

THE INTERPLAY OF NOSTALGIA AND MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES: A STUDY ON APPAREL

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Abstract

This study analyzed the relationship between nostalgia and memorable experiences on consumer purchase intention. While nostalgia was well-researched for Generation X and Y, there was a lack of understanding of how nostalgia influenced Generation Z brands and consumption preferences. Nostalgia marketing has been popular for several years, and there was literature on product and service categories, such as movie remakes, band reunions, candy, and brands that have completed their life cycle and could be re-released to the market by appealing to consumers' nostalgia. It used a sample of 135 observations and sneakers stimuli advertising with nostalgic components. Results showed that nostalgia affected purchase intention directly and the retrieval of memorable experiences of using the apparel product. However, it did not translate to purchase intention. The results helped marketers identify courses of action to create effective communication that triggers consumers' purchase intention who did not require product development.

Keywords: Nostalgia, nostalgic purchase, social influence, purchase intention, experimental design.

Introduction

Nostalgia is a complex emotion that has become popular for explaining product and service purchase preferences. Nostalgia is a link between the present and the past; in this way, consumers re-purchase products with which they have been familiar in the past, thereby reducing the uncertainty associated with new products. For example, Nike re-released Jordan's sneakers, which were popular in the 1990s. Consumers may prefer to buy Jordan sneakers rather than some new models from the same brand. This type of nostalgic purchase can evoke stories from childhood or youth.

The consequences of nostalgia, such as purchase intention and recommendation of nostalgic products (Keim & Wagner, 2018; Banerjee & Shaikh, 2022; Vredeveld & Kara, 2022), and the nostalgic brand-consumer relationship (Youn & Dadoo, 2021), have been extensively studied. Similarly, not only does nostalgia precede the purchase of sports team products (Cho, Lee, & Chiu, 2021), visiting sports venues, and also relevant in explaining repeat visits to tourist destinations and travel experiences. In another line of nostalgia research from a more psychological perspective, it has become a means to achieve consumer well-being or deal with adverse situations (Gammon & Ramshaw, 2021), since nostalgia as a resource links consumers with meanings and symbols that give them the idea of security and comfort in the face of changing scenarios (Akgün, Senturk, Keskin, & Onal, 2020). In this context, nostalgia is presented as an emotion that

facilitates bonds between the brand and consumer at a deep and emotional level (Gajanova & Zdenka, 2020). Additionally, nostalgia has been linked to sustainable behavior orientation, such as recycling, as its scope as an antecedent of consumers' adaptive behaviors is expanded. Because nostalgia links the past to the present, it requires the activation of memories of past consumption, yet the existing literature neglects this fundamental relationship between nostalgia and memory. Generation Z is a generational cohort born in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, characterized by its deep technological influence and pursuit of entertainment and immersive experiences. By 2030 they will represent 40 percent of the world population (Amatulli, Peluso, Sestino, Guido, & Belk, 2023). Although it is recognized that Generations X and Y show interest in nostalgia, there is still a lack of understanding of how this variable influences the purchase decisions of Generation Z (Jiang, Ge, & Yao, 2024), particularly the relationships among nostalgia, memory, and their purchase intention. This poses an interesting case study that requires an initial theoretical proposition to guide research.

Therefore, this study aimed to answer the following question: What is the effect of nostalgia on purchase preference and its interaction with memories? In particular, this study proposes an experiment that integrates both variables as antecedents of nostalgia, an interaction that has not been previously analyzed.

Previous research has advanced studies linking nostalgia and purchase intention. Purchase intention is

a crucial variable in studying nostalgia in the marketing context. For example, Özhan and Akkaya (2021) examined the effect of nostalgia proneness on ad-evoked nostalgia, attitude, and purchase intention. Similarly, Tang, Zheng, Xu, Zheng, and Chen (2023) explored how nostalgia proneness influences customers' purchase intention towards traditional tea, utilizing marketing theories to analyze consumer preferences. Other studies have examined the relationship between nostalgia and social influence and its effects on purchase intention, particularly focusing on how the strength of social ties between consumers and others moderates the mediation effect of social connectedness (Fan, Jiang, & Hu, 2020). Additionally, theoretical models have been observed investigating the process in which anticipatory nostalgia can enhance the meaningfulness and memorability of an experience (Bergs, Mitas, Smit, & Nawijn, 2020). Hence, this study follows the theoretical framework of previous studies, which place nostalgia as a variable that helps explain the purchase intention of brands and products.

