

How Cause-Related Micro-Businesses Foster Intergenerational Trust: Insights from Vietnamese Immigrant Communities in the United States

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ABSTRACT: This study explores the ways in which cause-related brand authenticity and community-centered cultural engagement help build intergenerational trust among Vietnamese immigrant communities in the United States, while also investigating how perceived generational value alignment moderates that relationship. Drawing on Social Capital Theory and Social Identity Theory, the research views intergenerational trust as a shared community resource shaped by genuine business actions, culturally grounded interactions, and common value perceptions across generations. Using a quantitative cross-sectional approach, the study gathered 385 valid responses from Vietnamese-American participants, including micro-business owners, first- and second-generation immigrants, and community stakeholders, through a structured questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale. Data analysis was conducted with SPSS 26 and involved reliability checks, exploratory factor analysis, multiple regression, and moderation testing using Hayes' PROCESS macro. The results indicate that cause-related brand authenticity ($\beta = 0.587$) and community-centered cultural engagement ($\beta = 0.430$) both have significant positive influences on intergenerational trust. In addition, perceived generational value alignment notably strengthens the link between cultural engagement and trust ($\beta = 0.498$), suggesting that shared values make community interactions more effective. Taken together, the findings show that intergenerational trust in immigrant communities arises not simply from cultural closeness but from the combined influence of authentic business practices, active cultural involvement, and perceived value alignment. By blending insights from different disciplines, this research enriches theoretical knowledge and provides useful guidance for promoting social cohesion in diaspora settings.

KEYWORDS: Intergenerational trust; Cause-related brand authenticity; Community-centered cultural engagement; Generational value alignment; Vietnamese immigrant communities.

1. INTRODUCTION

The transmission of trust from one generation to the next within immigrant communities represents a vital yet fragile element that supports social cohesion, economic involvement, and long-term community strength, especially when migration disrupts cultural continuity (Moschion & Tabasso, 2014; Dinesen & Hooghe, 2010). Studies tracking changes over time and across countries reveal that while parents do pass on some level of trust to their children, this inheritance is often reshaped—and sometimes diminished—by the institutions and integration experiences in the host society, resulting in inconsistent patterns across generations (Moschion & Tabasso, 2014). A key challenge arises from the acculturation gap, in which varying rates of adaptation and differing values between first- and second-generation immigrants create family tensions that weaken relational bonds and hinder trust development (Renzaho et al., 2017). Furthermore, intergenerational trust proves highly sensitive to surrounding conditions such as economic status, encounters with discrimination, and confidence in host-country institutions, though many existing models fail to fully capture these interconnected influences (Dinesen & Hooghe, 2010). Compounding the issue, research frequently measures trust only at the individual or family level, overlooking its broader role as a shared community resource sustained through collective practices.

Overall, prior work has examined intergenerational trust in immigrant settings mainly through related lenses like cultural value transmission, family conflicts, and social integration, rather than as a distinct community outcome influenced by small business activities. Evidence indicates that immigrant families can convey trust across generations, but the process remains gradual and heavily shaped by context (Ljunge, 2014). Recent studies on Vietnamese American youth and acculturation differences tend

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to focus on tensions, adaptation struggles, and mental health outcomes, paying limited attention to how trust might be reinforced via community institutions or everyday marketplace interactions (Nguyen et al., 2018; Shukla et al., 2025). At the same time, research on migrant entrepreneurship highlights the importance of social embeddedness and community ties but seldom links these dynamics directly to building trust between generations (Williams & Krasniqi, 2018; Yetkin & Tunçalp, 2023; Zhang et al., 2023). Similarly, marketing scholarship demonstrates that authentic branding and cause-related efforts can enhance consumer trust and involvement, yet such insights are rarely applied to immigrant community settings (Kim et al., 2021; Bhatti et al., 2023). This paper therefore aims to connect the fields of migration, entrepreneurship, and marketing by examining whether cause-related micro-businesses help strengthen community-wide intergenerational trust among Vietnamese Americans, and whether a stronger sense of alignment in generational values can amplify the benefits of cultural engagement.

This study is designed to address the following research questions: (1) To what extent does cause-related brand authenticity influence intergenerational trust within Vietnamese immigrant communities in the United States? (2) How does community-centered cultural engagement affect intergenerational trust across different generations in these communities? (3) How does perceived generational value alignment moderate the relationship between community-centered cultural engagement and intergenerational trust? This study seeks to explore the direct influence of cause-related brand authenticity on building intergenerational trust in immigrant communities. It further aims to examine the role of community-centered cultural engagement as a key socio-cultural process that helps strengthen trust between different generational groups. Finally, the research investigates whether perceived alignment in values across generations can amplify or diminish the impact of cultural engagement on fostering this form of trust. The scholarly contribution of the work stems from its interdisciplinary and community-focused approach, which brings together perspectives from migration research, entrepreneurship, and marketing. In doing so, it deepens our understanding of trust as a shared community outcome shaped by culturally rooted small business activities, while providing a fresh framework that connects everyday marketplace practices to social cohesion and intergenerational relations in immigrant settings.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Intergenerational Trust in immigrant Communities

Intergenerational trust within immigrant communities can be understood as the shared belief that members of different generations, especially first-generation immigrants and their children, will behave in dependable, supportive, and culturally mindful ways that help preserve common values and group solidarity (Uslaner, 2012; Dinesen & Hooghe, 2010). This concept goes beyond simple family-level confidence to encompass a wider community sense of assurance regarding the ongoing transmission of cultural standards and mutual responsibilities across age groups. From a theoretical standpoint, such trust plays a vital role in sustaining social capital, encouraging cooperation, and safeguarding cultural identity among immigrant populations (Putnam, 2016). When trust levels are strong, they promote greater community unity and resilience; however, when trust erodes, it can fuel tensions between generations, lower participation in group activities, and contribute to a sense of cultural disconnection (Dinesen & Hooghe, 2010). In Vietnamese-American communities specifically, acculturation differences often strain these relationships, as varying paces of cultural adaptation between parents and children lead to miscommunication and emotional distance (Nguyen et al., 2018). Research indicates that these strains are frequently associated with increased psychological stress and weaker family bonds, pointing to diminished trust (Telzer, 2011). Additionally, younger individuals navigating dual cultural identities may encounter further difficulties in developing stable trust relations (Phinney & Baldelomar, 2011). Taken together, intergenerational trust in these settings tends to vary widely depending on context, which underscores the importance of community-driven strategies to help rebuild and maintain it.

