic and emotionally engaging content that highlights academic programs, campus culture, student experiences, and future career opportunities (Razzaq & Rabiah, 2025). Such personalized communication resonates strongly with Gen Z because it reflects their preference for authenticity, emotional connection, and interactive digital experiences. Through these platforms, universities can foster familiarity and trust by presenting institutional identities in ways that feel personal, relatable, and socially relevant.

Furthermore, digital communication is closely connected to the concept of digital memory, referring to the ways individuals store, revisit, and emotionally connect with information encountered in digital environments. For Gen Z students, repeated interaction with university advertisements, social media narratives, and online content contributes to the formation of digital memories that shape how universities are perceived over time (Vu et al., 2026). These memories are influenced by multimodal presentation strategies, including immersive visuals, storytelling techniques, interactive features, and real-time feedback mechanisms that enhance emotional engagement and memorability. By developing memorable digital representations, universities can strengthen emotional attachment and influence students' future educational decisions.

Moreover, digital communication enables real-time interaction and immersive engagement between universities and prospective students. Through live chats, virtual campus tours, online student communities, and interactive social media communication, universities can create more dynamic and emotionally engaging experiences for prospective applicants (Nassaf & Hamadi, 2025). For Gen Z, who value interactivity, responsiveness, and immediate access to information, these digital experiences significantly influence both their immediate perceptions and long-term memories of an institution. Consequently, digital communication functions not only as an informational



tool but also as a mechanism for emotional engagement, memory construction, and identity-based decision-making in the university selection process.

METHOD

This study employed a phenomenological approach to examine how verbal and visual representations in university advertisements contribute to the formation of memorial consciousness in a Gen Z student's university choice. This approach was selected to explore how advertisement content was experienced, remembered, interpreted, and internalized by the participant. The study focuses on lived experience, conscious attention, memory formation, and meaning-making within the context of digital university advertising.

The study involved one Gen Z student who had chosen to enroll in a private university in West Java, Indonesia. The participant was selected purposively because they met the criteria relevant to the research focus. They belonged to the Gen Z cohort, had recently made a university choice, had encountered university advertisements in digital environments, and were able to reflect on the role of verbal and visual advertisement content in their decision-making process. The use of a single participant aligns with the phenomenological orientation of the study, which emphasizes depth, intensity, and the essence of lived experience.

The primary data were collected through an in-depth phenomenological interview. The interview was designed to elicit detailed descriptions of the participant's experience when encountering university advertisements, including what they noticed, remembered, compared, questioned, and considered before making a final decision. The interview explored the participant's engagement with verbal elements such as admission information, schedules, guidelines, procedures, and promotional messages. It also examined visual elements such as campus images, student activities, facilities, institutional symbols, and digital layouts. These elements were analyzed in relation to the participants' memory, social background, economic condition, and future expectations.

The interview was conducted in an open-ended format to give the participant space to describe their experience in a reflective and personal way. The questions encouraged the participant to explain how university advertisements appeared in their awareness, which parts became memorable, how they assessed the credibility of the information, and how the advertisements connected with family considerations, tuition fees, geographical distance, facilities, accreditation, institutional recognition, and career imagination. Through this process, the participant's university choice could be understood as a layered formation of memorial consciousness involving information, memory, emotion, social influence, and future aspiration.

Data analysis was supported by Atlas.ti. The interview transcript was imported into the software to organize, code, and trace relationships among meaning units. Atlas.ti served as an analytical support tool, while the interpretive procedure remained phenomenological. The analysis began with repeated reading of the transcript to gain a holistic understanding of the participant's experience. The researcher then conducted bracketing to reduce prior assumptions about Gen Z, digital advertising, and university choice, allowing the participant's own descriptions to guide the interpretation.

The first stage of analysis involved identifying significant statements that reflected the participant's conscious experience of university advertisements. These statements were processed through horizontalization, in which each relevant expression

was initially given equal analytical value. The statements were then grouped into meaning units based on how the participant experienced, interpreted, and internalized verbal and visual representations. Particular attention was given to expressions related to searching, noticing, thinking, focusing, remembering, comparing, feeling interested, feeling encouraged, gaining confidence, and becoming ready to register.