Social influence and its connection to purchase intention play an antecedent role that may influence how nostalgia triggers purchase intention. This study contributes to the literature on nostalgia marketing in three ways: First, it extends research on nostalgia and its memorable experiences. It offers insight into whether nostalgia affects purchase intention of consumers' memory retrieval. Second, memorable experiences may alter the role of nostalgia, as the impulse to follow the style of personality and influencers may mitigate past experiences. Third, it is possible to identify products that can be marketed without requiring product development investments but simply the relaunch of existing products.

Purchase Intention

In recent years, nostalgia has played a strategic role in marketing campaigns, and products, advertising, and brands have benefited from the association between consumer nostalgic consumption and its effects on purchase intention (Gu, Li, & Kim, 2021). The evocation of memories about the use of certain products or services triggers consumers' purchase intention, which is related to their predisposition towards certain products or services and is associated with specific perceptions, behaviors, and attitudes (Alkhafagi, 2023). Various factors, such as price, packaging, channel, quality, and promotions influenced consumer disposition (Alkhafagi, 2023). One of these factors is nostalgia, which presents two types of drivers: those related to consumers and their memorable experiences, and those related to marketing that seek to trigger

nostalgic memories in the consumer; in both cases, purchase intention is sought (Alkhafagi, 2023). Nostalgia is a driver of consumers' purchase intention because, from positive past experiences, memorable experiences are triggered in the consumer, which are meaningful or exciting experiences of the past. Thus, when a product or brand can evoke the emotional connection between nostalgia, and a memorable experience, and product or brand, they are inclined to buy that product or service that reminds them of that happy feeling evoked. This relationship is established by producing feelings of social connection concerning consumers' memorable experiences and triggering positive memories (Weingarten & Wei, 2023).

Personal nostalgia and historical nostalgia each present different outcomes concerning purchase intent. In the first case, personal nostalgia positively influences purchase intention for retro products. On the other hand, with respect to historical nostalgia, such a relationship manifests itself negatively. On the other hand, respect for nostalgic advertising and the memory of a certain visual image produces a deeper understanding and therefore increases the purchase intention (Riaz, Hussainy, & Khan, 2022), the same happens with retro merchandise which also has an impact on the purchase intention of consumers who express nostalgia about certain products (Scola, Dwyer, & Gordon, 2023).

Memorable Experience

Marketing seeks to create memorable experiences by evoking memories of specific moments or situations in the consumer and building experiences that effectively engage the consumer (Pelletier & Collier, 2018). The memorable experience is about the lasting and unforgettable moment that detonates memories or significant events in the consumer that determine their behavior and decision-making (Keskin, Aktaş, Yayla, & Dedeoğlu, 2024). They are cognitive imprints that can be positive or negative and are built around consumers' significant memories. Memorable experiences serve as valuations or other distinctions between normal experiences and experiences that the consumer values as special and unique, which is why, in many cases, these types of experiences are key factors for repeat behavior and successful consumer decision-making. The relationship between nostalgia and memorable experiences is emotional, and in nostalgic situations, they seek to re-experience that "happy" moment that brings positive emotions. Thus, nostalgia is associated with the creation and significance of memorable experiences that determine the type of evaluation a person makes about a specific event. These valuations are intentions and judgments

associated with nostalgic links connected by people's experiences (Keskin *et al.*, 2024), and they can anticipate future consumption by the consumer. From the previous discussion, the proposed hypothesis 1 is:

H₁: Nostalgia positively influences purchase intention.

Social Influence

Social influence theory analyzes consumer purchase intention as it relates to influencers' role as part of a brand extension campaign (Chopra, Avhad, & Jaju, 2021). Social networks are social influencer platforms that influence customer behaviors, either to increase sales of music products (Youn & Jin, 2017) or as determinants of their mood about specific products or services (Sedikides, Leunissen, & Wildschut, 2022). In social networks, influencers participate in consumers' purchase decisions based on trust, respect, similarity, and attraction (Sharipudin *et al.*, 2023), factors that influence customers in the path of their purchase intention. The credibility of influencers impacts the choice of the type of product or service (Chopra *et al.*, 2021), emerging as a key factor during their purchase journey. Hence, it is critical for the company to have consistency between the influencer and the category in which it participates and to differentiate itself by producing quality and relevant content that serves to trigger purchase intention (Hazari, Talpade, & Brown, 2024).

