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**TÍTULO: THE EFFECT OF NOSTALGIA MARKETING ON
CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR**

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1. ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to investigate and analyse the effect of nostalgia marketing on consumer perception, attitudes and, in turn, behaviour. Nostalgia marketing is defined as a lucrative strategy used by many organisations across a range of industries, to attract and retain customers by evoking and linking rose-tinted memories to a particular brand or product. This psychological marketing strategy, which is gaining popularity and becoming a central theme for many companies, targets consumers' emotions and desire to feel connected to other individuals, in an effort to create benefits such as increased sales, brand loyalty and customer perception. This paper aims to better understand this recently valorised marketing tool and the emotional response of consumers, to contribute to the wider discussion surrounding the concept and use of the purchase variable. To achieve this, nostalgic triggers and proneness variables, as well as nostalgic consumption trends, will be identified by analysing secondary published literature to better understand what factors entice consumers to participate in nostalgic consumption. The conclusions will be combined with the qualitative and quantitative results of the primary research derived from a nostalgic-centred survey. Finally, the paper will summarise the application of 'nostalgia marketing' using Barbie and CosMc's as case studies and discuss the future of nostalgia marketing.

2. INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive and saturated business landscape, brands are constantly looking for innovative ways to catch the consumer's attention, which in turn has led to the recent increased use of nostalgia as a marketing tool. In order to compete successfully, marketers are constantly challenged to "be ahead of the game" and to employ new, unique trends before they are adopted by the rest of the industry, thus becoming "dated" and "uninteresting". Recent trends show companies are abandoning the futuristic innovation and instead looking to the past for inspiration by relaunching nostalgic products and using nostalgia marketing. Studies show evoking nostalgia appeals to the consumer's emotions and is much more effective than appealing to their logic, leading them to desire and rationalise a purchase. Modern marketing has shifted in recent decades to become much more consumer- and psyche- orientated, with big strides being made within the social psychology community to understand the psychological processes behind purchases. By understanding the complex layers of emotions and feelings consumers unconsciously experience, companies are able to better plan campaigns and offerings in order to achieve the desired result. In other words, the idea of working backwards, starting with the desired response and target consumer and then planning the product or strategy around that, is becoming mainstream and has prompted a readjustment of the traditional familiar marketing tools used in the industry. The traditional idea of pushing products and brands onto all potential customers is being discarded and replaced with the new golden rule of marketing that aims to market the right product to the right consumer.

Due to its capricious nature, it is difficult to define, understand and predict consumer perception and behaviour. Many psychologists and experts have attempted to establish this relationship conceptually; however there is still a large gap within the current published literature,

with no findings conclusive enough to withstand challenge. There is therefore extensive research yet to be undertaken, especially with growing recognition of the importance of better understanding of consumer cognition. As the foundation of all consumer decisions, feelings and emotions must be well understood by marketers when defining target markets if they are to successfully market brands and products. Before beginning, it is important to acknowledge that human perception and behaviour are the result of a complex blend of emotions and feelings, and the results cannot be attributed to a single psychological process. The aim of this research paper is to isolate and analyse how the complex feeling known as “nostalgia” affects consumer perception of products, brands and trends and, in turn, how consumers behave in response to marketing efforts. In order to measure the effects of the investigation, consumer behaviour will be described as a manifestation and indicator of perception and feelings. Furthermore the investigation will establish how “nostalgia” manifests itself into the phenomena and marketing tool, which is commonly known as “nostalgia marketing” and how the tool will be used in the future.

This end of degree dissertation will investigate the emergence and evolution of nostalgia marketing, as well as the benefits and motivation of its continued application today. The growth of nostalgia marketing, in which industries it can be seen in, its limitations and potential challenges, are other angles that will be investigated to gain a deeper insight. Such an analysis will be conducted in an effort to determine whether this technique, which is quickly becoming mainstream, is a risky, unpredictable “pis aller” or in fact the secret to success and recognition. This investigation will therefore combine a scientific perspective to understand the psychology behind “nostalgia”, with an empirical appreciation of the way this is applicable to the world of business and marketing. The findings and conclusions of this dissertation will then be applied to modern examples, comparing how, when done correctly, nostalgia marketing can be a critical success factor, but can also be the Achilles heel of a campaign or product if executed incorrectly. The successful marketing campaign implementing nostalgia designed for the 2023 Greta Gerwig Barbie movie, will be contrasted with the 2023 launch of McDonald's spin-off CosMc's. By analysing two different industries the paper aims to understand the flexibility, boundaries, holistic nature and manifestations of nostalgia marketing. The research that will be used to support the findings in the paper will be a quantitative questionnaire. The insights gained from this investigation aim to contribute to the better understanding of such a complex and intricate mental process, in order to positively utilise and exploit this to a brand’s advantage. This paper will use a wide variety of literature and evidence to make unbiased conclusions, and gain a better comprehension of the unpredictability and fickleness of consumer behaviour.

3. OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The objectives of the study are based on the assumption that the feeling known as “nostalgia” has an effect on consumer behaviour.

Main objective: Demonstrate the effect that the feeling "nostalgia" has on consumer perception and behaviour and how nostalgia marketing can be implemented

Specific objectives:

1. Explain the concept and need of nostalgia

2. Analyse the evolution of nostalgia marketing and its benefits and challenges
3. Evaluate the effects of using nostalgia in two different industries using Barbie and McDonald's as examples
4. Conduct primary research to support the conclusions of secondary literature and case studies
5. Draw conclusions about the use of nostalgia in marketing.
6. Estimate the possible evolution of the use of nostalgia emotion in marketing actions.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 DEFINING AND DISCUSSING NOSTALGIA

4.1.1 DEFINITION AND HISTORY OF TERM

According to the American Psychology Association (APA), “Nostalgia” is commonly defined as “a longing to return to an earlier period of life recalled as being better than the present” (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2018). The fond experience of nostalgia is often referred to as “rosy retrospection” since the feeling is associated with positive sentiments surrounding the recollection of deeply-embedded memories, akin to the idiom of rose-tinted glasses. Nostalgic recollections characteristically filter out negative details of the past (Havlena and Holak 1991; Hepper et al. 2012), which means that a nostalgic person will view the past as greater than it perhaps was (Holak and Havlena 1998). Hence, many psychologists refer to nostalgia as a type of unconscious cognitive bias, as it often idealises and distorts past events or memories.

It is widely accepted that there are four main components of nostalgia, which describe the emotional process and reasoning behind memory retrieval: self-reflection, autobiographical memory, emotional regulation and operant conditioning through reward motivation. The solipsistic feeling can be triggered by a wide variety of sensory stimuli such as smells, images, objects, sounds etc, with each individual reacting differently depending on their past experiences (Schuman and Scott, 1989; Holbrook and Schindler, 1996) (Routledge et al., 2011; Sedikides et al., 2021) (Supski, 2013; Reid et al., 2014). Not only is the type of reaction and the behavioural outcome unique to each individual, but also the strength of the reaction known as the “emotional potency”. (Barrett et al., 2010; Barrett and Janata, 2016) Furthermore, it is acknowledged that nostalgia is universal and ubiquitous, and not limited by age, culture, ethnicity, social class or gender (Zhou et al., 2008; Hepper et al., 2014, 2021; Madoglou et al., 2017) (Greenberg, Koole, & Pyszczynski, 2004).

Neurologically, the bittersweet feeling of nostalgia emerges from the process of memory retrieval, which is a continual psychological process helping us to navigate the present. Nostalgia is importantly distinguished as a “feeling” rather than as an “emotion”, despite some non-scientific papers using the terms interchangeably. This distinction is established since, unlike emotions, nostalgia has a cognitive evaluation, an “affective signature” (Hepper, Ritchie, Sedikides, and Wildschut, 2012) as it is unique to each individual, and involves various of the six basic emotions: fear, anger, sadness, happiness, disgust and surprise. Furthermore, it is also necessary to note emotions, unlike feelings, are characterised as short-lasting and precede feelings in the process of

reacting to stimuli. The complex feeling therefore simultaneously activates many parts of the brain that can be seen in Figure 1 below, which then interact with each other, as opposed to being associated with a singular region (Kober et al., 2008; Lindquist et al., 2012; Saarimäki et al., 2018). Nostalgia also differs from other emotional experiences or memory phenomena such as “déjà vu”, through being inward reflecting, autobiographical, and having a large presence of “self”, as an individual is the protagonist in their nostalgic narratives (Wildschut et al., 2006; Abeyta et al., 2015).

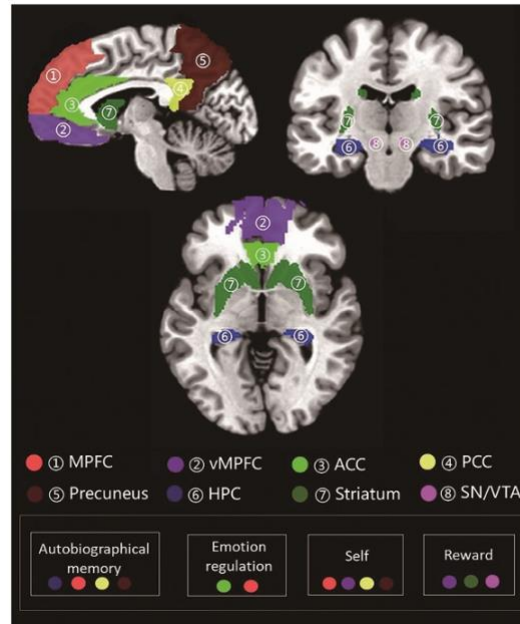


Figure 1. The Nostalgic Brain Model. Oxford University Press 2022

The term “nostalgia” first emerged in 1688, when Johannes Hofer (Hofer, 1934), a Swiss medical student, described nostalgia in his thesis as a neurological disease displayed by many Swiss mercenaries at the time, with its main symptoms being melancholy, depression, anxiety and extreme home-sickness (Dahl, Melissa 2016). Etymologically, the name derives from the combination of the Greek words “Nostos” meaning “homecoming”, and “algia” meaning “pain” (Fuentenebro; de Diego, F; Valiente, C 2014). Physician J.J. Scheuchzer (Davis, 1979), argued however that the melancholic mood of the Swiss mercenaries was a result of varying atmospheric pressure in the alps, while other military physicians went as far to claim the persistent sound of cowbells damaged the soldiers brain resulting in increased depression. As waves of immigrants migrated to the United States in the 19th and 20th centuries, nostalgia also gained the name “immigrant psychosis,” (Frost, 1938) as new Americans experienced homesickness as a result of big and difficult lifestyle changes. The disconsolate definition and perception of nostalgia being a psychological affliction lasted until around the turn of the 20th century. Since then, research has shown nostalgia can have the opposite affect of what was previously thought, and can in fact “ameliorate” levels of depression (Chiang et al., 2010) as people reflect on the “good ol’ days”.

Other positive psychological functions that have been identified as results of nostalgia include “psychological equanimity” (Siddique, 2020) and “improve mood, increase social connectedness, enhance positive self-regard, and provide existential meaning” (Wildschut, Tim;

Sedikides, Constantine; Arndt, Jamie; Routledge, Clay, 2006). The current trend in research surrounding this construct suggests nostalgia is more than a retrospective affective experience (Abeyta et al., 2015) and as our understanding of the emotion grows it is becoming clear that it also has a prospective nature, as the emotion guides our moods, behaviours and goal-oriented cognition to make present decisions (Routledge, 2015). Growing evidence indicates the “prima facie self-conscious” feeling (Van Tilburg et al., 2019) increases self-esteem by depicting the self in a favourable light, (Vess et al., 2012; Cheung et al., 2013, 2016, Wildschut et al., 2006; Luo et al., 2016) and psychologists at the University of Southampton in England claim it promotes and strengthens social relationships within groups (Wildschut et al., 2010; Reid et al., 2014; Sedikides and Wildschut, 2019). According to Van Tilburg (2018), who created a resultant map of emotions, seen below in Figure 2, some other self-relevant emotions that are considered similar to nostalgia include self-compassion and gratitude demonstrating the introspection and awareness surrounding nostalgia.

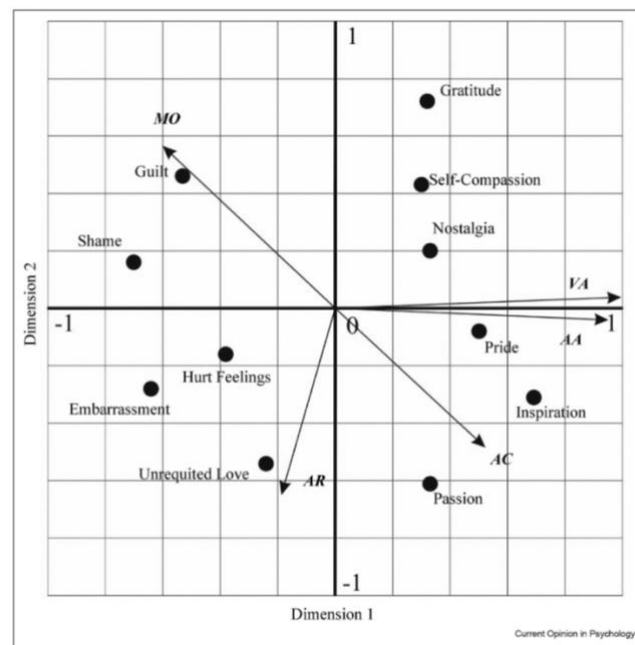


Figure 2. The Position of Nostalgia Lay Conceptions Among Self-Relevant Emotions. Van Tilburg 2018

4.1.2 NEED FOR AND EFFECT OF NOSTALGIA

One of the key characteristics that distinguish humans from other species is an amazing memory, and its associated processes. Nostalgia is an intrinsic, uncontrollable and psychopathological process which all humans innately experience regularly. As mentioned, the feeling has been more recently reconceptualised and is now considered a psychological resource that improves general mental well-being and engenders a variety of intrapersonal and interpersonal benefits (Sedikides et al., 2008, 2015; Frankenbach et al., 2021). In order to further analyse the effects of nostalgia it is important to distinguish between Personal and Collective nostalgia, depending on the subject of the feeling and whether it is shared or individual. Personal nostalgia (Routledge, 2015) is described as a sentiment for one’s unique and distinctive past,

whereas Collective nostalgia describes a sentiment for events, objects, music etc and is shared with other individuals (Cheung et al., 2017; Wohl et al., 2020). Only recently has Collective nostalgia become part of the discussion, and it is now recognised as equally influential in terms of occurrence and effect as Personal nostalgia, however with an empirically distinct purpose and yielding very different results. Both areas have the common characteristic of “self-continuity”, which describes making a mental connection between past and present events and situations surrounding oneself.

Nostalgia is a psychological need (Vignoles et al., 2006), and attempts to decipher the formation of our personal identity as well as our identity and sense of belonging within various social groups. This idea is supported with the “intergroup emotions theory” (Mackie et al., 2009), which describes how members of the same group experience collective emotions through collective experiences, influencing how the group reacts, perceives and behaves, including experiencing collective nostalgia. When individuals feel this sense of continuity through nostalgia (see Figure 3), they tend to feel greater security and self esteem which in turn leads to improved mental health and a eudaimonic mood (Sani et al., 2007, Smeekes & Verkuyten, 2015). This continuity is part of the series of processes individuals automatically and unconsciously experience in order to deal emotionally with difficult circumstances, threats, big changes, complicated decisions and unpleasant feelings. The fact that humans are social creatures explains the biological hardwiring that makes us seek social connections to combat feelings of loneliness and other negative emotions. To prove this theory, researchers at the University of Southampton purposefully induced people to feel negative emotions such as loneliness and depression, to which the participants responded by reminiscing about past events to improve their mood. The social nature and psychological wellbeing nostalgia offers is also a survival mechanism in the way it encourages people to reach out for help from others when necessary (Zhou 2019). Nostalgia not only promotes psychological wellbeing, it also promotes resilience which describes an individual’s positive ability to mediate the negative effects of stress (see Figure 4) (Lim, Sun-Young, Hyun-Joo Min, and Yong-Hwan Kim. 2022) . Therefore nostalgia is essential for an individual’s well-being and affects a person’s ability to integrate within a group and maintain relationships over time.

