

## “We consume to forget; we collect to believe”: Resistance, nostalgia, and VHS technologies in 21st century Greek video cultures

Ursula-Helen Kassaveti, Hellenic Open University, School of Social Sciences/+MATEK Project, Thessaloniki International Film Festival, Greece  
ursulacassavetes@gmail.com

### Abstract

Almost 50 years after the VCR's (Video Cassette Recorder) worldwide penetration in the international entertainment market, this paper will explore VCR-use-related and VCR-viewing-related activities, and the cultural practices of the Greek video cultures, particularly videotape collectors, in the 21st century. Rooted in various disciplines, the article aims to illuminate the persistent nature of VHS collectors' previous entertainment routines. From owning a VCR device and maintaining their videotape collections to enriching them with new acquisitions from video libraries and online buys, Greek videotape aficionados' practices show continuities and discontinuities from the past. Furthermore, it will explore how these practices have influenced their perception of current uses and gratifications of VHS technologies, revealing a perspective rooted in (tech) nostalgia. Moreover, the article will argue that the enduring presence and resilience of VHS technologies can be regarded as a testament to collective memory, a resistance to the digitalization of entertainment, and a longing for simpler ways of life, particularly in the aftermath of the 2007–2008 financial recession and the rise of new technologies.

### Keywords

VCR, VHS, VHS collectors, nostalgia, analog media, VCR-related activities, direct-to-video films

## 1 Introduction

The aftermath of the 2007–2008 financial crisis generated a wave of nostalgia (Boym, 2001; Guffey, 2006), prompting a reimagining and reassessment of what may have been considered “dead media” (Parikka, 2012, pp. 3, 5). Although Japanese electronics company Funai ceased the production of VCR (Video Cassette Recorder) appliances in 2016 (Sun & Yan, 2016), VHS technologies, such as VHS devices, camcorders, and cassette tapes, continue to consistently reappear in our daily technical, cultural, and aesthetic discussions. This persistence can primarily be observed in online video sharing and social media platforms. For instance, users worldwide share their digitized home VHS tapes on YouTube, driven by a clear desire to reminisce about the past. Moreover, music channels like EELF push the boundaries of *vidding* (Turk, 2010, pp. 88–89) by featuring electronic music releases alongside home and amateur videos. VHS technologies, including camcorders and

cassettes, see a revival for technical, stylistic, and artifact value. Examples include filmmaker Harmony Korine, who used analog camcorders for *Trash Humpers* (2009), even selling limited VHS cassettes with the film, or the horror anthology *V/H/S* (since 2012) that showcases “found footage” technique with VHS cameras.

This tension of “technostalgia” (van der Heijden, 2015, pp. 104–108) is abundantly evident in our contemporary media culture, as the interplay of materiality, aesthetics, and the past reveal novel cultural practices. There is a growing fascination with older, primarily analog, media technologies and their associated practices, often described as expressions of nostalgia, vintage appeal, or “retromania” (Reynolds, 2011; van der Heijden, 2015, p. 103). As the prevalence of technostalgia, the act of recalling past media technologies in present memory practices (van der Heijden, 2015, p. 104), continues to rise, “cultures of mediatization” (Hepp, 2013, p. 4) and fan cultures begin to form around



specific dead or obsolete media. One of them is video culture (Willett, 2009).

This article aims to explore the enduring significance of VHS technologies (hardware and software) in contemporary domestic entertainment. Focusing on Greek VHS cassette collectors, who remain dedicated users nearly five decades after video players became prevalent, the study delves into usage patterns, viewing habits, and the role these cultures play in collective cultural memory. By investigating the continuities and changes in entertainment routines, the research highlights how these cultures resist digitalization and intangibility, rooted in a perspective of (tech)nostalgia.

## 2 Video and its audiences: Challenges and complexities in Greece and beyond

From AMPEX's early experimentation with magnetic tape, to different formats and the VCR's great popularity from the late 1970s onwards, reveals how video would come to transform domestic entertainment. So far, the existing academic literature on VHS technologies focuses on video, and it explores the medium's predominant technological use through a cluster of social, cultural, and historical processes (Armes, 1988; Dobrow, 1990; Levy, 1989; Marlow & Secunda, 1991; Newman, 2014) that comes from both a synchronic and a diachronic perspective. In the first instance, a backward glance over the VCR's worldwide penetration figures in the 1980s (Ganley & Ganley, 1987; Tydeman & Kelm, 1986) shows the medium's prevalence in home environments and the significance of domestic viewing routines. Also, it helps us conceptualizing aspects of consumption and spectatorship (Benson-Allott, 2013; Cubitt, 1991; Gray, 1992). In the second instance, VCR as a tangible medium has become a dialectic within the frame of media archaeology (Zielinski, 1985), or it encourages considerations of new cultural connotations based on its software (VHS) and its distribution via video libraries (Greenberg, 2008; Herbert, 2014).

