Chapter 9

The longstanding obsession with nostalgic consumption

- Unpacking the past and future of marketing and consumer research on nostalgia

Ela Veresiu, Thomas Derek Robinson, Ana Babić Rosario

Introduction

Nostalgia permeates nearly all contemporary markets and has become a central theme for numerous brands in a wide array of industries including automotive, entertainment, technology, music, food, fashion, and tourism. Marketers and consumers appear united in valorizing nostalgia as a meaningful framework for almost any conceivable consumption activity. Contemporary consumers' nostalgia is found to be triggered by increasingly intense mass migrations, environmental catastrophes, technological discontinuities, accelerating urbanization, economic fluctuations, and geopolitical shocks (Brown, Kozinets and Sherry 2003; Goulding 2001; Hamilton et al. 2014; Holak, Matveev, and Havlena 2007; Precourt 2013). Studies have consistently shown that in tough times, individuals desire to live a simpler life from a personally experienced or imagined past (Baker and Azzari 2020; Veresiu, Babić Rosario, and Robinson 2018). Our addition to this astute finding is that people not only engage in nostalgic consumption when they experience profound social turmoil and personal alienation in the present, but also heightened anxiousness about the future. Consequently, as the world becomes increasingly unpredictable, marketers intensify their exploitation of consumers' desire to return to a more peacefully perceived past in order to sell their products. Nostalgia is therefore a highly lucrative marketing strategy (Hartmann and Brunk 2019), and hence important to consumer research because it can create strong and enduring bonds between different market offerings and a wide variety of consumer segments.

This chapter elucidates how nostalgia has been conceptualized and mobilized in different marketing research domains. We do this by scrutinizing how scholars study and understand nostalgia across three different levels of theoretical and empirical observation –

individual nostalgia among consumers, producers' application of nostalgia in advertising and branding, as well as collective nostalgia in broader consumer culture. On this basis, we discuss the role of consumption, production, exchange, and markets for nostalgia as a substantive topic, providing examples from extant work. We conclude by offering an outlook on upcoming trends within nostalgia marketing and consumer research.

One of the earliest mentions of nostalgia in marketing research is found in a study on optimizing promotional segmentation strategies for television programming (Gensch and Ranganathan 1974). Programs such as *The Andy Griffith Show* and *Walt Disney* are used to exemplify how nostalgia and traditional values play an important role in this regard. However, such early work does not provide any explicit definition of nostalgia. One early and influential conceptualization within the marketing lexicon can be found in Russell W. Belk's (1988) study of consumer possessions and the extended self. Specifically, this paper concludes that consumers' fascination with things past can involve nostalgia. The scholar informs his analysis by drawing on Susan Stewart's (1984) description of nostalgia as a sadness without an object in combination with Immanuel Kant's (1798) explanation of it as a longing for one's childhood, Grant McCracken's (1986) account of it as maintaining idealized values and visions of a golden age that never existed, as well as Fred Davis' (1979) theorization of nostalgia as it applies to the self:

> nostalgia (like long-term memory, like reminiscence, like daydreaming) is deeply implicated in our sense of who we are, what we are about, and (though possibly with much less inner clarity) whither we go. In short, nostalgia is. . .a readily accessible psychological lens. . . , for the never ending work of constructing, maintaining, and reconstructing our identities. (Davis 1979: 31)

However, Belk (1990: 670) did not establish his own definition of consumer nostalgia until a few years later, capturing it as 'a wistful mood that may be prompted by an object – a scene, a smell, or a strain of music.' Since then, nostalgia has received ample attention in marketing and consumer research, especially in lockstep with the end-of-the-millennium ethos. Researchers have predominantly focused on nostalgia as a selective recall of the past through rose-colored glasses (Belk 1991; Havlena and Holak 1991; Holak and Havlena 1992), and romanticized it as a time 'marked by spiritual unity and an absence of present-day complexities and stresses' (Thompson, Pollio, and Locander 1994: 443). Over the past five decades, consumers' nostalgia has been defined in multiple ways, ranging from an individual's measurable 'consumption preference toward objects (people, places, or things) that were more

common (popular, fashionable, or widely circulated) when one was younger (in early adulthood, in adolescence, in childhood) or even before birth' (Holbrook and Schindler 1991: 330) to a 'collective sentimental or bittersweet yearning for the past which represents a culture, a generation, or a nation' (Baker and Kennedy 1994: 170).

