

# Using the Culture Diamond Model to Analyze the Relations between the Artists on Audiences through Music Videos under Vietnamese Social Context Based on Case Study MV “There’s No One At All”: Perspective from Students at FPT University

Le Thi My Danh\*, Tong Ai Linh, Nguyen Tran Bang Bang, Nguyen Hai Ha Phuong, Vu Thanh Vinh, and Le Hong Hai

**Abstract**—The parasocial contact between artists/creators and audiences is partly established and maintained by media products. Media products such as music videos (MVs) and songs may contain not only the creators’ experiences but also their ideals, philosophy, and enthusiasm. Media products provide a means for audiences to approach admired icons. Audiences can comprehend the message and value the artist wants to impart. However, external factors such as cultural and social context may impact the process of generating music videos and perceiving the message from the creator(s). Sometimes, the messages of creators may not be consumed, or accepted in ways that the creators wish, causing controversy in social and public contexts. This paper aims at testing the relations in Vietnam’s social context through the case study MV “There’s No One At All” performed by Son Tung M-TP. The MV was removed in Vietnam since its contents are accused of being “contrary to national norms and customs, negatively harming religion, ethics, public health, and psychosocial,” regardless that Son Tung M-TP is one of the singers with the largest fan base in Vietnam currently. The authors use Griswold’s Cultural Diamond Model (CDM) as a theoretical framework and conduct a survey to collect perspectives from 257 Vietnamese youth who are studying at FPT University to understand their thinking and feelings about the MV and compare the findings with what the signers wanted to convey through the MV and common opinions regarding the MV. The findings show that more than half of the responses agreed that the MV’s image, content, and lyrics contained negative, suicidal elements. However, nearly a quarter of the respondents accepted the appropriate positive message that Son Tung desired to convey. This study is one of the very first studies that test whether the CDM is applicable in Vietnamese culture and society and plays a milestone in studying the relationship between famous artists and mass audiences in Vietnam’s entertainment industry.

**Index Terms**—Artists and audiences, cultural diamond model, MV There's No One At All, COVID-19

## I. INTRODUCTION

Music videos, which contain additional social information in the form of visual imagery, can be a potent source of

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information about social roles, consumerism, and culture [1]. Using visual and audio elements in narrative music videos can assist audiences in better understanding the nature and meaning of the song, thus in a more narratively engaging entertainment media experience than simply listening to songs [2]. Notably, the social influence process affects individuals’ attitudes toward communication media and media use - behavior. When applied to the case of music videos, when the audience receives the messages conveyed by the artist, that reception process will be affected by external objective factors such as cultural factors and society, etc. Sometimes, the messages of creators may not be understood in ways that the creators expect, causing controversy in society.

In Vietnam, there are very few studies that explain the relations between creators and receivers. To fill such gaps, this article primarily studies the relations between creators and receivers by taking the case of the MV “There’s no one at all” by singer Son Tung M-TP as a cultural objective. The MV, which was released on April 28, had approximately 6 million views and over 100,000 comments on YouTube after only 18 hours of broadcasting. However, the premiere MV faced substantial community complaints due to a defeatist attitude, negatively influencing young people [3]. Nevertheless, in less than 24 hours, Vietnam’s Performing Arts Department sent a request to Google to prohibit the newest MV of singer Son Tung M-TP on April 29, 2022. The Department claimed that the music video carries negative, violence, and ends with the character's suicide image, which has a strong impact on viewers' psychology, orienting negative behaviors of society, especially children. The Vietnamese state claimed that suicidal thoughts, lifestyles, and behaviors included in the MV have caused “enormous harm” especially to young target audiences after two years of the pandemic.

With the controversy surrounding the MV, based on the CDM, this paper hypothesizes that the MV (cultural object) that contains messages that Son Tung M-TP (creator) wants to convey to mass audiences (receivers) in Vietnam; mass audiences may understand/accept or not such messages by themselves under the impact of Vietnam’s social factors such as time releasing/social context/social opinions. To test the hypothesis, the paper was aimed at answering two research questions in order to demonstrate the existence of relationships between the creator and receivers:

(1) *What messages from Son Tung M-TP (creator) does the*

MV “There’s no one at all” (cultural objective) contain?

