



MEMORIES RELOADED :

**A Mixed Method Study on Nostalgia Integration in Brand
Communication for Generation Z**

by

Aylin Acilar

(s2811502)

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Faculty of Behavioral Management and Social Sciences

Supervisor: Thomas van Rompay

University of Twente

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Abstract

Introduction: In an era dominated by digital media and rapid cultural shifts, understanding the role of nostalgia in brand communication is crucial for marketers targeting Generation Z (Gen Z), born between 1997 and 2012, due to their digital nativism and distinct consumer behaviors. **Objective:** This thesis aims to investigate how nostalgia influences brand perception and consumer behavior among Gen Z consumers. Specifically, it seeks to explore the effectiveness of nostalgic elements in brand messaging and their impact on brand affinity and purchase intentions. **Methodology:** Employing a mixed-methods approach, this study combines qualitative interviews and a quantitative survey. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews, probing participants' nostalgic experiences and perceptions of nostalgic brand communication. Quantitative data were gathered via a survey, measuring the appeal, emotional engagement, and brand perception of nostalgic versus non-nostalgic mock advertisements among Gen Z consumers. **Results:** Qualitative findings revealed that nostalgia triggers emotional connections and influences purchase decisions among Gen Z consumers. Participants expressed a preference for authentic nostalgic experiences in brand communication, citing emotional resonance and cultural continuity as significant factors influencing brand loyalty. Quantitative analyses confirmed that nostalgic branding significantly enhances advertisement appeal and brand perception among Gen Z consumers, underscoring the effectiveness of nostalgia in fostering positive consumer responses. **Implications:** The findings suggest strategic implications for marketers aiming to engage Gen Z effectively. By authentically integrating nostalgic elements into brand communication, marketers can cultivate deeper emotional connections and foster long-term brand loyalty among younger consumers.

Keywords: *Nostalgia, Nostalgia Marketing, Generation Z, Brand Communication, Consumer Behavior, Mixed-Methods Research*

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Theoretical Framework	3
2.1. Nostalgia’s Evolution in Marketing Practices	3
2.2. Defining Nostalgia: Conceptual Framework and Perspectives	4
2.3. Types of Nostalgia.....	5
2.4. Harnessing Nostalgia: Strategies for Marketing Success.....	6
2.5. Mechanisms and Theoretical Perspectives applied on Gen Z.....	8
2.6. Incorporating Nostalgic Elements into Contemporary Marketing.....	9
3. Methodology	11
3.1. Research Design.....	11
3.2. Stimuli Development.....	11
3.3. Pre-Test: Qualitative Interviews.....	12
3.3.1. Participants	12
3.3.2. Procedure.....	13
3.3.3. Measurements.....	14
3.3.4. Qualitative Analysis	14
3.4. Quantitative Survey.....	15
3.4.1. Participants	15
3.4.2. Procedure.....	15
3.4.3. Measures.....	16
3.4.4. Survey Analysis.....	17

4. Results	17
4.1. Interview Results.....	17
4.1.1. Impact of Nostalgia	18
4.1.2. Responses to Mock Advertisements.....	20
4.1.3. Intergenerational Aspects	22
4.2. Survey Results.....	24
4.2.1. Demographic Characteristics	24
4.2.2. Reliability Analysis	25
4.2.3. Generalized linear model Analysis.....	25
5. Discussion.....	26
5.1. Main findings	26
5.1.1. Interviews	27
5.1.2. Survey.....	27
5.2. Limitations	29
5.3. Recommendations for future research.....	29
5.4. Strengths	30
5.5. Implications	31
5.6. Conclusion.....	32
6. References	34
7. Appendices	37

1. Introduction

In the competitive market landscape, the concept of *nostalgia* has emerged as a powerful tool for brands. Cases of the retro themed series like Stranger Things, Adidas' relaunched Gazelles or Sambas, Volkswagen's promotion of its past "Flower Power" association, Pokémon Go, Levi's "Go Forth" Campaign, Pepsi's relaunch of crystal Pepsi or old Polaroid cameras and more are successful examples of Nostalgia Marketing (Balakhonskaya et al., 2022; Barnwell et al., 2022) (see Appendix A). Nostalgia is defined as an emotion that is a romantically charged longing for the past (Hartmann & Brunk, 2019; Weingarten & Wei, 2023). Nostalgia in marketing is integrated by making use of vintage aesthetics, retro themes, and historical references into their digital campaigns. Brands can evoke feelings of comfort, trust, and reliability, thereby strengthening their brand image and loyalty through understanding their consumers' shared memories and emotional experiences. Moreover, research by Zhou, Ye, and Ye (2021) and Weingarten and Wei (2023) highlight the significance of nostalgia in influencing consumer behavior and perceptions. Their research shows that nostalgic experiences encourage social connectedness, increase perceived social support, and drive consumer engagement with brands. Thus, marketers have increasingly made use of the power of nostalgia to arise deep emotional connections with their consumers. This resonates especially with Gen Z, who express a high interest for both novelty and nostalgia.

Gen Z, born roughly between 1997 and 2012, has grown up in a digital world dominated by smartphones, laptops, and the internet. They are characterized as being intellectually active, sensitive, and open to new experiences. They possess significant purchasing power but display low brand loyalty, preferring unique and trendy brands (Rana et al., 2020; Jiang et al., 2021). While the digital technologies evolve, the marketing strategies are also adapting and taking advantage of these new technologies and can quickly recognizing

and address customers' needs and desires in this way. Particularly among the younger demographics who are more and more immersed in digital culture, the desire to return back in time and escape from the digital world grows stronger.

This research is a significant contribution to understanding the operational dynamics of nostalgia within today's consumer behavior, highlighting its role as an important piece in the larger puzzle of brand communication. It is crucial to understand how especially historical nostalgia remains relevant and interesting for Gen Z, despite their lack of personal experience of eras they feel nostalgic about. Balakhonskaya et al. (2022) highlight that, despite not having firsthand experiences, Gen Z individuals absorb emotional impressions of past times through secondary sources like family members, acquaintances, and various media channels, often romanticizing different eras portrayed in films, fiction, and mass media. This phenomenon highlights the still existing and enduring appeal of nostalgia among Gen Z, influencing their preferences, behaviors, and consumer choices. Exploring the mechanisms through which Gen Z connects with nostalgic elements from the past gives valuable insights for marketers aiming to engage this demographic effectively. Moreover, investigating the role of historical nostalgia in shaping Gen Z's identity, cultural perceptions, and consumption patterns can provide a deeper understanding of generational dynamics and consumer behavior in today's society.

To research all these concepts, mock advertisements will be integrated into both interviews and a survey. A mixed-methods approach will provide a comprehensive understanding of how nostalgia integration impacts Gen Z brand communication, combining qualitative in-depth perspectives on nostalgia marketing supported by quantitative findings comparing the impact of nostalgic and non-nostalgic advertisements on Gen Z and giving further insights.

This body of literature highlights the importance for brands to effectively integrate nostalgic elements and attract the influential Gen Z consumers and foster brand loyalty. The aim is to provide actionable insights for marketers who seek to navigate through the digital landscape and build lasting relationships with their target audience. Thus, this research addresses the question:

***RQ:** What are the perceptions and interpretations of nostalgic brand communication among Gen Z consumers, and how do these perceptions influence their purchasing behavior and brand preferences?*

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Nostalgia's Evolution in Marketing Practices

The rapid developments of digital technologies has created a global digitalization of modern society. This digital transformation has revolutionized the marketing landscape, empowering organizations with unpredicted flexibility and independence through online platforms. Moreover, digital information has emerged as an indispensable resource within the digital economy, enabling increased connectivity and accessibility for businesses and consumers alike (Balakhonskaya et al., 2022).

In this fast-paced modern environment, brand creators and marketers have turned to nostalgia as a compelling theme underlying contemporary marketing and advertising efforts (Zhou et al., 2021) to differentiate themselves in the competitive marketplace. The attractiveness of nostalgia lies in its ability to evoke a sense of comfort and stability in the middle of uncertainties of modern life and seek refuge in memories of a simpler past (Pichierri, 2023).

Marketers have observed the affinity of millennials and Gen Z for nostalgic emotional experiences, recognizing the potential to tap into this sentiment to resonate with their target

audience. Through the strategic integration of nostalgic themes and imagery, companies have successfully appealed to consumers' emotions, eliciting strong emotional responses and fostering brand engagement (Balakhonskaya et al., 2022). This rise of nostalgia marketing has not only countered the dissatisfaction experienced by consumers but has also recreated a sense of specialness, romance, and magic in everyday life (Hartmann & Brunk, 2019; Salahaldin & Hussein, 2022). As nostalgia continues to evolve and permeate various industries, its enduring appeal underscores its significance as a potent marketing strategy in the digital age.

2.2. Defining Nostalgia: Conceptual Framework and Perspectives

Nostalgia, stemming from the ancient Greek words “nostos” (return home) and “algos” (pain, suffering), embodies a universal emotional sentiment. It signifies a profound longing for a past era, often characterized by a yearning to return to simpler times. However, nostalgia is not a uniform experience; rather, it is subjective and shaped by individual perceptions and experiences (Balakhonskaya et al., 2022).

