

# An exploration into users' engagement with nostalgia content on Instagram.

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# AN EXPLORATION INTO USERS' ENGAGEMENT WITH NOSTALGIA ON INSTAGRAM

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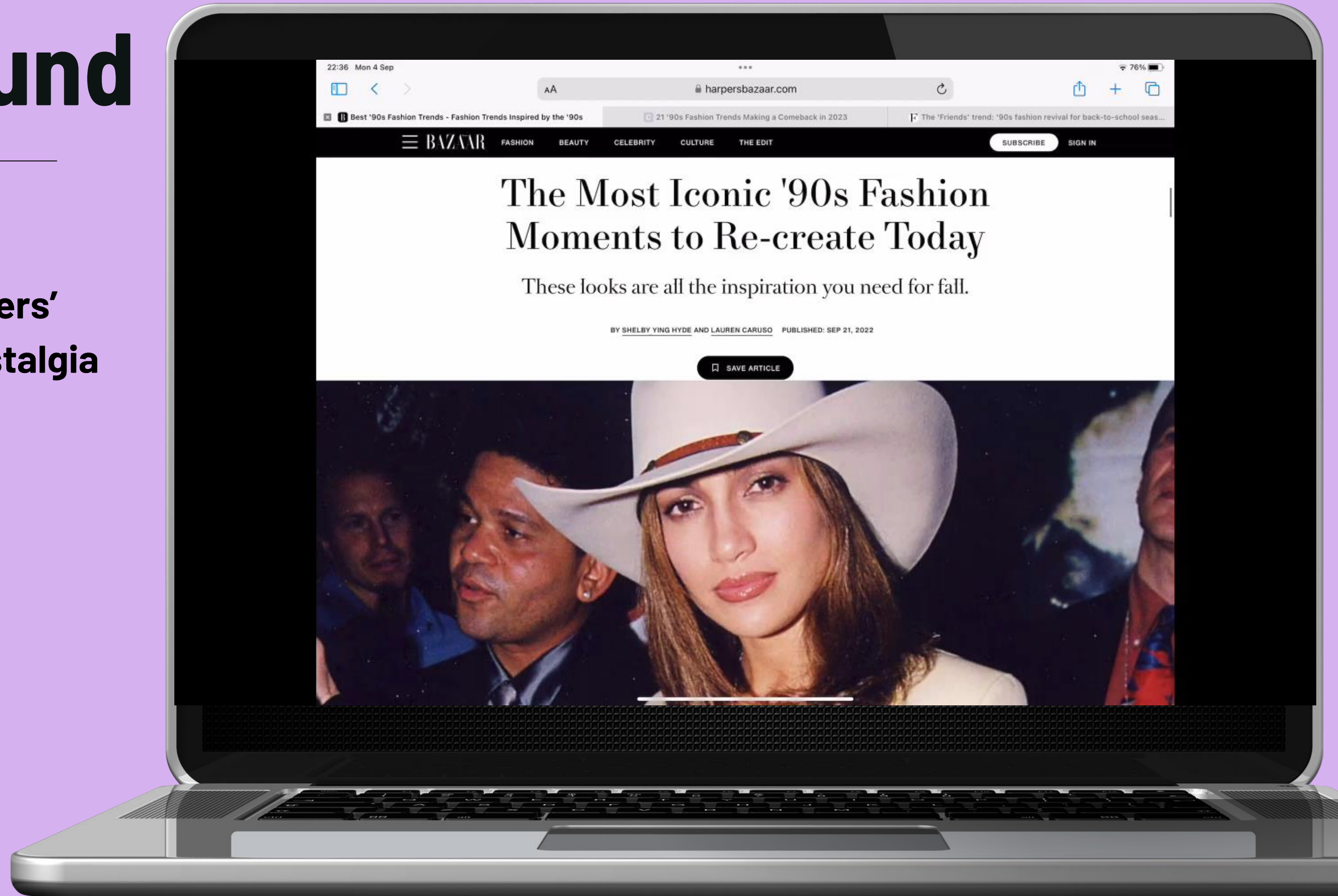
School of Creative and Cultural Business  
Robert Gordon University