During its prime, scholars also directed their attention to various audiences and how the VHS technologies influenced fam-

ily dynamics (Morgan, Alexander, Shanahan, & Harris, 1990) or altered their television viewing habits, e.g., Krugman & Gopal's (1991) engagement findings. Uses and gratification theory gauged VHS satisfaction, like the Israeli study by Cohen, Levy, and Golden (1988) on home entertainment. Besides, Lin's work (1992) identified three critical VCR functions: entertainment, displacement, and social goals. In the meantime, VCRs broadened choices (van den Bulck, 1999), with VHS as family time (Winn, 2009).

Research on VHS technologies in Greece has been notably limited (Kassaveti, 2014, 2016). Greek media scholars overlooked VHS technologies and its opportunistic, non-professional local video production with low-budget aesthetics during the 1980s. This led to a restricted interest in contemporary VHS usage and cultural practices or Greek direct-to-video films in original VHS format. Whatever the case may be, the history of VHS technologies in Greece reveals an intriguing and overlooked aspect that sheds light on the social and cultural implications of their use within a local context. Notably, between 1982 and 1987, there was a remarkable 900 % increase in VHS devices sales within the Greek market (Kassaveti, 2014, p. 182). This surge can be attributed to the profound sociopolitical changes occurring in Greek society in the 1980s (Kassaveti, 2014). The ascent of the quasi-socialist PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Movement) government, driven by a populist agenda, encouraged working and middle-class consumers to focus on the ownership of durable goods, such as television and VHS appliances (Kassaveti, 2014, pp. 184–187). Owning a VHS equipment became a symbol of social mobility and prosperity, and it was intricately connected to the emerging petit bourgeois aspirations for identification with the upper classes and smoother integration into society.

Yet, the growth of VHS technologies in Greece brings forth complexities. State television's political ties (Papathanassopoulos, 2010) and the 1980s media landscape with two unpopular channels led to a rise of direct-to-video film circuit as an alternative voice. VHS technologies' decline matched deregulation and private TV stations' arrival, offering varied entertainment. This shift led

video libraries to close or adjust for the DVD era in the early 2000s.

The advent of the high-speed Internet in Greece in 2004 (Mallas, 2017) facilitated the growing prominence of illegal downloading services, but also allowed for renewed access to “lost” direct-to-video films of the 1980s. With the emergence of social media platforms, video films from the 1980s gained even more visibility and collecting older VHS tapes gradually started to take root. People of various backgrounds started to share their collections or knowledge of various 1980s movies and uploaded them on social networking sites, but also used them to trade video cassettes and organize public screenings. Additionally, the Gagarin Film Festival for Cult Cinema, launched by the late filmmaker Nicholas Triantafyllides, continuously showcased Greek direct-to-video films from 2002 until a few years ago. The times of the Great Recession (2007–2008) apparently influenced Greece, and the 1980s culture came to the spotlight as a nostalgic trend (Zestanakis, 2016).

### 3 Research design, methodology, and ethics

While quantitative and qualitative research on Greek television and its audiences play a crucial role in understanding the different facets of Greek society and media culture (Papathanassopoulos, 2000; Vamvakas & Gazi, 2017; Vamvakas & Paschalidis, 2018), “obsolete” media, such as the VHS technologies, are under-researched. Moreover, the available sources from the 1980s pertaining to VHS spectatorship and audience are somewhat limited and contradictory. Official statistical information on this topic is scarce, and when it does appear in the Greek (professional) press, it tends to be somewhat ambiguous or lacking in specificity.

Notwithstanding these complications, the uses and gratifications theory (Katz, Gurevitch, & Haas, 1973; McQuail, Blumler, & Brown, 1972) provides a useful starting point and the conceptual background of this article. Overall, the theory aims to comprehend the reasons, motives, and purposes behind the audience’s everyday media use. With

this approach, valuable insights have been gained into how mass audiences embrace different media platforms (from television and video to print resources to the Internet) (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 24). Discussing the effects media have on individuals, the uses and gratifications theory explores their motivations and psychological needs that surround a particular medium and its use.

Methodologically, and in addition to the uses and gratifications theory quantitative frame, I have employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The participants in this study are individuals who more or less actively collect VHS tapes. There is existing literature on collecting as a pastime, which can be perceived as a psychological mechanism (McIntosh & Schmeichel 2004; Muensterberger, 1994) for building self-identity or as a cultural practice to preserve the past (Belk, 1995). Still, this article will not primarily concentrate on collecting habits nor will it seek to explore the motives behind collections. Instead, the focus will be on how collectors utilize VHS technologies, as VHS collecting entails specific devices and involves distinct routines. It is highly probable that a VHS collector would nowadays be the primary user of VHS tapes, given that these tapes require a specific device to be played and viewed. In that context, it may be argued that contemporary Greek video cultures predominantly consist of video collectors.