2.2. Critical Analysis of Theoretical Frameworks

2.2.1. Social Capital Theory

Social Capital Theory offers a particularly strong foundation for this research, as intergenerational trust functions as a core community asset built upon networks, mutual obligations, and common norms (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1994). Recent studies in migration highlight that trust goes far beyond a side effect of settlement; instead, it serves as a key driver of migrants' successful adaptation, overall well-being, and group flourishing. In immigrant contexts, both generalized trust and coethnic networks are closely connected to better integration, reduced psychological strain, and expanded social participation that reaches beyond ethnic enclaves (du Plooy et al., 2020; Bilodeau & White, 2016; Shin, 2025). This perspective helps explain the broader social importance of cause-related micro-businesses, which extend well beyond their commercial role. When such businesses are viewed as genuinely committed to community causes, they can serve as reliable hubs that transform everyday economic transactions into meaningful acts of reciprocity. In a similar way, community-centered cultural engagement nurtures both close bonding ties and

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wider bridging connections by encouraging repeated interactions, shared symbolic experiences, and mutual understanding between older and younger generations. Supporting evidence from recent work on migrant involvement shows that active participation in community life fosters feelings of belonging, significance, and inclusion, while research on migrant social capital consistently underscores the critical role of social ties and trust in facilitating integration and access to new opportunities (Martínez-Damia et al., 2023; Ziersch et al., 2023; Evansluong & Ramírez-Pasillas, 2019). Within this framework, cause-related brand authenticity can be seen as a mechanism that builds credibility, community-centered cultural engagement as a process that strengthens relationships, and intergenerational trust as the resulting accumulation of social capital. Perceived generational value alignment further aligns with the theory, since mutual reciprocity becomes more sustainable when individuals across generations perceive each other's intentions as consistent with shared cultural and ethical standards. Put simply, younger and older Vietnamese Americans are more inclined to place trust in the same local businesses and join the same community efforts when they sense that core values and priorities continue to connect them. This approach shifts the view of micro-businesses away from mere profit-driven entities toward their potential as important community institutions that help generate trust, solidarity, and lasting relational bonds in diaspora settings. The framework is especially compelling because it weaves together immigrant entrepreneurship, perceptions of authenticity, and communal trust through a unified lens focused on social resources and reciprocal responsibilities.

The core assumptions guiding the application of Social Capital Theory here are that trust arises from social processes rather than existing in isolation at the individual level, that ongoing community interactions build valuable relational assets, and that immigrant micro-businesses can serve as important facilitators of reciprocity within ethnic groups. The theory also posits that authenticity and cultural involvement function as meaningful signals that promote cooperation, sustained engagement, and confidence across generational lines. As a result, intergenerational trust is anticipated to develop most effectively in environments where community connections are strong, trustworthy, and grounded in commonly held norms.

2.2.2. Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory, developed by Tajfel et al. (2001), plays a vital complementary role here, as the study concerns not only social interactions but also how members of different generations understand belonging, authenticity, and the continuing relevance of their shared cultural heritage. Recent meta-analytic findings indicate that social identity exerts a clear and moderately strong influence on migrants' social integration, positioning a sense of belonging as a central driver rather than a background element in how immigrants form connections with their communities and surrounding structures (Hu & Cheung, 2024). This is particularly relevant for Vietnamese-American communities in the United States, where intergenerational trust is frequently influenced by variations in cultural adaptation, language practices, collective memories, and differing priorities. Studies focused on Vietnamese-American youth reveal that conflicts arising from acculturation differences between parents and adolescents are linked to later mental health challenges, while a comprehensive review of the literature confirms that such generational gaps continue to affect family dynamics in nuanced and lasting ways (Nguyen et al., 2018; Shukla et al., 2025). These insights suggest that intergenerational trust depends less on mere frequency of contact and more on whether generations view one another as authentic representatives of a common group identity. Social Identity Theory provides a useful lens for understanding how community-centered cultural engagement can support trust formation: activities such as heritage events, cultural rituals, and locally meaningful causes create opportunities for generations to negotiate and align their identities instead of allowing them to drift apart. Within this perspective, cause-related brand authenticity transcends its role as a simple marketing feature. Research on brand authenticity highlights that genuine brands earn appreciation by conveying integrity, consistency, reliability, and deep identity connections, with purpose-driven efforts building greater credibility and less skepticism than superficial or "woke washing" campaigns (Södergren, 2021; Walter et al., 2024). Consumer studies further demonstrate that perceived brand authenticity enhances trust and a feeling of psychological ownership, as authentic brands enable individuals to express their sense of self and connection to a larger group (Kim et al., 2021; Kumar & Kaushal, 2021). In the context of this research, a Vietnamese-American micro-business that actively backs community initiatives and participates in culturally rooted practices can serve as a shared identity symbol through which both older and younger generations affirm a collective sense of "us." Perceived generational value alignment fits naturally within Social Identity Theory, since trust tends to flourish when community members feel that their understandings of responsibility, achievement, heritage, and social duty largely coincide rather than conflict. Thus, this moderating factor is far from secondary; it captures the extent to which a unified group identity continues to feel psychologically valid across age groups. This theoretical approach helps account for why certain cultural engagement initiatives succeed in strengthening trust while others fall short: success hinges on their ability to foster identity validation among different generations. Overall, Social Identity Theory supplies the study with a robust explanatory foundation for connecting authenticity, cultural involvement, and trust to the maintenance and evolution of belonging in diaspora communities.