# Background

**This research aims to explore Instagram users' engagement with nostalgia content.**



# Nostalgia

## Literature themes

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- **Psychiatric disorder (Rosen, 2009)**
- **Healthy nostalgia – positive (Sedikides et al, 2008), restorative and reflective (Horváth, 2018, p9)**
- **Advances in search technology on social media – “renaissance” in digital cultural memory (Villa-Nicholas, 2019 p1)**
- **Nostalgia has become fueled by visual culture (Kay, Mahoney and Shaw, 2016) – process the past, reframe narrative, document memories for the future**



symbols of the past “...a reminder of the linearity of time, and they signify something that cannot be recaptured, something familiar and safe. These symbols represent transition” (Boren, 2013, np).

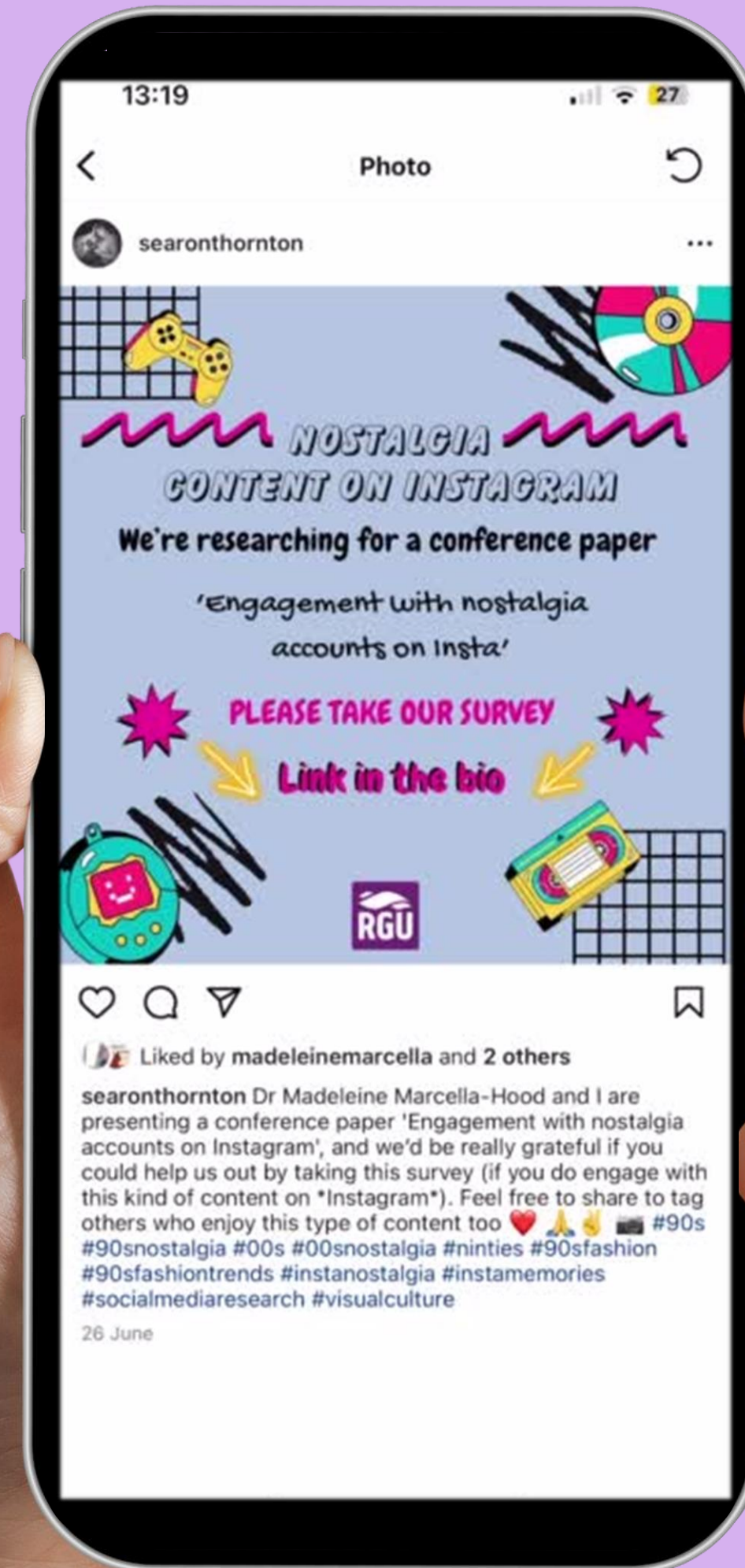


# Methodology

## Approach

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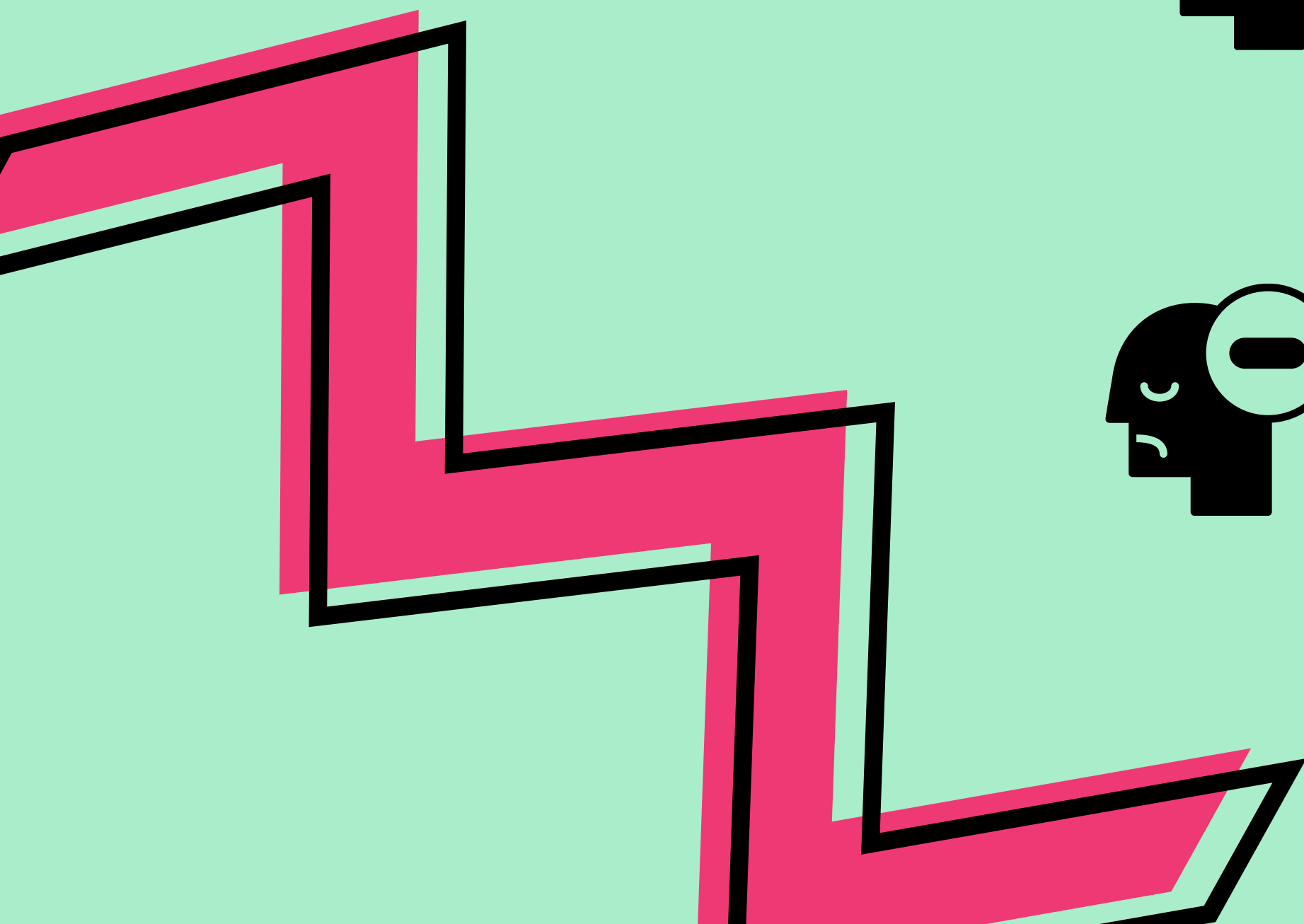
- Pragmatic approach
- Qualitative survey
- Purposive and snowball sampling
- Thematic analysis