Nostalgia

From the theoretical framework explained beforehand, researchers have analyzed that nostalgia is the result of the interaction between memory and recollection, and the social construction of meaning (Gergen, 2019). Strategies on the use of nostalgia serve to create emotional bonds with their customers by inquiring into their memorable experiences, all with the objective that this inquiry serves to monetize consumer memories (Rana, Raut, Prashar, & Quttainah, 2022). As its etymology suggests, it is a "return home," a reunion with places, emotions, faces, and smells, bringing us back to a safe and well-known space. Individuals encounter memories in their daily lives as mental archives in which emotions are associated with products, services, and memorable experiences. Nostalgia is related to memory as an archive of known and validated practices and habits that generate emotional richness, as suggested in the form of recollection. It is crossed by time in that it places it in the past as something that has already been and that presents a memorable stimulus; hence, its meaning is that of a scarce or luxury resource for the individual (Cui, 2015).

The important aspect of nostalgia translates into strong links that consumers establish concerning the tangible and intangible of the social world. A symbolic world of ways of doing, being, and thinking is created by referring to the passage of time as a mark of the evolution of things and actions. Therefore, it is in the transformation of purchasing preferences where it is possible to find the relevance of nostalgia since change opens new possibilities for consumption practices, with which the person deals with the uncertainty inherent in innovation and seeks what once was the security and control of his actions and ways of perceiving reality. Thus, nostalgia is a response to social changes as a safe and controlled place of social reality, which implies reflecting on the relationship between this emotion and purchase intention (Bhutto, Shaikh, Amar, Mangi, & Abbas, 2021). Understanding nostalgia as a strategy for the individual to rediscover the lost control of their horizons of meaning is useful for strengthening the link between the brand and the consumer from the generation of key resources to develop marketing communication tactics (Youn & Dadoo, 2021).

Consumer nostalgia is elaborated around the links given to consumers' consumption of things or consumption experiences. Products or services from the past are presented as emotional anchors that convey consumers' emotional stories. These links are registered as memorable experiences that allow the consumer to face uncertainty as experiences, sensations, conduits, and beliefs are valued and validated at other times, giving these nostalgic products or services a halo of exceptionality related to their practices and habits of configuring social reality (Ghobadi, Dehdashti Shahrokh, & Saleh Ardestani, 2018). Nostalgia is strategic resources that grant a sense of control (comfort) and comparison in scenarios of uncertainty and decision-making on unknown products (Zhou, van Tilburg, Mei, Wildschut, & Sedikides, 2019).

Nostalgia as a preference seeks to understand the linking factor of a taste or condition and the recovery of its "better times," which serves to connect the tastes or emotions of an individual to a specific period of his or her life. Research has sought from a cognitive perspective to understand nostalgia in terms of how consumers process information about their reality as a factor that impacts the sports tourism experience (Cho *et al.*, 2021). They relate nostalgia to consumer preferences and focus on the analyses of consumer experience concerning their consumption of music, sports, and food. Research on music nostalgia analyzes how certain nostalgic preferences impact significant moments of purchases (Puente-Díaz & Cavazos-Arroyo, 2021) and their implications over time (Davies *et al.*, 2022).

Recently, the effects of nostalgia on the consumption of sports products have been studied. This perspective has led to cognitive and experiential approaches that refer to nostalgia as a behavioral trigger in fans and, therefore, as a direct stimulus of purchase intention. Research has investigated how stakeholder groups around soccer and satellite fans collectively construct the experience of soccer symbols and how these favor purchase intentions (Cho *et al.*, 2021). Equally relevant is the approach that explores the connection between sports nostalgia and the impact of fans' behaviors on the creation of purchase experiences (Hungenberg, Slavich, Bailey, & Sawyer, 2020), while others have sought to uncover the social and psychological factors that impact the way consumer equity is constructed, some analyze soccer fans' longing to visit soccer stadiums in foreign countries (Cho *et al.*, 2021). Hence, the proposed hypothesis 2 is:

H_2 : Memorable experience plays a mediating role between nostalgia and purchase intention.