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The central assumptions of Social Identity Theory applied in this study are that people form trust evaluations partly based on perceived common group membership, that cultural symbols and genuine community activities help reinforce feelings of inclusion, and that intergenerational trust grows when generations see each other as preserving compatible interpretations of Vietnamese-American identity. The theory also posits that alignment in values helps minimize identity threats, whereas acculturation differences can undermine mutual recognition. As such, culturally authentic micro-businesses have the potential to function as identity-affirming environments that facilitate the development of trust across generational lines.

2.3. The Impact of Cause-Related Brand Authenticity

Cause-related brand authenticity captures the degree to which a business's social or charitable efforts are seen as genuine, driven by real values, and aligned with its fundamental character instead of appearing self-serving or purely profit-oriented (Södergren, 2021; Vredenburg et al., 2020). Drawing on Signaling Theory and Stakeholder Theory, this form of authenticity serves as a powerful credibility cue that lessens information gaps and builds stakeholder confidence by matching business actions with widely respected social principles (Connelly et al., 2011; Freeman et al., 2020). In cause-related initiatives, authenticity goes beyond surface-level gestures; it embodies moral legitimacy through a visible and sincere dedication to community well-being, which in turn deepens relational connections (Bhatti et al., 2023). Studies consistently find that when brand purpose feels authentic, it boosts trust, emotional bonds, and sustained involvement, whereas any hint of insincerity—often labeled “woke washing”—can erode reputation and spark doubt (Walter et al., 2024). Within immigrant communities, especially among Vietnamese Americans, where cultural identity, shared history, and group solidarity hold particular weight, authenticity takes on added significance. Local businesses frequently serve as cultural pillars, and their support for meaningful causes—such as safeguarding heritage or aiding community needs—can help sustain collective identity and group unity (Zhou & Bankston, 2016; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013). That said, how authenticity is received often varies depending on context, as generational differences in life experiences and levels of cultural adaptation influence its interpretation across age groups.

From a theoretical standpoint, fostering cause-related brand authenticity is anticipated to bolster intergenerational trust by conveying shared values, supporting cultural continuity, and encouraging mutual social exchange (Putnam, 2016). When members of an immigrant community view a business as truly invested in the group's welfare, it strengthens their sense of relational security and motivates participation that spans generations, ultimately elevating trust at the community level (Kim et al., 2021). Robust findings indicate that authentic branding meaningfully improves trust and loyalty by signaling integrity and creating emotional resonance (Södergren, 2021; Kumar & Kaushal, 2021). At the same time, academic discussions point to variations in the strength of this relationship. Certain research emphasizes a robust direct link between authenticity and trust development, attributing it to reduced uncertainty and clear moral compatibility (Napoli et al., 2014; Walter et al., 2024), whereas other work proposes a more moderate or conditional influence shaped by elements like consumer doubt, cultural variations, and clarity of intentions (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Bhatti et al., 2023). Viewed through a socio-economic lens, authenticity functions as symbolic capital that aids in accumulating trust, yet its success hinges on whether people see consistency between stated values and real-world actions. Consequently, in immigrant settings marked by cultural blending and generational differences, authentic involvement in community causes can serve as an effective bridge that promotes greater intergenerational trust.

H1: Cause-related brand authenticity has a positive impact on intergenerational trust in immigrant communities.

2.4. The Impact of Community-Centered Cultural Engagement

Community-centered cultural engagement describes the ways micro businesses purposefully weave community values, shared cultural symbols, intergenerational stories, and collective participation into their branding, everyday operations, and social exchanges, thereby turning ordinary commercial activities into meaningful venues for cultural preservation and connection (Yang & Giroto, 2024). Far from amounting only to ethnic visibility, it forms a relational process in which business owners and community members together build belonging and collective identity by sustaining ethnic networks, employing community languages, staging heritage events, observing cultural rituals, backing charitable efforts, and exchanging collective memories (Ivanova Gongne et al., 2024; Yang & Giroto, 2024). Contemporary perspectives frame this as culturally informed community engagement that recognizes and activates the social, familial, linguistic, and practical strengths within communities of color, instead of viewing them as shortcomings (Hood et al., 2023). Complementary views from social capital and communitarian approaches highlight how repeated involvement in common institutions nurtures reciprocity, trust, and mutual respect among participants (Kazemipur, 2012). Cultural-citizenship perspectives add that such participation serves as an assertion of belonging and recognition within the host society, particularly for migrant groups navigating identity across generations (Le et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2023).

In Vietnamese-American communities, this type of engagement holds special relevance because diaspora life has long revolved around ethnic enclaves, religious institutions, associations, family enterprises, and commemorative traditions that help

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maintain language, heritage, and collective memory while supporting adaptation to American society. Recent studies portray Vietnamese diasporic activities as not only economic but also civic, symbolic, and transnational, often connecting local identity with commitments to the homeland (Nguyen, 2022). Work on second-generation organizing further reveals that younger Vietnamese Americans actively reshape cultural practices through associations and public spaces that address influences from both their ethnic community and the broader society (Huynh, 2022). Thus, community-centered cultural engagement functions as a lively, two-way process, functioning best when businesses act as bridging institutions where first-generation experiences and second-generation reinterpretations can intersect. Philosophically, this aligns with a view of culture as something constantly reinterpreted and a communitarian understanding of trust as something grown through joint practices rather than individual decisions alone.