In accordance, nostalgia has spanned individual (Holbrook 1993), interpersonal (Havlena and Holak 1996), and collective (Brunk, Giesler, and Hartmann 2018) consumer forms, playing an important role in influencing consumer memories, preferences, identities, and experiences. Scholars have found that nostalgia can be stimulated by ads (Stern 1992), brands (Brown, Kozinets, and Sherry 2003), objects (Belk 1988), and places (Goulding 2001). It can refer to a past personally experienced during a consumer's lifetime (Schindler and Holbrook 2003), a historical period before a consumer's birth vicariously drawn from secondary sources (Goulding 2001), or even a past that never existed, but rather created and promoted by marketers (Brunk et al. 2018). As such, nostalgia has been instrumental in theorizing not only individual consumer behaviour, but also broader, market-mediated collective popular memories and consumer culture. Overall, for marketing scholars, nostalgia represents a market-mediated (aka influenced by market actors) memory or emotion that emerges from circumstances in the present and filters out more negative aspects of the past. In other words, market actors, resources, and offerings mediate consumers' nostalgic memories and emotions. For this reason, nostalgic consumption exhibits a dark side as people can become obsessed and seduced by the sirens of nostalgic marketing to such an extent that they fail to meaningfully engage with both the present and the future.

Nostalgia in Individual Consumer Behaviour

Nostalgia was initially interpreted as an individual, psychological phenomenon of looking back and yearning for an idealized past through consumption. This complex human state consists of both a cognitive dimension (i.e., memories of personal experiences) and an affective dimension (i.e., emotions that these memories evoke) that simultaneously affect consumer behaviour (Hamilton and Wagner 2014; Sierra and McQuitty 2007). Two main classes of consumer nostalgia are distinguished: 1) 'personal nostalgia' that 'reflects direct experience with the object of nostalgia where the meaning is unique to the individual' (Havlena and Holak 1996: 35; Goulding 2001; Stern 1992), and 2) 'cultural nostalgia', which is not only 'rooted in direct personal experiences,' but also 'based on shared symbols, so that the resulting feeling of nostalgia reflects the individual's connection to other members of the culture' (Havlena and Holak 1996: 37). This latter form of nostalgia can, for example, appear by reminiscing about

consumption experiences such as the famous 1969 music festival *Woodstock* or the U.S. centric, consumption fuelled celebration of *Thanksgiving*. In this type of marketing research, the past is often discussed as essential to a consumer's identity or sense of self (Belk 1990).

Individual consumer nostalgia is widely conceptualized as a positive emotion (Holbrook and Schindler 1991; Holak and Havlena 1998), although some scholars argue that it has a bittersweet component (Baker and Kennedy 1994; Havlena and Holak 1991; Walder 2014) as pleasant memories involve unpleasant, irreversible loss of, or distance to, the past. Researchers have demonstrated that the past can bring comfort to consumers and make them feel better about themselves (Loveland, Smeesters, and Mandel 2010). Particularly, prior work shows that when consumers feel sad and powerless, they experience higher levels of nostalgia and prefer consumption objects that provide short-term distraction from the present (Goulding 1999, 2001, 2002; Rutherford and Shaw 2011). However, nostalgia in consumerism is not only self-relevant, but also found to be a social emotion (Zhou et al. 2012). Nostalgic consumption of past familiar objects and settings can thus serve as a temporary coping mechanism or a means of escapism.