The second stage involved clustering the meaning units into four phenomenological layers of memorial consciousness. The first layer, noetic activation, refers to the participant's acts of consciousness, including searching for information, noticing advertisement content, thinking about available options, and focusing on details considered important. The second layer, noematic construction, refers to the formation of memory objects from advertisement content, such as admission schedules, registration procedures, guidelines, important dates, program information, and institutional images. The third layer, modal filtering, refers to the way these remembered objects were filtered through social, economic, cultural, and symbolic considerations, including family influence, tuition affordability, geographical distance, facilities, accreditation, and institutional recognition. The fourth layer, decision formation, refers to the emergence of interest, encouragement, confidence, and readiness to register at the chosen university.

The analysis also produced textural and structural descriptions. The textural description focused on what the participant experienced when engaging with university advertisements, especially the verbal and visual elements that entered memory and became meaningful. The structural description examined how the experience was shaped by the participant's digital environment, social context, economic condition, cultural expectations, and future-oriented imagination. These two descriptions were then synthesized to identify the essence of the participant's memorial consciousness in the university choice process.

Credibility was strengthened through careful transcription, repeated reading, reflective memoing, and consistency checks between the participant's statements, codes, and thematic layers. The coding process in Atlas.ti was documented to maintain an audit trail and to ensure that the findings remained grounded in the participant's lived experience. The interview was treated as a phenomenological account through which the participant's consciousness, memory, and meaning-making could be examined in depth.

Through this methodological design, the study explains how university advertisements become meaningful because their verbal and visual representations connect with memory, feasibility, social validation, and future imagination. The phenomenological approach allows the study to reveal how a Gen Z student forms memorial consciousness through the interaction between digital advertisement content and the lived conditions surrounding university choice.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The interpretation and internalization of verbal and visual representations in university marketing by Generation Z students is investigated in this study. Visual reading is a complex cognitive activity in which students actively interpret information, relate it to personal experiences, and situate it within social, economic, and future-oriented aspirations, according to data gathered through in-depth interviews (Bünzli & Eppler, 2024). In line with research on advertising copy, mental imagery, emotional response, and memory, the analysis shows that this interpretive process creates several layers of memorial consciousness, from initial attention to visual elements to the final confirmation of decision-making (Wang & Wise, 2026).



The results demonstrate that the interplay between visual and verbal components in digital advertisements as well as social, economic, cultural, and symbolic contexts, has a significant impact on students' decision-making processes when choosing a university (Arafat et al., 2026; Bazon et al., 2026). Visual reading is a sophisticated cognitive process in which pupils actively analyze and assimilate incoming information, according to an analysis of interview data (Birello & Pujola, 2023). Searching, selection, appraisal, emotive attraction, decision-making, and self-capability reflection are among the cognitive actions that make up this process, which together serve as the foundation for choice formulation (Albinsson et al., 2025; Syunita & Tikno, 2025).

The interaction between cognitive processes (noesis) and structures of visual meaning (noema) indicates that students do not merely interpret visual elements directly, but also relate them to social experiences and personal contexts (Atkinson III, 2023; Woermann, 2024). Basic visual elements, such as textual information and institutional representations, constitute basic visual noema, whereas meanings derived from senior recommendations, economic considerations, and future projections are categorized as applied visual noema, reflecting indirect and reflective interpretation (Bünzli & Eppler, 2024; Indah et al., 2024). Accordingly, students construct a holistic mental image of the institution, integrating factual information with subjective interpretations emerging from social experience and personal aspirations (Ubaydillah & Saptaria, 2026).

Furthermore, various forms of capital, including social, economic, cultural, and symbolic capital, are identified as key determinants guiding visual interpretation. Social capital, such as recommendations from senior students, provides legitimacy in the evaluation process, while word-of-mouth and social media marketing have been shown to affect university choice through brand image (Ubaydillah & Saptaria, 2026). Economic capital influences practical considerations related to costs and facilities; cultural capital encompasses assessments of career pathways and educational quality; and symbolic capital reinforces perceptions of institutional credibility and infrastructure (Bocquet et al., 2024; Pham, 2018). The combination of these factors forms an internal filter that mediates visual meaning and supports the decision-making process (Gao et al., 2026).