From this viewpoint, greater community-centered cultural engagement is expected to enhance intergenerational trust in immigrant settings. By organizing festivals, promoting language preservation, honoring refugee histories, or creating culturally familiar spaces for interaction between age groups, such businesses foster repeated contact, symbolic validation, and norms of give-and-take. Migration research broadly indicates that community involvement supports social integration, identity affirmation, neighborhood connections, and a deeper sense of belonging (Zhang et al., 2023; Yang & Xu, 2024). Trust studies similarly show that confidence among children of immigrants develops and strengthens within supportive social contexts rather than in isolation (Ljunge, 2014). In this light, active cultural engagement helps reframe potential generational divides not as inevitable conflicts but as issues that can be addressed through shared cultural encounters, allowing older members to feel valued and younger ones to feel included, which in turn supports stronger community-level trust.

Scholarly discussions, however, present some nuance regarding the strength of this relationship. One perspective emphasizes that culturally rooted engagement can have substantial effects by transforming ethnic businesses into credible community messengers, particularly valuable in immigrant contexts where mainstream institutions may feel remote or untrustworthy (Chau et al., 2023). This suggests culturally embedded participation can powerfully reinforce trust through familiar language, relationships, and norms. In contrast, a more cautious view notes that engagement does not automatically resolve generational strains. Research on Vietnamese-American families indicates that acculturation differences can heighten disagreements and emotional distance, especially when younger members adapt more quickly (Vu & Rook, 2013). Other studies on immigrant families point out that migration often interrupts typical processes of passing on values, so the benefits of engagement may be helpful yet conditional rather than guaranteed (Borkowska & Luthra, 2024). This is precisely where perceived generational value alignment serves as an insightful moderator: it helps determine whether cultural engagement is experienced as genuine shared heritage or as limited symbolic activity with weaker relational impact.

To sum up, the weight of recent evidence points to community-centered cultural engagement as a culturally grounded, socially productive process capable of strengthening intergenerational trust among Vietnamese Americans by cultivating belonging, reciprocity, and common meaning between generations. This reasoning therefore provides solid theoretical support for the proposed hypothesis:

H2: Community-centered cultural engagement has a positive impact on intergenerational trust in immigrant communities.

2.5 The moderating role of Perceived Generational Value Alignment

Perceived generational value alignment refers to the degree to which people from different age groups within a community believe that their fundamental values, cultural expectations, and social norms are compatible and mutually understood. What matters most is this subjective sense of congruence rather than any objective match, as relational outcomes hinge on how individuals interpret their shared or differing priorities. The concept draws from person-environment fit and value congruence theories, which argue that feeling aligned with others on core values improves relationship quality, group identification, and willingness to cooperate (Hoellger et al., 2021). Studies also link greater intergenerational value similarity to improved personal well-being and healthier family ties (Hoellger et al., 2023). On a wider scale, this idea connects to social cohesion theory, where commonly held moral frameworks help build trust and group solidarity (Bleidahl et al., 2018). Philosophically, it resonates with communitarian thought, which sees trust arising from joint moral commitments, and with hermeneutics, which views values as something generations actively reinterpret rather than simply inherit.

In immigrant settings like Vietnamese-American communities, perceived generational value alignment takes on particular importance because of the distinct acculturation paths followed by parents and children. Evidence indicates that harmony or mismatch in cultural adaptation strongly influences family relationships, affecting levels of conflict, closeness, and emotional connection (Harris & Chen, 2023). Among Vietnamese Americans, faster adoption of host-society norms by younger members can heighten tensions when there is little shared understanding of values (Vu & Rook, 2013). Yet more recent systematic findings

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suggest that acculturation differences do not inevitably lead to negative results; their impact often depends on surrounding circumstances and how they are interpreted (Shukla et al., 2025). In this way, perceived generational value alignment functions as a key interpretive filter that shapes whether generational differences are viewed as sources of friction or as opportunities for complementarity.

This understanding positions the construct as a moderator in the link between community-centered cultural engagement and intergenerational trust. When perceived alignment is strong, activities such as cultural festivals, heritage initiatives, and locally rooted business practices tend to work more effectively in building trust, as they carry similar meaning for both older and younger participants. In such cases, engagement creates a sense of normative harmony that deepens reciprocity and mutual respect. Supporting research shows that perceived value similarity contributes to better relational outcomes and greater psychological well-being (Belic et al., 2022), while shared values are consistently associated with higher trust and social unity (Breidahl et al., 2018). Trust itself is frequently understood as grounded in common moral expectations and collective identity (Holtug, 2025). Consequently, when generations sense alignment in their values, cultural engagement is more readily converted into genuine trust-building experiences.

Scholarly views differ, however, on how powerful this moderating influence truly is. The strong-effect position maintains that value alignment substantially boosts relational benefits by turning interactions into affirming encounters that accelerate trust development (Belic et al., 2022; Holtug, 2025). Newer work also suggests that intergenerational values are often actively shaped together rather than simply passed down, allowing aligned generations to gain more from joint activities (Luft et al., 2025). On the other hand, the moderate-effect perspective cautions that alignment is not always the deciding factor. Some reviews find inconsistent links between acculturation gaps and family outcomes, pointing instead to the stronger influence of communication patterns, overall family closeness, or economic circumstances (Shukla et al., 2025). Similarly, other researchers stress that generational relations are complex and cannot be explained by value congruence alone (Harris & Chen, 2023).

In summary, the existing literature supports the idea that perceived generational value alignment enhances the beneficial influence of community-centered cultural engagement on intergenerational trust. It does so by promoting clearer shared understanding, greater mutual recognition, and a deeper sense of common meaning across age groups. Although contextual factors may shape its strength, both theoretical reasoning and empirical findings point toward a positive moderating role.

H3: Perceived generational value alignment positively moderates the relationship between community-centered cultural engagement and intergenerational trust in immigrant communities.