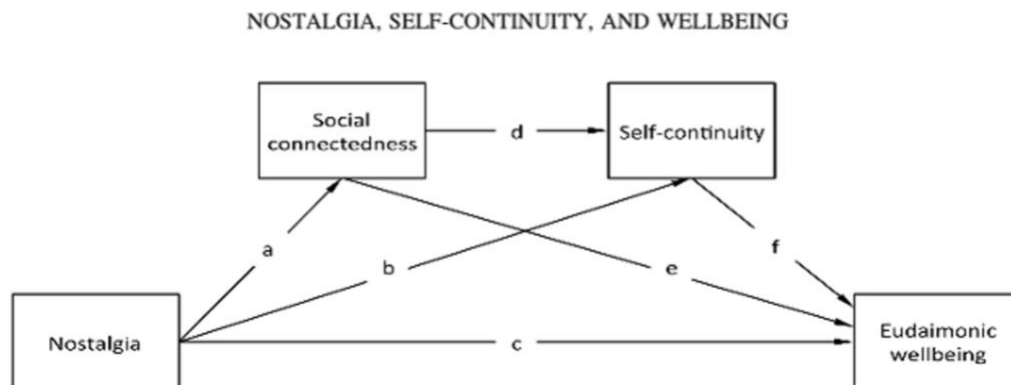


Figure 3. Nostalgia, Self Continuity and Wellbeing. Sedikides 2016

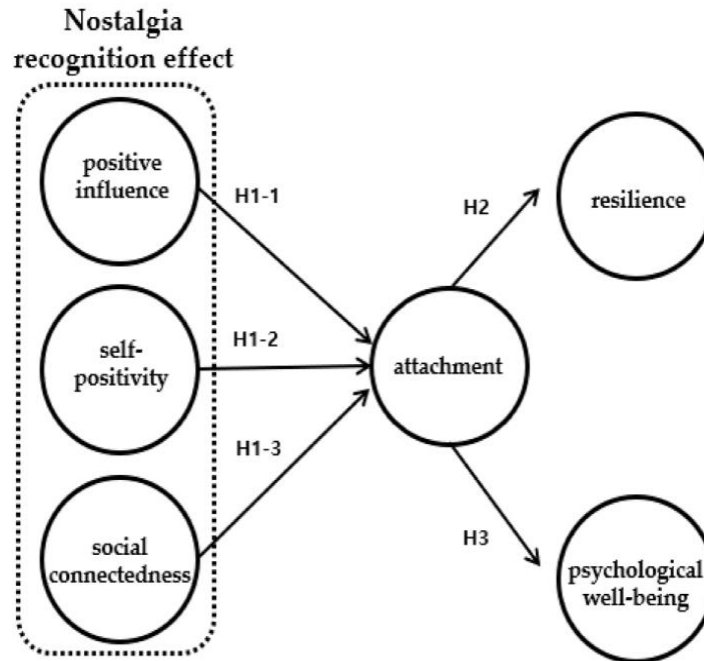


Figure 4. The Structural Relationship on Nostalgia Recognition Effect, Attachment, Resilience and Psychological Well-Being. Lim, Sun-Young, Hyun-Joo Min, and Yong-Hwan Kim. 2022

4.1.3 BIOLOGICAL PROCESS OF NOSTALGIA

Nostalgia is part of the greater capability of the brain known as “neuroplasticity” which describes how the brain adapts from experiences, memories and learning. This type of adaptation manifests in a structural way, as connections between neurons are either eliminated or fortified in the ongoing process of “synaptic pruning” (Cherry, 2022). Nostalgia is a complex cognitive process that stimulates several parts of the brain, some of the most essential being the hippocampus, amygdala and prefrontal cortex (see figure below). These specific areas form a larger region of the brain known as the limbic system, which is associated with emotional processes and responses (Moawad, 2016), In order to better understand the process of nostalgia, it is important to understand that the human mind is constantly codifying, storing new information and retrieving memories. Nostalgia is part of the process of memory retrieval which happens as we try to associate current information and stimuli with our existing knowledge. The term flashbulb memories (Brown, Kulik, 1977) describes a type of autobiographical memory which dominates nostalgia, and is triggered and affected by the emotional state of the individual. Flashbulb memories are also characterised as being vivid, personal, detailed and long lasting.

After decades of scientific investigations and experiments measuring neural activity during nostalgic reactions, the areas of the brain that are involved have been identified. The medial prefrontal cortex is the main region and “hub” involved in linking the subprocesses of nostalgia such as self-reflection, decision making and cognitive reappraisal. These subprocesses describe integrating stimuli in the context of personal thoughts, memories and traits, which is essential to the process of nostalgia (Northoff and Bermpohl, 2004). The next major area involved is the

Amygdala seen in Figure 5, which is responsible for processing emotions and working closely with other areas of the system to connect emotions to memories and form behavioural responses. Another region of the limbic system which is vital in the process of nostalgia and therefore necessary to mention is the hippocampus. Put simply, the hippocampus is responsible for long-term memory formation (Eichenbaum, 2017), some learning and associations, memory storage and memory retrieval. The parts of the limbic system constantly work in tandem to achieve the mammoth and tiring task of memory consolidation, integration of information and emotional processing. The nature of the limbic system shows how connected and intertwined emotions, memories and behaviours are. Interestingly, the “reward” based motivation involved in nostalgia is associated with the release of dopamine which is a hormone responsible for improved mood and inducing action. Therefore, it is theoretically possible to become addicted to the pleasant feeling, and being able to use it as a crutch to escape from the unpleasant feeling of reality (Moward, 2016). Brain structures identified as being specifically part of the reward network include the striatum, the substantia nigra, the ventral tegmental area, and the ventromedial prefrontal cortex (Yang Z, Wildschut T, Izuma K, Gu R, Luo YLL, Cai H, Sedikides C, 2022).

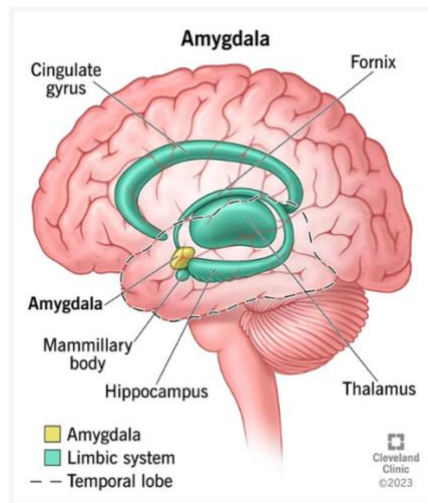


Figure 5. The Amygdala, Cleveland Clinic 2023

4.1.4 TRIGGERS AND PREDICTORS

In this paper, triggers and predictors are used relatively interchangeably since through understanding triggers we can predict when individuals will experience nostalgia. Identifying triggers and predictors is essential, as it is the first step in later evaluating an individual's proneness to nostalgia. Consequently, this information is critical in understanding how nostalgia works, in order to use it as a marketing tool, and in turn orchestrate and influence a desired response in a consumer's behaviour.

In general, triggers are difficult to identify, as perception and authentic unfiltered thoughts, especially surrounding personal memories, are hard to uncover. Specific objects and past events that cause nostalgia are also extremely mystifying and hard to pinpoint, since to an outsider stimuli

can often be perceived as insignificant and unremarkable. Therefore, the majority of existing research in this area makes conclusions based on personality types, moods, present environmental conditions and social groups. Applying these conclusions to predict nostalgia also poses a challenge, since although you can predict whether an individual will react to a stimuli through identifying them as being part of a certain group, the next step of predicting the strength of their reaction and its behavioural manifestation is not as simple. Depending on group structure, hierarchy, length of membership and emotional involvement as well as the presence of other group members at the time, people will experience varying levels of “emotional potency” and physical reactions. Simple examples of groups experiencing collective nostalgia include Beatles fans listening to old tracks or ex-pupils at a high school reunion. Nostalgic triggers often have a social value and are related to groups and relationships, and friends and family are often key components of warm memories (Holak and Havlena 1992). Subsequently, this conclusion highlights in general the importance of the context in which the stimuli are remembered, as the context is often what adds positive emotion to the memory. Lasaleta, Sedikides and Vohs (2014) investigated the correlation between the winter holiday season as a collective nostalgic trigger and individuals proneness to nostalgia. Participants of the study were found to be more nostalgic during the Christmas holidays compared to end of January, concluding nostalgia could be a variable which contributes to heightened consumer spending.

After triggers of nostalgia have been recognised, the next step can often be estimating the strength of the Nostalgic reaction which manifests itself physically, such as facial expressions and behaviour. When predicting the strength of a reaction there are two aspects of the external stimuli that need to be examined: the age at which the individual first came into contact with the object, and how often the object appears in their memory bank (Barret et al. 2010, Reid et al. 2014). These two factors affect the strength of reactions as “the more direct the experience, the more vividly it can be recalled” (Baker and Kennedy 1994). According to Rynnänen & Heinonen (2018), identifying “The temporal frames of recalled consumption experiences” can be influence and therefore predict an individuals reaction to a certain stimuli. When an individuals comes into contact with the stimuli in their early childhood, the stimuli is more likely to evoke what is known as “strong nostalgia”. Contrastingly, when an individual interacts with a stimuli in their adolescence they are aware of its significance and they create an emotional link, and experience what is known as “light nostalgia”. By categorising triggers into these time frames, a more accurate prediction of emotional potency is able to be made. Nostalgia is not exclusive to a particular age group however “stage of life” substantially influences proneness. Erica Hepper, a psychologist at the University of Surrey in England found nostalgia is higher in young adults and older people because they are experiencing lack of stability in their lives from big changes and look to nostalgia as a “tool for transition” and to settle their potential nerves and anxieties. Hepper also concluded that middle aged people experience less nostalgia as they are categorised as having stable routines and strong social systems. Furthermore, According to terror management theory (Pyszczynskiet al., 2004), existential anxiety is mitigated by nostalgia as it acts like an “existential buffer” as a healthy coping method to harsh changes in reality.

Through exploring the correlation between age and occurrence of nostalgia, scientific literature leads us to discuss the “reminiscence bump” (Jansari and Parkin, 1996), which features widely in autobiographical memory research. The term describes a common memory phenomenon, which aims to explain why autobiographical memories of young adulthood are more prevalent, reported and vivid than memories from alternative stages of life. Generally, there are two theories

that explain the rational behind this phenomenon, the first claiming it is a result of the diminishing biological and cognitive capabilities of the brain with age, affecting the ability to store long term memories and affecting their vividness and clarity. The alternative theory was explored by two Danish scientists, Annette Bohn and Dorthe Berntsen (2010), who concluded the phenomenon is a result of culture and societal norms since memories from young adulthood are widely more valued and have a disproportionately large effect on the formation of personality, explaining why that are recalled more frequently and fondly. They aimed to prove this by conducting a study that encouraged children to think about their future. The results of the study showed there is a much closer link between re-experiencing the past and the construction of pre-experiencing the future than was previously thought, all due to the cultural importance placed on this particular stage of life. This similarity is not limited to a cultural scope and was even observed on a neural and cognitive level as the left hippocampus was activated in both scenarios since both are associated with autobiographical memory, self-referential processing, contextual and episodic imagery (Addis, Wong, Schacter, 2006). The reminiscence bump can be displayed visually in the lifespan retrieval curve (Conway, Martin, Haque, Shamsul, 1999) which shows a clear peak of memory encoding in early adulthood. The curve also shows a period of childhood amnesia before the bump, where little autobiographical memories are created and encoded in early childhood. Finally, the bump is followed by a period of forgetting, as many memories are eliminated from storage due to lack of use.

After discussing the relevancy of age when predicting the prevalence of nostalgia, it begs the question of how much time a memory is stored for before it begins to appear in our nostalgic visions? The common misconception claims that triggers of nostalgia must be memories from the distant past or a relic that no longer exists, as the subject may actually still exist (Holak and Havlena 1998). The simple answer is there is no fixed time and instead as soon as an individual is no longer in a situation, frequenting a place or having regular interactions with the stimuli it can become a nostalgic trigger. As soon as the person, place or stimuli is no longer part of a person's daily life or their normal, the person may begin to feel nostalgic. This theory explains why individuals were nostalgic for simple activities and tasks they were no longer able to do during the 2020 COVID pandemic and why when an individual loses a loved one, they instantly become nostalgic. These examples corroborate the most influential factor of nostalgia is emotional connection and emotional intelligence instead of time passed. It is also important to note that although individuals seek nostalgia as a comforting mood booster, individuals may also experience a sudden wave of nostalgia through inadvertently seeing a photo, hearing a song or smelling their favourite childhood snack. Another example of unconscious nostalgia was conducted by Xinyue Zhou at Sun Yat-Sen University in China, who concluded nostalgia was more prevalent among her students on cold days and in cold classrooms, and her students reported feeling warmer after reminiscing on past memories, which Dr. Wildschut claims is the physical manifestation of the connection between the body and the mind.

4.1.5 INDIVIDUAL PROPENSITY

Once triggers have been identified, the next step is to estimate an individual's "proneness" to nostalgia. Proneness is unique to each individual, and is defined as a person's susceptibility and tendency to experience nostalgia and their attitude towards the past. When predicting proneness to personal nostalgia as opposed to collective nostalgia, a main area of focus is the influence of an individual's personality traits, caused by internal stimuli. Heidi Moawad, MD, (2016) discusses

the positive correlation between sadness and nostalgia using the “Affective Neuroscience Personality Scale (ANPS)” (Davis et al., 2003), to show people who are more prone to sadness are also more prone to nostalgia. Haspel (1974) contributed to this idea explaining nostalgia as “the patient investigating the past due to a harsh present. The past means security and starts looking rosy”. Even the most resilient of people who are least prone to sadness are still more likely to experience nostalgia in “tumultuous times in life” (Wildschut et al. 2010; Zhou et al. 2008). This theory explains nostalgia as being a coping mechanism to combat dysphoric states, which also explains why early researchers like Hofer in 1688 confused triggers of nostalgia such as depression and melancholy as symptoms. Davis (1979) supports this idea claiming that nostalgia is a tool individuals use to maintain their identity during hard times and big transitions in their life. Davis continues to claim his research indicated that men tend to be more nostalgia prone than women. Antithetically, Sherman and Newman (1978) claim gender does not directly influence proneness and instead their findings showed women experienced more nostalgia with personal stimuli, while nostalgia in men is more commonly evoked with consumer products.

The sentimental feeling is most prevalent in people who are self-described as lost, lonely, unfulfilled and regularly experiencing unpleasant feelings, (Routledge et al. 2013) and are seeking hopeful distraction and a form of cognitive reappraisal through perceived social support as seen in Figure 6. Social group membership and support has a great influence on an individual's mental wellbeing and moods (Hart et al. 2011). Therefore, people who are categorised as unhappy, with little social support systems and social connectedness, are more likely to react nostalgically than those who have strong social support systems and social connectedness (Goulding 2001; Zhou et al. 2008). Zhou, Xinyue & Sedikides, Constantine & Mo, Tiantian & Li, Wanyue & Hong, Emily & Wildschut, Tim (2021) even went so far as to investigate how nostalgia could be used to combat the mass loneliness experienced by individuals world wide as a result of the Covid19 pandemic lockdowns and the psychological distress associated with lack of contact with social groups. Nostalgia is also behind the saying “have your life flash your eyes”, as people use nostalgia to cope during near death experiences and to alleviate existential threats, as memories induce a positive emotional response, much like a psychological survival mechanism. These stressful and life-threatening situations are a general trigger for nostalgia.