Defined as a sentimental longing for the past, nostalgia involves reflecting on fond and meaningful memories, particularly those involving interactions with close others. Remarkably, nostalgia can evoke both positive and negative emotions – a bittersweet feeling - with individuals reporting its frequency at least once a week (Rana et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2021). Sociological literature offers a nuanced perspective on nostalgia, presenting it as a complex and multi-layered phenomenon that can range from a melancholic attachment to the past to a forward-looking and utopian daydream (Hartmann & Brunk, 2019). Despite its historical association with medical disorders, nostalgia has evolved into a predominantly positive emotion with elements of loss, providing comfort and introspection for many individuals (Khan & Hussainy, 2018).

Nostalgia has a strong impact on individuals and consumer behavior, shaping both emotional experiences and consumer choices. It emerges as a potent emotional motivator in branding and marketing strategies, offering individuals a deep sense of comfort, identity, and social connectedness. By tapping into nostalgic sentiments, marketers can help individuals manage negative feelings such as anxiety and sadness, fostering positive memories and emotions associated with the past (Balakhonskaya et al., 2022). Moreover, nostalgia performs a significant influence on consumer beliefs, behaviors, and preferences, driving affinity towards products and brands linked with familiar past experiences (Weingarten & Wei, 2023). Thus, nostalgia has been observed to positively impact purchase intention and consumer behaviors, eliciting nostalgic demand and fueling desires to make purchases (Liu et al., 2021).

2.3. Types of Nostalgia

In exploring the nuances of nostalgia, researchers have identified various types, each offering a unique lens through which individuals engage with their past experiences and memories. Among these, personal, historical, restorative, and reflective nostalgia stands out.

Personal nostalgia is a deeply individualistic form, rooted in direct personal experiences and memories. It entails a yearning for one's own past, including cherished moments, relationships, and significant life events. Personal nostalgia often serves as a means of reinforcing personal identity and fostering connections with others who shared those experiences. In contrast, historical nostalgia transcends individual timelines, encompassing a collective yearning for bygone eras or events. This form of nostalgia is often shaped by societal or cultural narratives, with individuals, such as Gen Z, romanticizing periods they have not directly experienced but have come to idealize through cultural representations. Restorative nostalgia represents a longing to return to a perceived "golden age" or idealized past, characterized by a desire to recreate or revitalize aspects of the past, whether through

cultural movements, heritage preservation, or personal rituals. Reflective nostalgia, on the other hand, acknowledges the impossibility of true return while embracing the emotional resonance of past experiences.

While these four types - personal, historical, restorative, and reflective - serve as foundational frameworks for understanding nostalgia, it's important to note that the landscape of nostalgic experiences is rich and varied. Other types, such as collective nostalgia, reluctant nostalgia, progressive nostalgia, and more provide further avenues for exploration and analysis. However, this study will focus on personal and especially historical nostalgia with consideration of Gen Z.

2.4. Harnessing Nostalgia: Strategies for Marketing Success

Nostalgia marketing, a strategy employed by advertisers to evoke sentiments of the past, has become increasingly prevalent across various industries. This marketing approach aims to capitalize on consumers' emotional connections to historical eras or cultural icons, effectively leveraging nostalgia to promote modern products and enhance brand awareness. Nostalgia marketing taps into two distinct age demographics: individuals under 25, who experience historical nostalgia through shared memories and secondary mediums, and those over 55, who reminisce about their own past experiences (Balakhonskaya et al., 2022).

Research indicates that nostalgic messages in advertising can significantly boost persuasion, making them a favored choice for marketers seeking to engage consumers (Weingarten & Wei, 2023). This strategy is particularly prominent in sectors such as fashion, food, health, and entertainment, where brands often seek to evoke feelings of comfort, authenticity, and tradition (Hartmann & Brunk, 2019). By evoking positive emotions associated with the past, marketers aim to establish a strong brand-consumer connection,

ultimately influencing purchasing decisions (Salahaldin & Hussein, 2022). Thus, the following hypotheses emerges:

H1: *Positive perceptions of nostalgic brand communication among Gen Z consumers will lead to increased purchase intent for products or services from brands employing such strategies.*

This approach has been widely adopted across various platforms, including social media and advertising campaigns, with brands strategically incorporating nostalgic elements into their messaging to resonate with target audiences (Pichierri, 2023). From reviving classic products to rebranding with retro aesthetics, nostalgia marketing serves as a powerful tool for brands to evoke emotion, build credibility, and foster consumer loyalty (Yang et al., 2022; Barnwell et al., 2022). Moreover, nostalgia marketing extends beyond product promotion to shape broader cultural narratives and societal trends, with iconic brands and entertainment franchises leveraging nostalgia to maintain relevance and cultural significance in an ever-changing landscape (Jiang et al., 2021).

However, while nostalgia marketing can create a sense of community and cultural connection, it also raises questions about its impact on consumer behavior and the authenticity of brand messaging (Jiang et al., 2021). Despite these concerns, nostalgia remains a dominant force in contemporary marketing, offering brands a compelling way to engage with consumers and tap into their collective memories while also influencing cultural discourse and shaping consumer preferences.

2.5. Mechanisms and Theoretical Perspectives applied on Gen Z

In marketing and consumer behavior, blending nostalgia with modern digital tools becomes a potent way to connect with audiences like Gen Z and shape brand perceptions. This section explores how this works, highlighting several mechanisms and theoretical viewpoints.

Emotional branding, as described by Marc Gobe, emphasizes the importance of emotional connections in consumer decision-making (Balakhonskaya et al., 2022). For Generation Z, nostalgia provides a unique avenue for emotional connection, allowing them to find comfort, security, and a sense of reliability in the romanticized versions of the past depicted through various mediums such as television, music, fashion, and nostalgic objects. Through nostalgia, they seek to reclaim a sense of familiarity and belonging, even to eras they never lived in (Austin, 2023).

The concept of "Newstalgia" capitalizes on modern digital technologies to evoke nostalgic feelings and forge emotional ties with consumers (Balakhonskaya et al., 2022). This approach resonates with Generation Z's inclination towards authenticity and emotional connections with the past. By integrating nostalgic elements into contemporary marketing campaigns, brands can tap into Generation Z's emotional responses and foster brand loyalty and engagement. The integration of nostalgia with modern digital elements delves into deep psychological processes like emotion regulation and identity formation (Pichierri, 2023). For Generation Z, nostalgia serves as more than just a longing for the past; it becomes a catalyst for envisioning a more promising future. By disrupting the boundaries of reality and time, nostalgia offers Generation Z a unique opportunity to reimagine the future by drawing inspiration from the past (Austin, 2023). Thus, the following hypotheses will be addressed:

H2: *Gen Z consumers with higher nostalgia proneness will prefer brands using nostalgic marketing.*

H3: *Gen Z consumers who perceive nostalgic brand communication positively will demonstrate higher levels of brand loyalty.*

The nostalgia pendulum illustrates the cyclical nature of nostalgic influence on cultural trends and consumer behavior (Austin, 2023). By understanding how cultural references evolve over time, marketers can anticipate and tailor content to resonate with emerging generational sensibilities, including Generation Z's unique relationship with historical nostalgia. Psychology views nostalgia as a positive strategy for social coping, strengthening resilience and adaptive coping mechanisms (Salahaldin & Hussein, 2022). By leveraging nostalgia to provide comfort and reassurance, brands can deepen emotional connections and cultivate lasting loyalty in a rapidly changing digital landscape.

2.6. Incorporating Nostalgic Elements into Contemporary Marketing

In the realm of digital marketing, brands strategically integrate nostalgic triggers into modern designs and digital tools to evoke emotional responses from consumers (Balakhonskaya et al., 2022). This involves leveraging various elements such as visual, auditory, and verbal cues to create a multisensory experience that resonates with consumers' memories and emotions (See Figure 1). Marketers recognize the power of emotional branding, pioneered by Marc Gobe, in influencing consumer behavior subconsciously (Balakhonskaya et al., 2022). By incorporating nostalgic labels and imagery into digital advertisements, brands can tap into consumers' emotional connections with the past, thereby enhancing brand evaluations and purchase intentions (Weingarten & Wei, 2023). For instance,

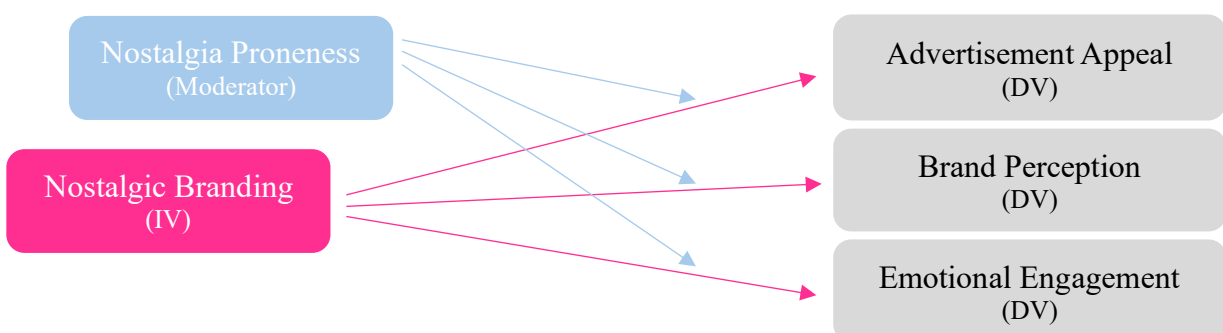
sepia-toned visuals and nostalgic messaging can transport consumers back in time, eliciting feelings of warmth and familiarity that drive engagement and loyalty.