Grounded in established theoretical foundations, this study advances existing scholarship by introducing the following conceptual framework:

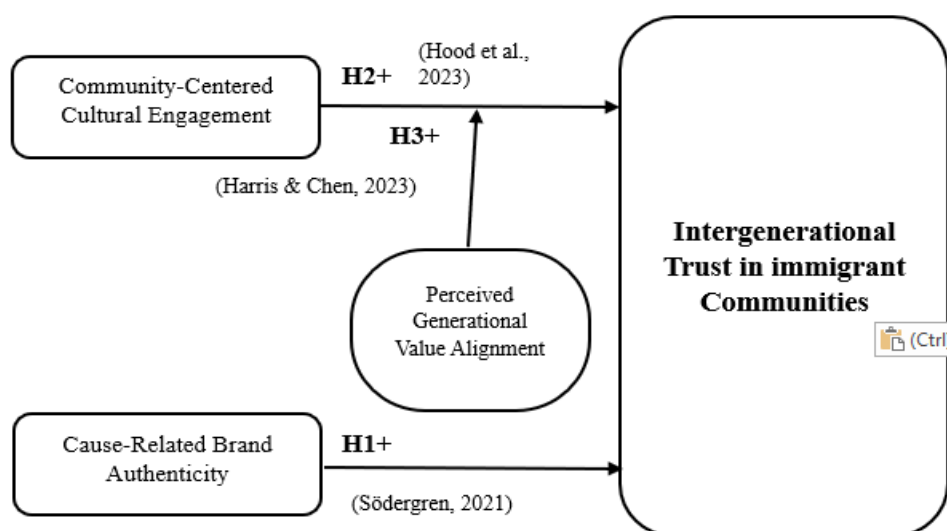


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. METHODS

3.1. Sampling Strategy

This study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional design to investigate the relationships between cause-related brand authenticity, community-centered cultural engagement, and intergenerational trust among Vietnamese-American communities in the United States, with a particular focus on the moderating influence of perceived generational value alignment. A quantitative method was

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chosen for its ability to rigorously test theoretical hypotheses, assess connections among underlying constructs, and effectively capture both main effects and interaction patterns using structured survey responses (Bryman, 2016; Hair et al., 2009). The cross-sectional approach proved suitable for providing a current picture of attitudes and social processes within these immigrant groups, especially amid ongoing changes driven by migration and cultural adaptation.

To promote diversity of viewpoints and improve representativeness, the study applied a stratified sampling technique. Participants were recruited from four important segments of Vietnamese-American communities: micro-business owners involved in community or cause-related initiatives, first-generation immigrants, second-generation Vietnamese Americans, and community leaders, cultural organizers, or social workers with insights into intergenerational issues. This balanced selection allowed the research to incorporate both economic and socio-cultural perspectives, thereby enhancing the robustness and broader applicability of the results.

Data collection relied on a self-administered online questionnaire created with Google Forms and distributed through Vietnamese community networks, social media platforms, cultural associations, and professional channels. The survey was constructed by adapting established scales from previous research to better fit the immigrant context. Measures for cause-related brand authenticity drew from well-known branding literature (Napoli et al., 2014; Södergren, 2021), items for community-centered cultural engagement were based on studies of community involvement and cultural inclusion (Hood et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2023), intergenerational trust scales came from migration and social capital research (Ljunge, 2014; Bilodeau & White, 2016), and perceived generational value alignment items were informed by value congruence scholarship (Hoellger et al., 2023; Breidahl et al., 2018). All questions used a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) to allow respondents to express their views with appropriate nuance (Brown, 2011). The final dataset consisted of approximately 385 valid responses, which satisfied guidelines for multivariate analysis and provided sufficient statistical power (Hair et al., 2009).

3.2. Data Analysis

Analysis was performed using SPSS version 26 and Hayes' Process macro (Hayes, 2022). The process started with descriptive statistics to summarize participant characteristics and check data distribution. Scale reliability was evaluated through Cronbach's alpha, with all constructs surpassing the 0.70 threshold and demonstrating good internal consistency (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). An exploratory factor analysis using principal component extraction and varimax rotation was conducted next, retaining items with loadings above 0.50 to support construct validity.

Hypothesis testing involved multiple regression analysis to assess the direct effects of cause-related brand authenticity and community-centered cultural engagement on intergenerational trust, while controlling for variables such as age group, migration generation, and level of community involvement to minimize potential confounding influences (Shrestha, 2020). The moderating effect of perceived generational value alignment was tested via moderated regression in PROCESS, allowing for accurate evaluation of interaction terms and conditional patterns (Hayes, 2022). Significance was assessed at the $p < 0.05$ level, and interaction effects were explored further through simple slope analysis to highlight variations at high and low levels of value alignment.

In summary, this methodological strategy delivered a thorough and rigorous examination of the hypotheses, with solid attention to reliability, validity, and moderation effects. It thus established a strong empirical basis for exploring how micro-business practices can support intergenerational trust within immigrant communities.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Descriptive Statistical Analysis

Table 1. Cross-Tabulation of Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Category	Percentage (%)
Role within Vietnamese Community in the U.S.	Micro-business owner / entrepreneur	28%
	First-generation immigrant (born in Vietnam)	34%
	Second-generation Vietnamese American (born in the U.S.)	18%
	Community leader / cultural organizer / social worker	12%
	Other	8%
	Total	100%
Length of Residence in the U.S.	Less than 5 years	16%

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	5–10 years	27%
	11–20 years	31%
	More than 20 years	26%
	Total	100%
Participation in Vietnamese Community Activities	Never	9%
	Rarely	18%
	Occasionally	29%
	Frequently	26%
	Very frequently	18%
	Total	100%
Age Group	Under 18	6%
	18–25	24%
	26–35	33%
	36–50	22%
	Above 50	15%
	Total	100%