A visual diagram of the model is shown in Figure 1.

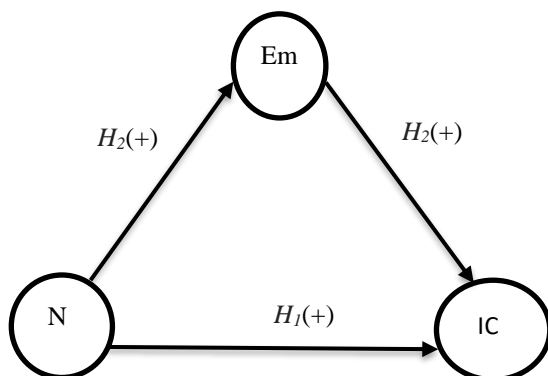


Figure 1. Proposed research model

Research Methods

Experimental Design and Sample

This study opts to conduct an experimental design for the following reasons: First, to isolate the effects of nostalgia and social influence on purchase intention and to assess the interaction between nostalgia and social influence. Second, to control consumer effects, variables extraneous, to the goal of this study, such as gender, age, and apparel awareness may inadvertently influence purchase intention. Third, a randomized sample helps to isolate nostalgia on purchase intention. It uses 2×2 experiments to develop stimuli with high/low nostalgia and high/low social influence to achieve its goal. In line with the research question, this study chose to use a sample of 135 business students as a proxy for Generation Z to assess the extent to which

nostalgia emerges as an antecedent of purchase intention, particularly concerning retrieving memorable experiences. This type of sample is suitable for the study because rather than aiming to capture the range of profiles within Generation Z, the research narrows its focus to this particular segment that features preferences and purchasing behaviors of new and relaunched apparel. Particularly, the subset of university students with high socio-economic segments helps to analyze the interplay between nostalgic memorable experiences, and purchase intentions, given that they can afford premium and luxury products such as apparel and sneakers. Price elasticity can be reasonably discarded as an influence in the further analysis (Ashraf & Merunka, 2017).

The next section describes an appropriate stimulus for the study sample. Nostalgia was measured as an independent variable, while social influence was manipulated as a moderating variable.

Pre-test

Two group sessions were conducted with five students each for and through open-ended questions exploring the themes of openness, evocations of nostalgia, and connection to the consumption of products and/or services, identified the categories of clothing, tennis, video games, toys, snacks, music, and visual content. It chose the tennis category and the Adidas brand because they registered the highest repetitions and narrative intensity.

Manipulation Stimuli

Four different versions of identical Adidas tennis shoe advertisements were designed with two factors: (1) the influencer and their YouTube follower numbers to signal social influence (high versus low), and (2) the type of Adidas shoes to signal a nostalgic product versus a new product.

Measures

The questionnaire includes measurement scales previously validated on evoked positive and negative nostalgia purchase intention (Youn & Jin, 2017), memorable experiences, and control variables on brand awareness, use of tennis, and frequency of use (see Appendix 1).

Procedure

It conducts a randomized online experiment using a randomized script on Google Forms. After informed

consent is obtained, participants are shown the ad stimuli. Immediately after watching the ad, participants are asked to complete the questionnaire. All participants are confirmed to be naive to the study’s goals and hypotheses.

Results

The independent variables used for the model are Memorable Experience (EMemo) and Nostalgia Evoked by the Positive Brand (NEPMP), and the dependent variable is Brand Purchase Intention (BPI). EMemo, NEPMP, and ICM are not database items but latent variables formed by database items. After applying confirmatory factor analysis, the following results are obtained. All calculations are conducted using the Lavaan package in R (Finch & French, 2015).