Digital platforms provide marketers with versatile tools to harness nostalgia and create authentic brand experiences. Brands utilize various digital mediums, including social media, websites, and multimedia content, to evoke nostalgic sentiments among consumers (Pichierri, 2023). By incorporating nostalgic design styles into digital assets, such as retro-themed graphics and vintage-inspired typography, brands can evoke a sense of nostalgia while maintaining relevance in the digital age (Jiang et al., 2021). Moreover, storytelling emerges as a powerful tool in digital marketing, allowing brands to weave narratives that resonate with consumers' personal memories and experiences (Yang et al., 2022). Through nostalgic storytelling, brands can create emotional connections with their audience, fostering brand loyalty and affinity.

Building on the theoretical understanding of nostalgia's psychological and emotional impact, as well as its role in shaping consumer behavior among Generation Z, this study employs a mixed methods approach to empirically investigate these phenomena. The following section outlines the research design, data collection procedures, and analytical techniques used to explore the influence of nostalgic brand communication on Gen Z consumers.

Figure 2

Research Model



3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

To ensure a comprehensive methodology, a mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining qualitative interviews and a quantitative survey. This design allows for an initial exploration of participants' perceptions and reactions to mock advertisements through pre-test interviews, which serve as a foundational phase for the subsequent survey. Integrating mock advertisements into both the pre-test interviews and the main survey provides a holistic understanding of how nostalgia influences Gen Z brand communication. By combining findings from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives, the research aims to yield robust insights into the effectiveness of nostalgic elements in brand messaging.

Ethical considerations encompassed showing an informed consent at the beginning of the interviews and survey which ensures confidentiality, minimization of harm, respect for participants' rights, and transparency. Prioritizing participants' autonomy and privacy ensures the ethical conduct of the research while fostering trust and accountability. This research was approved by the ethical committee of the University of Twente.

3.2. Stimuli Development

The development of the stimuli involved a multi-step process to ensure the effectiveness and realism of the advertisements. Initially, two versions of mock advertisements were created: a nostalgic themed and a non-nostalgic themed version, for both a fashion magazine and an Instagram post for a camera ad (see Appendix H, Figure 3 & 5). These versions were designed to elicit different levels of nostalgic response from the participants.

During the qualitative pre-test interviews, participants' reactions to these advertisements were closely analyzed. Based on these reactions, the fashion magazine

advertisement that was perceived as the most nostalgic by the participants was selected for further refinement. This selection was crucial in identifying the advertisement that had the highest potential to evoke nostalgia among Gen Z consumers. Then the selected advertisement was refined and manipulated to enhance its nostalgic elements with a “nostalgic filter” (see Appendix H, Figure 5). The refined advertisement, one with and one without the manipulation of the nostalgic filter, was subjected to a pre-test with a separate group of 15 respondents between the age of 16 and 25. These respondents were asked to evaluate the advertisement using a five-point Likert scale, focusing on perceived nostalgia and realism. The pre-test results indicated a significant difference in perceived nostalgia between the manipulated (nostalgic) and not manipulated (non-nostalgic) advertisements. The nostalgic version received a mean score of approximately 4.27, whereas the non-nostalgic version received a mean score of 2.6. These results confirmed the successful manipulation of the advertisement, as the nostalgic version significantly outperformed the non-nostalgic version in evoking nostalgia.

Based on these successful pre-test results, the refined and finalized advertisement (see Appendix H, Figure 5), which was confirmed to evoke the intended nostalgic response and appeared realistic, was used in the main survey. This thorough process of selection, refinement, and validation ensured that the stimuli used in the survey were effective and reliable for the study's objectives.

3.3. Pre-Test: Qualitative Interviews

3.3.1. Participants

The interview participants were selected to represent a diverse cross-section of Gen Z consumers, ensuring a variety of perspectives on nostalgic brand communication. A convenience sampling method was used to select interview participants, ensuring they met the

criteria of being born between 2012-1997 and expressed interest in nostalgic elements.

Participants were primarily recruited from the researcher's personal network, including family and friends, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives within Generation Z. This approach facilitated the selection of 10 participants, providing insights into the impact of nostalgia on their brand perception and consumer behavior. The sample size was determined based on the principle of data saturation, where no new themes emerge from additional interviews. The study sample consisted of 10 participants, of which 4 were male (40%) and 6 were female (60%). The ages of the participants ranged from 16 to 25 years, with a mean age of 21.9 years.

3.3.2. Procedure

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with a targeted sample of Gen Z consumers to delve deeper into their perceptions and experiences regarding nostalgic brand communication. The interviews took place online via Microsoft Teams or personally in a quiet and pleasant environment to create a good feeling for the participants. Semi-structured open-ended questions were used to probe participants' reactions, interpretations, and emotional responses to the mock advertisements, providing a nuanced understanding of their preferences and perspectives on nostalgia. Before doing so, the participants consent was assured by asking for the consent to participate in the study and giving the possibility to withdraw at any time. To ensure the participant's privacy, the recordings of the interviews were deleted right after analyzing all the results. The qualitative data collection took place from the 17th to the 22nd of May.

3.3.3. *Measurements*

The interview topics were selected based on a review of literature on nostalgia and brand communication, aiming to capture a broad range of participants' perceptions and emotional responses to nostalgic content. The interviews began with questions designed to elicit nostalgic memories from the participants, such as recalling a nostalgic memory from their childhood or teenage years. This was followed by questions measuring participants' proneness to nostalgia, including inquiries as "How often would you say you experience feelings of nostalgia?" and "How do you usually react when you see nostalgic content?". Subsequently, the participants' impressions, attitudes, and opinions about the shown mock advertisements were explored. The interviews also delved into measuring participants' experiences of nostalgia in the context of a digital society and their perceived differences compared to older generations experiencing nostalgia. The complete interview guide, including all topics covered, is provided in Appendix B. At the end of the interview, participants were given the opportunity to share any additional thoughts or pose questions related to the topic.

3.3.4. *Qualitative Analysis*

Thematic analysis was applied to the qualitative data from the interviews to uncover recurring themes and patterns. The analysis focused on participants' reasons for favoring certain advertisements, their personal memories associated with nostalgic elements, and their perceptions of nostalgia in the digital age and across generations.

The analysis was conducted using Atlas.ti software, which facilitated systematic organization and interpretation of the data through a coding process. A code book was developed to categorize and analyze the qualitative data, with themes derived from the literature and refined through iterative coding. The main codes included Intergenerational Aspects, Impact of Nostalgia on Brand/Product Related Measures, and Responses to Mock

Advertisements, each with specific subcategories such as differences between Gen-Z and elderly, emotional responses and triggers, and perceived nostalgia. The complete codebook is provided in Appendix G.

3.4. Quantitative Survey

3.4.1. Participants

A diverse and representative sample of Gen Z consumers, born between 1997 and 2012, was recruited for the survey, with efforts made to include participants from various backgrounds and demographics. The survey included 120 participants, ensuring sufficient statistical power for the quantitative analyses. The sample consisted of 26 males (21.67%), aged 16 to 27 years; 92 females (76.67%), aged 17 to 27 years; and two other participants (1.83%) who identified as other, both aged 22 years. Participants were recruited through social media platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp. Various contacts and group chats were approached via WhatsApp with a brief engaging description of the study and the link to the survey. Additionally, two stories were published on Instagram including easy access with a link to the survey to achieve a broad and representative sample.

3.4.2. Procedure

The Survey was created in an online environment using the online survey tool Qualtrics. After consenting to anonymously take part in the study, participants were randomly presented with either a nostalgic or non-nostalgic mock advertisement in the form of a fashion magazine to measure factors such as brand appeal, emotional resonance, authenticity, purchase intention, and participants' nostalgia proneness. The quantitative data collection took place from the 5th to the 9th of June.

3.4.3. *Measures*

The survey questionnaire was designed to measure the constructs advertisement appeal, brand perception and emotional engagement with the moderator nostalgia proneness. The items were designed based on the previously conducted interviews and an additional a review of literature.

Advertisement appeal was measured throughout the survey after the respondents saw the stimuli. In total eight statements were answered by respondents by indicating how much they agreed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The statements included amongst others “The advertisement seems authentic to me.”, “The advertisement has a unique and creative concept.”, “The design of the advertisement is visually appealing to me.” and “I would share this advertisement with my friends or on social media.”. The reliability of this measure is good, with a Cronbach's Alpha score of $\alpha = 0.83$.

To measure the brand perception of the participants based on the stimuli, a total of four statements were answered by respondents by again indicating how much they agreed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The statements are the following: “The brand featured in the advertisement is appealing to me.”, “The advertisement makes the brand seem stylish.”, “The advertisement increases my interest in the brand.”, and “I am likely to purchase products from this brand.”. The reliability of this measure is good, with a Cronbach's Alpha score of $\alpha = 0.85$.

The emotional engagement of participants was measured by a set of eight items using the same five-point Likert scale. Questions such as “I would love to recreate an 80s outfit.”, “The advertisement is memorable for me.!, “The advertisement feels emotionally engaging.” and “The advertisement reminds me of my childhood or past experiences.” were included in the set. The reliability of this measure is good, with a Cronbach's Alpha score of $\alpha = 0.82$.

The complete survey can be found in Appendix I.