# Respondents

Key themes

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# Types of content

## Respondent quotes

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"I'm always amazed at the associated memories it uncovers. I can remember whole days/conversations/chunks of my life just from one image."

"Recently a page I follow has been sharing images of items from the 90s. One that stuck with me was soap from the body shop in the 90s as I was instantly transported to my teenage bedroom when I saw it".



# Connecting through content

## Respondent quotes

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"It makes me feel connected in the sense that it's not just a thing that happened to me, there are so many people that share the memories and lived the same experiences. It's quite life-affirming at times."

"The collective memory as it takes you back to that point in time. And often spurs related memories."

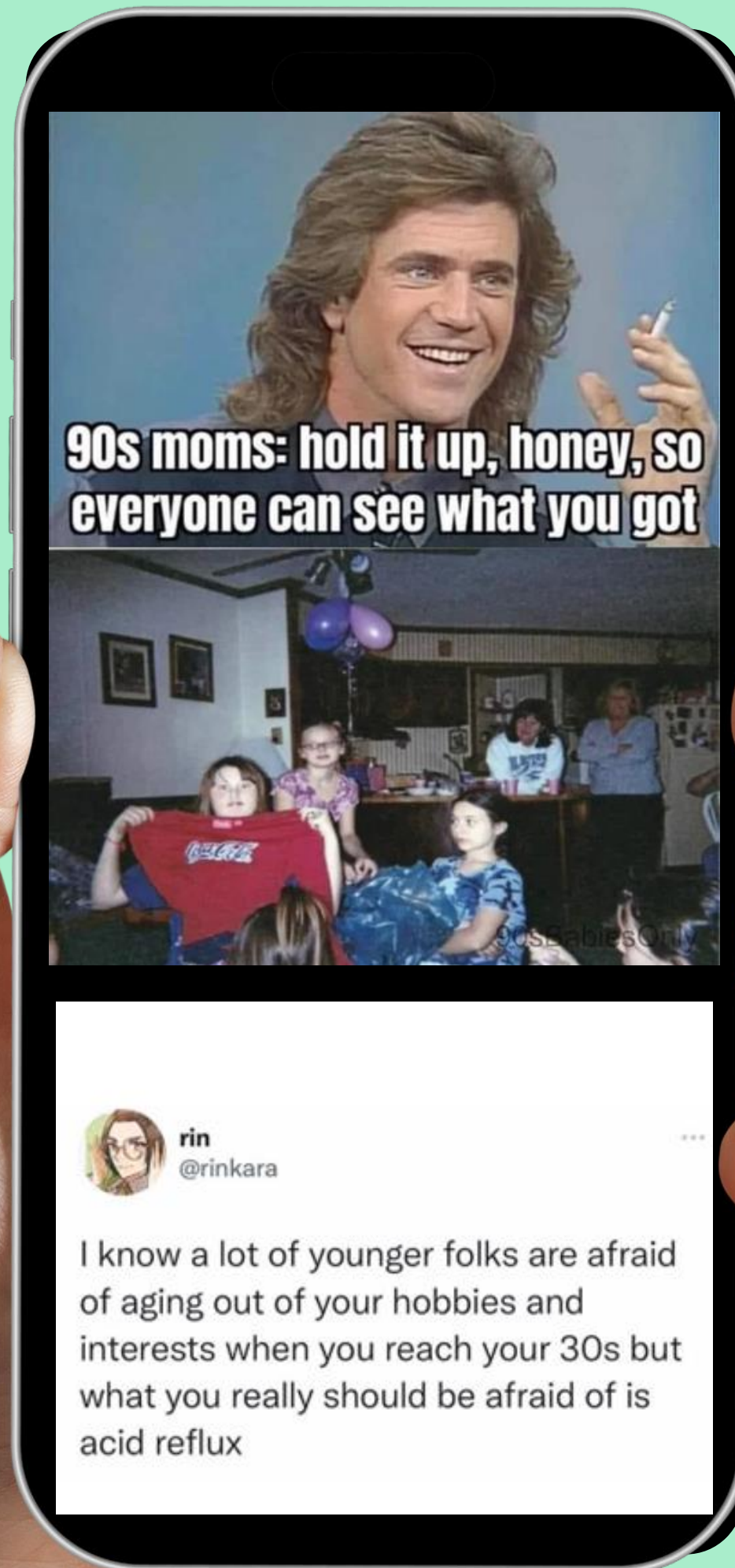




# Connecting the past to the present

Through nostalgia content

- Contributing to digital memory
- Placing nostalgia content within the current social/generational context
- “2000s kids will remember this”

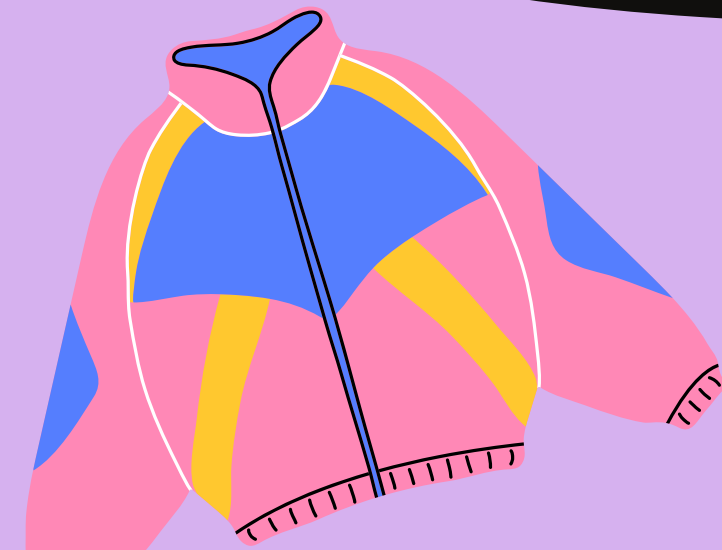




# Fashion and identity

"I feel nostalgic and appreciative when witnessing the revival of fashion trends from my own past. It evokes memories and creates a sense of connection with particular times from my past."

"Young people also need to fully commit and go for the thin eyebrows and obvious makeup lines. You can't have 90s fashion and have fabulous full eyebrows and flawless contouring."