(2) How do young receivers, particularly students of FPT University, understand and feel the messages of the MV “There’s no one at all” under Vietnam’s social context?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### A. Studies about the Relationship between Artists and Audiences and the Cultural Diamond Model (CDM)

Discussing the relationship between artists and audience, Arthur Asa Berger [4] used Focal Points Methods to demonstrate the connection between five points: Artwork, Artist, Medium, Audience, and society. He added that when discussing popular culture, media culture, and mass communication, it is not only the content of the text that will be discussed but also the creators, audiences, and effects of the text.

Similar to the Focal Points Methods, Wendy Griswold [5] [6] has offered a valuable paradigm known as a cultural diamonds model (CDM) containing four elements: creators, cultural objects, recipients, and the social world as well as the links among these points to encourage a fuller understanding of any cultural object’s relationship to the social world. Accordingly, a cultural object may be defined as shared significance embodied in form. A cultural object tells a story, which may be sung, told, set in stone, enacted, or painted on the body. Only when such objects become public, when they enter the circuit of human discourse, do they enter the culture and become cultural objects. Therefore, all cultural objects must have people who receive them and hear, read, understand, think about, enact, participate in, and remember them. The receiver (or people) engages with a cultural item by comprehending and interpreting its meaning. As a result, the receivers build, sustain, and share in the meaning of a cultural item [7, 8].

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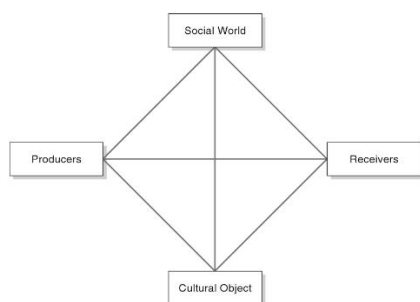


Figure 1.1 The Cultural Diamond

Fig. 1. The cultural diamond (cultures and societies in a changing World, wendy griswold).

The diamond demonstrates how cultural objects have producers (creators) and receivers who make meaning of the cultural objects within a specific social, economic, and political context [7]. The cultural diamond is “an accounting technique meant to facilitate a greater understanding of any cultural object’s link to the social environment” [5].

As the cultural diamond does not specify the nature of the link between the points, just that one exists [10], a myriad of researchers have applied the cultural diamond model when analyzing cultural phenomena factors in the sociology of art

[8, 9]. For example, Francesca Ieracitano tried to analyze events as cultural objects by using the Cultural Diamond Model [10]. In Vietnam, there is a very rare study examining the relationships between creators, cultural objectives, and receivers.

### B. Cultural Objectives with Negative Impact

Negative impact from cultural objectives draws much attention from scholars. Hogan *et al.* [11] stated that exposure to content related to violence, sexual messages, sexual stereotypes, and the use of substances of abuse in music videos might produce significant changes in the behaviors and attitudes of young viewers. Berkowitz *et al.* [12] argued that violent visual media exposure is associated with aggressive behavior, desensitization to violence, and negative thinking. Moreover, Murray *et al.* [13] proved that exposure to visual media violence stimulates brain regions associated with danger perception, attention, memory, threat-related word processing, and action inclinations. During such processes, aggressive notions, schemas, and scripts are likely to be primed [14]. Hence, music videos, considered media with bold content and images, may activate aggression in cognition and feelings [15]. The case of Kurt Cobain's Suicide Crisis could be one example to illustrate the impacts of negative content/image on audiences [16].

### C. “There’s No One at all” as a Cultural Objective

It is argued that the MV fits the criteria for the cultural object. As music videos unusually mix three media types: music (sound), lyrics (words), and visual images. As a result, music videos have a wide aesthetic range. Therefore, it is argued that in order to analyze an MV as a cultural objective critically, each component should be sensorily assessed. The MV “There’s no one at all” is a narrative-based music video that is defined as those in which the artists are attempting to tell a story. Narrative music videos often have a beginning, middle, and end. Additionally, the videos typically do not feature musical performances or lip-syncing. The words are used by the band to develop a story that relates to the subject of the music [17]. The MV’s message was “let’s comprehend the emotions that lonely people experience and learn to love, protect, and be kind-hearted before it’s too late” [18].