3.4.4. Survey Analysis

Quantitative analysis techniques were employed to compare the effectiveness of nostalgic versus non-nostalgic stimuli in appealing to Gen Z consumers and influencing their perceptions and behaviors. The study used a 2x2 between-subjects design with the factors being the nostalgic branding (nostalgic vs. non-nostalgic) and nostalgia proneness (high vs. low).

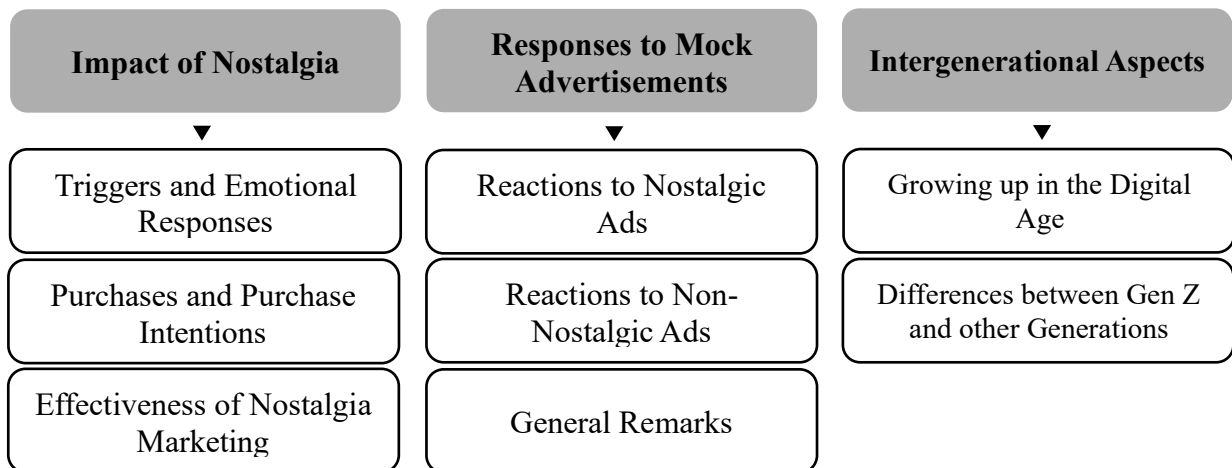
To ensure the reliability of the constructs used in the study, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each construct. The constructs included advertisement appeal, brand perception, emotional engagement, and additionally the moderator nostalgia proneness.

To test the hypotheses and conduct the comparative analysis, Generalized Linear Modeling (GLM) was employed for each dependent variable with the independent variable nostalgic branding including the moderating effect of nostalgia proneness.

4. Results

4.1. Interview Results

Within this section, the key findings of the qualitative analysis are presented in the following order: impact of nostalgia on brand/product related measures, responses to mock advertisements, and lastly the intergenerational aspects most frequently mentioned by the participants.

Figure 6*Visualization of Interview Themes and Subthemes*

4.1.1. *Impact of Nostalgia*

Triggers and Emotional Responses. Nostalgia is frequently triggered by cultural artifacts and media, eliciting strong emotional responses and a sense of continuity and identity among participants. Participants expressed nostalgia triggered by cultural artifacts like vinyl records, vintage clothing, and classic films. For instance, one participant mentioned, "I collect vinyls... I associate it with people from the times where they had them as well and that was the only way how they could hear music." (Participant 7). Furthermore, Music and movies were powerful triggers of nostalgia. Participants often associated specific songs or films with cherished memories from their past, enhancing their emotional connection to these cultural elements. As one participant recalled, "Maybe when I think about fashion, sometimes thrifted pieces remind me of a time I wasn't even alive, but I watched movies about that time and then I think, Oh my God, this reminds me so much of the 90s or something and I like the vibe so much." (Participant 3). Additionally, the advent of social media has amplified nostalgic triggers by allowing individuals to share and reminisce about past experiences easily. Participants noted, "lately it's easier to have that on social media, because you wouldn't see

things from the past before anywhere else because there was no social media but now it is easy to share around things from the past on social media." (Participant 2), Lastly nostalgia fulfills psychological needs by providing a sense of continuity and identity for the participants. They described feeling connected to their past selves and deriving comfort from nostalgic experiences. For example, one participant mentioned, "It feels like a continuum of your life path. Like it's not finished, and you're not finished so you're tied to it somehow. You go together through this world." (Participant 1)

Purchases and Purchase Intentions. The influence of nostalgia significantly shapes participants' purchase behaviors and product preferences, demonstrating a clear link between nostalgic triggers and consumer choices. Participants often purchased items associated with nostalgic triggers, such as vintage clothing, old cameras, or collectible vinyl records. One participant explained their motivation, "I started collecting records of artists that I love, because I wanted to hold on to something of that time." (Participant 9). Nostalgia not only influences what participants purchase but also how they perceive and value products. Participants were more inclined to choose products that evoke nostalgic sentiments, believing these items to hold cultural or personal significance. For instance, one participant mentioned, "Fashion I think because of the vintage clothing is just like such a big trend... sometimes I tend to, of course, buy maybe older clothes because it just takes you back to the time." (Participant 8). Participants highlighted that brands who want to effectively leverage nostalgia and foster brand loyalty need to be authentic in doing that. Participants indicated a preference for brands that authentically integrate nostalgic elements into their products or marketing campaigns. As one participant noted, "If Nike, for example, publishes a vintage collection, I'm already sold because it's old, it's real, it's nothing like 'this is new'." (Participant 7).

Effectiveness of Nostalgia Marketing. Nostalgia marketing enhances brand loyalty by resonating with consumers on an emotional level. Participants expressed a strong connection to brands that effectively evoke nostalgic memories or cultural references. One participant reflected, "I would probably buy the camera more if I also associate the advertisement with feeling nostalgic. So, I think the advertisement actually helps me getting more attracted." (Participant 7). Brands that incorporate nostalgic elements into their marketing strategies effectively engage consumers by tapping into shared cultural memories and emotional experiences. Participants noted, "It made me feel good then because I felt like ohh back then I had the same and they used to make me happy in the past. So when I now wear them or have them, I also have the same feeling like that they make me happy." (Participant 3). Nostalgia marketing strategies have a lasting impact on consumer perceptions and brand loyalty. Participants indicated a willingness to engage with brands that consistently evoke positive nostalgic sentiments through their products and marketing efforts. As one participant highlighted, "For the camera one, I think this is more of a nice, informative pose... with the colors and stuff, you directly know that the pictures you will take have a more nostalgic feeling to it." (Participant 8).

4.1.2. Responses to Mock Advertisements

Reactions to Nostalgic Ads. Reactions to the nostalgic Magazine were generally positive. It was described as evoking nostalgia through visual cues like vintage fashion styles, specific color schemes, and references to iconic figures from past decades (e.g., Princess Diana, 80s fashion icons). This triggered feelings of familiarity and connection to past eras, even among those who did not live through them directly. One Participant mentioned "I wasn't around in the 80s, but this really makes me feel connected to that time." (Participant 4). The nostalgic camera advertisement received mainly positive feedback. The use of filters,

vintage camera aesthetics, and explicit references to nostalgia in captions successfully evoked nostalgic feelings, resonating with respondents on an emotional level. "Seeing this makes me think of my old family photos. It brings back good memories." (Participant 7).

Reactions to non-Nostalgic Ads. The non nostalgic magazine received less favorable responses compared to the first magazine. "The design is sleek, but it doesn't take me back to any particular era. It feels very now." (Participant 5). It did not evoke nostalgia and was rather seen as more reflective of contemporary trends. The modern camera ad received mixed to negative responses. It was described as modern "It's a nice ad, but it doesn't give me that nostalgic feeling at all." (Participant 1). It did not evoke nostalgia; perceived as more aligned with current technology and design trends, thus failing to connect with respondent.

General Remarks to the Ads. Respondents frequently mention specific visual cues that evoke nostalgia, such as the use of filters, vintage fashion styles, and specific color schemes (like green and yellow reminiscent of the 70s). Elements like grainy textures, retro fonts, and designs that mimic older styles are noted as contributing factors. "I love how they used those old-school fashion styles and colors. It reminds me of pictures I've seen of my mom in the 80s." (Participant 3). Mention of iconic figures from past decades like Princess Diana, Michael Jackson, and actors from the 80s. The presence of these figures in advertisements triggers nostalgic feelings, despite many respondents not having lived through those eras directly. "Seeing Princess Diana in the ad brings back so many memories, even though I didn't personally experience that era." (Participant 5). Nostalgia is often tied to fashion trends of past decades, particularly the 80s, with references to specific clothing styles and fashion icons. Design choices in advertisements that mimic older magazine layouts or photography styles are highlighted as nostalgic triggers. "The fashion in the ad looks just like what my parents

wore back in the day." (Participant 4). Some respondents differentiate between ads that genuinely evoke nostalgia and those that use nostalgic themes superficially. They mention elements like modern technology (e.g., digital cameras) portrayed with vintage aesthetics, which evoke mixed feelings about authenticity. "It's not enough to just look vintage. It has to feel authentic to really be nostalgic." (Participant 2). Many responses reflect on personal connections to nostalgia, such as childhood memories or cultural influences. There's a sense of comfort and familiarity associated with nostalgic elements, which respondents find appealing in advertisements. "These nostalgic elements make me think of my childhood, and it's really comforting." (Participant 1). The effectiveness of nostalgia in advertisements is acknowledged, with suggestions that ads evoking genuine nostalgia are more likely to resonate with consumers. Preferences are often stated for advertisements that accurately capture the essence of past eras compared to those that merely mimic nostalgic elements. "When an ad really captures the past, it feels more meaningful and connects better with me." (Participant 4)