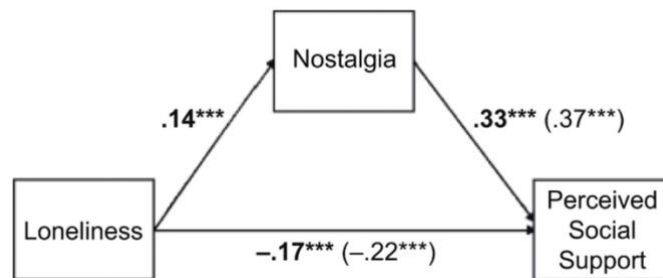


Figure 6. Counteracting Loneliness: On the Restorative Function of Nostalgia. Zhou, Sedikides, Wildschut, Gao 2008.

4.1.6 SUMMARY OF PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS OF NOSTALGIA

In this section we have reviewed the concept and history of nostalgia, needs and effects and associated triggers and propensity. As a result the following conclusions have been reached:

- Nostalgia is defined as a longing to return to an earlier period of life recalled as being better than the present (APA Dictionary of Psychology, n.d.)
- Nostalgic recollections characteristically filter out negative details of the past which means that a nostalgic person will view the past as greater than it perhaps was (Holak and Havlena 1998)
- Four main components of nostalgia, which describe the emotional process and reasoning behind memory retrieval: self-reflection, autobiographical memory, emotional regulation and operant conditioning through reward motivation.
- Nostalgia can be triggered by a wide variety of sensory stimuli such as smells, images, objects, sounds etc, with each individual reacting differently depending on their past experiences (Schuman and Scott, 1989; Holbrook and Schindler, 1996)
- The strength of the reaction known as the “emotional potency”. (Barrett et al., 2010; Barrett and Janata, 2016)
- Nostalgia is importantly distinguished as a “feeling” rather than as an “emotion” since nostalgia has a unique cognitive evaluation known as an “affective signature”
- Nostalgia differs from other memory phenomena because of its characteristics of being inward reflecting, autobiographical, and having a large presence of “self”
- Positive psychological functions that have been identified as results of nostalgia include “psychological equanimity” (Siddique, 2020) and “improve mood, increase social connectedness, enhance positive self-regard, and provide existential meaning”.
- Nostalgia also has a prospective nature, as the emotion guides our moods, behaviours and goal-oriented cognition to make present decisions
- Nostalgia can be categorised as being Personal or collective (Routledge, 2015;). Personal nostalgia is described as a sentiment for one’s unique and distinctive past, whereas Collective nostalgia describes a sentiment for events, objects, music etc and is shared with other individuals
- Nostalgia attempts decipher the formation of our personal identity as well as our identity and belonging within various social groups
- Nostalgia is not only essential for an individual’s well-being but also affects a person’s ability to integrate within a group and maintain relationships over time
- Nostalgia is part of the greater capability of the brain known as “neuroplasticity” which describes how the brain adapts from experiences, memories and learning.
- Nostalgic triggers often have a social value and are related to groups and relationships, and friends and family are often key components of warm memories.
- When predicting the strength of a reaction there are two aspects of the external stimuli that need to be examined: the age at which the individual first came into contact with the object, and how often the object appears in their memory bank (Barret et al. 2010, Reid et al. 2014)
- When an individual comes into contact with the stimuli in their early childhood, the stimuli is more likely to evoke what is known as “strong nostalgia”. Contrastingly, when an individual interacts with a stimuli in their adolescence they are aware of its significance and they create an emotional link, and experience what is known as “light nostalgia”

- Nostalgia as a “tool for transition” and is more prominent when individuals are experiencing lack of stability in their lives
- The concept of the “reminiscence bump” (Jansari, Parkin, 1996) explains why memories of young adulthood are more prevalent, reported and vivid than memories from alternative stages of life. Due to diminishing biological and cognitive capabilities of the brain with age, affecting the ability to store long term memories and society placing a disproportional importance and value on young adulthood.
- Nostalgic memories have no fixed time and instead as soon as an individual is no longer in a situation, frequenting a place or having regular interactions with the stimuli it can become a nostalgic trigger
- Proneness is unique to each individual, and is defined as a person's susceptibility and tendency to experience nostalgia and their attitude towards the past.
- Individuals who are more prone to sadness are also more prone to nostalgia.

4.2 NOSTALGIA AND ITS RELATION TO MARKETING AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

4.2.1 UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONAL MARKETING

When the decision is made to market and advertise a product or company, one of the first steps is choosing between a rational or emotional approach. The rational approach aims at appealing to logic and focuses on facts, figures and evidence to communicate value and to ultimately persuade and convince the customer to purchase. The emotional approach aims at eliciting a desired emotional reaction, and to influence the consumer to act in a certain way. This decision is usually based on the type of product and the target audience. When consumers are searching for products which are considered necessary or day-to-day items, they tend to base their decision largely on the product features and tangible benefits like price, warranties, availability, size etc. There is little emotional connection to the brand or product, and therefore consumers aren't very loyal and will change to a competitive brand or product if they offer a better or more convenient option. However, when a consumer has an emotional connection to a product it will be much harder for them to switch to a competing or substitute product. For example, a consumer who has used the same product all their life and connects with the intangible and psycho-symbolic aspects of the product such as the logo, colour, brand values and brand actions will be more forgiving of faults in the product and more willing to travel further or pay more for the product. Having an emotional connection to a brand or product is especially necessary for luxury products since it is what allows people to justify spending a great deal more than alternative products, simply for the additional brand name, prestige, uniqueness etc.

With increasing recognition of the importance of customer loyalty, connecting to the contemporary customer emotionally and creating a stable life-long relationship with them is becoming paramount to a company's success (Barnes, Southee, Henson, 2003) and represents a new symbol of consumption culture (Rytel, 2009). As the markets become more saturated with global competitors, consumers are increasingly bombarded with products, and it is no longer enough to follow a traditional marketing strategy and simply offer a quality product at a good price. In order for consumers to repeat purchases they need a story behind the product, a value,

person, place or character they can relate and connect to, and explains why companies are increasingly using “influencers” and celebrities to associate a popular personality with their brand. Psychological literature recognises the fact that emotions influence every stage of the decision-making process, making the traditional marketing concept of capturing the mind of consumers redundant, and resulting in its substitution with capturing the hearts of consumers instead. This has led to the emergence of emotional marketing which describes the larger process of creating a sustainable relationship with consumers (Putra 2021, Praditya 2020), ensuring a product or brand has a place in their heart, which in turn strengthens the company’s position in the market.

It is important to note that emotional marketing does not guarantee an emotional relationship with the consumer; however it is a popular and powerful tool that often makes a marketing campaign more remarkable, distinctive and ultimately remembered (Moore, 1989). The most successful marketing strategies combine both the rational and emotional approach. This allows the company to ignite desire for the product through the emotional approach whilst simultaneously allowing the consumer to justify the purchase by providing rational information. This dual strategy even allows companies to charge more for a product since consumers, both subconsciously and consciously, justify the additional price through the added emotional benefit the product provides. This strategy explains why consumers are willing to pay more for original products with fun adverts, clever slogans and eye-catching characters like Kelloggs’ Frosted Flakes with Tony the Tiger, rather than cheaper no-brand name options. This trend affects the whole business strategy, and is therefore also found in the advertising world. An analysis of the IPA data bank containing 1400 case studies of successful advertising campaigns, conducted by Hamish Pringle and Peter Field in 2009, showed the emotional content performed twice as well as the rational content as seen in Figure 7.

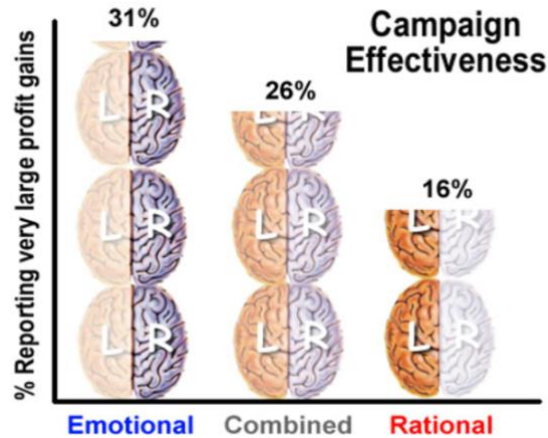


Figure 7. Comparing Profits of Emotional Campaigns v Rational Campaigns in the IPA Databank Collection. Pringle and Field 2009

Within the industry, it is often said that “emotion stimulates the mind 3000 times faster than rational thought” (Deshwal, 2015), which is why it is imperative that marketers are emotionally intelligent with a deep understanding of consumers emotions. Consumers naturally have an emotional reaction to stimuli and in initiating a marketing strategy by defining the desired emotion it aims to elicit, before planning the smaller details and tactics, the results are often a lot more in-line with the original goals. In order to be more effective, emotional marketing generally focuses on making consumers feel a single emotion such as happiness, sadness, anger etc, or a single feeling like fear, guilt, nostalgia etc so the stimuli has a high impact, generating a singular emotion. Being a very complex strategy to master, emotional marketing involves perfecting the deliberate use of smell, facial expressions, tones, music, colours, communication channels etc both in advertising and at points-of-sale, when accuracy can either make or break the strategy. Variables involved in emotional marketing are categorised into three dimensions: Equity, Experience and Energy. Equity is created through trust and the ability to satisfy needs, Experience describes a product's convenience and accessibility (Sihite 2020, Supratman 2021, Suprapti 2020) and Energy describes consumers' interactions with employees and company representatives (Purwanto 2020, Suryani 2020). Emotional marketing demands thorough planning in all three of the dimensions mentioned, an understanding of the target audience, establishment of a strong brand image and constant evaluation of the consumer response in order to create a sense of mutual collaboration and trust. Nostalgia marketing is encompassed in the greater discipline of emotional marketing, due to its emotion-centricity and focus on provoking the feeling of nostalgia.

4.2.2 DEFINING NOSTALGIA MARKETING

Nostalgia marketing is a lucrative, modern strategy based on a clear understanding of neuroscience, which is permeating a wide variety of industries and aims to elicit nostalgia in consumers so they will be more willing to purchase. The strategy combines emotional marketing with neuromarketing, in an effort to better understand customer motivation, preferences and decision making, with the ultimate aim of eliciting a favourable behavioural response . Nostalgia marketing, also known as nostalgic branding, targets consumer nostalgia, and can be aimed at either collective, historical or personal nostalgia. This strategy describes “a set of practices initiated by both manufacturers and consumers to incorporate non-functional sources of value in goods and services, and turn them into sources of hedonic, symbolic, and interpersonal value” (Badot & Filser, 2007). Fort-Rioche and Ackermann (2013), define nostalgia marketing as a term to describe marketing strategies “capitalising on the past to sell up-to-date products and services”. The efficacy of the strategy is a result of intentionally implementing familiar stimuli into marketing campaigns to quickly and efficiently communicate a message and re-enchanted the consumer. Symbols of the past are associated with current brands or products in order to not only spark consumer interest and increase sales, but also to overcome emotional obstacles such as the challenge of launching unfamiliar products or modifying a key product feature.

The process of nostalgia marketing begins by eliciting a nostalgic emotional reaction which in turn creates a nostalgic cognitive reaction. During the cognitive reaction phase, the individual will create an attitude or bias towards the stimuli, either positive or negative, which will subsequently manifest itself through the action of nostalgic behaviour. Consumers who have a positive attitude towards a nostalgic product are more likely to purchase, and are motivated by maintaining internal self-continuity and contact with the past (Sierra, McQuitty, 2007). The

success of a nostalgia marketing campaign therefore focuses on analysing and measuring the results of nostalgic consumer behaviour. Brown (2003) identified the “4As of retro branding”, which need to be considered and managed for a successful relaunch, consisting of allegory, arcadia, aura and autonomy. Allegory describes the brand's story and evolution and includes all symbolic stories, narratives or extended metaphors. Arcadia refers to an idealised community of consumers who feel connected to the brand and have an utopian view of the past. The brand essence is described by the term aura, and explains the sources of the brand's perceived value, originality and authenticity which construct the brand's identity. Finally, antinomy elucidates the idea that every product has two opposing characteristics which are simultaneously satisfied, such as “old” and “new”.

A crucial step involved in implementing a nostalgic marketing strategy is segmentation. Companies must identify and choose the segment within their consumer base which would best respond to this strategy or choose a segment that they want to grow or re-enchant. Segmentation is paramount to developing a consumer profile which is needed to confidently identify nostalgic triggers with romantically-charged longing for the past. Marketers can choose to reintroduce a distinctive characteristic from one of their own past products or they can choose to add value to a new product by associating it with a distinctive trend from a particular decade. The decision is based on the age and product history of the company, as well as the brand identity. Brand identification describes the visible characteristics of a product or brand such as colour or logo, which distinguish the product in the consumer's mind and influence the consumer perception (American Marketing Association). Brand identification is controlled and designed by the company and is not to be confused with brand image which is the consumer's subjective perception and associations with the brand (Keller, 1993). To illustrate the power of a strong brand identity, world-renowned chocolate manufacturer “Cadbury” celebrated their 200 year anniversary through a traditional ad in the newspaper which exclusively featured their logo and distinctive purple colour.

According to Holbrook and Schindler (1996), each generation has a unique “generational nostalgic imprint” which describes an age-related preference for different products. This generational phenomenon arises as a group of consumers of similar ages have similar past experiences and exposure to products and therefore share nostalgic triggers. Identifying this generational nostalgic imprint is especially necessary for eliciting collective and historic nostalgia, as a method of segmentation and to identify effective stimuli. An example of this generational imprint and use of historical nostalgia can be seen in members of Generation X sharing nostalgia for popular trends from the eighties such as boxy blazers, big hair and acid washed denim. As previously mentioned, nostalgia marketing can also be centred around personal memories instead of collective memories, targeting heterogeneous audiences instead of homogeneous groups. Airbnb's “Live there” effective marketing campaign was aimed at personal nostalgia and subjective interpretation, whereby individuals were shown creating memories with loved ones in travel destinations with personal significance, encouraging viewers to do the same after feeling nostalgia. Subaru's 2012 “First Car Story” campaign also targeted their audience through personal nostalgia, with great success, as people reminisced and reconnected with memories of their first car.

Within the branch of nostalgia marketing exists “Retro marketing”, which explains the process of relaunching a product or service by using familiar packaging or product designs, to engender a nostalgic connection and trust among consumers (Brown 2003). Hallegatte et al. (2018) distinguished three types of Retro marketing as seen in Figure 8, which are categorised by the level of brand heritage, the brand's objective and the time period the marketing refers to. Retroization describes when a new brand tries to associate with the past despite having no products or brand history from that era, and should not be confused with retro branding which is when the brand has a past nostalgic association. Finally, brand revitalization is a survival tactic used when an established company is declining and attempts to use its established brand image and brand heritage to regain customer interest. Established companies with long product history, brand heritage and strong brand identity will often choose to reintroduce a discontinued product as a way to regain market share that has been lost to new entrants. Contrastingly, due to their lack of history and brand identity, new entrants to the market will associate their new products with generic characteristics of the past to decrease the perceived risk and increase the perceived value of the product. Zhou et al., (2013) supported this hypothesis, claiming that a nostalgic product and/or the use of nostalgia marketing will lower the consumer’s perceived risk, fear and uncertainty of the purchase due to the familiarity and result in retro-loving consumers. Levinson (2008), however, used a different method of categorisation, grouping the three areas of retro marketing under “Repro, Retro, and Retro-retro”. He describes Retro-retro marketing as a simple reproduction and relaunch of nostalgic products, Retro marketing as modernising nostalgic products and Retro-retro marketing as neo-nostalgia. Neo-nostalgia is a common term used to describe the creation of new products whilst still inspiring a nostalgic feeling within consumers.

Perceived temporal roots for brands	Desired temporal roots for the product or brand (2)	
Present	Conventional marketing	Retroization marketing
Past	Brand revitalization	Retrobranding

Figure 8. Differences between Brand revitalisation, Retro-Branding and Retroization Marketing. Hallegatte, Ertz, Marticotte 2018.

