



EFFECTIVENESS OF NOSTALGIA IN ADVERTISING: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CUSTOMERS OF DIFFERENT GENDERS AND AGE

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Abstract

Nostalgia in advertising involves recreating memories through advertisements and showcasing past culture in advertising campaigns which help potential customers reminisce about their old memories. This study empirically examines the impact of nostalgia advertising with a sample of 93 respondents varying in terms of their demographic characteristics, namely, age and gender. The results show that no significant differences exist between males and females regarding the impact of nostalgia advertising while significant differences exist between people of age group below 40 and above 40 with respect to nostalgia advertising. Conclusion, limitations and suggestions for future researchers have been discussed.

Keywords: Consumer Behaviour, Nostalgia, Nostalgia Advertising, Nostalgia Marketing.

Introduction

Nostalgia can be defined as a bittersweet feeling connecting one to his or her memories, influencing the emotional and cognitive reactions and getting the desired behavioural reaction (Cui, 2015). Nostalgia in advertising involves recreating memories through advertisements and showcasing past culture in advertising campaigns which help potential customers reminisce about their old memories. Different studies show that marketing strategies that create a personalized impact relating to their memories are more effective and brands using such strategies are seen distinctively from others in the market (Kessous, Roux & Chandon, 2015). Such postulations make it important for researchers to study the impact of nostalgia on consumer behaviour when used in conjunction with marketing communications and strategies. (Chen, Yeh & Huan, 2014).

The constant change in the environment and the need to adapt to newer and newer products, technologies and lifestyles left people not just confused but also rootless in a way. In such a transition period, there happens to be cultural anxiety and fear of discontinuity of an era. People tend to look in the past in such times for emotional security (Stern, 1992). Thus, people belonging to the era of change are often seen getting nostalgic about the 'good old times.' Various studies show that consumers tend to buy products that have cues associated with their past times, social identities or social groups (Sierra & McQuitty, 2007).

One thing that works on someone might or might not work on others due to the differences in various factors. Past studies have focused on the impact of personal or historic nostalgia (Marchegiani & Phau, 2011; Merchant, Latour, Ford & Latour, 2013; Muehling & Pascal, 2012) but the demographic factors that influence the impact of nostalgia; like the age and gender have not been focused upon. The goal of this paper is to examine the impact of nostalgia advertising across a diverse range of customers varying in terms of their demographic characteristics, namely, age and gender.

Review of literature

Nostalgia is a longing or affection for the past (Holbrook, 1993). Humans in many cases have a deep-rooted desire to go back to the past lived times and thus seeing, feeling or having things that relate to past makes them recreate and retrospect those times (Stern, 1992). It is a complex feeling having a positive power which helps to reflect upon things associated with the past (Holak, & Havlena, 1998). Nostalgia helps people in associating with others based on similar past experiences, interests and memories. (Koetz & Tankersley, 2016) found that nostalgia characterizes an important dimension in the community, positively affecting the relationship between individuals and the brand.

It is a strategy to positively influence a customer by associating the product with some past experiences, people, culture or/and things through marketing techniques like product designing, packaging, advertising, branding, positioning etc. (Aytakin, & Ayaz, 2018). Marketers carefully use positive nostalgic cues in advertisements to evoke positive affective status (Ju, Jun, Dodoo & Morris, 2017). Nostalgia creates proclivity (re-enchantment) by rendering the ordinary thing into something special through three different routes namely, re-instantiation, re-enactment, and/or re-appropriation (Hartmann & Brunk, 2019).

Past studies like (Muehling & Sprott, 2004; Aytakin, & Ayaz, 2018; Pauwels Delassus, Grappi & Zarantonello, 2018) majorly focused upon ad-evoked nostalgia and its impact & dimensions. Muehling, Sprott & Sprott (2004) assume that ads that have nostalgic elements in them and thus create pleasant memories for the viewers have more chances of creating more valanced feelings than ads not having nostalgic elements. Nostalgia in ads helps people maintain consumers' concept of self which is one of the basic and most powerful factors in influencing consumer behaviour (Belk, 1989).



Emotions are important in studies of consumer behaviour but studied less often because of their subjective nature of perceiving. What would work on who is pretty difficult to know because of subjectivity (Magids, Zorfas & Leemon, 2015). More research is needed on how nostalgic advertising is actually practiced, especially in emerging markets such as India (Srivastava, Maheswarappa, & Sivakumaran, 2017). Several studies in the past have established that attitudes and purchase intention change favourably if companies use an emotional approach in communications and other segments of marketing (Youn & Jin, 2017). Nostalgia is not simply a reaching toward the definite past from a definite present, but a subjective state that seeks to express itself in pictures imbued with particular memories of a certain pastness (Bandyopadhyay, 2008). The impact of cultural changes and memories attached to past culture on consumer behaviour is studied less frequently (Jain, Merchant, Roy, & Forde, 2019). This paper will focus on the impact of nostalgia marketing on Indian consumers keeping in view the diversified demographic conditions among people of India.

Several studies in the past have guided to study the moderating effect of gender of customers on the effect of nostalgia advertising. Little research has focused on the role of nostalgia in advertising and more avenues for research with respect to gender differences are needed to understand the domain better (Muehling & Pascal, 2011). Kim & Yim (2018) suggest that the use of nostalgia themes campaigns cannot yield constantly positive results without considering the demographic factors like age and gender. Although (Kessous, Roux & Chandon 2015) studied the moderating effect of gender but the study had a major limitation that the sample contained the majority of women. (Muehling, Sprott & Sultan, 2014) also suggested that a relationship may exist between age and effectiveness of nostalgia. Based on the literature, the following hypotheses have been built up:

H₁: Males differ significantly from females with respect to the impact of nostalgia-themed advertisements.