4.1.3. Intergenerational Aspects

Growing Up as Gen Z in the Digital Age. Digital media, especially social platforms like TikTok, play a significant role in evoking nostalgia for Gen Z and idealizing the past. The constant exposure to retro-inspired content and trends on these platforms brings the past into their daily lives. "If I see like social media advertisements or that stuff TikTok, it's maybe too modern. But still sometimes I see videos on social media that are like a catapult back in time. So I would say, yeah, definitely the digital age had an effect on me." (Participant 7). Nostalgia triggers a range of emotions among Gen Z, often focusing on the positive memories of the past. This can sometimes create a distorted view of the past, emphasizing the good times and glossing over challenges. "Maybe you always just remember the really, really good times. So,

nostalgia can make you sad. But if you think more about how life actually was back then, it was, of course not perfect. Or maybe as a kid you didn't realize it. Because maybe our parents say that the time was harder, or it was like you didn't have so many opportunities as you have right now. So maybe for our parents, it's also different because in the early 2000s, they were adults. Maybe as a kid you tend to, um, remember all the good things." (Participant 8)

Differences Between Gen Z and Elderly/Other Generations. There is a Gen Z and older generations perceive and experience nostalgia differently. Older generations often tie nostalgia to significant life events and physical items, like photo albums and cassette tapes. In contrast, Gen Z accesses nostalgic content digitally, making it more frequent and on-demand. Participant 1 noted, "My parents and grandparents have stories from their youth that can only happen outside. I don't have that because so much happens online, which doesn't create lasting nostalgia." For Gen Z, digital platforms offer immediate access to nostalgic content, such as music and TV shows. Participant 4 said, "As Gen Z, we have more access to nostalgia because everything is recorded." Gen Z also demonstrates a more selective approach to nostalgia, choosing when to indulge in it. Participant 7 explained, "I can decide when to be nostalgic. If I'm exhausted, I can listen to Michael Jackson or watch Top Gun to feel nostalgic. My parents don't do that; they just encounter it." Older generations have a stronger connection to physical memorabilia, while Gen Z relies more on digital forms. Participant 9 observed, "My parents might appreciate a physical photo album, whereas I have everything on iCloud. They have cassette tapes, and I use Spotify." The emotional intensity of nostalgia is often deeper for older generations due to their longer life experiences. For them, nostalgia evokes a sense of loss or longing for a tangible past. In contrast, Gen Z's nostalgia, tied to digital memories, can feel less profound. Digital technology has transformed how nostalgia is experienced. Older generations engage with nostalgia through physical objects and direct

memories, while Gen Z uses digital devices and platforms. This shift allows Gen Z to revisit past experiences more conveniently but misses the tactile aspects older generations cherish. There is a generational gap in nostalgic triggers. Older individuals feel nostalgic about personal experiences, while Gen Z experiences a curated, idealized version of the past. Media and popular culture play pivotal roles in shaping these experiences. Older generations feel nostalgic about the original airing of TV shows or music releases, while Gen Z encounters these through remakes or digital archives, continuously reshaping nostalgia through a contemporary lens.

4.2. Survey Results

4.2.1. Demographic Characteristics

Participants (N = 120) were predominantly from Germany (74.17%) and the Netherlands (20.83%). Other countries constituted the remaining 5% of the sample. The gender distribution was as follows: 76.67% identified as Female, 21.67% as Male, 0.83% as Non-binary / third gender, and 0.83% preferred not to say. Regarding education level, 68.33% had completed secondary education (e.g., VMBO, HAVO, VWO, Gymnasium, Realschule, Hauptschule), 16.67% held a Bachelor's degree, 10% completed vocational training (e.g., MBO, Berufsschule), and 4.17% had a Master's degree. In terms of employment status, 53.33% of participants were students, 19.17% were employed full-time, 9.17% were students employed part-time, and smaller percentages were self-employed, unemployed, or had other employment statuses. The majority of participants reported using social media multiple times a day (91.67%).

4.2.2. *Reliability Analysis*

Advertisement Appeal. The construct for Advertisement Appeal showed good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.83$). The item-total correlations ranged from 0.36 to 0.41, indicating reliable measurement of participants' responses.

Brand Perception. The construct for Brand Perception also demonstrated good reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.85$). The item-total correlations ranged from 0.57 to 0.79, suggesting strong internal consistency among the items.

Emotional Engagement. The construct for Emotional Engagement exhibited good reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.82$). The item-total correlations ranged from 0.36 to 0.42, indicating consistent measurement of emotional engagement across items.

4.2.3. *Generalized linear model Analysis*

Advertisement Appeal. A general linear model (GLM) assessed the impact of Nostalgia Branding (nostalgic vs. non-nostalgic) on Advertisement Appeal, considering the moderator effect of Nostalgia Proneness. The GLM revealed a significant main effect of Nostalgia Branding on Advertisement Appeal ($\beta = 0.411$, $p = 0.036$). Participants exposed to nostalgic branding reported slightly higher appeal scores compared to those exposed to non-nostalgic branding. However, the interaction effect between Nostalgia Branding and Nostalgia Proneness was not significant ($\beta = -0.122$, $p = 0.651$).

Brand Perception. For Brand Perception, the GLM showed a significant main effect of Nostalgia Branding ($\beta = 0.306$, $p = 0.183$) and Moderator ($\beta = -0.581$, $p = 0.013$), indicating that nostalgic branding and lower levels of Nostalgia Proneness were associated with lower brand perception scores. However, the interaction effect between Nostalgia Branding and Nostalgia Proneness was not significant ($\beta = -0.071$, $p = 0.824$).

Emotional Engagement. In terms of Emotional Engagement, the GLM did not reveal a significant main effect of Nostalgia Branding ($\beta = 0.237$, $p = 0.118$) or the Moderator ($\beta = 0.085$, $p = 0.458$). Similarly, the interaction effect between Nostalgia Branding and Nostalgia Proneness was not significant ($\beta = -0.102$, $p = 0.413$).

5. Discussion

5.1. Main findings

This section presents the pivotal insights into how nostalgia influences Gen Z's perceptions and behaviors towards brand communication. Through a mixed-method approach combining qualitative interviews and quantitative survey data, this study delves into the nuanced triggers of nostalgia among young consumers. Additionally, the findings of Kessous et al. (2015) further support the effectiveness of comparing nostalgic advertisements with non-nostalgic ones. Qualitative findings reveal that cultural artifacts like music, movies, and fashion styles serve as potent triggers, fostering emotional connections and fulfilling psychological needs for continuity and identity. These qualitative insights are further substantiated by quantitative evidence, demonstrating that nostalgic branding significantly enhances advertisement appeal and brand perception among Gen Z consumers. This integrated approach not only enriches our understanding of nostalgia's impact but also underscores the strength of employing mixed methods to capture multifaceted consumer behaviors and preferences in contemporary marketing contexts. This aligns with Hartmann and Brunk (2019), who discussed nostalgia as a complex phenomenon that can evoke strong emotional responses.

5.1.1. Interviews

The qualitative phase of this study revealed profound insights into how nostalgia influences Gen Z's perceptions and behaviors towards brand communication. Participants expressed strong emotional connections to nostalgic triggers such as music, movies, and fashion styles from past decades, even when not experienced personally. These triggers not only evoke pleasant memories but also fulfill psychological needs by providing a sense of continuity and identity. This is supported by the findings of Pichierri (2023), who emphasized that consumers develop a preference for past-related objects through socialization and media, which trigger specific moods or emotions. Moreover, participants demonstrated a preference for brands that authentically integrate nostalgic elements into their products and marketing strategies, highlighting authenticity as a key factor in fostering brand loyalty among Gen Z consumers.

The reactions to mock advertisements further underscored the effectiveness of nostalgia in enhancing brand affinity. Ads that successfully evoked nostalgia through visual cues like vintage fashion styles and references to iconic figures received positive feedback, fostering a sense of familiarity and emotional resonance among respondents. Conversely, advertisements lacking nostalgic elements were perceived as less engaging and failed to evoke similar emotional responses.

These qualitative findings support Hypothesis 1 (H1), which posits that positive perceptions of nostalgic brand communication among Gen Z consumers will lead to increased purchase intent for products or services from brands employing such strategies.

5.1.2. Survey

The survey component of this study provided quantitative insights into how Generation Z responds to nostalgic brand messaging and its impact on consumer behavior.