Using snowball sampling (Gray, 1992, p. 35; Shatzer & Lindlof, 1989), I located participants for the questionnaire, including collectors I knew personally or recruited via social media, particularly my Facebook page on Greek VHS direct-to-video films.<sup>1</sup> Some were acquaintances, while others connected through online interactions or screenings. The survey featured a structured online questionnaire on VCR-related activities, VCR viewing-related audience activities, and the interplay of nostalgia and old media in the modern media landscape. Throughout the article, I have maintained the acronym VCR (Video Cassette Recorder), as all activities are heavily interrelated with the appliance.

1 <https://www.facebook.com/greekvhsbook/> (accessed 1/8/2023).

The questionnaire was sent to the collectors via e-mail and was open from December 2021 to February 2022. My first intention was to engage in an ethnographic perspective with in-depth interviews and film / video elicitation methods (Banks, 2005, p. 99). The ethnographic tradition in media scholarship, from its origins at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (Grimshaw, Hobson, & Willis, 1981; Hobson, 1982) to today, provides a diverse approach to understanding media's role in culture (Jordan, 1990). Still, due to ethical considerations and the post-COVID-19 restraints, such an approach could not be employed. Eventually, all data were collected by informed consent, and personal information was disclosed. The interviews have been conducted in Greek and the author translated all parts presented in the following into English.

The final sample consists of seven Greek males born in the greater metropolitan area of Athens, Attica:

- › Panagiotis (b. 1971), Fanis (b. 1980), and Kostas (b. 1979) hold university degrees.
- › Nontas (b. 1975) comes from a technical background.
- › Christos (b. 1974) graduated from a public institute of vocational training.
- › Bakis (b. 1975) and Leon (b. 1983) have completed their formal compulsory education.

While space limits discussion of gender bias in video use and collecting, it is noteworthy that VHS activities, particularly collecting “trash films” (as Greek direct-to-video films are often considered), often appeal more to males (Menninghaus, 2016). Previous research (Gunter & Wober, 1989) suggests male dominance in VHS-related activities. In this study, no female collectors of Greek direct-to-video (apart from the author) or foreign films on VHS were identified in Athens or other Greek areas. The participants are VHS device owners with diverse collections, embracing “para-cinema” (Sconce, 1995, p. 372), which includes different and diverse film subgenres within the realm of “cult film,” such as horror films, soft pornography, splatter flicks, to name a few.

The paper's first results section (section 4) explores VHS technology ownership, including VCR usage, domestic screening, recording, replaying, and video library building. The second results section (section 5) delves into collectors' viewing activities, cultural practices, and uses and gratifications. Finally, the Conclusion section examines Greek direct-to-video films as a form of vernacular software, highlighting how participants engage as “textual poachers” (Jenkins, 2013, p. 69), and reinterpret VHS material within collective cultural memory. This approach provides both gratification and a window into an older prosperous past, invoking nostalgia. To this end, the concept of “ethnographicness” (Heider, 1990, pp. 5–6) and the shift toward technostalgia are also pivotal.

#### 4 VCR-use related activities

This section will focus on the possession of VHS technologies, specifically VCRs, the current frequency of playing, watching at home, recording and playing back activities, as well as the process of maintaining a video library. Previous scholarly works (Lin, 1990; Gunter & Wober, 1989; Rubin & Rubin, 1989) have emphasized the significance of activities associated with VCR use. Despite employing a quantitative framework, these studies provide valuable insights into the fundamental applications of VHS technologies. Further, they pinpoint entertaining, and social aspects of their use.

Nontas owned the same VCRs for 30 years; Fanis owns four of them. Bakis reports that

in the 1980s, I owned a VCR player made by Hitachi; at the end of the 1990s, I bought a Sanyo, which I still own. Today, apart from the Sanyo, I own a Sony and a Funai – 1990s models –, an old Telefunken VCR from the 1980s that has been a recent gift, and an LG VHS/DVD recorder combo player.

Besides, Leon used to own a “family VCR” until 2001. His recent VCR player was bought in 2003 from a “sailor's widow.” It appears that Panasonic holds significant appeal as a

brand, as five individuals possess products from this specific electronics company.

All of the collectors' first VCRs were bought by their fathers, and they have been purchasing new devices over the years. Leon and Nontas have changed one and four VHS devices respectively, Christos has changed five, while Fanis has changed in toto 25 video players. Still, five of the collectors have never done any maintenance of their VHS equipment.

Far more interesting is where this VHS device is located. Typically, these appliances are situated in the living room, beneath the television set. Four of the collectors have retained their original placement. Nontas argues that such a decision is justified, as it operates as "a recollection of its primary use." However, a VHS device is situated in Christos's home office, as "VCR connects only to CRT (Cathode-Ray Tube) monitor." In terms of frequency, four of the collectors use their VHS equipment once a week, one uses it three times a week, one sets the power only every 15 days to see if the device works, one uses it rarely, and one never.