Ultimately, this process culminates in a decision formation pathway, in which students progress through stages ranging from initial attention to visual stimuli, evaluation of alternatives, decision-making, and finally validation or confirmation of choice. This stage confirms that decision-making is not merely the result of rational evaluation, but rather the outcome of meaning construction that dynamically emerges through the interaction between advertising stimuli, cognitive processes, and internal forms of capital (Arafat et al., 2026; Murdiani et al., 2026). Gen Z's responses to digital advertising also show that engagement and avoidance depend on how advertising stimuli are cognitively and affectively processed (Attiq et al., 2026).

Overall, this narrative demonstrates that visual reading in university advertising functions as a mechanism for triggering memory and meaning, enabling students to construct a comprehensive representation of institutions and make decisions guided by a combination of visual information, socio-economic context, and future aspirations (Wang & Wise, 2026; Zheng et al., 2026). These findings provide a foundation for interpreting how memorial consciousness is formed and how it influences Generation Z's university choices within a multimodal and meaning-driven decision-making framework (Arafat et al., 2026; Bünzli & Eppler, 2024).

Accordingly, based on the explanation above, the following components were identified in this study: noesis, noema, modal domains, and decision formation.

Table 1. Multilayer Structure of Memorial Consciousness in the Visual Reading Process

Components	Categories	Unit of Analysis
Noesis	Analytical	11:1 nyari-nyari 11:3 nyari 11:8 searching 11:24 nyari 11:47 mendalami 11:48 fokusin
	Reflective	11:31 mikir 11:33 notice
	Emotional	-
Noema	Basic visual	11:18 jadwal ujian 11:19 panduan 11:21 alur 11:22 tanggal-tanggal
	Applied visual	-
Domain modal	Modal Social	11:53 orang sekitar 11:54 laporan ke keluarga
	Modal Economic	11:26 Biaya pendaftaran 11:27 Biaya UKT. 11:28 Biaya pendidikan 11:29 gaji orang tua 11:41 biayanya masih lumayan terjangkau
	Modal Culture	11:30 yang dekat antara rumah atau kampung 11:38 lulusan teknik sipil
	Modal Symbolic	11:13 fasilitas 11:45 Akreditasinya 11:49 ketenaran
Decision Formation	Negation	-
	Affirmation	11:37 tertarik 11:40 terdorong 11:42 semangat 11:50 Langsung daftar 11:51 fix yakin 11:52 baru mendaftar

The structural coding presented above demonstrates that memorial consciousness in digital university decision-making emerges through the dynamic interaction of noetic processes, noematic constructions, modal filtering systems, and decision formation pathways. The process would be completely elaborated in the following paragraphs.

*Noesis as the Activation System of Memorial Consciousness*

Memorial consciousness in digital university decision-making emerges through structured noetic processes grounded in lived experience and the attentional constitution of meaning (Atkinson III, 2023). As shown in Table 1, analytical noesis dominates the participant's initial engagement with university advertisements. This appears through repeated scanning activities such as *nyari-nyari*, *nyari*, *searching*, and *mendalami*. These exploratory actions show how consciousness begins through active selection, where visual and informational stimuli are filtered, compared, and directed toward meaningful points of attention. This pattern aligns with studies showing that visual attention in digital environments works as an active selection system in dense informational settings (Woermann, 2024). and supports verbal–visual guidance in advertising interpretation (Bünzli & Eppler, 2024). The code *fokusin* further shows that attention gradually moves toward selected cues within the advertisement, creating a clearer attentional anchor in multimodal content.

Reflective noesis then appears as a secondary layer that strengthens interpretation. Codes such as *mikir* and *notice* show that the participant begins to evaluate the relevance of information within their own cognitive framework. At this stage, advertisement content becomes connected with expectation, consideration, and personal meaning. This finding is in line with research explaining that advertising comprehension involves cognitive appraisal and meaning consolidation (Albinsson et al., 2025). It also reflects how digital engagement supports cognitive–affective integration during evaluation among Gen Z audiences (Syunita & Tikno, 2025).