H₂: Customers of the age group below 40 differ significantly from customers of age group above 40 with respect to the impact of nostalgia-themed advertisements.

This paper will aim at examining the impact of nostalgia evoked advertising campaigns on potential consumers and studying if nostalgia impacts the customers of different gender and age differently.

Methodology

A sample survey was conducted to empirically test the hypotheses using the online sampling given the COVID-19 pandemic situation. Initial sample of 138 respondents was finally reduced to 93 after filtering out the non-responses and the responses to filter questions. 53 of the final sample are males and the remaining 40 are females. 63 of the final sample belong to the age group below 40 and 30 belong to the age group of above 40.

Questions measure the frequency of nostalgia advertisements respondent is exposed to, the effect of nostalgia and their attitude towards nostalgia advertising. Lastly, demographic questions are asked. The Likert scale has been.

Reliability is tested using Cronbach alpha. The value of Cronbach’s alpha is 0.641. the value of alpha is above 0.6 which is satisfactory. Chi-square test is used to check the hypotheses postulated.

Results

Table 1:

Gender of the respondent: * Nostalgia effect Crosstabulation										
		Nostalgia effect							Total	
		1.00	2.00	2.50	3.00	3.50	4.00	4.50		
Gender of the respondent:	Male	Count	1	4	8	17	12	8	3	53
		% within Gender of the respondent:	1.9%	7.5%	15.1%	32.1%	22.6%	15.1%	5.7%	100.0%
		% within Nostalgia effect	100.0%	66.7%	66.7%	60.7%	60.0%	38.1%	60.0%	57.0%
	Female	Count	0	2	4	11	8	13	2	40
		% within Gender of the respondent:	0.0%	5.0%	10.0%	27.5%	20.0%	32.5%	5.0%	100.0%
		% within Nostalgia effect	0.0%	33.3%	33.3%	39.3%	40.0%	61.9%	40.0%	43.0%
Total	Count	1	6	12	28	20	21	5	93	
	% within Gender of the respondent:	1.1%	6.5%	12.9%	30.1%	21.5%	22.6%	5.4%	100.0%	
	% within Nostalgia effect	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	



Table 2:

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.752 ^a	6	.576
Likelihood Ratio	5.106	6	.530
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.750	1	.097
N of Valid Cases	93		
a. 6 cells (42.9%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .43.			

The value of p is greater than 0.05 (p = .576). Hence, H1 is rejected. (table 2)

Table 3:

From which age group do you belong? * Nostalgia effect Crosstabulation										
			Nostalgia effect						Total	
			1.00	2.00	2.50	3.00	3.50	4.00		4.50
From which age group do you belong?	Below 40	Count	1	5	3	20	15	18	1	63
		% within from which age group do you belong?	1.6%	7.9%	4.8%	31.7%	23.8%	28.6%	1.6%	100.0%
		% within Nostalgia effect	100.0%	83.3%	25.0%	71.4%	75.0%	85.7%	20.0%	67.7%
	Above 40	Count	0	1	9	8	5	3	4	30
		% within from which age group do you belong?	0.0%	3.3%	30.0%	26.7%	16.7%	10.0%	13.3%	100.0%
		% within Nostalgia effect	0.0%	16.7%	75.0%	28.6%	25.0%	14.3%	80.0%	32.3%
Total	Count	1	6	12	28	20	21	5	93	
	% within from which age group do you belong?	1.1%	6.5%	12.9%	30.1%	21.5%	22.6%	5.4%	100.0%	
	% within Nostalgia effect	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Table 4:

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	20.151 ^a	6	.003
Likelihood Ratio	19.828	6	.003
Linear-by-Linear Association	.374	1	.541
N of Valid Cases	93		
a. 7 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .32.			

The value of p is less than 0.05 (p = .003). Hence, H2 is accepted (Table 4).

Discussion

In the study, the effect of nostalgia is tested upon customers bifurcated into two groups i.e., based on gender and based on age. The hypotheses deal with the impact of nostalgia on males and females and on customers below the age of 40 and customers above the age of 40. In particular, this research indicates that nostalgia advertisements have a different impact on customers of two different age groups. However, no significant difference could be seen between males and females as to how they get impacted by nostalgia advertising.



Analysis proves that nostalgia effect is stronger on the customers above the age group of 40 than those below the age of 40. People who are older in age might have more nostalgic experiences and past memories and thus get more affected by nostalgic cues given in advertisements. However, no significant difference is found between males and females with respect to nostalgia. When companies use nostalgia in advertising, they may want to target older consumers rather than younger consumers, aiming to generate a sense of youthfulness, resulting in a more positive intention to purchase them.

Conclusion, Limitations and Suggestions

Although we make several significant contributions in this study, it is not immune from some limitations. In this research, sample is collected through online sampling due to the COVID-19 situation in the country. Random sampling in the study would have given results that could be generalised on a larger population. To warrant our speculation, we encourage future researchers to empirically test this based on a wider range of samples. The validity should also be tested if there is a wider sample. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to examine how more diverse human traits would affect the influence of nostalgia. For example, self-evaluations about attractiveness, self-confidence, self-esteem, and socioeconomic status would possibly be able to explain the role of nostalgia on consumer responses in more detail.

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