Bakis, Leon, Fanis, Kostas, and Christos perceive their collecting practices as a "work-in-progress," while Nontas and Panagiotis seem to have completed theirs. The amount of collected VHS cassettes range from 30 (Christos) to 5000 (Fanis). Leon owns 300 VHS tapes, while Nontas once had 800 VHS tapes in his collection, but now only has 30 remaining, which only "serve as a memory" of his previous collection. Two collectors (Panagiotis and Bakis) have been collecting VHS since the 1990s, and two (Leon and Kostas) began their collection in the early 2000s. Christos started his collection in his early 30s. The rest have been collecting VHS cassettes since the 1980s.

VHS collectors acquire films on tape through diverse sources: VHS tape exchange, old Greek video libraries, online markets, and other collectors. Nontas, Kostas, Leon, and Fanis collect from fellow enthusiasts or warehouses. Bakis frequents video library clearances, flea markets (Monastiraki), and online platforms. Panagiotis and Christos exchange and purchase from video libraries. While some communication exists among collectors, buying VHS cassettes appears to

be a predominantly solitary activity, even though there used to be more interaction, particularly in visiting video libraries. However, most of the collectors stress how video library owners and collectors overvalue tapes for sale. Leon agrees that "some people speculate; it is normal due to the rarity and demand for some VHS. After all, it is not a sport for small pockets." Christos expands this argument: "After all this 'hipster' hype, prices went up. Now, the prices are so ridiculously high with retromania that it is not worth even bothering." He concludes, "we gathered what we could, and that is all."

VHS collectors seem to take care of their VHS cassette collections: Nontas has "special shelves on a piece of furniture in the living room or the storage room." Bakis has transformed the childhood bedroom into a storage room "with shelves full of VHS tapes." Panagiotis has placed "shelves everywhere," Kostas uses his parents' storage room and his old baby bedroom to store his tapes. Christos had an old-school shelf for his VHS tapes; his main concern for them was their "vertical" (otherwise they get demagnetized) position.

Apart from collecting VHS as a part of an entertainment routine, collectors indicate different reasons for doing so. Though Nontas has stopped buying cassettes, his remaining tapes have a sole destination: "I want to see the same films repeatedly and for completist reasons (as he owns full videographies of selected directors)." Bakis collects only films that "were not released in any other format." He argues that "if some films have already been released in Greece on DVD or Blu-ray, I would prefer buying the latter, as – let us face it – they have a better audiovisual quality compared to VHS."

Panagiotis experiences "frustration" from watching VHS tapes, because he prefers HD formats, and Fanis collects films for completist reasons and research. In contrast to the views already expressed above, Leon and Kostas stick to VHS cassettes' obsolescence. Leon's point is clear: "could it be a passing fancy or romanticism, but I tend to salvage obsolete forms of technology that are precious to me." Kostas' argument focuses on technology: "a VHS could be held as a magic spell. You put it into the VHS equipment, and the portal opens. Then, the past is in front of you."



In the present context, ownership of VHS devices and software has shed its previous connotations of conspicuous consumption and social escalation. It now reflects collectors' aesthetic preferences and personal needs. These collectors, often continuing a generational tradition, maintain or acquire VHS devices, preserve and enhance their collections. Despite modern trends like hipsterism and retromania, online markets have simplified VHS cassette acquisition. VHS collectors, not necessarily tech-savvy, digitize tapes while valuing the tangible aspect. VHS devices remain vital for playing these collections, even as formats like Blu-ray offer superior quality. This contrast forms the basis for the following section, exploring VHS collectors' viewing patterns.

## 5 Viewing-related audience activities

This section delves into the viewing-related activities of collectors, the cultural practices that revolve around this pastime, and the motives behind them. Initially, VHS technologies were primarily associated with communal viewings among friends and family, i.e., “family togetherness” (Gunter & Wober, 1989, p. 55). However, as the medium became obsolete and alternatives like DVD, Blu-ray, and online streaming emerged, most collectors transitioned to watching VHS tapes in solitude, either due to the changing landscape or the abundance of entertainment options. Nontas argues that “it is better to watch VHS with a company,” but he cannot find enough time. Christos also has limited time at his disposal; however, “nobody else wants to follow him” in his VHS tape viewing.

Bakis likes “company to comment upon” the VHS content, while Panagiotis defines himself as a “misanthropist,” and he avoids any companionship. Still, Leon remembers one particular time when he and his wife were “eating snacks, drinking soda, and watching VHS cassettes together.” Solitary VHS tape viewing contrasts with recollections of events revolving around direct-to-video films. Bakis recollects a public VHS tape screening of two video films, *O Skylas* (directed by Dimitris Vogiatzis, 1986) and *O Alitis kai o Batsos* (directed by Giorgos Mylonas, 1989). It took

place in 2004 in “Texas,” a heavy metal club in Athens, and “one viewer would throw a punchline, and generally it would be so messy and fun.” Christos finds it challenging to watch VHS tapes with friends; nevertheless, he remembers about “3–4 successful public VHS screenings that we organized.” Nontas co-organized and attended one of them; it was the cult video film *To Computer tou Thanatou* (directed by Michalis Lefakis jr., 1987). Actor Akis Florentis, the film's main protagonist, attended the event, and “was excited that so many people loved the films he starred in.” Unfortunately, Florentis died a few months later.