Emotional noesis appears as a subtler layer within the dataset. Affective orientation is visible through the transition from scanning to evaluation, especially when attention becomes more selective and personally directed. Emotional response in advertising often works within cognitive processing streams, particularly in high-attention visual tasks (Wang & Wise, 2026). In this study, emotional orientation is embedded in the movement of attention, reflection, and emerging personal relevance.

Overall, the findings show that memorial consciousness is constructed through layered noetic activation. The process begins with exploratory scanning, develops into reflective awareness, and prepares the cognitive system for meaning formation. Noesis, therefore functions as the gateway of consciousness activation, where perceptual attention becomes structured cognitive readiness for memory construction and decision-making.

Noema as Constructed Memory Object

The analysis of noematic structures shows that memorial consciousness is activated through cognitive processes and formed through meaning objects within consciousness. As shown in Table 1, noema appears in two layers: basic visual construction and applied visual construction. These two layers explain how external stimuli from university advertisements are transformed into internal memory objects.

Basic visual noema appears in units such as *jadwal ujian*, *panduan*, *alur*, and *tanggal-tanggal*. These units show that early meaning formation is grounded in direct informational cues found in university advertisements. Such elements function as memory anchors that help the participant recognize, organize, and remember important information. This finding aligns with studies showing that visual-verbal anchoring plays an important role in stabilizing interpretation and guiding comprehension in multimodal advertisements (Ariefin et al., 2025; Bünzli & Eppler, 2024).

Applied visual noema reflects a deeper level of meaning construction. At this stage, visual information moves from literal recognition into contextual and experiential association. Advertisement content is connected with mental imagery, emotional resonance, and recall processes that strengthen memory encoding (Wang & Wise, 2026). This process also shows how affective meaning can emerge through memory-based emotional and imaginative intentionality (Helmanto et al., 2025). The movement from structured informational cues to interpretive meaning illustrates how prospective students integrate external content with personal expectations during university decision-making (Arafat et al., 2026).

The distinction between basic and applied visual noema highlights that memory within memorial consciousness works as a reconstructive process. In phenomenological terms, meaning objects are continuously constituted through perception, interpretation, and relevance to lived experience (Atkinson III, 2023). Visual stimuli in university advertisements are reconfigured into subjective memory objects shaped by personal relevance, prior experience, and anticipated outcomes.

Overall, the findings suggest that noema operates as the structural outcome of noetic activation. Informational inputs are transformed into meaningful memory objects that support evaluation and decision-making. Within this framework, memorial consciousness is sustained through the interaction between perception and interpretation, allowing digital representations to remain as cognitively meaningful constructs that influence university choice (Syunita & Tikno, 2025; Wang & Wise, 2026).

Modal System as Memory Filter

The modal system functions as a filter in the processing of digital representations and shapes the development of memorial consciousness. As shown in Table 1, this system consists of four interconnected dimensions: social, economic, cultural, and symbolic. These dimensions guide the selection, emphasis, and internalization of memory objects during the decision-making process. In line with Bourdieusian perspectives on capital in educational choice, modal structures shape how informational stimuli are transformed into meaningful cognitive representations (Bocquet et al., 2024; Pham, 2018).

The social modality appears in units such as *orang sekitar* and *laporan ke keluarga*. These units show that memory construction is shaped by interpersonal validation and social accountability. The participant's interpretation of university advertisements is connected with the views of nearby people and the need to communicate the choice to family. This finding aligns with studies showing that word-of-mouth, peer networks, and social media interaction influence students' institutional choice through mediated trust structures (Ubaydillah & Saptaria, 2026).

The economic modality appears through references to *biaya pendaftaran*, *biaya UKT*, *biaya pendidikan*, and *gaji orang tua*. These references show that financial consideration works as a cognitive filter that organizes memory based on feasibility. Information about tuition and registration costs becomes more salient because it is directly connected with the student's family resources and educational affordability. This supports research showing that socioeconomic capital strongly shapes higher education aspirations and choices (Indah et al., 2024).

The cultural modality is reflected in proximity and academic identity markers, such as *yang dekat antara rumah atau kampung* and *lulusan teknik sipil*. These units show how familiarity, distance, and perceived academic alignment influence which memories remain meaningful in the decision-making process. This finding corresponds to studies



explaining that cultural capital and perceived academic fit shape educational pathways and strengthen selective attention to institution-related information (Gao et al., 2026).