Industry analysts claim nostalgia marketing generally follows a 20-to-30-year cycle or pendulum (Metzger 2017) which explains why most recent resurfaced trends stem from the 90s and early 2000s, also known as “Y2k”. This 20-30 year rule seems to be employed in a wide variety of industries, and is applicable to product characteristics such as colours, fonts and shapes. Colours for example, are able to evoke comfort, familiarity and joy, with 90s favourites like dark red, warm tan, lavender and mint predicted to make a comeback in 2024 (Pantone 2024) . This delicate, nostalgic re-introduction cycle allows for children and young adults to grow up, gain purchasing power and become consumers of products they fondly remember from their younger years. Individuals transition from being culture and trend consumers to culture and trend creators

with disposable incomes. However, a post-pandemic and social-media fueled world is speeding up the nostalgia cycle, and just like the fast algorithm culture, consumers demand constant new trends and products to grab their attention. Social media is the perfect archive to accelerate the nostalgic cycle by acting similarly to a search engine, providing easy access to unlimited references. This widely available tool, combined with unstable life transitions that are being experienced globally, such as the recent pandemic, have created a widespread explosion of nostalgic cravings. Beyond the life cycle of nostalgic products, Hartmann B. J. and K. H. Brunk (2019), claim that there is another crucial decision to be made in the planning of a nostalgic marketing strategy, concerning the three possible routes in re-enchanting the consumer. Companies are able to follow one of three approaches; re-instantiation (symbolic retrojection into a past), re-enactment (integrating the performance of past-referenced brands and practices into contemporary everyday life), and re-appropriation (ludic re-interpretation of the past). These categorisations and clear distinctions show a global consensus surround the categorisation of nostalgia and retro marketing and mirror Levinsons and Hallegatte conclusions.

4.2.3 BENEFITS OF NOSTALGIA MARKETING

Nostalgia can be a compelling consumption variable in the decision-making process for consumers, which is why the strategy is gaining unprecedented momentum and popularity as companies choose to abandon innovation and distinction in their search for the perfect window to the past. Nostalgia creates a sense of social connectedness among consumers who collectively share a rosy memory for a particular product or service. A consumer may be persuaded to purchase a nostalgic product due to the brand capitalising on their personal experience, the recommendation of a trusted source, or the belief that the brand heritage of a product reminds them of a favourable period of time. Nostalgia marketing creates quantifiable benefits for companies through the purchase behaviour which follows the collective consumer emotional response. Consumer purchase intention is part of the greater process of consumer purchase decision which describes the psychological and emotional process which leads to a purchase (Mirabi et al., 2015). Purchase intention is related to the behaviour, perceptions, and attitudes of consumers (Fathy 2015), and describes the consumer's intent and desire to purchase a product after careful analysis of perceived risk and value. Nostalgia can add perceived value to the product and therefore proportionally increase the consumer purchase intention, increasing the likelihood of purchase. Wildschut et al. (2014) found that collective nostalgia encouraged members of a group to spend money in order to behave cohesively, and feel identified with the group. The perceived value and key characteristics of the product contribute to the overall brand equity (Aaker, 1991) which describes the brand's intangible assets such as brand loyalty and brand associations, which engender premium pricing and customer loyalty. Brand associations, brand trust and brand image created from nostalgia can differentiate and secure the brand's position in the saturated modern market, through increasing brand loyalty and increase purchase intention (see Figure 9).

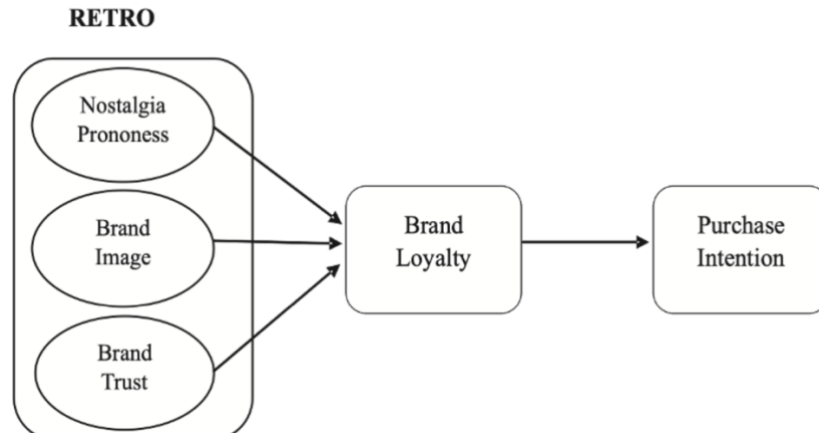


Figure 9. The effect of Nostalgia Proneness, Brand Image and Brand Trust on Purchase Intention and Brand Loyalty in Retro Marketing Applications. Soba 2020

Nostalgic products have a novelty value by transmitting a “one time offer” and exclusive message, making the product automatically more attractive to the consumer. According to Cialdini's seven principles of persuasion (Cialdini 1984), nostalgic products influence purchases by encouraging “committed” consumers who enjoy buying products that they feel connected to, by communicating “scarcity” and a sense of urgency, whilst creating “unity” and connectedness between individuals who purchase to continue to be part of a social group. Demand for nostalgic products is generally purely emotional based, as nostalgic products and services don't offer improved functions and efficiency. The consumer's emotional response to nostalgic marketing is manifested through a weakening of the perceived value of money, less psychological obstacles to purchase, less price sensitivity and ultimately a greater willingness to purchase (see figure below) (Lasaleta, Constantine, Sedikides, D. Vohs 2014). This conclusion is even more impactful when you consider that literature has shown the presence of money usually reduces the desire for social bonds and instead a preference for isolation (Vohs et al. 2006). Nostalgic experiences allow the consumer to be more susceptible to promotional efforts, as they experience a wave of warm emotions. Much like Pavlov's dog, the consumer unconsciously makes a neurological connection between the brand or product and the pleasant emotions and sense of belonging they feel. Nostalgia marketing adds emotional value to a product and ultimately increases the perceived benefits of the offering, making the brand, experience and product more attractive. Consequently, many brands use nostalgia marketing or a nostalgic feature when innovating or implementing a new product to lower the risk of the product being rejected (Routledge et al. 2012). Pepsi employed this technique when celebrating its 125th anniversary in 2023, as the campaign included rebooting the nostalgic Pepsi challenge reference as they unveiled a new logo. CMO Todd Kaplan explained the new design was not only “a nod back but lean forward” but also in an effort “to connect future generations with our brand's heritage”.

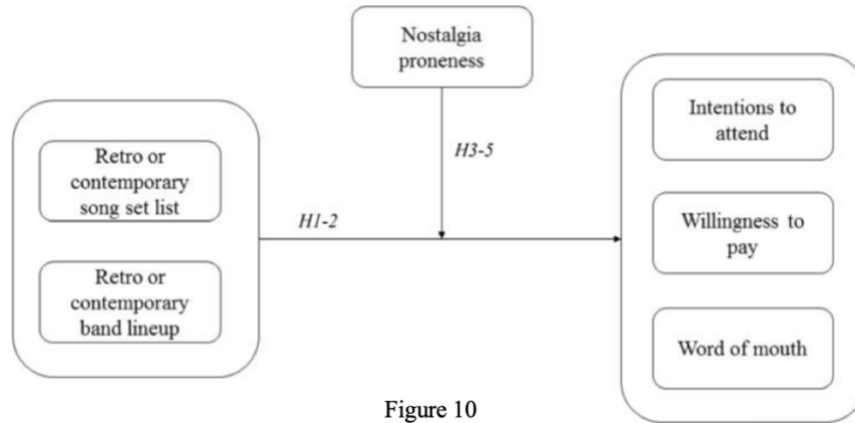


Figure 10

Figure 10. The Impact of Nostalgia Proneness. Hallegate, Ertz and Marticotte 2018

The driving force behind the increased use and discussion surrounding nostalgia marketing is the increased demand for nostalgic products and campaigns especially amongst Gen Z and Millennials. Nostalgic campaigns are no longer limited to appealing to older generations, making the strategy much more valuable and malleable to companies and their consumers. Perhaps one of the most important factors to justify the higher susceptibility, prevalence and affinity for nostalgia in members of Gen Z and millennials compared to previous generations is the presence of social media. Social media not only encourages the spread of romanticised and idyllic information and pictures, it also offers a bridge to the past and with a tap of the finger, young users have free access to an archive of millions of past photos and posts. Another critical factor in this notable psychological difference in younger generations is that having lived through a global pandemic seems to not only have changed young consumers' perception of time but has also forced them to naturally become nostalgic during isolation and quarantine (Batcho, 2020). This theory contributes to the widespread discussion of how for the first time in history younger generations yearn for, and are jealous of, the lives their parents led. Pandemics, inflation, the housing crisis, the environmental crisis, job insecurity etc all make young adults nostalgic for a simpler and easier life like the ones their parents lived, despite having never having lived it themselves, and nostalgia offers them mental comfort (Harlow, 2023). As can be seen in Figure 11, which shows the results of a study conducted by GWI, 50% of Gen Z described feeling nostalgia for the media of the past, and a combined 93% feel nostalgic for the early 2000s and 90s. This theory also allows a distinction to be made between Millennials and Gen Z consumers. Millennials are nostalgic for a pre-COVID simpler time that they have actually experienced, whereas Gen Z, who have been more affected than any other generation as their young adulthood has been full of instability and heightened anxiety, are nostalgic for a simpler time which they have not lived through. This phenomenon is elucidated by the concept of Nowstalgia (Madwell, 2016) which is defined as “The impulse to return to an imagined past by those who never experienced it in the first place.” Nowstalgia describes implementing past trends and products into the modern world to be better received and perceived by modern consumers, making this strategy more effective to a wider audience. Nowstalgia demands historical accuracy to appeal to consumers who have first-hand used or experienced the product whilst also adding a futuristic and creative spin. Generation Z are also distinguished as enjoying innovation, convenience, security, authenticity

and escapism (Woods, 2013), which is why nostalgia is appealing and have had great success for this consumer group since it provides perceived escapism, authenticity and security.

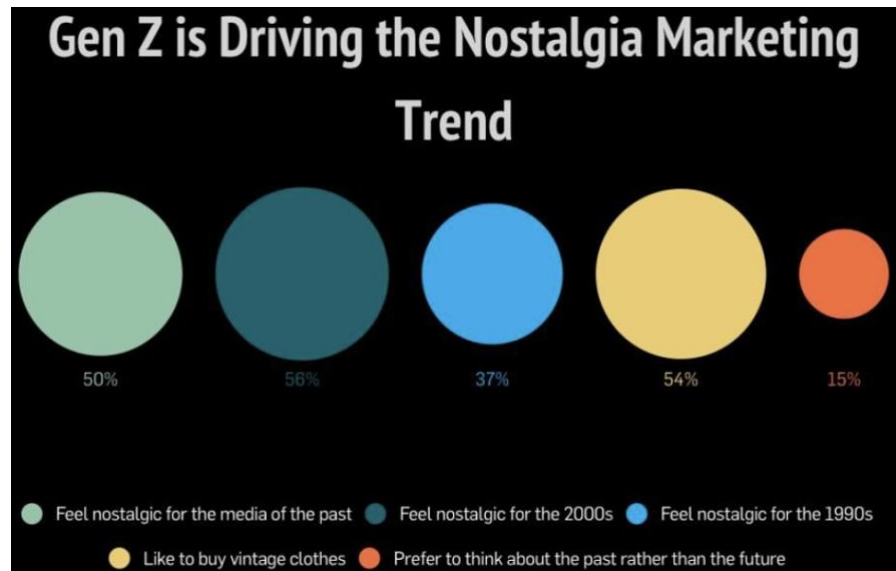


Figure 11. Gen Z is Driving the Nostalgia Marketing Trend. GWI, The New Age of Gen Z, 2024

The flexible and holistic nature of nostalgic marketing allows companies to implement the strategy across a variety of communication channels in different ways. For example, a company which has lost some market share could bring back a popular discontinued item and promote the product through nostalgic jingles and slogans on the radio, nostalgic colours and fonts on billboards and nostalgic packaging with distinctive textures. Through an immersive and comprehensive use of communication channels and stimuli, brands are able to effectively deliver a strong brand message through an emotional experience. When reintroducing discontinued products that are part of a brand heritage the company also has the opportunity to simply relaunch the product as it was or to relaunch a “new-and-improved” product. Relaunches that promote authentic brand heritage create a positive consumer attitude due to the assumption the brand has a higher quality and less perceived risk due to its historical equity (Percy, Rossiter, 1992). Brand confidence and trust are also increased by brand familiarity and experience with the product (Laroche, 1996), which further justifies the use of retro and nostalgia marketing. Modification of products allows the company to potentially replace or remove undesirable characteristics of nostalgic products such as their limited functionality. The versatility of nostalgia marketing prevents it being limited to a singular industry or only large companies; however it is important to note that the strategy is primarily seen and discussed in literature in a B2C marketing setting instead of B2B. Nostalgia marketing also allows companies to appropriate cherished trends and features of the past and integrate it into their brand identity, which creates a stronger brand image and allows the company to manipulate its positioning in the market. In the case of new companies, nostalgia marketing creates a false brand heritage and provides the product and company with increased legitimacy. Strategies that use nostalgia can re-enchant clients that have been lost or are susceptible to being swallowed up by the competition and it also connects with the consumer on an emotional level. Nostalgia marketing is therefore closely entwined with relationship marketing, as it places a large focus on customer retention, creating lifelong loyalty, increasing perceived

value and quality, and creating a strong and relatable brand identity (Christopher, Payne, Ballantyne, 2002).

Nostalgic marketing is a legitimate marketing strategy for many companies due to the low cost of capitalising on historical brand equity to position the brand, especially in the case of companies that reintroduce their own discontinued products. This low investment is the result of capitalising on existing customer associations and knowledge, rather than by creating innovative product features and disruptive marketing techniques, which require greater consumer attention. When the right stimuli is paired with the right consumer, the nostalgic product or feature is recognised instantaneously and, potentially, even on an unconscious level. Consumers who are not the primary target audience and therefore don't connect nostalgically with the product may still perceive the product as a novelty product and therefore purchase. Nostalgic product features also often carry a premium price (Netemeyer, et al., 2004), as they offer immediate emotional gratitude after the purchase in the form of happy memories. Therefore nostalgic products often have high profit margins, proving the benefits of nostalgia marketing can be monetary and not solely focused on improving customer perception, brand image and emotional connection. Subsequently, other quantifiable measures of the success of nostalgia marketing include increased sales and in turn increased profits, increased consumer engagement and increased word of mouth. Despite indirect increase in sales, the primary objective of implementing nostalgia marketing into the greater brand strategy may be to raise brand awareness, improve brand attitude, increase brand recognition, create a favourable brand preference (see Figure 12) or to create a “viral” product that can be posted on social media.