Figure 2 shows that the direct effect of memorable experiences on purchase intention is not statistically significant. While the indirect effect, that is, the effect of the mediating variable nostalgia (NEMPMP), is statistically significant. The significant impact (0.88) of memorable experience on nostalgia and nostalgia (0.53) on purchase intention implies that the greater the memorable experience, the greater the nostalgia, and the greater the nostalgia, the greater the purchase intention, the higher the nostalgia, the higher the purchase intention. The results obtained in this work confirm the positive effect of nostalgia on purchase intention (Jensen & Ohlwein, 2020; Putra & Fariz, 2020; Cho *et al.*, 2021). Nostalgia is a powerful effect that recalls events with past products, associated with positive emotions (Riaz *et al.*, 2022; Zhang & Tao, 2022). This link detonates an emotional connection with brands or products,

leading people to buy those products to relive those moments of happiness (Jensen & Ohlwein, 2020; Xia, Wang, & Santana, 2021; Zhang & Tao, 2022), as well as providing solace and comfort (hunger for the past).

Table 1
Indicator Loadings and Latent Variable Coefficient

Item	Factor Loading	p-value	Cronbach's Alpha
MEM1	0.92	<0.001	0.91
MEM2	0.95	<0.001	
MEM3	0.87	<0.001	
MEM4	0.28	<0.001	
NOSTPOS1	0.89	<0.001	0.91
NOSTPOS2	0.91	<0.001	
NOSTPOS3	0.87	<0.001	
NOSTPOS4	0.71	<0.001	
NOSTPOS5	0.68	<0.001	
INTBRAND1	0.78	<0.001	0.82
INTBRAND2	0.78	<0.001	
INTBRAND3	0.79	<0.001	

Memorable experiences are often associated with positive feelings, with brands or products, generating an emotional link to purchase intention. This connection makes people more likely to remember brands or products for nostalgia (Li, 2018; Zhang, Wu, & Buhalis, 2018; Kutlu & Ayyildiz, 2021; Tiwari, Bajpai, Singh, & Vyas, 2022). However, this study found that while nostalgia positively affects the formation of memorable experiences, such memories do not translate into purchase intention. This result may be because although young people can identify nostalgic products, as seen in the group sessions, the processes of retrieval of memories are developing in the sample.

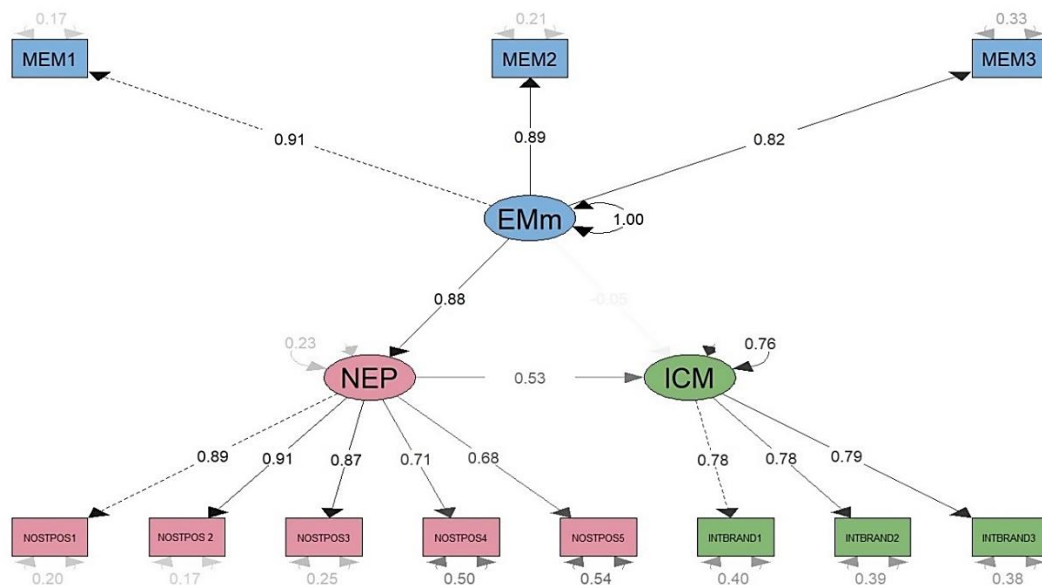


Figure 2. Structural model results

Conclusion and Implications

Structural analysis confirms the validity and reliability of the measurement scales used. Hence, further structural model analyses are conducted. This model shows that memorable experience has a positive influence on the purchase intention of a brand but not on the purchase intention of the product. The causal mechanism to detonate purchase intention is positive-evoked nostalgia, associated with advertising stimuli that show the classical model of sneakers. The direct effect of memorable experiences on brand purchase intention is non-significant. Hence, only one path influences brand purchase, mediated by positive-evoked nostalgia.