The symbolic modality appears in units such as *fasilitas*, *akreditasinya*, and *ketenaran*. These elements strengthen memory salience through perceived legitimacy, quality, and prestige. Facilities, accreditation, and institutional recognition become symbolic markers that help the participant evaluate the credibility and attractiveness of a university. This supports the view that institutional reputation and symbolic capital structure students' decision hierarchies (Smith, 2022).

Collectively, these modal dimensions operate as an interpretive filter that determines which visual and verbal stimuli are retained, emphasized, or placed aside within memorial consciousness. The filtering process shows that memory construction is shaped by social, economic, cultural, and symbolic conditions that guide perception and interpretation in digital environments (Arafat et al., 2026). Therefore, the modal system plays a decisive role in stabilizing digital representations as meaningful memory objects that influence evaluation and university choice.

Decision Formation as Manifestation of Memorial Consciousness

Decision formation in digital university selection appears as the manifestation of accumulated memorial consciousness. This process is shaped through layered cognitive activation, constructed memory objects, and modal filtering systems. As shown in Table 1, the decision-making trajectory moves from affective stimulation, such as *tertarik*, *terdorong*, and *semangat*, toward behavioral commitment, such as *langsung daftar*, *fix yakin*, and *baru mendaftar*. This progression aligns with studies on digital enrollment, which show that engagement, persuasion, and intention formation develop through staged cognitive and affective integration (Syunita & Tikno, 2025).

The movement from initial attraction to final enrollment shows that memorial consciousness functions as a stabilizing structure. Noetic activation and noematic construction are gradually integrated into actionable intent. Digital marketing stimuli strengthen cognitive salience, reduce uncertainty, and guide prospective students toward enrollment decisions (Murdiani et al., 2026). The affirmation stage, especially through expressions such as *fix yakin* and *langsung daftar*, signals the consolidation of meaning into behavioral certainty.

Recent studies on multimodal persuasion support this memory-driven decision pathway. Structured multimodal stimuli can strengthen recall, emotional engagement, and decision confidence by aligning perception and evaluation into a unified processing flow (Wang & Wise, 2026). In higher education marketing, digital engagement strategies, especially social media campaigns, can increase enrollment intention through immersive cognitive stimulation (Murdiani et al., 2026).

Within this framework, decision formation can be understood as the behavioral manifestation of memorial consciousness. Accumulated memory traces involving social, economic, cultural, and symbolic considerations interact with cognitive activation processes to produce final commitment. Repeated exposure to digital narratives strengthens long-term decision orientation by embedding institutional meaning into memory structures (Zheng et al., 2026). As a result, university choice among Gen Z emerges from a memory-saturated cognitive system that stabilizes preference into action.

Overall, decision formation represents the endpoint of a dynamic interpretive system in which memorial consciousness integrates perception, memory, and valuation

into a coherent action-oriented structure. Digital advertising functions as an information source and a cognitive structuring mechanism that shapes behavioral outcomes in higher education contexts (Zheng et al., 2026).

Integrated Model: Memorial Consciousness Construction

The findings lead to an integrated model of memorial consciousness construction in digital university decision-making. This model brings together four interdependent layers: noesis, noema, modal systems, and decision formation. Memorial consciousness is positioned as a dynamic system where perception, meaning-making, socio-cultural filtering, and behavioral commitment operate in a continuous cycle. Within this structure, noesis functions as the activation mechanism that initiates engagement with digital stimuli, in line with phenomenological accounts of intentional consciousness formation (Atkinson III, 2023).

Noema represents constructed memory objects that emerge from the interpretation of visual and verbal representations. This aligns with studies showing that advertising meaning is shaped through anchoring mechanisms that organize interpretation and memory encoding (Bünzli & Eppler, 2024). Modal systems then mediate this process by filtering and stabilizing meaning. Social, economic, cultural, and symbolic modalities determine which memory objects become relevant, meaningful, and durable within consciousness (Gao et al., 2026; Pham, 2018).