While collectors use their VHS equipment to watch various films, the 1980s Greek direct-to-video films seem to interest them more. As mentioned earlier, these VHS tapes have only lately begun to be considered a part of the Greek (audio)visual culture. Except for Panagiotis (who prefers comedies), all collectors highly regard them and watch them occasionally. Christos favors the latter, along with adventure films. His most beloved films are *Peinanteous* (directed by Giorgos Skalenakis, 1987) and *Klassiki Periptosi Vlavis* (directed by Takis Vougiouklakis, 1987). The other collectors prefer most VHS-film genres, such as high-school comedies and dramas about drug addiction. Leon finds youth deviant video films really “exciting.” He argues that Dimitris Tzelas, a filmmaker whose VHS ventures adopted a social critique on drug addiction, is “a very notable video film director.” Both, Nontas and Bakis, appreciate the works of Tzelas likewise. Nontas argues that Tzelas' *O Straggalistic tis Syngrou* (1990) is “very original and daring.” Bakis likes Tzelas' video drama *Oi Batsoi Poulane tin Iroini* (1989) because he adores “Gatos” (The Cat), the video film's main character. Moreover, he enjoys the work of other filmmakers, such as “Nikos Foskolos, Kostas Karagiannis” or “Andreas Katsimitsoulis” who happened to work for the mainstream film market since the 1960s. Fani's most beloved filmmaker is Takis Vougiouklakis, and his video films *Harise mou to Gounaki sou* (1986) and *Anarchikes Kalogries* (1986).

In analyzing the motives behind such tastes, all the collectors argue that they like Greek direct-to-video films, as the latter of-

fer testimony of the 1980s, when everything was “simpler,” as Nontas puts it. For him, this spirit of “non-political-correctness” was essential, as “nowadays everything is so commercial and a limited circle of individuals directs all films.” It encapsulates a “hit-and-miss attitude,” as Christos explains, and “this attitude had been prevalent in the Greek direct-to-video circuit and the Greek society as well.”

Bakis indicates specific reasons for watching direct-to-video films. He wants to see “locations, places, and neighborhoods from the past, clothing, and hairstyles of the 1980s decade,” how people entertained themselves – something that “no longer exists in our lives.” Kostas adds, “Greek video films exemplify how low-budget production values work, and they show places and people you will not expect to watch on tape.” For all of them, Greek direct-to-video films provide a more or less accurate portrait of the 1980s in Greece. Kostas thinks that “whenever I push the ‘play’ button, I can see an alternative ethnography of the 1980s unfold in front of me.” His motto is “we consume to forget; we collect to believe.”

Leon comments on the video representation that it “is quite faithful and could be considered a period document for scholars.” Nontas argues that “it reflects, to a satisfactory degree, what was going on at the time.” Christos further adds that “they present such a relaxed routine that we can no longer even recall. I also think landmarking is quite interesting.” On the other hand, Fanis believes that this representation “is not always plausible” but “cultural elements can be located instrumentally.” He adds that “they are of cultural, social and folkloric interest.”

Using the VCR and watching Greek direct-to-video films triggers nostalgia. Leon remembers his “pre-teen self-fondly, the old pre-Internet society,” and Kostas recollects a

society that was not afraid of anything: the crisis, the pandemic, the loss. However, most importantly, a society that is not afraid of the technological complexity of today, especially when you forget all your passcodes on the web! How embarrassing!

For Nontas, these films “foreshadow a beautiful era, now long lost.” Leon’s final argument summarizes this nostalgia: “They are documents of an era I long for.”

But what are the collectors’ views of the original VHS viewing of video films in contrast to their digitized version, which is often uploaded on the Internet? Nontas does not feel that watching video films from their source is superior, and he acknowledges it as a “psychological difference that certainly exists.” For Leon watching a video film from a VHS cassette reveals “a warmer format and it has a process, a special ritual; digital is very easily accessible, cold and, therefore, cheap.” Christos comments on how VHS technologies orchestrates a particular ambiance: “the blur, the analog noise, the mechanical murmur, the hazy sound set up an atmosphere.” Bakis has another argument: “Because I own several (videotapes) in physical format, and I prefer to watch them that way because they have a better picture. On YouTube and streaming services, the picture quality is poor.”