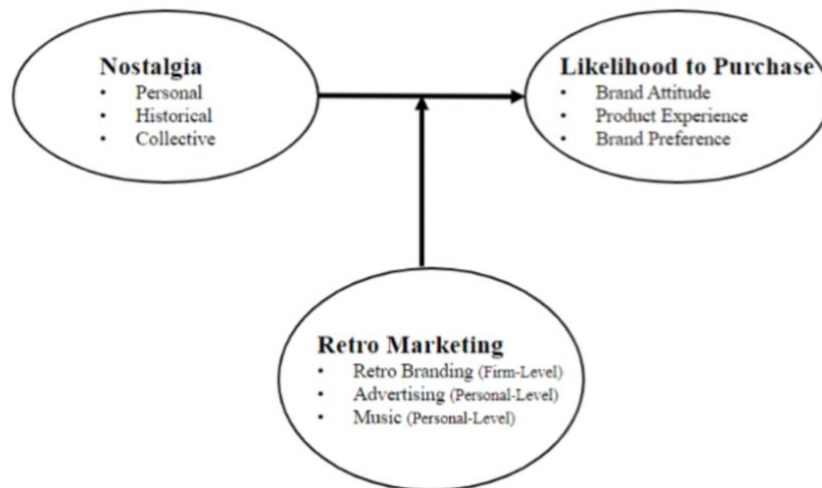


Figure 12. The use of Retro Marketing to entice Consumer Purchase. Bunch, 2022

4.2.4 CHALLENGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF NOSTALGIA MARKETING

Nostalgia marketing is a delicate strategy that is not easily mastered for the simple fact it requires a deep understanding of the consumer psyche. Brands must be able to identify many factors such as: which consumers will respond best, what nostalgic product they want to introduce,

how they are going to induce nostalgia and where will the nostalgic product be available. For example, promoting and advertising the release of a vintage product aimed at Baby Boomers on social media would be fruitless and ill-conceived, illustrating a lack of comprehension of the target consumer. Furthermore, stimuli and nostalgic triggers are not only difficult to identify but also complicated to measure their manifestation in the form of emotional response, which is why companies tend to implement multiple nostalgic stimuli. Newly emerged companies which attempt to associate their products with past trends face the greater challenge of ensuring consumers are able to associate their brand with the nostalgic feature and justify the connection. Nostalgia marketing is therefore not a marketing strategy that can be quickly implemented, and requires in depth analysis. Perhaps the biggest misconception surround nostalgia marketing is the idea nostalgia alone offers enough value to the consumer (Cerdán Molero, 2023). Nostalgia may positively influence a purchase by creating emotional motivations but if the other product characteristics such as functionality, price, availability, quality and service are not offered the consumer will likely not purchase. A nostalgic offer needs to be supported with quantitative, measurable and tangible benefits.

As mentioned, companies must decide whether to relaunch a product as was or to instead relaunch a modified and improved version of the product, with neither method being risk-free. Relaunching accurate vintage products may require sacrificing the quality or functionality, and offering an inferior product compared to newer alternatives. The associated risk is consumers will potentially make a rational purchase and choose the option that provides the most desirable features instead, despite the lack of nostalgic connection. However, with this method companies guarantee the product will be easily recognised, accepted, nostalgic and likely purchased. Instead, if companies choose to reinvent the product, making it perhaps more functional and adding desirable modern features, consumers may reject the product since it contradicts their recollection and doesn't evoke nostalgia in a positive way. As a result, the company may experience a loss of customer loyalty, decreased purchases across their portfolio, negative word of mouth, decreased attitudes (Shields and Johnson 2016) and loss of investment. To avoid negative behaviour, companies must identify the key and core nostalgic features of a product before redesigning or modifying in any way. An example of this negative response was the 2023 live-action remake of the Little Mermaid, which was criticised for changing the protagonist's race, changing the appearance of beloved characters and using toned-down colours. The movie completely lacked nostalgic characteristics or stimuli and was therefore rejected by many consumers who took to social media to express their disillusionment. The nostalgic expectations of the consumers were especially high pre-launch due to the use of the language like "remake" and the nostalgic accuracy of previous Disney remakes. This example also shows how nostalgia can inhibit innovation, as Disney's attempt to become more diverse, inclusive and innovative with the use of new technologies and CGI was considered subjacent to nostalgic expectations.

Since the value of a nostalgic product originates in its novelty and limited nature, companies tend to release the nostalgic product for a short period and limit the amount of times they use the tool in order to avoid desensitising or alienating the consumers (Zhang, 2022). With so many brands implementing the strategy, consumers may become less responsive to repetitive nostalgic stimuli or simply too overwhelmed to purchase due to habituation. Brands must be deliberate when they decide to use the tool and understand it is not a formula that can be easily repeated or copied. This often leads brands to focus on their heritage and unique features which

cannot be replicated by competitors. Nostalgia marketing also requires sufficient advertising in order to allow consumers to be aware of the product whilst still maintaining its “one-time-offer” nature. A popular occasion to use nostalgia marketing is when a brand hits a particular milestone or anniversary and uses the tool to celebrate with the consumers. A mentioned, British chocolate company Cadbury celebrating its 200 year anniversary through traditional nostalgic newspaper ads and relaunching its historical and vintage packaging. Compared to alternative strategies, nostalgia marketing is therefore a short-term option despite its potential to foster long-term loyalty.

4.2.5 SUMMARY OF PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS OF NOSTALGIA MARKETING

In this section we have reviewed nostalgia marketing and associated benefits and challenges. The following conclusions have been reached:

- Nostalgia marketing is defined as set of practices to incorporate non-functional sources of value in goods and services, and turn them into sources of hedonic, symbolic, and interpersonal value in turn capitalising on the past to sell up-to-date products and services.
- Nostalgia marketing is part of emotional marketing which describes the larger process of creating a sustainable relationship with consumers (Putra 2021, Praditya 2020) and whose benefits originate from the idea emotions influence every stage of the decision-making process.
- Emotional marketing does not guarantee an emotional relationship with the consumer; however it is a popular and powerful tool that often makes a marketing campaign more remarkable, distinctive and ultimately remembered.
- Variables involved in emotional marketing are categorised into three dimensions: Equity, Experience and Energy.
- Nostalgia marketing combines emotional marketing with neuromarketing and shares characteristics and objectives with relational marketing.
- Nostalgic emotional reaction creates a nostalgic cognitive reaction and perception which influences nostalgic behaviour.
- Consumers who have a positive attitude towards a nostalgic product are more likely to purchase, and are motivated by maintaining internal self-continuity and contact with the past.
- Brown (2003) identified the “4As of retro branding”, which need to be considered and managed for a successful relaunch, consisting of allegory, arcadia, aura and autonomy.
- According to Holbrook and Schindler (1996), each generation has a unique “generational nostalgic imprint” which describes an age-related preference for different products.
- Within the branch of nostalgia marketing exists “Retro marketing”, which explains the process of relaunching a product or service by using familiar packaging or product designs, to engender a nostalgic connection and trust among consumers. Three types of retro marketing: Retroization, Retro Branding and Brand Revitalization.
- Nostalgia marketing generally follows a 20-to-30-year cycle or pendulum. This nostalgic re-introduction cycle allows for children and young adults to grow up, gain purchasing power and become consumers of products they fondly remember from their younger years. A post-pandemic and social-media fueled world is speeding up the nostalgia cycle

- Nostalgia can add perceived value to the product and therefore proportionally increase the consumer purchase intention, increasing the likelihood of purchase.
- Brand associations, brand trust and brand image created from nostalgia can differentiate and secure the brand's position in the saturated modern market, through increasing brand loyalty and increase purchase intention.
- Nostalgic products have a novelty value by transmitting a "one time offer" and exclusive message.
- According to Cialdini's seven principles of persuasion (Cialdini, 1984), nostalgic products influence purchases by encouraging "committed" consumers who enjoy buying products that they feel connected to, by communicating "scarcity" and a sense of urgency, whilst creating "unity" and connectedness between individuals who purchase to continue to be part of a social group.
- The consumer's emotional response to nostalgic marketing is manifested through a weakening of the perceived value of money, less psychological obstacles to purchase, less price sensitivity and ultimately a greater willingness to purchase (Lasaleta, Constantine, Sedikides, D. Vohs 2014).
- Gen Z, who have been more affected than any other generation as their young adulthood has been full of instability and heightened anxiety, are nostalgic for a simpler time which they have not lived through. This phenomenon is elucidated by the concept of Nowstalgia (Madwell, 2016) which is defined as "The impulse to return to an imagined past by those who never experienced it in the first place."
- Generation Z are also distinguished as enjoying innovation, convenience, security, authenticity and escapism (Woods, 2013), which is why nostalgia is appealing and have had great success for this consumer group since it provides perceived escapism, authenticity and security.
- Relaunches that promote authentic brand heritage create a positive consumer attitude due to the assumption the brand has a higher quality and less perceived risk due to its historical equity (Percy, Rossiter, 1992).
- Brand confidence and trust are also increased by brand familiarity and experience with the product (Laroche, 1996).
- Nostalgic marketing is a legitimate marketing strategy for many companies due to the low cost of capitalising on historical brand equity to position the brand.
- Nostalgic product features also often carry a premium price (Netemeyer, et al., 2004), as they offer immediate emotional gratitude after the purchase in the form of happy memories.
- The biggest misconception surround nostalgia marketing is the idea nostalgia alone offers enough value to the consumer (Cerdán Molero, 2023). Nostalgia may positively influence a purchase by creating emotional motivations but needs to be supported with quantitative, measurable and tangible benefits.
- If nostalgia marketing is no executed correctly the company may experience a loss of customer loyalty, decreased purchases across their portfolio, negative word of mouth, decreased attitudes and loss of investment.
- To avoid negative behaviour, companies must identify the key and core nostalgic features of a product before redesigning or modifying in any way.
- Since the value of a nostalgic product originates in its novelty and limited nature, companies tend to release the nostalgic product for a short period and limit the amount of

times they use the tool in order to avoid desensitising or alienating the consumers (Zhang, 2022).

4.3 NOSTALGIA MARKETING'S APPLICATION TO INDUSTRY

In continuation, the application of nostalgia marketing will be further analysed through studying the use of the tool in the film industry compared to the food and beverage industry. This contributes to the objective of gaining a greater understanding of nostalgia marketing by analysing real world and practical examples instead of limiting the study to theoretical and conceptual information. The purpose of this analysis is to evaluate the flexibility and scalability of nostalgia marketing depending on the objectives of the brand and the industry. Despite the two case studies originating from different industries, both examples are from 2023 exhibiting nostalgia marketing's current manifestation and collaboration with contemporary variables such as digitalisation and social media. The investigation also aims to demonstrate how nostalgia marketing can be used to respond to a wide variety of obstacles and challenges that are industry-specific. Analysing the practical manifestation of established conceptual ideas contributes additional information and data and in turn increases the validity of the study.

4.3.1 NOSTALGIA IN THE FILM INDUSTRY: BARBIE 2023

The film industry is no exception with regard to the increased global interest in nostalgia and the rise in use of nostalgia marketing. Demand in recent years has shown a shift away from sci-fi and futuristic content in favour of nostalgic tv and film productions. Television has been a feature of both personal and collective nostalgic memories for decades (Holdsworth 2011); however media is now purposefully being created to nostalgically engage with the audience. Nostalgic media has a huge audience and allows consumers to time travel to the past and relive old times or experience the time period for the first time. The popularity of nostalgic film and tv is therefore being seen within an extremely wide consumer group comprising all ages and races. This genre encompasses creative remakes, reboots, reappropriations, revivals and reunions with the key characteristic being the obvious nostalgic stimuli. Svetlana Boym defines this twenty-first century media phenomenon as restorative nostalgia, which aims to romanticise the past by omitting negative aspects and characteristics of the period and instead focusing on presenting its alluring and iconic aspects. Audience attraction to the genre arises as viewers are allowed to escape reality and enter a new world, their reward being waves of pleasant emotions. Nostalgia appeals to the human love of storytelling, with storytelling appealing to the same parts of the brain seen in social interactions, which boosts oxytocin, the "feel good" hormone (VanDeBrake, 2018). Alternative genres such as action and futuristic/sci-fi, which peaked in popularity in the 80s, are saturated categories that have been so extensively mined that there is little room for originality, thereby allowing an alternative, nostalgic genre to supersede them .

The flexibility provided by nostalgia media makes it very attractive, since creators are able to use different levels of nostalgia, combine nostalgia with other genres and have unlimited decades to choose from. Popular examples of nostalgic media from the last decade include *Peaky Blinders* (2013), *Stranger Things* (2016), *Friends: The Reunion* (2021) and *Oppenheimer* (2023). Most recently, Netflix launched "One Day" based on David Nicholls 2011 novel set in the late 80s

and 90s, which has since been watched by 15.2 million viewers since its release on February 8th 2024 (Fahey, 2024). Streaming platforms such as Netflix and Disney are contributing to the growth of the genre by not only facilitating consumer access to nostalgic content but are also developing and producing their own nostalgic media. Both streaming giants have been adding nostalgic and retro media to their databases and are actively suggesting nostalgic category lists for users to browse which can be seen in Figure 13. Nostalgic media forms part of their business model, as they are guaranteed to attract and satiate consumers, with the subsequent increased revenue covering the cost of producing original shows. At the moment nostalgic favourites such as *Sex & the City*, *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* and *Friends* guarantee constant and reliable streams and outperform many new material, leading streaming platforms to pay millions of dollars for rights to the product (MUO, Mercado, 2021). Netflix, Disney and other global competitors are therefore now in a constant race to be the first to secure the rights to consumers' favourite nostalgic tv shows, to guarantee they maintain and grow their subscription base. Streaming consumers are characterised as having low loyalty, with half of subscribers changing their streaming platform membership multiple times a year, and 48% of them citing their primary motivation behind switching to an alternative platform as being due to content (Parks Associates and SymphonyAI Media 2022). Streaming services are under huge pressure to attract and maintain their subscribers, leading them to offer familiar, widely-popular nostalgia film and tv options to compete and stay relevant.

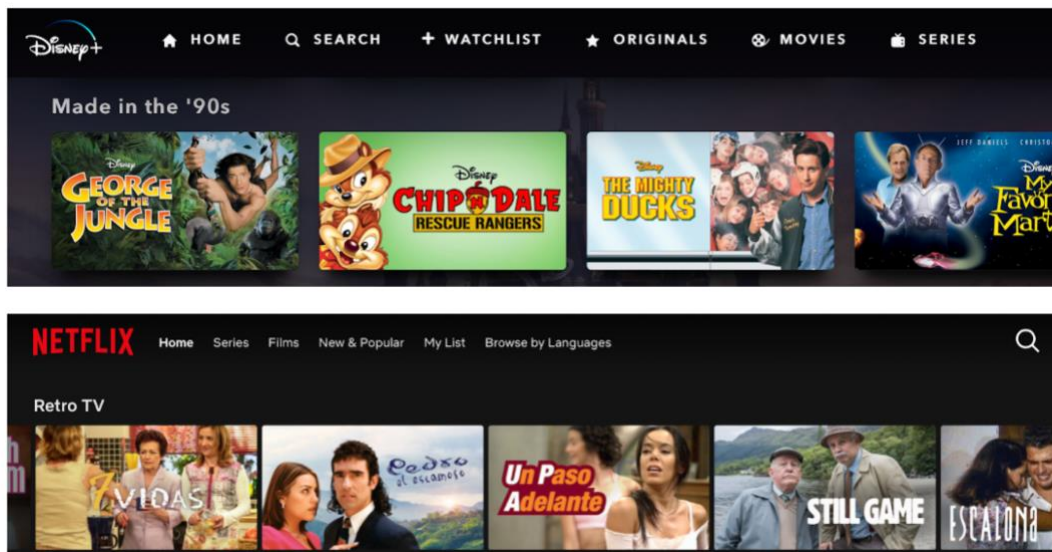


Figure 13. Netflix and Disney's Nostalgia Categories. 2024

One of the most successful movies and largest global releases of 2023 was the movie *Barbie*, based on the iconic and eponymous fashion dolls created by toy maker Mattel. The Mattel and Warner Bros collaboration was named one of the top 10 films of 2023 by the National Board of Review and the American Film Institute, with the fantasy nostalgic comedy also receiving many accolades, including two Golden Globe awards and eight Academy Award Oscar nominations. Outperforming and exceeding all previous expectations, *Barbie* was not only the highest-grossing film of 2023 with a \$1.44 billion take at the box office, but it is also the 14th-highest grossing film

of all time (Wikipedia 2023). Due to the glamorous and iconic doll having been released in the late 50's, it has featured in, and impacted on, the young childhoods and teenage years of Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, Gen Z and even Gen Alpha. Therefore, the target audience had huge nostalgic expectations due to its multi-generational appeal, wide audience and collective nostalgic connection. Director Greta Gerwig faced the challenge of accurately representing the fashion doll and its nostalgic characteristics to meet the public's expectations, while appealing to the contemporary viewer and entertaining an audience beyond the doll consumers. Unlike the Disney remake of *The Little Mermaid*, the Barbie movie was able to be innovative and modern with its portrayal of the matriarchal world, feminist message and diverse cast, therefore appealing to non-Mattel consumers, while simultaneously transmitting a strong nostalgic feeling to Barbie consumers. This widespread reach was summed up with Greta Gerwig's phrase "If you love Barbie, if you hate Barbie, this movie is for you" (Variety 2023). The acceptance of these modern ideas and adaptations was due to the accurate portrayal of many of Barbie's iconic features, capitalisation of brand heritage and use of nostalgic stimuli that the audience was quick to recognise. The film was able to transport viewers to the pre-2000s with the use of neon vintage costumes, "Barbie pink", leg warmers and rollerblades, and by featuring a blonde and blue-eyes protagonist.