Source: (The authors, 2026)

Table 1 outlines the key background characteristics of survey participants from the Vietnamese community in the United States. In terms of roles, first-generation immigrants born in Vietnam formed the largest group at 34%, followed closely by micro-business owners and entrepreneurs at 28%, highlighting a sample rich in migration experience and economic initiative. Second-generation Vietnamese Americans made up 18%, while community leaders and cultural organizers accounted for 12%. Regarding length of stay in the U.S., the highest share had resided there for 11–20 years (31%), with 5–10 years (27%) and over 20 years (26%) also well represented, pointing to a largely settled immigrant population. On community involvement, occasional participation was most common (29%), trailed by frequent engagement (26%), which suggests a moderate yet meaningful level of cultural and social activity. As for age, the 26–35 bracket dominated at 33%, followed by the 18–25 group (24%) and those aged 36–50 (22%), reflecting an overall youthful and dynamic sample.

4.2. Reliability analysis

Table 2: Reliability analysis of “Intergenerational Trust in Immigrant Community”.

Reliability Statistics				
Cronbach's Alpha		N of Items		
.754		4		
Item-Total Statistics				
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
IT1	7.098	4.397	.701	.738
IT2	7.555	4.952	.713	.726
IT3	6.026	7.358	.695	.738
IT4	6.397	7.120	.728	.737

Source: (The authors, 2026)

Where the survey indicators labeled IT1 to IT4 corresponded directly to items 1 through 4 in the questionnaire and were specifically developed to operationalize the latent construct of Intergenerational Trust in Immigrant Community.

Table 2 shows that every indicator achieved strong corrected item–total correlations, well above the standard 0.30 threshold, with values ranging from 0.695 to 0.728. This pattern clearly demonstrates good item discrimination. The scale as a whole displayed satisfactory reliability, as reflected by a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.754, which comfortably surpassed the recommended minimum of 0.70 and pointed to acceptable internal consistency (Hair et al., 2009). In addition, the alpha values if any item were deleted fell between 0.726 and 0.738, all lower than the overall coefficient, meaning that dropping any single item would weaken the scale’s reliability. These results suggest that each indicator played a valuable role in measuring the underlying construct. The

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uniformly high item–total correlations further support the internal coherence of the instrument (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Consequently, all four items were kept for further analysis, affirming the solid and dependable measurement of intergenerational trust in the present study.

4.3. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

Table 3: Factor Loading Matrix.

Rotated Component Matrix ^a			
Component with loading factors			
1	2	3	4
IT1 .705	BA1 .640	CE1 .712	VA1 .696
IT2 .756	BA2 .685	CE2 .720	VA2 .705
IT3 .750	BA3 .669	CE3 .700	VA3 .708
IT4 .969	BA4 .599	CE4 .731	VA4 .695
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.			
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.			
a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.			

Source: (The authors, 2026)

Where the measurement items labeled IT1–IT4, BA1–BA4, CE1–CE4, and VA1–VA4 were systematically developed to operationalize the dependent construct, two independent constructs, and the moderating variable, with each latent dimension assessed through multiple carefully designed indicators.

Table 3 reveals that the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) yielded a clean four-factor solution that aligned exactly with the constructs outlined in the research model. All items achieved factor loadings above the accepted 0.50 threshold, ranging from 0.640 to 0.756, which pointed to solid convergent validity and effective representation of their respective constructs (Hair et al., 2009). Importantly, each item loaded clearly onto its intended factor without any meaningful cross-loadings, thereby supporting adequate discriminant validity among the factors. Consequently, no items needed to be dropped from the model. Overall, these results offer strong empirical evidence for the validity and reliability of the measurement scales used in this study, confirming their appropriateness for the analyses that followed.

4.4. Multiple linear regression model

Table 4: Coefficients^a.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	8.267	0.705		11.73	.000
BA	0.570	0.165	0.587	3.45	.001
CE	0.593	0.172	0.430	3.45	.001

a. Dependent Variable: IT

Source: (The authors, 2026)

Where IT represents the mean score of IT1–IT4; BA denotes the mean of BA1–BA3; and CE reflects the mean of CE1–CE3.

Table 4 displays the regression outcomes, revealing that the significance levels for both independent variables fell well below the conventional 0.05 threshold. This confirms that BA and CE each exert a statistically significant influence on the dependent variable. Notably, BA showed a stronger standardized beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.587$) than CE ($\beta = 0.430$), highlighting its greater contribution to intergenerational trust (IT). The positive direction of these coefficients indicates that higher levels of BA and CE are linked to increased intergenerational trust within the Vietnamese community. Taken together, these results offer clear empirical backing for the proposed hypotheses and underscore the important roles played by both constructs in accounting for differences in the outcome variable.

4.5. Moderator analysis

Table 5: Results analysis of “Perceived Generational Value Alignment”.

Model: 1 Y: IT X: CE W: VA Sample Size: 385

OUTCOME VARIABLE: SSCP Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	dl1	dl2	p
.731	.534	.570	5.302	3.000	381.000	.000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
(Constant)	2.850	0.243	11.73	.000	2.372	3.328
CE	0.412	0.087	4.74	.000	0.241	0.583
VA	0.365	0.082	4.45	.000	0.204	0.526
Int_1	0.498	0.051	3.88	.000	0.098	0.298

Source: (The authors, 2026)

Where VA was operationalized as the average composite score of items VA1 through VA4.