VHS collectors’ viewing habits reveal the antiquated perception of using VHS devices and tapes, even within families. Public screenings fall short, maintaining video watching as a solitary endeavor. Collectors favor comedy and drama genres, especially direct-to-video films that address delinquency, police dramas, and 1980s Greek issues. Beyond their dramatic content, they value VHS films for their ethnographic essence, as they capture historical and cultural nuances. These films serve as a gateway to lost Greek heritage, nurturing collective cultural memory. While sparking memories of youth, they also mirror analog interactions, socialization, and past entertainment. These films encapsulate prosperity, interwoven with 1980s cultural insights; they reshape and enhance the VHS collectors’ personal experience, contributing to cultural memory (Fickers, 2009, p. 124). Collectors perceive themselves as individuals who once experienced the 1980s through various entertainment and cultural routines, and connected to a specific sociotemporal collective. VHS technologies, both hardware and software, expand memory boundaries, aligning with Assmann’s notion that media shape memory’s evolution

(Assmann, 2011, p. 137), and they infuse the collectors' historical instances into an idealized semi-factual, semi-fictional narrative. This process transforms factual history into remembered history, effectively crafting myth within cultural memory.

## 6 Conclusion

Twenty-first-century Greek video cultures, i.e., this small group of VHS cassette collectors, exhibit interesting levels of activity, creativity, and critical involvement as consumers of popular culture, signifying their role as pioneers in shaping a novel bond with older media. Older uses and gratifications of VHS technologies, that encompass entertainment, displacement, and intra-family communication, have evolved in the digital era. In an age of diverse media, VHS could be considered a form of "de-massification" (Williams, Rice, & Rogers, 1988, pp. 12–13), and collectors seem to derive gratification from the medium's content. Either considered old fashioned, obsolete, or dead, VHS technologies persisted in being part of their entertainment routines. Face-to-face intra-communication for renting and viewing has waned, and the VHS appliance intentionally supplants other, potentially higher-quality media options. Greek video collectors employ VHS technologies to fulfill psychological needs, and they view them as carriers of collective memory and symbols of simpler social structures. Amid skepticism toward the digital realm, they perceive themselves within the broader analog context, using VHS to uncover cultural evidence of a bygone ideal society.

An important dimension observed from the collectors is that VHS technologies seem to be central to their lives. Greek VHS collectors engage in memory practices that evoke nostalgia through VHS technologies and watching Greek direct-to-video films. For most of them, the latter serve as vivid ethnographies of the 1980s, and a reminder of what Assmann has pinpointed: "That which continues to be a living memory today, may be only transmitted via media tomorrow" (Assman, 2011, p. 36). Bakis concludes that "viewing these films can help you recall the days we lived. And now, it has all gone." In

that sense, technostalgia emerges as a new form of memory practice, not simply longing for the past, but bridging analog and digital realms, archival and performative aspects (van der Heijden, 2015, p. 104). This process reevaluates the past and reframes the present, mediating between different practices, perceptions, and viewpoints (Pinch & Reinecke, 2009, p. 166), constructing a temporal "bridge" between various experiences and contexts.

The abovementioned tension is clearly illustrated in the collectors' attitude toward contemporary digital culture, as they perceive VCR-use-related activities and view related activities as "non-revolutionary" in the digital realm. For Panagiotis and Kostas, VHS equipment was revolutionary for its time only. Nontas insists on his memories: "for some of us, it is an example that they can make do with what is available, and they are against this hyper-digitization of our lives." With their analog allure, VHS technologies are charged with the ability to teleport one to another decade. It is no surprise that all collectors are prone to use traditional media, such as cassette players, arcade video games, walkmans, CDs, and turntable players. Christos has carried out this experiment: "I recently recorded the first two episodes of *Stranger Things* on VHS (cassettes), while having previously watched them on Netflix, and they seemed a lot scarier..."

This study has raised important questions about 21st-century VHS technologies and cultures, yet there are untapped avenues for exploration. A transnational approach could reveal variations in national viewing habits and gratifications. Investigating how cultures around dead media shape bonds and fandom perceptions offers another intriguing angle. Additionally, delving into areas like pornography consumption on VHS or gendered analyses could shed light on contemporary perceptions of analog entertainment and its appeal as a nostalgic refuge.

## Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their fruitful comments on an early version of this manuscript, and



A. K. for his constructive remarks. Besides, the author feels indebted to the anonymous participants of this research study and would like to thank them sincerely. During difficult circumstances, they dedicated their time to this study and revealed some intensely challenging aspects of VHS technologies, filling some of the 1980s lost grand mosaic gaps. I hope they continue to do so in the future.

### Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

### References

- Armes, N. (1988). *On video*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Assmann, A. (2011). *Cultural memory and Western civilization: Functions, media, archives*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Banks, M. (2005). *Visual methods in social research*. London, UK: Sage.
- Belk, R. W. (1995). *Collecting in a consumer society*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Benson-Allott, C. (2013). *Killer tapes and shattered screens. Video spectatorship from VHS to file sharing*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Boym, S. (2001). *The future of nostalgia*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Cohen, A. A., Levy, M. R., & Golden, K. (1988). Children's uses and gratifications of home VCRs: Evolution or revolution. *Communication Research*, 15(6), 772–780. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009365088015006006>
- Cubitt, S. (1991). *Timeshift. On video culture*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Dobrow, J. (Ed.) (1990). *Social and cultural aspects of VCR use*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Fickers, A. (2009). Tuning in nostalgic wavelengths: Transistor memories set to music. In K. Bijsterveld & J. van Dijck (Eds.), *Sound souvenirs. Audio technologies, memory and cultural practices* (pp. 123–138). Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press.
- Ganley, G. D., & Ganley, O. H. (1987). *Global political fallout. The first decade of the VCR 1976–1985*. Cambridge, MA: Program on Information Resources Policy.
- Gray, A. (1992). *Video playtime. The gendering of a leisure technology*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Greenberg, J. M. (2008). *From Betamax to blockbuster. Video stores and the invention of movies on video*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Grimshaw, R., Hobson, D., & Willis, P. (1980). Introduction to ethnography at the centre. In S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe, & P. Willis (Eds.), *Culture, media, language: Working papers in cultural studies, 1972–79* (pp. 73–77). London, UK: Hutchinson in association with The Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies University of Birmingham.
- Guffey, E. E. (2006). *Retro. The culture of revival*. London, UK: Reaktion Books.
- Gunter, B., & Wober, M. (1989). The uses and impact of home video in Great Britain. In M. R. Levy (Ed.), *The VCR age: Home video and mass communication* (pp. 50–72). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Heider, J. G. (1990). *Ethnographic film*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Hepp, A. (2013). *Cultures of mediatization* (K. Tribe, Trans.). Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Herbert, D. (2014). *Videoland. Movie culture at the American video store*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Hobson, D. (1982). *Crossroads: The drama of a soap opera*. London, UK: Methuen.
- Jenkins, H. (2013). *Textual poachers. Television fans and participatory culture*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Jordan, A. B. (1990). A family systems approach to the use of VCR at home. In J. Dobrow (Ed.), *Social and cultural aspects of VCR use* (pp. 163–179). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Kassaveti, O.-E. (2014). *Η ελληνική βιντεοταινία (1985–1990). Ειδολογικές, κοινωνικές και πολιτισμικές διαστάσεις* [The Greek direct-to-video film (1985–1990). Generic, social and cultural aspects]. Athens, Greece: Asini.
- Kassaveti, O.-E. (2016). Audio-visual consumption in the Greek VHS era: Social mobility, privatization and the VCR audiences in the 1980s. In K. Kornetis, E. Kotsovoli, & N. Papadogiannis (Eds.), *Consumption and gender in southern Europe since the long 1960s* (pp. 241–256). London, UK: Bloomsbury.