## III. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employs both qualitative and quantitative approaches. For the first research question, the authors use a qualitative method of multimedia content analysis to analyze the content/lyrics, image, and message of the MV [19]. This is one of the useful ways to analyze MVs. To answer the second research question, a Likert-scale questionnaire was designed in variable forms in Google form to collect data from students at the FPT university, Ho Chi Minh City. The questionnaires are designed based on the following questions:

*How did you feel about the image/lyrics/message of the MV?*

*Did social factors (including time releasing/social context/social opinion) impact your consuming the MV?*

The participant survey sample for this study consisted of 312 subjects accounting for approximately 39.49% of the

total figure of FPT University students (N=790). Only 257 were aware that they had watched the MV. As a result, the total number of students who met the criteria and were eligible for data processing was 257. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) is used to classify and support analyzing the data. The age of respondents ranged from 18 to 22 years old mainly. The majority of respondents for participants were male (61.9%, N=190) and female (35.8%, N = 110). All the survey participants were students from the University with 100% (N=312) having completed high school and learning at University.

#### IV. RESULTS

In this part, the authors analyze the content of the MV and combine the results of the survey together.

##### A. Images in the MV

According to information from the creator, the MV's image depicts the character's loneliness through footage such as being abandoned by his mother when he was born and witnessing a lack of affection from his loved ones to portray the character's loneliness to describe the lyrics "I never felt love". Colors are associated with emotions, according to studies using visual color stimuli [20]. As a result of employing this strategy, the producers are able to manipulate the color scheme to manage the atmosphere of the picture. Therefore, in addition to the factors described above, the color scheme in the MV plays a vital part in affecting the emotions and thoughts of the audience while viewing the MV. According to Mahnke, blue was connected with despair [11]; thus, the MV with such gloomy content, blue and black hues are utilized mainly in the MV to generate a sensation of sadness, somewhat negative throughout MV to match the tale and lyrics.

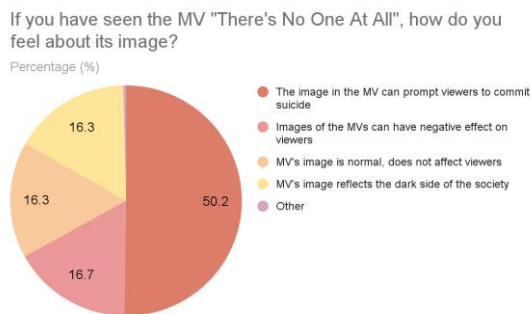


Fig. 2. FPT students' evaluation of the possible negative impact of the image of the MV.

According to the figure, the majority of survey respondents agree that the image of the MV may cause negative impacts such as encouraging viewers of the MV to think about committing suicide (50.2%, N=129), causing hurt feelings (16.7%, N=43). Less respondents believe that the MV image is normal, and does not affect viewers negatively (16.7%, N=42). It could be said that after watching the MV, these people had thoughts and understood the message that Son Tung M-TP wanted to convey through the MV, (rather than through what the singer explained later in the media, as mentioned above).

##### B. Lyrics

Some of the song's lyrics express sadness and negativity, such as "You took me, leaving nothing" "So did it feel that good, see my soul bleeding," "I never knew love," "Wishing you'd die," and the line "There's No One At All" is repeated throughout the chorus. Because sad song lyrics can sometimes elicit pleasant feelings, as when a listener feels understood by an artist, the lyrics performed by the song can influence the listener's emotions when watching the MV "There's No One At All." However, the audio version of this product is still available on internet music platforms. Therefore, the influence of lyrics in music videos will not be examined in depth in this paper because the factor of lyrics has little impact on the case of removal of MV.

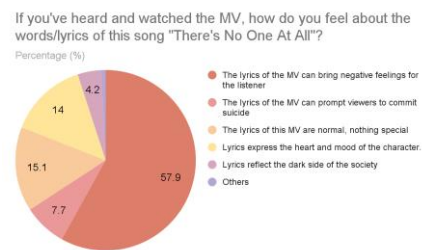


Fig. 3. FPT students' judging (multiple choice) the lyrics/lyrics of the MV.