Turning to memories, Morris Holbrook and Robert Schindler (1991) show that consumers maintain, sometimes for the rest of their lives, early imprinted preferences toward people, places, or things that were common when they were young. Yet, consumer researchers argue that nostalgic memories also contain an imaginary character. Accordingly, despite being rich and evocative, they are often more imaginary than 'real.' Building on this idea, scholars have expanded the conceptualization of consumer nostalgia to include: 1) 'vicarious nostalgia', defined as 'a strong sense of identification with figures and movements from previous eras…that were felt to have been aesthetically or intellectually superior to the present' (Goulding 2001: 584); 2) 'simulated' (Baker and Kennedy 1994) or 'interpersonal nostalgia' that 'results from indirect experience obtained through direct interpersonal contact,' such as 'the recollections of family members or close friends' (Havlena and Holak 1996: 36); as well as 3) 'historical' (Stern 1992) or 'virtual nostalgia' dealing with 'indirect, collective experiences' (Havlena and Holak 1996: 37) derived from consuming historical information across various media. These different forms of nostalgia all result from consumers' indirect and/or imaginary experiences of the past through the recollections of friends and family or non-personal communications, such as historical books, art, movies, and museums. As a concrete example, one study demonstrates how Russian consumers evoke interpersonal nostalgia through everyday consumption in their mixed-generation homes (Holak et al. 2007).

Psychologically oriented consumer research has therefore largely focused on consumers' nostalgia as a quantifiable individual preference toward consuming objects from

one's past (Holbrook and Schindler 1991) that can serve as a means of escaping the present (Belk 1990). As an illustration, a common survey item that is still used to measure consumers' nostalgic sentiment is 'this brand reminds me of a golden age' (Napoli et al. 2014: 1093). However, such a survey item decontextualizes the notion of golden age by failing to address which Golden Age is meant. On a more critical note, nostalgia as an individual psychological consumer phenomenon (Goulding 1999; Hirsch 1992; Holbrook 1993; Stern 1992) can filter out more negative aspects of the past, and therefore lead to selective consumer recall. Furthermore, it can become detrimental to the self by encouraging hoarding, excessive materialism, and socially inhibiting behaviours (Baker and Azzari 2020). As a result, the commodification of the past in nostalgic market offerings creates a fetishistic relationship to objects and events from before, which conceals or even obliterates other drivers of history for the individual consumer. Future researchers can therefore explore in greater empirical detail how the consumer psychology of nostalgia is embedded within wider sociological processes of commodity fetishization, with a view to emancipatory engagements within the market (Murray et al. 2019; Murray and Ozanne 1991).

Producers' Nostalgia in Branding and Advertising

From the producers' perspective, nostalgia is conceptualized as a fundamental element of value that will sustain a company's revenue growth (Almquist, Senior, and Bloch 2016; Lasaleta, Sedikides, and Vohs 2014). Within branding research, Brown et al. (2003: 19) pioneered the idea of retro branding, which they define as a company relaunching 'historical brands with updated features.' The authors not only demonstrate that consumers resort to retro brands, such as the *Volkswagen New Beetle* and *Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace*, in order to connect to original brand communities—'a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand' (Muñiz and O'Guinn 2001: 412). They also find that contemporary, market-mediated nostalgia is more concerned with aesthetics than emotions. A comparison of consumer brand relationships of nostalgic versus non-nostalgic brands further illustrates how nostalgic brands preserve memories that enhance consumers' lives, as these consumption objects allow people to re-experience or, perhaps more precisely, create an idealized past in the present (Kessous, Roux, and Chandon 2015). For a case outside North American or European consumption contexts, developing a retro brand community in post-apartheid South Africa requires marketers to shape a sense of an imagined community of resistance in the minds and hearts of contemporary consumers (Drewett 2008). Most recently, it has been noted that effective nostalgic marketing strategies

should focus on enchantment – 'the rendering of the ordinary into something special' (Hartmann and Brunk 2019: 669).