- Kassaveti, O.-E. (2020). Από την κινητικότητα στο 'κράχ': Έργα και ημέραι των ελληνικών ιδιοκτητών βιντεολεσχών στη δεκαετία του 1980 [From mobility to crash: The days of the Greek video-library owners]. In E.-A. Delveroudi & N. Potamianos (Eds.), *Working in the spectacle* (pp. 163–178). Heraklion, Greece: School of Philosophy, University of Crete.
- Katz, E., Gurevitch, M., & Haas, H. (1973). On the use of the mass media for important things. *American Sociological Review*, 38(2), 164–181.
- Krugman, D. M., & Gopal, Y. (1991). In-home observations of television and VCR movie rental viewing. In R. H. Holman & M. R. Solomon (Eds.), *Advances in consumer research* (pp. 143–149). Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research.
- Levy, M. N. (Ed.) (1989). *The VCR age. Home video and mass communication*. London, UK: Sage.
- Lin, C. A. (1990). Audience activity and VCR use. In J. Dobrow (Ed.), *Social and cultural aspects of VCR use* (pp. 75–92). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Lin, C. A. (1992). Profile: The functions of the VCR in the home leisure environment. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 36(3), 345–351. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838159209364182>
- Mallas, D. (2017). Διαδίκτυο στην Ελλάδα: από το 1% του 1995 στο 82% του 2017 [Internet in Greece: from 1% in 1995 to 82% in 2017]. *CNN Greece*. Retrieved from <https://www.cnn.gr/tech/story/109154/diadiktyo-stin-ellada-apo-to-1-toy-1995-sto-82-toy-2017>
- Marlow, E., & Secunda, E. (1991). *Shifting time and space. The story of videotape*. New York, NY: Praeger.
- McIntosh, W. D., & Schmeichel, B. (2004). Collectors and collecting: A social psychological perspective. *Leisure Sciences*, 26(1), 85–97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400490272639>
- McQuail, D., Blumler, J., & Brown, J. (1972). The television audience: A revised perspective. In D. McQuail (Ed.), *Sociology of mass communications* (pp. 135–165). Middlesex, UK: Penguin.
- Morgan, M., Alexander, A., Shanahan, J., & Harris, C. (1990). Adolescents, VCRs, and the family environment. *Communication Research*, 17(1), 83–106. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009365090017001005>
- Muensterberger, W. (1994). *Collecting: An unruly passion; Psychological perspectives*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Newman, M. Z. (2014). *Video revolutions. On the history of a medium*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Papathanassopoulos, S. (2000). *Η τηλεόραση και το κοινό της* [Television and its audience]. Athens, Greece: Kastaniotis.
- Papathanassopoulos, S. (2010). *Η τηλεόραση στον 21ο αιώνα* [Television in the 21st century]. Athens, Greece: Kastaniotis.
- Parikka, J. (2012). *What is media archaeology?* Cambridge, UK: Polity.
- Pinch, T., & Reinecke, D. (2009). Technostalgia: How old gear lives on in new music. In K. Bijsterveld & J. van Dijck (Eds.), *Sound souvenirs. Audio technologies, memory and cultural practices* (pp. 152–166). Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press.
- Reynolds, S. (2011). *Retromania. Pop culture's addiction to its own past*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.
- Rubin, A. M., & Rubin, R. B. (1989). Social and psychological antecedents of VCR use. In M. R. Levy (Ed.), *The VCR age: Home video and mass communication* (pp. 92–111). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Ruggiero, T. E. (2000). Uses and gratifications theory in the 21st century. *Mass Communication & Society*, 3(1), 3–37. [https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327825MCS0301\\_02](https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327825MCS0301_02)
- Sarkhosh, K., & Menninghaus, W. (2016). Enjoying trash films: Underlying features, viewing stances, and experiential response dimensions. *Poetics*, 57, 40–54. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2016.04.002>
- Sconce, J. (1995). "Trashing" the academy. Taste, excess, and an emerging politics of cinematic style. *Screen*, 36(4), 371–393. <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/36.4.371>
- Shatzer, M. J., & Lindlof, T. R. (1989). Subjective differences in the use and evaluation of the VCR. In M. R. Levy (Ed.), *The VCR age: Home video and mass communication* (pp. 112–131). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Sun, Y., & Yan, S. (2016, July 22). R.I.P.: The world's last VCR will be manufactured this month. *CNN Business*. Retrieved from <https://money.cnn.com/2016/07/22/technology/vcr-funai-last/>

- Turk, T. (2010). "Your own imagination": Vidding and vidwatching as collaborative interpretation. *Film & Film Culture*, 5, 88–110.
- Tydeman, J., & Kelm, E. J. (1986). *New media in Europe. Satellites, cable, VCRs, and videotext*. London, UK McGraw-Hill.
- Vamvakas, V., & Gazi, A. (Eds.) (2017). *Αμερικανικές σειρές στην ελληνική τηλεόραση. Δημοφιλής κουλτούρα και ψυχοκοινωνική δυναμική* [American serials on Greek television. Popular culture and psychosocial dynamics]. Athens, Greece: Papazissi.
- Vamvakas, V., & Panagiotopoulos, P. (Eds.). (2017). *GR80s. Η Ελλάδα του ογδόντα* [GR80s. Greece in the 1980s] [Exhibition catalog]. Athens, Greece: Technopolis.
- Vamvakas, V., & Paschalidis, G. (Eds.). (2018). *50 χρόνια ελληνική τηλεόραση* [50 years of Greek television]. Thessaloniki, Greece: Epikentro.
- van den Bulck, J. (1999). VCR-use and patterns of time shifting and selectivity. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 43(3), 316–326. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838159909364494>
- van der Heijden, T. (2015). Technostalgia of the present: From technologies of memory to a memory of technologies. *European Journal of Media Studies*, 4(2), 103–121. Retrieved from <https://necsus-ejms.org/technostalgia-present-technologies-memory-memory-technologies/>
- Willett, R. (2009). In the frame: Mapping camcorder cultures. In D. Buckingham & R. Willett (Eds.), *Video cultures. Media technology and everyday creativity* (pp. 1–22). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Williams, F., Rice, R. E., & Rogers, E. M. (1988). *Research methods and the new media*. New York, NY: The Free Press.
- Winn, J. E. (2009). Videotime: Selection and structuring family social time with rented commercially prerecorded electronic media. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 53(2), 227–241. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838150902907751>
- Zestanakis, P. (2016). Revisiting the Greek 1980s through the prism of crisis. In K. Kornetis, E. Kotsovoli, & N. Papadogiannis (Eds.), *Consumption and gender in southern Europe since the long 1960s* (pp. 257–274). London, UK: Bloomsbury.
- Zielinski, S. (1985). *Zur Geschichte des Videorecorders* [On the history of the video recorder]. Berlin, Germany: Volker Spiess.