Decision formation appears as the behavioral manifestation of the entire system. The movement from affective engagement, such as *tertarik* and *terdorong*, toward cognitive commitment, such as *fix yakin* and *langsung daftar*, reflects the consolidation of memorial consciousness into action. This finding is supported by studies showing that digital marketing ecosystems shape enrollment decisions through layered exposure, engagement, and institutional perception formation (Syunita & Tikno, 2025).

The integrated model also corresponds with research on multimodal cognition and digital persuasion. Structured visual and verbal inputs can connect perception and behavior through memory, affect, and interpretation (Wang & Wise, 2026). In higher education contexts, social media marketing and digital engagement strengthen enrollment intention by embedding institutional meaning within students' cognitive frameworks (Murdiani et al., 2026).

Repeated digital exposure further reinforces memory-based decision trajectories among Gen Z, especially in networked environments where recurring narratives stabilize meaning over time (Zheng et al., 2026). When viewed alongside the present findings, this shows that memorial consciousness operates as a recursive cognitive-mnemonic system. Repeated multimodal exposure structures perception, strengthens interpretation, and guides behavioral commitment.

Overall, the integrated model positions memorial consciousness as a central explanatory construct in digital decision-making. University selection among Gen Z emerges through the structured interaction between cognitive activation, memory construction, socio-cultural filtering, and behavioral consolidation within multimodal digital ecosystems.

Theoretical Contribution

This study advances a theoretical framework of *Memorial Consciousness Construction in Digital Decision-Making* by positioning noesis, noema, modal systems, and decision formation as an integrated cognitive-mnemonic architecture. This



framework explains how Gen Z interprets and internalizes digital university advertisements during the university selection process. Decision formation is understood as a layered consciousness process shaped by the dynamic interaction between perception, meaning construction, and socio-cognitive filtering. This perspective aligns with recent higher education marketing research showing that enrollment intention develops through staged cognitive-affective integration (Arafat et al., 2026; Syunita & Tikno, 2025).

The first theoretical contribution lies in the reconceptualization of noesis as an activation system of consciousness. Noesis functions as the gateway through which digital stimuli enter cognitive processing. The findings show that scanning, searching, focusing, and reflective noticing are structured intentional processes that transform external visual inputs into cognitive engagement. This extends phenomenological approaches by grounding intentionality in observable digital reading practices. It is also consistent with studies showing that visual attention in digital environments is organized through active selection and interpretive filtering (Atkinson III, 2023; Woermann, 2024). In multimodal advertising contexts, attentional structuring plays an important role in shaping comprehension and engagement (Bünzli & Eppler, 2024).

The second contribution concerns the positioning of noema as a constructed memory object. The identification of basic and applied visual noema shows that meaning in digital advertisements is actively constructed through interpretive layering and contextual association. This finding strengthens recent arguments in multimodal cognition research, which explain that meaning in digital environments is assembled through interaction between visual and verbal systems (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021). It also corresponds with empirical work on rhetorical and visual effects in advertising, especially the role of imagery in shaping memory, emotion, and recall (Wang & Wise, 2026).

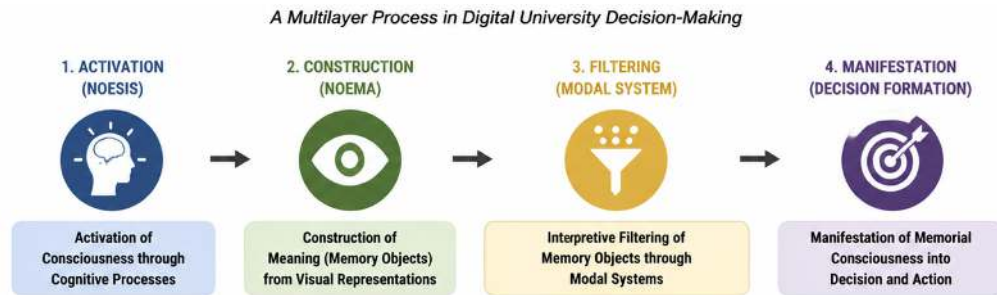
The third theoretical contribution lies in the identification of the modal system as a cognitive filter in memory formation. Social, economic, cultural, and symbolic modalities operate as internalized structures that determine salience, retention, and prioritization of memory objects. This aligns with Bourdieusian perspectives that conceptualize capital as a structuring logic of perception in educational choice (Pham, 2018). It also supports recent studies showing that social and symbolic capital shape institutional evaluation and student decision pathways (Bocquet et al., 2024). Contemporary socio-digital theory further strengthens this view by emphasizing that meaning-making in digital environments is embedded within platformed socio-cultural structures (van Dijck, 2024; Couldry & Hepp, 2023).