Table 5 presents the results for the interaction term (Int_1), which produced a highly significant p-value of 0.000—well below the standard 0.05 threshold. This finding delivers clear statistical support for the moderating effect of perceived generational value alignment (VA) on the link between CE and intergenerational trust (IT). Moreover, the positive coefficient associated with the interaction ($\beta = 0.498$) suggests that greater alignment in generational values enhances the positive relationship between CE and IT. Put differently, the effect of CE on intergenerational trust grows stronger when perceived value alignment is higher. Overall, these outcomes provide solid empirical backing for accepting the proposed moderating hypothesis.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Result Summary

Both cause-related brand authenticity and community-centered cultural engagement emerged as powerful predictors of intergenerational trust among Vietnamese immigrant communities, with standardized regression coefficients of 0.587 and 0.430, respectively. In addition, perceived generational value alignment played a notable moderating role, amplifying the positive link between community-centered cultural engagement and intergenerational trust through an interaction coefficient of 0.498. In short, these results lend strong empirical support to all the proposed hypotheses and offer solid validation for the conceptual framework developed in this study.

5.2. Theoretical Implications

The results provide strong empirical backing for H1, highlighting cause-related brand authenticity as a potent driver of intergenerational trust in Vietnamese immigrant communities. This aligns with the view that authenticity helps lower uncertainty and conveys moral alignment, thereby fostering greater trust (Napoli et al., 2014; Walter et al., 2024). The notably high standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.587$) further supports Södergren’s (2021) assertion that genuine brand actions create emotional connection and credibility. At the same time, the present study extends previous consumer-focused perspectives by showing that authenticity also functions as a form of social capital at the community level, in keeping with Putnam (2016). While the findings somewhat temper the idea that authenticity’s influence depends heavily on skepticism or cultural context (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Bhatti et al., 2023), the robust statistical significance observed here suggests that, within close-knit diaspora settings, authenticity is more consistently recognized as a marker of shared values. Overall, this research endorses the notion that authenticity acts as symbolic capital capable of bridging generational gaps, rather than a fragile or highly situational factor.

The empirical support for H2 confirms that community-centered cultural engagement meaningfully boosts intergenerational trust, although its effect size ($\beta = 0.430$) calls for a more measured interpretation. These outcomes resonate with social capital and communitarian theories, which stress that ongoing cultural interactions build reciprocity and shared understanding (Kazemipur, 2012; Zhang et al., 2023). Echoing Ljunge (2014), trust appears here as a collective outcome shaped by common experiences rather than an individual trait. However, the moderate coefficient offers only partial endorsement of claims that cultural engagement can single-handedly overcome generational divides (Chau et al., 2023). Instead, it points to the limits of engagement in addressing deeper acculturation challenges, consistent with more cautious perspectives (Vu & Rook, 2013; Borkowska & Luthra, 2024). In this light, the study takes a balanced position: it recognizes cultural engagement as a valuable

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relational tool while cautioning against overly optimistic expectations, underscoring the need to view it within wider socio-cultural contexts.

The results offer compelling empirical support for H3, showing that perceived generational value alignment substantially strengthens the positive relationship between cultural engagement and intergenerational trust ($\beta = 0.498$). This lends credence to the strong-effect viewpoint that value congruence improves relational outcomes by fostering shared meaning and easing identity tensions (Belic et al., 2022; Holtug, 2025). The findings are consistent with Social Identity Theory, which posits that trust develops not just through repeated interactions but also through a sense of identity compatibility (Hu & Cheung, 2024). At the same time, the study questions the moderate-effect stance that minimizes the importance of value alignment relative to factors like communication or economic circumstances (Shukla et al., 2025; Harris & Chen, 2023). Although those elements matter, the robust interaction effect underscores value alignment as a key lens that determines whether cultural engagement feels authentic and impactful or merely surface-level. In this way, the research endorses the growing perspective that intergenerational values are actively co-constructed rather than simply passed down (Luft et al., 2025), highlighting alignment as a vital process that turns cultural participation into effective trust-building.

5.3. Practical Implications

The findings regarding H1 indicate that cause-related brand authenticity serves as more than a symbolic marketing instrument; it functions as a strategic resource for promoting intergenerational cohesion in immigrant communities. On a practical level, Vietnamese micro-businesses would benefit from moving past token cause-related efforts toward sustained, genuine commitments—such as backing cultural heritage projects or community support programs. This approach echoes the idea that authenticity acts as a powerful credibility signal when business actions consistently match stated values (Södergren, 2021; Connelly et al., 2011). Community leaders and policymakers can further encourage transparent, value-aligned business practices, enabling local enterprises to become important institutions for building trust. Nevertheless, to guard against “woke washing,” businesses must maintain clear consistency between their communications and real-world actions, lest they risk undermining credibility (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

The findings for H2 suggest that community-centered cultural engagement can play a meaningful role in strengthening intergenerational trust, encouraging businesses to act as cultural facilitators rather than simply economic players. In practice, Vietnamese micro-businesses and community groups should develop inclusive programs—such as intergenerational festivals, language workshops, and heritage storytelling sessions—that create regular opportunities for older and younger members to interact. These efforts help build social capital through shared experiences and mutual support (Kazemipur, 2012; Zhang et al., 2023). However, the moderate effect size indicates that cultural engagement by itself may not be enough to fully close generational gaps. Community leaders should therefore combine such initiatives with approaches that directly tackle acculturation differences and conflicting values (Vu & Rook, 2013). Ultimately, successful programs need to go beyond encouraging participation and actively promote open dialogue and deeper understanding between generations.

For H3, the clear moderating influence of perceived generational value alignment underscores the importance of ensuring cultural activities carry similar meaning across age groups. Practically, businesses and organizations would benefit from jointly designing cultural initiatives with contributions from both first- and second-generation Vietnamese Americans so that the activities reflect commonly held values. This approach is consistent with research showing that value congruence improves cooperation, relationship quality, and trust (Belic et al., 2022; Breidahl et al., 2018). In addition, educational and communication efforts should focus on reinterpreting cultural identity in ways that blend tradition with contemporary realities, thereby narrowing perceived value differences. Without deliberate alignment, cultural engagement may come across as tokenistic or disconnected, reducing its potential impact. Accordingly, practitioners should view value alignment as an active process to be carefully managed rather than an automatic outcome, as it plays a decisive role in determining the success of trust-building efforts.