Firstly, the survey results confirmed a strong preference among Gen Z consumers for advertisements that incorporate nostalgic elements. Respondents consistently rated nostalgic advertisements higher in appeal and emotional engagement compared to non-nostalgic counterparts. This indicates that nostalgia effectively captures attention and elicits positive emotional responses, which are crucial in an era where consumer attention is increasingly fragmented. Secondly, the survey highlighted the influence of nostalgia on brand perception and purchase intentions. Participants expressed a greater likelihood of considering or purchasing products featured in nostalgic advertisements. These findings underscore nostalgia's role not only in enhancing brand affinity but also in driving actual consumer behavior. Brands that successfully tap into nostalgic sentiments can thus influence purchasing decisions and cultivate loyalty among Gen Z consumers who value authentic and meaningful connections with brands. Moreover, the survey findings suggest that authenticity is paramount in leveraging nostalgia for marketing purposes. Respondents indicated a preference for brands that authentically integrate nostalgic elements into their messaging, avoiding superficial or contrived attempts to capitalize on nostalgia. This authenticity resonates with Gen Z's desire for genuine brand interactions and contributes to building trust and credibility over time. Additionally, the survey explored variables that might moderate the effects of nostalgic advertising such as nostalgia proneness. Factors such as participants' frequency of nostalgic experiences, cultural interests, and social media usage patterns were analyzed to understand variations in response to nostalgic brand messages. This nuanced understanding can inform targeted marketing strategies that resonate more effectively with specific segments of Gen Z consumers based on their unique nostalgic triggers and preferences.

The quantitative findings support Hypothesis 2 (H2), suggesting that Gen Z consumers with higher nostalgia proneness will prefer brands using nostalgic marketing. They also

support Hypothesis 3 (H3), which posits that Gen Z consumers who perceive nostalgic brand communication positively will demonstrate higher levels of brand loyalty.

In conclusion, the survey findings complement the qualitative insights by providing quantitative evidence of nostalgia's impact on brand perception and consumer behavior among Generation Z. This dual-method approach not only enriches our understanding of how nostalgia operates in contemporary marketing contexts but also offers practical implications for marketers aiming to engage this demographic authentically and effectively.

5.2. Limitations

Despite the valuable insights gained from this study, several limitations should be acknowledged. Firstly, the sample predominantly consisted of participants from Germany and the Netherlands, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other cultural contexts. Secondly, the study's reliance on self-reported data could introduce response biases, affecting the reliability of participants' accounts of their nostalgic experiences. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the survey limits the ability to draw causal conclusions about the relationships between nostalgic branding and consumer behaviors over time. Future longitudinal studies could address these limitations by examining how nostalgic influences evolve across different demographic groups and over extended periods.

5.3. Recommendations for future research

This study's findings highlight several areas for future research on nostalgia in brand communication, especially among Gen Z. First, conducting *longitudinal studies* could provide insights into how nostalgic preferences and their impact on consumer behavior evolve over time. This approach would help to understand whether the influence of nostalgia remains stable or changes as Gen Z progresses through different life stages. Additionally, *cross-*

cultural comparisons are recommended to explore how cultural backgrounds affect the perception and impact of nostalgic branding. Comparative studies across diverse cultural contexts could identify both universal and culture-specific nostalgic elements that resonate with Gen Z, thereby informing more targeted marketing strategies. The role of emerging technologies, such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR), in enhancing nostalgic experiences also warrants further investigation. Understanding how these technologies can be used to create immersive nostalgic content can offer new dimensions for nostalgic marketing strategies. Further research should also examine how brands can balance nostalgic elements with contemporary relevance to maintain authenticity. This help brands leverage nostalgia effectively without appearing superficial or insincere, as this study revealed that authenticity is a key factor for the effectiveness of nostalgia. Adding to that, sector-specific strategies should be investigated to determine the effectiveness of nostalgic branding across different product categories, such as technology, fashion, and food. Different products may evoke unique nostalgic associations, requiring tailored marketing approaches. Finally, the influence of social media on nostalgic experiences deserves attention. Examining how peer and social networks on platforms like TikTok shape the dissemination and reception of nostalgic content could help marketers design more effective social media campaigns leveraging peer influence.

Addressing these areas will deepen the understanding of nostalgia in brand communication and provide more nuanced strategies for engaging Gen Z consumers. These insights are crucial for brands aiming to build strong emotional connections with this influential demographic.

5.4. Strengths

One of the key strengths of this study lies in its mixed-methods approach, which integrates both qualitative and quantitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of

how nostalgia influences brand perception among Gen Z consumers. The qualitative interviews offer deep insights into the emotional and psychological dimensions of nostalgic experiences, capturing nuanced individual perceptions and attitudes that might be overlooked in purely quantitative research. This is complemented by the quantitative survey, which validates and generalizes these findings across a broader population, enhancing the reliability and applicability of the results.

Furthermore, the study's robust methodological design, including the careful selection of interview topics and survey questions based on a thorough literature review, ensures that the data collected is both relevant and comprehensive. The inclusion of mock advertisements as part of the survey provides a practical, real-world context for assessing the impact of nostalgic branding, making the findings directly applicable to marketing strategies.

Lastly, the study's ability to identify and explain the emotional and cultural resonance of nostalgic elements among Gen Z highlights the enduring power of nostalgia in brand communication. This underscores the potential for brands to authentically integrate nostalgic elements into their messaging to foster deeper emotional connections and brand loyalty among younger consumers.

5.5. Implications

The implications of this study span both theoretical and practical dimensions, offering valuable insights into the role of nostalgia in contemporary marketing and consumer behavior.

Theoretical contributions include a deeper understanding of nostalgia as a potent mechanism for enhancing brand affinity and cultivating consumer loyalty, especially among younger demographics like Gen Z. This study underscores nostalgia's ability to evoke emotional connections and resonate with personal as well as cultural identities, shedding light

on its pervasive influence in shaping consumer preferences and behaviors, which aligns with the findings of Jiang et al. (2021).

Practically, the findings offer actionable guidance for marketers seeking to engage effectively with Gen Z. By authentically integrating nostalgic elements into brand communication strategies, marketers can tap into the emotional reservoirs of Gen Z consumers. This approach not only enhances brand perception but also fosters long-term loyalty by aligning with the demographic's preference for authenticity and meaningful storytelling. Brands that successfully leverage nostalgia stand to differentiate themselves in competitive markets saturated with fleeting trends and short-lived consumer interests. Moreover, understanding how nostalgia operates in the digital age allows marketers to adapt strategies to leverage platforms like social media and digital content creation. By making genuine connections and fostering community around shared nostalgic experiences, brands can deepen their engagement with Gen Z consumers who value authenticity and cultural continuity in their brand interactions.

In conclusion, this study highlights nostalgia as a dynamic force in contemporary marketing landscapes, offering theoretical insights and practical recommendations that can guide marketers in building enduring relationships with Generation Z through authentic and emotionally resonant brand experiences.

5.6. Conclusion

This study underscores the significant impact of nostalgic brand communication on Generation Z's perceptions and behaviors. Using a mixed-method approach, the research reveals that nostalgic triggers, such as music, movies, and fashion from past decades, evoke strong emotional connections and fulfill psychological needs for continuity and identity.

These findings align with previous research, emphasizing the importance of authenticity in nostalgic branding.

The qualitative insights are supported by quantitative evidence, showing that nostalgic advertisements are more appealing and emotionally engaging to Gen Z consumers compared to non-nostalgic ones. Nostalgia not only enhances brand perception but also influences purchase intentions and loyalty, particularly among those with a higher tendency for nostalgic experiences.

While the study's focus on participants from Germany and the Netherlands and its reliance on self-reported data suggest the need for further research to generalize the findings, the overall conclusions underscore the enduring power of nostalgia in marketing. Brands that authentically incorporate nostalgic elements into their messaging can build deeper emotional connections and foster long-term loyalty among Gen Z consumers. This study offers valuable theoretical insights and practical recommendations for leveraging nostalgia effectively in contemporary marketing strategies

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During the preparation of this work, I used “ChatGBT” to help me with the formulation of sentences. After using this tool, I carefully reviewed and edited the content as needed, taking full responsibility for the final outcome of this paper.

7. Appendices

Appendix A – Nostalgic Marketing Examples

Figure 1

Nostalgia Marketing Examples



Note. Examples of Nostalgia Marketing including “Crystal Pepsi” Advertisement, Relaunch of the “Nokia 3210”, Levi’s “Go Forth” Campaign, Instagram Ad of the Adidas Gazelles Relaunch, and Nintendo’s Relaunch of the Nintendo NES Mini.

Appendix B - Interview Guide

Interview Guide – Nostalgic Brand Communication

PART 1: INTRO & WARM-UP

1. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study! The purpose of this study is to explore Generation Z's perceptions and experiences regarding nostalgic brand communication. Before we begin, I will provide you with an informed consent form to review. This form outlines the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and your rights as a participant. Once you have reviewed and signed the informed consent form, we can proceed with the interview. The interview is expected to last approximately 30-45 minutes. Are you comfortable with all that?
2. To start things off, let's ease into the conversation. Are you familiar with the term nostalgia? If so, what does it mean to you?
3. Let me define nostalgia for you: *Nostalgia can be understood as a sentimental longing or affectionate remembrance for the past, often accompanied by feelings of warmth, comfort, and emotional attachment to specific memories, places, or experiences. It involves a desire to return to or relive moments from one's personal or shared history, evoking a sense of familiarity and belonging.*
4. Can you tell me about a nostalgic memory from your childhood or teenage years?
5. Could you briefly describe what your life has been like growing up as part of Generation Z?

PART 2: EXPLORE NOSTALGIA PRONENESS

6. How often would you say you experience feelings of nostalgia?
7. Can you describe a recent experience where you felt nostalgic?
8. What do you think triggers feelings of nostalgia for you?
9. Are there any specific types of nostalgic content (e.g., music, movies, fashion) that are more relatable than others to you?
10. How do you usually react when you see nostalgic content?
11. Have you ever purchased a product or engaged with a brand solely because of its nostalgic appeal? What was the motivation behind it?