Concerning advertising, consumers' personal memories are specifically primed to elicit nostalgia with the use of special characters in campaigns (Callcott and Alvey 1991). Autobiographical narration is commonly utilized in advertising to evoke consumers' memories of past experiences. For example, *Walt Disney* celebrated the 25th anniversary of *Disney World* in Orlando with a past-inspired campaign titled 'Remember the Magic' (Braun, Ellis, and Loftus 2002), and a 2012 *Werther's Original* commercial invited nostalgic consumers to 'Feel Like a Kid in a Caramel Shoppe Again' (Fritz, Schoenmueller, and Bruhn 2017). Nostalgic ads frequently juxtapose a feel-good cultural, generational, or personal memory with a current product-use situation (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Stern 1990). In a study on nostalgic typologies used in advertising, Barbara Stern (1992) recounts a television commercial for *Rascals* candy that evokes generational consumer nostalgia by narrating a child's enjoyment of 1960s science fiction movies enhanced through eating the candy. The ad's aim is to reposition the brand as an adult candy and remind baby boomers of their idealized childhood.

Following this producer-oriented perspective, nostalgia presents numerous opportunities for the creation of successful market offerings. Unsurprisingly, the most prominent types of nostalgic products include museums and heritage sites. On the one hand, static museums host original collections of cultural and branded heirlooms, as well as contemporary reproductions of past memorabilia, making them ideal nostalgic retailscapes for contemporary consumption (Chaney, Pulh, and Mencarelli 2018; Devine 2014; Goulding 1999). On the other hand, living museums are highly interactive, themed spaces that include industrial, architectural, and societal re-creations of specific glorified golden ages, making them even riper for nostalgic consumption. As a prime example, England's *Blists Hill* (Goulding 2001) is a reconstructed eighteenth-century Victorian village with functioning shops, staff dressed in period costume, romanticized public squares, and cobbled streets cleansed of Victorian era detriments such as disease and poverty that contemporary consumers can uncritically experience.

Heritage tourism—centered on historic sites, buildings, and even artwork—has emerged to re-create the 'places of the past through the lens of the present' (Balmer 2011: 1383). Yet, the historical accuracy of artifacts appears irrelevant to nostalgic consumers. For instance, Eric Gable and Richard Handler (1996) demonstrate the complementary relationship of original artifacts from a historical period (e.g., cannons from the American Civil War at *Colonial Williamsburg*) with carefully designed, authentic looking, and artificially aged artifacts

reproduced to accomplish an image of arrested decay. Fictional elements (e.g., a 1938-looking street) allow contemporary consumers to relate past locations to their present lives (Devine 2014). Yet, nostalgic consumers also re-create historical settings without the help of such artifacts (Hede and Thyne 2010). As an example, nostalgic consumers use personal assumptions and their imagination at the *Riverside Museum* to re-enact a historic Glasgow city that never actually existed (Jafari and Taheri 2014).

Along these lines, Jan Logemann's (2013) study of mom-and-pop stores shows how nostalgic consumers create romanticized visions about the past in the present. Small stores are perceived as part of a past bourgeois, organic, and harmonious retailscape worthy of emulation in the present. Past retail shops therefore become an alternative ideal in the present age of alienating suburbia and strip malls. This is not unlike *Disneyland's Mainstreet, U.S.A.*, which captures the essence of a lost, walkable, and thus more social retailscape that has been supplanted by alienating, sprawling, car-centric urban spaces (Francaviglia 1996). Art deco cafés play a similar role as sites for contemporary consumers' nostalgic recollection (Devine 2014). In this sense, café consumption becomes representative of what Elizabeth Carnegie (2010) refers to as the enactment of a nostalgic 'heritagized culture,' allowing consumers to re-experience positively perceived aspects of a local areas' past. Similarly, but for a different epoch, present-day Edwardian tea rooms are steeped in nostalgic consumers' romanticized ideas about past polite and demure British upper class in contrast with today's crass society (Hamilton and Wagner 2014). Bradford T. Hudson (2011) further underscores this aspect of consumers' nostalgia by unpacking how art deco themed transatlantic cruise ships appeal to an anglophile upper-class consumer that idealizes past classism. As a final example, *Ralph Lauren* boutiques achieve a nostalgic retail atmosphere by reproducing a romantic vision of a traditional elite's Anglo-Saxon home (Kessous et al. 2015), however without ever questioning its exclusionary, elite function in society.