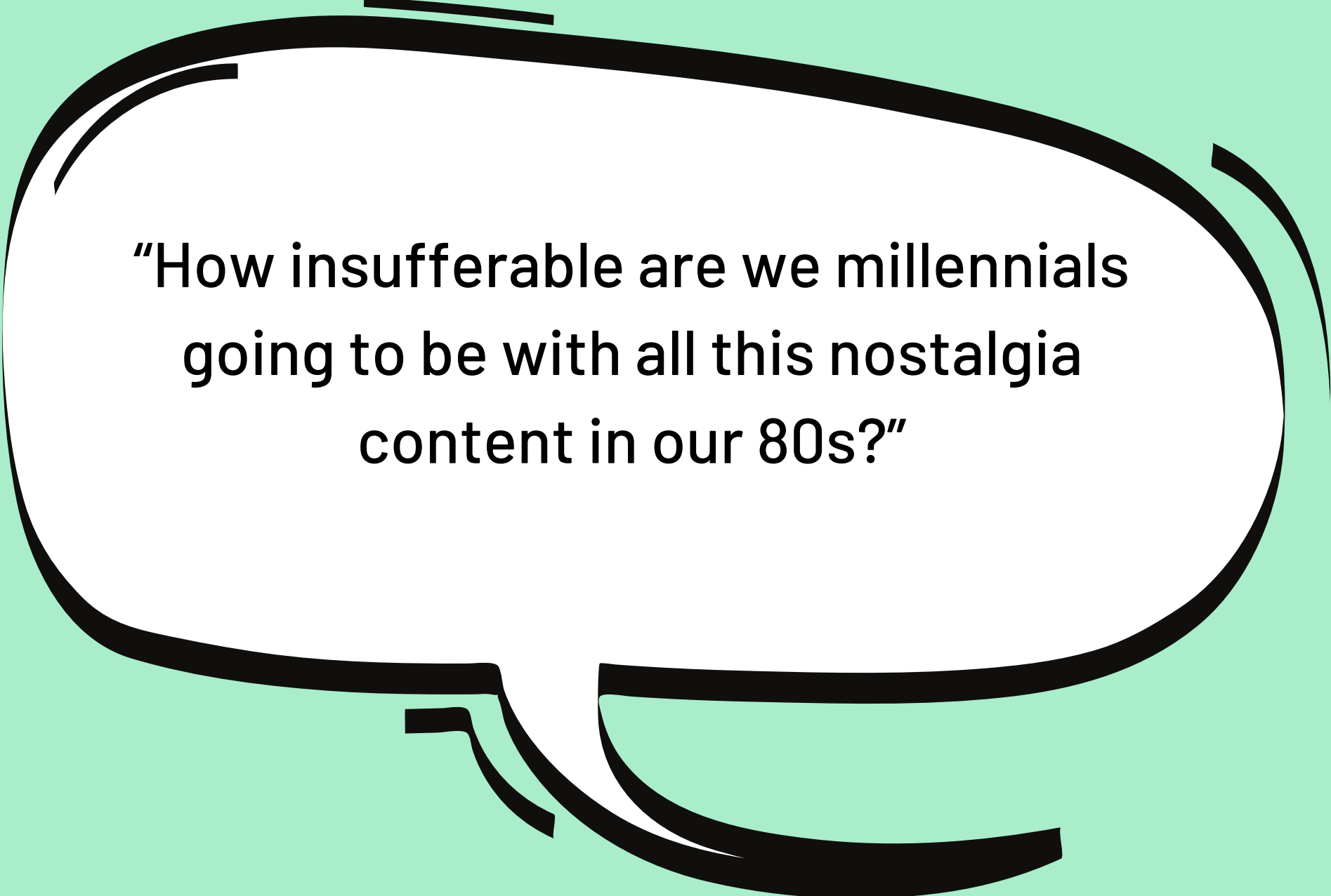


# The need to feel part of something

## Conclusion

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- **Connection – motivator and consequence**
- **Experiencing with others enhances nostalgia**
- **Participatory culture is contributing to millennial collective identity**
- **Instagram can be used to specifically elicit sensory memories and emotions for therapeutic and cathartic benefits – to be “seen, heard, part of something” and also to feel “safe”, “validated”, “accepted”, “grounded”, “magical”**



“How insufferable are we millennials going to be with all this nostalgia content in our 80s?”



# References

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