Claimed by many as the "Marketing campaign of the year", an estimated \$150 million was spent solely on extensive, eye-catching and varied marketing efforts, which is even more incredible considering a large portion of the marketing was in fact unpaid and produced by consumers and other brands. The first teaser featured a single image of Barbie in Barbie Land in 2022 (Variety 2023), which quickly went viral on social media, followed by 'spontaneous' photos of the cast being set up whilst still shooting the movie. The marketing efforts took on a life of their own, with social media dominated by "Barbie core" and "Barbiemanía". Through implementing a "breadcrumb" strategy (Variety 2023), fans were filled with curiosity and the constant social media chatter created a huge amount of organic marketing. Barbie's organic online promotion and coverage of real-world guerilla marketing, such as their use of bus benches and billboards, illustrates how powerful social media and the internet is in regards to modern marketing. The social media domination further proves the flexibility of nostalgia marketing and its ability to be moulded to any communication channel and to be used for omnichannel and holistic strategies. Its simultaneous release with Universal's *Oppenheimer* led to the Barbenheimer cultural phenomenon, which contrary to worries it would create competition and a divide within viewers, instead served to promote both nostalgic films. Digital analytics such as Google Trends quantify and demonstrate the spike in interest of Barbie after the release of the film (Figure 14).

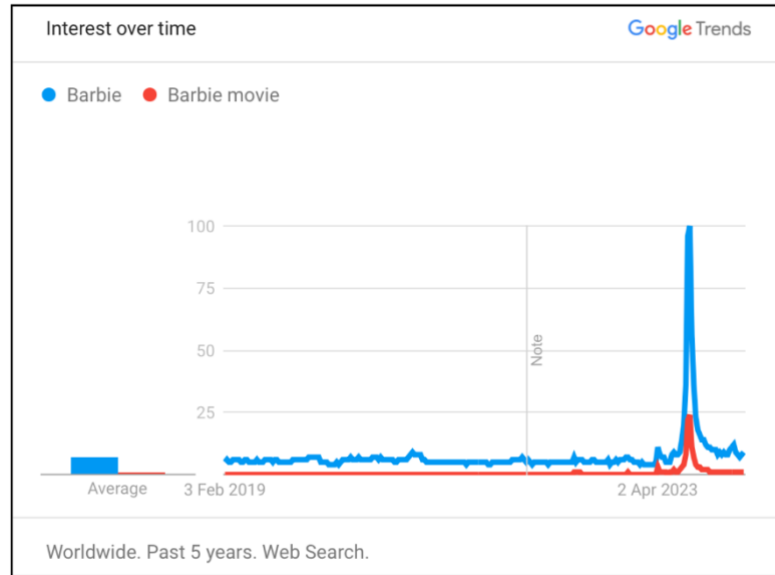


Figure 14. Interest over 2019-2024 in “Barbie” and “Barbie movie”. Good Trends, 2024

A large portion of Barbie's marketing success was through hundreds of diverse collaborations, both paid and unpaid, which helped propel Barbie into mainstream pop culture and to reach alternative audiences. Some of the most unique and notable collaborations included brands such as Crocs (Figure 16), Balmain, Xbox, Moon Oral Care and Beis, demonstrating the diversity of consumers of the Barbie movie (Rambharose, 2023). Many brands launched their own Barbie-inspired products, despite having no direct collaboration or relationship with Mattel or Warner Bros, in an effort to tap into and claim Barbie's support of feminism, large loyal consumer group, attractive product value, brand heritage and nostalgic originality. Airbnb's extravagant "Barbie's Malibu dream house" collaboration created further virality (Figure 15), and was relaunched to coincide with the release of the movie after previously being used to celebrate the doll's 60th anniversary. Barbie's collaboration with Airbnb and its "World of Barbie" offered immersive nostalgic experiences to consumers, with many reporting it as a "dream come true".



Figure 15. Barbie Malibu Dreamhouse. Airbnb 2023
Figure 16. Crocs x Barbie Collaboration. Vogue Spain 2023

The feminist flick of 2023 used personal marketing as part of a greater social media campaign, whereby women were encouraged to share old nostalgic pictures of themselves and reminisce about the anxieties of growing up as girls, building social connectedness through shared experiences. This shared nostalgia acted as a bridge between generations and Barbie became much greater than just a movie or doll. Through marketing, Barbie was able to create a pink social movement surrounding the subject of female empowerment by presenting a powerful female protagonist wrapped in familiar nostalgic symbols. Since the release of Barbie, Mattel has seen an unprecedented increase in sales, growing 9.3% to \$1.92 billion, exceeding projections of \$1.84 billion, as consumers purchased an increased 27% in Mattel's flagship Barbie products, as well as other Mattel product lines (The Guardian, 2023). Following the atomic success, Mattel has shared plans to produce 17 more films, with 14 currently in production, featuring their other nostalgic toy line such as Barney, American Girl, Hot Wheels and Uno (Bryce, 2023). Nostalgic media continues to maintain its popularity, so viewers and consumers can expect to have their screens filled with nostalgia for years to come. The Barbie movie is a great example of the effective and diverse use of nostalgia combined with nostalgia marketing, showing how nostalgia can permeate all communication channels. The unforgettable campaign exemplifies the use of the promotion tool to revive consumer interest, loyalty and emotional connection with a particular product. Nostalgia marketing is no longer a niche tactic, but instead has become a mainstream and intricate strategy that has permeated modern pop culture.

4.3.2 NOSTALGIA IN FOOD & BEVERAGE INDUSTRY: MCDONALD'S & COSMC'S 2023

Food and beverage has long been a common source of nostalgia, with most individuals holding personal memories surrounding a particular dish or item. The majority of consumers can recall a certain food item when asked, such as their mum's spaghetti or a favourite childhood chocolate. The relationship between food and nostalgia is unsurprising since cherished food items and nostalgia are both able to act as stress relievers and provide the consumer with comfort and joy (Kroger, 2022). The food and beverage industry is therefore not free from nostalgic marketing efforts, and like most industries is experiencing a recent increase in consumer demand for nostalgic products (International Food Information Council, 2022). Multinational food company, Kraft Heinz reported sales of 90s snack "Lunchables" have reached "double digit growth for the first time in five years". Companies are eagerly looking to the past, and their company archives, to inspire new flavours, packaging and presentation to catch consumers interest (Datassential, 2023). In the US, sales of nostalgic brands such as Goldfish, Oreos, Campbell Soup and Doritos surged during the pandemic, with 69% of people saying they will continue to enjoy the same amount of comfort food post-pandemic (The Food Institute, 2021). One of the ways consumers can expect to see nostalgic products on their supermarket shelves includes relaunches such as Dunkaroos, a popular American cookie from the 90s that was discontinued in 2012 but relaunched in 2020, directly appealing to millennials who had nostalgic memories associated with the product. Alternatively, some brands are choosing to integrate nostalgic characteristics into their current business strategy, such as Pizza Hut relaunching their iconic games to accompany their pizza in the form of a mobile app. Other companies may simply wish to remind their consumers of their brand heritage and long product lineage, such as Pringles' who launched 2021 campaign with the slogan "Poppin' Tops since 1968". Since the modern consumer and members of Gen Z are

characterised as being increasingly health-conscious, food companies may also choose to adapt nostalgic products to the contemporary palate with strategies such as increasing transparency around production, choosing Fairtrade products, using solely vegan ingredients or increasing health benefits.

Fast food is a huge source of comfort for a large number of consumers with many choosing to eat, consciously or unconsciously, as a distraction from stress, anger, sadness etc (Mayo Clinic, 2022). Similar to nostalgia, emotional eating is often triggered by negative moods, periods of transition and stress, or problems with social connectedness. At the centre of the fast food world lies McDonald's, an American multinational, claimed by many to be the king of fast food. Being the largest fast food company in the world, serving over 69 million customers in over 100 countries daily, McDonald's has a deep understanding of consumer tastes and thus effectively positions itself in the market. Some of McDonald's most iconic and recognisable characteristics include its golden arches, Ronald McDonald character, and its world-renowned children's Happy Meal. Apart from their successful business model of affordability, convenience and a standardised product, McDonald's constantly explores new marketing avenues such as delivering target messages, their mobile app, and influencer collaborations, with great success and positive consumer response. Recently, McDonald's has been experimenting with nostalgia marketing in the form of introducing adult Happy Meals and the Grimace birthday promotion. Grimace, the evil McDonald's mascot, was launched in 1971, and to celebrate its 52nd birthday in 2023 McDonald's released the "Grimace Shake" with the goal of using nostalgia to target their older consumers. This led to the viral Grimace Shake trend on Tik Tok which depicted people posing with the "evil" drink before staging horror-inspired scenarios. According to a LinkedIn post by Guillaume Huin, who heads social media for the brand, this campaign influenced "billions" of posts and generated millions in engagement. The Grimace Shake was the top trend on Twitter/X for eight days (Huin, 2023), boosted sales by 10% (Fortune, 2023) and proved a bigger success than could possibly have been anticipated as it inadvertently captured the attention of many young consumers through the popular Tik Tok social media platform.

McDonald's huge brand lineage and product history allowed it to modify one of its most popular products - the Happy Meal - into a nostalgic throwback for its adult consumers. The McDonald's collaboration with American entertainer and DJ Kerwin Frost essentially marketed itself as an adult Happy Meal complete with colourful packaging, surprise toy and childhood joy as seen in Figure 17. The adults Happy Meal, or "Kerwin Frost Box", launched in December 2023 in the U.S., Canada, Mexico and Australia (Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 2023), aimed at encouraging adults to relive their childhood experience and excitement of receiving a Happy Meal. The product was designed to have multiple nostalgic characteristics including the collectable toys which are an adaptation of the 1988 limited edition "McNugget buddies" included in the original Happy Meals, something that every kid from the 80s and 90s cherished (Callahan, 2023). McDonald's claims that they are already seeing the success of the adult Happy Meals and higher menu prices with quarterly sales up by 12.6% compared to 2022 (WSJ, 2023).



Figure 17. La Caja de Kerwin Frost. Aguilar 2023

Perhaps McDonald's greatest nostalgic venture thus far has been the 2023 launch of spin-off store CosMc's in Illinois. The drive-thru only concept is based on the nostalgic McDonaldland character, CosMc, an extraterrestrial who "craves McDonald's food (CNBC, 2023), and who appeared in McDonald's advertisements from 1986 to 1992 (Figure 18) (CBS Chicago, 2023). CosMc's use of the maximalist retro colour combination of yellow and blue is intended to transport people to the 80s and potentially make the new product more familiar and lower consumers perceived risk of trying a new brand. After the failure of McCafé, CosMc's is McDonald's re-attempt to enter the growing and promising \$100bn speciality beverage market (RB, Maze, 2023), which has previously been dominated by other multinationals such as Starbucks and Dunkin' (RW, 2023). The beverage-centred spin-off focuses on highly-profitable products such as "otherworldly" speciality teas, sodas and coffees, describing them as "mood boosters", can be seen in Figure 19. CosMc's continues to cultivate the idea of familiarity as some items are part of McDonald's current menu, such as McFlurry ice creams and McMuffin breakfast sandwiches. The pilot project aims to appeal to a large audience, hoping to inherit McDonald's extremely loyal customers and nostalgic generations whilst appealing to Gen Z with its simple business model. The retro store offers trendy, viral, customisable and Gen Z-approved drinks and a very simplified delivery by relying on contactless payment and drive-thru only option. Foot traffic analyst firm Placer.Ai reports the flagship store has received twice the traffic of a regular McDonald's and is able to produce higher quantities due to their increased space from lack of traditional seating. McDonald's CEO Chris Kempczinski also shared plans to open ten more locations in 2024, illustrating the success of the nostalgia-powered business and how brands continue to test the boundaries of nostalgia marketing.



Figure 18. A New Beverage Concept from the McDonald's Universe. CosMc's 2023

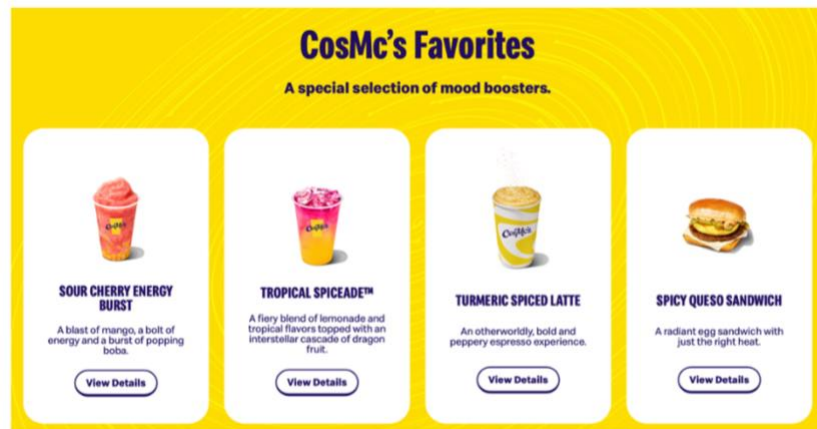


Figure 19. CosMc's Special Selection of Mood Boosters. CosMc's 2023

4.3.3 SUMMARY OF PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS OF THE APPLICATION OF NOSTALGIA MARKETING

As a result of analysing the use of nostalgia marketing in the case studies the following conclusions have been reached:

- Nostalgia Marketing is not limited to a singular industry as it was used effectively in both the food and beverage industry and film industry.
- Consumer demand for nostalgic products and experiences has been increasing for years and continues to do so.
- Nostalgia Marketing increases consumer acceptance of a product or innovative idea.
- Nostalgia marketing can be used as a tool to retain and attract customers, and also allows the product to be appealing to a wider audience.
- Nostalgia can contribute to creating a strong brand image and identity which allows greater positioning and differentiation from competition.
- Nostalgia alone does not provide enough value and must be combined with a quality, interesting and likeable product

- Effective nostalgia marketing requires identifying core nostalgic features that cannot be modified, in order to make sure the product is accepted.
- Social Media has a disproportionate influence on public opinion and is therefore a popular communication channel used for both organic and paid nostalgia marketing.
- Choice of colours is one of the important product variables that are controlled when planning a nostalgic marketing campaign or product.
- Nostalgia marketing is often combined with other marketing efforts such as Guerilla marketing or Social media marketing.

5. PRIMARY RESEARCH:APPLICATION OF NOSTALGIA IN MARKETING

The purpose of the quantitative study is to confirm and support the conclusions drawn from secondary published literature in order to increase their validity and to contribute towards understanding the objectives of this paper. More specifically, the quantitative research aims to prove correlations between age, different stimuli and nostalgia as well as to gain a better understanding of consumer perception towards nostalgia. The investigation process began identifying the main conclusions of research discussing nostalgia and nostalgia marketing before selecting which conclusions and theories needed to be investigated and developed further. Following this step, the size of sample and its corresponding demographic variables were established before selecting a suitable format to collect the required data. The form of the study was a survey, as it favoured a variety of question techniques, allowed the survey to be easily shared to increase the sample size and appealed to all members of the diverse sample. The survey was analysed based on the assumption that the sample size will be diverse and large enough to be an accurate representation of the larger population. All participants of the survey were willing volunteers who have consented to the analysis and publication of their responses. The online survey can be described as being non-probabilistic since all members of the population have an equal chance of participating. Finally, the survey is characterised as an example of snowball sampling, as some participants will be found through referrals.