Most of the survey respondents thought that the lyrics of the MV "There's no one at all" could have a negative impact on the listeners (58%, N=149). Meanwhile, the data table records information such as: "Normal MV Lyrics" (15.2%, N=39), and "Lyrics expressing the hearts and emotions of the characters in the MV" (14%, N=35). Similar to the result of the image, it could be said that after watching the MV, these students understood the lyrics directly through the MV, rather than through what the singer explained later in the media.

##### C. Messages

Son Tung M-TP wants the MV to be able to convey the message: "Let's understand the feelings inside lonely people, understand to love, protect, and open our hearts. before it's too late." [21].



Fig. 3. Survey data on the FPT students' understanding of the message in the MV.

Fig. 4 examines the degree of coincidence of Son Tung MTP's message with the message that the audiences interpret. Most of the survey respondents agree with the first point: Lonely people need to be understood, protected and encouraged as "There are always many people like you; you are not alone" (67.3%, N= 173). The table also records a group of people who agree with the second message:

“Reflecting the reality of society, many individuals with emotional disorders often consider suicide a way to escape. At the same time, highlight the role of people in the surrounding community to help them overcome adversity” (23.3%, N=60). It could be said that the FPT respondents mostly share and understand the overall message of the MV, which is the same as what the singer explained in the media.

*D. Social Factors: Social Context, Social Discussions and Time of Release*

There are many social factors that might impact mass audiences’ process of consuming an MV. For the purposes of this study, the authors focus on the factors: social context, time release, and popular opinions from experts and reporters, and exclude other factors such as social norms and beliefs, etc.

For the release time, Dao Le Hoa An, psychologist of the Vietnam Psychological Association, said that through the COVID-19 pandemic, the already unstable psychology of students became more and more unstable after a long time of social distancing. online learning... It’s the age when young people are in the development stage, asserting their ego, having many conflicts with parents and under a lot of pressure about studying... So, the context of the MV "There’s No One At All" depicts a psychological development taking place in the real life of many young people, especially elementary and high school students, that will affect this audience [22].

Moreover, there were diverse opinions, both sympathy, and criticism, in the media, which might impact public opinion regarding the MV. Journalist Hanh Nhi claimed that “Son Tung does not intend to promote suicide, he just wants to warn about the consequences of letting children fall into despair and helplessness” [23]. In contrast, according to Mr. Le Quang Tu Do, Director of the Department of Development and Electronic Information, "the image of the MV is dark, with a scene of jumping to commit suicide in the ending scene". Notably, just a few months before the MV was released, there were serious cases across Vietnam, in which students jumped to commit suicide with causes said to be psychological pressure. One of the most serious circumstances is the suicide of an Amsterdam high school student. It is argued that such serious and sensitive events might partly raise anxiety from parents about media products that included dark and negative messages like what the MV was conveying.

FPT University students' agreement with the following statements:					
	Total	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cultural factors, social context and the time of release/launch of an art product affect the audience's acceptance of that art product.	257	1	4	3,53	0,745
Psychologist Dao Le Hoa An-Vietnam Psychological Association statement	257	1	5	4,36	0,99
Mr. Le Quang Tu Do - Director of the Department of Development and Electronic Information's statement	257	1	5	4,21	1,098
Journalist Hanh Nhi's statement	256	1	5	4,47	0,881
Valid N (listwise)	256				

Fig. 4. FPT students assess the influence of social factors on the audience's responses to the MV.

According to Fig. 5, the majority of survey respondents strongly agree that “cultural factors, social context and time of release/launch of art products have an impact on audience reception. for that art product” (M=3.53). In terms of the degree of agreement of FPT students about their views under

the post-Covid-19 situation, the reception of a product containing harmful elements like the MV “There’s No One At All” has dramatically affected young people receiving agreement from most FPT students (M=4.36). In terms of the degree of agreement of FPT students on the negative factors in the MV that have hurt young people, the percentage of FPT students who agree with this view is relatively high (M) = 4.21). Regarding the support of the MV, the opinion of journalist Hanh Nhi about the message Son Tung wishes to convey through the MV, it can be seen that the average level of agreement with this perspective is high (M=4.47).