From a critical perspective, although these nostalgic retailscapes are indicative of consumers' quest for 'imaginative nostalgic escapism' (Goulding 2001: 575) to romanticized versions of the past, they nonetheless have the potential to exclude certain consumer segments in the present. Ultimately this second type of marketing research has established that marketers increasingly use various nostalgic appeals in order to pitch their offerings, which range from retroscapes (Brown and Sherry 2003), heritage attractions (Goulding 1999), and high street shopping (Maclaran and Brown 2001) to cinematic experiences like remakes, sequels, and prequels (Brown 2001). This has led Brown (2007) to establish the retro-dominant logic of marketing, whereby the drivers of marketing endeavours are neither goods nor services, but

rather stories, in this case compelling stories about the past. These stories, in turn, can play on consumers' present-day anxieties and fears about the future (Baker and Azzari 2020), which further fuels their dissatisfaction, turning it into a potentially perpetual viscous cycle. Inversely, nostalgia in consumerism can also function as a form of ideology, where market stakeholders maintain a certain status quo through ongoing curation of the past in the material culture and symbolic resources they set up for consumers in the present. A recent study for instance shows how luxury retailers have a vested interest in maintaining social inequalities (Dion and Borraz 2017), but less in known about what role nostalgia plays in this regard.

Collective Nostalgia in Consumer Culture

Finally, in consumer culture, collective nostalgia is seen as 'a contemporary obsession with the simulacra of the past' (Hamilton and Wagner 2014: 815). This stream of marketing scholarship has linked consumer nostalgia to broader sociocultural transformations, such as industrialization, revolutions, and world-changing terrorist attacks (Hamilton et al. 2014; Marcoux 2017). Here, consumer nostalgia is conceptualized beyond the merely individual or producer levels as a broader phenomenon that includes marginalized histories (Hamilton et al. 2014; Samuel 1994), as well as the market-mediated shaping of popular and collective memories (Brunk et al. 2018; Thompson and Tian 2008). As such, this body of work emphasizes socio-economic and cultural critiques of consumers' nostalgic memories that result from interactions with the contemporary marketplace and its vested interests.

At the societal level, consumers can experience 'collective' or 'communal nostalgia' in the wake of world-changing events (Ebenkamp and Odiorne 2002; Nadkarni and Schevchenko 2004). Following Gary Cross' (2017) overview of nostalgic collections, communal nostalgia can unite consumers around ephemeral commodities from bygone eras in communities of consumption. These consumer goods include music, television series, kitsch items, automobiles, and playthings such as dolls. Given the ephemeral nature of these consumption items, collective nostalgia creates distinct age boundaries for group members. More importantly however, societies exhibit collective nostalgia for a version of the past that never really existed but is rather reimagined through marketing efforts. Exploring post-unification German consumer culture, Brunk et al. (2018) identify three salient, market-mediated nostalgic frames marketers use to depoliticize Germany's socialist past in order to make it compatible with its capitalist present: moralistic, pastoral, and carnivalesque nostalgia. According to the authors, market actors try to appease former East German consumers' anxieties by shaping depoliticized

and romanticized popular memories through market offerings of, and from, the former GDR ranging from mustard to summer camps.