The design is created to be simple with clear structures and instructions to answer and to facilitate the categorisation of answers. A variety of question styles will be used depending on the content of the question and its potential answers, with the added goal of keeping the participant focused throughout. Question styles include multiple choice, open ended questions, checkboxes and Likert scales. The content of the survey has been influenced by Holbrook (1993) who pioneered the study of nostalgia in marketing through the development of the “Nostalgia Index” which measured “nostalgia proneness” on an individual level. The nostalgic index asks the participant to what extent they agree with typical nostalgic phrases such as “they don't make them like they used to” and “things used to be better in the good old days”. The survey design has also been influenced by the Southampton nostalgic scale which encourages the participant to self-analyse in order to answer prompts such as “how often do you experience nostalgia?” and “how prone are you to feeling nostalgic?”. The length of the questionnaire was limited to 20 questions in order to encourage responses, avoid participant fatigue and in turn increase the sample validity. Due to limited resources the final sample size comprised 73 individuals. Once the survey was

conducted, the final step of the investigation process was to analyse the results and if the data permitted, relate the data to the conclusions of the secondary research.

5.1 PRIMARY RESEARCH DATA SHEET

Objectives: Validate or reject conclusions from secondary research

Type: Survey with both quantitative and qualitative prompts

Platform: Online Survey using Google Forms

Universe: Infinite and heterogeneous

Sample: 73 individuals

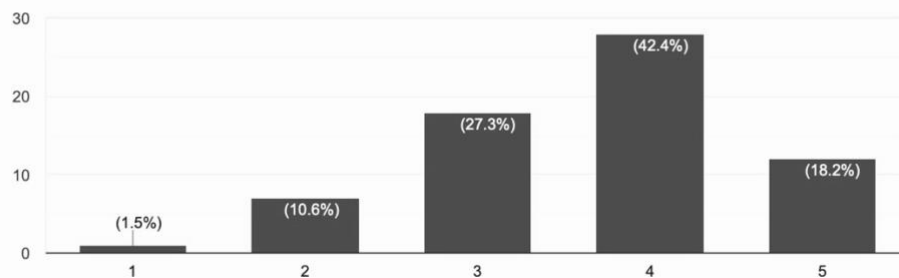
Time period: January 2024

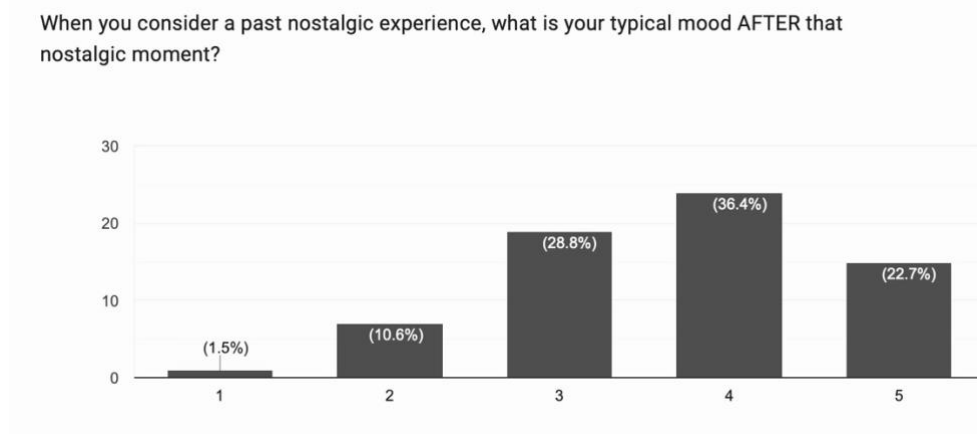
Sampling error: 11,5%

5.2 ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION OF QUANTITATIVE SURVEY RESULTS

Perhaps the most important conclusion the study aimed to support was the idea that nostalgia is a positive feeling, that improves moods and attitudes through rosy retrospection and elimination of negative aspects. 60,6% of survey respondents indicated their nostalgic memories could be described as positive, idyllic and recalled with fondness, with only 12,1% of respondents disagreeing. Subsequently, 87,9% of participants stated their mood after reminiscing could be described as either dramatically improved, improved or neutral. The 12,1% of individuals who described a decrease in mood encapsulates the bittersweet nature of nostalgia and the fact it sometimes leaves individuals longing for a past that no longer exists.

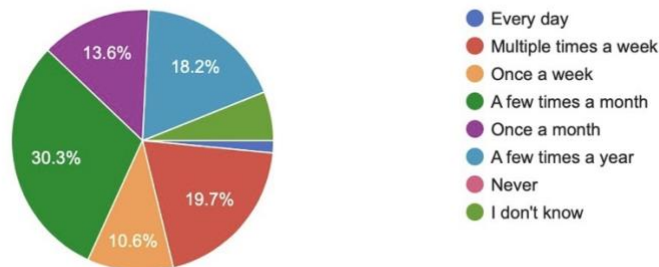
To what extent do you agree with the statement, "My nostalgic memories are generally idyllic, positive and with fondness"





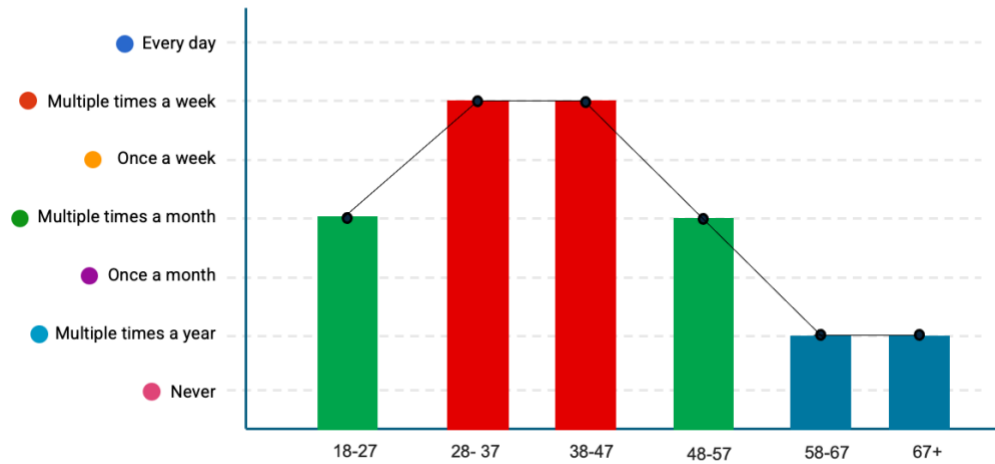
Inspired by the Southampton nostalgia index, the result of the introspective question “how often do you experience nostalgia” allowed multiple conclusions to be drawn, including the fact that not a single participant stated never. This supports the concept that nostalgia is an innate and unavoidable emotion that is ubiquitous and common to all human experience. Furthermore, the results of this question highlighted the prevalence of nostalgia with 75,7% of respondents stating they experience nostalgia at least once a month.

How often do you experience nostalgia?

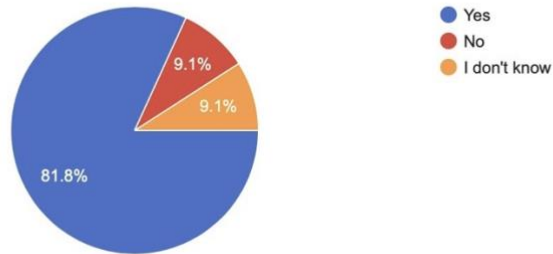


Respondents of the questionnaire were unanimous in their impression that nostalgia proneness and prevalence increase with age. This corresponds with the idea that older generations are more nostalgic and more inclined to buy a nostalgic product, and that they have the purchasing power to do so. This conclusion also relates to the presence of a “reminiscence bump” established in secondary literature, explaining the common tendency for older adults and middle aged individuals to experience enhanced recollection of the past. The reminiscence bump can be clearly seen in the graph below which shows the relationship between participants’ age and their answers to the question, “How often do you experience nostalgia?”. Within each age group, the most frequent response to the question was then used as a representation of the general feelings and prevalence of nostalgia within the age group. The graph shows a clear increase in frequency of nostalgic recollections as individuals enter their 30s and 40s, which is then followed by a steady decrease as individuals enter their 50s.

Relation between age and prevalence of nostalgia

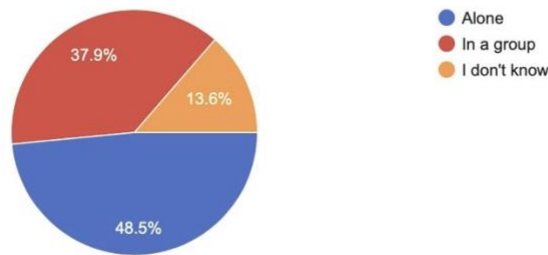


Do you think you experience nostalgia more as you get older?

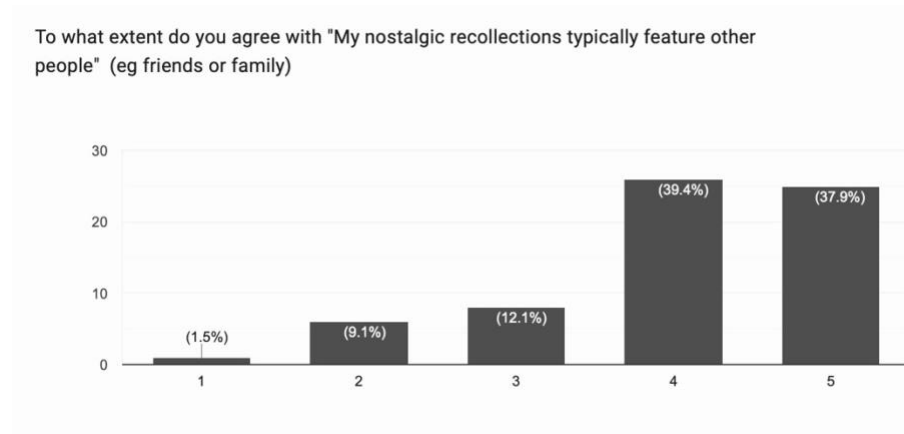


The majority of respondents agreed that they were more prone to experience nostalgia when alone rather than in a group setting, which supports the idea that loneliness sparks the urge to feel social connectedness. As 37,9% of participants stated that they experience nostalgia in group settings, this is consistent with the idea that individuals also use nostalgia as a tool to socialise and increase connectedness when in a group setting. In this case, individuals may not only be inspired to seek relationships after experiencing nostalgia but also may use nostalgia to find common ground and reminisce with others who share similar memories.

Do you experience nostalgia more often when you are alone or in a group setting?

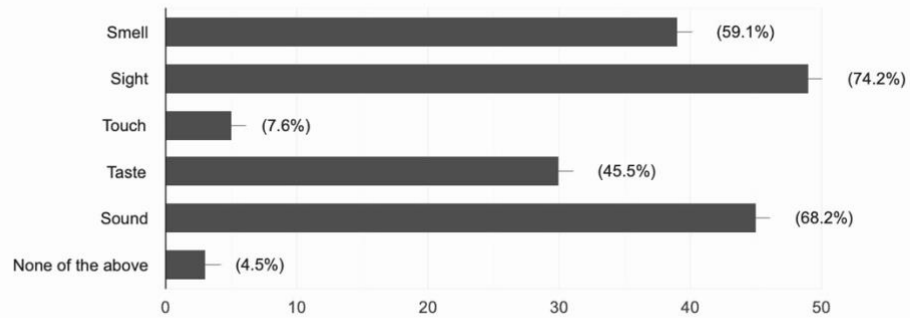


The previous idea of nostalgia being used as a social tool to promote relationships is supported with the majority of respondents agreeing with the statement “my nostalgic recollections typically feature other people”. As little as 10,6% of respondents disagreed, with 77,3% agreeing they often share collective memories with friends and family, allowing them to feel socially connected even when alone.

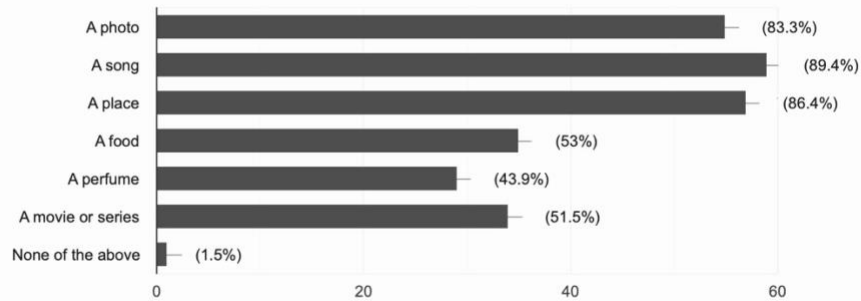


The survey also aimed to gain a better understanding of nostalgic triggers and which stimuli can be utilised to evoke nostalgia. Respondents stated that stimuli relating to smell, sight, sound and taste were the most effective in prompting nostalgia and the top three more specific triggers included photos, songs and places. Holbrook and Schindler (1989) aimed to investigate the correlation between song preference and when they were first exposed to the song. In their study, participants ranging in age from 16 to 86 years rated popular songs dating from 1932 to 1986. Results revealed a greater preference for songs that were popular when participants were in their late teens, relative to other moments in their life. The same conclusion can be seen in the nostalgia survey as 90% of respondents indicated a song had prompted and triggered their nostalgia in the past.

Which senses, if any, prompt you to feel nostalgia?

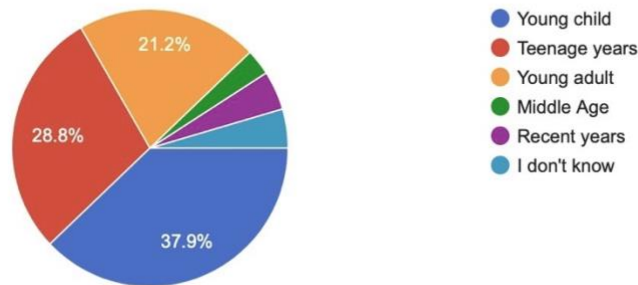


Please select which stimuli, if any, have caused you to experience nostalgia.



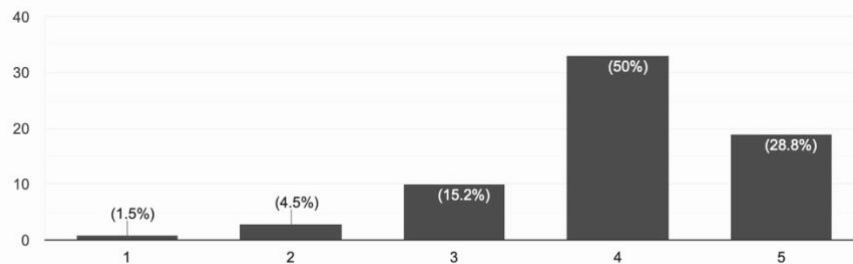
Secondary literature such as Holbrook and Schindler's (1989) conclusions supports the idea people are most nostalgic about their young adulthood for both societal and psychological reasons. The "reminiscence bump" explains how childhood and young adulthood are the peak periods when the brain is coding and storing memories, while Annette Bohn and Dorthe Berntsen (2010) explain societies idolisation of these periods/stages made individuals more nostalgic for these times. The primary results of the survey aimed to contribute to this idea by directly asking participants what period of time most featured in their nostalgic memories, in a multiple choice format. The results indicated young childhood, teenage years and young adult accounted for 87,9% of answers, affirming alternative research.

What period of your life features most in your nostalgic recollections?