5.4. Limitations

Although this study makes several meaningful contributions, it is not without limitations. Its cross-sectional design means it can only identify associations rather than track how intergenerational trust evolves over time, which limits causal conclusions. In addition, the use of self-reported survey data introduces potential issues such as common method bias and subjective bias, especially when measuring concepts like authenticity and value alignment. The sample was also restricted to Vietnamese immigrant communities in the United States, so the findings may not readily apply to other ethnic groups or national settings that operate under different cultural and institutional conditions. Furthermore, important influences like socioeconomic status, experiences of discrimination, and institutional trust were not included in the model, which may have reduced the framework's overall explanatory strength.

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5.5. Future Research Directions

Future research could address these gaps by employing longitudinal or panel designs to observe changes in trust dynamics and establish firmer causal links. Broadening the scope to include various immigrant communities and different geographical locations would improve generalizability and enable useful comparisons across cultural and institutional contexts. Researchers might also incorporate more objective behavioral indicators, such as actual participation rates in community events, to complement perceptual measures. Exploring additional moderators or mediators including institutional trust, digital communication patterns, or socioeconomic mobility could provide a richer picture of the processes shaping intergenerational trust. Finally, qualitative methods would offer valuable depth by revealing how individuals from different generations actually experience and interpret authenticity and cultural engagement in daily community life.

5.6. Conclusion

This study contributes to the understanding of intergenerational trust in immigrant communities by drawing together ideas from marketing, social capital theory, and identity theory. The results show that cause-related brand authenticity and community-centered cultural engagement act as important drivers of trust, with perceived generational value alignment playing a key role in strengthening these links. By framing micro-businesses as socio-cultural actors rather than purely economic ones, the research emphasizes their potential to support generational cohesion. It also highlights that trust does not arise automatically from interaction alone but relies on shared meanings and aligned values. In sum, the study delivers both theoretical insight and practical guidance, offering a balanced framework for how culturally grounded business practices can help maintain trust and social cohesion within diaspora settings.

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APPENDIX: Survey

Table 6. Survey Questionnaire Background information

1. Which of the following best describes your role within the Vietnamese community in the United States?	Micro-business owner entrepreneur	First-generation immigrant (born in Vietnam)	Second-generation Vietnamese American (born in the U.S.)	Community leader / cultural organizer / social worker	Other (Please specify):
2. How long have you been living in the United States?	Less than 5 years	5–10 years	11–20 years	More than 20 years	

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3. How frequently do you participate in Vietnamese community or cultural activities (e.g., festivals, events, associations)?	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Very frequently
4. What is your age group?	Under 18	18–25	26–35	36–50	Above 50

No.	Variables	Coded Observed Variables	Content
1.	Intergenerational Trust	IT1	I believe that different generations within the Vietnamese community can rely on each other in a trustworthy and supportive manner (Uslaner, 2012; Dinesen & Hooghe, 2010).
		IT2	Our organization's supply chain practices have significantly There is a strong sense of mutual understanding and cooperation between older and younger generations in my community (Putnam, 2016; Ljunge, 2014).
		IT3	Interactions between generations in the Vietnamese community are generally characterized by trust and shared responsibility (Dinesen & Hooghe, 2010; Bilodeau & White, 2016).
		IT4	Cultural continuity across generations strengthens trust and solidarity within the Vietnamese community (Nguyen et al., 2018; Telzer, 2011).
2.	Cause-Related Brand Authenticity	BA1	I perceive that Vietnamese micro-businesses genuinely support community-related causes rather than acting for self-interest (Södergren, 2021; Bhatti et al., 2023).
		BA2	The social and charitable activities of local businesses reflect their true values and long-term commitment to the community (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Connelly et al., 2011).
		BA3	When a business engages in cause-related activities, it enhances my trust because it signals sincerity and credibility (Kim et al., 2021; Napoli et al., 2014).
		BA4	Our green procurement initiatives contribute significantly to reducing waste, emissions, and environmental risks in the supply chain (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Walter et al., 2024).
3.	Community-Centered Cultural Engagement	CE1	Vietnamese micro-businesses actively promote cultural traditions and community values through their activities (Hood et al., 2023; Kazemipur, 2012).
		CE2	Participation in community cultural events (e.g., festivals, traditions) helps strengthen relationships between generations (Le et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2023).
		CE3	Community-centered cultural engagement creates shared experiences that enhance belonging and mutual understanding across generations (Martinez-Damia et al., 2023; Ziersch et al., 2023).
		CE4	Cultural activities organized by local businesses encourage interaction and cooperation between older and younger community members (Yang & Xu, 2024; Ljunge, 2014).

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4.	Perceived Generational Value Alignment	VA1	I feel that younger and older generations in the Vietnamese community share similar core values and beliefs (Hoellger et al., 2021; Breidahl et al., 2018).
		VA2	There is a strong alignment in cultural expectations and social norms between different generations in my community (Harris & Chen, 2023; Vu & Rook, 2013).
		VA3	Differences in generational values are generally understood and accepted within the Vietnamese community (Shukla et al., 2025; Hoellger et al., 2023).
		VA4	Shared values across generations strengthen mutual respect and trust within the community (Belic et al., 2022; Breidahl et al., 2018).

Survey link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScY2zj_YWjGtULn1l1AANL7dcChuBWvA3EQoAbn3TL1GSYZyg/viewform?usp=header
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/15xcZxO9dl2zsLIP9NLa4ZOenLaUrZ9WNJZy_WaE9aIA/edit



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