As another illustration, American consumers' collective nostalgia about past U.S. society is subject to what Richard Godfrey and Simon Lilley (2009) term 'periodization' in their study on visual consumption and collective memory in representing war. According to the authors, each stage of social development gives rise to its own particular form of nostalgia for past American societies. In accordance, certain consumers' long for the colonial, puritan American society, while others yearn for 'the youth and innocence of the 1940s USA' as exemplified in the box office hit *Pearl Harbor* (Godfrey and Lilley 2009: 287). However, Sarah Edwards and Juliette Wilson (2014) maintain that the glorification of past American societies through the market takes on a toxic and disturbing note when discussing the Tea Party Movement, which later turned into Trumpism and its America First creed. Here, a 'fictitious vision of the past' (Edwards and Wilson 2014: 112) is created to frame the rebarbative nature of the present. Specifically, nostalgic consumption serves to restore or safeguard early American liberties that are perceived to be lost or at risk, such as those pertaining to guns and Second Amendment rights. Importantly, these forms of consumer nostalgia about Early American or East German societies involve the purposeful absence of 'negative aspects,' especially pertaining to racial inequality and segregation that was 'institutionally widespread' (Godfrey and Lilley 2009: 287). Hence, from a critical viewpoint, contemporary consumers' nostalgia pertaining to past societies involves a selective editing of past social structures of inequality and human suffering. This, in turn, can lead to different social groups being pitted against one another, creating cultural pathologies (Baker and Azari 2020) and maintaining socioeconomic inequalities into the future.

Nostalgia Marketing and Consumer Research Trends

Although marketing and consumer researchers have recently begun to pursue a wider set of questions regarding what specific social structures influence consumers' nostalgia, what role the market plays in this phenomenon, and whether it is contextually sensitive, the literature stream has nonetheless almost completely elided non-Western forms of nostalgic consumption. The few notable exceptions include Michael Drewett's (2008) study of nostalgic consumption in South Africa, Ling Zhou et al. (2013) quantification of consumers' nostalgia in China, as well as Kalman Applbaum and Ingrid Jordt's (1996) exploration of consumers' nostalgia as a means of communality in Japan. Likewise, while marketing research understands the role of Orientalism and the exoticization of otherness (i.e., representations of the non-Western world)

in Western consumer nostalgia, little is known about the role of Occidentalism (i.e., representations of the Western world) in non-Western consumer nostalgia. Perhaps non-Western consumers' nostalgia is difficult to identify, theorize, and incorporate. Yet, we worry that without an inclusion of substantive, empirical research on nostalgic marketing and consumption from multifarious and underexplored consumption contexts outside the North Atlantic region marketing and consumer research on nostalgia does not paint a full picture. This suggests an urgent need for future research into consumer nostalgia outside the Western hemisphere, as tacit regional assumptions about the roles and meanings of nostalgia in marketing practices and consumer behaviour currently hamper academic progress.

On a related note, consumers' nostalgia is rarely a constant condition, but rather one that waxes and wanes with time and with the conditions in which consumers may find themselves (Baker and Azzari 2020). As such, future researchers can pursue longitudinal qualitative and quantitative analyses (Smith and Lux 1993) of nostalgia experienced at different points in a consumer's lifetime to determine a nostalgia life cycle of sorts. Such studies can explain how novel forms of consumer nostalgia appear, mature, and subsequently decline. Similarly, but from a producer perspective, it would be interesting to explore longitudinally why certain periods and ages in history are more relevant in marketing efforts at a given time only to diminish in importance at a later point (Holt and Cameron 2010).

A third under researched complexity of nostalgia and marketing concerns assumptions about its benevolent nature. It has been recently demonstrated that marketers can use nostalgia as a regulatory mechanism, especially in a given market undergoing massive economic, social, and cultural changes, such as through the marketization of former socialist societies (Brunk et al. 2018) or the reconstruction of former confederate states into the U.S. (Thompson and Tian 2008). Market-mediated nostalgia can therefore have regulatory, disciplinary, and exclusionary potential, as it not only renders romanticized, consumable versions of history in the present, but also occludes more sinister or morally problematic aspects of the past. Jean-Sébastien Marcoux (2017), for example, finds that there is power in consumers' memory work, as they frame not only what is worthy of celebration and emulation in the present, but also what is to be disregarded, marginalized, and forgotten. Nostalgic consumption is thus a highly selective engagement with the past that both censures and valorizes it simultaneously. Market-mediated nostalgia curates the past to exclude and include certain people, places, and events in particular ways, which in turn can create religious, classist, ethnic, racial, and/or gender tensions.