PART 3: EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF NOSTALGIC BRAND COMMUNICATION

12. Now, I'd like to show you a couple of mock advertisements. After viewing each one, I'd love to hear your thoughts. Let's start with the first ad. What are your first impressions?

[show Mock Ad 1 & 2]

13. Did one of these ads made you feel nostalgic? If so, which one?

14. Which nostalgic elements did you notice in the ads?

15. How did the nostalgic elements in the ad make you feel? Did they attract or detract your overall perception of the product?

16. How do you think your experiences growing up in the digital age influences your feelings of nostalgia?

17. Have you noticed any differences in how you experience nostalgia compared to older generations? If so, what are they?

18. In your opinion, do you think nostalgic brand communication is effective in appealing to Gen Z consumers like yourself? Why or why not?

19. Do you think social media platforms/trends/challenges contribute to or influence your feelings of nostalgia? If so, how?

20. Can you recall any specific brands or products that have effectively used nostalgia in their marketing campaigns? What made them memorable for you?

21. Lastly, if you could give advice to brands looking to incorporate nostalgia into their marketing, what would it be?

CLOSING

Thank you for sharing your insights and experiences with me today. If there

Appendix C - Informed Consent Interviews

Informed Consent

You are being invited to participate in a research study titled "Exploring Nostalgia Integration & its Impact in Brand Communication on Gen Z". This study is being conducted by Aylin Acilar from the Faculty of Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences at the University of Twente.

The purpose of this research study is to investigate how nostalgia integration in brand communication affects Generation Z consumers. Your participation in this study involves completing a survey that will take approximately 10 minutes to finish. The data collected will be used to analyze the impact of nostalgic elements in brand communication on consumer behavior and perceptions.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and your responses will remain anonymous. You are free to withdraw at any time, and you may choose not to answer any question you are uncomfortable with.

We believe there are no known risks associated with this research study. However, as with any online activity, there is a minimal risk of data breach. To ensure confidentiality, your responses will be kept anonymous, securely stored, and only accessed by the researchers. Any personal information provided will be kept strictly confidential.

For further information or inquiries about the study, please contact Aylin Acilar at a.acilar@student.utwente.nl

Thank you for considering participation in this research study. Your input is valuable in advancing our understanding of nostalgia integration in brand communication.

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

Appendix D – Descriptive Statistics of Participants

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Interview Participants

Age	Male		Female		Total	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
16	1	10	0	0	1	10
21	0	0	1	10	1	10
22	0	0	3	30	3	30
23	0	0	1	10	1	10
24	2	20	1	10	3	30
25	1	10	0	0	1	10
Total	4	40	6	60	10	100

Note. The table shows the distribution of age and gender among the 10 participants.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Survey Participants

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	16	1	0.8%
	17	3	2.5%
	18	1	0.8%
	19	1	0.8%
	20	4	3.3%
	21	11	9.2%
	22	26	21.7%
	23	33	27.5%
	24	14	11.7%
	25	11	9.2%
	26	6	6.7%
27	7	5.8%	
Gender	Female	92	76.7%
	Male	26	21.7%
	Non-binary / third gender	1	0.8%
	Prefer not to say	1	0.8%

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Education Level	Secondary education	82	68.3%
	Bachelor's degree	20	16.7%
	Vocational training	12	10.0%
	Master's degree	5	4.2%
	Other	1	0.8%
Employment Status	Student	64	53.3%
	Employed full-time	23	19.2%
	Employed part-time	7	5.8%
	Employed part-time, Other	1	0.8%
	Student, Employed part-time	11	9.2%
	Student, Employed full-time	1	0.8%
	Student, Self-employed	2	1.7%
	Other	6	5.0%
	Self-employed	1	0.8%
	Student, Employed part-time, Self-employed	1	0.8%
	Student, Employed part-time, Other	1	0.8%
	Student, Employed full-time, Self-employed	1	0.8%
	Unemployed	1	0.8%
	Student, Employed full-time, Other	1	0.8%
Country	Germany	89	74.2%
	Netherlands	25	20.8%
	Other	6	5.0%
Social Media Usage	Multiple times a day	110	91.7%
	Once a day	5	4.2%
	A few times a week	1	0.8%
	Once a week	1	0.8%
	Less than once a week	3	2.5%

Note. This table shows the frequency and percentage of participants by demographic characteristics and social media usage.

Appendix E – Reliability Analysis

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability for Constructs in the Survey

Construct	Cronbach's α	Mean	SD	Max	Min
Advertisement Appeal	.83	3.6	.75	2.7	4.0
Brand Perception	.85	3.4	.92	3.0	3.9
Emotional Engagement	.82	3.3	.79	2.8	3.6
Nostalgia Proneness	.81	3.7	.69	3.0	4.3

Note. This table shows the descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients for the constructs used in the study including the moderator nostalgia proneness.

Appendix F – GLM Analysis

Table 4

GLM Results for Advertisement Appeal, Brand Perception, and Emotional Engagement

Dependent Variable	Predictor Variable	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t)
AdvertisementAppeal	NostalgiaBranding	0.41	0.19	2.12	0.04
	NostalgiaPronenessLow	-0.33	0.20	-1.67	0.10
	NostalgiaBranding: NostalgiaPronenessLow	-0.12	0.27	-0.45	0.65
BrandPerception	NostalgiaBranding	0.31	0.23	1.34	0.18
	NostalgiaPronenessLow	-0.58	0.23	-3.41	0.00
	NostalgiaBranding: NostalgiaPronenessLow	-0.14	0.26	-0.54	0.59
EmotionalEngagement	NostalgiaBranding	0.34	0.19	1.84	0.07
	NostalgiaPronenessLow	-0.64	0.19	-3.41	0.00
	NostalgiaBranding: NostalgiaPronenessLow	-0.14	0.26	-0.54	0.59

Note. This table presents the results of the GLM analyses for Advertisement Appeal, Brand Perception, and Emotional Engagement, including the interaction effects of Nostalgia Branding and the Moderator Nostalgia Proneness.

Appendix G - Codebook

Codebook

Main Codes	Sub Codes	Definition
Intergenerational Aspects	Differences between Gen-Z and elderly	Examines the distinctions in attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions between Generation Z and older generations, particularly in the context of nostalgic brand communication.
	growing up in the digital age	Explores the experiences and perspectives of Gen-Z who have been raised in an era dominated by digital technology, and how this shapes their interaction with nostalgic elements.
Impact of Nostalgia on Brand/Product related Measures	Emotional responses and triggers	Identifies and analyzes the emotional reactions and specific triggers that nostalgic elements evoke in participants, highlighting the connection between nostalgia and emotional engagement.
	purchase intentions	Assesses the influence of nostalgic marketing on participants' intentions to purchase a product, evaluating how nostalgic elements affect their likelihood to buy.
	effectiveness of nostalgia marketing	Evaluates the overall effectiveness of using nostalgia in marketing strategies, considering aspects such as brand appeal, emotional resonance, and the ability to drive consumer behavior.
Responses to Mock Advertisements	Perceived nostalgia	Investigates how participants perceive the nostalgic content in mock advertisements, focusing on their recognition and interpretation of nostalgic cues.
	Nostalgic elements	Identifies specific elements within the advertisements that are designed to evoke nostalgia, such as imagery, themes, or references to past eras.
	Perception of the product in the ad	Explores how the inclusion of nostalgic elements influences participants' perceptions of the product being advertised, including perceived quality, desirability, and relevance.

Appendix H – Stimulus

Figure 3

Mock Ad Stimuli Fashion Magazine



Note. The nostalgic magazine is on the top including a cover at the left and a double page at the right. The not nostalgic magazine at the bottom also includes a cover at the left and a double page at the right

Figure 4

Mock Ad Stimuli Camera



TechShot • Follow

Transport yourself back in time with the timeless charm of analog photography! 📷

Introducing the latest from TechShot Innovations, where vintage aesthetics meet modern technology. Rediscover the joy of capturing moments with our retro-inspired camera, perfect for adding a touch of nostalgia to your photography adventures. From classic design details to artistic filters, every shot tells a story straight from the past. Embrace the nostalgia and start creating your own vintage memories today! 📸✨