The fourth contribution concerns the understanding of decision formation as the behavioral expression of memorial consciousness. In this process, cognitive activation, memory construction, and modal filtering converge into behavioral commitment. This study shows that Gen Z university selection is memory-driven and structurally conditioned by interpretive systems. This perspective expands decision-making theory by explaining how social media interaction, brand exposure, and multimodal persuasion influence enrollment intention and decision outcomes (Murdiani et al., 2026; Zheng et al., 2026). Evidence from advertising cognition also shows that repeated multimodal exposure strengthens memory consolidation and increases the possibility of behavioral commitment (Wang & Wise, 2026). Overall, this framework reframes decision-making in digital higher education environments as a consciousness-structured process.

University choice emerges through the mutual interaction of perception, memory, socio-cultural filtering, and behavioral consolidation.

The following figure illustrates the theoretical model developed from this conceptual elaboration.

Figure 1. Integrated Model of Memorial Consciousness Construction



To provide a cohesive explanation of memorial consciousness in digital university decision-making, the integrated model in Figure 1 synthesizes the dynamic interaction among noesis, noema, modal systems, and decision formation. The model shows consciousness as a multidimensional and recursive system in which perceptual activation, meaning formation, socio-cultural filtering, and behavioral manifestation interact continuously. Each element shapes how digital representations are internalized and transformed into decision outcomes through a cumulative process.

Memorial consciousness functions as the central concept that connects cognitive processes with socio-cultural influences. The model presents memory as an active and reconstructive mechanism shaped by repeated exposure to multimodal stimuli. Noetic activation initiates attention toward digital representations, while noematic construction transforms these representations into meaningful memory objects. Modal systems then stabilize and prioritize meanings based on social, economic, cultural, and symbolic considerations.

The decision formation layer shows how accumulated interpretive and mnemonic processes develop into behavioral commitment. The movement from cognitive engagement to affirmation reflects the crystallization of memorial consciousness into action. In this process, memory and consciousness become central forces that guide university choice in digital environments.

Overall, the model offers a theoretical framework for understanding how Gen Z navigates digital university marketing through memory, cognition, and socio-cultural interpretation. By combining phenomenological consciousness theory with multimodal digital communication analysis, this model strengthens the explanation of digital decision-making in higher education contexts. Future research may expand and validate the model across broader digital settings and demographic groups to strengthen its theoretical generalizability.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how Gen Z constructs memorial consciousness in selecting a university through digital advertisements. Using a phenomenological approach, the findings show that university choice develops through a layered interaction between perception, memory, and socio-digital context. What appears as a simple decision is



actually formed through a gradual interpretive process that begins with cognitive attention and develops into behavioral commitment.

The first finding shows that memorial consciousness begins with noetic activation. At this stage, Gen Z students scan, notice, and reflect on digital advertisement content. Fragmented visual and verbal stimuli gradually become focused attention, allowing university advertisements to gain psychological relevance. The second finding shows that noema emerges as a constructed memory object. Information from advertisements, such as admission schedules, campus images, facilities, and institutional messages, is reconstructed into meaningful impressions. These impressions develop through personal experience and continue to guide the student's evaluation of the university. The third finding highlights the role of the modal system as a memory filter. Social validation, economic affordability, cultural proximity, and symbolic legitimacy shape which meanings are strengthened and retained in consciousness. Memory formation is therefore influenced by the student's social, cultural, and material conditions. Finally, decision formation appears as the behavioral expression of accumulated memorial consciousness. Interest, attraction, confidence, and readiness to enroll emerge through repeated exposure, emotional stabilization, and modal reinforcement. The final decision reflects a coherent sense of conviction shaped by memory and meaning.

Overall, this study shows that Gen Z's university selection is a memory-driven and consciousness-structured process. Digital advertisements function as catalysts that connect information, emotion, social influence, and future aspiration, ultimately shaping institutional choice.

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