V. DISCUSSIONS

In the communication process, the "receiver" is the listener, reader, or observer—that is, the individual (or the group of individuals) to whom a message is directed. The receiver is called the “audience” or decoder. Receivers may be divided into two types [24]. An audience is described as “active” when they engage with a text and come to their understanding of it [25]. In this study, active audiences maybe those who are not negatively affected by the negative message from the MV. So, they did not experience any adverse effects. To be more specific, these people may still see the negative side due to the negative image of the MV; however, they understand the exact message that Son Tung M-TP promoted.

A passive audience is heavily influenced by a text and blindly accepts its meaning [25]. Passive audiences have low motivation to process information, low ability to process information, and focus on simple cues, for instance, appearances instead of content [26]. According to the definition given above, these folks may passively observe and readily accept the MV without giving the message that Son Tung M-TP wants to get through any thought. More than half of the survey responses indicated that the MV's image, content, and lyrics contained negative, suicidal elements. However, nearly a quarter of the survey respondents selected the appropriate positive message that Son Tung desired to convey. This has the unexpected consequence that not everyone who sees the negative images in the MV will be negatively affected and imitate the MV's actions. To explain this issue, many other social factors such as Vietnamese norms, beliefs, culture, etc may need to be taken into account in the future.

VI. LIMITATIONS

This paper has some limitations. Firstly, the cultural diamond model has 4 factors. However, this paper only examines the relations between a creator and mass receivers through a cultural object and selected social factors. Secondly, the article employs quantitative research methods that do not provide a data source as detailed as qualitative research methods do. For example, the survey only focused on university students, so it is not diverse in terms of age, generation, demographics, geography, etc. In the future, additional studies are recommended to investigate the perspectives of other audiences.



## VII. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, the hypothesis is tested and the research questions are answered: Son Tung M-TP as a creator touches the young audiences, like surveyed FPT students, through the MV. His viewers as receivers who comprehend and grasp its meaning, which is about sadness and suicide, will be able to replicate the actions in the MV. According to the result of the survey, of the younger generation, like students at FPT university, most of them are active audiences who have open looks at the MV. They can engage with the MV and come to their understanding of its meaning. This study also revealed an intriguing finding: if the audience simply looks at the images and lyrics of the music videos, they will feel the negativity conveyed by those two factors, which is not similar to the message that Son Tung expected the audience to comprehend. However, when summarizing and carefully considering what the MV demonstrates, the audiences understand the meaningful message attempted to convey, which makes it easier to empathize with that message. On the contrary, prior to the impact of social factors such as cultural factors and the social context at that time, some people paid more attention to the suicide image at the end of the MV rather than the assessment overview. As a result, it caused inconsistency in the analysis of that MV, resulting in controversies in the mass media.

This paper is one of the very first studies that apply the CDM to analyze the relationship between famous artists and music audiences in Vietnam from a social perspective. Specifically, this study also contributes to testing the model in 3 main aspects: examining in the Vietnamese context, examining the MV “There’s no one at all” as a cultural object transmitting the messages of the creator to mass audiences, and examining the thinking of a group of young students in Vietnam. This study shows limitations of the model such as Griswold does not explain what kind of media products can be considered as a cultural objective.

This study still has a vacuum to develop in the future. For instance, the role of creators and other social factors needed to be considered in the future to comprehensively understand the relations. Additionally, the authors can look into the cultural objective- the MV in a new light, such as how the content and images in this MV affect the viewer's psychology and behaviors. People may analyze public reactions towards the MV under the norm and cultural perspectives such as the influence of collectivist culture, Confucianism, and Buddhism. Meanwhile, young audiences who may accept the MV, people may consider the influence of Vietnam's globalization which provides them an open mind to accept diverse messages from creators.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Vu Thanh Vinh and Tong Ai Linh: conducted the research, Le Thi My Danh: framed structure of the paper, Le Hong Hai: analyzed data, Nguyen Hai Ha Phuong and Nguyen Tran Bang Bang: wrote paper. All author had approved the final version.

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