Future research can therefore explore how the dialectical exchange between various in-groups and out-groups affects nostalgic marketing and consumption. For example, how do West

Germans experience the *Ostalgie* marketplace that 'commemorates East German socialism through a broad array of nostalgic products, brands, memorabilia, and consumption experiences' (Brunk et al. 2018: 1326), and how does this affect Germany's overall consumer culture? How do working-class Brits perceive the upper-class Edwardian style of the luxury department store Harrods or expensive vintage tea rooms (Hamilton and Wagner 2014)? How do African Americans experience the nostalgic consumption of space through touristic Southern Plantations (Thompson and Tian 2008)? How do women experience the objectifying potential of male nostalgia about burlesque dancing (Blanchette 2014)? As we show from these extensions of empirical contexts explored in extant consumer research, nostalgic consumption is not necessarily innocent and innocuous. One consumer's nostalgia is often another consumer's abomination. The dialectical exchange between nostalgia and its 'other' desperately needs further unpacking. As global markets and capitalism speed up societal transformations, we recommend returning to a given nostalgic consumption context and exploring it from the perspective of the 'other' or out-group.

Furthermore, since Davis' (1979: 107) work, which stresses the role of nostalgia in 'holding onto and reaffirming identities which had been badly bruised by the turmoil of the times,' consumer nostalgia has been largely treated as a grand emotion that is deeply constitutive of self and identity (Belk 1988). As such, little is known about consumers' more fleeting or liquid (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2017) ties to nostalgia. Researchers can therefore uncover how fleeting pangs of nostalgia frame consumer experiences, such as in online shopping environments or temporary pop-up stores. Furthermore, how does this short-term consumer nostalgia differ from the more profound, identity-shaping long-term form?

Although immersive forms of nostalgic consumption have been explored in the context of open-air museums (Goulding, Saren, and Pressey 2018), little is known about nostalgia and digitalization. Some researchers posit that the virtual environment in cyberspace can make nostalgic consumer experiences more vivid than reality (Holak 2014). Bernard Cova and Stefano Pace (2006) for instance, discuss Nutella's online chatroom dedicated for customers to share their childhood memories involving this iconic chocolate spread. Future research can investigate online gaming and the role of virtual reality as an immersive environment for nostalgic consumption. For example, the multibillion-dollar gaming market already exploits different forms of nostalgia through games such as *Chivalry: Medieval Warfare* or *Age of Empires*. Furthermore, while virtual reality is currently being tested for museum visits (Matchar 2017), it will most likely draw on historical gaming genres, creating new avenues for nostalgic marketing research and practice. Augmented reality also poses opportunities for future

consumer nostalgia research. While some museums already integrate augmented reality into their exhibits (Billock 2017), mobile notifications about historical locations from *Google Maps* and other augmented reality services such as tour guides (Holovis 2017) provide novel ways of inscribing historical time references into contemporary consumers' lives. Exploring such nostalgic marketing and consumption phenomena would require novel digital research methods pertaining to Geographical Information Systems.