#TechShotInnovations
#VintagePhotography
#Nostalgia
#AnalogRevival

4h
For you ▾

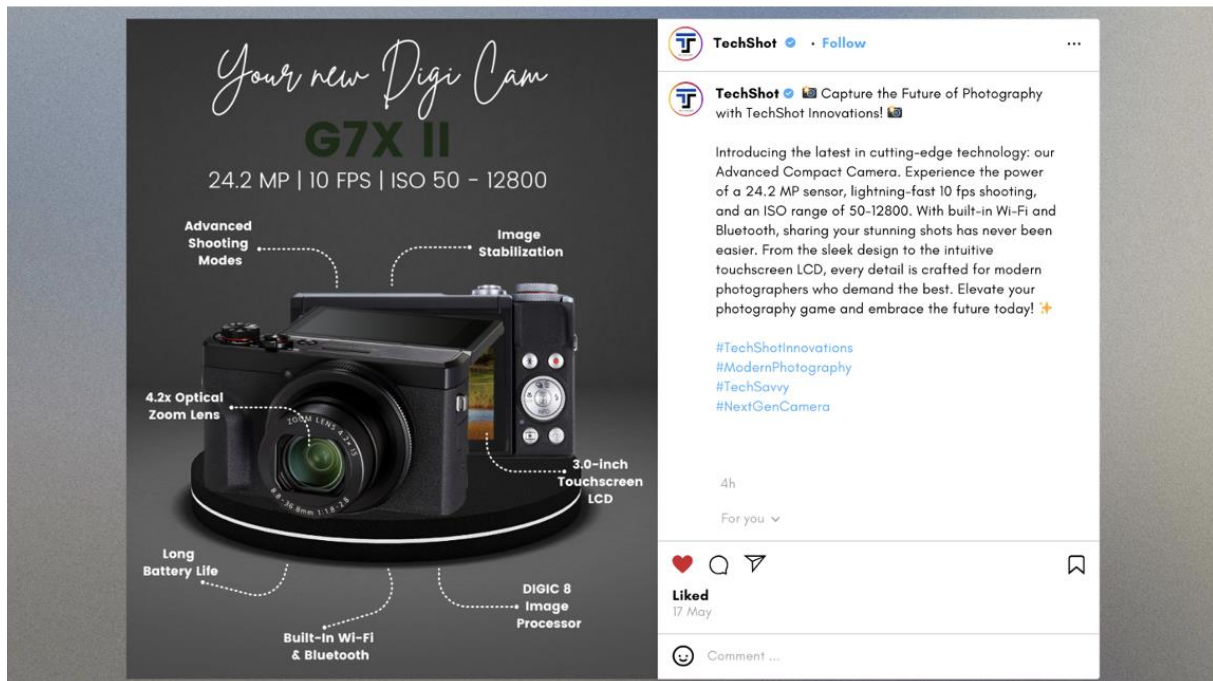
Liked
17 May

Comment ...

TechShot • Follow

DIGITAL CAMERA G7X II

- Timeless Aesthetic
- Classic Viewfinder
- Built-in Pop-Up Flash
- High-Quality Analog Feel
- Old-School Shutter Sound
- Classic Film Simulation
- Retro-Inspired Filters



TechShot • Follow

Capture the Future of Photography with TechShot Innovations! 📷

Introducing the latest in cutting-edge technology: our Advanced Compact Camera. Experience the power of a 24.2 MP sensor, lightning-fast 10 fps shooting, and an ISO range of 50-12800. With built-in Wi-Fi and Bluetooth, sharing your stunning shots has never been easier. From the sleek design to the intuitive touchscreen LCD, every detail is crafted for modern photographers who demand the best. Elevate your photography game and embrace the future today! ✨

#TechShotInnovations
#ModernPhotography
#TechSavvy
#NextGenCamera

4h
For you ▾

Liked
17 May

Comment ...

Your new Digi Cam
G7X II
24.2 MP | 10 FPS | ISO 50 - 12800

- Advanced Shooting Modes
- Image Stabilization
- 4.2x Optical Zoom Lens
- 3.0-Inch Touchscreen LCD
- Long Battery Life
- Built-in Wi-Fi & Bluetooth
- DIGIC 8 Image Processor

Note. The nostalgic camera ad on Instagram on the top. Not nostalgic/modern camera ad on Instagram on the bottom.

Figure 5

Manipulated vs not Manipulated Survey Stimuli



Note. This figure shows the manipulated stimuli in form of a fashion magazine on the left side with a nostalgic filter which changes the colors, adds texture, grain and a distressed look and the not manipulated stimuli on the right side without the nostalgic filter.

Appendix I - Thesis Survey

Thesis Survey

Start of Block: Introduction/Informed Consent

Dear Participant,

you are being invited to participate in a research study for my bachelor thesis titled “Digital Memories Reloaded: Nostalgia Integration in Brand Communication for Gen Z.” This study is being done by Aylin Acilar, a third-year Communication Science Student from the Faculty of Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences at the University of Twente.

I will present the full aim and purpose of this study after you have completed the survey. This is to ensure that the answers provided are as unbiased as possible. The Survey will take you approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. The data collected will be used for research and educational purposes and will be treated with absolute confidentiality.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. You are free to omit any question.

To be eligible to participate in this study, you must have been born between 1997 and 2012. If you are under the age of 16, you will need to obtain consent from your legal guardians to participate.

We believe there are no known risks associated with this research study; however, as with any online related activity the risk of a breach is always possible. To the best of our ability your answers in this study will remain confidential. We will minimize any risks by securely storing data on password-protected devices and anonymizing the data by removing any identifying information.

If you have any questions, remarks, or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me by email at a.acilar@student.utwente.nl.

If you have concerns about this study that you wish to discuss with someone other than the researchers, please contact the Secretary of the Ethics Committee for the domain of

Humanities & Social Sciences at the University of Twente at ethicscommittee-
bms@utwente.nl.

 Thank you for your efforts!

By selecting "I agree", you or a legal representative are consenting to the conditions described
above.

I agree

I do not agree

Skip To: End of Survey If By selecting "I agree", you or a legal representative are consenting to the conditions described... = I do not agree

End of Block: Introduction/Informed Consent

Start of Block: Block 1: Demographics

In which year are you born?

▼ 2012 ... 1997

What is your gender?

- Male
 - Female
 - Non-binary / third gender
 - Prefer not to say
-

What is your highest level of education you have completed?

- Secondary education (e.g., VMBO, HAVO, VWO, Gymnasium, Realschule, Hauptschule)
 - Vocational training (e.g., MBO, Berufsschule)
 - Bachelor's degree
 - Master's degree
 - Other (Please Specify) _____
-

What is your current employment status?

- Student
 - Employed full-time
 - Employed part-time
 - Unemployed
 - Self-employed
 - Other
-

In which country do you currently reside?

- Netherlands
 - Germany
 - Other
-

How often do you use social media?

- Multiple times a day
- Once a day
- A few times a week
- Once a week
- Less than once a week
- Never

End of Block: Block 1: Demographics

Start of Block: Block 2: Intro to the Mock Advertisement

In the following section, you will be presented with a fashion magazine advertisement.
Please take a moment to carefully view and read the advertisement. After viewing it, you will be asked a series of questions regarding your perceptions and attitudes towards the ad.

Ready?

- Yes!

End of Block: Block 2: Intro to the Mock Advertisement

Start of Block: Block 3.0: Mock Advertisement (not manipulated)

.....

.....

.....

(Note: You can not go back and view the advertisement after continuing to the next page)

End of Block: Block 3.0: Mock Advertisement (not manipulated)

Start of Block: Block 3.1: Mock Advertisement (manipulated)

.....

.....

.....

(Note: You can not go back and view the advertisement after continuing to the next page)

End of Block: Block 3.1: Mock Advertisement (manipulated)

Start of Block: Block 4: First Impressions, Perceptions, Attitudes

Your honest feedback is valuable and will help to understand consumer preferences and opinions better. There are no right or wrong answers. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree on the following statements based on your genuine impressions and feelings.

Page Break

The design of the advertisement is visually appealing to me.

- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
-

I find the colors and layout of the advertisement attractive.

- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
-

The advertisement has a unique and creative concept.

- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
-

The advertisement seems authentic to me.

- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
-

The advertisement successfully captures the essence of 80s fashion.

- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
-

The message of the advertisement is clear.

- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
-

I would share this advertisement with my friends or on social media.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

Page Break

The brand featured in the advertisement is appealing to me.

- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
-

The advertisement makes the brand seem stylish.

- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
-

The advertisement increases my interest in the brand.

- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
-

I am likely to purchase products from this brand.

- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
-

The advertisement feels relevant to my interests.

- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
-

The advertisement increases my interest in 80s fashion.

- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
-

I would love to recreate an 80s outfit.

- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
-

The advertisement resonates with my personal style.

- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
-

The advertisement is memorable for me.

- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
-

The advertisement evokes positive emotions in me.

- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
-

The advertisement feels emotionally engaging.

- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
-

The advertisement makes me feel nostalgic.

- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
-

The advertisement reminds me of my childhood or past experiences.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

End of Block: Block 4: First Impressions, Perceptions, Attitudes

Start of Block: Block 5: Nostalgia Proneness

In the next section, I would like to understand more about your general preferences and feelings towards different aspects of life and experiences. Please read each statement carefully and indicate how much you agree or disagree with each one.

Page Break

I enjoy movies, TV shows, music and content that remind me of the past.

- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
-

I like to use digital filters or apps that give a retro/vintage feel to my photos and videos.

- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
-

I like to collect retro/vintage pieces.

- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
-

I prefer products that have a retro/vintage vibe.

- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
-

I am more likely to purchase products that remind me of the past.

- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
-

I often tend to romanticize things.

- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
-

I frequently recall fond memories of the past.

- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Thinking about the past makes me happy.

- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
-

I feel a strong emotional connection to my memories.

- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
-

Nostalgic memories bring me comfort during difficult times.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

End of Block: Block 5: Nostalgia Proneness

Start of Block: Block 6: Study Aim and additional thoughts

This study aims to explore how nostalgia is integrated into brand communication and its impact on Generation Z. By understanding the role of nostalgic elements in advertisements, this research seeks to provide insights into effective marketing strategies for engaging Gen Z.

You are welcome to share any additional thoughts you have about this survey! :)

End of Block: Block 6: Study Aim and additional thoughts