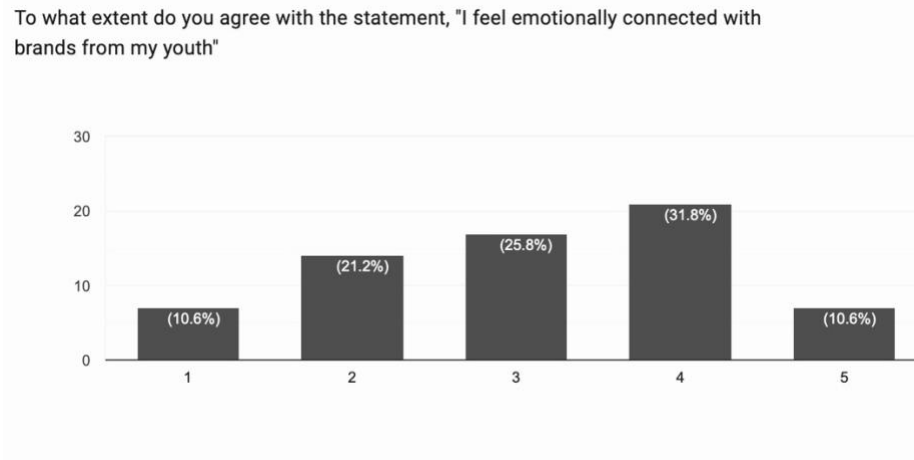
The next question aimed to understand how nostalgia can add legitimacy to a product or brand and increase consumers' perceived value and quality. 78,8% of consumers agree that modern products are now lower quality and not made to last, which explains the phenomenon of many brands associating themselves with historic moments or promoting their brand heritage to overcome this psychological perception.

To what extent do you agree with the statement, "Products are now lower quality and not made to last"

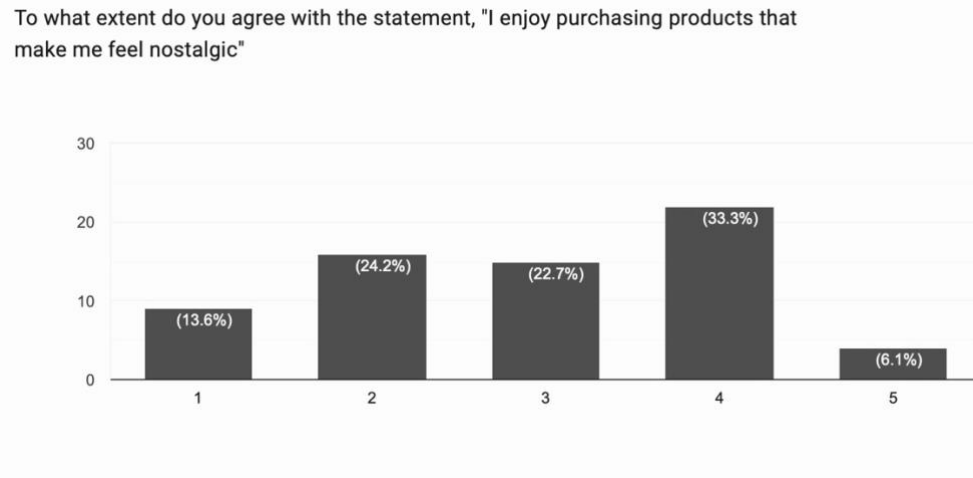


During the investigation of published secondary literature, Muehling et al's (2012) investigation of childhood brand exposure in their study of "An Involvement Explanation for Nostalgia Advertising Effects", was examined. The study involved an experiment with 180 participants, with an age range of 18 to 35 years old, to capture participants' reactions towards nostalgic print ads. This experiment indicated that childhood brand exposure, or personal attachment, increased positive brand attitudes and purchase intentions when nostalgic ads were used. This conclusion is essential to the use of nostalgia marketing as brands need to understand what childhood interactions the consumer had with the brand and whether they can be capitalised on. To be able to support or argue against this conclusion, participants of the survey were asked to state their agreement with the phrase "I feel emotionally connected with brands from my youth". Results showed 42,6% of respondents in strong agreement, however 31,8% argued against the idea. This could indicate consumers lose emotional connection with brands from their youth,

as brands fail to create emotional relationships and acknowledge consumers who were previously overlooked but have recently gained purchasing power.



Like Holbrook and Southampton University, Shields and Johnson (2016) developed a scale to specifically test childhood brand nostalgia, resulting in the definition of “a positive emotional attachment to a brand because of the brand’s association with fond memories of the individual’s non-recent lived past”. To further support Shields and Johnson’s definition, participants of the study were asked to use the Likert scale provided to show their level of agreement with the phrase "I enjoy purchasing products that make me feel nostalgic". Responses revealed 39,4% of consumers agreed with the statement, while 37,8% of consumers disagreed. This split opinion could allude to the previously stated idea that nostalgia alone is not a purchasing variable that is strong enough to justify a purchase, and instead brands must combine nostalgia with other attractive values such as convenience, price, quality and functionality.



5.3 ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE SURVEY RESULTS

At the end of the survey participants were asked to describe a nostalgic product they had recently purchased and explain the consumption experience and motivation behind the purchase. The results showed that nostalgic motivation was associated with the idea of wanting to feel more connected to loved ones and wanting to relive a particular phase in their life. All nostalgic anecdotes shared by individuals described pleasant, warm and joyful memories that were evoked in detail by the particular product. Interestingly, two participants of different ages both referred to the same product “Calvin Klein One” perfume, but had unique and individual memories attached to the product. This result highlights the idea that consumers share nostalgic triggers due to their shared experiences and interaction with the product. The conclusion also highlights the power and influence some products have in order to maintain popularity for several decades therefore creating various generational nostalgic imprints.

“CK One Perfume. The smell takes me back to being 15 the first time I tried the perfume and all the mementoos that summer held so the smell now instantly takes me back home to Spain and I picture the friends I had then and feel like the person I was then too. Also totally different but littlest pet shops are extremely nostalgic to junior school memories.” - Female (18-27)

“Calvin Klein One fragrance. I used to buy it in the 90s and it was very expensive for me but I saw it at Chemist Warehouse for just \$30 and went to smell it. It evoked a flood of fond memories from my early 20s. Just had to buy it.” Female (48-57)

Various respondees also used language to indicate repetitive purchase of the nostalgic product, which supports the assumption that nostalgia increases customer lifetime value through consumer loyalty. Lindt and Babybel are both considered brands with long brand lineage and heritage. Notably, both brands offer products that are considered within the high-end price tag for the product category, which contributes to the conclusion that consumers are willing to pay more for nostalgic brands and products.

“Every year at Christmas I buy Lindt chocolate balls. Even though I do so on a yearly basis, I still mostly buy them because they remind me so much of my grandmother and how she would have them for us. They were a special treat at the time, I connect them with my grandmother, the time of year, home (place). I think of the time of when my grandmother was still around and took care of me, which fills me with warmth and love.” - Female (48-57)

“Since leaving home, I still buy Babybel cheese snacks. They are a comfort food my parents used to put in my childhood school lunch and buying them reminds me of them” - Male (18-27)

Perhaps one of the most crucial conclusions that was supported by the qualitative study proved nostalgia's influence across a wide range of product categories and product prices. The study also revealed participants from all genders, nationalities and ages had been influenced by nostalgia marketing when purchasing. Consumers showed awareness of their feelings and memories and an understanding of its influence on their purchase.

“Candy. Fruit roll-ups and Sour punks. Nostalgic because we used to trade sour punks in the school playground and used to give ourselves tongue tattoos with the fruit roll up’s and wrap them around our fingers to suck and eat.” - Male (28-37)

“Polly pocket miniature playset. I used to have some when I was very young and bought one for my daughters. I used to love playing with them as a little girl and loved the different themes and worlds they would create. They also had Disney themed play sets to collect that also reminded me of the movies that were released during my childhood.” - Female (28-37)

“I bought soda pop, called Cola Postobon, because it reminded me of my home country Colombia when I used to drink it when I was little. It used to be a treat my mum would give me on special occasions, but now i enjoy buying it for myself.” - Male (48-57)

Some other ideas that were shared by the participants included:

“Memories accurate or otherwise tend to be positive and recall a period of enjoyment etc. Buying a product for me is an attempt I think conscious or otherwise to try and recreate that time.”

“These experiences almost always create a positive emotion and provide a sense of comfort with familiarity.”

“I think someone’s definition on nostalgia is important because to me it is generally always a mix of melancholy for what no longer exists/happens in the present, but also an overall positive feeling because I know it happened and can look back fondly at different stages of my life or people that were in my life. So I would define it positively although others may view nostalgia purely as negative reminiscing.”

“I think there can definitely be positive and negative nostalgia so it depends if it’s brought up through a happy lens or more in terms of it being a trigger and taking me back to a negative place or time. Photos for example could be a combination because it may be a happy photo but with people I no longer speak to or was taken at a bad period. However the opposite can happen and a photo can transport you to one of the happiest times with people you love.”

Below is a Word Cloud which is a visual representation of common responses and key words found in the questionnaire results. The Word Cloud not only displays highly recurrent words but also illustrates which words were more prevalent, as the larger the font, the more frequently it featured in responses.



Figure 20. Word Cloud of Responses from Survey

6. FINAL CONCLUSIONS & FUTURE OF NOSTALGIA MARKETING

As a result of achieving the objective of defining the concept of nostalgia, it can be described as a naturally occurring and inevitable feeling that consumers will continue to experience and be influenced by, no matter their age, generation or race. Consumer behaviour is significantly influenced by nostalgia, and behavioural responses can be negative or positive depending on consumer understanding and strategy execution. Brands must understand the feeling to effectively use it as a tool to positively influence consumer interaction and to avoid negative public reaction and product rejection through a lack of understanding. Some benefits of nostalgia marketing that were established in this paper include its a limitless, holistic and extremely flexible nature that offers abundant opportunities to marketers. Brands are able to mould the strategy to their company mission, using different levels, methods and stimuli to meet objectives. The use of nostalgia also highlights the need for introspection and brand self-awareness, since companies must have a deep understanding of consumer psyche, purchase motivations, nostalgic triggers and product preferences. Companies must also make decisions such as whether they want to aim at personal, collective or historical nostalgia and whether to use Brand Revitalization, Retro-branding or Retroization, also known as neo-nostalgia, depending on their goals and company history. Even brands who don't plan to use nostalgia in their current strategies must understand the feeling in order to understand consumers' pre-established perceptions and expectations which in turn would avoid rejection of innovation, launches and changes. Nostalgia is not a neutral psychological variable and has the possibility to encourage and motivate consumer loyalty and sales or pose a psychological obstacle and prevent/discourage purchases. Furthermore, nostalgia also influences future trends as popular characteristics, including colours and features, oscillate in and out of fashion over decades, and in order to stay ahead of competition brands need to acknowledge all and any factors that influence consumer preferences.

Nostalgia has grown beyond a simple feeling and beyond a marketing tactic, as it influences other departments such as advertising and product development. Put more simply, nostalgia is a

strategy that influences the entire company's activities and, in some industries, even the entire business model. Nostalgia influences much more than product features and is an integral part of many businesses. As society segues into a technology-driven, innovative, modern world, nostalgia paves the way and smoothes the transition for consumers by being a familiar face and anchor to the past. Nostalgia is gaining momentum and popularity in the business and marketing world as companies look to the past for innovation and originality. According to the 20-30 year cycle, consumers can expect to see more products from the 2000's hitting the market in a wide variety of industries, as brands phase out their 90's relaunched. Some of these 2000 trends that are already gaining popularity and traction include capri pants, digital cameras, maxi denim skirts and matte makeup. These 2000 trends also illustrate the shift in focus towards Gen Z consumers since they grew up in the 2000s and now have purchasing power. As Gen Z continues to age they will gain more purchasing power and become more attractive to marketers. However, successful brands understand that loyalty and brand preference originates in brand experience and interactions from childhood, teenage years and young adulthood and appealing to consumers with purchasing power requires decades of marketing beforehand. Harnessing and utilising nostalgia is not a quick cash-grab, PR stunt or call for attention. In the case of Gen Z, companies must also understand the psychological importance of authenticity, transparency and convenience in order to plan how it can be combined with nostalgia.

Nostalgia is not an easy strategy to master, with many challenges to overcome, including the realisation that nostalgia-induced dopamine and interest are finite. Consumer behaviour and spending habits are often unpredictable and fickle, meaning brands must be careful to not alienate and deter the consumer with repetition and lack of originality, also known as habituation, or nostalgia will lose its allure of variety, authenticity and exclusivity. Brands must find the delicate balance between exploiting nostalgia marketing whilst avoiding being perceived as stale or irrelevant as a result of heavy dependency on the past. Nostalgia alone does not provide enough value to encourage consumers to purchase, and to be effective must be combined with other values such as product quality, price and customer service. The feeling-inducing strategy is therefore short-lived and relies on other brand and product attributes. This paper has been able to establish that brands must identify key nostalgic characteristics that must remain accurate in order for consumers to recognise the product and connect with their positive past memories. As previously established, these nostalgic characteristics can be obvious, eg by using replicas or copies, or instead be subtle and discrete and influence consumers on an unconscious level.

Consumers will continue to see nostalgic trends and products return to shelves as more industries are motivated to participate in the strategy after learning of the potential benefits. Nostalgia marketing will continue to influence product development and design and consumers will likely recognise not only products from their past but also nostalgic colours and fonts. In response to the objective of discussing the effect of nostalgia marketing in Barbie and McDonald's, industry leaders such as McDonald's who have capitalised on and had success with nostalgia may inspire competitors to follow suit. Consumers can expect to continue to find their beloved nostalgic tv on streaming platforms, with the category expected to continue expanding as both nostalgic inspired tv and older content is added and promoted. Nostalgia will continue to inspire and influence Hollywood as Mattel is not the only company that has shared plans to develop future nostalgic media. The aim of investigating these two successful and unrelated examples was to further indicate the diversity among the industries using nostalgia marketing and their different

approaches. Barbie and McDonald's show pioneership as they push the limits and flexibility of nostalgia and explore uncharted, emotional marketing territory. Both experienced a positive reception from consumers, beyond their expectations, illustrating the demand for nostalgic products and marketing and encouraging other brands to follow suit.

In order to respond to the objective of estimating the future of nostalgia in marketing actions, it is impossible to ignore the influence of technology and digitalisation. Nostalgia will likely become part of the global effort to make artificial intelligence more emotional and human-like through better understanding of these emotional psychological processes and in identifying behavioural patterns. As tech companies prepare to launch consumers into the metaverse and experience-focused virtual spaces, nostalgia may be considered a vital tool to add familiarity, attractivity and overall value in order to encourage consumers to explore and build social connections in the foreign digital landscape. The use of AI in relation to nostalgia marketing could potentially allow brands to overcome some of the challenges nostalgia marketing presents as AI offers the ability to find nostalgic triggers and potential audiences, as well as helping to design campaigns. With external pressure to push the limits of nostalgia marketing, augmented reality and the offering of nostalgic immersive experience will be a prospective future manifestation of nostalgia. Society is currently full of instability and rapid changes, and nostalgia offers the unique possibility to comfort consumers and provide temporary emotional stability. Nostalgia has the potential to keep brands relevant, build emotional connections with their consumers and drive quantifiable results, resulting in the strategy taking centre stage in the future.

7. LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

The limitation of the primary study stems from a lack of resources and a limited sample size. Since unconscious reactions and attitudes were not able to be measured, the data collected was introspective and therefore more subjective and easily manipulated. The study could potentially have been improved by investigating the influence of unconscious nostalgic reactions, by providing participants with prompts and measuring their brain activity and facial cues, allowing for more extensive data. The validity of the study could also have been increased by asking participants to respond multiple times over the course of a year and record when they feel nostalgia ; this would improve robustness of the study and allow investigation of other suggestions from the secondary literature, such as the influence of seasons on nostalgia. The final criticism of the study concerned limited representation within the sample, as respondents shared some cultural and demographic features. Further diversification within the sample in future research would allow for more widely applicable findings which are more holistically representative of the consumer market. The results of the study also spark new questions such as whether nostalgic products can be substituted? If consumers have noticed brands' increased use of nostalgia? How will AI and technology influence nostalgia marketing? This highlights the size and extent of this topic and the need for continued consideration of nostalgia as a purchasing variable and influence on consumer behaviour. Extensive research and investigations surrounding nostalgia will be required as the industry and knowledge of nostalgia marketing continues to develop and evolve.

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