A final area of nostalgic consumption that is the most underexamined concerns consumers' relationship with an imagined future. In other words, consuming how the future was envisioned at one point in the past. According to Jill Bradbury (2012: 341) 'nostalgia is not only a longing for the way things were, but also a longing for futures that never came, or for horizons of possibilities that seem to have been foreclosed by the unfolding of events.' This type of future-oriented nostalgic consumption brings nostalgia into the sphere of 'counterfactual consumption' (Prendergast 2019), as it informs consumers' imagination of what could have been but never was. Researchers can investigate a whole range of nostalgic retro-future consumption, including the increased fascination with the Paleo or caveman diet (Ertimur and Chen 2019), which emphasizes unprocessed foods dating back to a pre-historical time (the Stone Age) that was lost to the age of agroindustry. We propose that Paleo consumers are nostalgic for an imagined, counterfactual caveman lifestyle in an effort to change their future embodied selves. Moreover, the ultramodern tiny house movement represents a relatively new consumption phenomenon through which, we suggest, consumers are nostalgic for a retro-future termed 'New Americana' or an imagined American pioneering time that never really existed but is nonetheless employed as a template to change future climate change outcomes. Furthermore, future oriented nostalgic consumption can take the form of reflective consumer nostalgia 'that is not innate or an emotion, but rather performatively enacted' (Veresiu et al. Thompson 2018: 823). We follow Bradbury (2012: 341) in pointing out how nostalgic 'narratives of the past' are important since they 'may provide resources for articulating future possibilities.' Reflectively engaging with, and reframing, the past, thus, plays a pivotal role in consumer processes by replenishing the symbolic resources available for 'imaginative anticipation of, or speculation about the future' (Campbell 1987: 83), which requires further empirical verification.

Conclusion

Contemporary marketers and consumers continue to be fascinated with the past. Nostalgia—generally understood in marketing research as 'a longing for the past, a yearning for yesterday,

or a fondness for possessions and activities associated with days of yore' (Holbrook 1993: 254)—plays an important role in shaping consumer behaviour and market offerings. Consequently, researchers across five decades have theoretically, empirically, and managerially explored various facets of the role of nostalgia in marketing and consumption. Nostalgia has been directly defined in this body of work as a personal state of melancholy, a bittersweet emotion linked to the past, a measurable consumption preference, an aesthetic component of advertising and branding efforts, as well as a collective experience that occurs at the societal level. In this chapter, we have therefore demonstrated that nostalgia is a complex marketing and consumer issue with profound variations. As such, consumer nostalgia is not purely an introspective state, but rather a complex phenomenon that orbits consumers' societal awareness. Consequently, we note that the conceptualization of nostalgia in marketing and consumer research is neither a priori nor definitive—it may be amended, restructured, or expanded as we encourage future research to incorporate evermore findings from a growing range of especially non-Anglo-European contexts.

Particularly, future research in marketing and consumer behaviour can provide deeper theorizations of how nostalgia relates to other temporal phenomena and dimensions. For example, how does nostalgia relate to consumers' efforts to forget (Marcoux 2017)? How does it shape consumers' engagement with the future (Veresiu et al. 2018)? Additionally, future marketing research can address more postmodern and playful forms of nostalgia and how they apply to consumer behaviour. For example, what is the role of nostalgia for future pasts that have not happened yet? In the *Star Trek* brand community, the future history of the *Federation* plays a significant role in negotiating what constitutes canon and provides an ongoing conundrum for brand managers in catering to various sub-groups in its core segments. The complicated temporal dynamics of postmodern nostalgia will require a much deeper theorization in future marketing studies. Similarly, what is the role in nostalgic consumerism of past futures that never happened? Specifically, these take the shape of lost opportunities or promises that were never realized. Examples of these include consumers' nostalgia for political promises that never materialized. The ongoing fascination with the death of John F. Kennedy for example not only captures speculations about what could have been for both the U.S. and the world but is also regularly marketized in entertainment culture.

In conclusion, we argue that nostalgia in the market has powerful political potential, which researchers must grapple with in an age of nationalist populism. From our perspective, today's consumer nostalgia can be theorized as a response to social, economic, political, and cultural transformations under globalization. On the one hand, such discontinuities permanently

propel consumers into new and uncertain circumstances. On the other hand, nostalgic consumption inscribes bodies with a disposition to return physically and/or imaginatively to a point of initial outset, as well as to re-inhabit older positions and relations in the present. Ultimately, consumers' longing for the past and yearning for yesteryear may be innocuous and healthy, but it also contains ominous and dangerous potential for our future.

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