The literature on memorable experiences shows its influencing role in the intention to purchase, recommend, and visit destinations. This study analyzes the role of memorable experiences, but this is one of the first studies to relate this construct with nostalgia. Our results show that nostalgia is the causal channel through which memorable experiences influence the purchase intentions of brands. After being presented with visual stimuli with nostalgic products, consumers can evoke memorable experiences from their childhood and youth. The average age of the participants is suitable for assessing the emergence of memorable experiences. Researchers can add this construct to their nostalgia studies to assess the effects of different categories. Additionally, memorable experience is a construct borrowed from the tourism discipline, and this study has substantiated its use in the domain of apparel consumption. Hence, researchers can confidently apply this construct to other domains. Finally, existing studies on nostalgia have focused on fast-moving consumable products, and our results show that apparel is an appealing category; thus, memorable experiences and nostalgia appear and influence purchase intention. Researchers can extend studies on nostalgia by considering the role of stimuli in retrieving memories that lead consumers to detonate higher purchase intentions.

The results of our study show the mediating role of nostalgia detonated by memorable experiences. Marketers can activate these results in the following ways: First, advertising stimuli may be designed across channels to help consumers retrieve memories more easily with simultaneous association with a nostalgic product. Thus, consumers may transition from retrieved memory toward nostalgic appeals. This nostalgic appeal detonates the intention to purchase a product. Second, results from this study show that memorable experiences not only emerge in service settings but also while remembering ‘the old times,’ which can be associated with the consumption of apparel. In this line,

marketers can locate suitable memories within the segment so that they can help consumers resonate with this memory, driving nostalgia appeals to influence purchase intention. Third, the direct effect of nostalgia on purchase intention is found to be non-significant; hence, only one causal link to affect purchase intention is identified. Marketers should be careful when using only memories to drive purchase intentions through advertising campaigns. Instead, memories need a nostalgic effect to drive purchase intention, which should be reflected in brand communication initiatives.

This study has some limitations. First, the sample is relatively young compared to other studies on memorable experiences and nostalgia. This limits the period that can be achieved by detonating memorable experiences. Although this study finds a significant effect of nostalgia on purchase intention, nostalgic appeals, and memorable experiences can occur within a short time. Future studies can replicate these findings with a sample from a higher average to assess the extent to which memories spread throughout the consumer’s lifetime. Second, the adaptation of the measurement scale for memorable experiences is borrowed from the tourism discipline and adapted for the consumption realm. Future studies need to develop their measurement scale including several categories of consumption to provide more ecological validity. Third, this study utilizes only one category and product; to add robustness to the results, future studies can conduct cross-category studies to identify the varying effects of the link memorable experience-nostalgia-purchase intention.

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Appendix 1
Measurement Scales

Construct	Source	Item
Memorable experience	Kim, Ritchie, and McCormick (2012)	<p>As I remember the event, I feel as though I am reliving it.</p> <p>As I remember the event, I feel that I travel back to the time when it happened, that I am a participant in it again, rather than an outside observer tied to the present.</p> <p>Sometimes people know something happened to them without being able to actually remember it. As I think about the event, I can actually remember it rather than just knowing that it happened.</p> <p>As I remember the event, I can hear it in my mind.</p>
Positive brand nostalgia	Ford, Merchant, Bartier, and Friedman (2018)	<p>___ reminds me of happy times I spent with my family.</p> <p>___ reminds me of pleasant times from my childhood.</p> <p>___ brings to mind positive memories that are not tied to my own past.</p> <p>___ makes me think of a time I would like to have experienced.</p> <p>___ reminds me of happy times I spent with my friends.</p>
Purchase intention of brand and product	Youn and Jin (2017)	<p>I can imagine buying clothes from Levi's.</p> <p>The next time I buy clothes, I will take Levi's into consideration.</p> <p>I am very interested in buying clothes from Levi's.</p>